

**tradeboat**

**Test**

Bluewater  
450M

PHOTOS: ALLAN WHITING VIDEO: ELLEN DEWAR



We've been aboard many boats, but you will be hard pressed to find any that are better built than the Australian-made Bluewater Cruising Yachts range, reckons ALAN WHITING from the deck of the 450M



**HOMER** & away



This photo: The substantial single piece mast towers 20m above the waterline. Top inset, down: Roller furling boom can be electrically furled to any size for winds of five to 45kts; Deck is finished in synthesised teak for low-maintenance and coolness on the feet in summer. Opposite: Steering on 450M is beautifully light and precise.



**W**e didn't approach the 450M as a new design, but more to re-acquaint ourselves with the Bluewater marque following the announcement of the company's latest design, the 520 Pilot House (see *Trade-a-Boat* issue 392).

The 450M we evaluated for this report is a relatively new boat, but its proud owners, Virginia and Peter Lewis, have already clocked up thousands of sea miles, including an inaugural trip to New Caledonia.

*Charlie's Dream* is named in memory of Virginia's father, who loved cruising and would certainly have approved of their new home on the water.

We caught up with Peter Lewis and Bluewater Yachts managing director, David Bradburn, aboard *Charlie's Dream* as the boat lay moored at Marks Point Marina on NSW's Lake Macquarie. The boys had brought the boat north from the Sydney International Boat Show and, despite this 450M being a shallow (1.7m) draft version, had managed to drag the bulb over the encroaching sandbar at Swansea.

*Charlie's Dream* differs from the standard plan in having a vertical transom, in place of the normal 'sugar scoop' stern. It was Peter's idea, to allow for the addition of aft deck hatches, and swimming access is provided by a hydraulic, drop-down stern platform.

Clambering aboard the Bluewater 450M is easy, thanks to a pair of opening side gates with swing-down ladders. The cockpit is cruising, not racing oriented, so seating is a tad squeezy, but with ample handholds and foot-bracing points. Low-effort sail control is provided by big Andersen winches: 58 primaries, 46 halyards, and 40 secondaries and mast winches. Powered winches are optional and *Charlie's Dream* has electric primaries.

The drag-link steering operates from a single wheel (the new 520M has paired wheels) behind a large binnacle, which on *Charlie's Dream* has a Raymarine E120 plotter, autopilot and bowthrustrer controls.

#### QUALITY BUILD

All Bluewater yachts are built to NSW Maritime Survey requirements and the hull

is monolithic GRP with UV-resistant NGP gelcoat. A tie layer is vinylester resin and the hull is warranted for 10 years against osmosis. The deck is a PVC foam laminate, but the cockpit sole and winch attachment areas have 18mm plywood coring. There are three layers of coremat under all tracks and fittings, and the hull-deck join is a bonded internal flange, topped with a Giot toerail. Bulkheads are glass-reinforced plywood and the main bulkhead is semi-watertight. Forward of the main bulkhead the hull is laminated with 300g Kevlar.

Bluewater Yachts is proud of its construction methods and happily displays cores that have been removed to make holes for through-deck fittings. I was particularly impressed by the thickness and cohesion of the cores that were removed from *Charlie's Dream* to fit the bowthrustrer. No wonder a Bluewater yacht that recently went aground on rocks sustained only minor damage to its hull.

The lead winged keel attaches to the hull with 13 x 25mm 2205 stainless steel bolts, with structural floors and backing plates, and



the mast loads are distributed across two athwartship members.

Water tankage is concentrated near the keel and is a combination of 316 stainless steel and integral baffled tanks. The integral tanks are lined with four layers of epoxy. Fuel is stowed in four aft-cabin 316 stainless steel tanks and the holding tank is located under the forward vee-berth, where it doubles as a collision void.

