

Warriewood Surf boat History 1970 – 1984

The 1970's

1971 We were rowing the old Pontiac Chieftain No.9 which was used mainly for training and cracking waves.

1972 The GH Boat built by Olympic Oarsman Roger Ninham, and christened that year was a very light boat and was fast and comfortable to row. It was a great all round surf boat with good lift through the break and would pick up waves easily.

Warriewood won the '73 NSW Open Boat Title in the GH at South Maroubra in a controversial final which was a dead heat. A re row was ordered for the first time in a championship, and Warriewood swept by Life Member Barry Page came through to win the row off against Queenscliff. The crew was Robert Walsh (bow), Colin Scully (2nd Bow), Ross Jorgensen (2nd stroke) Bob Fulton (stroke), and Barry Page (sweep).

1974 saw the Swift Sure boat (Roger Ninham design) christened, sponsored by Swift Sure Hot Water Systems.

In 1975 Warriewood again swept by Barry Page won the Australian non Championship Boat Race at Dee Why. This event was a one day competition run on the Friday Easter Weekend when the Interstate Competition was held. The Nationals were held Saturday and Sunday. This event ceased in 1976 in which we ran 3rd trying to defend the title at Clifton Beach Tasmania.

1977 was the beginning of Warriewood's Golden Era in Surfboats. It began at the Australian Titles at a place call Bancoora Beach. Warriewood swept by Warren (The Mole) Molloy who came out of retirement to help us out, swept brilliantly in 6m seas to win the coveted title. The crew was Robert Walsh (bow), Colin Scully (2nd bow), James Taylor (2nd stroke), and Bob Fulton (stroke). Ross Jorgensen who had rowed for years with the crew and taught us to row the new still water style became ill two weeks out from the Championships and was replace at short notice by James Taylor who had rowed with the club some years previously.

In 1978 Warriewood came second defending it's Australian Title at Kingscliff NSW rowing the new Roche Aquasun Boat. (Roger Ninham design). This year was the start of Ross Jorgensen's amazing run of success as a sweep. The crew was Robert Walsh (bow), Bob Fulton (2nd bow), Colin Scully (2nd stroke), and Graham Mc Dougall (stroke).

1979 The Roche Aquasun again, and at the NSW Titles at North Narrabeen, Warriewood won the final by over 100m in rough and windy conditions to hand them a place in the NSW State Team In Trigg Island WA at the Australian Championships. The NSW Team were victorious. The crew also won the gold medal for the second time at the Australian Championships. The crew was Robert Walsh (bow), Chris (The Bat) Branson (2nd bow), Colin Scully (2nd stroke), Bob Fulton (stroke), and Ross Jorgensen (sweep).

The 1980's

1980 The boat was the Maranz HI – Fi (BOB Miles design). Warriewood, competing at Maroochydore Australian Titles, won the Open "A" and Reserve Grade Boat double on the same day. The "A" crew was Robert Walsh (bow), Chris Branson (2nd bow), Colin Scully (2nd stroke), James Taylor (stroke), and Ross Jorgensen (sweep). The Reserve crew was Wayne Horne (bow), Ron Perry (2nd Bow), Garry Horne (2nd stroke), Graham Mc Dougall (stroke), and Bob Fulton (sweep). Bob had rowed all year with the "A" crew and switched to sweeping three weeks before the titles. James Taylor was again called into the crew and won his second gold medal with only 5 weeks rowing between 1977 and 1980. Prior to the change of crew members, Warriewood "A" Crew were selected to represent Australia in the Trans Tasman Test at Bondi where the crew and the team defeated New Zealand comfortably.

Warriewood also won the Mayne Nicholas State Knockout Final at Coogee Beach taking home a new boat and trailer.

An interesting statistic is that in the 1978 - '79 season, competition results Warriewood "A" crew entered 22 carnivals for 11 wins, 6 seconds, 3 fourths and all others were unplaced and missed one final. The next year 1979 – '80 season they entered 22 Carnivals for 13 wins, 3 seconds 2 thirds and the rest were unplaced and missed one final. Only two finals missed in two years is a remarkable achievement considering the competition, surf conditions and different beaches locally and interstate.

1981 Warriewood competed at the Australian titles at Wanda Beach and returned home with the "A" and Reserve Boat Gold Medals completing the double - double in consecutive years never before achieved in the history of surf boat rowing. The "A" crew was Robert Walsh (bow), Bob Fulton (2nd bow), Steve Newnham (2nd stroke), James Taylor (stroke), and Ross Jorgensen (sweep). The Reserve crew was Wayne Horne (bow), Clive Weston (2nd bow), Wayne Horne (2nd stroke), Graham McDougall (stroke), and Ross Jorgensen (sweep).

The win gave Robert Walsh his fourth Australian Gold Medal joining Chris Branson as the only rowers to have won 4 Gold Medals in rowing in the Open Boat at Australian Titles. Chris won two of his medals with Freshwater in 1974, '75.

The most incredible statistic involving the "A" crew over its three year dominance at the Australian Titles is that they won every race from heats to finals three years straight (18 races). This is a record that may never be beaten.

1982 The "A" crew were also selected to compete for Australia in the Trans Tasman Test held at Mt. Maunganoui in NZ. The tour was three weeks and the boat crew competed at regional carnivals all over the north and south islands of NZ without defeat. Australia also won the Test.

This was the end of the dream run for Warriewood, after returning from NZ the Australian Titles were held in Moana Beach SA and Warriewood were selected in the NSW Team.

The NSW Team were victors in the interstate event. The crew was Robert Walsh (bow), Bob Futon (2nd bow), Colin Scully (2nd Stroke), James Taylor (stroke), and Ross Jorgensen (sweep). Steve Newnham was replaced a few weeks from the championships by Colin Scully due to illness. Steve recovered enough at the last minute to help our "C" crew win a silver medal.

We made the final but prior to this the turning cans were accidentally moved out of alignment and three farcical finals were run with all winning crews coming from one end of the beach. Warriewood drew alley 6 and could only manage 4th place.

1983 Following crew changes and an indifferent season Warriewood went to Hawaii to contest the World Interclub Championships. The composite crew of Robert Walsh (bow), Bob Fulton (2nd bow), Steve Newnham (2nd stroke), Mark Williams (stroke), and David Benson (sweep) won the gold medal capping off great careers for Robert Walsh and Bob Fulton who had won every major title available in surf boats.

The boat was renamed and sponsored for the World Titles by Ben Ean Moselle Wines.

Around 1983 , '84 the next two boats that the club competed in were the Pacific Waste and the Scan Pac which were almost the last of the timber boats, which were about to be superseded by the fibreglass boats and then to the modern day floatation tanked boats.

Four of the members of the boat crews of this era were inducted into the ASRL (Australian Surf Rowers League) Hall of Fame. They are Robert Walsh, Bob Fulton, Chris Branson and Ross Jorgensen. All of who are still active either coaching or competing in Masters Events to the present time 2007.

2nd in the series
By Robert Walsh