



# Wooden Boat News

Volume 2, Issue No. 2, 2010

Look Aft and Learn

## 3rd Annual Wooden Boat Conference

From Thursday October 27th to Saturday October 30th the Town of Twillingate was busy hosting the Museum’s third Annual Conference as well as the Indeavour Exhibit.

Steeped in history, and a rustic ambience offered by open rough hewn posts and beams, the Orange Lodge, constructed in 1906, was a great venue for the WBMNL’s Indeavour Exhibit. In the three days of display over 200 hundred locals and students took advantage of the exhibit to learn more about the building of the Indeavour and the voyage undertaken by John Guy and his crew in 1612. Many thanks to the staff for their work in making the exhibit a success. John Guy would be proud!

Workshops on Friday afternoon started off the Conference activities. Lead by Alf Manuel, the well attended sessions intrigued the audience with the spiling of a plank – the boat builder’s secret to success in getting one plank to lie nicely against another; oar construction and the art of balance; and the making of the whiff – the important rope connection between oar and boat. Modest Alf fielded an afternoon of questions as though he had been teaching for years. Many tried creating their own whiff, with varying degrees of success!

Chris Sullivan, the newest member of the Museum’s Board, introduced the use of the “gate” - a method to determine frame shapes employed by some on the Southern Shore. This aroused much interest, prompting us to feature an explanation of the “gate” in a future newsletter.

On Saturday the venue shifted to the Lion’s Club where we were spoiled all day by the attention our hosts.

### Session 1

The day began with an excellent presentation by Kayla Dalley, a sixth generation member of the Pardys, who introduced us to her well known family of Twillingate boatbuilders and shared tales of their punts and skiffs as well as their long history with model building.

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With six family members still building boats today we were honoured to have Eric, Hedley and Heibert join us in the audience and delighted they stayed for the day.

A generation earlier, Eric Pardy, a renowned model maker, predicted the sentiments of the museum when he said “. . . these ships are all gone; they’re ghosts. Of those that remain, people are trying to preserve them but they’re not going to. Eventually they’re going to rot. What I am creating is something that CAN be preserved.”



Eric Pardy, Hedley Pardy, Kayla Dalley and Heibert Pardy





Wooden Boat  
Museum  
of Newfoundland  
and Labrador

The Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador archives, conserves, exhibits and transmits our wooden boat history and its contribution to the province's economy and way of life.

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#### Website:

[www.woodenboatnl.com](http://www.woodenboatnl.com)

#### Membership:

Individual membership is \$30 and includes unlimited free admission to the Wooden Boat Museum in Winterton for one year (and 10 per cent discount on guest admissions); 10 per cent discount at the museum store in Winterton; and free subscription to Wooden Boat News.

For information on other membership categories and benefits, contact Beverley King. Phone 709-583-2070 or email [bkingheritage@gmail.com](mailto:bkingheritage@gmail.com).

#### Newsletter:

Wooden Boat News is published four times a year. Members contribute most of the information and photos for this publication.

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## Session 2

In the second presentation Chris Osmond chipped away at our ignorance with a short history of the Notre Dame Bay area and the diversity of its many wooden boats. With a backdrop of marvellous old photographs, we learned, amongst many other things, of a prolific schooner construction era spanning a hundred years and the influence of economics, gear technology and the internal combustion engine on boat design.



Alf Manual demonstrates Spiling of a Plank

## Session 3

The morning concluded with David Clarke who delivered a heartfelt account of the Howlett-Ashbourne Store, built on Howlett's Island over a century ago, and the efforts to which the Isles Wooden Boat Building Committee has gone to preserve and restore the structure. A big event in late July next summer is to be the relocation of the store to Twillingate. The Wooden Boat Museum hopes, of course, that traditional wooden boats will be the ones to tow the store across the bay to its new home.

During lunch break, everyone was re-invigorated by the passionate energy of Jim Payne who regaled us with songs and stories.

## Session 4



Conference sessions at Lions Club

Finally, an afternoon "round table" challenged the membership with several questions: How can we create opportunities for the old hands to share their wealth? How can we coax people to share their stories and hidden nuggets of history and heritage? Are we a wooden boat enthusiasts' group or the traditional wooden boats of Newfoundland and

Labrador enthusiasts' group? The resulting discussion will help shape our future activities as we grow into our provincial mandate as the Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Following a fine dinner, catered by the Lion's Club, the conference ended with Melvin Green managing a lively kitchen party with special guests - the Split Peas - joined by many of our talented membership.

The Twillingate conference was a success and greatly enjoyed by All. This success has gained Chris Osmond a permanent spot on the Museum's conference committee!

Many thanks to Twillingate and to all who made this year's conference the memorable event it was.

