

tradeboat  
REFITS  
**BLUEWATER**  
420 RAISED  
SALOON

PHOTOS ALLAN WHITING



# TIME TRAVELLER

Something old, something new, something borrowed,  
something blue... ALLAN WHITING catches up with  
the Bluewater 420 Raised Saloon yacht first tested in  
*Trade-a-Boat* back in early 1998

Bluewater's hard dodger is the result of many hours of analysis that has produced a function-before-form design



The new solid dodger creates hitherto new levels of weather protection, left, on the Bluewater 420. The refit coincided with a rerig — the ocean is now calling.

**T**he Australian-designed and built Bluewater 420 Raised Saloon yacht is a cruising icon that has easily stood the test of time. It's still the most popular Bluewater model and three are in build as this article goes to press.

But this is a most unusual boat report, because we did it 13 years ago! Let me explain: this Bluewater 420 was purchased in 1997 by Pip and Michael Kalajzich and tested back then by David Lockwood. His summary of this beautiful yacht ran like this:

"The 420 is easily managed by a couple, strong enough for crossing oceans, powerful under sail and engine, and finished well enough inside and out so that a Swan won't steal the limelight when it parks alongside you in that picture-perfect tropical cove."

David was also impressed by the 420's seaworthiness during a 7- to 8-knot punch in 15kts of breeze through the notorious chop at Sydney Heads. There was ease of handling thanks to furlers on the cutter-rigged forestays, roller furling in the boom and a huge brake to control any accidental

gybing. Sail area reduction could be done entirely from the safety of the cockpit.

Joe Adams originally penned the 420 as a 40-footer, before the addition of a swimplatform extension. The hull shape is a no-compromise cruising style, where wetted surface area takes second place to interior volume. Beam and hull depth are concentrated amidships, maximising saloon volume and under-sole tankage and storage space.

The Bluewater 420 boasts carrying capacity that similar-

LOA cruiser/racers can't match.

#### TEST OF TIME

Since our 1998 test, *Renaissance* has cruised extensively and its owners are still in love with their boat. We went for a brief sail with Michael Kalajzich and asked him about his experience with *Renaissance*.

"The boat is a joy to sail and everything works as it should," says Michael.

"It's sturdy and stiff enough to carry full sail in up to 25kts and then is simple to depower — with the heavy-weather jib on the

inner stay and the main reduced, balance is still perfect.

"Storage space and tank capacities are so important on long voyages and the 420 has plenty of both for our needs," he told us.

At a boat age when wear and tear might prompt many owners to consider trading-up, the Kalajzichs were more than happy with the as-new appearance of their Bluewater 420. However, many cruising miles resulted in a wish-list of customising suggestions and Bluewater Yachts' David Bradburn was only

too happy to perform a refit. The alterations coincided with replacement of the massively strong, but aged standing and running rigging.

The major areas where the Kalajzichs needed some changes were in the forward owner's cabin and in the cockpit: the offset bed in the bow was a tad squeezey and the cockpit needed more protection from the elements. Bradburn got to work with his designer and shipwrights and the result was on display for all to see at this year's Sydney International Boat Show,



Purpose-designed and -built cruising yacht with global capability, generous accommodation and storage space, and world-class construction

where *Renaissance* turned many cruising heads.

The Bluewater boys are so pleased with the results that the forward cabin rework is now a standard arrangement on the 420 Raised Saloon model and the hard dodger is an extra-cost option on all 420RSs.

### LOCAL ADVANTAGE

A great advantage of buying locally is that if customising is needed the designer and builder are on hand to incorporate changes without compromising hull strength.

The transformation of *Renaissance's* forward cabin is very clever, resulting in a larger head/shower alcove than the original cramped, bow-located design and a larger bed, without the need to move the forward cabin bulkhead.

The bed is now a vee-berth, moved forward into the former head area and the head/shower

is now aft of the bed, abutting the bulkhead. Its dividing wall is an L-shape that neatly frames the forward hatch and allows easier access to the bed. Wall indentation inside the head is barely noticeable, because the loo is set back into the resulting alcove, so there's unrestricted showering space atop a nicely finished teak grate.

The Kalajzichs use the port aft cabin exclusively for storage, so they asked David Bradburn to shrink it in size by moving the bulkhead farther aft and thereby gaining additional galley space. Easily done.

The final touch below decks was a cabin-sole sand and varnish, making it look like new.

### WEATHER PROTECTION

Bluewater's hard dodger is the result of many hours of analysis that has produced a function-before-form design. The double-skinned roof is stepped to clear the boom arc and supported aft by the existing targa frame, making it easy to retrofit to any 420.

Control lines lead through the dodger via double rubber boots and the divided backstay passes through generous, rubber-booted holes in the roof. Sturdy grabrails abound, underneath and on top of the dodger mouldings.

Heavy-duty clears are normally rolled up out of the way, leaving the dodger sides unobstructed

The reason for the refit was to create more protection in the cockpit (above left), which looks stylish in teak decking that flows all the way to the bow (above).

for normal crew movement, but can be dropped progressively when required, acting as weather shields or effectively converting the cockpit into a protected, on-deck lounging or sleeping space. Wraparound screen windows are tempered glass and there are three opening hatches.

The dodger's forward sections make ideal locations for instruments, where they're more visible than cockpit-mounted readouts.

Public opinion at the Sydney International Boat Show was generally favourable, Bradburn asserted, and our view is that the hard dodger makes a heap of sense on a cruising boat, where it's essential to have some form of shade and weather protection anyway. Why not opt for an engineered, weather-proof solution, rather than a fabric and frame compromise?

