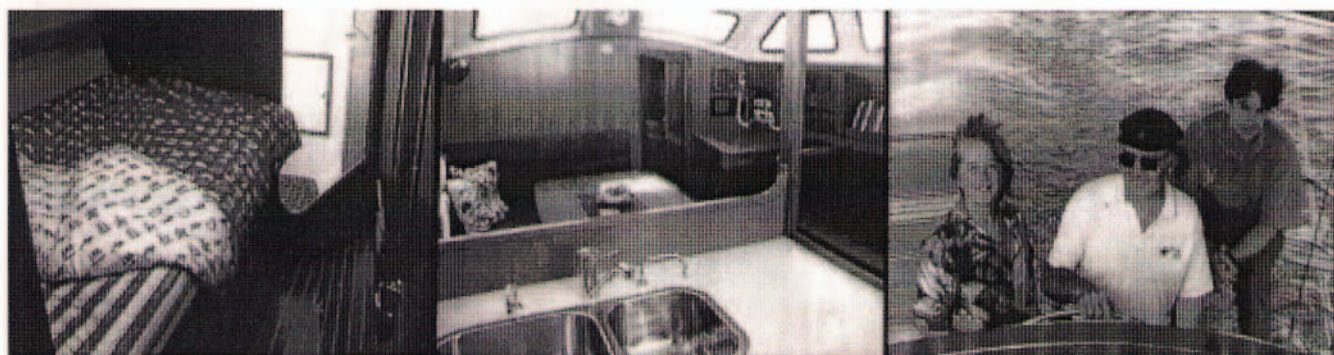


Interior finish is of a high standard

Owners Vivienne and Chris Golias with
David Bradburn of Bluewater Yachts.



Yacht Review: Bluewater 400

Seabird

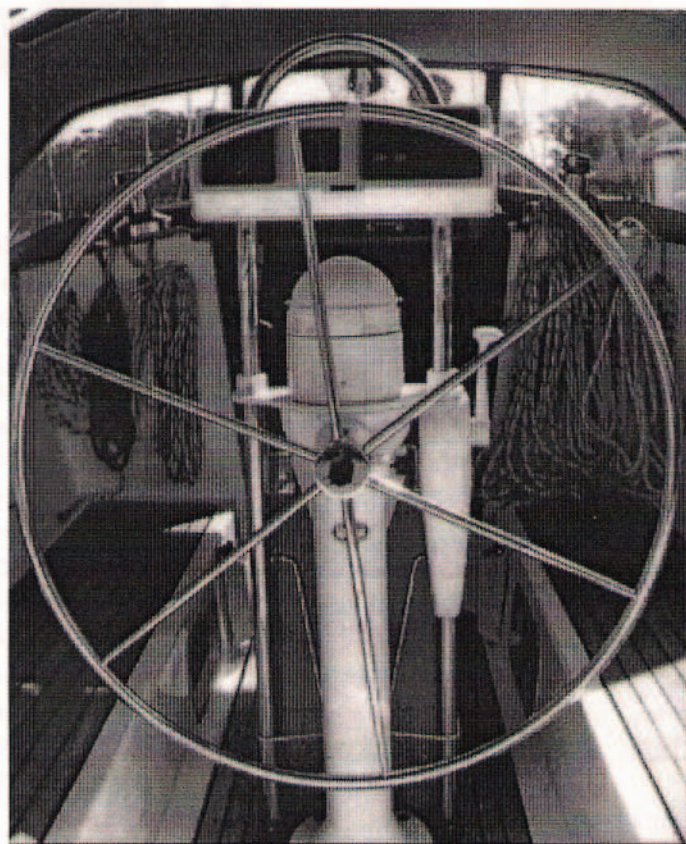
In the marine industry where boat builders come and go and boating service centres are often an overnight affair, it's a little wonder today's consumers are wary about where they'll spend their money.

By Irene Bates

Bluewater Yachts' attention to detail is evident throughout.



Line drawing of the Bluewater 400, raised saloon version.





