



# THE FOILS ARE BACK ON SYDNEY HARBOUR

**A**DMITTEDLY IT IS NOT possible to take a ride on them since they are all static – and in scale 1/87.

The scale models are owned by Australian hydrofoil aficionado Chris Verdich but were not built by him. So far the fleet is made up of three vessels, PT 50s *Fairlight* and *Dee Why* and RHS 160F *Sydney*.

The prototypes of these were all built in Italy by Rodriguez and entered service with The Port Jackson and Manly Steam Ship Company, later to become the Urban Transit Authority of NSW and the State Transit Authority, between Sydney and Manly, Australia, in 1966, 1970 and 1985, respectively. A total of eight hydrofoils operated on Sydney Harbour over the years, from 1965 to 1991, consisting of one PT.20, unlike the rest built in Japan by Hitachi, four PT.50s, one RHS 140 and two RHS 160Fs. In addition another PT.20 was used on tourist trips of the Harbour by a private operator in the late 1990s. Incidentally, this hydrofoil still exists in Sydney but has not been active for a number of years (see CFF April 2013).

Not considering himself skilled enough, after some searching for a source to build accurate models of the Sydney hydrofoils, Chris Verdich located a firm in the Philippines, Philcrafter Models, which

**Above :** PT.50 Dee Why passes Fort Denison on a mid afternoon Manly–Circular Quay service. The hydrofoil is a model, the backdrop is not / CHRIS VERDICH photo (photomontage)

**Below :** The first model in the Chris Verdich hydrofoil fleet, PT.50 Fairlight, arrived in Sydney from the Philippines four years ago / CHRIS VERDICH photo



**Right : RHS 160F Sydney passes one of Sydney's two major landmarks – the Opera House**  
 / CHRIS VERDICH photo  
 (photomontage)



**Below : PT.50 Fairlight off South Head in calm sea conditions. Big swells are not uncommon on this stretch**  
 / CHRIS VERDICH photo  
 (photomontage)

specializes in models of aircraft and navy ships.

The first order was for *Fairlight* and Chris supplied Philcrafter with all the relevant information that he had researched on the internet and elsewhere, including photos of the full scale vessel and a general arrangement plan. Since the original drawing for this specific hydrofoil could not be tracked down, a GA plan based on profile and other images of the real *Fairlight* was created by Chris himself using computer tools.

Unfortunately due to some rough shipping, the model arrived in pieces and was sent back for repairs.

The communication with the Philippine manufacturer has been excellent throughout, says Chris. The team would send regular updates with photos of the development during the manufacturing so that you got the opportunity to report back any modifications which needed be done before completion.

Second time lucky saw a beautiful *Fairlight* back in Sydney in 2010. This lead to the development and ordering of *Dee Why* and *Sydney*.

#### C U S T O M - B U I L T

The craft are made from mahogany wood. The hull is solid whereas the wheelhouse and upper saloon feature interiors. The seated and standing passengers were acquired at a local hobby shop and added by Chris. It has not been possible to gain access to the wheelhouse to populate this properly, however. All flags and the UTA logo of the time were generated also by Chris.

The paint scheme chosen, in particular as far as *Fairlight* and *Dee Why* are concerned – not unusually this changed over time – is the one Chris remembers from when he was growing up and also it is the one last carried before these two vessels were withdrawn in the mid-1980s. As for RHS 160F *Sydney*, this sported the white and blue design from the beginning and survived on Sydney Harbour for only six years before being sold back in Italy.

The models come fastened to a custom stand which includes a plaque with the name and type of the vessel and years in service, as well as an embossed badge of the Urban Transit Authority of NSW logo.

Production time from start to finish of the three models ordered to date was approximately two months in each case but is obviously subject to the backlog of orders at the manufacturer.



The costs were certainly reasonable as well, reports Chris, about AUD 350, including shipping to Australia. It is believed that prices have gone up somewhat since and also may vary between models/types and destinations to which they are shipped.

Chris Verdich plans to do also the remaining five vessels in the since long gone Sydney hydrofoil fleet. All documentation necessary for this is in place. But when and in which order of priority only time will tell.

#### **SIMULATED OPERATION**

As an interesting consequence to his passion for the hydrofoils is the creative way in which Chris Verdich presents the scale models.

Simulating their active years Down Under he thus inserts the models into real life Sydney backdrops making it all look quite realistic, as can be seen in the striking photomontages on the previous pages. [cff](#)



**Top :** PT.50 Fairlight. The full scale vessel was delivered by Rodriguez in 1966 and served on Sydney Harbour for twenty years

**Above + Right :** Dee Why entered service in 1970 and was the last Supramar PT.50 built by Rodriguez before being replaced by the RHS 140 developed by the shipyard

/ CHRIS VERDICH photo, all

**Left :** A non-standard version of the RHS 160F, Sydney was the last hydrofoil to enter service with the Urban Transit Authority of New South Wales in 1985. So far Sydney is also the last scale model added to the Verdich fleet.  
All models come painted and assembled secured to a custom stand  
/ CHRIS VERDICH photo