### THE CREATIVE PROCESS

It's no secret that the Australian boatbuilding business has been hit hard in recent years by imported boats and, as the Aussie dollar increases in relative value, the competitiveness of importers is further enhanced. More than one local boatbuilder has been forced into schemes

#### HIGHS

- ▶ World-class build quality, equipment levels, fit and finish
- ▶ Optimised design and layout for extended cruising
- ▶ Massive rigging
- ▶ Ease of sail handling

#### LOWS

- ▶ Relatively narrow aft sections restrict cockpit space



of arrangement, leaving part-owners of work-in-progress boats in limbo.

How can a Bluewater Yacht buyer be confident that the company can continue to survive the onslaught?

"We've built our business around yacht designs that appeal to genuine cruising people," Bradburn said.

"Many of them come to us after experience with craft that have

inbuilt compromises, so they understand what cruising boat priorities are. There have always been sufficient numbers of these customers to keep our factory busy.

"However, we're well aware of the cyclical nature of the cruising yachtbuilding business, so we've protected ourselves from inevitable downturns: we do a lot of refit work; we make FRP sub-components for several customers

in diverse industries; we mould catamaran hulls; and we custom-build projects such as the huge houseboat that's currently nearing completion in our yard.

"A refit we're doing at the moment is a major rework of a Wayworld 45 — the predecessor of the Bluewater 450 — incorporating many of the features we've built into the 450," he said.

A tour of the Bluewater factory, not far from the shores of NSW's Lake Macquarie, is an exercise in bespoke boat construction. When I called in there were three new boats in build — two 420RSs and one 420CC centre cockpit model — and a 45-footer refit nearing completion.

Although the 420 hulls are fixed shapes out of the mould and certain structural interior features

The new forward cabin arrangement has a vee-berth replacing the head (above right), which is now aft of the bed, abutting the bulhead. A cabin-sole sand and varnish completed the interior renovations (above left). The refit so pleased Bluewater they had *Renaissance* (left) on display at this year's Sydney International Boat Show.



are unalterable, it's pretty much up to the customer from then on. The Kalajzich's L-head forward cabin is recommended, but if you want the original vee-head arrangement, then so be it. *Renaissance* has a step-through transom and swimplatform, but if you want a transom with full lazarette capacity and drop-down transom/swimplatform that can be incorporated.


In the case of the part-built 420CC, the buyers had requested additional bench space above the engine hatch, so that was being integrated. A previous 420CC buyer wanted that same alcove for a workbench and tool storage. Easy.

Another 420 buyer wants the galley to incorporate a slide-out cutting board and the boys were busy working out how strong the slide tracks would have to be.

Watching boats being built is always instructive and the Bluewater shed has nothing to hide. What's obvious is the inherent strength of all components and Bradburn is only too happy to show people the thickness and integrity of the deck and hull cut-outs that are made to accommodate hatches, shafts, through-hull fittings and thrusters. The saloon roof supporting beams are so thick that they bend the roof shape slightly when they "go off", necessitating an allowance for that shape change in the roof alignment.

Water-tank tops are made of extra-thick FRP, to ensure water pressure won't distort them or the access panels. Under-bunk storage areas have braced, hinged lids, not loose tops. Chainplate knees are massive, but beautifully clad in fitted timber: no paper-thin veneers that can chip and peel here.

What's obvious is that strength and quality are never compromised in the interests of weight-saving. That must remain uppermost in the mind of the cruiser/racer builder, which is why the Bluewater 420 tips the scales around 50 per cent heavier than a cruiser/racer 40-footer.

As the *Renaissance* refit shows, this inbuilt quality makes a 13-year-old 420RS look as good as new. 

## Facts & figures

### FAST FACTS

The Bluewater 420 is built to offshore survey standards with solid GRP hull, Kevlar bow-section reinforcement, isophthalic gelcoat and foam laminate decks with plywood reinforcement in cockpit sole and winch pads. Cruising design includes deep bilges, bulwarks and easily-handled sailplan. The optional hard dodger provides additional comfort and weather protection.

### PRICE AS TESTED

**\$595,000**+GST (replacement cost for *Renaissance's* current specification at today's pricing)

### OPTIONS FITTED

Hard dodger (\$33,000+GST), pushpit arch with three 64W solar panels (\$12,000+GST), chartplotter, furler on inner forestay, boom brake, and radar

### PRICED FROM

**\$524,950** + GST

### GENERAL

**MATERIAL:** FRP hulls and decks — foam, plywood and coremat laminate deck and solid FRP below  
**TYPE:** Keelboat  
**LENGTH OVERALL:** 12.75m  
**WATERLINE LENGTH:** 10.67m  
**BEAM:** 3.99m  
**DRAFT:** 1.9m  
**WEIGHT:** 12,170kg

### CAPACITIES

**BERTHS:** Two doubles/one head; two doubles, one single/ two heads; or two doubles, one queen/two heads  
**FUEL:** 450lt  
**WATER:** 1400lt



## BLUEWATER 420RS

### ENGINE

**MAKE:** Yanmar  
**TYPE:** Shaft drive, freshwater cooled diesel  
**RATED HP:** 55  
**PROP:** Three-blade fixed

### SAILS

**MAINSAIL:** 36.32m<sup>2</sup>  
**GENOA:** 53.04m<sup>2</sup> (No.1)  
**SPINNAKER:** 74.34m<sup>2</sup>

### SUPPLIED BY

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### THE VERDICT

Purpose designed and built cruising yacht with global capability, generous accommodation and storage space, and world-class construction. Evergreen design continues to attract buyers.

Bluewater's David Bradburn (below left) said he was only too happy to refit the 13-year-old 420RS (below) at the builder's Lake Macquarie facility (bottom).

