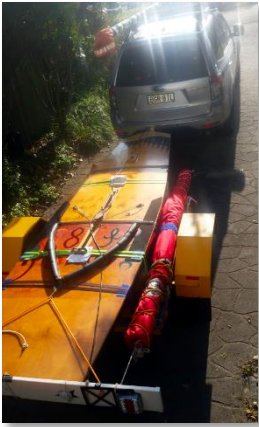


## Inverloch Wooden Dinghy Regatta, 2020



Double tied and ready to go we departed on Wednesday morning the 22<sup>nd</sup> January. The intent was to leave after peak hour to miss the traffic and so at 9.30am we departed, heavy traffic greeted us as we made our way toward the city, onto the harbour tunnel approach to read the big overhead sign 'breakdown, extensive delays', fortunately we took a side exit over the Sydney Harbour Bridge toward the heart of the city towing our trailer, fun. After crossing George Street and making our way to Macquarie Street we re-joined the traffic south after passing the State Library. School holidays usually mean everyone leaves Sydney, however this holiday it seems everyone stayed. Bumper to bumper, stop start all the way to Liverpool on the main M5 route, three hours after leaving home on the northern beaches we got out of Sydney, a record I was not proud to achieve.

The route down the Hume Highway had been determined over the prior month with the shocking fires ravaging the townships on the south east coast leaving the Pacific Highway cut for traffic and our usual route of Cooma to Cann River burning.

As we approached Yass the effects of the drought became far greater, brown crop stubble and dry grasses gave way to barren hills showing the colour of the earth where no vegetation now grew. The dog on the tucker box at Gundagai suffered in the heat with a lack of water in dams and creeks and very little stock on the land. The giant convoy of hay on semi-trailers beat its way north on the opposite side of the highway.



We arrived at Wangaratta late afternoon to a very quiet Painters Island Caravan Park where we set up tent. Dinner was at the R.S.L. on the opposite side of the river, some terrific little bridges giving direct access. Following dinner, we returned the long way around by the river boardwalk with its eerie warm lighting breaking the darkness.



The night was wild, strong winds and light rain squalls with sounds of an occasional train, clack, clack, moving in the distance. As morning broke, we attempted to dry our tent between passing showers, topsoil had taken to the air and was deposited as a thick muddy silt, reminding us of what the farmers had lost.



Thursday and a quick side trip to Beechworth, she who must be obeyed. We arrived with overcast sky and sought out the bakery for breakfast. In order to work off some of the food a walk around town was carried out and some money put back into the local economy before returning back to the car in the now soaking rain we had in tow. Another fascinating but grim location was also visited, the former Beechworth Asylum where a company now runs ghost tours and other activities.



The afternoon was a short drive to Diamond Creek, an outer suburb of Melbourne, where Greg and Vicky Barwick our hosts for the night greeted us, providing a terrific meal and a nice cuppa tea.

Friday we arrived at Inverloch. Greg led out two car convoy into Inverloch having skirted the city traffic, making good time. On arrival we headed straight to the South Gippsland Yacht Club where local Trilby Paraise dropped off the key for us to unload our boats in the compound and raise the masts. Not long following Chris Cleary arrived to raise the mast on his Sailfish.

At The Hub the usual team efforts were underway with all the usual suspects fronting up to get the work done on the weekends public display. We offered our cheery smiles and anything else of value, which I admit was not much. The traditional 16ft skiff was in the last throws of being rigged and along side was 'Errol Flynn's skiff', the shell of a 12ft skiff in the midst of a sympathetic restoration. Meanwhile a group had gathered in anticipation of the overdue more modern 16ft skiff which arrived shortly before we headed off giving us time to help it off the trailer and into the hall. A Sabot, part of the local scout display, looked somewhat dwarfed by the craft around it but made up for it with the number of fuzzy soft toys adorning its topsides.



"Little Bill, the 2<sup>nd</sup>", an ex-Illawarra Yacht Club 16ft skiff, c.1938.



Errol Flynn's 12ft Skiff

The 'Invy' or Inverloch Hotel was venue for dinner. We had turned up a bit late to get indoor seating, however the seats outside were plenty for our needs and our group, which had by now grown considerably, satisfied themselves with what was on offer while fending off glances of the seaguls. Following the feast a small group of us walked off dinner and took in a view of the inlet showing a major change from the prior year with no sand island to navigate.

