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Feast of classic sights in Tasmania

Words by Steve Cranch
Photos by Simon Smith

What a treat to arrive by sea, in a small open boat under sail surrounded by hundreds of vessels of all shapes and sizes, rowboats to brigantines, everyone charging up the mighty Derwent river to the bi-annual mecca for wooden boat enthusiasts – The Australian Wooden Boat Festival.

Arrival at Hobart's Constitution dock was mind blowing with the huge collection of immaculately presented wooden boats on

and off the water. Considering it's held on an island, the numbers are amazing – 540 boats on display and 220,000 people attending over four days. Despite these numbers, the event somehow manages to retain a slightly relaxed feel and doubles as a great social gathering where wooden boat enthusiasts swap tips and catch up with old friends.

Steve and Megan Cranch, Baden Pascoe and Mike Mahoney attended as part of the St Ayles Skiffs group. They put on a demonstration

sprint race and managed to give over 120 people a small taste of skiff rowing in a few hours. Mike shipped his skiff, *Wee Tawera* over for the event.

There were pavilions of small boats, models and gear plus boats of all sorts covering every square inch of available wharf. Kids from local schools competed building a simple skin on frame boat and then raced each other to find the winner. A group of vintage machinery popped and fizzed away all day, steam boats, row boats, tall ships, it's all

there big and small.

Of course a visit to the AWBF should also include some time spent exploring the wonderful island that is Tasmania, its history, wild scenery and exquisite local produce can easily consume another week or two.



Open boat cruise scores a big hit

By Steve Cranch

Here we were, three CYA members, Megan and Steve Cranch and Mike Mahoney (Baden Pascoe joined a bit later), standing nervously next to our rigged-up St Ayles skiff on a spectacular white sandy beach one hour's drive south of Hobart. We had arrived into Hobart the night before, unpacked the skiff from its container and scrounged together all the bits and pieces required for five days camping in a small open boat.

With some trepidation we pushed off into a small surf and the unknown. We needn't have worried, as moments later we were all wearing silly grins as we romped along at over 6 knots, barely creating a ripple as we rapidly consumed the miles between us and Brunny Island, not bad for a boat we had never sailed before. Shooting in behind the small walled harbor at Allonah, we were suddenly immersed in the Tawe Nunnugah, a group of fellow adventurers who were all busy drying out after four days of rain.

The Tawe Nunnugah (to travel by canoe in Aboriginal)



STEVE CRANCH PHOTO

is a low-key small boat journey or Raid, as they are known these days, organized by the Franklin Wooden boat Trust in Tasmania.

We had decided to join in as part of our great Tasmania adventure, taking in the Australian wooden boat festival and the St Ayles skiff regatta to be held in Franklin.

For the next five days we sailed, rowed and camped up the gorgeous Tasmanian coast, stopping each night in a small bay where we pitched tents and ate shared meals in a marquee, or by the fireside, swapped tales and made lasting friendships.

It's some of the best cruising I have ever done. The simplicity of life with sail and oar and the ability to hop along the shoreline, or pop into a beach on a whim is something that is lost in bigger boats. We were all so hooked that we are now organizing a similar event here for next year.

Riverhead Rewards Stout of Heart



ALAN HOUGHTON PHOTO

When it comes to weather forecasts, the one for Sunday May 24th could not have been worse and, one by one, the messages arrived – “Sorry crew mutiny, we will be traveling by car, see you there”. The day dawned almost as bad as forecast, but it appeared things could improve so seven CYA launches made the early morning trip up the creek and were rewarded with a great trip, not sunny, a little cold but no rain.

Crew spirits were lifted on arrival at the hotel jetty when 40+ members, who had traveled by road, greeted us. The brunch put on by the hotel was excellent and most forgot the early hour to enjoy something a little stronger than coffee with their meal.

As always a great day's boating enjoyed by everyone.

by Alan Houghton

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