

SISC Vessels Attend the Victoria's 44th Annual Classic Boat Festival and 2nd Annual Race Around the Rock.

By Tim Harvey, SISC reporter

The Saltspring Island Sailing Club was well represented at two maritime events in recent weeks. One was the Maritime Museum of BC's 44th Annual Classic Boat Festival, which saw dozens of classic boats of all description gathered in Victoria's Inner Harbour on the first weekend of September. Conspicuously present was the club's wharfinger Bo Curtis and his wife Catherine Young, with their jaunty sloop *Waxwing* and its nimble tender *Auk*. The latter earned the "Best Tender" award at the same festival last year.

Relaxing in *Waxwing's* cockpit, Curtis and Young were enjoying a sunny Saturday fielding questions about the history and features of their boats. A display plaque resting on *Waxwing's* port gunwale featured an impressive 27 participation medals dating back to the Sixth Annual Classic Boat Festival in 1983. The ship's builder and original owner, long-time club member Robert Denny, was responsible for the first four participation medals. Denny also won the "Best New Construction" at the 1993 Vancouver Wooden Boat Festival. After acquiring the ship in 1997, Curtis went on to win a series of awards: two for racing, and one for "Best Motorsailor 2012", which are now mounted on an interior bulkhead.

The 7'5" sailing dingy *Auk*, hung from *Waxwing's* stern davits, was carefully built by Curtis during the Covid lockdown using red and yellow cedar, Sitka spruce and Douglas fir. It appeared as well-crafted as any wooden boat in attendance.

Curtis was quick to point out that although *Waxwing* and *Auk* were the sole SISC representation at this year's Classic Boat Festival, there are several vessels at the club that qualify as classic boats and would be suitable to participate. Among the ships he named was *Scout*, the Bill Garden trawler owned by James and Lisa Sayer, who joined the club in 2022.

I shared Curtis' appreciation of *Scout*. The previous week I had witnessed the ship plying calm waters in the pink dawn sunlight off Yeo Point. *Scout* had made a pre-dawn departure from the club, as she was also bound for the official starting point of one of BC's most prestigious and challenging ocean rowing races, the Second Annual Race Around the Rock, hosted by the Salt Spring Island Rowing Club. Three SISC boats were to serve as volunteer safety vessels for a race described by Rowing BC as an "ultra-long-distance rowing relay." The race featured seven open-ocean rowboats that would circle Salt Spring Island clockwise from Fulford to Fulford over the course of about eight hours.

The safety vessels' role was to convey umpires from Rowing Canada around the island in the shadow of competing rowers, allowing the umpires to maintain close observation of the race. The SISC contingent included the wooden trawler *Scout*, the new-looking Raider 250 aluminum powerboat *Lady Gayle* owned by associate club member Jack Speirs (who was also rowing that day), and my own *Northern Freedom*. She is a well-weathered, BC-built aluminum fast cruiser

that was unique enough to be featured in the May 1987 edition of *Pacific Yachting* (she looks like a mashup between Relic's *Beachcomber* jet craft and the cigarette boat from *Miami Vice*).

Ahead of the starting signal, *Northern Freedom* made an on-the-water rendezvous with *Scout* to transfer an umpire between ships. Pulling alongside her, it was impossible not to admire the trawler's lustrous woodwork and artistry of design. It says something about our club that we not only provide volunteers and participants in local maritime events, but show up in some of the most unique and well-built vessels on the coast.



