

**The Classic Australian
Wooden
Power Boat Association**

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Editor's Note:

My apologies for this edition being a little late. I have been quite busy over the last couple of months and being remote makes it hard to keep up with the current news I need to fill these pages. Anyway, here is the first edition for 2003. I hope you enjoy it.

May you all have a happy, safe and prosperous 2003.

Please, keep talking to me

Greg Carr

Lowanna ... continued

and frames are all sound. I still have all the original hardware.

As I already have a collection of parts left over from ski racing a Thurgar "T" deck, I plan to rebuild the motor with a dry sump, Brodix #8

heads, a relatively mild roller cam (270 to 280 degree duration at .020 lift, and about .500" lift), freshwater cooling, 12.5:1 compression, and I have a choice of induction between a Victor Junior manifold with a 780 Holley, Elderly stack type fuel injection or a tunnel ram with twin Holley 660s. I will need to stick to the single carby if I want to use the original engine cover, so that is probably what I will do.

The boat's name is *Lowanna*, which I don't particularly like, but I guess I will retain for sake of originality.



Pat Primmer's Lewis, Lowanna

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Coming Events

January 2003

- National Maritime Festival, Newcastle, NSW, January 18th & 19th.

February 2003

- The Australian Wooden Boat Festival, Hobart, Tasmania, February 7th - 10th.

March 2003

- The South Australian Wooden Boat Festival, Goolwa, South Australia, March 14, 15 & 16.

April 2003

- Victorian Chapter Get Together, National Water Sports Centre, Bangholme, Melbourne, April 27th. Contact Keith Laws (03) 9792 0887 for details.

Contact your local rep for details on the above events.

① *Please check for confirmation of dates and venues*

Club Contact Details

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The Victorian Wooden Speedboat Club

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The New South Wales Wooden Speedboat Club

For further information, contact Dave Pagano by phone on: 02 4578 4444 (after hours) or by e-mail at: davehotboats@hotmail.com

The Queensland Wooden Speedboat Club

For further information, contact Chris Lawrence by phone on: 07 5594 2517 or via e-mail at: chrisles@onthenet.com.au

The Tasmanian Wooden Speedboat Club

For further information, contact Alan Mansfield by phone on: 03 64 282290 or email at: amansfie@southcom.com.au

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THE HOLLOW LOG

Volume 3 Issue 1

January 2003

**The Classic
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Bonjour!

Hello all.

This edition of the Hollow Log is truly an international effort. I have put it together in Toulouse in southern France, where I am working for the next few months. The finished newsletter was then sent back to Australia where it was printed and mailed out by Keith Laws and Darren Goldberg.

Both the NSW and Victorian Chapters had Get Togethers towards the end of 2002. I was fortunate enough to attend both. The Victorian meeting was again a "dry" turn while NSW had another day out on that superb waterway called the Hawkesbury River.

Both events turned up boats that were previously unseen by the majority of members. Although the Victorian affair



Atalanta, circa 1950's

was on dry ground, four boats turned up, the first appearance for three of them. There is more on both these meets elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Both meetings were great fun with members families and friends coming along. Plenty of good information was exchanged along with of plenty of good old fashioned B.S.

More events are planned for both states in 2003.

Another excellent boat show coming up is in Goolwa, SA, in March. This is an excellent show and the only one I know of that allows us to put our boats in the water for a display. It's worth a visit and better still, worth putting you boat into.

Quote for the day:
In the race for quality,
there is no finish line

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French Woodies

Before I left Australia, I was told in no uncertain terms that I must include a picture of a French woodie in this edition of the newsletter.

Well, that demand has proved a tad difficult to accomplish. It is winter here and there is not much about in this neck of the woods anyway.

Regardless, here is a pic of a few woodies moored in the Canal du Midi in Narbonne, France, not far from the

Mediterranean Sea.

They are actually house-boats and, I'm sorry, but they have iron hulls. Only the cabins are timber.



NSW Chapter Get Together

September 2002 saw the NSW Chapter hold another outing on the Hawkesbury River at Windsor.

Boats that attended were *Skidoo*, *Sheba II*, *Little Devil*, *Dad's Woody*, *Divine Intervention* and *Surferoo*.

