

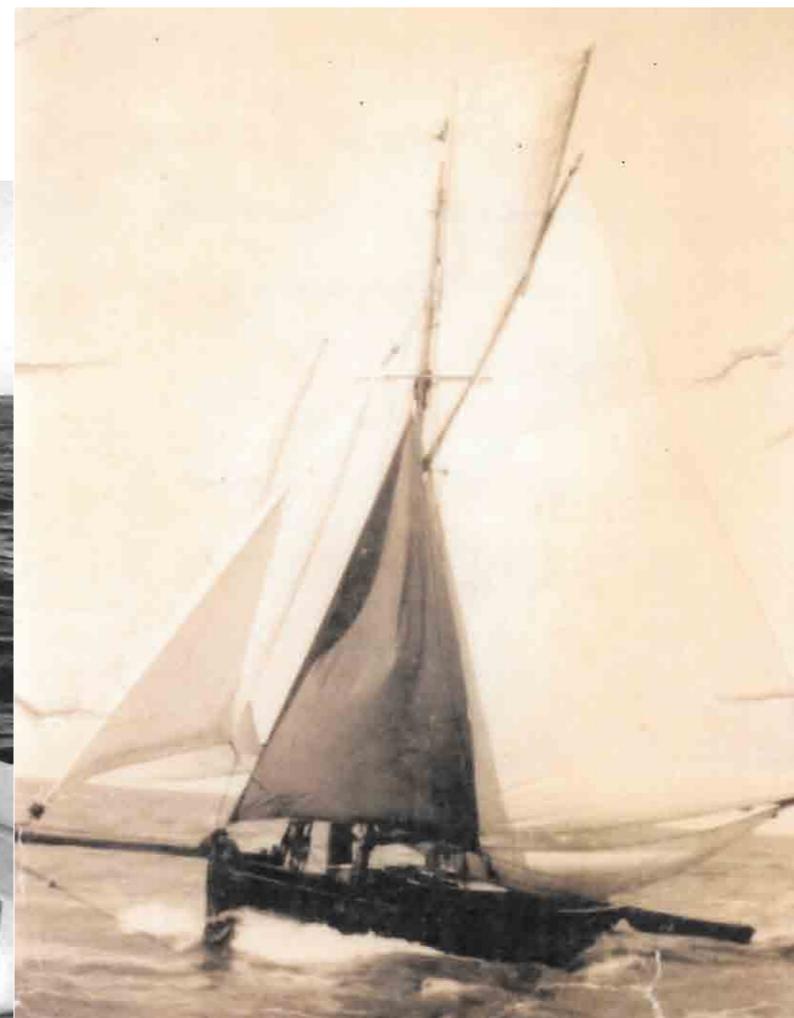


Scruffie World News

BY DEREK ELLARD



The very first Scruffie 16 in 1990.



The original Secret in the mid 30's.



Secret 20 No. 1 on Moreton Bay, 70 years on.

Life in our miniscule part of the universe is subject to linear time and punctuated by an infinite number of significant events, some clearly signposted, others as a result of the toss of a coin. Particle physics or fascinating multiverse theories aside, it's what we live with.

Some of our life chapters start with an explosive fanfare of fate, some creep up on us in the shadows. It is how we react that is important, we can wallow in a self-indulgent funk or we can stride forward with confidence.

Scruffie Marine started after a perfect storm of multi-adversity but our 25th Anniversary this month is founded on unwavering persistence, hard work and unshakable confidence – we chose to stride. Our first boat slipped off a makeshift trailer into the water on Easter Saturday 1990 and now, 327 boats later, we're still here.



Twenty five years on, the new Secret 33 taking shape.

The name Scruffie was chosen by a *Courier Mail* journalist who asked “well what kind of boat is it, then?”

“It’s a simple no frills knockabout family sailing boat you can build from a kit,” I replied, then adding something like “a boat that doesn’t stand on ceremony.”

“A bit scruffy, then?”

“Well yes.”