### CRUISING RIG

As befits a global cruising yacht, the Bluewater 450M is graced by a sturdy rig, centred on a keel-stepped, heavy-section mast with a tapered upper section and twin, swept-back spreaders. The rigging is 1 x 19mm 316 wire with 10mm forestay, removable inner forestay and intermediates. Cap shrouds are 11mm and the lowers are 12mm, with an 8mm backstay that splits above the bimini and forks to two transom plates. A pair of spectra running backstays is provided for additional mast support in storm conditions. Foredeck and spreader lights are fitted.

Sails are radial-cut Norths, with the standard main being fully battened and the genoa a 120 per cent cut. *Charlie's Dream* is fitted with a roller-furling boom, but three-point slab reefing is standard.

The deck finish is in synthesised teak, which is low-maintenance and cooler

**Left: The 450M's sturdy rig befits a global cruising yacht. Below, left to right: Jammers are Spinlock XCS models; All rigging connectors are through-bolted with tangs for maximum strength. Opposite, top down: Saloon's portside dinette seats six with another couple in the starboard armchairs; The L-shaped galley is superbly finished and equipped for long-distance voyaging.**



### HIGHS

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

### LOWS

- Imitation wood finish decking

underfoot in hot weather than the real thing, but it somehow doesn't look quite classy enough. Also, we weren't mad about the red cabin flashing and red targa, but that's a personal judgement. We've seen a silver-trimmed 450M that we liked more.

### HOME BELOW

Below deck, this home-on-the-water exudes quality materials and superlative fit and finish. A Bluewater 450M we'd seen previously was fitted out with solid teak cabin soles and cherrywood cupboards, drawers and trim pieces, but the Lewis' choice was for Tasmanian oak soles and blackwood panelling. The effect was a tad on the dark side, but there was no questioning the quality of the grain matching and the homely feel the woodwork provided.

The 450M's aft cabin is generous and well laid out, with an island queen-size bed and twin corner seating. In deference to the boat's seagoing abilities the bed splits in two, with the halves separated by a lee cloth.

The forward cabin is also generous and features a vee-berth with padding and shelving on both sides. Opposite the ensuite head and shower is a pair of stacked bunks that can be converted into a two-seat lounge, by simply folding down the upper bunk. Clever.

Forward and aft heads have electric-flush

loos, teak-grate floors, ample cupboard space and Mylar shower curtains.

The L-shaped galley is superbly finished and equipped for long-distance voyaging, with front and top opening fridge-freezer and dedicated top-opening freezer, two-burner gas stove with oven, plus a microwave and twin-bowl sink.

A portside dinette seats six in comfort, with another couple in the starboard armchairs. Wine bottle and glass storage is inbuilt and the chainplate knees are neatly covered by removable panelling.

The lift-up chart table is sensibly large, with a fully upholstered bench, not an afterthought perch, and easily scanned chartplotter, radio and electrical panels.

Engine access is via a lifting companionway stair panel, with gas-strut support and side panels in the aft cabin. While lifting the engine cover, I noticed the construction of the wing-end steps. Rather than the accepted method of curved laminate that can separate after years of traffic, the Bluewater 450M has steps made from solid wood, with the turned-up end pieces dovetailed into the treads: time consuming construction, but rugged.

Power shouldn't be a problem for *Charlie's Dream*, with the standard six Geltec 225amp/h batteries backed up by twin solar panels on the bimini and a 6.5kVa generator.





Opposite page, clockwise from top: Lift-up chart table is sensibly large and boasts a dedicated upholstered bench seat; A queen-size bed splits corner seating in the generous aft cabin; Passing a pair of bunks you enter the for'ard cabin with vee-berth; En suite/day head. Clockwise from above left: Owner's prerogative, the vertical transom with hydraulic, drop-down stern platform; Pulpit has walkthrough step that doubles as a seat; Targa bar supports the dodger and houses the mainsheet traveller; The large binnacle on *Charlie's Dream* features a Raymarine E120 chartplotter, autopilot and bowthruster controls.



powered winches for the main halyard and genoa sheets. We used the full main and the forestay-set genoa, but left the staysail furled. The Bluewater 450M pointed well for a heavy cruising boat and went upwind at 5-plus-knots in a gentle 10 to 13-knot nor'easter.

