

cover story :

a new Norwalk Islands Sharpie

launched in Canberra

by ROBERT AYLIFFE

THERE ARE NOW OVER 50 Bruce Kirby designed Norwalk Islands Sharpies sailing in Australia.

Several NIS18 cat boats, mobs of NIS23 cat ketchs, a surprising number of NIS26s, a half dozen NIS29s and four or five NIS31s with many more under construction in all of the sizes. The



NIS 18 Ketch, *Clancy*, being sailed by John Hyam and son Stephen. Lake Burley Griffin. (left)

Official launch of *Clancy*, Canberra, L-r (standing): Owner John Hyam, Marcia Hyam, John's mum, NIS18 builder Phillippe Pattaca. Front: Anne Hyam and much loved 16-year-old deaf and blind hound, *Clancy*. *Clancy* has not only achieved fame as the name on John's boat, but some of you may recall him as a star in his younger days, on *Burke's Backyard* ... really. (above)



commencement of the first NIS43 is imminent. There are hundreds in America, and dozens in Germany, Italy, France, Finland and the UK.

Because I live away from the water I have always been attracted to the smaller boats in the range. My NIS23, *Charlie Fisher*, that I built over 20 years ago has opened a rich door to wonderful places and joyous survival through conditions I could not have imagined during the construction, and a handy caravan in the meantime.

Sometimes, less can be more.

I'd always like the potential of the NIS18, the smallest in the fleet, but never liked, on the Sharpie anyway, the cat boat rig that this one was designed with.

Mast was too long, resulting in lots of overhang. Sail was awkward to put up at sea, because the boat would not lie nicely, nose to wind, as the split rig boats do. Self steering was nowhere near as good as the ketch rigged sisters. I kept wondering about the ketch rig on the 18, and the potential that I had for easier boat storage on the trailer, with masts that folded inside the boat's length, and easier boat handling at sea.

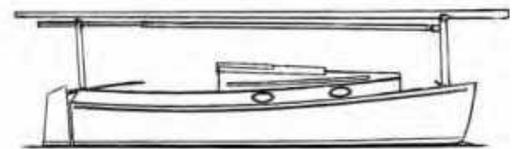
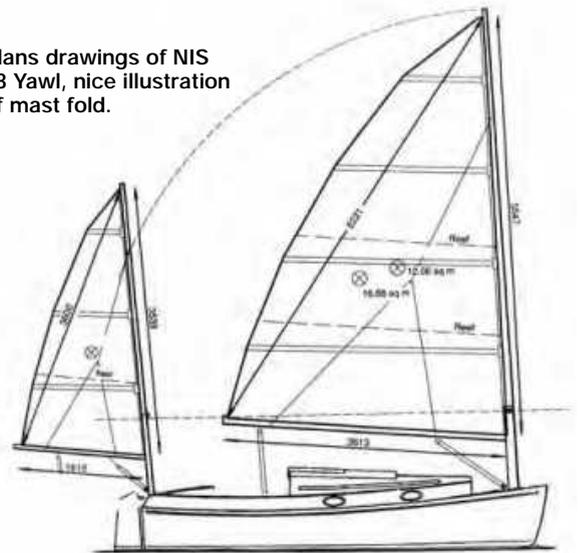
Nipped away at me for years, like a burr in the saddle.

I finally bit the bullet. Michael Storer helped me (thanks Michael) with the sail plan, and, as with all things, once change is embraced, things we could not have foreseen became possible. The chestnut about the mizzen being in the way of the tiller was headed off when Michael pointed out that the beautiful *Rozinante* and whole brace of very elegant Herreshoff yawls of another era were set up this way with no ill effect. Next, the cabin roof, since the main mast was now 150mm forward of the original position, it could come forward to the next bulkhead, giving a 400mm increase in coachhouse length.

The proof is in the pudding. *Clancy* was initially launched on a blustery rain squally April Sunday. The owner John Hyam and another NIS18 kit builder David Sumsion had her out at Snowdens Beach, running, reaching, beating, reefing and shaking out on the fly, with remarkable ease, especially given that neither of them had sailed the boat before.

Anyway, here she is, in her Canberra home. I admit to being a little proud of her.

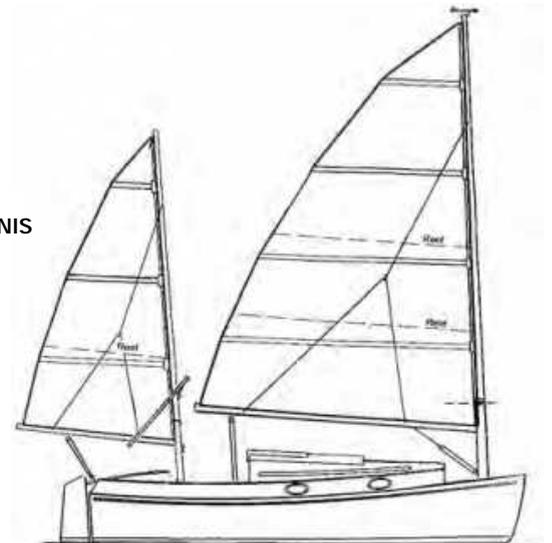
Plans drawings of NIS 18 Yawl, nice illustration of mast fold.



Short cabin long cockpit 'Expedition' NIS18.



Plans drawing NIS 18 Ketch version.



Designer of the NIS range, Bruce Kirby, who had been initially reluctant to endorse the project, responded to the launching pictures with two words.

“Bloody gorgeous”.

I hope you like her, too.

So much so that I am thinking of building one more on spec, before handing over the NISBOATS construction work to Phillippe Pattaca.

You can contact him, if you want your boat quick, on 0425 748 654. He worked with us in the last few fitting out days on *Clancy*. His work is efficient, and very good. He works from kits, to cut the hours down and save you money. He is based in Ivanhoe, Victoria. ■



Complete control in close quarters; John wing and winging; ‘fanging it’; into Lotus Bay, Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra, ACT. (April 2009). (left)

Nice roomy comfortable interior. LOTS of storage. (above)