

“In Praise of Older Women . . .”

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As a concept I think that the refurbishment of a good, older hull with, amongst other things, a new motor, has much going for it.

Revolutions in hull design, material and construction are relatively few and far between. For 2000 years boats have been pointy at the front and blunt at the back. Among the more contemporary innovations: planing hulls, deep-vee design, high-speed catamarans and fibreglass have all been around for sixty years. Motor technology events on the other hand are almost an annual thing these days. Stern drive, duo-prop, high powered outboards, HPDI, E-Tec, 4 stroke O/Bs, turbo-charging, common rail diesel injection, etc.

I'm not going to enter an exhaustive analysis of who's who of good hulls as there are many designs and manufacturers worthy of the consideration of cost conscious boaters looking for a bit of a project. But the latest in motor technology is just so good that you have to have it, particularly in an escalating fuel price environment which I think is with us for the foreseeable future.

So if you are feeling a bit cash-strapped, but still fancy a boat upgrade,

an older hull may be part of the solution. But before leaping into the fray there are a few things to watch out for, and they can be pigeon holed into 3 categories.

Poor Design: This is essentially a hydrodynamic question and what is a poor design for inland waterways may be brilliant at sea and vice versa. I think the best place to start is to spend some time identifying your particular purpose and then go and have a look at and chat to others doing pretty much the same thing.

Poor Engineering: My experience of boats and disembowelling them when necessary instructed me in a fundamental truth. “Pretty joinery and upholstery can hide a multitude of sins”. As buyers, few of us will want to start dismembering a prospective purchase and fewer sellers will allow it. So to a degree you are forced to fall back on the collected experience of others. This can be summed up in one word: “Reputation”. Shop around, ask questions of any one who will give you the time of day. Brokers, owners, builders, old magazines, internet. Search high and low and make no apology for it.

The rule is *Caveat Emptor*. Literally “Let the buyer beware”.

In design and engineering, a turkey is a turkey. It can be a cruddy old turkey or a nice shiny new turkey but both still turkeys

Poor Use Of Materials: This could be poor choice of materials or poor use of the right materials. Professional Marine Surveyors come into their own here. If you have found a design you like from a builder with a good reputation only now should you go looking for a surveyor skilled in the sort of vessel or manner of construction in question. These are the folks who know where the bodies will be buried and who can shake the tree of prospective calamity and see what falls out. He will charge you a fee and it is money well spent.

My experience has been with fibreglass hulls by John Haines and it has been a happy one. Perhaps not so happy for him as I am sure that he wants people to buy his nice new expensive hulls, he's creating a marketing issue, that's for sure, but it is not relevant here. If he persists in executing brilliant, rugged designs, then we cost conscious boaties who

When husband and wife team **Don & Robyn Gilchrist** finished their ten-year adventure sailing around the world in their Jack Savage-designed Oceanic 42 yacht, they decided to swallow the anchor and settle in Far North Queensland. That was the plan. “No more time at sea” they said. But as so often happens, the call of the sea outside their window at Yorkey's Knob, the very presence of the GBR at their doorstep, and the ‘**need to smell the salt - and the mackerel**’ proved irresistible; it wasn't long before they were planning to get back . . . to where they started.

This is a fascinating look at how Don did it, as we tap into the mind and skill of this consummate boating writer, author and fisherman. Oh - and we should pre-empt his work by noting that Don calls a spade a spade, and he's not a bit backward in coming forward with his view on, well, anything and everything! Enjoy . . .



don't mind getting a bit of dirt on our hands, should persist in exploiting them.

I have had 3 previous hulls by John Haines. The first was a V-133 monstrously overpowered by a 110 hp in-line, six pot Mercury. This rig introduced me to the mysteries and opportunities of trim tabs. She was the first boat I had ever owned myself and for her size a great design, but she was just too small.

The next boat became *Bandwagon 1*. She was an early Haines Hunter 1600 SO and I bought her as a wreck from a university ski club. She had great style but the worst outboard set-up I have ever seen, but I only wanted the hull and trailer. It took six months before they realised they were never going to move her on with the pile of junk on the back.

In the mid-80s I totally stripped her, had her repainted, reupholstered and re-engined with a 140 Hp V4 Johnson - then later re-powered again with an oil injection model. I kept her for 5 years and she was a great boat.

I was seduced into *Bandwagon 2*, also a Haines 1600 SO but a later model, as I wanted to explore built-in

fuel tanks, multi-roller trailers and runner planks. I took my existing motor with me and was able to quantify the performance gap between the generations in some detail, but I didn't keep her that long before I went back to yachting - but she was well made and a good performer.

Bandwagon 3 was a Farr 1104 36 foot ocean racing yacht. A very successful International Offshore Rule design but the IOR was always a disaster. The rule was just a way of making slow, uncomfortable and unseaworthy yachts comparable for racing. But her purpose was to teach Robyn and I how big sailing boats worked, before we did some serious cruising.

A decade living aboard one of the world's great cruising designs, Jack Savage's Oceanic 42/46, taught me much about what you find in the bowels of boats when you are on the other side of the world and there is nobody to help, because they are all paddling about in hollowed-out logs.

After 10 years of this and sailing around the world, I was ready to give boats away.

I'd had a mega-dose, and tried to

give them up. But I couldn't do it. After a few years ashore in our new home in Cairns, the salt in my veins eventually corroded my resolve to avoid boat ownership.

Cruising was finished with; been there, done that. We decided that we wanted something to explore the wonderful proximity that our home at Yorkeys Knob afforded to the Great Barrier Reef. Our task list was;

- Get out to the reef for a day trip with enough time to do what we wanted and still get home in daylight.
- If conditions permitted, stay out for a couple of nights
- Not need to be left in the water and be legally trailable without a permit or special vehicle.
- Be able to deal with typical conditions in Far North Queensland.
- Have enough style for us to feel good about owning her.
- Have adequate resale possibilities if we decided that this was not the vessel for us or we didn't really want to be boat owners again after all.

Style is a very personal interpretation. Robyn had often