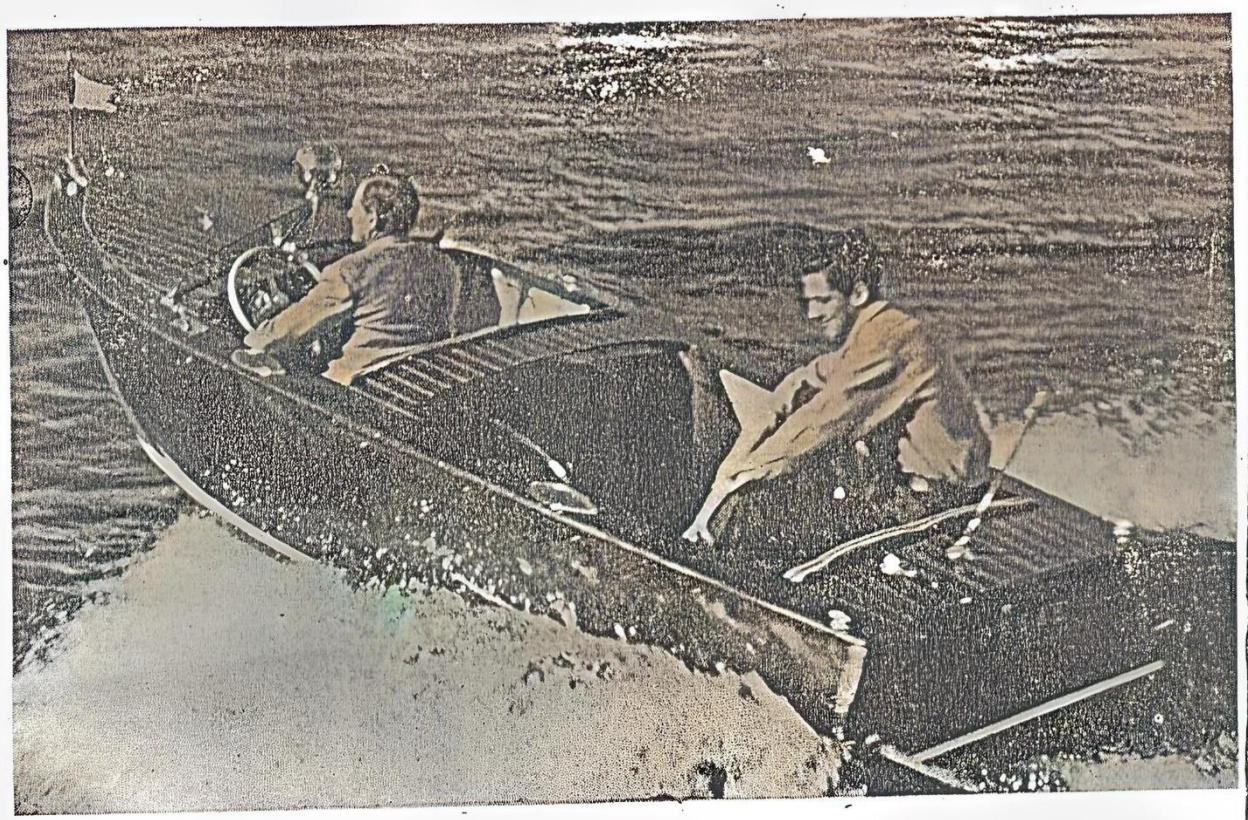
Ayling & Ramage

Peter Ayling had always been interested in boats, having started building model boats as a teenager, eventually winning the Diploma of Merit at the Model Engineering Exhibit for a replica of a 50' Thornycroft cruiser. Even then it was clear that Peter had the craftsman's touch, that intangible ability that is so necessary and so unequally distributed among those who work with their hands. Still there wasn't much work to be had with boats, especially in England in the mid 1930's. Peter worked as a shoe salesman and kept on applying to various yards. His break came in 1936 when he finally landed a position with British Power Boat Company, then under the direction of the famous boat designer and racing driver Hubert Scott-Paine. In spite of the easygoing presence he had before the newsreel cameras, in the factory Scott-Paine was a short-tempered perfectionist who would yank a piece of wood out of a workmen's hands and throw it across the shop floor if he saw something he didn't like. You either learned properly or you left, willingly or not.