“Okay, a scruffy boat then” he said as he scribbled away on a dog-eared notebook. Later I spelt it with an ‘ie’ to make, well, less scruffy ... We’ve often thought of changing it – the joke quickly wore thin but re-branding is a costly exercise and you’d have to re-brand the designer too – something he wouldn’t take kindly to. Besides, the customers just won’t have it.

Beginnings

The simple essence of the original Scruffie 16 lives on in every single kit boat we produce. The tried and tested build systems initiated by many and lauded by the boating media have been fine-tuned and fettled to make the boats easier and quicker to build. With the Secret 20 we designed a composite hull with double chines, strip-planked and faired off to a nicely rounded bilge. Forwards a 4mm ply section is bent around the bottom and glassed over, continuing the rounded sections to the boat, the whole hull then glassed. “I wish I had thought of it,” said Dick Phillips of the UK magazine *Watercraft* in 2009.

The boats have stood the test of time and this month we’ll ship out Shimmy No 84 (AUS) – A lightweight version, Queensland Red Cedar trimmed with tanbark sails and a Torqeedo electric outboard.



Michael Liles taking it green in the Tawe Nunnegah Raid, Tasmania 2013.



Max's Shimmy on the Norfolk Broads.

We can never stand still, however, and many innovations have been tried and accepted or rejected. In '98 we were the first to use custom 3D routed rigid foam hull sections as a part of a catamaran kit. The 20-footer weighed just 360kg all up and went very well indeed. But we only ever sold one. It was an expensive project but the experience was priceless. This system has since been adopted by other kit catamaran manufacturers.

Some years ago after much hand wringing we ventured into the world of fibreglass production, a move accompanied by much gnashing of teeth, especially as it coincided with the fallout of the Great Wall Street Shuffle – the shuffling of capital from us to them. Undeterred, "Forward!" I cried.

Secret 33 – Sparks Must Fly

And now another significant milestone is being passed – the new Secret 33.

Now when you set up production for fibreglass or composite boats most people build a fake boat, albeit beautifully finished one, in MDF. This is used to build the mould and it's then thrown away or used to decorate bars. In a similar way a strong-back is used as a mould for strip-planked boats. It all seems such a waste to me. Of course hundreds of moulds are taken from existing boats, old and new, and this is our preference. We're building Secret 33 No 1 in foam core glass over what amounts to a Scruffie Marine kit, this one will be a yacht (we're building them with interchangeable keels.) The framework is, of course, our usual set of interlocking bulkheads overlaid with closely spaced stringers. The 15mm foam core sheeting, in 2.4 up to 12m lengths is then bent, kerfed, and cajoled over the framework, filled, faired and glassed all over.

The catalyst for all this furious foaming is an order for two electric passenger ferries for Perth. An honour gratefully accepted. We've been serious about electric boats for a decade or more and a good many of our sailing boats carry electric outboards – Torqeedos or Protruars. Our first all electric passenger launch was the GRP Sienna 19, a 5.9m motor boat also available as a lugsail yawl. The motor we fitted was a Torqeedo Cruise2, powered by a bank of lithium batteries charged by the canopy mounted solar array. Such is the efficiency of the Secret derived hull and efficient power train that she uses half, yes half, the power of similar electric production boats and in several years as a hire boat not once has shore charging been required.

Free power, free of pollution, free of profit-sapping overheads – everyone's a winner. Sienna's big sister will use a pair of new generation Torqeedo Cruise 4.0s and be rudder steered. For day to day ferry services, up the north bank of Perth water and down the south the batteries will need an overnight plug in to top up the solar input, and lithium batteries can be quickly

"I have photographed your beautiful boats for nearly a quarter of a century - it's not work, it's pleasure."

Ray Cash

raycashphotography.com

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"Congratulations Derek and Annette for the great achievement of 25 years building your truly classic boats. Thank you for our long standing partnership, one that I have enjoyed throughout my entire career."

Ben Kelly

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Thanks from Ian and the crew"

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topped up between trips if need be, but this will rarely be necessary. The new Secrets are unashamedly vintage in appearance, an important part of the brief, but thoroughly modern under the skin. They'll fly too!