Seabird has a clean uncluttered foredeck.

In 1992 with a vision and challenge to produce a dynamic, world class quality cruising yacht, David Bradburn, Managing Director of Bluewater Yachts Pty Ltd, faced a competitive yacht building market. As the first step in the quality journey Bradburn listened to the consumer's needs and values. Then, armed with this information, he combined his listening skills with the designing expertise of Joe Adams to produce the Bluewater 400 series.

"At Bluewater Yachts we recognise the customer is the most important part of our business," Bradburn explained. "We invite our clients to participate and review every part of the building process including construction, fitting, finishing and finally fine-tuning."

"There is a need for an ocean cruising yacht with sufficient displacement and load carrying ability for extended cruising," Bradburn said. "While production yachts are available, the choices are limited for a customised deck and long term cruising internal design layout. Also, the market identified that customers wanted to choose the completion stage. Some of our clients have excellent woodworking skills and like to complete the interior themselves. Customising is about identifying and working with the client's needs."

To further Bluewater Yacht's customer service focus, David Bradburn then relocated from Sydney to Lake Macquarie NSW and extended the quality journey, constantly evaluating and improving the Bluewater 400. "It's like having a huge test tank in the backyard," Bradburn explained. "Apart from fine-tuning the finished product I encourage all employees to learn how to sail. This promotes better understanding and a working knowledge of the production process and provides appreciation for the customer's needs."

With an invitation to review Bluewater Yacht's latest fleet addition, *Seabird*, I was keen to examine if this manufacturer qualified as a quality boat builder. More importantly, did the advertised finished product and its production processes meet the customer's expectations?

One of the advantages of Bradburn's approach is that there are consumer choices. With centre cockpit or flush deck options the Bluewater 400's raised saloon utilises and maximises the yacht's 12.27m LOA. There's no standard layout but, with 1.9m of main saloon headroom and similar height forward in the step-down forepeak, a potential Bluewater 400 owner is only limited by their imagination. Secondly, consumers are invited to participate throughout the production process by 'thumb printing' and following through the various evolving stages.

The Bluewater 400 is heavier and stronger than other yachts of this size and, using a fibreglass chopped gun production technique, Bluewater Yachts has five 400s' currently underway at various stages of completion. But, it is the work quality and work performance which impresses.

With Chris and Vivienne Golias, the new owners of *Seabird*, Morrie Morgan a professional delivery skipper and David Bradburn, I joined *Seabird* at the 'test tank' for its fourth Lake Macquarie sail. Dockside, *Seabird* strikes an impressive ocean cruising profile with a fine bow, long water line, powerful wide stern and raised saloon. The moment you step onboard there's a feeling of strength, stability, seaworthiness and confidence. With a fibreglass short deep fin keel encapsulating 4.5 tonnes of lead and low skeg hung rudder the manoeuvrability and boat handling aspects combine to form a 1.9m draft. But, it's *Seabird*'s finish and quality features which jump out to claim its pedigree: As a worldwide yacht that sails with simplicity while maintaining, agility, speed and comfort.

Onboard there are noticeable user-friendly differences. A fold-down ladder mounted to the transom's boarding platform provides plenty of strong easy-to-reach hand holds. Deep bulwarks, sensible wide walks around decks with tall staunchions and a large deep cockpit provide a sense of security and safety. With two additional seats moulded into the stern rails there's no hint of overcrowding in the large eight-seater cockpit.

The well-positioned controls are perfect for short-handed and long haul sailing as the pedestal steering and skipper's seating position is in full view of the easily reached sail, engine controls and instruments. Also the problem of disappearing down deep lockers, searching one-handed for fender, ropes, gas bottles etc. is eliminated as gas hydraulic hinges swing the locker doors open at the touch of the catch allowing 'hands free' retrieval. Adding overall appeal and value to *Seabird* is the beautifully crafted teak deck overlay matched for colour, grain and consistency. Getting underway is effortless, with a fully battened mainsail, 'lazy jacks' and generous winches - raising and lowering the 36.32sqm mainsail is smooth and simple. Individual 'quick release' rope fittings replace the usual cockpit bags and keep the cockpit free of clutter. Then, added to the list of envious short-handed sailing features there's a 53.04 sqm self-furling Genoa system and provision for an inner forestay.