One of the firm's projects was the development of the MTB or motor torpedo boat, a fast deep V hulled seagoing air-sea rescue boat. When the war broke out, Scott-Paine sent Peter and several other BPBC employees to Canada to set a factory in Montreal. The firm, which became Canadian Power Boat Company, eventually employed 1,200 workers engaged in turning out the MTB's. However the need for the craft had been overestimated, so the plant turned to the production of plywood airframes and fuselages for, among others, the twin engine Mosquito bomber. Peter continued on in the aircraft industry when the war ended and there he met Bill Ramage, who already had a long career in boats and shipbuilding. Ramage's' early experience was in the Royal Navy, and he was part of the surface rescue operation during the bungled recovery of the Royal Navy submarine Thetis in June 1939. Neither man had any great desire to build planes, and they began to explore a new business. Together they put together a 20-foot outboard runabout to serve as a freight carrier for fur trappers in northern Ontario. This led to a contract to build 16 canoes for a boy's camp. They quit their jobs and set up a boatbuilding enterprise in the town Arnprior.



Versatility and Comfort

The range of use is unlimited. "The Arnprior 16" accelerates quickly, stops smoothly and turns on a dime at all speeds.

Lots of leg-room in both cockpits for a 6 ft. person and room to spare for duffle, gear and picnic baskets.

For cruising, fishing, swimming, tender and commuting duty she is ideal.

Economical to operate — her fuel and oil expense is even less than that of the larger outboards.

The specifications, materials and finish are those of a custom-built boat.

$1778 (Sales Tax Included.)

(Prices and specifications subject to change without notice.)

See Your Dealer or

Write direct to the Builders—

AYLING & RAMAGE

ARNPRIOR, ONTARIO

CANADA

SPECIFICATIONS—

Hull Length — 16 ft. 0 ins.

Beam — 5 ft. 0 ins.

Power — Kermath Sea Cub 25 H.P.

Speed — 20 M.P.H.

Fuel Capacity — 10 gallons.

Hull — Marine Grade Mahogany Plywood.

Deck — Mahogany plywood, white lines.

Keel and Stem — Oak.

Chines — Oak or Sitka Spruce.

Framing — Oak or Sitka Spruce.

Fastenings — Bronze or Brass throughout.

Propeller Shaft — 1" dia. Stainless Steel.

Underwater Gear —Bronze Strut with Aquali self-lubricating bearing. Self aligning sha log.

Rudder — Balanced bronze.

Automatic Bailer.

Chrome finish navigation light, cleats, chocks a strips.

Upholstery Kapok filled fabrikoid, choice of R Blue or Green.

Finish — Stained and Varnished outside, wh enamel inside. Gas and oil resisting pa in bilges.

The move to Arnprior was made because they were able to lease inexpensive plant space, actually an old horse barn. In 1947 they were able to land a few more canoe and rowboat contracts and also built sailboats, outboard runabouts, and a 19-foot inboard day cruiser powered by a 25 hp Kermath. The marketing plan was simple enough: a customer told them how much he had to spend, and Peter told him what he could get for it. The orders however, kept coming, and after a well-received display at the Ottawa Sportsman's Show in 1948 they were building several types of power craft, from a kayak up to a 22-foot mahogany runabout with a Ford V8 marine conversion.

The partner's timing was fortuitous; wartime austerity was ending and there was renewed interest in boating. Although most veterans were still too strapped in 1948 to shell out for luxuries like boats, there were still plenty of established businessmen such as Fred Runge (The Runge Press Inc. one of Ottawa's largest commercial printers) and T.H.G. Kenyon who wanted, and could pay for, a new runabout. Also, many prewar builders such as Nichol, Dowsett, Malette, the Dey family of Ottawa, the Knapp's of Kingston and the St Lawrence Engine company had either passed on or had turned to marina service businesses. Myles Jeffrey of Athens was still active, but he only built mahogany inboard runabouts, and then only in either 19- or 22-foot lengths. Ayling and Ramage, along with their basic line of 16-, 18- and 20-foot runabouts would build racing canoes, runabouts, tenders, outboards, and flat-bottomed racing sailboat known as a "Y" flyer (the Y-Flyer craze lasted about five years before fizzling, but it helped put another pioneer plywood guy named George Hinterhoeller on the sailing industry map; more on him later). A big break came in 1951 when Ayling and Ramage won a contract with the Royal Canadian Navy 16 16-foot motor tenders built with mahogany lapstrake construction and powered by Graymarine engines. They had up to nine employees working on this contract.