Thank you project head Kevyn for having the vision and the persistence to carry it through and thank you for choosing us – here's to many more and not just in Perth.

And Now Back to the Archives

The lead photo shows me and two of my sons sailing Scruffie No 1. This was the first of many pictures taken by professional photographers. From early '92, however, most were taken by Scruffie owner Ray Cash, without a doubt one of the country's best – recently chosen to cover the G20 sortie and the swearing in of the new government in Queensland. We've been delighted by his work over the years and many examples have graced these pages. Our website and blog are identified by his stunning photo of Secret and Stornaway on Moreton Bay. Ray can be contacted at raycashphotography.com

The sepia photo shows the original Secret in a bit of a hurry crossing the English Channel. An old friend's father commissioned her in the '30s from Shuttlewoods of Paglesham, a yard famous for traditional working craft, notably smacks and smack yachts like Secret. The difference being mouldering oilskins in the hold, rather than rotting fish. With war clouds looming and a new bride to placate, the old man kept her a secret as long as he could but she found out. Thankfully she then became a family secret – the boat, that is. Still sailing in the UK, her DNA lives on here at Scruffie HQ.

Stornaway – Scruffie Grows Up

The first Stornaway was originally a stretched 16 with a counter-stern. She quickly underwent a whole series of modifications, including widening the hull aft, remodelling the stern, rig and rudder. Stornaways are our second best seller with 77 of them out there.

All of our kit boats are built around a solid timber keel and the frames and bulkheads slot in to the keel and to each other. There aren't many production boats built this way, most of them use centreboards or the devil's own dagger-boards, sliding down through vestigial keels.

Ah dagger-boards! I can tell a tale or two of those evil contrivances, in fact here's one.

As a young student who knew everything about sailing, I once took out a lovely young sweet-natured girl, blessed with cascading ringlets of shimmering bronze. The boat was her dad's, a nice little clinker dinghy with a dagger-board. It was dead calm as we launched so I began to row out up the narrow muddy Leigh creek. Within minutes I had caught an oar on the muddy, fishy bank and splattered her lovely hair with flecks of black estuarine goo. She shrugged it off.



top: Lew Dalglish in his beautifully built Scintilla 24 on the Clarence River.

above: Teamwork – Sienna No. 1 (bottom) left to right Jono, Martin, Derek and Annette.

opposite right: A painted ship on a painted ocean – Ray Cash at his best.

As the wind piped up I set sail on a dead run and a little wayward gust caught the little mainsail unawares and the little boom gaily swung over collecting the little angel on the forehead en route – involuntary tears welled up. Mine, I think.

This was definitely not going to plan.

We sailed on, morosely.

We picnicked on the sunny sandbank, envious eyes cast over to other happier, unblemished, mud-free sailors.



On the way back I touched ground and the rigid non-retractable rudder tore out the bottom transom pintle. I managed a makeshift lash up and we continued, the broken rudder banging on the varnished transom.

The final humiliating end to this day of maritime disasters came as we were tacking back up the creek to the cockle sheds. The devil's dagger-board was down, the water was shallow, the wind was brisk and gusty from the west. We picked up speed on the final leg and the dagger collected a bit of bank that shouldn't have been there. The boat stopped dead in the water but the crew carried on – both thrown forward, her lovely lips making contact with an unyielding mahogany thwart.

Blood trickled.

I was mortified.

I apologised for the seventh time but it was way too late.

Her features set in a grimace that did not bode well for future dates or meeting the parents.

We packed up the gear and trudged silently up the hill. We parted at her gate without a word and I never saw her again.

I have never, ever, built a boat with a dagger-board. Even today most of my smaller boats carry boomless mains.

More stories, articles, and even recipes on the Captain's Blog blog.scruffie.com

Cherchez la femme

I did and at the end of 1994 I found Annette!

