

New South Wales: Tweed Heads to the Central Coast



TUCK THE BELLYBOGGER UNDER YOUR GUTS, LIE LOW, AND GO FOR IT.

Bellybagger.



Ian Anderson on a finless wood paipo.

Source: Photos Dick Ash and Ian Anderson.

1 Tweed Heads to Yuraygir

An advertisement for a Tweed Heads Surfriders contest on April 1973 included a division for the "neglected" (Unknown 1973).

neglected

Tweed Heads Surfriders have got a contest on for all you neglected Belly Board, Knee Board, Mat Riders. It will be held in the best surf available in the Tweed Heads area over the Easter holidays. Entry fee of \$2, entries close Saturday 14th

April, at PO Box 179, Tweed Heads, NSW, 2485.
1st New Board, Trophy + \$50.
2nd A Trophy + \$20.
3rd A Trophy + \$10.
A meeting of all contestants will be held in the Clubhouse of Tweed Heads Surfriders and Lifesaving Club at Duranbah Beach on Friday 20th April, 1973 at 7 pm. Heat draw will then be displayed.

Tracks, April 6, 1973.

Fibreglass bodyboard style boards were made under the Tweed Coast Surfboards label and Josh Dixon (2022) recalled Proline from Tweed Heads made this style of board, usually finned. Jon Jenkins and Jeff Latham also rode prone boards around Cabarita. Jenkins made Tube Rocket boards and acknowledged a debt to Glen Winton in relation to his quad finned boards.



Glen Winton inspired quad finned Tube Rocket. Photos Michael McKenzie and Jon Jenkins; Tweed Coast twin fin. Photo Corey Hord .

More recently, Al Bruce's has added bellyboards to his board range. These boards feature stringerless EPS blanks, glassed with hybrid and carbon/basalt cloths to the deck/rails and a fibreglass/carbon insert on the bottom.



Native paipo: Hull entry single concave



Native paipo: Hull entry single concave.

Source: Photos Al Bruce, <http://nativekneeboards.com/nativekneeboardPaipo.html>

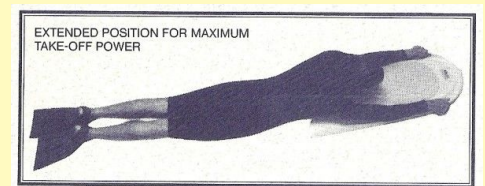
Originally based in Avalon, Dick Ash (Ash 2009) first produced a bellyboard around 1960 when he cut up an old broken balsa board. Almost a decade later, around 1970 Ash produced the bellybogger, a roto moulded hollow plastic board. After these boards were banned from use within the 'flags' and with the advent of the Morey Boogie board Ash ceased production. Operating out of Noosa at the time, in 1994 Dick Ash advertised a new bellybogger model. He estimated that he sold 50 of these boards. Now based around Byron Bay, in 2010 Ash released a new version of the bellybogger. Around 2017, the late John Standing from Coolangatta was making bellyboggers for Dick. Dick advises that John died (November 2017) while riding his bellybogger and that Dick won't be continuing to make them. Also in Byron Bay, Dennis Anderson at Jet surfboards produced some bellyboards around 1979 while Dain Thomas, who produced Sea Surfboards has experimented with finned, bellyboards.



Dick Ash bellyboard collection. Photo courtesy Dick Ash



Most recent version of the bellybogger



Advertisement for Dick Ash bellyboards.

Source: Photos courtesy Dick Ash.



Balsa bellyboard made by Dick Ash.



Dick Ash and bellyboggers.

Source: Photos Dick Ash.



Jet bellyboard by Dennis Anderson. Photo courtesy Gary Clist.

Around Angourie, a small group of women, including Jayne Seymour, Adrienne Dahlberg, Dianna Lobry, Kath Gorman and Belinda Chambers rode fiberglass bellyboards. Seymour had been riding bellyboards since the early 1970s (Seymour 2025). Rod Dahlberg made his wife, Adrienne, a "fiberglass boogie board" that featured four channels and two small keel fins on the rail. In 2013 Adrienne still rode these boards (Dahlberg 2013). Dan Webber advised that his brother Greg, a business partner of Dahlberg, also made his wife Diana Lobry, a bellyboard. These boards were surfed around Angourie (Webber 2013). Country Style from Yamba also produced bellyboards in the 1980's.



Jayne Seymour 1974 with Dave Croman board.



Seymour's Nick Pope and Woody Jack bellyboards

Photos courtesy Jayne Seymour.



Woody Jack quad.



Jayne at Rote.

Photos courtesy Jayne Seymour.



