

# F&B's Boat Renovations & MakeOvers

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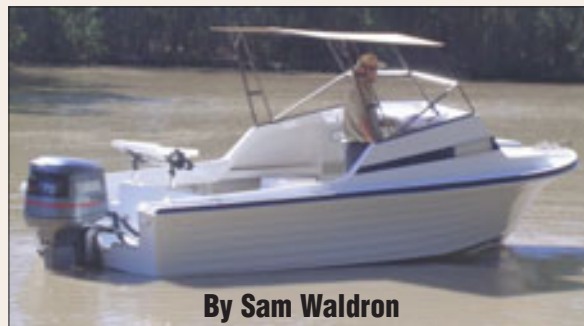
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F&B's R&M

# Restoration Of A Cruise Craft Reef Ranger 18



By Sam Waldron



Do It Yourself  
-with F&B!

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)

# F&B's Renovations & MakeOvers

## DIY Fibreglass Ice or Fish Box

with Tony Ravenscroft

**I**n the process of making the icebox or this article, I was constantly reminding myself that there are faster ways to make an icebox. So if you are reading this after first skimming the photo series, and thinking "It looks like a lot of stuffing around just to make an icebox!" I will be the first to agree.

As some readers will see this as being in conflict with the purpose of this DIY series, let me explain: the average home built icebox is simply a few slabs of insulating foam (the type that does not react with resin) pinned together and covered with fibreglass straight over the top. The finish is not very good, but it will keep your beer just as cold as if it were a gold plated professional job.

"So why is this particular icebox construction so complicated?" you keep wondering. For two very good reasons.

**First:** While I have already conceded that the straight 'glass-over foam box will do just as good a job, I prefer that the things I make look a little better than that. Accordingly, I am prepared to put in the extra effort. If you don't see the need, then just pick out the information you want from the following pages and do a straight 'glass-over-foam job, and as I said - your beer will be just as cold!

**Second:** The other reason is a little more solid. This is the final in our "Learn to Fibreglass" series.

In the previous sections we covered a wide range of skills, materials and how to use them. To tie all that together it was obvious that we had to make something, and preferably something many readers actually want to make and use. So it was decided an icebox was the go.

However, bear in mind the same techniques are just what you need if you were making a hardtop or a swim platform.

If you were making a hardtop, for example, then it should not take too much imagination to look at the following pages and modify what is on them, to make it and have it look as good as a professional job.

That by the way, is THE point. You can make just about anything you want with fibreglass. The only limits are those imposed by your imagination and how much effort you are prepared to put into the job.

Since it was a while since I have done a job like this I rediscovered just about every mistake you could make and (thankfully) how to fix them as well. I will mark the trail as clearly as I can.

Before we go too far the best advice I can give is to start small. Either make a small box of say 20cm square (I mean just a box, not an icebox like we have here) or perhaps just start with the icebox lid. Build your skills by making mistakes where it doesn't matter,



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then launch into the icebox proper.

Fibreglassing is really easy, and so is riding a bike - but how many times did you crash before you made it to the end of the driveway?

Finally, re-read the last "Fibreglassing At Home" article before you do too much more.

### How To Use This Guide To Build An Icebox

It is not my intention to tell you blow for blow how to build the icebox shown in the photos. Very simply, it may not be the size that you want. What I have attempted to do is to tell you how to design and build a professional looking, double moulded item to your own specification.

Then read this whole piece in total *before doing anything* towards actual building. Draw some rough sketches and take them to your fibreglass suppliers; the guys behind the counter will be able to then tell you what and how much you need to buy.

This article will provide all you need to have four mouldings off the moulds ready to assemble - and then we'll assemble them.

### Basic Job Description.

The icebox is made of four fibreglass mouldings. An outer shell, an inner liner, a lid and a flat base for the lid. All have a gelcoat finish.

