

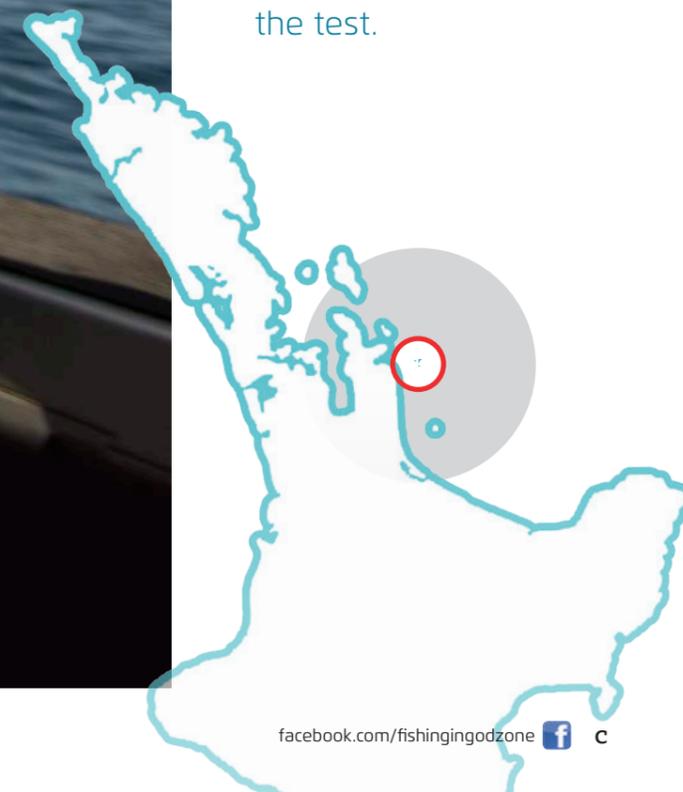
The writer (left) and Clem
pose with their double
Photo credit: www.guymac.co.nz

HITTING THE ALDERMEN ISLANDS

By Mathew Hewetson
Photos: Mathew Hewetson and Guy MacIndoe

WITH EPIC ADVENTURES

We headed to Whitianga in early 2017 to board Epic Adventure's big Senator to target kingfish out around the Aldermen Islands and their surrounding pins. Maven Rods came along for the trip to put their Godzone made rods to the test.



We were joined by the other Epic boats and fished side by side working the pins, you can see the Aldermen Islands in the background to the south



CONSTANTLY MOVING

We headed out with the two other Epic boats in convoy to fish the deep reefs and pins north of the Aldermen's. The fishing proved to be patchy for us all, as we fished different marks trying to find hungrier fish.

We had a few hits on the live baits which were getting the most attention but jigs weren't getting much interest. I however, kept persevering with them as I was enjoying using the Maven Pacific Mechanical Jig 5'6" Spiral Wrap PE3-5 rod. This was matched to a Shimano Talica 10 and Clem has added a special made handle with cork grip. These custom handles look and feel great when jigging and match the stylish cork grips on the Maven Rods.

All the boats were constantly needing to move this morning, covering ground and searching for where the better fish were holding. Owen commented the Yamaha 225hp never gets turned off when out fishing and has done over 4000 hours, the big girl has always been reliable.

Clem hooked up using a live bait and a nice 10-12kg fish was on board. We

decided to keep this for the table, and I think these sized fish are the best kings to take home. The bigger 18kg+ fish are good for a fight, photos and then release. We started to get more interest now and I switched to live baits and got a couple of hits but didn't hook up. Gayleen then hooked up on her jigging outfit and a nice kingfish gave her a good work-out.

We then moved to another mark and I reverted back to jigging, while Clem put down another livie. This time we both got smashed on the drop and had to work the fish carefully up to the boat so we didn't tangle each other and bust off.

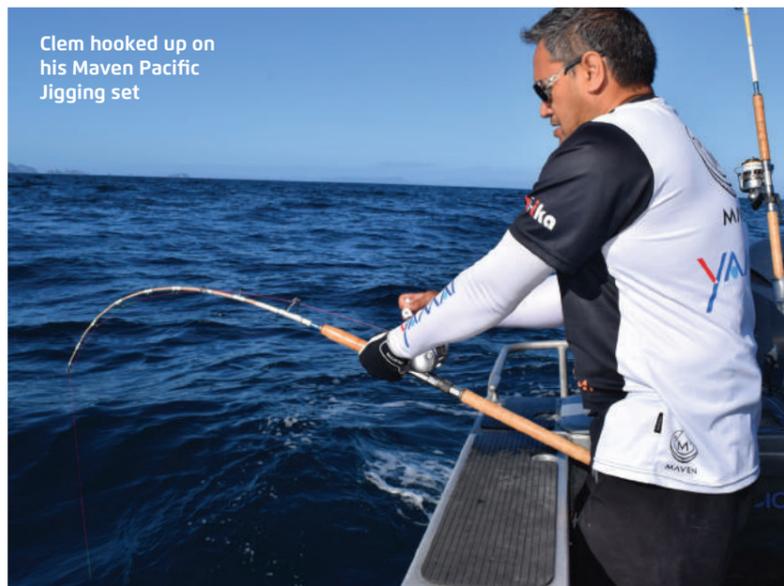
Both fish were landed and again, good conditioned 10-13kg kings. The Maven Pacific Jig rod was great to fight the kingfish on, with plenty of power and very comfortable when playing a good fish. The blanks used in these rods are CTS and made right here in Godzone, over on Auckland's North Shore. CTS have a very strong name overseas and they export the blanks around the world. Maven Rods are Gayleen's baby and she is very passionate about making quality rods, which look striking in their striped colours.

