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WE TEST
THE CYGNET 20

COMBINING HISTORICAL BEAUTY WITH MODERN DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION MAKES AN INTERESTING ADDITION TO THE TRAILER SAILER MARKET.

PHIL ROSS

No ugly duckling

 IN an increasing world of same-same, every now and then something pops up that takes the best of yesteryear and enhances it with modern technology.

The trailer sailer Cygnet 20, from Bluewater Cruising Yachts, is one neat package.

First glance evokes memories of the old crabber yachts dotted around the English coastline: gaff rigs lashed to tanbark sails from Ratsey and Lapthorn; even the little cuddy cabin top has the old style portholes.

Indeed that is what naval architect Peter Lowe was hoping for when he first conceived the idea. Working with partner Will Hardcastle they have taken the quirky look of the crabber and moulded it into an easy-sailing, slippery little trailer sailer.

Joining up with David Bradburn and his boatbuilding team at Bluewater Cruising Yachts was the next smart move. Using the same construction techniques he uses for the Bluewater 420, such as hand laid GRP, the Cygnet 20 is built to last plus take a beating like many TSs receive over a lifetime.

SO WHY THE GAFF?

Bringing back the gaff-rig actually makes good sense for the type of cruising this yacht will provide. Matched with a swing keel and above-waterline swinging rudder, the Cygnet 20 can get under low bridges and into shallow water courses the envy of any keelboater, or even multihull cruiser.

MAIN: The obvious advantage of a TS. Note the nods to history with a stem post, capped bulwark and rounded portholes.

OPPOSITE PAGE: But do not be misled, this is a modern design!



The gaff also makes it easy to rig and get the yacht on the water. Plus there is the added bonus of being quick and easy to reef if caught in a storm. Once you drop the mainsail completely, it stays connected to the spars and easily handled lying flat on the deck.

With such a large mainsail area due to the extended rig, the jib barely extends past the mast. This means all sail handling does not require winches and just a simple 4:1 block and tackle for the mainsail. While I was off the boat taking photographs of her sailing, designer Lowe was easily able to single-handedly manoeuvre the Cygnet around Pittwater on all angles of sail.

But do not mistake this ye olde tip of the hat for sluggish performance. As can be seen in the images, this is quite a slippery design. The jib is roller-furled and the main spar is deck stepped, all spars are carbon fibre. When the water ballast is pumped out this is a light yacht that will not weigh down your trailer, and is easily lifted by the cranes used for Etchells and Solings.



PERFORMANCE

The profile view depicted in this review may be hand-drawn but it still provides good insight. An initial deep forefoot leads to a flat run the length of the yacht. This allows the Cygnet a deep wide canoe body for plenty of form stability and good beaching capability, the big advantage trailer sailors enjoy over keeled yachts.

Besides the 72 kilogram swing-keel to give good heel resistance when sailing, the Cygnet also includes water ballast tanks in that flat hull for added weight when needed. Thus keeping the overall weight down without sacrificing performance.

We found this little 20 footer relishing the ten knot Pittwater breeze, performing a gentle roll onto its flat stern sections and slight tumblehome resulting in a zippy upwind speed. Peter and Dave Bradburn have been enjoying some success in the local twilight races and have found it quite competitive.

The cockpit is deep and the coamings high so lounging about is easy with plenty of support. The cockpit will seat four easily and six at a pinch.





"THE QUIRKY LOOK OF THE CRABBER MOULDED INTO AN EASY-SAILING, SLIPPERY LITTLE TRAILER SAILER."

It is responsive to the helm, making it a delight to sail on all angles. We had under ten knots of breeze and she slips along nicely and is well-balanced. Just haul on the jib and work the main to reduce the heel and the long waterline and flat sections do the rest.

This little cutie will get you to your destination in plenty of time to prepare for sundowners.

INTERIOR

The emphasis of the Cygnet is for enjoyable on-the-water sailing; to this end, while the cockpit is large enough to fit four to six people, this makes less space for down below but there is still room enough to sleep four crew.

There are various options to kit the cabin out the way you want but the standard is supplied with the vee berth with portable toilet stored underneath; a single burner portable stove to port with a sink to starboard and two long single berths running under the cockpit. The saloon table folds out to seat four on top of the swing keelbox.

The look down below is in keeping with the style of the old crabber boats with lovely timber joinery on oyster white mouldings. the panelling is grooved to evoke the look of wooden planking.

Using an outboard engine means there is plenty of stowage for an icebox and picnic

hamper under the cockpit where an engine would normally be.

What makes the interior livable is the optional pop-top cabin top, I would suggest this is a necessity as it provides close to enough headroom and better ventilation down below. Wherever space allows there are cupboards and shelves.

After testing so many 40 to 50 footers, the change is startling to get into something half the size. But, as a family weekender, or as a solo vehicle the living is fine enough.

SWANNING ABOUT

The Cygnet 20 is a great addition to the trailer sailer market that could easily rejuvenate this stagnant section of the Australian yacht market.

Having all the advantages of a trailer sailer: take anywhere, sail anywhere, easy to sail and family affordable; the Cygnet has the added bonus of looking cute as well.

Testing the yacht in Pittwater is the perfect place to launch: plenty of little bays and inlets in which the Cygnet could easily disappear from view and enjoy the serenity. Then, if bored with Ku-Ring-Gai National Park you can simply hook the trailer up and take off up north to Lake Macquarie or down south to Jervis Bay.

The same could be said for any part of Australia, there are plenty of waters available



for the eager TS family to explore and enjoy.

A bespoke trailer costs an extra \$4400.

With its flat bottom and hand laid fibreglass hull it is an easy matter of beaching the boat.

If you are up in those tight waterways and the wind is non-existent, the Tohatsu 4 horsepower outboard is right there in its engine box under the tiller, ready to push you along at an acceptable speed.

The safety bulwark around the deck hull join is capped with lovely varnished teak, this helps to detract from the height of the cabin and give it its true 'crabber' feel. A wooden stem post at the bow behind the bowsprit facilitates that connection.

CONSTRUCTION

As stated before, this yacht being built by a true bluewater yacht builder, is strong and tough. This strength makes the Cygnet almost unbreakable, but it does not necessarily add to the weight. The clever use of 230 litres of water ballast ensures stability while sailing but no large weight when towing.

You may have deduced that I have developed a soft spot for the Cygnet 20. You would be correct.

The trailer sailor market in Australia, if not globally, has been in decline; relying on secondhand sales and devotees. The Cygnet 20 is an interesting addition that just may provide the shake up required. Daysailers have been marketed in Australia and have never taken off. Maybe Australians are looking for something that is more of a weekender, something that is portable, big enough for a family and affordable.

Add in cuteness and you have the Cygnet. ≈

LEFT TO RIGHT: While it looks tubby in the water, there is little tumblehome.

Taking full advantage of a nice breeze. Smooth lines, no quarter wave or mid-hull holes.

Soft and inviting interior. Note pop-top is down and table folded up.

SPECIFICATIONS

Length (m)	5.85
Waterline (m)	5.40
Beam (m)	2.23
Draft (keel down)	1.57
Dry displacement (kg)	1250
Base boat price:	\$49,500

Test yacht courtesy builder:
www.bluewatercruisingyachts.com

