



Brian Lemon

The fourth in the series of profiles on MHA members features Brian lemon.

was born in December 1932, in conjunction with my twin sister Jeanne, in Perth. In 1937 the family moved from Mt Lawley to Floreat Park. The following year we both started school at the then quite new Wembley Primary School. The following year the Second World War started. From Wembley School I went to West Leederville School and then in 1945 to Perth Boys High School. In 1948 I started a five year apprenticeship in the photographic section of the block making department of J. Gibney & Sons. In 1951 I was called up for National Service in the Army, which lasted for two years. Towards the end of my apprenticeship in 1953 I was approached by my examiner, who had been given the job of forming the Air Photo Section for the Lands and Surveys Department if I would be interested in coming into this area when fully operational. The answer was Yes. I spent another two years with Gibneys before this eventuated. In 1954, while in the city on my lunch break an event occurred that was to start a new phase of my life.

It was in Forrest Place that I noticed a crowd of people gathered around a most peculiar small car. A sticker on the rear window said VOLKSWAGEN. When I returned to work I asked a Czechoslovakian chappie who was working with me about this vehicle. By an amazing coincidence he had driven a captured one of these vehicles for a couple of years while in the Czech Army. "They are air-cooled, four cylinder, overhead valve rear engine, four-wheel suspension, very rugged, very reliable". Some weeks later I read where this car had created a new record from Perth to Melbourne across the Nullabor. On January 13th 1955 I bought my first Beetle, new. On January 17th I drove it to work and at lunch time went to the traffic branch and got my licence. I taught myself to drive in those five days. Shortly after this I helped to form the Volkswagen Club of WA. For the next five years I was heavily involved with the club in helping with Redex Trials at Caversham and many other car club events.

Needless to say I very quickly taught myself to service and repair these vehicles, which continues to this day, although somewhat less vigorously. In all these years I have only had five vehicles, all Beetles, plus in partners with a mate, a Kombi Camper and a VW Transporter. My current vehicle is a 1973, 1300cc (now 1600cc) series Beetle which I purchased in 1979. This vehicle has done well over 1,000,000kms. I have done seven over-land trips in VWs including around Australia and three weeks touring Tasmania in 1982.

In 1968 I met Irene, who at the time was a widow with two young boys. In 1970 we were married. In 1971 Irene and our then next door neighbour



A younger model of Brian with one of his older models



won first prize in the State Lottery. This allowed us to take a trip to Singapore and I bought my first twelve volt series Beetle.

Some time in 1975 I decided I needed to do something at night time instead of watching TV, so I bought a wooden kit of a model Torpedo Boat. This was to start the third most important phase of my life. My first thirty models were all fully Radio Controlled as I soon joined the WA Model Boat Club. During the ten years or so in this club I won many championships for scale models, including the Australian Championship in 1977. In 1983 I won the first prize by the judges at an all model show at Bunbury, and also the public's choice. I have three models permanently on show at the Whaleworld Museum at Albany. My model of the Townsville RAAF crash tender is at the Bullcreek Air Force Museum. Somewhere touring around the world is a model of mine of one of the two motorised lifeboats carried on board the First World War hospital ship called *Brittanic*. This is in conjunction with the "Titanic Exhibition".

It was around 1992 at that year's Classic and Wooden Boat Show that I met the Hicks family. This was the beginning of an amazing friendship, that of course still exists to this day. Many people have had the privilege of visiting their wonderful Maritime Museum. I have of course had the privilege of exhibiting some of my models at this Museum, and making a number of models for permanent display. I have also been fortunate enough to use their museum for a number of presentations. Over the years I have made some wonderful friendships from both the maritime modelling side of things and the full size marine scene. I recently had the humbling privilege of being made an Honorary Member of the Maritime Heritage Association of WA.

Although I have built many models and contributed many articles to *Model Shipwright*, and some other journals, there are a number of models that have special significance for one reason or another. I feel the foremost of these would have to be the model of the *Krait*, for which I have a debt of thanks to both Ross Shardlow and Arthur

Jones, the last remaining of the six specially trained commandos who did so much damage to Japanese shipping during "Operation Jaywick" in 1943 in Singapore Harbour. The model was "launched" at Barry Hicks' Museum on the 50th anniversary of "Jaywick" in 1993. Then there was the surprise gift to Ross Shardlow of the model of the Bristol Pilot Cutter *Hilda* for his "leg work" in getting the plans for *Krait* out of the Canberra War Museum.

Very close behind *Krait* is the privilege of making the model of Mike Igglesden's beautifully restored motor sailer *Oriel*, which I consider possibly the best model I have built. Another was the model of the Albany ferry *Silver Star* for Tom Sagers. And also the model of the Hull tug *Tollman* for Dave Nicholson, who has about eight of my models now. Dave is the man who has done some wonderful digital photos of my models. In recent times is the model of the Rottneest Pilot Whaler of 1853 for Ross Shardlow, reward for his work with the full size one (28ft) which is now part of the museum system at "Rotto". The model of the Swan River barge for the Melville Shire from plans drawn by Ross is now on permanent show at the Shire office. The *Little Dirk* model hopefully may be of some use in restoring the full size one at Carnarvon. There is the model of the sailing barge *Cambria* for Barry Hicks. Some day they may restore the full size one in England. The models of the drifter *Strive* and trawler *Master Hand* were made for the Hicks' Museum. Of course there was the surprise of Bill Leonard on receiving the model of the fifie, *Reaper*, then recently the presentation of the pretty little model of the Maltese water taxi to that lovely man Bill Morris.

With a bit of luck, both of my hobbies and interests will continue for many years to come.