For many of us a yet unseen and unusual boat turned up on the day. *Surferoo*, brought along by Edgar Phipps, was built by Graham Howard in the early 1970's. It is a hybrid runabout hull and hydro-plane and is believed to have been built as a ski-racer tow boat for use in the Bridge to Bridge on the Hawkesbury River in NSW. The boat appeared to be in original condition, although there was some discussion on whether its 302 Ford was original. The original red striped Ford GT Falcon tyres fitted to the trailer also drew quite a bit of attention.



Skidoo, Little Devil and Sheba II

Once launched, all eyes were on *Surferoo*, which was an unknown quantity. Edgar had not run the boat before the day and

Andrew Petty put his Goldsbrough, *Sheba II*, through its paces for me and it performed well. It was very nice listening to that Y block (but I know I am biased).

Dad's Woody also proved a joy to ride in. The flat head Ford Mercury V8 had a wonderful sound to it. This boat, built in by owner Scott Rowe's father in the late 1940's, has a real vintage look and feel about it. It is a beautiful boat with beautiful lines.

It was another great day out that was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who attended.

Thanks to Dave Pagano and Rob Cranfield for their hospitality during the weekend and for organizing the event as well as to all who attended, many of whom came along just to say hello.

I had an excellent day. I



Edgar Phipp's boat Surferoo

All credit to Stu Hennesy who still had the heads off the engine in his boat *Divine Intervention* on Sunday morning. He might have been a little late, but he made it. Stu was heading off to Germany for an indefinite period and was determined to be there for what will be the boat's last outing for some time.

The day started off with a BBQ lunch before the boats were launched for a trip down the river. There were quite a few other boats on the ramp when we got there and I think our woodies made a fine show lined up together amongst all that plastic.

was taken for a ride in *Sheba II*, *Dad's Woody* and *Skidoo*, apart from heading out to the beach in Suzie Vlamig's Hunts Marine, *Little Devil*.

Jeff Lockhart's *Skidoo* was given a workout by water skiers Rob Cranfield and Dave Pagano. I was really impressed with this boat's soft ride and the willingness of it's Dodge flat head six cylinder. It truly is an excellent ski boat.



Scott Rowe and Dave Pagano in Dad's Woody

which says something about the quality of his workmanship.

brushed away part of the name *Venus* was revealed - (obviously a result of some hard racing).

soon after Stephen had purchased her, *Venus* was down at the local ramp once again demanding plenty of notice—with the open stacks so many people turned up to see what all the commotion was about.

Stephen also has the half scale models that Syd made to get the original shape of his boats and to give you an idea of the scale they are about 16 inches in length.

All in all it was a great couple of hours spent with Stephen and his family and an

A lot of older folk could remember Syd Long and *Venus* being in the area in the 1960's and so this created plenty of discussion and reminiscing.

Stephen plans to refurbish *Venus* when time permits and he would like to locate and install a Holden Grey motor which is what she was originally powered with.

(Alan would like to thank Stephen Long for his contribution towards this article)



Stingray in the late 1970's

Jacana and *Comet*, together with their owners, had also successfully competed in National Championships interstate in their class in the 1960's.

I did have the pleasure of racing *Comet* in the early 1980's and she later became the learning ground for Chris Palmer who went on to bigger things in speedboat racing, contesting this year's Griffith Cup in New Zealand with his supercharged displacement hull named *Plum Crazy*.

The original saw bench used in building the boats is still here and in use today.

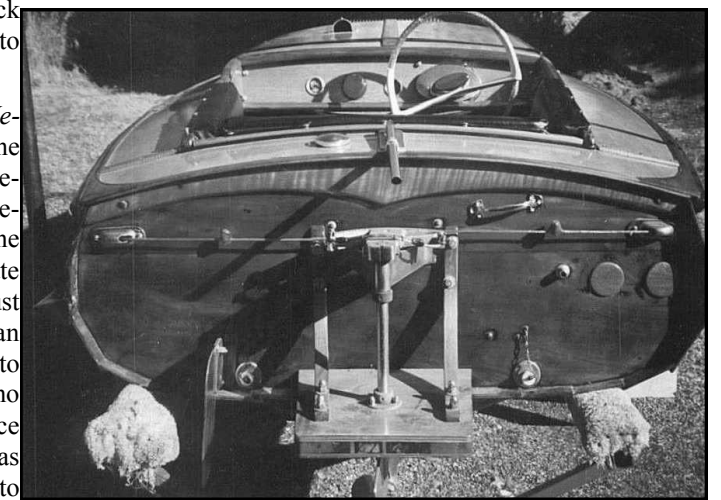
A couple of old two bladed brass propellers used on *Venus* still hang from a beam.