# Leon Hicks, age 16, brings new life into the time-honoured craft of wooden boat building

By Dennis Flynn

The October rain marches across Twillingate harbour in horizontal sheets before trudging inland towards the tidy Lions Club building. Inside the welcoming hall the audience of around 70 veteran boat builders and enthusiasts give it no mind at all. This is a crew of old hands well-seasoned in the ways of the weather and the workings of the wood. As participants at the 3rd Annual Conference of the Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland Labrador they've come too far and are too focused to be put off by a little bluster and breeze.

Gazing around the table one face stands out. Dressed in red plaid shirt, black pants, and camouflaged baseball hat hiding dark hair, the lean young man bears a hint of a moustache and chin whisker. Quiet determination on his face he leans in intently listening to the speaker with an older demeanor that looks the part but can't quite conceal his youthful appearance.

According to Howard Cooper of the WBMNL in 2010 approximately 62 percent of traditional boat builders in the province were over the age of 60. That makes 16 year old Leon Hicks of Comfort Cove-Newstead, Newfoundland Labrador a rare breed of new hand in an ancient craft. As far as is known Hicks is one of the youngest builders currently in the province.

**“ Hicks' boat, which he dubbed the “Newstead Drifter” and is powered by a three and a half horse power outboard motor, has impressed the locals. ”**

Chatting with the pleasant Hicks I learn he built his first wooden boat last year as a hobby at age 15 saying, “It was a 15 and a half foot trap skiff. I started her there last March and finished her in June just before the recreational food fishery”.

Hicks credits his father who had built boats before as the person who gave him the most guidance on the part time project. He says, “We cut the wood ourselves and it was a good experience. My cousin from the mainland and I used the boat in the recreational food fishery and quite often caught our quota. It was a lot of fun”.

Hicks' boat, which he dubbed the “Newstead Drifter” and is powered by a three and a half horse power outboard motor, has impressed the locals. He says, “A lot of the people down around home they can't believe it. I really hope to build another one in the future. Even now when I'm in the woods walking around I'm looking and I size of sticks that would be good in a boat”.



Leon Hicks and Henry Vokey

Saying good bye to Hicks I ask if he has enjoyed the conference and he says with a smile, “Oh yes, I've met a lot of interesting people and picked up a few good things about building boats. And it's better than school”.

Before I leave I capture a picture of Leon Hicks with legendary boat builder 81 year old Henry Vokey of Trinity, Trinity Bay. It hits me that I have seen perhaps the youngest and the oldest active builders in the province side by side. A young man who has just built his first boat gets to stand next to a master who has made over 1000. What better place than beautiful and historic Twillingate for such a meeting of old and new hands to take place? There is room in the boat for them all.



Photo by Dennis Flynn

## Out and About

### North Atlantic Fish and Workboat Show

Our punt, battened out and ready for framing, attracted much attention.

So, what comes next? Sawn timbers, laminated or steam bent frames?



### Boat Building in St. John's!

The WBMNL is offering a recreational course on the **Fundamentals of Traditional NL Boat Building** in St. John's during the long winter months. Details on the course will be posted on our Website early in 2011. To register or simply express interest, contact Beverley at [bkingheritage@gmail.com](mailto:bkingheritage@gmail.com) or call 709-583-2070. Your interests can help determine the programme focus!

### Research Project

The WBMNL carries out various research projects in its mission to safeguard and protect the history of Wooden Boats in this Province. One such project involves documentation of historically significant traditional boats. For many early boats the only remaining evidence of their design and use lies in the half models and three piece moulds used to build them and the stories behind them from a bygone era.

We need trained volunteers throughout the Province – **you!** Join us in a one day workshop and learn how to document half models and moulds. contact Beverley at [bkingheritage@gmail.com](mailto:bkingheritage@gmail.com) or 709-583-2070

## Members



### We Need You

The WBMNL will be holding a **Fundraising Gala** in 2011. To make this event a success we need the help of our membership. Ticket sales? - Silent auction donations? – Sponsorships? There is an important role for everyone! Please, Call us or fill out the Volunteer Questionnaire on our website.

### Memberships

This Christmas season we are sending all members a **free membership** application. Send us the completed form and a **gift message** along with a Membership Card will be mailed out to the person of your choice. Let's be honest, we hope these new members will embrace our movement and renew their memberships a year from now. Please take the time to fill out your **free membership** application!

### Seasons Greetings

The Board of Directors of the Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador would like to take this opportunity to wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year. We look forward to your continued support as we work together to preserve the traditional art of wooden boat building in our Province.

## Look Aft and Learn is our motto.

Seafarers commonly say "look aft" to mean look behind, to the rear and the wake of the vessel. As a wooden boat museum, we feel it is a fitting expression that shows our commitment to looking to our history and heritage as a means of learning for the future.

