

# NIS BOATS



kit boats

## CAN we do it?

**KITS, FOR ALL SORTS OF THINGS, INCLUDING BOATS, HAVE BEEN AROUND FOR A VERY LONG TIME.**

BY ROBERT AYLIFFE

**O**UR COMPANY IS THE WORLD WIDE agent Bruce Kirby's famed Norwalk Islands Sharpie range, and Australia and the Pacific for the extremely beautiful, elegant designs of Iain Oughtred and Derek Kelsall's good looking, extremely comfortable and capable cruising power and sail catamaran range. You'll find more details on our website:

[nisboats.com](http://nisboats.com) We also supply Iain Oughtred's plans and kits to BoatCraft Pacific and Duck Flat Wooden Boats.

Definition of 'kit' can get a bit blurry; building yards have always premade lots of components for more economical assembly when runs of a particular design are required. Some designers in Australia have simply traced lines on a sheet



**NIS 26 kit being planked by Laurie Edmonds, Port Macquarie, NSW. Some builders estimate that over the whole hull building the time savings could be as much as 50%. (left)**

**NIS18 Clancy was really a proof of concept of the NIS18 kit. There are currently five NIS18 kits building around Australia; three NIS23 kits and one NIS26 kit. Many more overseas. (below)**

**Kit built Imperial Japanese Navy Holland Class Submarine, circa 1905. (bottom)**



of ply for the client to cut out, and called that a 'kit', while we and other kit makers have everything neatly pre-cut, including the assembly jigs.

Even submarines, from as early as 1905 were supplied as a kit of pre-cut components.

"The Imperial Japanese Navy acquired its first submarines in 1905 from the Electric Boat Company, barely four years after the US Navy had commissioned its own first submarine, *USS Holland*. The ships were Holland designs and were developed under the supervision of Electric Boat's representative, Arthur L. Busch. These five submarines (known as Holland Type VII's) were shipped in kit form to Japan (October 1904) and then assembled at the Yokosuka, Kanagawa Yokosuka Naval Arsenal, to become hulls No one through five, and became operational at the end of 1905. [58] (wikipedia)"



A WW2 Dutch commando memorably described to me the joys of building kit kayaks in the confines of a submarine, lying on the bottom of the Malacca Straits between what we now know as Malaysia and Indonesia.

He and his mates regularly loaded the sub with dimensioned sticks, ready to assemble

paddles, parcels of string, precut canvas and other bits and pieces. The commandos then assembled the components into sleek kayaks that were eventually pushed out the sub's conning tower, under cover of darkness on the occupied Indonesian side, close into the enemy shore. They then paddled quietly in, wreaked murderous havoc and then just as quietly slipping back out to their waiting submarine, scuttling the kayaks and returning to allied lines.



The advent of plywood, and the relatively new practice of large scale welded steel construction prior to and during WW2 led to a form of 'kitting' in the yards where hundreds of more or less 'kit' boats were built.

Given the post war enthusiasm for the personal enjoyment of boats, supported by numerous magazines like *The Rudder*, *Popular Mechanics* and *Motor Boating*, home building, and especially do-it-yourself kit boats gradually gained acceptance with the wider public.

In 1955, the famed American Power Boat company, 'Chris-Craft' created The Plywood Boat Division which marketed both kit and pre-built plywood craft, before the bean counters drove the company to the heavier, cheaper and perceptually lower maintenance fibreglass hulls in the late 60s.

The first really big selling modern kit boat was the Jack Holt designed 'Mirror' Pram dinghy, which has sold upwards of 70,000 since its design in 1962. These are plywood, stitch and tape boats with great family racing and camp cruising potential. The kits are available from Drive Marine 02 9553 5470, Bote.Cote@optusnet.com.au

Among the best kits today are from the work of already reputable designers like 'our' Bruce Kirby, Iain Oughtred and Derek Kelsall.



**Mal Gahan's NIS23 kit building at Binalong Bay, Tasmania. (top)**

**This lapstrake Chris Craft Lapstrake 'Sea Skiff' runabout was well suited to kit manufacture. (above)**

**Mirror Dinghy. (below)**

The modern digitising of their plans enables makes the most economical use of the plywood by careful component 'nesting' in the standard panels.

All the components are cut to astonishing accuracy by either laser or router. We mostly use laser:



With the advent of modern computing, and computer driven cutting systems, there has been a resurgence of interest driven by the reassurance the accuracy of the kit provides the nervous amateur builder, and to the professional, who wants to capitalise on the dramatic time/cost savings that our modern, well designed kits can provide.

You still need to buy plans. They are usually part of the royalty, which if we did not pay, we would not have any boat designs at all. The plans are also necessary for details like spars, rudders which are often options in the kits.



**Typical pack ready for shipment (Actually, Bob Frame's Iain Oughtred designed 'Tammie Norrie' about to go to New Zealand. (above) Bob Frame (right) and friend planking Tammie Norrie kit. (right) Bob and partner Caro sail their superb completed Tammie Norrie kit, Archie. (below)**



You build with the great comfort of knowing that it WILL all fit together as it should.

You can order your kit as plywood hull and MDF build jig only, or with the solid timber pack, and also with the BoteCote epoxy glue and fabric pack, or, everything you need to build the boat.

You save an enormous amount of time and stress by the reduction of double measuring and climbing in and out of your project, as always happens with scratch building.

You can still customise. Details are everything. Trim dimensions, even internal layouts can be jiggled about.

Importantly, you can legitimately be proud of saying when someone, on that future day, out on the water asks:

Where did you get that boat?

We built her!