Thornton Fallander tri-fin.



Jayne at Rote.

Photos courtesy Jayne Seymour.



1980s Country Style bellyboard.

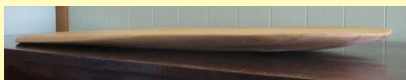


1980s Country Style bellyboard.

Source: Photos by Warren King.

Ross Harvey and Mick Vesey rode homemade ply bellyboards with schoolmates around the Yamba area in the late 60s to early 70s. Ross noted that there were a few others around who rode these boards but he didn't know them. A lot of experimentation went on, but the final design was made using a jig. Three sheets of 1/8" marine ply, approximately 800-900 mm) were glued together using epoxy, and clamped to the jig made of timber and angle iron. Employing 8-10 G-clamps, this method enabled the boards to have some nose rocker. Initially the boards were tried with a large surfboard-style single fin, but the fins would break from the base. Two shallower twin fins were found to be better suited to the boards and longer lasting. Ross and his mates were body surfers and he thought the bellyboard idea came from trying to find a better way to bodysurf. The boards had limited flotation but with flippers were ridden in waves up to 1.8 metres in the Yamba area.

Ian Anderson (Anderson 2008) has ridden a variety of homemade wood boards in the north coast area. Anderson (2013) recalls Ross Harvey surfing a plywood bellyboard with single fin at Yamba main beach in the early to mid 1970s. Harvey's father was from England a Grafton medical practitioner. Anderson speculated that the board being influenced by UK boards. Anderson's motivation to get interested in paipo boards followed a 2006 surfing injury. Anderson came across the Hawaiian Paipo Design (HPD) website (the successor to the 1960s Paipo Nui board). Anderson recalled: "The HPD was very fast but felt a bit big in a lot of north coast beach breaks. In early 2009 I built a smaller HPD inspired board out of Paulownia and continue to ride this board regularly. It is 40" long by 24" wide with a Simmons type foil and this is the board in the accompanying photo. I have also built a few pocket paipo which are approximately 24" x 14 1/2" and have the same design influences. The best description for pocket paipo is 'high speed bodysurfing' and they are great fun in punchy little shorebreaks. My design preference is for low flotation, flat, fast and finless boards. Not having to use a leash is another bonus. Currently I am playing with plywood and vacuum bags to make cheaper flexy boards". Lewis Hayward has also been experimenting with bellyboards and rides them in the Yamba area.



Ian Anderson finless and pocket paipo.



Ian Anderson finless paipo.

Source: Photos courtesy Ian Anderson.



Ian Anderson on his paipo. Photo courtesy Ian Anderson.



Lewis Hayward 2016 bellyboard.



Lewis Hayward 2021 Callum Liddle bellyboard.

Source: Photos Lewis Hayward.



Lewis Hayward riding a bellybogger.



Lewis Hayward riding a bellybogger.

Source: Photos Lewis Hayward.



Lewis Hayward riding a bellybogger.



2014 Wooloweyah bellyboard.

Source: Photos Lewis Hayward.

Located in Mclean, Paul Witzig rode a bellyboard based on a Reno Abellira template. The board features a set of horns which are used for turning.



Paul Witzig board.



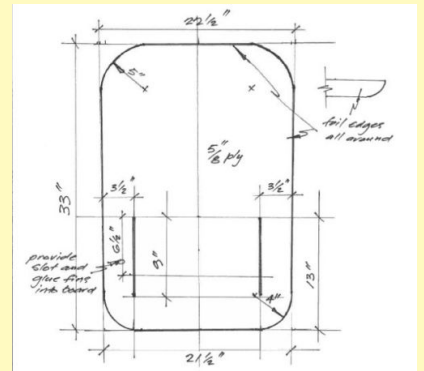
Paul Witzig board.

Source: Photos Paul Witzig.

2 Coffs Harbour



Dave Andrews with bellyboard.



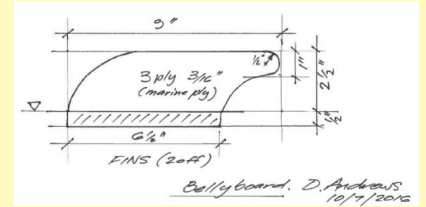
Dave Andrews bellyboard.

Source: Photos Dave Andrews.

Dave Andrews rode a board of his own design around the Coffs Harbour area in the 1960s/70s.



Dave Andrews bellyboard.



Dave Andrews bellyboard.

Source: Photos courtesy Dave Andrews.

