

new design...

*Is this the ultimate two person liveaboard cruiser racer?*

## NORWALK ISLANDS SHARPIE 31: UNSTAYED RIG CAT KETCH 31'9"

**Beam** 9'9"

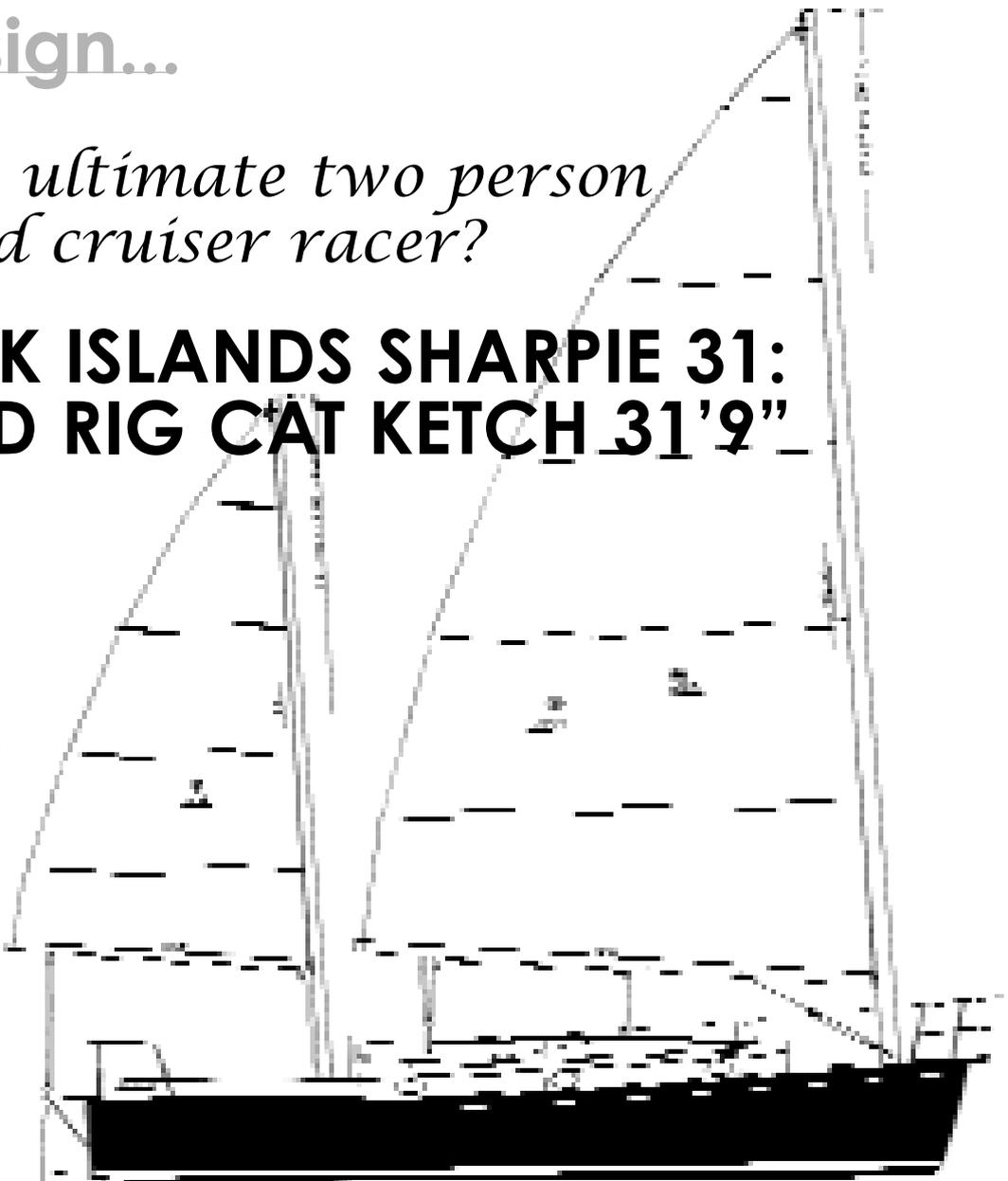
**Draft** 18", Board Up,  
Board down 6'6".

**Sail areas:** Main  
330sq' Mizzen 109sq'

**Rig Options:** Cat  
Ketch Unstayed, Ketch  
and Yawl, Stayed.

Options are included  
in the plans sets. Plans  
are best suited to  
experienced builders,  
and inexperienced  
builders with NISBOATS  
backup.

**Designer,** Bruce Kirby.



At last, Bruce Kirby releases the Unstayed Cat Ketch Rig for the NIS 31. Is this the ultimate two person liveaboard cruiser racer?

by **ROBERT AYLIFFE**

**Frame kits.** Materials packs and specialised construction available. (Cape Boat works have been commissioned to provide a complete precut, highly accurate interior furniture, cockpit layouts and structural bulkheads kit, ready to go.)

Over the years many potential NIS31 clients have said that they liked the boat, but not the available rigs. What they said drew them to the NIS range was the simplicity, ease of use and proven performance of the unstayed rigs of the smaller boats.

The NIS31 is an even more powerful, comfortable boat than its sisters, and its dimensions first suggest. Her spacious, clean interior, vast uncluttered cockpit and wide side decks will carry an army daysailing, four comfortably overnighting, a small family, at a pinch, and two easily for extended liveaboard.