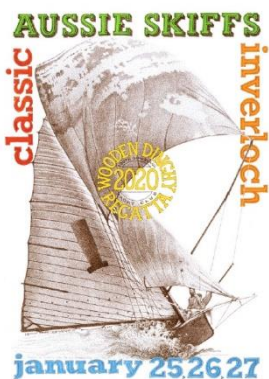


Saturday morning started with a cup of tea at our A'Beckett Motel lodgings, flicking off some photos to the child prodigies who were absent this time around although wishing they were with us.

Sailfish sailing for the day consisted of a race of a triangle, windward return, then two more triangles. The Sailfish again had enough starters to form our own start division with twelve seen over the weekends event and Hartas Productions included APSU's mast art in the first day video which was wonderful and worth the humid three day creation, a ladybird had earlier landed on the boat's deck to be near it's friends, the painted ladybirds.



The evening meal was a B.B.Q. at the host South Gippsland Yacht Club. It was run in a most efficient way with a great team preparing meals well before the hounds were released. Desert was run in a similar fashion dispatching with the masses in a mater of moments. This was a departure for the Sailfish bunch who traditionally ate a meal at the local Indian restaurant, but following a less than appreciative host last year decided to support the club instead.



Sunday came around quickly, a nice sunny day with equally nice breeze, what more could we have asked for. The quad bike crew performed an invaluable service carting each competing boat from the compound yard of the sailing club down to the beach which had sufficient sand despite the tide being near its maximum height. A group briefing was held and mention was made of the rescue boat tally, Sailfish one, rest of the fleet zero, a large cheer from our mob clearly showed we appreciated the assistance and of yet again winning something, anything really. The race was sailed with tight racing across the fleet and challenging tide at the marks.

2020 Event Poster by Marion Chapman





Sunday night was the presentation dinner at the Inverloch Bowling Club, nice and handy being opposite the South Gippsland Yacht Club. We were fed lots of nibbles prior the main meal and desert, and entertained by Oliver Hartas who gave some insight into the making of his videos with examples shown of various classes including the 18ft skiffs and Cherubs. Sponsors were thanked for their valuable funding of the event and the local scout group acknowledged for their efforts in carving out balsa boats on display at each of the tables, being voted on by those attending the meal.

*Sailfish gathering at the compound*

Monday was another fine day with nice breeze. Everyone was a bit worn by now but the sailing format allows for this occurrence being a search for buried pirate treasure. At briefing it was mentioned a lap would be sailed then coming past Point Smythe the second time, treasure could be found. Paddling and pushing were legal, however outboard motors banned. Again, the rescue boat tally was read out, Sailfish two, rest of the fleet one, hurray, something won again. The gun went and most jumped aboard sailing against the current while a few rouge sailors opted to walk or run their boats along the beach toward the top mark jumping aboard further up the course. The top mark proved a challenge with light wind, some who shall remain nameless even hit the top buoy 'five times' in attempting to round it, while others, with paddles, smoothly transitioned to the next leg of the course with muttering heard back in the distance. But all was not lost for the leaders were shown the shortened course flag at the furthest point from the treasure allowing those toward the middle and rear additional time to dig for the treasure. The kids sought high and low for their bounty and clearly showing better prowess at this kind of activity found their treasure first. Meanwhile the adults all fumbled around with a hole here, another there, random searching, some even took to using driftwood as a divining rod to seek the hidden loot, with little success. Meanwhile the organiser who buried the treasure could not recall where it was for the stick marking near the spot had been moved. A while later a circle was drawn out and it was on for short and tall, before long the area in the circle containing the treasure was dug and turned over many times looking like a lumpy meat pie. Finally I came up with the treasure, yes me, a fine bottle of limited edition Captain Morgan spiced rum, I knew all that training years ago would come in handy for something. Many thanks to those who loosened up the sand first and the rescue boat who let me know it hadn't been found despite being last to the beach.



*Spoils*

On sailing back to the rigging beach I was met by Bonnie Parise, keen for a sail on the Sailfish, with a perfect breeze we set off, Bonnie holding the mainsheet. On APSU the Sailfish there are no hiking straps for the crew so it is a challenge just to stay aboard. A quick spurt across the channel and a wave synchronising with a gust, just as we all enjoy, the craft shot off like a rocket surfing across the face of the wave with spray shooting across the deck. Bonnie was a bit shocked at first but very quickly a smile appeared as the fun of what took place sunk in, yeehaa. On returning to the beach I rounded the boat up and heeled to windward as I swung overboard, meanwhile Bonnie, not having any hiking strap, did a perfect dismount into the water with backflip, yeehaa again. Bonnie's father Jonathon was next in line for a go, I handed the tiller, gave some instructions as two grown adults aboard requires planning and we headed off. Despite our speed being vastly reduced, Jonathon enjoyed the experience being so near the water, we tacked, I kept low and half way across the deck, but Jonathon was already around in place, easier than expected, always good, back to shore and a rest for APSU.

