



The Bounty Boat crew? From left to right, Mike Perham, Don McIntyre, Peter Stier, and David Wilkonson.

HIGH ACHIEVERS

As this 400th edition of *Trade-a-Boat* hits the stands, Jessica Watson is heading home, and Don McIntyre is about to sail across the Pacific Ocean in an open boat

I suppose you would have to agree that the world's most read book may be the *Bible*? I would also agree that Australia's most-read boating book is the *Book of Dreams* aka *Trade-a-Boat* — probably more often for Australia's boating population than the other good book. There is no question that it has shaped the recycled boating market in Australia. Happy birthday *Trade-a-Boat*! What an achievement to get 400 issues out there.

I was there in the beginning when one guy was looking for people interested in listing a free ad in *Trade-a-Boat* issue 1. Now I am still here, writing in it.



I have probably read virtually every issue, kept up with what friends are doing by watching the boats sail through the pages, been inspired to chase dreams by just letting my imagination run with the special boats hidden in the listings, and made a living by selling "stuff" through the readers.

The *Book of Dreams* is special. Like everything in life, it is evolving with the times and has now developed into one of Australia's premier boating magazines. Maybe I am biased, but why would you not read it. Bring on the next 400!

ODDS-ON FAVOURITE
 Australia's round-the-world solo

sailor Jessica Watson is nearly home (touch wood) and what a day that may be. I speak to her every week and email often. She is still the same Jessica and, yes, I am proud of her.

Plenty will be written about what she has done and how she has achieved an incredible dream with guts and determination — all this in the face of some daunting knockers and emotional extremes, before she even set off.

In 1968, when Robin Knox-Johnston sailed solo, non-stop around the world, I was 13. He inspired me to apply as a cabin boy on the last commercially operating steam tug in Australia. I got to know Robin in 1983 and we became friends.

A few years ago, when he sailed an Open 60 solo around the world as a pensioner, I was stunned and inspired by him again. I have only known Jessica for 18 months and I know I am watching someone unique.

The exciting part now is knowing there are people out there all over the world, on every continent, who are truly excited about her and what she is doing, to the point of now being inspired by her.

As big as it will be, I will not be there to see her sail in. I will be sitting on *Talisker Bounty Boat* somewhere (?) dreaming of food, trying to stay dry and upright. Jessica understands, as there is this thing about adventurers... nothing gets in the way of doing it!

LITTLE BOATS

Wow, they are still out there. I have had some great emails from people doing things in boats under 8m on budgets that would seem impossible.

I love hearing about that and, hopefully, sometime soon I will try to get some up on a website so all can be inspired.

It's amazing how many don't write about it and just do it, which goes with the territory of grabbing life and getting on with it, quietly, although a few admitted they enjoyed writing to me... so feel free. You have one avid listener here.

SAILING WITHOUT MUSTO

There are some things in sailing that are just a given, a fact of life, and a couple of the basics like food and water... well, being on *Talisker Bounty Boat* is like nothing else... we are short on food and water.

And now I have chosen for the first time since 1982 to sail without my Musto! Not on Sunday afternoon, but



Bounty Boat crew training.

for 4000nm across the Pacific in an open boat in the footsteps of Captain William Bligh after the *Mutiny*.

It has been bugging me for some time that I am going without toilet paper, because Bligh had none, yet I was going to be wearing Musto, arguably the best gear in the world!

So the new ground rules are that no sailing clothing, at all, will be on the boat. Mike Perham (another Musto fan) was onto me from England within minutes of the crew email arriving with the news. In the end, if you are going to be thirsty and hungry anyway, being wet like Bligh may not feel so bad.

As you read this, we will already be out there, so tell all your friends and jump on the daily blog at www.taliskerbounty.com

This is definitely not going to be your average sailing gig. In fact, I can't even confirm who the crew might be — Pete Stier is having second thoughts. You may remember in my last column, he collapsed after our starvation weekend.

Following three weeks of training in Sydney, on the last day, Pete began to question how the boat could survive big seas and not be rolled over, multiple times, creating a desperate situation. It was a hard question to defend and in some ways I couldn't try, but I would not be there if I did not think it was possible, or that we can survive extreme conditions.

Talisker Bounty Boat is not self-righting and we practiced rolling it over many times, so I believe it is possible, even at night in tough conditions. It will not be pretty, but survival is a big driver. We have our drogues and para-anchor and, collectively, some good experience.

BOUNTY CREW

Mike Perham, 18, — currently the world's youngest solo circumnavigator — is along for the adventure on *Talisker Bounty Boat*. He brings youthful enthusiasm with sailing professionalism.

Dave Wilkins, 47, from Hong Kong, is an average sailor who last year had a life-changing medical scare and is now grabbing life with both hands. His eyes are wide open and he is never short of a line to make us laugh.

Pete Stier, 53, from America, is a tower of energy, a real thinker, Mr Fix It, medic and all-round nice guy. I feel he can do this and would sail with him anywhere, so I really hope he makes it.

If there is one thing I know, it's the fact that we all have our secret concerns. It happens with every adventure that holds the driving attraction of simply having an unknown outcome!

Can we possibly get close to Bligh and his men, to do it like they did, without the indisputable truth that he had no other choice? I think we can. All we have to do is get out there and face what comes. We can't turn back.

We arrive in Nuku Alofa, Tonga on April 12 and spend a week on the beach sorting and preparing *Talisker Bounty Boat* for the voyage ahead.

On April 19, we travel 135nm northwest, sailing by day and anchoring at nights, as we settle into life in an open boat. At around 6am on April 28, we will be about 20nm off Tofua and its volcano. This is the exact spot, 221 years to the day, where Fletcher Christian cast Bligh and 18 men adrift in what was to become one of the greatest open-boat journeys in maritime history.