3 Valla Beach

Michele Latta (2018/2019) advises that her husband, the late Frank Latta (formerly of Cronulla) was riding a bellyboard of his own design around Valla Beach from 2004-2005, for a few years before his death in 2010. His favourite board was 1700mm long, 370mm at tail, 325mm on nose, 80mm thick at widest part and fins 300mm to center. All the bellyboards had flat bottoms. Michele noted that Frank "played around with different shapes" but his first board was his favourite.



Frank Latta bellyboard.



Frank Latta bellyboard.

Source: Photos courtesy Michele Latta.



Frank Latta bellyboard:
700 x 530 x 75 mm. Nose and
tail 330 mm.



Frank Latta bellyboard:
1700 x 500 x 75 mm. Nose 420
and tail 370 mm.

Source: Photos courtesy Michele Latta.



Frank Latta bellyboard:
1700 x 530 x 75 mm. Nose and
tail 330 mm.



Frank Latta bellyboard:
700 x 530 x 75 mm. Nose and
tail 330 mm

Source: Photos courtesy Michele Latta.

4 Nambucca Heads

Marketed as gut sliders, Keith Robinson has been making boards to be ridden prone since at least 2016.



Photos supplied by Hewysurf Photography

Oceanfoil Surfboards

Surfing with Guts

The years tick by. The body starts to struggle and the mind drifts towards retiring from the ocean for good.

For surfer of a certain vintage where aging knees, ankles and legs makes jumping up to catch a wave both challenging and painful, there is now an alternative to giving up.

Nambucca Valley based surfer and veteran surfboard shaper Keith "Katie" Robinson, who is now in his 70th year, has applied his extensive shaping experience to produce a Gut Slider board for himself and his mates to ensure their time in the water is as extended as possible.

"A guy who I made boards for 40 years, had hip pain and couldn't get up fast enough" Keith said.

With his mate in mind Keith said he set about experimenting with shapes, sizes and fin placement to develop a board that would allow riders to paddle on to waves easily, manoeuvre just under the lip and perform cutbacks just like you can on a surfboard, all without using flippers.

Keith said the Gut Slider was built on a tri-plane hull where the rail curve is different to the bottom curve through the board.

The boards range from 5'0" to 5'10" in length and 23 inches wide although Keith said the rail to rail turning points are about 19 inches to get a fast rail transition.

"It's designed to get up and go as fast as you can on a rail so you can do little nosies and amazing cutbacks - they're quite a thing" Keith said.

"Once you get the hang of surfing these things it put a big capsize P.U.N. back in your day."

"As a family group they're a great low-off board that you can add to your quiver."

"They're an incredible every-level board for kids. They can catch waves and get to their feet without a struggle."

"If you give them a high-performance board, it's too twitchy for them as a start-up board and they fall."

After nearly six years on the Gut Slider Katie based surfer Antoni Jovancay said the board had given him the confidence to stay in the line-up at some of the best breaks on the coast and catch more waves than he did standing up.

Just back from a month in Indonesia where he said the board gave him days of fun, Toni, 67, said he was able to go for waves often knowing he would get onto them and on the small 25 waves the board just flew.

"It's wider and thicker than a normal surfboard, and it's so quick, it has changed my surfing life" he said.

It's that same love for the surfing "high" that has kept Keith in the water every day he can.

For Keith, who said he was going to retire from board making when he was 65, but lasted about two weeks, the call of the ocean and the creativity of board making is what keeps him going. Although he reckons that he wasn't catching waves, he's not so sure he'd be as keen to make boards.

The Gut Sliders are the latest style of board crafted by Keith's hands in a career that has spanned nearly 60 years.

His love of surfing started as a young age, growing up in Avalon, north of Sydney, where his Dad owned the local barber shop.

He remembers his first ride on a 16-foot plywood footpeck.

"Our next door neighbour David (the Mexican) Sumpter took me out at Avalon," Keith recalls.

"I was just laying down on the front of the thing and today I can still remember the sound and smell of the plywood board. I can still remember that I was nine years old at the time."



Toni Jovancay. Photo by Chris Hewgill.

The bug had bitten and while he was supposed to be going to school on the bus, Keith said he barely made it, opting instead to go to the beach for a surf with his mates. He was booted out of school at 14 and started hanging around surfboard factories, helping to fix dings and gaining knowledge from those in the trade in Broomevale at the time. When he was 16, Keith made the move to Victoria.

He said that was when he really got a start in the surfboard design sphere, learning to glass at George Rick Surfboards - although by the night, he couldn't find a way into the shaping room.

It was only after making a move to South Australia and taking a job working with John Arnold, and later with Don Burford, he learnt to shape surfboards.

