

New Zealand from the 1960s



(a) Dave Jackman and Tony Butt, with one of Dave's paipo. November 2011.



(b) Peter White, Tony Butt and unidentified paipo rider - Muriwai, 1967.

Source: Photos by Bob Green and courtesy Peter White.

Dave Jackman (<http://mypaipoboard.org/interviews/DaveJackman/>), an Australian surfer permanently moved to New Zealand in 1963. He had been exposed to the Paipo Nui style boards from trips to Hawaii and went on to ride a slightly, narrower and longer version (see above photo).

Peter White (<http://mypaipoboard.org/interviews/PeterWhite/>) had also visited Hawaii and brought back a Paipo Nui board, which he copied and sold to fellow members of the Muriwai surf club.

Tony Butt (<http://mypaipoboard.org/interviews/TonyButt/>) bought one of these boards which he used over a 15 year period around Muriwai. Below is a 1967 article featuring Peter White.



Flett, N. (1967) Auckland Star, courtesy Peter White

For speed in the surf, you can't beat a paipo

About halfway between the exhilaration of bodysurfing and the thrill of surfing comes the newer surf-sport of paipo-boarding. The man who brought the boards to New Zealand is Peter White, of Onehunga.

A Muriwai surf lifesaver, he discovered the paipo boards while he was staying at Sunset Beach, Hawaii, in 1963.

The 3ft by 2ft 6in plywood or fibreglass "saucers" could outrun the fastest surfboards in the 10 to 20ft waves.

Once he tried them he discarded his six years of board-riding and bought a paipo.

"The big gun surfboards in Hawaii do more than 30 miles an hour down a wave, and yet the paipo riders just flashed past," he said.

He recalls seeing paipo boardriders skimming across waves with their faces only inches from the wall.

"The paipos could do more than 40 miles an hour in the huge Sunset surf," he said.

The boards are really a variation of the old ironing board, but where they differ they do so greatly. A plate of plywood is placed in a mould overnight, and when it is dry, the bottom is coated with fibreglass. The finished product looks like a thin cupboard door with upturned edges.

"Once in the surf, the board only just floats and flippers are needed for propulsion," White said.

"You hold the paipo in front of you and kick your legs. If a wave is going to break over you you tilt the paipo down and go like a submarine. The board goes where you point it."

"When you are out where the waves are forming, you turn around and kick down the face of the wave. When you begin to slide you pull yourself forward until your head is over the front, and you're off."

"To turn left or right you dip the appropriate edge into the wave and the board turns quickly. This enables the rider to skim in front of the break, right across the wave's face."

White has tried the board in most North Island surf. He found it performed particularly well at Raglan and Muriwai.

"You go so fast across the wave that you have to push boardriders out of the way," he said. "You can ride in 2ft or 2ft surf."

The amazing speed is caused by the flat planing surface in the middle of the board. A rider actually hydroplanes down the face of the wave.

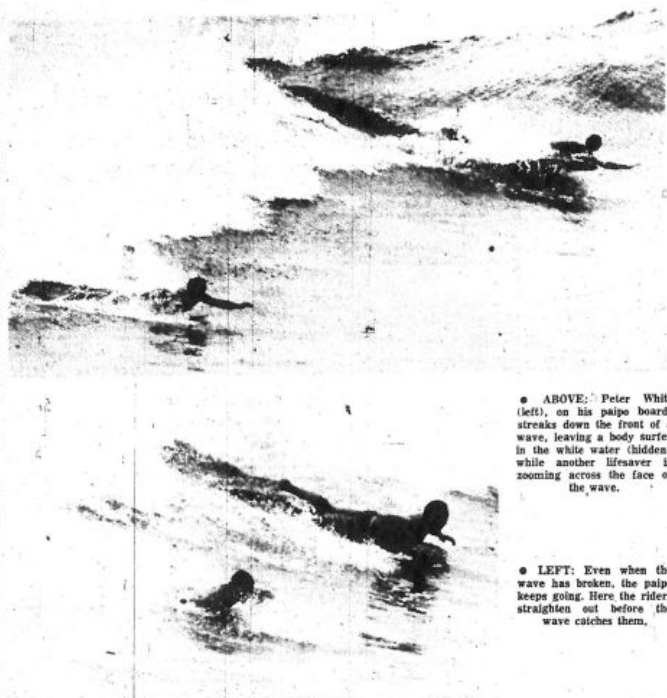
But what about danger? Are the boards dangerous?

"No, not at all," said White. "When you fall off, the board just stops. There's no long swims after your board. You just pick it up and try again."

Since 1964 White has made about 50 paipos for his surf club friends.

"Once you try it, surf riding seems dull," he said.