A damaged length of plywood planking was uncovered and when the dust was

interesting look back into the past as to how it used to be.

Stephen spotted *Venus* on display at the Devonport Apex Regatta in the late nineties and knowing she was built by his late grandfather he just had to have her, so an offer was made to Kevin Bryan who had owned her since 1972 and she was brought back home to Georgetown.

Today *Venus* (see photo) is powered by a 250ci Falcon and



Venus today



Venus in 2002

Venus

We were on a weekend holiday in late autumn and our destination required us to pass through the seaside township of Georgetown in Tasmania where boat builder Syd Long used to live.



Syd Long's workshop

I had been talking to Syd's grandson Stephen who had informed me that the workshop where his late grandfather had built inboard racing skiffs in the 1960's was still there and in use by family members, so this made a stopover here on our way a necessity.



Venus in action in the 1970's

Syd had moved to Georgetown in 1949 to work for a short time in the building industry, but because of the continuing demand in the area for his services he ended up staying.

Syd was always interested in boating and in his spare time tried his hand at building a runabout which he aptly called *Skip-A Long*. He raced her with the Northern Tasmanian Power Boat Club whose headquarters was at Rosevears on the Tamar River near Launceston. (The club went into recess in 1975, but the facility is still there today and used mainly by a local water ski club.)

Syd's first serious step into speedboat racing was with his 155 cubic inch clinker displacement skiff called *Venus*.

Venus measured 13 foot 6 inches in length, was plywood planked and powered by a hard

revving Repco Holden engine.

She won many championships and Stephen could recall Syd together with Stephen's uncle taking her to Sydney in the early 1960's to contest the National Championship for the

155 cubic inch class.

In those days they used to race with a co-driver who was usually the mechanic and after making it through the heats to contest the final, Syd unfortunately lost his

co-driver overboard on a corner. He continued on to finish in second place only to find out later that he had been disqualified as the rules stated that you must finish the race with the same amount of crew

you started with.

Venus was sold by Syd in 1968 to Barry Gardam (to replace Barry's small skiff *Lindy* that was destroyed by fire at the Devonport Marine Board's Centenary Regatta of 1967).

Other owners have been Doug Ray and Kevin Bryan.

Venus did end up win-

ning that National Championship for Kevin in 1972.

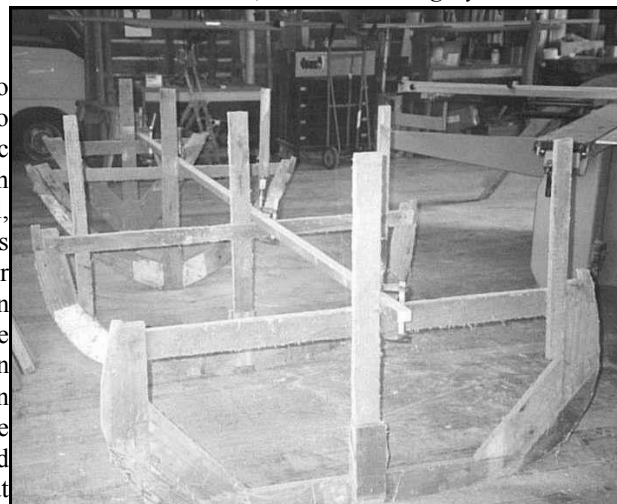
An identical hull to *Venus*, named *Diana*, was built at the workshop by Syd using the same frames that were used for *Venus*.

Stephen actually found the frames still tucked up away in the rafters and he brought them down and laid them out in order on the workshop floor.

Frames were also found for an outboard powered tunnel hull.

Tunnel hulls (which are today's Formula Ones) were popular in the early seventies and Syd had built just one of these.

Three smaller clinker skiffs were also built here at the workshop to contest the 95 cubic inch displacement class, namely *Jacana*, *Comet* and *Stingray*.



The frames used to build Venus and Diana

Two of these boats, as well as with *Venus*, are still in existence today,



Comet in 1982

Simpkin Boats

Dave Powley

If you are like me, I often sit and admire the subtle, gracious lines of my boat's planks as they flow from the transom over the tumblehome on down the compound curves of the hull until, in a final tapered upswing, they all meld together in delicate detail on the prow timber cutwater. We have the material product to admire and cherish, but sometimes thoughts dwell on people who, through raw talent, dedication and hard work, have the ability to couple these artistic designs and actually turn them into a functional object. To do this, the materials had to be shaped, twisted, bent and forced against their natural tendencies.

