

# SURF BOATS

## HISTORY OF THE SURF BOATS AT AVOCA BEACH

The first time boats were used to perform rescues was at Manly Beach in the 1920's where the Sly brothers performed many heroic rescues using a fishing boat.

Avoca's first surf boat was a clinker built dory and manned as a rescue boat and launched in 1930.

As more surf clubs were formed, the natural Aussie competitiveness rose to the top and soon these boats were used to race each other.



**Our first Surf Boat 1930**

Over time the timber clinker boats were refined and eventually a standard size of boat (26 feet long) was specified under the SLSA rules.

The construction changed to molded timber ply wood as crews sought to have lighter craft which were more competitive and also easier to move on the beach.

All boats in those days were equipped with a shark spear.

I am not aware of any crew ever using the shark spear on a shark however this regulation piece of essential equipment was later changed to a shark knife kept in a holster under the 2<sup>nd</sup> bow seat. Again, one could not imagine a crewman leaping over the side armed with a knife to take on a shark, so this was eventually phased out too.

Each boat also had a "box line" in the bow which had a surf line and belt for use in rescuing people washed off rocks.

The box line was more often used to drag capsized craft back to the beach as there were only galvanized steel buoyancy tanks in the bow and stern under the decks in those days and a boat full of water barely remained afloat.

As this was long before pumps, the 2<sup>nd</sup> stroke, being at the lowest level in the boat, had the duty of bailing out water with a bucket during a race if a big wave gave the crew a boat full on the way out. This was not easy as the rowers in those days also had to wear cumbersome life jackets which were more hindrance than help

The development of fiberglass soon saw the hulls being constructed from that material; however the seats, gunwales and decks were still timber.

Soon timber was phased out completely and the whole craft was molded from fiberglass into the racing boats we have today with much more floatation and electric pumps to remove water rapidly.

Since 1930 our club has had 25 racing boats to this time plus a few old training boats.

For a full record of these boats and what became of them,  
click on the “History of our Surf Boats” link

Updated My Mike Tamblyn, July 2009