

Centennial Celebrations

ROYAL PAPUA YACHT CLUB

LIFE MEMBERS

ANDREW JOHN 'FOSSIL' THOMPSON



Andrew John Thompson AKA Tommo / Fossil was born in 1948 in Auchenflower, Brisbane, Australia. Andrew started sailing at the tender age of 4 years old during his family holidays at Golden Beach Caloundra, Australia. He attended Ironside State School and Indooroopilly State High School.

Andrew first arrived in Port Moresby, Papua in 1967 to work for Tutt Byrant Pacific who offered him a job that paid far more than what he was earning in Brisbane. More importantly a bunch of his friends were eager to go surfing in PNG so it must have been a good place to be. He transferred to Tutt Bryant's Rabaul operation a year later and eventually moved back to Port Moresby in 1971 to work with San Miguel brewery shortly thereafter.

Andrew joined the Papua Yacht Club (the fore runner of the RPYC) and started sailing Fireballs. He also owned two Fireballs namely Savage Grace and Just Fireball. At this time Fireballs were the senior sailing class in PNG and were sailed in Rabaul, Kieta, Madang, Lae, POM and Wewak.

In 1976 he progressed to sailing Lasers and participated in numerous local and overseas events including the South Pacific Games in Guam, where he represented Papua New Guinea and finished 4th.

In 1979 Andrew took up Hobie Cat sailing and not only did he help develop one of the Pacific's biggest Hobie Cat fleets, but he sailed in numerous World Titles, Australian Titles, State Titles, PNG Titles and also at the South Pacific Games.

The Australian National Hobie Class Association inducted Andrew into the 'Hobie Legends' Hall of Fame on 5th January 2018 during the 2017/18 Hobie Australian Titles at the Somers Yacht Club in Melbourne Australia. The creator of the award Geoff Rowdon said the award is Andrew Thompson only given to people who have given 'life changing' input into the sport. He said Andrew "was a huge influence back in the late 1970's and 80's to Australian Hobie Cat sailors during his time in PNG running the South Pacific Hobie Championships". Geoff said Andrew "has always been very interested in following the Hobie racing even long after his retirement". He went on to say "Andrew is famous for being a great

Hobie Historian storyteller story. He is always laughing and taking the mickey out of everybody and starting great conversations. Andrew is a great character". In addition to Hobie Cats, Andrew owned a couple of racing A Class boats, Farrago Express and Racketeer and competed in big boat racing both in PNG as well as along the Australian east coast in sailing events at Hamilton Island, Port Douglas regattas and the Coral Sea Classic races.

Sadly in 2000, due to his failing eyesight, Andrew had to give up competitive boat racing but took up fishing instead. Given his extremely competitive nature he poured all his time (and money) into both local Blue Water and Galley Reach fishing and all the National fishing titles throughout PNG. Andrew served on the RPYC committee over a period of 18 years, in the positions of Captain Sail, General Committee and Vice Commodore. The other club activities he was involved with include:

- Being actively involved in the early days of Search and Rescue service;
- Sail training for the Hobie Fleet;
- Maintaining the Hobie Fleet by becoming the local Hobie dealer;
- Importing the vast majority of the Hobie Cats into PNG;
- Being on the organising committee for the PNG Hobie Championships;
- Arranging for numerous overseas competitors including world champions and the top Hobie sailors in the world to come to PNG for our championships. These events had 42 boats, of which 18 of the boats were skippered and crewed by overseas competitors.

When asked whether he had any memorable moments he said there were several events that stand out in his life including racing his own boat in the Coral Sea Classic and crewing on a number of Sydney to Hobart races. However, his most memorable moment was winning the David Purdy Memorial Trophy and becoming a Life Member of the RPYC.

It must be mentioned that Andrew was a stalwart member of the Old Bastards Corner in the Wet Bar of the clubhouse – this corner heard many a story; a number of complaints and was known for its high consumption of rum and coke.

Andrew left PNG in 2012 to return to Queensland Australia.

Thank you, Andrew, for your contributions to the Royal Papua Yacht Club. A heartfelt thank you also to his wife Virginia Elmsley for assisting with this profile and Geoff Rowdon the founding creator of the Hobie Legends' Hall of Fame with the Australian Hobie National Class Association.