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The Aldermen Islands are a small group of rocky islets to the southeast of Mercury Bay in Godzone, located off the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula, 20 kilometres (12 mi) east of the mouth of the Tairua River.

The islands were named 'the Court of Aldermen' by Captain Cook and his crew on November 3, 1769 after previously naming Mayor Island. The Aldermen group consists of four main islands: Hongiora, Middle, Ruamahuanui and Ruamahuaitei, all are the remnants of a volcanic cone. Their combined area is just under one square kilometre.

This rocky and broken up area on the seabed provides ideal habitat for big snapper, kingfish and hapuka. Local charter operator Epic Adventures has three boats that fish this area nearly every day, so they are very experienced and work hard to put clients onto good fish.



Clem hooked up on his Maven Pacific Jigging set

It was my second trip out with skipper Owen Wills on board the Senator 690 and this time joining me was Gayleen Pratt from local rod manufacturer Maven Rods, with Clem Henry who helps test their rods.

The plan was to try and catch several kingfish on both the jigging and

stickbaiting outfits, although we did spend time collecting live jack mackerel as Owen advised they were producing the best fish lately. The water was strangely cold for this time of year and nearly 2 degrees colder than usual for early summer. So, this was affecting the bite time and fishing.



Clem poses with his first king caught on a live bait
Photo credit: www.guymac.co.nz

Skipper Owen helps bring in a fat fish for photos and release



MARLIN TIME

We were about to lower live baits back down when Owen noticed a blue, larger fish swimming towards the boat and said it looked like a mako was coming in. As it came closer to the boat and was only 15-20 feet away, I noticed it had stripes and a beak. It was a small striped marlin!

Quickly, I lowered my jack mackerel into the water and free-spoiled it down and the marlin came straight over and went under the boat towards the livie. Nothing happened! It then popped up on the other side swimming past Clem's livie and came up finning on the surface.

Clem quickly grabbed the Maven Pacific 8'3" PE6-8 Stickbait rod and sent it out right past the marlin. It turned its nose up at this offering too! Very frustrating when they just don't want to know, it would have made for a great bit of action if we hooked up.

Owen pointed out they commonly get marlin taking live baits over summer around the Aldermen Pins and while most fish were lost, a few had been landed.



The striking custom cork handle on the Talica is a good match to the Maven Rod

SHALLOW WATER

After spending the morning and early afternoon out wide, we decided to head in to fish shallower water around the islands using stickbaits. We found a good work-up of birds and kahawai schooling on the surface and worked stickbaits hard through these, but only foul hooked kahawai.

The kingies weren't shadowing this school today and then Gayleen hooked up on her lighter Pacific PE2-4 set and the fish was coming in nicely. Suddenly, it lunged and loaded up hard followed by a loud snap. It had snapped the main 35lb braid and upon checking the drag on the Stella 5000, it was perhaps a tad too tight.

It could have been a kahawai which got hit by a kingfish on the way in or a good kingie that woke up when it saw the boat. We will never know, but it proved the light stickbait gear is fun to use and to be prepared for gear failure when bigger fish strike.

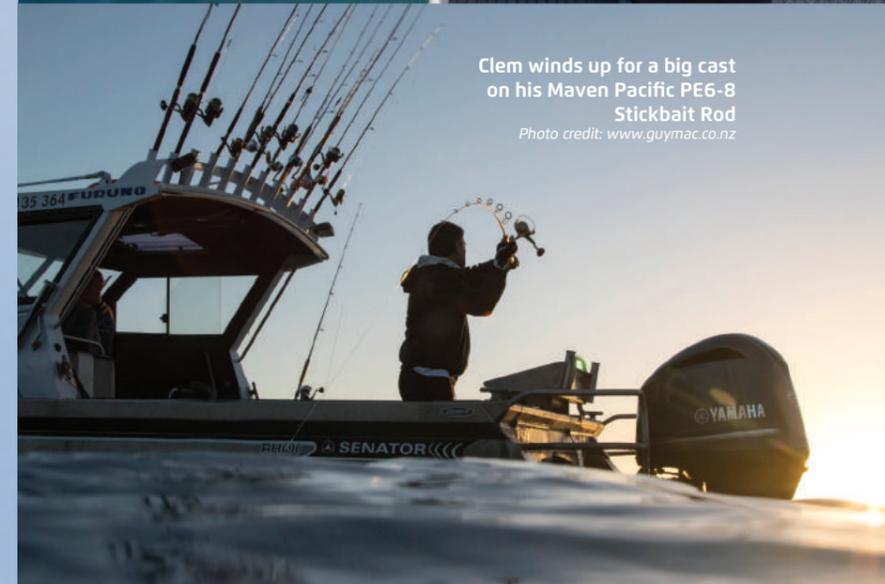
After an hour of hunting in the shallows we decided to pull the pin and head back to the wharf at Whitianga to unload and head for home. Another great day out on the water with Epic and the team from Maven Rods.

For more information visit:
www.epicadventures.co.nz
www.mavenfishing.com

Gayleen battles a nice fish with her Maven Pacific Mechanical Jig 5'6" Spiral Wrap PE3-5 Rod



Clem winds up for a big cast on his Maven Pacific PE6-8 Stickbait Rod
 Photo credit: www.guymac.co.nz



Going top water in the shallows