In those first few years I struggled on with two boys

to look after and a business to build but then Annette joined in and we became a team. In short order a proper functioning office took shape with a proper filing system and all. Annette and I both have an art school background so between us we have been able to cover just about all of the business design needs in house. So from boat design to boatbuilding, from brochure design to bookkeeping (the long-boarding of office work) from costing to customer care, from component design to ... anyway, we make a good team. .

Export or Die

Starting in the late 90s we began to export the kits. We exhibited at the Southampton Boat Show in 1995 and sold our first three export kits. Classic Boat did a favourable story on us, the first of the three, and after a couple of false starts we appointed Max Campbell as our UK agent. Max built a Secret and a Shimmy and sold numerous boats before the Wall Street Shuffle trampled the UK market.

We exported kits to nine different countries, most to the UK and America and by 2008 half our business was in exports. Then someone moved the goal posts, the sign posts, and even the gate posts. We took a collective deep breath, tightened our belts and panicked.

Back to the Secret, then

We've certainly had our fair share of challenges but no corners have been cut and indeed THE CORNER has been well and truly turned with the new 33s. We're all very excited to be working on a new model. It's lovely to see her evolve from early concepts – the 29 and the 36 – into the current 33, rapidly taking shape in the yard. Her hull follows current racing yacht practice with a needle sharp entry merging into a wide flattish section aft of centre – a big Secret 20 in fact and still trailerable. That's not to say you'd put her in for an afternoon sail, no, you'd keep her on a mooring or caravan up to the Whitsundays for a few weeks.

While all boats are both a challenge and a compromise, the good thing about our production system is that, like the Sienna, many different models can be built from the same hull, power or sail. No 1

will be a sailer and a scale sketch appeared in the last issue of AABB.

While I'd prefer an over-canvassed gaff cutter with an outrageous jackyard topsail, I have drawn this as a yawl with an eye to working the Swan River and the Rottneest run. A lower main mast is essential to clear the bridges and while the gaff is being dipped to clear the lowest, she still has plenty of power with the staysail, jib and mizzen.

While the electric ferries have a draught of under 600mm, the sailing version with their deeper 1-tonne ballasted keels draw a metre – still not bad for a 33-footer. I've been studying a number of comparable boats in the Spirit of Tradition sector and most of them draw 6 or even 8ft with a fin keel – a fixed dagger board – no good for the shallows or overconfident teenage skippers and a bit of a problem with

the trailer unless you had a 30ft drawbar or a handy mobile crane.

Then there's the weight – the boat and trailer must total no more than 3.5 tonnes to suit most newer 4 x 4s and of course a beam of 2.5 is the limit without flashing lights, flags, and nerves of steel. There's an end to slipway fees of course and electric outboard on a sliding track is quickly serviced or even replaced, unlike an inboard diesel.

While I really can't see a big market for a kit version, we've already had enquiries about home fit-out, so I could be well wrong.

We couldn't have done it without ...

... Our suppliers, our service providers, the locals here on Tamborine Mountain, and most of all the customers whether they be schools, commercial operators or you, dear reader.

Here then are some of the people, in no particular order, who continue to make it all possible.

That Oregon Place has supplied us with beautiful close grained Oregon Pine or more correctly, Douglas Fir for 25 years. Every single boat we've built has incorporated Oregon. The best comes from high up in the Cascades and is shipped out from Portland on the Columbia River. Oregon State law allows only sustainable logging and rightly so.

Keith Smith has been supplying us with rich Red Cedar and Silky Oak for over 30 years. He's a builder



Annette in 2001.

too and we've built several houses up here. Keith and I are not good with paperwork, we rely on plain verbal agreement and Annette keeps us in line – it works.

Ben Kelly of Quantum Sails – Ben served his apprenticeship cutting our sails and we've been with him for nearly 20 years now and followed him when he teamed up with Quantum. Ben is a racer and his sails reflect that passion – that's partly why a Secret 20 will out-perform so many other boats, even to windward. Quantum sails and Ben Kelly – the best.

