

Queensland



Kit Carson, Jeff Callaghan and Robert McDermott
-Kirra 1965.



Tom Wegener.

Source: Photos courtesy Kit Carson and Sean Davey.

1960s

In 1965 Bob McDermott had come up from Maroubra in Sydney on a surf trip. Gold coast lifesavers Bob 'Kit' Carson and Jeff Callaghan recalled seeing McDermott surfing his bellyboard in cyclonic surf at Kirra. Carson recalls being "pretty impressed" (Carson 2010). Joe Larkin set up his factory in 1962 and recalled: "When I moved to Kirra the balsa was gone and I just used the plan shape from those early days for the plywood boards. I got four boards out of a sheet of 3/16 inch ply, 6 feet by 3 feet. Fins were three inches high and about 4-1/2 inches long, with a 3-inch chrome kitchen cupboard handle. I loved these little boards and we all had a great time surfing Snapper and Kirra" (Larkin 2012). The Gold Coast bellyboarders consisted of lifesavers such as Carson, Callaghan and surfers such as Col Taylor and Joe Larkin. Others included Mal Sutherland, Vinnie Ford, Graham Dunne, Mark Green, Terry Law, Graham Byrnes, Ken Wiles, Mick Potter, and Jimmy Purdon. Carson and Callaghan surfed from Noosa down to at least Lennox Head, and then moved to Torquay around 1965.



Robert McDermott, Snapper May 1965. Photo courtesy Kit Carson.



Vinnie Ford? Greenmount. Photo courtesy Mal Sutherland.



Michael Potter 1960s bellyboard.



Michael Potter 1960s bellyboard.

Source: Photos courtesy Michael Potter.

In the mid 1960's Barr recalls surfing a wooden bellyboard purchased by his brother, from the Myer department at Tweed Heads in the mid to late 1960s (Barr 2010b). It was a Whiz Skid, bellyboard/skimboard made by Blue Pacific Aquatic Products in Brisbane, by Ken Fowler (Potter 2010). Barr and his friends rode the board around Kingscliff but also remembers fellow Tweed High students riding wooden bellyboards around Coolangatta(2010a).



Whiz Skid. Photo courtesy Kevin Barr.



60s ply board - located at a Noosa charity shop.



60s ply board - located at a Noosa charity shop.

Source: Photos courtesy Photo Gary Clist.



Wooden bellyboard. Photo courtesy Noosa Surf Museum.

Eddie Sawden who in the 1960s worked for Carey Surfboards advised that there were casual orders for bellyboards (Sawden 2009) and Lawrie Hohensee who also shaped for Carey, reported that he made bellyboards during the 1960s and beyond (2009). Barr (2010) recalls Graham Merrin surfboards from Tweed Heads (NSW) and Mick Carey Surfboards from Currumbin, as making the occasional bellyboard, “sometimes using the noses cut from cut down surfboards”.



1960s Carey bellyboard. Surfworld Currumbin.

Woosley in Brisbane made at least the occasional bellyboard. One example resembles scaled down longboard. Henry Marfleet (UK) located a letter from an 'ex D.Y surfer' (1964) who wrote from Brisbane and referred to fellow bellyboarders Graham Wyles, John Paul, Gary Edwards and Robert Smith.



Ray Woosley 4'6 bellyboard, c 1965. ebay photo.



Woosely bellyboards.

Photo courtesy ebay; unknown.



Woosley bellyboard.



Woosley bellyboard.

Photos courtesy David Parkes.

Ken Adler (2010) advises that Candy Calhoun was in Australia for three years: 1965-1967. It was during this time that Calhoun featured in the above The Australian Women's Weekly article (McGetrick 1966). He made her a board similar to a board made by Gordon Thiesz, who surfed with Candy in the US (Moynier 2010). Candy mostly surfed Alexandra Headland and when the conditions were right, National Park at Noosa head. For many years this board was in the possession of Darrel Dell. Calhoun, who along with her mother (Marge) and sister (Robin) competed internationally, rode Wedge and Pipeline bodysurfing.



Candy Calhoun US paipo rider.



Candy Calhoun 1965.

Australian Women's Weekly- 1966 and Unknown.

1970s-1980s

Wayne Tommasi (Tommasi 2009) has collected a range of bellyboards including boards made by Shell Shapes, Papworth, Kirra Surf, the Shaping Company and Tweed Coast surfboards.