The inner liner was made with two layers of 450gsm chopped

Re-introducing Tony Ravenscroft's popular series all about building your own fibreglass ice box at home. First published back in 1995 - it's been in constant demand ever since, despite long ago selling out of the 2 issues that first carried the reports. Fibreglassing is not a difficult process once you've got the hang of it - and armed with that knowledge, there is then no reason why you can't do fully professional repairs; make your own moulds, design and build a hardtop, ice-chest, or fishbox - or build your own fibreglass boat. In this series, Tony has done a marvellous job of taking a very technical subject and putting it into language we ordinary folk can understand. He's been assisted by some of the industry's top fibreglass specialists who tipped all the high tech words back in - forcing Tony to re-write the piece several times. But as technical guru Brian Edwards said to F&B "Sure, keep it simple by all means, but let's get it right." What we have here, then, is one of the best reports we've ever read on this subject, and although it is still - of necessity - a bit heavy in parts, if you take the time to read it through a couple of times, it will provide the basic understanding and know-how that you need to go to the next square. Our thanks to all the people who so willingly contributed their time and expertise to this series - we've all learned a great deal in the process.



Left: "Just like a bought one" only better, because it is designed and built to suit your exact needs.

strand mat.

The lid and outer shell were made with two layers of 450gsm chopped strand mat and a final layer of heavy woven rovings. The outer shell has a reverse flange for added strength in the final assembly.

The lid base was made with two layers of 450gsm chopped strand mat and a third layer added during the final assembly process.

The insulation used was green foam from the fibreglass suppliers. White coolite foam dissolves in seconds upon contact with resin and cannot be used in this particular icebox project.

## Step 1

### Making the basic mould.

To make this type of mould, you can use just about anything that resin doesn't stick to. So basically anything that is the shape you want, or can become the shape you want will do. It also helps if you can get it cheap.

I had originally planned to use coated 6mm masonry stiffened with a light timber frame. Then by coincidence where I currently work remodelled a storeroom and all the coated 12mm chipboard from a row of shelves came my way for

# Rebuilding The Transom On An Old Haines V-17 C

with Tony Ravenscroft



**I'm sure that it really did seem like the thing to do. The transom was rotten, it had to be got out somehow . . . so cut the back off the boat.**

Simple. Well it did get the rot out. It wasn't until later when work had to begin on putting it all back together, that the flaws in the plan became apparent.

At this point it became clear to the owner that he had made a pretty big mistake. A phone call to the F&B office led to a suggestion that he call me for some ideas. Now to be honest, from the description he gave me over the phone I didn't quite understand what he had done. I did understand however that he was feeling pretty desperate about it. So in spite of the fact that he was a good two hour drive away he was keen to tow it down to me so I could have a look.

One quick glance told the story. He had paid good money for a boat and now, as far as he could see he had reduced it to a worthless wreck.

The good news was that being fibreglass, everything is fixable. Even if there was quite a bit of work involved.

Forgetting the transom for the moment I had a good look around the rest of the boat.

A Haines Hunter V-17C, it is still (in my opinion) one of the best looking half cabs ever built in Australia. And editor PW confirmed it was a lot more than just a pretty boat, being one of the

nicest handling and riding boats of the 1970's-1980's era. Definitely worth the effort involved to bring it up to standard. Which was just as well, because in spite of what the owner had been led to believe, the rot was more wide spread than just the transom.

That's pretty common though for a fibreglass boat of this age. Nearly all boats of this era have a lot of wood in the internals. While that is not in itself a bad thing, a combination of the wood not being completely encapsulated in fibreglass and holes drilled to bolt on fittings over the years contributed to water getting locked in just about everywhere. We drilled a number of inspection holes and proved that the rot was right through nearly all the internal timber.

While there was a lot of work ahead, this was, and will be again, a great boat. The owner paid very little for it and will only need to spend a couple of thousand more to make it as good as new. Compare that with the price of a new 5.2 m half cab at about \$27,000 - \$35,000!

It sounds good, doesn't it.? Well it's a bit of an exaggeration because you can also buy a boat of similar age but without the rot, for a lot less.

However, the price difference between even that and the rebuild is still significant, making the rebuild a good option. Problem was, as he had just clearly demonstrated on the back of the boat, he really had no idea how to go about it.

I just couldn't bring myself to give this bloke some quick instructions and send him on his way. I had just finished a similar project and I never thought I would meet anyone as silly as me.

So I figured we had to stick together. We came up with a five stage plan.

**Stage One** Repair the transom, I don't mean the actual replacement that began all this - I mean putting back in the bit that he shouldn't have cut out.