At Muriwai recently with 12ft waves running, a small



● ABOVE: Peter White (left), on his paipo board, streaks down the front of a wave, leaving a body surfer in the white water (hidden) while another lifesaver is zooming across the face of the wave.

● LEFT: Even when the wave has broken, the paipo keeps going. Here the riders straighten out before the wave catches them.

group of Muriwai lifesavers dived off the rocks with their paipos and flippers.

"Diving in was no trouble," White recalls. "We just held the paipos out in front and dived in so they skimmed along the water."

The speed of the paipos could be seen when two riders caught the same wave as a bodysurfer, who was quickly left in the foam.

In the Hawaiian Islands, riders have become so expert that they can stand on the boards and it is commonplace to kneel down while racing across a wave.

"It is easy to start learning the sport," White said.

"Everyone can do it the first time out. The only difficult part is learning to steer across the face."

There doesn't seem much chance of the paipo beating the surfboard in popularity, but it makes a great change when the surf is crowded with boards, he said.

**"BLACK & WHITE"
WHISKY DRINKERS
ARE STUBBORN!**

*—and with
very good reason*



Photo courtesy of E. Bishop. Central Auckland Research Centre Auckland Libraries. Nga Whare Matauranga o Tamaki Makaurā

In addition, to Peter White and Tony Butt, other surfers included Gary Butt, Mike Lawson and 'Red' Luton. Below are photos of boards ridden by Tony, Mike and Peter. All these boards were made from plywood, by Peter White using a wooden mould and clamps.



(a) Tony Butt's board.



(b) Tony Butt's board



(a) Mike Lawson's board.



(b) Peter White's board.

Source: Photos courtesy Tony Butt and Peter White.

Red's board hangs in the Muriwai surf club. In the photo below Peter White is holding the original Val Valentine Paipo Nui board he brought back from Hawaii. Charlie Straumietis also surfed at Muriwai. His father made him a similar style board which he eventually rode on his knees. He also added fins and went onto riding kneeboards which he continues to ride.



(a) Red Luton's board.



(b) Peter White at Whangerau.

Source: Photos courtesy Pauline Butt and Peter White

There are few other accounts of bellyboards being ridden after the 1960s. Peter White recalls seeing a board made by him at Tauranga, while the Great Barrier Islands had been surfed by Maroubra surfers (Peden 2010) and Rocky Hall, from the South Island had surfed on a small ply bellyboard in Victoria (Callaghan 2010, Carson 2010) before returning to New Zealand.



Peter White. Photo courtesy Peter White.

This solid wood board was owned by Jeff Drinkwater back in the 1960s when he was becoming a teenager. His family spent Christmas holidays for many years in Auckland and north of Auckland. His mother had written on the rear of the board. In the photograph below this board, two bellyboards can be seen in the shop window.



(a) Jeff Drinkwater 'Surf Boy' board.



(b) 3'6 3/4" x 11 1/2" - Surf Boy bellyboard.



New Plymouth Surf Shop 1963. Bellyboards in the window. Photo courtesy: Williamson, Luke (2000). Gone Surfing.



(a) Dell bellyboard.



(b) Dell bellyboard.

Source: Photos courtesy James Newby.



(a) Quane bellyboard.



(b) Quane bellyboard.

Source: Photos courtesy James Newby.



(a) Mark Ogram Lipsticks.



(b) Made for Robyn in Whangamata in the mid 80's.

Source: Photos Unknown



Big Sun paipo. 4'6 x 22' x 2'3/4. Ryan Glover shape. Source: <https://www.bigsun.nz/products/big-sun-lord-board>.

Ricardo Paes tested a prototype in 2010 and since around 2016-2017 has been creating Cork bodyboards. Now based in New Plymouth, the twin-finned boards are reported to be 65% upcycled styrofoam in the core and 30% cork and 5% paulownia.



(a) Cork bodyboard.



(b) Twin finned board.

Source: Photos courtesy <https://www.facebook.com/corkbodyboards/posts/>.



(a) Cork boards in action.



(b) Cork boards in action.

Source: Photos courtesy <https://www.facebook.com/corkbodyboards/posts/>

Based in Auckland Hebri Boards produce wooden bellyboards. Many resemble the traditional UK style bellyboard.



(a) Hebri Boards.



(b) Hebri Boards.

Source: Photos courtesy <https://www.facebook.com/hebriboardsltd/>

Mamo handplanes have also made some paipo boards.



(a) Japanese Cedar
with Tasmania Black wood,
finish with homemade beeswax polish.



(b) 12mm central concave, with 80mm
wide 10mm deep chines to the rails.

Source: Photos courtesy <https://www.facebook.com/MAMOHandplanes>



(a) Pani Marsh home made paipo.
Photo Pani Marsh.



(b) Kerry Hunt paulownia boards, with redwood stringers.
Source: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/404306646826482/posts/596556504268161/>