

NISNEWS



Stephen and son Kurt alongside houseboat – Parsley Beach, NSW.

by ROBERT AYLIFFE

FIRST 'MET' STEPHEN ZONNEVELD IN 2006. IT was a phone meeting, and it was good phone. His wife Kristianne, was overseas, and it seemed to Stephen a good time to buy himself a project.

A surprise, as he put it, for when she came home. Brave, I thought.

'The project' was an NIS26 that had been started by the excellent Paul Chynoweth, in 1991 In his shed at Mt Compass in South Australia.

Life does intervene, and it had with Paul. Money flowed around, hands were shaken, and pretty soon I was towing an upside down NIS26 across to



Kelpie leaves Mt Compass, South Australia in 2006.

Kurrajong in NSW, along with assorted barrels of lead tyre weights, new masts, new sails and all the dust that collects in the cuff of a dream.

I arrived to a greeting from the ancient Fred; Kristainne is into horses, and Fred had been in her life for a big part of it. I think Fred was 30 years old, and moving slowly.

Fred eventually excused himself from the barn verandah, and we shuffled the hull into place.

Stephen later stunned me with his culinary expertise, and now rested and refreshed I headed back to Adelaide.

Four thousand phone calls, emails, packages at the post office, visits with Angus and the intervening of years, I got the call for the launching.



Part built Kelpie under her verandah, Kurrajong (later 2006).

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Launching of *Kelpie*, with the aid of Pirates, Brooklyn Ramp.

Of the new NIS26 *Kelpie*.

The actual launching of *Kelpie* was at the Brooklyn ramp, but the launching party was at Parsley Beach, only accessible by boat.

Blowing like stink, too. Yes said Stephen. He would just motor, given the conditions.

Since he and his retinue were all dressed as pirates, I should have known better.

I advised my trusting wife to go with Stephen. He's going to motor round. Hard for her to hear, several crabs, swordfish and miscellaneous marine debris filled the air, blowing past us at speed.

Meantime NIS26 Mk2 builder, Laurie Edmonds and I elected to travel with Angus Houstone, in his previously electric, but now, fossil fuel, one lugger putt boat, 'Current Thinking'. Support, in case Stephen needed a hand.

We had scarcely got out of the Brooklyn ramp area when excitement ensued on *Kelpie*.

The boat seemed to zig this way then that, and I realised sails were being put up after all. The boat heeled, somewhat, as the wind caught things, and I knew my time was about to become unhappy. Leaning lots, and swinging booms, and general frantic bustle on a boat make my bride cross. I learnt that a long time ago.

Soon the mayhem stilled, order prevailed and *Kelpie* took off like banshee for the aforementioned herbacious Beach.

Until a mile short of her destination.

Something was very wrong.

Something seemed to have broken.

What broke, as I was to hear, in a threatening phone call from my bride, was the rudder, of my

construction. She was embarrassed and wanted to go anywhere. Especially, anywhere I was not.

In that moment, so did I.

Cast of thousands waiting at herbaceous beach!

Angus suggests that we might take *Kelpie* in tow. Great idea, but a loud burp from the ancient and malevolent fossil burner, and the dear thing dies. Bobbing on the curling seas. Cascading calamities.

Not only can't we take *Kelpie* in tow, we also need rescue ourselves.



Kelpie tied alongside rescuing houseboat.

Heads down and bottoms skyward in the hot and horrid red bowels. Try to stay calm. Tears well, when I realise that not only can't we take *Kelpie* in tow, thus scrabbling a tiny glory, but a big aluminium pontoon house boat has to do the job.

Just at the point where I was contemplating the blunt knife at my disposal, and looking at my wrists, we managed to get a cough and a splutter.

Twenty similar starts were required before we limped into Parsely beach.

The walk across the sand to the lowering crowd of pirates was not triumphal.

Apology doesn't get close to describing my contrition.

The rudder box looked like a fruit crate that had argued with a fork lift.

I gathered its kindling remains. I took them back to Adelaide and realised that my 'improving' what had worked so well on *Charlie Fisher* led directly to this memorable and so highly public occasion.

It was, entirely, my fault.

About which I wish to say no more.

It says a lot of Stephen, and his family, that they still speak to me and had *Kelpie* on show at the



Kelpie sailing on Pittwater, just off Lion Island.

Newport Wooden Boat Festival, extolling, as I heard from visitors, the joy of his boat, and, especially the excellent rudder system!

My inbox over the past months has been full of stories from Stephen, of days on Sydney Harbour, and trailing and sailing and overnighing at myriad locations.

All owner builders bring something new to the constraints of an original design. Stephen is no exception.

Thanks for the faith Stephen, thanks for the patience and contribution and congratulations on your achievement!

Bon voyage, *Kelpie*.

Next week, time and weather permitting, I will have *Charlie Fisher* retro fitted with her new carbon masts and booms, some other tidying up all of which takes up far more time in the roiling heat than we ever expect.



John Hyam's *Clancy*.

Deadline next Wednesday evening, when Chris Dearden and I drive the 800kms to the inaugural (and booked out weeks ago) Melbourne Wooden Boat Festival.

Pretty exciting. We, along with John Catford, owner of NIS29, *Oyster Catcher*, and John Hyam, owner of NIS18 ketch *Clancy* will be there, on the water at Docklands supporting Phillippe Patacca's new Preston based business, 'Build Wooden Boats'. Phillippe is already selling the range

of Boatcraft pacific products, and will also be providing rental owner boat builder workshop space for his clients.

Phillippe is focusing especially on the NIS range, since he is building an 18 (turbo rig) ketch from one of our kits for himself. He will also be handling our Iain Oughtred kits, and Derek Kelsall catamaran kits when they come onstream. We thank John Hyam for trailing his NIS18 from Canberra for this event and I believe the Geelong event two weeks later, and similarly John Catford trailing his 29 from Lakes Entrance.

Peter Ironmonger (NIS18 kit) has been enormously helpful getting banners and poster material together.



John Catford's *Oyster Catcher* NIS29 at Lakes Entrance.



Sabattical – NIS26 dusted with snow. Note aluminium trailer. (above)

Lyall working on his rudder foil. (left)

Lyall working on his NIS18, as yet unnamed. (below left)



I will be leaving *Charlie Fisher* in Melbourne at Phillippe's shop, to put her in the subsequent Geelong Wooden Boat Festival.

Lyall Tweedale is making good progress on his NIS18 ketch, and is looking forward to joining Phil Brown's recently launched NIS18 ketch *PlayStation 2* on the water. Note the tight working space that Lyall is using. Lyall and Ian Mortleman (NIS26 *Presto*) are joining us at Melbourne.

Kelly Avant has just about finished his NIS26 *Sabattical*, in Minnesota, USA. Snowing there, right now, as you can see.

See you all at the Melbourne Wooden Boat Festival and/or the Geelong Wooden Boat Festival March 6 and 7. ■



coming events :

This issue won't get out before the Melbourne Wooden Boat Festival, BUT might, just might, be in your hands in time for the Geelong Wooden Boat Festival, March 6 & 7.

We'd love to see you there!

You will also find Phillippe, myself and a large display, including Iain Oughtred boats and NIS23 *Charlie Fisher*, NIS18, *Clancy* and maybe NIS29 *Oyster Catcher*. And your chances of a sail around the bay in any one of these would have to be pretty high.

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