Y-Flyer flat hull scow racing sail dinghies, shown here on White Lake, Michigan. Y-Flyers were the Lazer of their day, a craze that originated in Quebec and then crossed North American waters. Both George Hinterhoeller and Ayling and Ramage built these boats, until the movement passed. Bigger sailboats were on the way.

18-ft Y FLYER

ONE-DESIGN RACING SAILBOAT

BUILT BY

AYLING & RAMAGE

ARNPRIOR, ONTARIO

PRICE LIST FOR "Y" HULLS and ACCESSORIES

(1)	Hull, completely finished according to specifications with bright varnished mahogany trim, painted canvassed deck, racing enamel finish on sides and bottom in choice of colours. Complete with floorboards and hardware as shown on drawings	790.00
(2)	Hull, as above but without hardware	695.00
(3)	Hull, complete with deck laid, filled, sanded and primed. Inside white under deck. No coamings or trim, ready for canvas. Hull treated with wood preservative	570.00
(4)	Mast. Sitka Spruce, hollow, grooved for bolt rope of mainsail, varnished, with tangs and pivot.	75.00
(5)	Boom. Sitka Spruce, with track. No gooseneck.	12.00
	Hollow, with groove for sail	20.00
(6)	Rudder. Fixed alum. blade with tiller and pintles	25.00
	Kick up blade with tiller and pintles	30.00
(7)	Standing Rigging, stainless with swaged fittings per set	39.50
	Galv. with swaged fittings	28.50
	Galv. with spliced thimbles	23.50
(8)	Running Rigging, set consists of Manilla main and jib halyards, cotton mainsheet and jib sheets, shackles and blocks	35.00
(9)	Sails. Ratsey & Lapthorn, England	166.00
	Cranfield & Carter, No. 8 cloth	150.00
	Tom Taylor, 4 3-4 oz. cloth	195.00
	3 3-4 oz. cloth	157.50

The cute little racing dinghy was not cheap! All in, hulls, sails, fittings, you were looking at factory total bill of over $1300. It would be more if you bought it at a dealer. Don't forget federal manufacturer's sales tax of 18% and Ontario Provincial Sales Tax of 6% either!

For the builder it meant having to sell the product and find a way to accommodate the buyer's wishes without having the costs go out of control. Receiving payment for a boat or boat repairs was not always guaranteed either, or although most of Ayling & Ramage's customers were honorable in paying their bills, there was still the occasional adventure. Once, a fellow who had repairs made to his boat came into Peter's office and indicated that her had no cash but would pay his bill with an ancient industrial sewing machine. What else was there to do? Peter accepted the sewing machine and later turned to his advantage by using it to sew upholstery on boat seats. In any kind of business, these risks had to be met, and most of the time they could be managed.

The top of the line of Ayling and Ramage, a 25-foot cruiser with a 100 hp Ford Interceptor engine. Peter Ayling is on the right, at the controls.

However, fire was a different matter. In March of 1953, Ramage was stripping paint off a boat hull. He spied a nail head coming through the wood sheet and picked up a hammer and nit the nail, shooting off a spark. The spark ignited the liquefying oil paint and the boat hull ignited. Ramage ran to get something to extinguish the blaze but by the time he returned the flames were already in the ancient dry ceiling timbers of the old barn.

The fire levelled the building and several boats still under construction were charred beyond recovery. Peter and Bill Ramage were left with $18,000.00 in debt, were insured for $9,000. Only a last-minute deal worked out with their suppliers and a loan arranged by an understanding bank manager saved the situation and allowed them to begin to rebuild.