Bruce Kirby originally custom designed the 31 for experienced East Coast sailor and friend, Barry Peale. Barry wanted an ocean capable comfortable liveaboard yacht with very high reserve stability, yet with the creek crawling and beach running capability the type is famous for.

Barry chose the more conventional stayed yawl rig over the unstayed rig of the other boats in the NIS range. The resulting boat, 'Mudlark' was a success, and the subject of numerous international magazine articles.



Barry Peale's *Mudlark*, beach running.

All of the range are blessed with the Kirby magic of deceptively simple, clean good looks, surprising interior volume, practical layouts, high performance on and off the wind, uncomplicated construction, and just the right balance of perky sheer and roomy curved cabin tops for a distinctive, timeless look. The 31 adds to that tradition.

American Sharpies evolved from over a century and a half of oyster fishing and racing to markets in all weathers. Some were more than 40' long, and they in turn inspired Kirby's Norwalk Islands Sharpies range of today



Angus Houstone living typically dangerously, 'aboard' a pair of traditional 40' working Sharpies at The Centre for Wooden Boats, Seattle. Note the lack of cabin, low sides and narrow side decks. (I am not referring to Angus)'.

The original working Sharpies had little and sometimes no cabin space, relatively low gunwales and side decks to aid oyster gathering. They all had the flattish bottoms, flared sides, centre boards and unstayed rigs that form the basis of the Kirby Sharpies. They were renowned sea keepers and some were so fast that some clubs are said to have banned them from racing.

Choosing modern epoxy composite construction techniques with plywood for all the deck, cabin and cockpit furniture, and strip plank or cold mold techniques for the hull, Kirby has created a higher, very strong but much lighter deck line and cabin top than the original boats. The result is a full headroom cabin that you can walk around in, complete with comfortable shower, head and chefs galley, saloon and extensive storage arrangements.

Like her smaller sisters, the useable cabin space of the 31 goes right forward to the first bulkhead, giving a sense of space rarely found even in much bigger keel boats. The cockpit is large, and self draining.



Spacious. Clean interior of Angelo Pericleous built, Roy and Dianne Barkas owned, NIS31 *Serano*, Hobart Tasmania.

Ballast is in the proven form of a lead shoe bolted, glued and glassed to the bottom with a baffled slot through which the centreboard swings.

All the range can take the bottom at low tide, sitting up straight, as all boats should!

Auxiliary power is provided very successfully by a cockpit well mounted 9.9 or 15hp outboard, lightweight, inexpensive, reliable, uncluttered and in this installation, very safe.



**A big ocean capable boat with the beachability of a dinghy.**

The unstayed cat ketch rig has achieved world wide respect in both cruising and racing on the smaller boats and the option will add to the already strong following for the 31.

### **Some of the advantages:**

Completely self-tacking. Sails always live on the booms. No rattling shrouds, no heavy chain plates, no bottle screws, no sheet winches, no sail changing or wet sails below, ever. No need for spinnakers either, since you can wing both booms out to just past 90°, unencumbered by contrary shrouds. You save a lot of sails costs, because on this boat, EVERY thing is done by the two sails on the booms.

Wonderful for family sailing, since no one has to be hassled to grab sheets and wind winches and cleat things off going about. Put the helm down, the nose responds and the booms swing across. That's it. No need to do anything more!

The crew may still be gainfully occupied, however.

Sheet trimming, washing the decks and cabin space, fetching you some fresh coffee and tasty morsels. And that's if you are at the helm at all, since these rigs reliably self-steer with the wind above five or six knots, and anywhere forward of the beam.

Modern, proven, lightweight alloy spun tapered mast making techniques mean that the new generation of modestly priced (about 1/2 to 1/3 that of carbon) are very competitive in all areas against the more standard rigs.

Windward performance of the unstayed rig is consistently excellent throughout the range, foil

centre boards down, and adequately even with the boards up in shallow water.

Because the sails are fully battened, and there are no flapping jibs to worry about, when it all does get a bit wild, just let the sheets go.

Quiet.

The boat lies a bit above 'a hull', and after centering the rudder you set about reefing your ship. Reef the mizzen first, sheet it in to centre it and the boat will drift slowly backwards, nose held to wind by the vane action of the mizzen. Then reef the main, still loose sheeted, all from the safety of the cockpit.

You will have it done in safety and with minimal fuss in a few minutes.

Pull on the sheets, and you are on your way again, comfortable and in control.

There are three NIS31s already in Australia. They are conventionally ketch rigged and much loved by their owners, Petrea Heathwood in Queensland, Roy Barkas in Tasmania and one in Cullen Bay, Darwin.



**'Sensible, uncluttered layout for the Bruce Kirby designed NIS 31.**

A fourth is being built by Airlie Beach QLD shipwright and experienced Sydney Hobart campaigner, Simon Moody and his partner Pamela. They are planning to use the unstayed rig on their boat. Simon may be contacted on 0439 345 437 or kareelahwhitsunday@yahoo.com.au

Nic Nelissen, in WA spoke for many when he ordered his NIS31 study plans the other day.

If we can't have an unstayed cat ketch rig on the 31, we are not interested in the boat!

We understand!

*Study Packs, more info and plans sets available from:*

**NIS BOATS**

**PO Box 843, Mt Barker, SA 5251**

**Ph: 08 8391 3705 Fax: 08 3913 0799 Email: nisboats.com**  
also

**Frecheville Heaney Boat Builders Victoria**

**Ph: 0412 979 824**

also

**BoatCraft Pacific**

**Ph: 07 3806 1944**