

# *China Girl's Shakedown Cruise From Lake Macquarie To The Whitsundays*

**A brand new cruising yacht; a very young and inexperienced family crew - driven by a burning desire to change their way of life, and demonstrate the impressive cruising qualifications of the state-of-the-art, Joe Adams designed, Bluewater 420 they build in Cardiff, NSW**

*Report & Pics by David and  
Corinne Bradburn*





## *China Girl:* Shakedown To The Whitsundays

Following the excitement and final work pressures after *China Girl* was launched, for the first year or so, we mainly focussed on familiarising ourselves with all the systems on the boat, and practising our sailing skills on beautiful Lake Macquarie.

This included setting up the sail lines and using the reefing system, using the staysail, launching the Code Zero (sail), using the electronics and loading Navionics charts, learning the autopilot setup, obtaining our boat licences, and launching the dinghy with the 'big' 20 hp outboard, etc!

Small 'getting to know the yacht' trips were undertaken from Lake Macquarie to Newcastle, Pittwater and Sydney which were all good shakedown cruises. As we were planning to travel north in May 2016, we set about getting all of our passage planning items such as charts, books, Stugeron seasick tablets, radio licences

***Above:*** Always a day of great excitement, celebration, nervousness, anticipation and hyper adrenaline (and that's just driving down to the boatyard to start the day!) launching a brand new cruising yacht of this calibre, is unforgettable. And doing it with all the team who actually built the yacht, makes it even more special.

***Right:*** First cruise, first ocean, first memories.

(to operate the VHF and HF radios) internet plans, etc. And we also had to 'bed in' and get our heads completely around all the safety gear for the 'just in case' scenarios.

This included the liferaft, PFDs, EPIRB's, PLB's, harnesses, jackstays, man overboard recovery slings, bolt cutters, knives, torches, flares, etc, and for quite a few months, the 'to do' List(s) for 'next weekend' seemed endless.

### **Lake Macquarie to Whitsundays Return (May to December 2016)**

We finally left Lake Macquarie, on Saturday, 14 May 2016. As always, it was on the high tide out of Swansea Channel, before we turned left, and

started heading up the coast.

Fortunately, the forecast was for calm seas and light winds, and as this was my first serious offshore voyage (as it was for the kids, Will and Jessie Rose) we were all grateful we were being eased into the cruising world so gently.

The kids and I took a Stugeron seasick tablet (just in case) but probably more to ease the nerves, than deal with any actual seasickness. We had a good trip up the coast, too. On the way we saw whales, dolphins, birds, cargo ships, fishing boats, lighthouses, beaches, beautiful coastal scenery, and lots of deep blue water. In fact, being on the water, in hindsight, is quite magical and does not in a way feel real.

Let's face it, we had perfect conditions, with calm seas, a light breeze, the sails up . . . *and not a care in the world.*

We were really enjoying this new life on the ocean wave, and all of us agreed: Being out on the water with your loved ones in such perfect conditions. . . *life does not get much better than this!*

With the cockpit cushions in place around the cockpit, it was very comfortable, and with the clears rolled down when the sun went down, we found the four of us were still in the cockpit (complete with pillows and light blankets) taking it in turn for rests through the night, whilst someone was always on watch. In this way, we found sailing at night very comfortable, dry, warm and enjoyable.

We enjoyed breakfast, morning and afternoon teas / snacks, lunches and dinner in the cockpit. Simple food was mostly consumed, prepared with a minimum of fuss a few steps away in *China Girl's* comprehensive galley.

In the early hours of the second night, I realised I was out too far in the East Australian Current (EAC), and on the screen, saw a triangle revealing a potential hazard to avoid - a cargo ship, as it transpired. At that stage, I was still working out how to 'read' the chart plotter properly, (and *that* was a steep learning curve) so I decided to play safe, and as David was sleeping in the cockpit, woke him up for a second, more experienced opinion.

I told him there was a ship showing up on the screen, but I could not physically see it. He got up rather groggily, and took a quick look at the chart plotter. He could not believe I had awoken him. Even though he was still half asleep he was still in disbelief as the cargo ship was still 20 nm away! He laid back down and resumed his sleeping position.

After that, and with more playing around with the chart plotter, I managed to work out how to zoom in and out, note the distances involved, and how close other ships were. Talk about learning on the run – but that's what 'shake-down' cruises are for - and we were certainly learning an amazing level of information about *China Girl's* extensive array of electronics and yachting equipment.





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Actually, the most challenging thing I found was doing the 3.00 am to 5.30 am watch. I remember sitting behind the wheel in the cockpit trying to keep a lookout. My eyes so heavy, and *the head just dropping* . . . it felt like I was falling, which woke me up again. I had to stand up, slap myself on the face, make a coffee and turn on the iPod for some loud music to keep me up - I was OK then! The music would get me through till 6.00am when the sun started to rise.

On Monday afternoon we had made the Gold Coast Seaway, and all onboard were happy.

We exhibited *China Girl* at the Sanctuary Cove Boatshow which was a nice stopover, and where she was well received by visitors to the Show.

After the Show we made our way through the Broadwater again, timing the high tide at Jacobs Well. Always fun going through the Broadwater, and we anchored at Peel Island. The kids enjoyed the walk along the beach, chasing the crabs, and David enjoyed another sail onboard "China Rose" our Eastpram dinghy.

