



PROUD HISTORY: Restoring the the rowing scull *Perseverance* may have driven Geoff Talbot crazy but its a job well done. **Inset:** Members of the Merbein Rowing Club in the 1920s. **Picture:** Stacey Merlin

Perseverance restores Merbein rowing history

By Hannah Knight

AN old rowing boat has been restored to its former glory for the Merbein Centenary.

A single racing scull, *Perseverance*, will be carried in the Fishers Supermarkets Centenary Parade by descendants of the town's heroic rowers.

In October, 1923, a Merbein crew rowed to victory at Melbourne's Henly-on-Yarra.

Competing in a borrowed boat and using borrowed oars, the Merbein rowers won the Elswick Challenge Cup by half a length in front

of 96,000 spectators.

Merbein Rowing Club also had success at the Melbourne Regatta "Dunkling Shield" and at Ballarat's Victorian championship pairs in 1925.

Perseverance, one of the first boats used at the Merbein Rowing Club, will represent the town's prosperous rowing history, according to Richard Wells.

The Merbein Centenary Committee member said rowing was popular in Merbein in the 1920s.

"The rowing club was located just downstream of the Merbein Pumping Station and quite a few of

the rowers were wood cutters," he said.

"They would go down there in the morning, row about seven or eight miles and cut sleepers with an axe all day and then row home.

"They were very, very fit men."

Mr Wells said the club's success in the Elswick Challenge Cup was phenomenal.

"The story goes that they went to Melbourne on the train, borrowed a boat from Albert Park Rowing Club, the oars from somewhere else and, on one occasion, they actually borrowed a coxman.

"They were just bloody unreal."

Geoff Talbot, a Mildura Rowing Club member, has spent the past few months repairing *Perseverance* in time for the centenary parade on August 21.

It is believed the boat was entrusted to the care of the Mildura Rowing Club, after the Merbein Rowing Club folded in the 1930s.

"It's about 80 years old," Mr Talbot said.

"This boat belonged to Angus Foster, who was an early settler and a founder of the rowing club.

"It was his own private boat and when the Merbein club folded he started rowing out of Mildura so-

cially. When he died, the boat was left down there and was basically used as a decoration and then disappeared."

Mr Talbot said *Perseverance* had been found in a shed a few months ago.

"I agreed to do it up and it's been driving me crazy ever since," he said.

"It will never go on the water again, but it will do the job for the parade."

An original pair of oars have also been restored and are on display at the Centenary office, 91 Commercial Street, Merbein.