**Stage Two** was to replace the transom timber, this was the job he originally started and on the way show him how it should have been done.

**Stage Three** was to remove all the internal structure which we had determined was also rotten and do some of the preliminary work towards getting that back into the boat.

**Stage Four** really ran through the first three stages. It was to teach the owner how to fibreglass and a few fibreglass boat building basics. The final stage was to then send him home with a good kick start on the project and see how he progressed now that he has a better idea of what to do and how.

As usual, there is always more than one way to do any job and that includes this one. So this isn't necessarily the only way this repair could have been done. And of course if you are planning a similar repair yourself getting some advice from a professional shipwright before you start is always a good idea.

F&B's R&M



**1** It did get a lot of strange looks on the highway. The owner knew that there was a bit of rot in the transom when he bought the boat but thought it was only a small patch. He cut it out but found more so just kept on cutting. He admits that he knew that working from the outside was a mistake, but couldn't see how he was going to get access from the inside. Since he thought he only had a small patch to cut out working from the outside looked like a good idea. But even if the damage had not been so wide spread, you really do have to get at it from the inside. Cutting a hole on the outside (even one smaller than this) will generally lead to a repair that not only looks ugly but is severely compromised in strength.



**2** The rot didn't stop at the transom however. We drilled some inspection holes which you could also look upon as core samples. These showed that just about everywhere there was timber in the boat there was also dry rot. Notice that these were drilled with a hole saw not just a drill bit. A hole saw gives you a hole big enough to look into and the piece from the hole does really act like a core sample and let's you have a really close look at the state of the timber. Make the hole the same size as a large screw-in bung fitting and you don't even have to repair the hole if you find there was no rot. Just fit a bung instead and you then have a permanent inspection port the check for water (etc) later on.



**3** Ain't she pretty! Well I think so, anyway. Still one of the best looking trailerboats ever built in Australia. Notice however that she is off the trailer and sitting flat on her keel on solid, flat ground. You can't do any type of repair work like this with the boat on the trailer. Even on a relatively small repair the hull can get pushed out of shape by the rollers and skids. As you will see in later photos there really wasn't much left in the back end of this boat by the time we had finished anyway. There was no way we could have left it on the trailer.



**4** This photo was taken after I had sent the owner home to grind and cut for a few days. Most of the internal timber was rotten so it was decided to do a full internal rebuild while the transom was being done. Just be aware that if only the transom was rotten then there would not have been the need to cut out the floor and the structure underneath as has been done here. However, even if that had been the case we would still have taken out about half a metre of floor to give full access to the transom from the inside. The frame supporting the boat was made before anything was cut out and is needed to preserve the shape of the boat and keep what's about to be left of the back of the boat solid while we work.

(Continued Over)



# The Rebuilding Of 'Dad & Dave'

**I**t all started in 1983, when a workmate said that he and his father had an old 20 foot plywood cabin cruiser that they had started to restore, but the job had become too big for them. I always had an interest in old wooden boats, and so I told my father about the boat and my desire to have a large boat that we could both use to go on fishing trips together.

After a discussion with Dad, I arranged to go and have a look at the boat. My first viewing of the boat was on my own as I had no idea of what I was going to find.

Finding the address I'd been given, I proceeded to the back yard to find the boat, and I could not believe what I saw. The boat was sticking half out of the shed, upside down and no paint

**Introducing a great yarn by a bloke called Dave Long, from Ballarat in Victoria. It's a story of how a father and son spent nigh on 20 years building a dream together; a plywood fishing boat they could share.**

**It's also a story about a couple of battlers having a go. Not for them the slick, shiny fibreglass boat or trick tinnie. These blokes started with just \$350 and the unshakeable belief that one day, they would finish their boat, and go fishing together.**

**Well, as things turned out, Dad didn't see the boat finished, but on November 1st 2003, his son, Dave Long, launched the boat in the memory of his Dad. We're pretty sure he was there, too. And very proud.**

on it. It was obvious the boat would need lots of work to restore it to its former glory.

I went home and told Dad about it, and we decided to go and have another look it, to see if he thought it could be restored. To my surprise, Dad was very excited about what he saw. He climbed in under the upturned boat to assess its condition. Being a trade qualified painter and decorator, with some carpentry experience Dad was able to spot any rot or other damage the boat may have had. What he found was lots of rot, but a boat that could be repaired with lots of work, effort - and of course, lots of money.