Keith Simpkin was for many years a local (Melbourne) talent in powerboat building. Keith's love affair with boats grew slowly out of necessity rather than as a hobby. He worked as a wood machinist in the days just after the Second World War, involved in manufacturing such mundane things as wooden step ladders and wooden articles for household use. He was approached by a boat builder from Footscray who wanted him to build decks for his hulls, and it was from there that his involvement in boats grew. Keith opened his own workshop in Gilfoyle Avenue in the Melbourne suburb of North Coburg in 1962. That workshop, like so many other things that now no longer exist, was claimed by the wrecker's ball some years back. Keith tells that boatbuilding was not the business to be in if you wanted to make a quick buck. He had to work long hard hours to make a go of it, so hard in fact that he said five years went by before he could afford his own boat, called *Mam'selle*. She was a 15' clinker powered by a Holden six.

After *Mam'selle*, he built himself a whole series of boats, keeping each one a year or so until some customer offered to purchase it. Over the years, about 120 timber boats emerged from the workshop until 1975, when Keith produced his first fibreglass boat, the first few of which had wooden decks.

Pictured is *Bwana*, a typical Simpkin styled boat. Keith preferred the prow to be sloped quite acutely, giving a dry ride.

Starting in the early 1960's, Keith was involved in runabouts as well as racing boats. He built about a dozen 12 ft. racing



Bwana, a typical Simpkin styled boat

skiffs as well as various 16 – 18 footers. As their reputation for handling and speed grew, Keith had a ready market for his boats with no advertising required.

Travelling all over Victoria from Albert Park Lake in Melbourne to the Murray, Keith was involved in the power boat and racing scene, putting in about 20 years in club events as a marshall and club boat rescue member. As for actually racing, he left that to others – building boats was his thing.

In a garage in country Victoria is one of the last timber boats. Keith constructed and to this day it is in near new original condition. She is powered by a rear-mounted Oldsmobile V8, complete

with auto transmission, allowing her to be backed off the trailer under power.

Keith's craftsmanship has given us something to use, admire and protect for now and future generations. Probably someone in thirty, maybe fifty years from now, will be sitting in his garage, as I did, gazing at the wonderful flowing lines of his wooden pride and joy and perhaps giving a thought to its creator.



Keith Simpkin's workshop in the mid 1960's. Note the narrow door - boats had to be tipped on their sides to clear the door.

Victorian Chapter Gathering

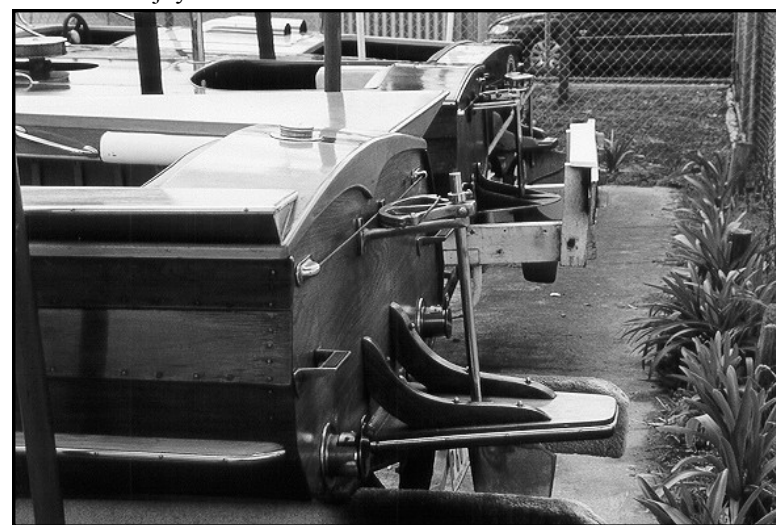
Late October saw a "Get Together" of Victorian Chapter members in Melbourne. It was yet another dry turn, only in that there was no water, because it certainly was not the case in the liquid refreshment department.

The venue was at Darren Goldberg's factory way down on the Mornington Peninsula in the bayside suburb of Seaford and for a non-water get together, this was an excellent venue. Some even say it is the Victorian Chapter's new official club-rooms! There was plenty of room inside to move around (great for the kids) and plenty of room outside for the boats that turned up for display.

