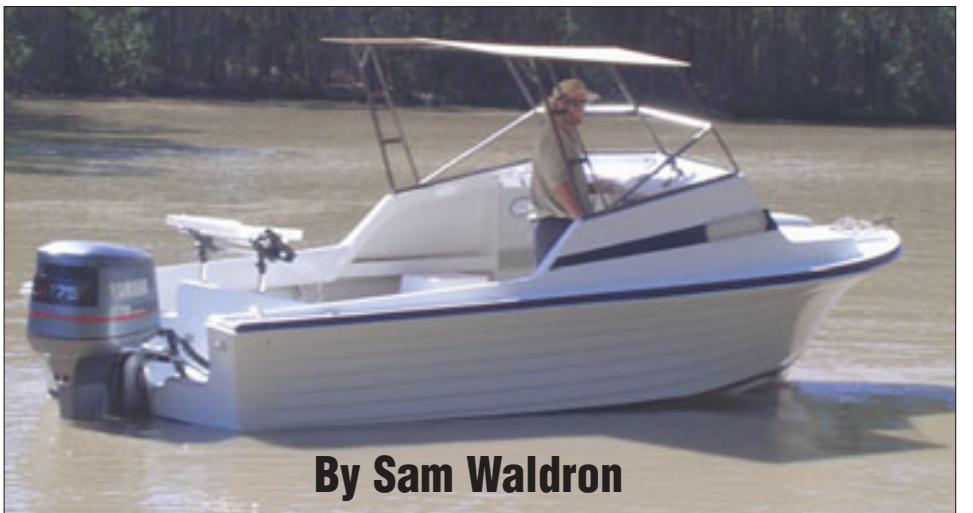


Restoration Of A Cruise Craft Reef Ranger 18



By Sam Waldron

For South West Queensland farmer Sam Waldron, being 650 km from the nearest bit of ocean was a mere detail - he was determined to renovate a 'classic' within a very tight budget of around \$15,000 for the whole package. This is an inspirational story of dust, grit . . . and real determination.

Looking for another project to get my teeth into after finishing the 1969 ex-Army Landrover and realizing that my current 4.1m tinny was too small for the growing family, got me thinking.

F&B's series of boat restoration stories got me interested in restoring an old fibreglass boat. I decided that fibreglass was the go as it was another skill which I have not been exposed to and knowledge of its use could only be beneficial.

Now, which boat to choose? Jeff Webster's series of DIY boat repairs and Golden Oldie review magazines were a great start.

I narrowed it down by selecting for the following goals:

Intended Purpose:

- Fishing and cruising different holiday destinations
- Must be able to comfortably carry 2 adults and 3 kids or three adults offshore
- Must offer protection from the elements
- Must have offshore range of 100 nautical miles
- Must be able to pull a single skier

Use – 4 times per year in saltwater; 10 times per year in freshwater i.e. surrogate ski boat (If it ever rains in western Queensland to provide a ski-able water source)

Intended Waterways

- Moreton Bay
- Hervey Bay
- Offshore Noosa
- Mooloolaba
- Maybe 1770
- Maybe Hinchinbrook

As I live with my family near Dirranbandi in SW Qld (650kms from the coast) the boat must have a good trailer capable of sustained high speed running. I am looking for a maximum all up towing weight of about 2500kgs. Keeping it under 2000kgs would be great and also help with the budget.

Budget

Set at \$15,000 as a completed project, I decided to search for the following models:

- Haines Hunter V17L
- Haines Hunter V19C
- Cruise Craft Reef Ranger
- Savage Surveyor
- Savage Atlantic
- Pride President

As I found out, anything that starts with Haines commands premium prices for not necessarily a premium product, and most Savages and Prides were located in Victoria. I wanted to stick to well known brands to ensure

Wasn't she beautiful.....



Lovely lines, deep forefoot, solid decks. Held together with cable ties, I think the trailer was lucky to make it home.



Practical roof and cutting table. Unfortunately only enough room for two people. The old Yamaha was sold and replaced with a later model 175hp.



Needs a tidy up.....

I had a saleable product on completion of the project. After looking at a V17L I crossed it off the list as they are small. The V19C are a great sized boat, but prices range from 12-15K for ones that still need work and equipped with aging outboards.

Cruise Craft Reef Rangers never seem to come up for sale. I figure that there was not many of them made or that they are good boats held in families for years. It rated in the top ten of Jeff Webster's Golden Oldies, so I figured it can't be too bad.

A Reef Ranger 18 which needs work was listed on ebay in October 2005. The boat was located in The Town of 1770 and the owner was very honest and was willing to answer any questions truthfully (not common these days). As it turns out I won the auction and after a 2000km round trip I had the boat home. I got it for the right price – I THINK.

The Project Begins.

I separated the project into five distinct sections.

1. Trailer
2. Hull
3. Floor and interior structure
4. Top decks
5. Roof and fitout

The trailer was fairly straightforward. It towed extremely well so I was reluctant to alter the basic design. I cut it off at the A-frame and used the old frame as a template for new steel fabrication. The trailer's corrosion resistance is oil filled sub-sections, and the whole lot coated with 92% zinc cold gal paint and top coated with two coats of enamel paint. I know it's not hot dipped galvanized, but it will last a good number of years with preventative maintenance.

Wiring was concealed to protect from stone damage and LED lights were used. 14" 8 ply light truck tyres were fitted to resist blowouts. A centre walkway was added to help launch and retrieve the rig at the ramp.



Ready for RWC and Rego

Next step was the hull. I stripped the boat completely and tipped it over in the yard for three weeks of sanding, filling, sanding, filling, sanding, sanding and just a bit more sanding.

Finally she was ready for painting. Two pac polyurethane was applied. (Continued Over)