It was the start of a relationship that continues to this day with Keith still buying his blanks from Burford, and still calling on him for advice when he comes up against a challenge while building a board.

Building boards, working and surfing his way through the Pacific and New Zealand, including a stint at Weaver Surfboards brought Keith back to Victoria where he opened one of the first surf shops on the Mornington Peninsula in 1971.

"I bought my first six blanks off Burford and they were \$15 each back then, and I had enough money and materials to make six boards and pay the rent for a month" he said. "I thought to myself, I've got 30 days to get my shit together, and we pulled it off."

"We ended up making about 60-100 boards a month and about 18 months later we owned the shop and the factory next door."

"Eventually, we had a factory fire, and I moved up here and was putting out six to eight boards a week at Scotts Head."

"When I got to 85, I thought I was going to retire, so I gutted the factory and sold off the equipment and I lasted two weeks."

Keith said he had a couple of hundred acres of bush that he owned, so he retired there, and set up a shed where he now makes a few boards a week for friends and clients who have found him by word of mouth.

"These days I make boards because I want to, not because I have to," he said.

"I've got had a dozen wallabies sitting at my feet as I'm talking to you. We grow a lot of our own tucker. I've got a state-of-art solar system and we collect a lot of our own water too."

As for the nickname 'Atlas', Keith explained it came from his time in Victoria traveling to surf locations and around the world such as Morocco, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Andamans and even the South China Sea areas of Malaysia, Vietnam, Borneo and Burma.

Keith and Oceanfoil Surfboards, can be reached by phone on 0434 211 779

"It's designed to get up and go as fast as you can on a rail so you can do little reos and amazing cut-backs - they're quite a thing."

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Gut slider. Photos by Chris Hewgill, featured in Smorgasboarder, Issue 53, 2022

5 Port Macquarie

Since around 2015, Mark Franklin from Port Macquarie had made Impact boards - "finned or finless with beep double concave, clip or bat tail. Different lengths/thickness, tail with various litres".



Impact bellyboard. Photo Mark Franklin.



The Milnes from the UK rode their Grays boards at Flynn's beach from the 1950s.

Source: Photos courtesy Mark Franklin and Port Macquarie Surf Museum.



Les Gillette late 70s-early 80s prototype.



The original had a large raked fin.

Source: Port Macquarie Surf Museum. Information provided by Alan Jeffrey.

6 Newcastle

From Newcastle, Nick Hartigan the shaper of Kneeon kneeboards has recently been making prone boards. They differ from kneeboards as "definitely bigger boards, plan shapes are much straighter with different rockers & rails - shaped purposely to catch waves ... I don't use flippers so paddle power is everything when the ocean doesn't have lot of push so the return on the invested energy is greater than trying to paddle a sub 5" board around which you would almost be more like swimming around not paddling around " Hartigan 2023).



Kneeon board. Photo Nick Harrigan

7 Central Coast

On the central coast John Monie made a bellyboard (4ft 10" x 20" x 3"). How many he made and whether it was ridden prone or kneeling is not known.



Monie bellyboard. Source: <http://www.soulsurf.com.au/>

Currently, on the Central Coast, long time kneeboarders Steve Artis, Damian Coase and Don Boland have been modifying kneeboard designs to ride prone. In the photo below, Damian advises that Steve's board features chine rails with super hard edges. Made from stringerless epoxy the fins are more upright and pivoty hanalei, than what Damian and Don have been experimenting with. Damian advises that Don "started with a single fin, in a 7inch box with two side bites. After moving the single as far up as possible, which still felt too stiff, he just used the side bites.

These were a bit too small and slid out so he got two extra sets of plugs put in and his quad prone was born. From here the feeling, from both of us, was that this was the way to go. The fins got smaller to allow one set to be lifted clear of the water surface when turning thus significantly loosening up the board. From here we found that using the upright front fin as a pivot point with a smaller trailer behind gave the best combination of turning ability and drive. I got a quad set of bonzer 5 side fins with my little Baker eps prone board but again found that the cant of the fins caused them to slide out. I do like them as quad rears though as they seem to give my board a squirt out of a turn. These are just our latest findings and we are constantly trying new fin combinations, I reckon that we have about 20 pairs of fins between us. And things also change when the waves get serious.



Martin Hallen. Photo Michael Huby, courtesy Martin Hallen.



Trio of prone boards.



Damian test piloting.

Source: Photos courtesy Damian Coase.



Don Bolan's board.



Don Boland. Photo by Roslyn Odonohue.

Source: Photos courtesy Don Boland.

Another Central Coast surfer is Martin Hallen **Martin Hallen riding Avoca Point**. His board is 6'6" x 23" x 2.75"