Down below *Seabird* is superb. Words do little justice to the long list of *Seabird*'s interior design features; in fact Chris and Vivienne Golias elected to design the yacht's interior. There's a successful blend of modern style, comforts, safety, technology and traditional elegance.

"From previous yacht ownership there were design features we wanted," Vivienne Golias explained. "Like, a feeling of spaciousness, cross flow air, two heads, easy galley and safe companionway steps. Chris drew the yacht's outline on the street in front of the house and also 'roped off' our kitchen with fishing line. Apart from creating

huge neighbourly interest we were able to walk around and review if our plans were workable."

Finished in teak, *Seabird*'s broad 3.96m beam, raised saloon and step-down forepeak retains a feeling of warmth and spaciousness. At the bottom of the stairs a head with two-way door system services the starboard aft cabin as a private ensuite or, closed off, allows thoughtful undisturbed sleep. Apart from the shower, vanity basin and toilet installed in this multifunctional head are hanging rails for wet weather gear, towels, laundry etc. Under the steps the 50hp Yanmar diesel is easily accessible, just a flick of the catch and the gas filled hydraulic hinge swings the engine cover upwards. In the galley, there's plenty of pressured hot and cold water over the two bowl sink from the 1000

litre storage tanks replenished by the water maker. Apart from the gas stove/oven, the microwave and fridge/freezer are concealed and fit flush in line with the expansive cupboard space. Positioned forward in the saloon the navigation station is fully equipped with today's offshore technology and keeps electrical systems well away from potential 'wet' areas. Midship, there's a wide U-shaped lounge with settee opposite where two slide-out storage chart drawers allow easy access for voyage planning. Stepping into the forepeak, the large owner's cabin links to the forward port ensuite and, with plenty of hanging space, cross flow ventilation, room to move, living aboard is more a delight than disaster.

To adequately and independently assess the Bluewater's 400 performance I invited Morrie Morgan, a professional interstate delivery skipper to review and comment on *Seabird*'s sailing performance.

"Blending performance with comforts is a difficult mix," Morrie Morgan stated. "With an overall weight of 23,000lbs *Seabird* is unlikely to win too many sprints around the cans. But, it's the yacht I'd choose for offshore stability, safety, ease of short-handed sailing, boathandling, and long comfortable ocean passages. *Seabird* is very strong and instils confidence as a capable rough weather handler. In trials, the yacht accelerated well in a reach, then held a reasonable off wind 35 degree course and speed. While no amount of scooting around the lake could successfully measure the yacht's offshore performance, *Seabird*'s wide beam and stern gave impressions of excellent downwind control. Often promoted by 'picture postcard' images of leisurely down hill sailing, 'good' days can quickly turn to 'bad' where long hauls, steep seas and hand steering soon take their toll. Having the confidence in a stable, easily controlled and well equipped vessel removes the pressure and *Seabird* meets these seaworthy demands."

The Bluewater 400 is impressive. Having opened all the lockers, lifted the hatches and poked around every corner it became a challenge to spot an average piece of joinery or poor surface finish. Couple this with Bluewater Yachts unique customer listening skills where choices, communication and co-operation adds value to the finished product, it's no wonder this yacht and those built by this manufacturer are so special.

For information and specifications contact Bluewater Yachts Pty. Ltd. 39B Munibung Road Cardiff NSW 2285 or telephone 049 56 8522. Fax enquiries 049 56 8524. ■

Having the confidence in a stable, easily controlled and well-equipped vessel removes the pressure

Specifications:

LOA	12.27m	Ballast	4,500kg
LWL	10.67m	Sail Area	
Beam	3.96m	No 1	53.04msq
Draft	1.9m	Main	36.32msq
Displacement	10,900kg	Spinnaker	74.34msq