The latter part of the 1950's were the most prosperous years for the partnership and saw the increasing popularity of outboards, both in runabout and cruiser form. Canoes and rowboats had been dropped from the line, although they continued to build Y-Flyers for customers such as Harold Crain (printing) and R.W. Southam (Southam Newspaper Group). They also built a "Canada One" inboard racer for Tom Sullivan of Sullivan Construction Limited. All the craft were built of plywood, a material both partners were well acquainted with from their days building aircraft. Plywood was a durable and less expensive material to work with than mahogany planks, although Peter was never completely satisfied by the adhesives in use at the time. Few builders were and most plywood boats of the time suffered some amount of transom rot. It wasn't until the arrival of the modern polysulfide rubberized caulking, such as 3M 5200, that the problem was solved to some degree. However, these caulks can be even more dangerous than old style sealers if used improperly, as the caulk would be laid in when the wood planking was dry (as required) but once the boat was in the water, the wood began to swell and once the rubber reached its compressive limit the plank would eventually be forced to separate from the frame, often tearing out the screws or breaking them.

Ayling and Ramage craft offered a modest and affordable boat than say, a Jeffrey, a plywood hulled 18 foot, 25 hp craft.

Nonetheless, the product looked good and worked well and kept building costs manageable at a time when the price of specialty woods was steadily going up. 1957 was the best year for the firm, which saw 23 boats built and sold. Almost all of these were 16 foot or larger inboards and outboards both in cruiser and runabout styles. Bill Ramage passed on 1958 of a heart attack and Peter carried on by himself. Again it was the more modest boats that were the best sellers, in this case the 16-foot runabout with a 35 hp Fageol inboard (a marinized Crosley car engine) or the same boat in outboard configuration, with a 36 hp Evinrude Lark or Johnson Javelin for power. The largest were a pair of 25-foot inboard cruisers as well as a contract for four 15-foot cod jigging boats and two 22-foot fishing boats for the Department of Fisheries. 23 boats were built in 1959. Production slid in 1960 to 16, then alarmingly to 7 in 1961, a brief recovery to 9 in 1962 and finally just 6 in 1963. In 1960 Ayling moved from Arnprior to the town of Merrickville and bought the old Percival Plough works adjacent to the foundry and built a marina. Percival Plough had taken over the location from the Merrick family interests. Merrickville in the 1960's was a tired, dusty mill village, the main business in town was human alcohol processing, and it was not uncommon, even on a weekday afternoon, to see two or more middle-aged men wandering up and down the middle of the main street, stumbling in the way of the almost nonexistent car traffic. In the late 70's some hippie entrepreneurs formed a crafts cooperative and moved into one of the stone buildings on the main street. The Feige's, both CBC employees purchased the foundry and set up a successful custom casting operation. Little by little Merrickville began to revive and eventually turned into a tourist boomtown over the 1980's and 1990's.

THE ARNPRIOR 16

. . . . . A Trim, Comfortable, Inboard Power Boat

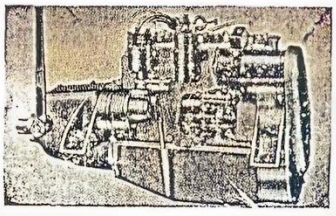
Outstanding Performance----

You will be surprised at the quiet smooth running of the ARNPRIOR 16. Her strong, stiff, well designed hull is powered with the famous Kermath 25 H.P. Sea Cub Marine Engine.

Safe, Steady, Seaworthy---

KERMATH

Flaring bow, spray deflecting chines, splash rails cause her to ride over the waves — not through them.



Experience in building and operating High Speed Torpedo Boats and Rescue Launches is profited from in this boat. More speed, more stability, more safety.

For reliability and ease of handling the ARNPRIOR 16 is hard to beat.

In the 1990's Peter Ayling poses with the model he built as a teenager in England. It won in a local craft competition and secured his first job with British Power Boat, under Hubert Scott-Paine.

As the boat building operation wound down, Ayling rebuilt the old plough works into a full-service marina. Cruising was becoming popular and wood cruisers were becoming a common sight. (Both Shepherd and Chris Craft focused their attention on the high margin cruiser

business rather than the highly competitive ski and runabout market where the fiberglass boats were replacing woodies). But the cruisers kept coming to rent dock space, fill up with gas, be lifted out in the fall and launched in the spring and as always, needing repairs, repairs, and more repairs. Cruisers props hit rocks and hull ran into docks. Engine oil would turn a funny cream colour and reverse gears wouldn't reverse. And eventually the hulls would start to leak, and the most popular trouble spot was where the side planks joined the stern planks. Ayling's Marine Yard became to go-to repair and restoration place for many of the wood cruisers in Eastern Ontario.