A club race was held in the afternoon, however I was worn out and there was a lot of double tying to be done. Goodby's were made and some headed home while others stayed the night. Chris Cleary and I took the later option and met at the Invy for a pub dinner, this time indoors.

After a good sleep Chris departed at the crack of dawn Tuesday to drive home that day, meanwhile we had a leisurly start departing at 9.30am. A stop was made at the Inverloch Surf Club for a walk to the Amazon 1863 ship wreck on the beach. Locals are working hard to stop vandals taking souvenirs from the shipwreck and keeping the remnants intact for others to appreciate.

*You know you are in Australia when...*



More: <http://inverlochhistory.com/the-amazon-shipwreck/>  
& <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/shipwrecks/23/download-report>

On our way out we followed the coast road via Cape Patterson a scenic route worth the drive.

The traffic was light on the drive back toward Melbourne, last year we went the day earlier and got caught with the long weekend traffic.

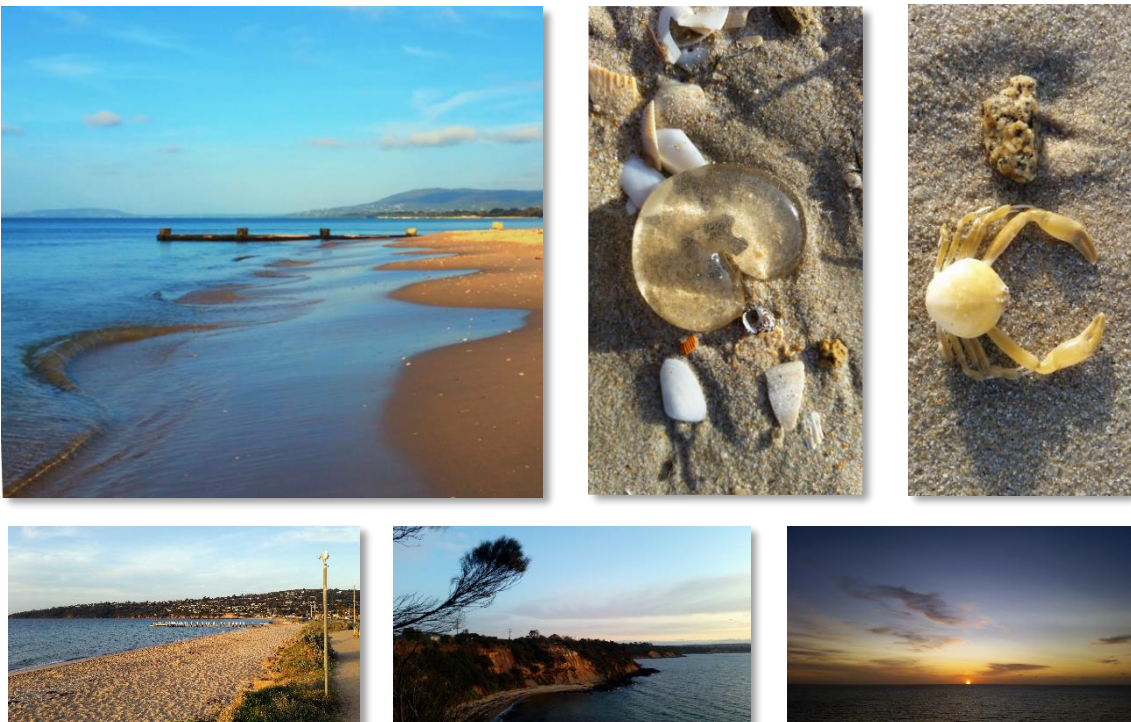




The Royal Botanic Garden at Cranbourne was reached by lunch and we stopped at the Café for some light food and a cool icy drink. The day was getting hot so hats and sunscreen were a must for a walk around the gardens which is free entry. At this time of year many of the natives are in bloom.