Boatcraft Pacific – a quarter century of good service with good products, courtesy of BoatCraft Pacific. Bruce, the founder, brewed his own epoxy and we've been using it forever. It's superior, full stop. They supply our cloth and these days marine ply plus all sorts of stuff from their extensive range of boatbuilding products. So thanks Ian and the boys.

Col Clifford of Compucraft – I can't remember when I first met Col but it must be nearly 30 years by now and never a bad word between us. To this day I draw up the hull lines by hand, Col scans them in and his electronic wizardry smoothes out the wobbly lines on the screen. We then work up the lines to full scale plans and while I have the final say, we are always in accord, even when I obsess over raising a sheerline 3mm at the bow. That's not to say the design process ends there, the whole front third of the Scintilla 24 was re-modelled after the prototype and I've now completely re-worked the new Secret 33's stern – she's a little wider too, now perilously close to the 2.5 metre maximum width. This, of course, stresses the importance of building and modifying a full-size boat before you commit to a production run – there's surely no substitute.

When Col and I were doing the Shimmy we followed the usual procedure and we each took a set of lines to fine-tune. He rang me up and said "You'd better get down here and look at this." He would say no more. So, fearing the worst I drove down as soon as I could. He held up our two versions to the sunlight, one on top of the other – they were, within a mill or two, identical.

That's the way we do it!

Australian Amateur Boatbuilder – what can I say? Thank you Wendy, thank you Paul and everyone else at the magazine for your unfailing good humour, even when I'm having one of those 'moments'.

Ronstan – we've used Ronstan products almost exclusively from day one and considering the thrashing they often get, year in, year out their gear doesn't give up easily. That's why we stick with them, that and their very efficient service. Sure we also buy from other suppliers, but a good three quarters of our chandlery is from Ronstan.

Lightwave Yachts – build all of our GRP hulls to a consistently high standard and they look after us very well.

Blue Peter – Jono and his crew currently run two Siennas and one Stornaway. They work their boats hard and Jono is without a doubt our most experienced skipper – in his hands a Sienna 19 will take on all comers and probably come out on top. Jono and Martin, between them have bought lots of our boats over the years for schools and outdoor education centres. We are extremely grateful.

Rite Price Distributors – I'm happy to say their prices are right by us. They supply Watty coatings, sanding products and various specialised industrial stuff – definitely recommended.

Oceanic Trailers – Australian built, good service, and nice alloy wheels too.

There really are so many – **Runaway Bay Marine Covers** do all our marine covers and soft fit-outs, a special thanks to Martin for looking after our web hosting, Ben Upton at **Echo Imaging** has been a great help as have all our customers, especially those who have taken the time to provide feedback, drawings, endless encouragement and lots of photos – a big hug from the captain and a big kiss from Annette

I'd also like to thank my staff, Ian and Andy, and my supportive sons Robin, Chris and Andrew, my late parents and ... and ... wait a minute, this sounds like one of those truly embarrassing Oscar acceptance speeches where a tearful actress in a fearful frock thanks everyone from the local newsagent to the third cousin twice removed.

So I'll stop right there.

from the AABB desk ...

It was 1993 when I first began working for Australian Amateur Boatbuilder and I met Derek very soon after, and have enjoyed in particular, the borderline eccentric characters that I've come across, and you Derek, surely, are one of them.

Congratulations to you and Annette on your milestone of 25 years, you've been one of the constants for me working on this mag and often brought into my day a breath of fresh air when composing your columns, with no shortage of 'guidance' from you it has been relatively painless and the tears shed have been from laughter. Thankyou.

Our regular conversations have often diverted away from boats and all things nautical, my doing I would suspect, and along the way we have discovered a mutual liking for Pink Floyd music, so I'll just take this opportunity to say I've nearly forgiven you for 'plane on you crazy diamond' a few issues back.

Perusing over some old columns recently I note that we (you) devoted no less than 500 words to socks, shoes and shoelaces ... who says we don't do cutting edge stuff at AABB huh?

Thanks Derek and Annette and here's to some more years ...

Wendy

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