About 18 people turned up. This included members, wives, partners and kids—a real family turnout, which made the day even more enjoyable.



Three in a row - Pearl Necklace, Goldsbrough and Yandy V



The line up from the rear

The boats that were on show included Keith Law's *Pearl Necklace*, Craig Balme's *Yandy V*, David Nagle's Goldsbrough and *Holeshot*, a Seacraft brought along by Peter Adcock. It was the first appearance for three of the boats, so it was a real bonus for everyone there to see them for the first time.

Craig Balme brought along his runabout, *Yandy V*. Craig owned *Yandy V* some years ago and had sold it to someone in NSW. It was a reluctant sale and Craig, with some excellent foresight, arranged to have first option on buying the boat back if the new owner ever decided to sell. Ten

years later that option was taken up and Craig had returned to Victoria with the boat only a couple of days before the Get Together. *Yandy V* is an 18' clinker runabout and is believed to have been

built by Jack Burns in around 1960. It is powered by a Chrysler 313 ci V8. Also unseen until the day was David Nagle's Goldsbrough. Although David has owned the 16 footer for some years, it has had little use. This might have had something to do with the boat being in Tassie.

David's boat is powered by a six cylinder Dodge Q engine and has only recently been returned to the mainland.

Peter Adcock brought along *Holeshot*, a Seacraft runabout. Peter is currently carrying out restoration work on the boat for its owner. The hull being stripped out gave everyone the opportunity to have a look at the layout and construction of this style of boat. Peter was able to answer any questions put to him about the boat, having built them for many years. The workmanship and finish on *Holeshot* was superb, a great display of Peter's skills and standards.



Bob Carter and Doug Bamerry deep in discussion

Lowanna

Pat Primmer owns Lowanna and sent me some information on the boat.

The boat was purchased new by my father in Easter 1970 from Frank Lewis in Huskison NSW. It was fitted with a reasonably stock 350 Chev and used for Ski Trials and Ski Racing.

The motor was soon upgraded with a "Duntov" cam, LT1 forged and tuftited crank, so called 11:1 TRW forged pistons (actually gave 10.2:1 with our heads), an Edelbrock Hi-Rise inlet manifold and a 780 CFM Holley carburetor.

A few years later I bought her and ported the heads, blueprinted the engine, fiddled with wedges between the hull planks and bearers, moved the water scoop to the cav plate and behind the prop, removed the windscreen and back floors, cut down the fin and replaced the original brass rudder with a steel wedge type. In this configuration, she was officially timed at St George Motor Boat Club, in a two way pass, at 72 miles per hour. Also, with this configuration, the porpoising was eliminated and the steering was much more accurate at high speed.

She has been out of the water since 1980, with several short attempts at restoration. I am now more determined to restore her to original condition.

Earlier attempts at restoration, have at least preserved her. She was scraped back to bare wood, the dry-rot that always forms around the nail holes in the transom and under the rivet heads was scraped out. She was then treated inside and out with Everdure two pack epoxy, the transom was reinforced with fibreglass, and the garboard planks attached to the transom via thru bolts and 2" X 2" aluminium angle.

She needs upholstery, the ply veneer on the transom replaced, and the deck re-nailing in a few places where it is just starting to lift as well as the gunwales and combings replaced. The engine cover also needs some work. The hull planks, deck

.... continued on page 8



Yandy V showing some fine lines

Last but not least was Keith Laws' Walker built clinker, *Pearl Necklace*. This 15' runabout is in beautiful condition and was featured in the Vol 2 Issue 3 edition of the *Hollow Log*.

There was plenty of discussion through the day on a wide variety of topics that included the good and bad points of Dodge side valve and Chrysler 313 "Sawtooth" engines, clinker hull construction and the application and durability of two pack paints as opposed to good old fashioned varnish. Also of interest to everyone there was the photo albums and other interesting boat related paraphernalia brought in and put on show.

There was also a good deal of discussion on getting the next Victorian meeting on

the water. Some people with pretty positive ideas on the issue came forward and by the time you read this something will have been organised.

Many thanks to Keith and Darren for organising the day, Darren and Liz for the venue and food and special thanks to Peter Adcock who displayed another skill of his as "Chef" in front of the BBQ. Thanks also to all those who attended - it is people like you that make the day.

The day was special to me as it was the last gathering I would be able to attend for quite some time due to my posting overseas. Thanks everyone for making it a really good day.



Some of Peter Adcock's handiwork