

Great Success With 'Kit' Fishing Boats

By Tony Kittel



Firstly, let me say that I enjoy reading F&B and believe it has become more interesting in the last couple of years with the inclusion of the plate alloy DIY boats. And have read with interest the arguments for and against DIY plate boats in the last few editions.

Previously I have emailed your mag about DIY kit providers, and about Plate Alloy Boats Of Australia.

In reply to my earlier email, you recommended at the time C.D.M., Alucraft and Gavin Mair as the 'trifactor' in DIY kits.

I had previously built a 6.1 m CDM cuddy in 96/97 on a tight budget and powered it with a Force 120 hp outboard. This was a brilliant project and I learnt a lot from it. Earlier this year 2001, I decided to upgrade and taking your three leading choices into account I decided upon a 6.5 mtr Gavin Mair cuddy. Edition #56 pg. 30/31 also helped me decide on a Gavin Mair design, reading about Port Kennedy Boat works' Shark Hunter series boats.

Similar to John Kemp's matrix design, this kit is built upside down on a jig. As opposed to Alucraft and CDM which are self-jigging designs. and are therefore built right way up.

I am a fabricator/welder by trade, love boating and fishing, and felt confident I could build my own plate boat in 1996. At the time I had a 16ft Warland 1/2 cab glass boat with an 85 HP Mercury.

The CDM 6.1 is very similar to your Curran 4.85 I followed in the edition 56#. It bought back fond memories and spurred me on to go bigger and better. The CDM is a fine boat and easy to construct, but I live in Port Lincoln and wanted something deeper, and heavier with reverse chines and more dead rise. The 6.5 m GMMD had all of this. It is, as you have said of many of the leading designs in plate alloy, 'bullet proof'.

The GMMD crew were more than helpful over the phone. When I decided on the design (they offer many design choices in the 17 to 22 ft range) they faxed the jig drawings over so that I

had time to built it before the kit arrived. So when I unpacked the kit it was full steam ahead. The GMMD crew rang a few times to see how it was taking shape and to get feed back on the whole project.

As I stated earlier I am a fabricator welder with over 20 years experience in the trade. From alloy work to earth moving equipment, to building rolling stock.

I don't recommend a novice with little welding practice tries to build a boat without some experienced welding lessons, because of the simple fact that these kits cost several thousand dollars, and if you butcher them, you can't do a lot with them. (It would be an expensive sand pit for the kids to play in).

I have built both of my alloy boats in my own shed using only a MIG welder and had the windscreen made locally from my templates.

My first alloy boat was built with a 250 amp GIG MIG. For the second boat, I had traded in the GIG and bought a 255 WIA both fitted with a 30 amp 240-volt cable and plug. They work a lot better with a 30-amp plug compared to the 15-amp supply.

I spent about 200 hours building the CDM hull, and over 300 hours on the latest one, so don't kid yourself - if you start a DIY project you need plenty of free time to complete it from start to finish and add onto that time, another 40 hrs if you build your own trailer as I have done both times. I stayed with the single axle trailer with mechanical brakes to keep the whole unit under the 2 tonne mark.

The hull has a 5mm bottom 4mm sides, 5mm transom and 4mm frames with 50 x 6 FB stringers and 38 x 25 x3 RI-IS deck stringers. The deck and cabin are 3mm plate.

The fuel tank is under floor 220 l with true self draining decks with 230 mm of free board the inner railing height is 730 mm it has a beam of 2490 mm and a large floor area from the bulkhead to the transom is 3440 mm and the deck beam is 2280 mm, the deck room behind the seat storage boxes is 2280 mm wide and 2460 mm, long it has a length of 6.5 m from bow to transom and 6.9 if you include the bowsprit.

The hull has a variable dead rise to 19 degrees with reverse chines. I fitted this hull with 150 hp Yamaha carby 2 stroke from Boat Supplies who also

supplied the Muir winch, seats, Hydrive steering, etc.

As you have covered in other issues, I only fish on weekends, so the fuel saving didn't justify buying a HPDI or 4-stroke.

The four thousand dollars I saved paid for a Muir 700 winch, and 60 m of chain plus a little left over for other things. I am currently running a 15 pitch prop, but will mess with this a little later and try a couple of different 4 bladers - as you suggested in the 6.7 Bar Crusher article.

At the moment it does a nice 35 knots at 5,500 rpm, 29 knots at 4,500 rpm, and 23 knots at 3,500 rpm.

It is the softest riding plate boat I have ridden in, and no, this is not a biased owner's comment! I have been in a couple of tinnies over the years from Quinnies to OceanTechs, and I was over the moon when I launched this one. It was blowing around 25 knots in the bay for its first test run, so I couldn't have picked a better day for it. We tested out the welds 'big time' when we had it air borne a couple of times. It came down softly on its tail without that hard slam. We drove it into the metre or so chop then turned and ran with it - I was more than impressed.

That same afternoon I had a phone call from Gavin Mair who said he was in town and would like to see my boat. So the next morning the wind had backed off to about 15 knots and Gavin and I took it for another run. With a moderate bay chop, it picked up its nose and effortlessly flew across the top of it. Gavin then commented "I had forgotten how soft this hull rides".

So here are some pics of the first CDM and the latest GMMR and I will leave it up to your readers to decide whether to build their own or not. For me, it has been very rewarding.

Lastly some approximate costs. The CDM 6.1 with Force 120 hp and fitting out 5 years ago - approx. \$22,000, 250 hours of time and 1.3 tonnes BMT.

Gavin Mair 6.5 m with Yamaha 150 hp and fitting out around \$39,000 with 350 hrs of time and 1.95 tonnes BMT.

These are very different boats and very different costs and time involved at both ends of the 6.0 m scale of hulls. But if you feel you can do it by your self or with a group of mates with various trades or skills behind you, give it a go.

F&B



Above: "Gee - look what Santa brought me !" Talk about a boat in a box - this is how the kits arrive from the plasma cutter's shop. All you need do now is add about 3-6 months of hard yakka - not too much more cash - and this (below) can be the result. This is the Gavin Mair design Tony Kittel built.

Facing Page: Another of the very distinctive Phil Curran designs from CDM Marine - the first boat Tony built. Nice job, too.



Apart from the enormous amount of satisfaction that comes from building your own boat, there are quite a few other advantages, too. For instance, you can build it at your own financial pace. You will save quite a lot of money - from 20-50%, depending on your own skills - and you get to build the boat EXACTLY as you want it to be. Best of all - if you've done a good job and looked after it, you'll almost certainly sell it for a profit after a couple of years' fishing and boating.