Although it felt quite competent on the wind, *Charlie's Dream* was more at home with sheets eased to a reach. The sail plan has been worked out nicely, because the boat could be sailed 'hands free' at all points of sail, other than a square run, by simply trimming the sheets for balance. There is no need to haul in and then ease the main through gybes, because the boom preventer takes care of that job. The tubular stainless steel targa bar supports the spray dodger assembly and mounts the mainsheet traveller. Steering is beautifully light and precise, but not the least bit twitchy.

The bimini provides welcome shade in the cockpit, but with some restriction on sighting the mainsail. However, if you were social racing in the Bluewater 450M you could 'garage' the bimini inside the FRP targa moulding. Forward vision through the spray dodger is excellent: the Bluewater polycarbonate panel design is way ahead of flexible clears.

When we first climbed aboard we thought the cockpit seating layout was a tad on the fussy side, bordering on intrusive as far as companionway access was concerned, but once underway it made

a lot of sense. The little projecting perch that cuts into companionway access, but makes for easy aft-cabin entry when below, is an ideal seat when the autopilot is engaged and a single crew member on deck wants to see everything that's happening above deck and below. A plus for the restricted cabin access is no chance of a 'greenie' flooding below.

Our short test sail was restricted to the sheltered waters of Lake Macquarie, but Peter Lewis assured us that the boat is quite at home at sea. He's had several trips in 40-knot storms and the boat handled rough-sea conditions very well.

Reducing sail was little more hardship than making sail: the main needed a bit of halyard

work during its descent to ensure the sail didn't bunch towards the front of the furler, but otherwise it was a cinch. Interestingly, the genoa is fitted with a padded strip along its luff, to help it flatten as it's reefed down.

When we returned to the dock we were greeted by a Bluewater owner who had just purchased a used 400 model. This bloke has been researching the boat market here and overseas for many years, looking for a quality-built cruising yacht. "I've looked at everything on the market, including much-vaunted global brands that are the benchmark for quality and none of them can better Bluewater boats."

Enough said.



### MAKING SAIL

With a short burst from the thrusters, *Charlie's Dream* slid sideways from the dock and motored out of the narrow marina mouth. The engine was quiet and ran with very little vibration or prop walk.

Once clear of the shallow channel we made sail — a very simple operation, thanks to roller furling on the boom and

## Bluewater 450M

PRICE AS TESTED  
\$1.25 million

### OPTIONS FITTED

Shoal draft keel (1.7m), Classic Stern with hydraulic swim platform, electric winches, bowthruster, genset, air-conditioning in owner's aft cabin, cockpit fridge, stern arch with solar panels and davits, radar/autopilot/GPS, HF radio, and cockpit clears

PRICED FROM  
\$960,000

### GENERAL

Material: .....FRP hull and decks — foam, plywood and coremat laminate deck and solid FRP below

Type: .....Monohull  
Length overall: .....13.7m  
Waterline length: .....12.2m  
Beam: .....4.1m  
Draft: .....1.95m (1.7m optional)  
Weight: .....13,500kg

### CAPACITIES

Berths: .....1 queen, 1 double, 2 singles  
Fuel: .....560lt  
Water: .....1100lt

### SAILS

Mainsail: .....41.5m<sup>2</sup>  
Genoas: .....No 1-66.2m<sup>2</sup>;  
No 2-59m<sup>2</sup>  
Spinnaker: .....150m<sup>2</sup>  
Gennaker: .....109m<sup>2</sup>

### ENGINE

Make/model: .....Yanmar diesel  
Type: .....Shaft drive, freshwater cooled  
Rated HP: .....75  
Prop: .....Three-blade fixed

### SUPPLIED BY

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