

I've built my 50th boat and I'm not bowing out yet...

■ Sailor has turned his hobby into a profession

■ He once opened fire on a Russian warship

KAREN BRITTON

A SAILING enthusiast who gave up his job to follow his dream is celebrating after making his 50th boat.

Roger Wilkinson, 54, has made every one of his 'Kittiwake' sailing boats at his workshop on a farm near Pott Shrigley, Cheshire. He has sold them to buyers all over the world.

One of his more unusual creations is his fully-functional 24ft two-man battleship complete with guns - which he used to take on a Russian warship.

The self-proclaimed 'big kid', of Robin Lane, Macclesfield, said: "I took the ship to an event in Portsmouth to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar.

"There was a Russian missile

cruiser there, it was really unusual to see one and I thought I would make my approach. There I was tootling along and all the officers came out to take pictures, so I fired one of my fire-work rockets at them."

Another incident came when Roger appeared at the Wooden Boat Show in London, in 1987 and caught the eye of show host David Dimbleby with his fibreglass craft.

Roger said: "I didn't know it was a purist wooden show and that I'd entered hallowed ground with a fibreglass boat."

Self-taught Roger does everything from moulding the hulls to fitting the boat with wooden decking and seating and fixing the sails. He started his floating industry after working at Manchester Airport for 20 years.

He said: "I had always tinkered with old boats, but decided to try to make some money out of it."

See video on this story at: manchestereveningnews.co.uk

AHOY THERE
Roger Wilkinson is a self-taught boat builder