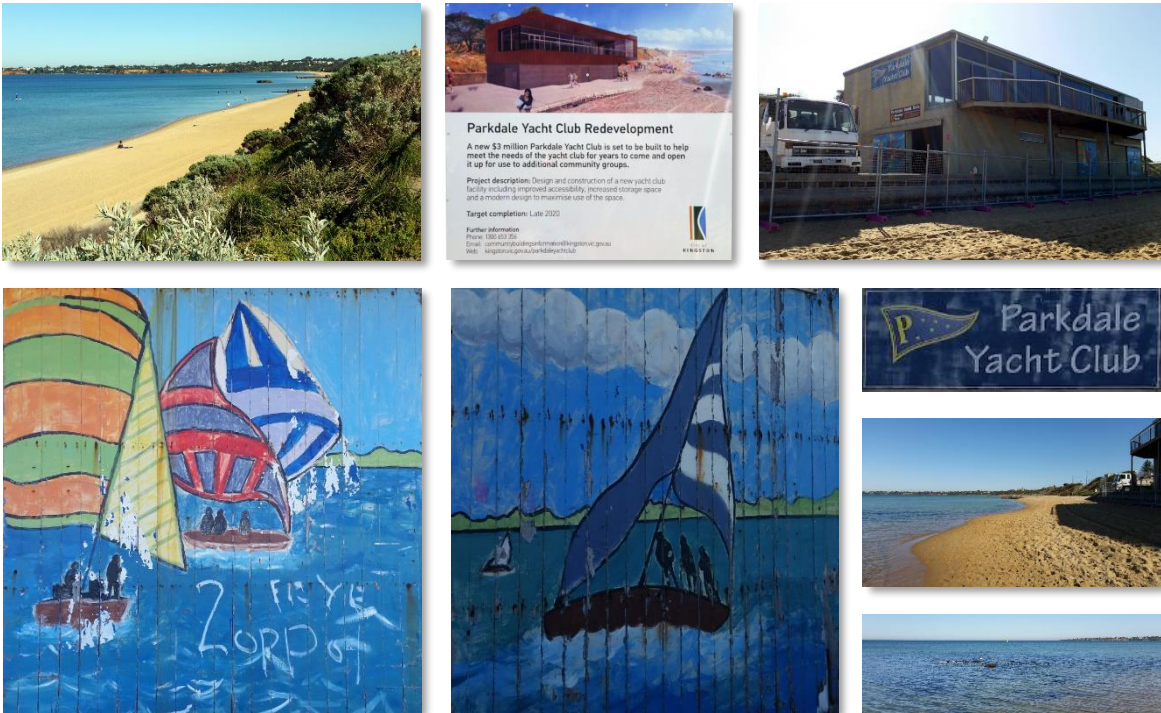
Our stop for the next two nights was camp at the Frankston South BIG4 allowing a visit to various cousins, aunt and uncle, including a very nice B.B.Q., always appreciated. On our first evening we drove to Hector's Seafoods at Rye for their old style fish and chips, consumed on the beach in front of the yacht club, watching the waves surge up the shore. A coastal drive back via McCrae, Safety Beach, and Mount Martha, capped off the evening.





On Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> Janita watched as a small bird attempted to eat the fish painted on the deck of APSU without success. The temperature was on the rise as we headed up the Nepean Highway and Beach Road to Parkdale. Lots of road works were under way around the yacht club with a \$3 million redevelopment underway. In front of the club I chatted with a chap who had been married at the hut up the road, Mentone Hotel, and held his reception at the yacht club, he seemed pleased to see renovations taking place. Parkdale was a key club in the early years of the development of the Sailfish, by 1961 50 boats were in the club of which 10 were Sailfish.

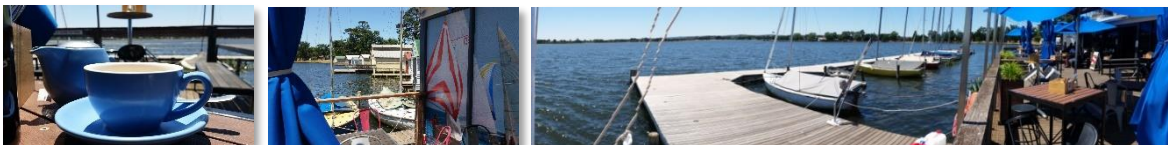
More:



<http://parkdalesailing.org.au/home2/history>

Crossing the Westgate bridge we headed on the Western Freeway out to Ballarat arriving for a 12.30pm check-in to the BIG4 Windmill Caravan Park. This is the same park we stayed at during the 1979-80 Sailfish National Titles except back then it was in the middle of nowhere with paddocks, cows, and a small pond on which morning mists would form, entertainment being a trampoline. Today it has all the mod-cons, indoor swimming pool with a large screen for catching up on sports, high tech kids playground, etc. and is in the middle of a large brand new subdivision of Lucas with its many display homes and modern shopping centre.