Wayne Tommasi boards, left to right: Board 1 - Early to mid 70's stringerless 4ft 2" x 19 3/4". Spirit of the sea Kirra Gold Coast Pencil on foam 436/A Shaper? Dick Van Straalen said he can't remember if he shaped it or not. He said he can't remember much from that era, but his wife designed the Logo. Board 2 - "My personal board March 2009 I used the Hohensee as a guide shortened it 2" widened and squared the tail 2" added 2 1/2" keel fins plus centre fin box. Slight concave on deck. Shaped and glassed by Paul Carson (The Factory Surfboards, Caloundra)". Board 3 - Early to mid 70's stringerless 4'6" x 19 3/4" single fin Logo Hohensee 'OVER FREE FLIGHT BIRD LOGO'- Hohensee Miami Gold Coast shaper? Board 4 - Late 60's early 70's 4'7" x 20 1/2" single fin Carey. Surfboards Currumbin Gold Coast. Shaper Eddie Sawden said if Carey Logo was block lettered, he would have shaped it. No other markings on board.

The 1980s boards clearly show the influence of bodyboards.



1970s bellyboards.



1980s bellyboards.

Wayne Tommasi collection.



3' bellyboard from Carl Tanner collection. Photo Rob Ryan.



Unidentified c.1973. Kirra.

Original footage - Gary Smiley? Craig Halstead edited and posted on former Coastalwatchsite.



Unidentified c.1973. Kirra

Unidentified c.1973. Kirra.

Source: Original footage - Gary Smiley? Craig Halstead edited and posted on former Coastalwatchsite.



4'5" bellyboard , possibly from Brisbane. Photo courtesy Mick Vaisnys.

Ash's 1994 bellybogger booklet contains a testimonial from Greg Lee from Bribie Island. Ash at the time was located in Noosa, so it is likely there were other bellybogger riders in that area. Paul Reinhard had Star Jammer boards from Noosa, make a fibreglass version of the bellybogger, but with fins added. Paul(2022) advised: I had a plastic "Bellybogger" yrs ago...bought it off some mates who were from West Oz... '81 on the Sunshine Coast, copied it to a fiberglass version, made by a guy worked out of "Cornell" workshop in Sunshine Bch, Qld. Ray or "Forey" we called him arranged it through his label "Star-Jammer" also in Sunshine Bch in the shops there (long gone) I think I paid like \$80 to make it. Honestly it never worked as well as the Belly Bogger, I surfed it at A Bay in the Noosa Nat Park, Dbl Is Point, Ti Tree and Boiling Pot, mainly surfed it on Bch breaks at Sunrise and Wurtulla, Peregian Bch, Pt Cartwright also in NZ at Stent Rd in Taranaki ... I used Churchill fins which I still use for body surfing when I can."



Bellybogger copy.



Bellybogger copy.

Source: Photos courtesy Paul Reinhardt.

Bodyboard style bellyboards were made by Fluid Foils from Caloundra. Ron Palmer bought his board in 1984. Brett Compton (2022) recalled his board as "being fast but kinda too fat n heavy for me especially trying to carry it for miles on the pushy".



Fluid Foils bellyboard.

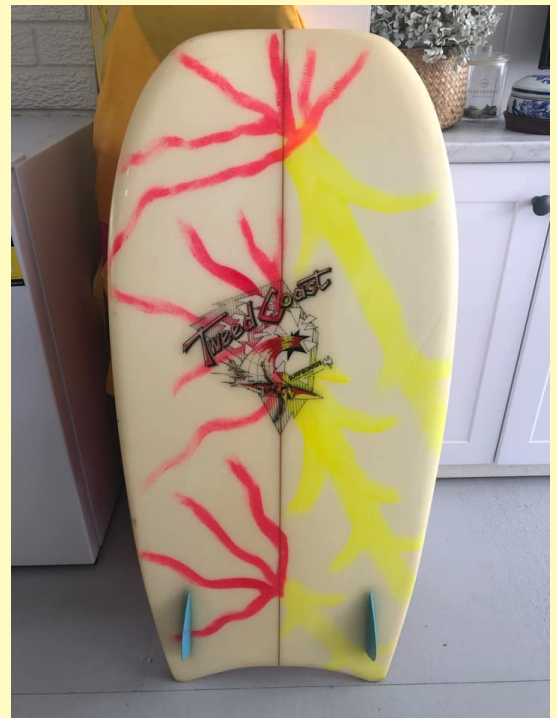


Fluid Foils bellyboard.

Source: Photos courtesy Ron Palmer.



Billy Grant shape.



Billy Grant shape.

Source: Photos courtesy Cory Hord?



Hohensee belly/kneeboard, shaper Geoff Darby. Unknown board. Photos courtesy Gary Clist.



Luke Smith, 1990s Beach Beat twin fin.

