



## Inverloch Classic Wooden Dinghy Regatta 2023

### Judging Panel Report

The 2023 Inverloch Classic Wooden Dinghy Regatta continued its success into its ninth year with 34 boats registered as participants, many of those for the first time. The winds were moderate, there was plenty of sunshine and the tide times made the launching and sailing of boats as convenient as possible in the waters of Anderson's Inlet.

The judging for the best presented boats in the various categories occurred on the Sunday morning of the regatta. This year's judging panel members were:-

Mark Rimington  
Jeff Cole  
Greg Barwick  
Becky Fairlie  
Rowan Fairlie  
Leigh McNolty

One of the primary aims of the regatta is to preserve and promote the classes of Australian racing dinghies that were designed in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. This era produced many racing dinghy designs that were suited to Australian conditions and the ethos of speed and thrills, where a capsize was part of the fun. They were also boats that could be built in the home garage with a few sheets of plywood.

Our first award aims to recognize this history. The Best Presented Racing Dinghy of an Australian Design award goes to Mark Rimington's St Kilda 8 dinghy "Maggie". This class originated in the 1920s and was sailed at the St Kilda Skiff Club and on Albert Park Lake. In the 1950s the boxy, planked design was updated by Rob Legge of Mouldcraft boats into a round bilged hot-moulded racing boat. Mark brought his restored Mouldcraft boat to the 2022 regatta. Over the past year a completely new boat has been created by master boat builder, Ray Eade using the strip plank method to accurately replicate the design, taking the lines off the old boat. Mark, the skilled professional sailmaker, put together a replica of the rig used on the 1950s boats which had a curved gaff for the gunter cat-rigged sail. The narrow panels on the sail make it highly authentic.



At only 8 feet long and with 76 square feet of sail, a St Kilda 8 is a bit of a handful to sail but Mark's boat looked superb on the inlet. The time, effort and resources that have gone into this boat have

been rewarded with recognition by our wooden dinghy community for keeping alive a distinctive class of dinghy that is part of Victoria's sailing history.

There were other boats in this category which made a significant impression on the judges. Andrew Chapman's Gwen 12 "Aquarius" was in excellent condition, looked great and sailed fast. Graeme Cox has brought his Aquanaut "AC/DC" to every regatta since 2016 and sailed with members of his family as crew. Paul Murphy sailed his Rainbow at the regatta again this year as the sole representative of this once numerous class. Pete Keily purchased a Fireball just to have an interesting and fast boat to sail in the regatta.

The second award the panel considers is for the Best Presented Racing Dinghy of a non-Australian design. Last year the award was won by Craig Ginnivan's meticulously restored Finn class dinghy "Mickey Finn", and Craig was at the regatta again this year with the boat looking as perfect as ever.



This year's winner is a first time entrant to the regatta, being a recently completed restoration. David Baskett bought Mirror 2991 "Lille Fugle" (Norwegian for Little Bird) as a fairly derelict boat that had been left in a shed for over twenty years. His restoration involved replacing the gunwales, centreboard case and thwart as well as taking the bottom back to bare wood and giving it a waterproofing and strengthening seal with epoxy and glass. New sails and fittings completed the picture to bring one of the earliest Mirrors in Australia back to life as a competitive racer in the class. It is great to see a class of boat in which many of us learnt to sail, still going strong with interest in full restorations.

The Sailfish Class has become the centrepiece of our regatta with 14 out of the 34 entries this year being of that class. In recognition of their support for the regatta we have a Best Presented Sailfish award, giving the judges a difficult choice to make with so many excellent boats to look at.

To give a couple of examples, Malcolm Seller's Sailfish "Brumby" has never been restored since it was built in the 1970's, because it has always been kept in perfect condition. Chris Cleary's "Janus" was built for Chris when he was 15 and he won a number of Sailfish titles in the boat back in the 1970s. He still owns and sails it today.

However the winner of our Best Presented Sailfish award is Ian Milton's "Goofy Footed" because it stood out for its skilled and original restoration. Ian was alerted by a friend to the boat being left out on the hard rubbish. The photo below shows the condition it was in. The only original parts of the deck remaining are two inlay work footprints on the foredeck. The highly distinctive inlay work on the new aft deck is a demonstration of the quirky character of the Sailfish group and their skills and dedication in keeping the boats going.

"Goofy Footed" was sailed by Warren Jones in the regatta races and performed very successfully.



The Moth class has a special place in the history of Inverloch as it was here that Len Morris first sailed his original design, the 11 foot scow "Olive" and went on to develop the class into an internationally popular development class.

There were only two Moths entered in the regatta this year, Harry Cox's "Skeeta" and our outstanding winner of the Best Presented Moth award, "Empire" sailed by Matt Keily.

"Empire" is one of the few skiff (pointy-bowed) Moths built in Australia. Nearly all Australian Moths are of the scow type because they have greater stability in stronger winds. Skiff Moths are popular in the light winds and lake sailing of Europe.

Matt purchased the boat as a restoration project and invested a huge amount of time and effort in rebuilding the structure and perfecting the finish and appearance of the boat. The varnish work on the decks is of furniture quality. Matt also managed to obtain a sail in keeping with the design.

The narrow waterlines and the "wings" for sitting out are responsible for both the speed and the instability of the skiff Moth. Matt, who is among the top Impulse sailors in Australia,



was able to get the most out of the boat with a little "time in the boat" over the regatta weekend. It was easily the most difficult boat to sail of all the boats entered in the regatta.

It would be great to see more Moths in future regattas, leading up to the Centenary of the class in 2028.

Our final category is the Best Presented non-racing Sailboat. This year all three entries in this category were designs by Iain Oughtred. Oughtred designs are interpretations of traditional European fishing and working boats, modified to be suitable for building from modern materials such as plywood.

SGYC's Commodore, Simon Wilson, entered and sailed his double ended Skerrie skiff "Sjospray" that is surprisingly fast for a simply rigged boat that is as much a rowing boat as a sailboat. Tony Landy brought his Artic Tern, one of Oughtred's large open boats derived from Scandinavian and Scottish traditions. Ex Commodore Wayne Smith took command of the boat for the regatta weekend.

This year's winner was prolific boatbuilder Tony Landy's other entry, the 12 foot Shearwater design he named appropriately "Shearwater". Tony built the boat a few years ago and has now tweaked the rig and sails to make "Shearwater" an efficient and easily managed sailboat. Tony crewed on the boat in the regatta races with club member Andrew Biram at the helm. With its tan sails the boat looked a picture perfect example of a wooden sailing boat from a past era.



From the above award winners, the panel has to choose the winner of the Best Overall Presented boat of the regatta. We chose Mark Rimington's "Maggie" for this award as the boat and the story of its creation represent everything the regatta tries to encourage. It helps to preserve a class of boat that was once popular and unique to our region, it maintains the skills of our traditional boatbuilders and sailmakers and by sailing at the regatta, it brings this history to a wider audience.

The Inverloch Classic Wooden Dinghy Regatta is continuing to act as a showcase for the types of boats and the styles of sailing that existed in our fairly recent history. Without the Inverloch regatta,

and other similar events at Cairn Curran and interstate we would be losing the boats, the skills and the history of these fascinating boats.

The regatta has the most friendly and welcoming atmosphere for all who participate and the club is a great venue for viewing all the fine woodwork in the yard and watching all the sailing action on the water.



*Leigh McNolty, February 2023*