We went home and decided what the boat was worth, what it might cost to fix, and refit it to suit our requirements. The total cost

*Right: The remains of Dad & Dave once all the rot was removed and it was time to start rebuilding. (My late father inside the remains of Dad & Dave).*

of the project far exceeded our expectations and budget, so we thought about it some more, and came up with a figure we could scrape together.

The next day, I went to work and hesitantly made our offer to my workmate. To my surprise, he accepted. The offer was \$500, but a down payment of \$250 would be sufficient until all the accessories that had been removed from the boat were found, and given to me.

The next challenge was how to get the boat to my house, a job that was made easier by the fact that my workmate had not informed me that he had the trailer for the boat, but it was also in bad repair and in storage at another friend's house.

It was then decided that we would need some help to



get the boat up the right way and onto the trailer, and I would come the following weekend with some mates to pick up the boat.

## Getting It Home

The day came finally to go and collect the boat, and to my surprise we found the boat sitting on the trailer outside my workmate's house. Apparently he had decided to visit the hotel across the road from his house and meet some mates,

and after a few drinks, they decided that there was enough of them to do the job.

My workmate's assessment of the trailer proved correct as the trailer was in a very bad condition, but would be good enough for the short trip to my place. After pumping up the tyres and tying down the boat to the trailer, we were on our way.

The next task, once home, was to get the boat and

trailer into the back yard of my parent's house, as there was no access to the backyard, except through the next door neighbour's backyard. After a short discussion with our friendly neighbour, she gave us permission to the access we needed, providing we took her fishing when we finished the boat. A done deal!

Once we got the boat into the backyard we made a better assessment of the



## Renos & MakeOvers

# Refurbishing A 1988 Haines Signature 1850 L



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This is young Nicholas Hall, standing very proudly in front of the family's fully restored 1850L.

Introducing a very interesting report by Ray Hall in Mt Isa, Qld detailing how (and why) he worked - and re-worked his faithful Haines Signature through an engine change-over, a new trailer - and finally, the big hull make-over. It is a fascinating tale with lots of info to absorb by other readers with similar projects in mind.

**A**fter months and months of looking for a new boat (or new to us), we decided, after much debate, to keep what we had, and refurbish. This article is about how an average Joe like me, with no boat yard, or painting experience, refurbished a 1988 Haines Signature 1850L.

We've all read any number of articles on how 'so and so' stripped their hull and had a professional boat yard refurbish their hull. I went about it from a different point of view: I wanted to do it myself.

I accepted that probably the most important aspect of the refurbishment was the actual laying of the paint, and decided to contract the spraying out to a professional.

Before I delve into the actual process of refurbishment, let me give you a bit of history on the boat.

### Finding The Signature

Having been transplanted from the 'States some 7

years ago to the central coast of NSW, I was fortunate enough to befriend a number of charter operators working out of Terrigal. While working for fishing time, I was able to learn quite a bit about the local area and how to fish in 'foreign' waters.

After a couple of years of this, I decided it was time to go it alone, especially as I had by then, acquired a family of four. My wife loves to fish, and we have 2 boys aged 8 and 10 now.

We needed a boat that could handle a number of functions, be reasonably towable by a family sedan, be capable of operating offshore up to say 20 nautical miles, and if needs be, pull a water skier.

Again after many months of scouring the newspapers, Trade-A-Boat, reading magazines, visiting boat yards up and down the central NSW coast and Sydney, we found the "Perfect Boat".

We then set about outfitting her for light tackle game fishing, and bottom fishing off Terrigal. This included HD rod holders, new 27 meg radio, EPIRB, 12 ft outriggers, live bait tank/ cutting board, rocket launcher. It's interesting to note that over the past few years I've read a lot of magazines, and some books on older boats in Australia, and have yet to see the Signature 1850L (or the 1750 or 1950, for that matter) listed.

However, I'm here to tell you she's one hell of a boat. After the modifications listed above, we've regularly taken her offshore to the 'Shelf for yellowfin, marlin trips, numerous dolphin fish and hours of bottom bashing. She has performed flawlessly.

