



NEW 'BUGS AT THE OLD BOAT FESTIVAL



by PETER TAIT

Part One - Building 'Bugs at the Festival

The MyState Australian Wooden Boat Festival in Hobart is a biennial feast for all wooden boat nuts. It's largely non-commercial and all to do with wooden boats and that's how I come to be writing this – three of my little FireBug dinghies were built at the show by the families of the Lindisfarne Sailing Club. They didn't need me to help but I couldn't stay away!

After seeing a FireBug being built at the 2009 AWBF the Lindisfarne Sailing Club in Hobart had great fun finding suitable families to take part and then building a 12 boat fleet in the clubrooms. The boats were launched on the same day last summer and all the kids taught to sail. Club Commodore Des Clark and the committee were delighted with the way

top: Large obstacles on the race track!

above from left:

Well, what do we do next?

All action in the building area

Learning handy skills

it all worked out and to keep things bowling along they decided to build three FireBugs at the boat festival this year and simultaneously sail the Tasmania Champs in the dock area in front of the show!

The club already had the workers, the building jigs and full sized patterns for the various components from the previous build. This speeds up the process considerably but then a few days from opening they



heard that power tools weren't allowed to be used inside the building! So to make sure they didn't come out looking silly it was decided to pre-make some of the major components to get a flying start. The building area was in the Princes Wharf No 1 Shed alongside some of the club's fully rigged boats.

Sawing and banging at boat shows always attracts a crowd and this time was no exception. Once things started to roll on the first day there was a never ending bunch of on-lookers. It wasn't all blokes, lots of mums and families and even a boat-loving Grannie who reckoned she had had a good look around and this was the best stand in the whole show – 'Not only

above left: **Fixing the plywood sides.**
above right: **It's been a long day!**

interesting but whole families taking part and all picking up valuable life skills – amazing, Well done!

The three boats came close to completion but the 'Bug is deliberately not a quick build – it is optimised for learning so there are a lot of 'bits' to shape and fit and after all why not leave something for the new owners to try their hand at?



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Meanwhile the Tasmania FireBug Champs were taking place out in the dock area directly in front of the festival and adjacent to the building shed. It was a difficult course with the breeze all over the place and all sorts of obstacles in the way: a very large cruise liner was tied up to MacQuarie Wharf to the north and all sorts of water traffic cruised through the race track, even a Viking Ship and a row boat with a choir singing sea shanties – now that’s a first! The young sailors did extremely well, probably the best ‘Bug sailing I’ve seen. Several capsizes got a big ‘oooooh’ from the on-lookers but the boats were righted without any trouble. In between racing the sailors got dropped back at the shed for boat building duties. A busy time and they all loved it!

During the show over a \$1000 was raised for club funds selling magazines and candy floss. When the show closed the race boats headed home, the builders had a picnic in the park across the road, and it was cheers all around – good fun and a job well done!

Tasmania FireBug Championship 2013 Results:

- 1st - Junior G - Max Gluskie
- 2nd - Ezza - Harrison Mills
- 3rd - Crisis - Max Cooper
- 4th - GitterBug - Adele Auchterlonie/Hugh McKay
- 5th - BugZapper - George Auchterlonie/Ollie Pritchard



Part Two - Just the Best Festival!

This year was the 10th time that downtown Hobart had transformed into the venue for the hugely popular Australian Wooden Boat Festival which is second only in size to the four-yearly Brest Maritime Festival in France.

The traditional Parade of Boats begins the four day festival with over 300 wooden boats of all types converging on Sullivan’s Cove. These vessels join the already assembled ranks to give boats-on-display totals of:

- 550 wooden boats all afloat on the King’s Pier Marina with owners on board and keen for a chat
- Several square riggers including the beautiful 1874 iron hulled barque *James Craig* and the topsail schooner *Enterprize* from Melbourne
- Large numbers of beautifully built wooden craft on shore for close up inspection
- A big building full of model boats of all types and sizes
- Hundreds of yachts of all types sailing and racing on the beautiful Derwent.



top left: Magazine seller raising funds.
 centre left: Showing the simple structure.
 centre right: Keen kids galore!
 left: Boats racing in the Tasmania Champs

The festival covers the entire waterfront from Princes Wharf to MacQuarie in the north. From one end to the other it's about 20 minutes at a brisk non-stop walk but there is so much going on it can easily take two or three days for a good look! The attendance was expected to be up from the 160,000 last time. With FREE entry a lot attend more than once and I would say many would go all four days.

There was so much to take in, try this list for starters: wooden boatbuilding skills of all types being demonstrated, unusual vessels like the replica Portuguese Caravel and the Russian Viking Ship, displays and demos with traditional Tasmanian boat building timbers like Huon Pine (it was interesting to see short 3 x 2 offcuts of such timbers



left: Turning candy floss into club funds.

below left: Boats crowded into the dock area

bottom left: The superb barque *James Craig*.

selling at \$8 apiece, can't you see those old timber millers spinning in the grave?), a large building full of model boats – many of which performed in Constitution Dock on the final day, a whole wharf building full of rigged dinghies and small boat gear, boat building – FireBugs, Gloucester dories, an Irish Currach and various 'instant' boats, all types of boat rides to be had – steam boats, square riggers, old ferries ...

The Maritime Museums and local art galleries had maritime displays going on and a MyState V.I.K Stage in the park entertained the children with storytelling, Scallywags and of course with so many clinker dinghies around the Swallows and Amazons make an appearance. Roving musicians both on land and afloat entertain with sea shanties and nautical tunes. The Royal Australian Navy Band was rockin' it too! Talks and presentations





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in the theatre venues impart all types of marine advice, knowledge, if you listen hard probably a few secrets and not surprisingly 'How to Build a Wooden Boat'!

The food at the festival is well presented, fresh as fresh and local. I especially enjoy the Huon Salmon Packs and the stall doing large bowls of beautifully ripe and juicy strawberries, blueberries and raspberries with cream and ice cream! And you could lose yourself in The Wooden Boat Tavern for a long time, enjoying the non-stop nautical music and Tasmanian beer, wine and cider tastings.



