



Presenting the second instalment of F&B's resident DIY (Do-It-Yourselfer) Tony Ravenscroft's 7 Part Series rebuilding a Mako 20 from little more than scrap..

Rebuilding The GRP Mako 20 - Part 2

The Mako was not my first boating project. I have behind me a wide range of successes and failures that all combined to give me the skills, experience and confidence to take on this particular job. It's worth having a look over a bit of that history, however.

I have owned boats, or at least claimed ownership of family boats since I was about twelve. I still remember my first fibreglass repair performed at age thirteen on a dinghy that I still own and in fact have had for almost forty years. The repair fell off within days and as a result, for years

after I relied on the more traditional collection of nuts, bolts and screws whenever I secured anything to a boat. It was about six or seven years before I dared to try fibreglass again when a friend helped me modify the transom of a small fibreglass ski boat. Although not finished off correctly and left looking more than a little rough, it not only got the boat on the water but inspired me enough to think of the next even bigger project. I little knowledge really is a dangerous thing. And so began one of the biggest mistakes of my life.

I bought the hull and deck of an

eight metre yacht with the intention of fitting it out within two years and doing some cruising around Morton Bay. To make a very, very long story short, I had this boat for nine years, it was never finished, at least not by me and every spare cent was consumed by it for the entire nine years.

My main enemy in this project was lack of knowledge. This article is about how you can get the knowledge. But remember that knowledge and experience are not the same thing. One does complement the other - but don't make the mistake I made and take on a big project until you are certain you have the experience, as well as the knowledge, to see it through in reasonable time.

So, how much do you need to know about repairing boats before you start a project? Well, even the world's best boat builders started at some point knowing nothing about boats at all.

How much boat repair knowledge you need before you start is really none at all. All you need is the basic ability to learn and the ability to plan the job and work out in advance what areas you need to go and get more information and knowledge about. A lot of people will see that as a bit of a side step on my part because they will want to know exactly what areas they need skills in. And I suppose there is a basic list, some carpentry skills, some knowledge of fibreglass, maybe a bit of experience with different glues and a bit with two-pack paint.

The list however would depend entirely on what your renovation plans involve. For example, if you don't need to paint the boat, then you don't need to know about types of paint and how to brush or spray it on. So don't be scared off doing a job simply because you haven't done it before. That is mainly why I don't want to write out a list. So let's forget the list, because all you do need to know is how and where you can get the information and knowledge that you need.

Sources of Info

There are three sources in particular I find very useful. First, if you are really starting from square one then you can't beat books. Books on the particular subject of boat building or repair can be hard to find, but it does depend where you look. Most capital cities will have a bookshop that



How did the world survive before power tools? Now they are so cheap don't take on a project without some. If I have to pick a basic set, this is it. A 100mm angle grinder, a power drill that has variable speed and reverse functions, a jig saw and a heat gun. The heat gun could easily be left out, but I personally find it vital on cold days to speed up resin and make it cure faster. The angle grinder is essential for any fibreglass work - you simply can't fibreglass without one. The jig saw handles most plywood cutting jobs and I find that when repairing trailer boats, plywood is all that you need to cut. The drill of course, now used as much as a screwdriver, is essential.



Pictured here is a belt sander, an oscillating orbital sander and a combined seven inch grinder/power buff. Nothing here is essential, just nice to have. In fact I included the belt sander more as an example of what you don't need. Yes, they do rip off a lot of product very fast, but I find they are too vicious for what I do at least. For a big sanding job they seem to be what most people think of first, but my advice is fight the urge, I hardly ever use this one. The grinder I have is used more as a polisher - this one is a dual purpose model, so it does both. Most however, are either a grinder or a polisher as they spin at very different speeds. Don't grind with a polisher and vice-a-versa. A big grinder is nice to have, but the little 100mm will generally do just as good but take longer. One polisher is essential to polish the boat when all repairs are done but if that is all you will use it for then I suggest you rent one on those odd occasions. The blue disk in the lower right of the picture is a Velcro backed backing plate that is used with grinding disks. If you do buy a grinder they are worth getting as well. The oscillating orbital sander is just fantastic for getting a smooth surface in record time. When we get to that point on the Mako I will give you the full chapter and verse on how to put one to most effective use. The catch is that while they will get a surface smooth it may not be flat - there is a difference.

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