

5 MINUTES WITH... COS KARPOUZIS

The owner of Nautifix Shipwrights shares his lifelong connection to boating and why he loves being part of the Shellharbour Marina community.



Please share some of your early on-water memories.

Family days around Rose Bay near Woollahra Sailing Club were how my connection to boats and the water started. We'd all head down, rig up the little Laser and take turns sailing around Shark Island and Clark Island. We moved down to Shellharbour when I was about 12 years old. Growing up here, we spent a lot of time surfing the local Shellharbour breaks, especially The Shallows just off the marina.

Tell us about your career in the marine industry and your business, Nautifix Shipwrights.

I've been in the marine industry since 2009, starting with an apprenticeship at Seawind Catamarans. This was followed by roles at Supra Boats, Macquarie Fibreglass and Sydney Tall Ships, where I spent eight years working as a shipwright, maintaining and restoring traditional timber vessels. Throughout that time, I was always watching the development of Shellharbour Marina – my goal was always to eventually bring my skills back home and build a business locally.

Nautifix Shipwrights was established around the same time Shellharbour Marina opened four years ago. Most of the boats we work on are pleasure craft based at

Shellharbour Marina, ranging from smaller 20-ft fishing vessels through to larger cruising yachts and motor yachts in the 75-ft+ range. Alongside our marina work, we operate a fully equipped workshop in Berkeley, about 15 minutes away, where we carry out a range of fabrication, timberwork, fibreglass repairs and restoration projects.

What qualities make a great shipwright?

Attention to detail and patience. Boats aren't something you rush – doing the job properly matters far more than doing it quickly. The trust between a shipwright and a boat owner is also hugely important. When someone hands over their boat, they're trusting that the work being done will be safe, reliable and built to last. There isn't always a textbook answer for every repair or situation, so a lot of responsibility comes down to the shipwright's judgement and experience.

What do you love about Shellharbour Marina?

It's in my hometown. For me personally, it's pretty special to be able to build a marine business and keep my own boat in the place I grew up around. The marina team is a huge part of what makes the place work so well. The level of care they show toward both the boats and the berth holders really stands out. They genuinely go the extra mile. I also really appreciate the design of the marina itself. The fairways are noticeably wider than in many marinas, which makes manoeuvring boats far less stressful, especially in rough conditions or tight situations. The facilities are also excellent, with clean amenities, lounges, laundry facilities and strong security throughout the marina. More than anything though, the sense of community is what makes it special.

Are you looking forward to the boat maintenance facility opening next year?

It's going to be a major step forward for the local marine industry and the boating community. For boat owners, it will mean easier access to everything from shipwrights, riggers, sailmakers and fabricators to marine electricians, detailers, mechanical services and surveyors, all within the same facility. One of the biggest advantages will be the ability to carry out full refits and major works in one location, both in and out of the water. I think it will absolutely become a destination for visiting boaters and marine trades.

Your vessel is also moored at Shellharbour Marina – tell us about her.

Pukka Belle is a 12-ton Gauntlet, a 1937 Berthon-built double-ender from England. My wife, Sally and I, came across *Pukka Belle* in 2019. When we bought her, she was in rough condition and restoring her has been a labour of love project. A big part of the restoration has been finding the balance between preserving the boat's originality while quietly improving the way she can be lived on and enjoyed.

What do you love about boating in this area?

It still feels natural and untouched in a lot of areas. For the sort of boating we do, Bass Point is hard to beat. Within 10 minutes of leaving the marina you can be anchored in crystal-clear water, swimming off the boat and feeling like you are miles away from everything. **NM**



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