2000s

Paul Joske and Tom Wegener have been pioneers in the use of paulownia as a surfboard construction material in Australia (Gray 2008, Sutherland 2008). At the time of writing Tom wasn't making boards commercially, but has manufactured a range of boards that can be ridden prone, including alaia modelled on Hawaiian boards, the surfie (<https://www.tomwegenersurfboards.com/models/surfie-bellyboards>) and a wood/cork bodyboard style board. Tom is an enthusiastic proponent of prone boards and has ridden everything from Japanese itago to UK style bellyboards. Also in Noosa, Parrish Watts (Watts 2010) and Rupert Goodall (Fatwoodz bellyboards) have been making boards in the style of wooden UK bellyboards.



Tom with 5' alaia for Bob Green.



Tom riding a surfie.

Source: Photos courtesy Tom Wegener.



Wegener big wave surfie - with cork deck.



Surfing Green paulownia board.

Source: Photos courtesy Tom Wegener and Adam Williams.



Terry Cooper 5'6" -used with flippers.



Terry Cooper 6'6" - for bigger days.

Source: Photos courtesy Terry Cooper.



On left: 4'5 1/4" by 20".



"edge, the massive single to double concave".

Source: Photos courtesy Adam Baldwin.



Adam Baldwin's 4'5 1/4" by 20".



Dan Foster with his board made by Jeff Quam from Capistrano Beach.

Source: Photos courtesy Adam Baldwin of Reclaim Surf and Dan Foster.



Peter Webb's board.



Mark Pridmore More bellyboard.

Source: Photo More surfboards.



More bellyboards.



More bellyboard.

Source: Photo More surfboards.



Lesleigh's More bellyboards.



More bellyboard.

Source: Photo More surfboards.

In his obituary to Bob Cooper, Phil Jarrat (2020) wrote: One day he loped in and told me quite excitedly that he had something in his truck to show me. We went out to the street and he opened the back to reveal something that looked like a ten-foot kneeboard. "Awesome," I said. "What is it?" "It's my belly board," he said. "That's all I got left. You come into this world a kook, and you go out a kook. Just gotta hope you did okay in the middle."



Bob Cooper. Maldives 2007. Photo by Judd Armstrong.



Van Straalen bellyboards, Photos Photo Wayne Tommasi and Anthony Young.



5' Dick van Straalen board. Photos courtesy Mike Lim.

Tommasi from Palm Beach has ridden a bellyboard made by Paul Carson from Caloundra while Anthony Young has ridden Van Straalen bellyboards. The late John Standing rode the latest bellybagger incarnation around Coolangatta. South of the border, former Gold Coast based shaper Chris Garrett has produced a number of custom bellyboards for Bob Green. These boards were initially based on the twin-finned designs of Larry Goddard from Hawaii, but in more recent years have moved from a flat to a cottom bottom, with a foil more like a surfboard and are designed to be ridden finless. The basic dimension is 54 x 21 x 1 7/8".



Yoshiro Takeda bellyboard fro Mr Wayne: 4'4 x 20 1/4 x 1 11/16. Photo courtesy Yoshiro Takeda.



Bob Green bellyboards: finless to 5 fins.



Evolution of a design, from flat bottom to concave. Chris Garrett shapes.

Source: Photos Bob Green.



Melaeuca Missile. Photo courtesy Chris Garrett



Melauleuca Missile #5.



Melauleuca Missile #7.

Source: Photos Federico Vanno and Janelle Green.

The Gold Coast have a crew interested in bodysurfing, mats and bellyboards. It's not surprising, with renewed interest in bodysurfing, that there would be crossover and interest in bellyboards. Mini-paipo or large handplanes: 'Harry Gordon has been shaping and glassing surfboards and hand planes for the past 15 years. In recent years he has been focusing on closing the gap between bodysurfing and prone board riding. This has lead Harry to design and construct a range of "mini" paipo boards that provide the speed and lift of a board but still provide the immersive experience of bodysurfing. The boards range between 20" to 25" long and around 15" wide, the bottom shape is typically a deep double concaves and the boards have hard edges along the length of rail. Harry has experimented with a range of other designs and in recent times has been inspired by the prone board designs of Larry Goddard and Bob Green's quiver to scale up boards and explore the joys of prone board building and riding'.



Harry Gordon mini-paipo. Tubed. Photos courtesy Harry Gordon.



Harry Gordon mini-paipo. Photos courtesy Harry Gordon.



Modern bellybagger shaped by Jim Morton ([instagram.com/metalsurfboards](https://www.instagram.com/metalsurfboards)) and original.



Modern bellybagger shaped by Jim Morton and original.

Source: Photos courtesy Jason Cuthbert.



Classic quiver.