In one instance, 4 years ago, we'd had a 25-knot Sou'easter blowing for 3 days, and on Sunday morning it was forecasted to ease to 5 to 10. We loaded up with 240 litres of fuel, 100-litre esky



A 1988 Haines Signature 1850L powered by a Johnson 140 hp outboard. She came to us at a reasonable price, however most of her life was spent fishing inshore waters, as the danforth anchor had just 30 m of rope, and the rod holders were of the plastic bolt-on type.

I couldn't imagine what would happen to one of them when a 40 kg yellowfin hit with 8 kg's of drag on my 24 kg standup rig, however she was clean and at a reasonable price.

with ice and bait, 3 adults and 4 kids aged between six and eight.

Off we went to the 'Shelf, some 25 nautical miles away with good mates alongside in their 5.5 m plate boat for company. I had to stop 3 times for them to catch us in a 2.0 m swell. When they did finally catch up they were soaking wet and complaining that they were bashing so hard their electronics were shutting down!

Needless to say, we were all dry and the kids

# Robbie's Up-Scale Tinnie

We all know there are more ways to fit-out a tinnie than David Warner can hit runs in 20/20, but Sydney fisho Robbie Newcombe might have set a new course record in detail and onboard efficiency. In this beautiful report, he explains how and why he did it . . .

**L**ike a lot of people, my love of tinnies started out early on in my life. I still have fond memories of dad taking my mum, my brother and I out in the old 12' Brooker that sat atop of a box trailer he had modified to double as a boat trailer.

When I think back on it, to us little kids, a tinny seemed huge, but I dare say it felt the opposite for mum who has the swimming ability of a house brick.

It is thanks to dad that I am so at home modifying and tinkering on boats. This whole caper started back when I was in Year 7, and dad helped me do up my first boat - an 8' tender I bought off a kid at school.

It was probably better suited to becoming a big flower bed than being restored, but dad got it up and ship shape again and then he would drop me down the lake each morning most weekends after it was done, help me launch, then watch me chugging off into the distance with the little two horse power outboard he got me for it. Then he'd pick me up in the arvo, mostly with a less than impressive catch, but plenty of good memories and a growing level of experience in small boats.

Then in Year 12 for my woodwork project, I converted an old Flying Ant sail boat to a dinghy with a cast deck and storage galore. We built a trailer to suit (read: as I spent the



# The 6.4m Trojan Resurrection

Report & Photography By Neil Dunstan

**W**ay back in the early Seventies, I was employed at the alumina refinery at Gove in the Northern Territory. We shifted there hoping to get ahead financially as the pay rates were significantly better than where I was previously working.

In those days it was a very isolated place, with no TV or radio, except Radio Australia's Indonesian service which was not very good for checking up on the football scores, so we had to make our own entertainment.

Luckily for me, being a boating and fishing tragic, the area around Gove was an unspoilt paradise for these pastimes. I spent many adventurous times with my great fishing mate John Bell fishing out of his early model 16

foot Quintrex. This boat was seriously hard riding and had a habit of ducking under a following sea and trying to run along the wave with frightening possibilities. After I had earned a bit of money I decided to invest in a bigger, better and safer boat with which we could range farther afield and explore new places and fishing. To this end I purchased a Dehavilland Trojan, a 6.4 metre plate aluminium half cab, which was the biggest alloy boat available then, apart from specially built one-off units which were prohibitively expensive.

As a matter of interest the boat was shipped from Gladstone where I knew the local marine dealer quite well, and the price landed in Gove, with a trailer,

was \$2,900. John and I began fishing the area and we were just getting the boat set up when I changed jobs, and was soon planning on shifting to the north west of western Australia. The result was that John and I sailed the boat for six hundred miles across the Top End to Darwin, experiencing many hair raising adventures (*this epic was recorded in an early F&B and is now in the SEA Library*).

My wife and kids came across from Gove to Darwin by plane, and waited until we arrived, and the trailer and car duly came along by barge.

From there, we loaded the boat and all our worldly possessions onto the pack rack on the old HR Holden and into the boat, and set off for Wickham



*Neil's wife Dorothy Dunstan pours the launching bubbly over the Trojan, whilst daughter Nicola holds the craft steady . . . this was (as it always is) a very big, special day for the Dunstans.*