Lunch was at the Ballarat Yacht Club restaurant. We sat on the deck under the shade of an umbrella with a warm breeze blowing in from the north-west.



A walk around the Botanic Garden on the opposite side of Lake Wendouree followed.



With the temperature soaring it was a good time for a cool drink at Piper's on the Lake.



Returning back toward the yacht club we watched the weed cutting machines at work. By this time a boat was being rigged up in the yard, a Sharpie, and better still it was former Sailfish National Champion, Peter Coburn. Peter suggested I get out with them on the Sailfish, however it was very warm and late in the afternoon, the decision proved correct the wind dropping to nothing approaching sunset.



Friday we hit the road at 8.30am heading out to Lake Learmonth. On arrival we had to look hard to see the water a long way from shore, nothing remotely like conditions of the 1976-77 or 1978-79 Sailfish National Titles, no doubt long forgotten by the locals.



1978-79 National Titles, Lake Learmonth and the same location in 2020.





Leaving Learmonth we headed north up the Midland Highway arriving at Saffy's, Castlemaine for tea with another cousin who lives at nearby Fryerstown. The heat was building and we hitched a lift with my cousin back to the car and trailer parked at the opposite end of town, most appreciated. It was then a short trip out to Cairn Curran and the Sailing Club to see the reservoir. Even though we had been there just two months earlier it was noticeable how much the water level had dropped. The scorching sun meant sailing would not be an option despite a nice 12kn wind.



*Cairn Curran Reservoir and Sailing Club*

From Cairn Curran we drove back to the Maldon Hotel for lunch and to sit in the cool air conditioned room, relief. Much chilled water was drunk and food consumed before we took a walk around town and then headed further north.



*Maldon main street.*

The temperature continued to climb into the low 40°C range by the time we drove through Bendigo. A short detour and we arrived at the Bendigo Yacht Club and receding shoreline of Lake Eppalock, the drought having a big impact. A lone fisherman was down by the shore but nobody else dared the heat, again not appealing conditions to go for a sail.



*Lake Eppalock*

From Bendigo we drove via Violet Town back onto the Hume Highway for the late afternoon run up to Wangaratta. We opted out of camping and took a cabin with air conditioning at Painters Island Caravan Park and were relieved to have done so.



Saturday, we drove north on the Hume Highway diverting off at the Olympic Highway. As a couple of months earlier the smoke from bushfires was heavy along this section of the road.

Lunch was at the Junee Licorice & Chocolate Factory, again a respite from the heat which was already back into the 40's. Daughters Emma and Susan placed licorice orders by text message for delivery by their loving parents, fond memories of their early visit in our Mini Moke for the Wagga Wagga, Moke Muster, 2011, and their vertical bowling win.

*Vertical bowling, Junee Licorice & Chocolate Factory*



It was possible to drive back to Sydney in the evening, however there was no requirement to be back and the kids probably liked having the house to themselves so overnight was spent at the Aalana Motel, Cowra, again with air conditioning to help sleep. A late afternoon stop was also made to the Cowra Japanese Gardens, it was an hour before closing we decided the \$30 entry was way too steep, especially as we had been through the gardens on prior trips so we turned around and headed back to town.



The following morning, we filled the tank and made the drive back to Sydney. At Bathurst the 12-hour on Mount Panorama was part way through and as expected the police were on mass along the road. Brother David and nephew Michael were in the crowd enjoying the spectacle but by now we wanted to get home.

A quick refreshment at Lithgow and check that the Bells Line of Road was open and we took to crossing the Blue Mountains. Bells Line of Road was open but with a 60kph speed limit. It was very different to see the blackened bush and views into the distance showing things normally hidden. Lots of dirt tracks winding through to remote properties, many houses surviving despite the total devastation around them, a real nod to the firefighting efforts.



The Zig Zag railway had lost a number of buildings but was largely untouched, however the bush nearby was scorched more than we saw anywhere else along the route, street signs melted off the poles.

We reached home in time to unpack before lunch and reflect back on another wonderful Inverloch trip, yet tinged with sadness due to the drought and recent fires.