

Rebuilding The Transom On An Old Haines V-17 C



Do It Yourself
-with F&B!

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 it's 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.

We'll follow his progress over the coming months and see how it all comes together and find out if he still thinks it was a good idea at the end of it all. If you want more detail on how the fibreglassing was done you might like to check out F&B issues 16,17, 18,23 and 24. They had our "Fibreglassing at Home" series inside. Contact the back issues department @ www.seamedia.com.au for ordering details.

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.

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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 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.