Next stop was Manly. We left our boat at the marina for 4 weeks and flew back home to attend to business, school (*Cont. P-28*)

**Above:** Another special thrill - a pod of dolphins forms an escort for *China Girl* off the bow.

**Below:** More on the job list - raising 'The Flag' for the 2016 Sanctuary Cove Boat Show.





**China Girl was launched in July 2015 for a family of four.**

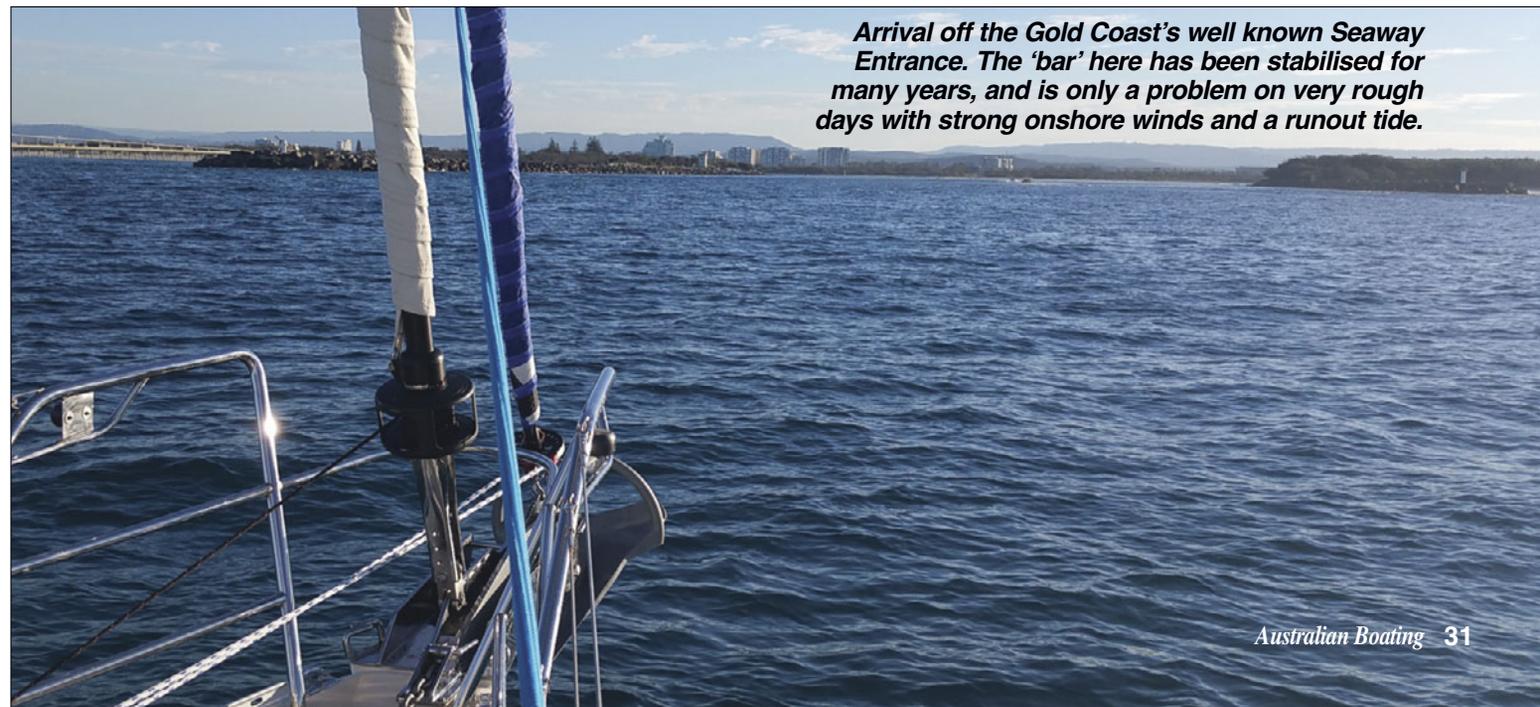
She is a 3 cabin fibreglass Bluewater 420 cruising yacht, with forward king sized bed, twin heads, B&G electronics, Finscan touch screen technology (which the kids can operate better than the parents!), four TVs, internet, heater, washing machine, workshop, fridge/freezer with extra drawer fridge, wine storage, liquor cabinet, lithium battery to run all the house / electronics, 600 litres of diesel, 1400 litres of water, good storage, and in real terms, all the inside comforts of home.

Outside is just as good. The hard dodger creates an indoor/outdoor room experience, whilst a 3.1m Walker Bay centre console RIB (with a Honda 20hp outboard) pushes us along nicely, be it for shopping trips ashore or extended exploratory dinghy trips) and is housed on the stern arch. Other features from



around the decks include an exterior BBQ, 2 servery side tables to entertain, Eastport pram dinghy stowed up forward on deck (which does not get in the way of the sailing when we are in port or anchored), and a 10'7" Red Stand Up paddle board with windsurfer kit for keeping fit and staying in shape. All the toys certainly keep us occupied. - Corinne

**Arrival off the Gold Coast's well known Seaway Entrance. The 'bar' here has been stabilised for many years, and is only a problem on very rough days with strong onshore winds and a runout tide.**



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and home duties.

### **Cruising - With A Modern Family**

This was how it was going to work for us. In between business, school and home, we flew back and forth in school holidays at the most convenient times, and each time moving the boat further up the coast.

From Brisbane to Scarborough Marina, and then onto Mooloolaba (to see other customers along the way).

Next challenge was the Wide Bay Bar. We had obtained the 2 new waypoints at the time and entered them into the chart plotter. We had a good crossing, and eventually made our way to Hervey Bay Boat Harbour. Here we stayed for 2 weeks as it was school holiday time.

We hired a car for a week, and enjoyed the sights. David even flew back home for one week to make sure everything back at the factory was all okay.

The next stops were Bundaberg, Pancake Creek, Roslyn Bay (Great Keppel Marina). We again flew back home for 3 weeks (from Keppel/Rockhampton) and returned one late night. In the morning we were back on deck

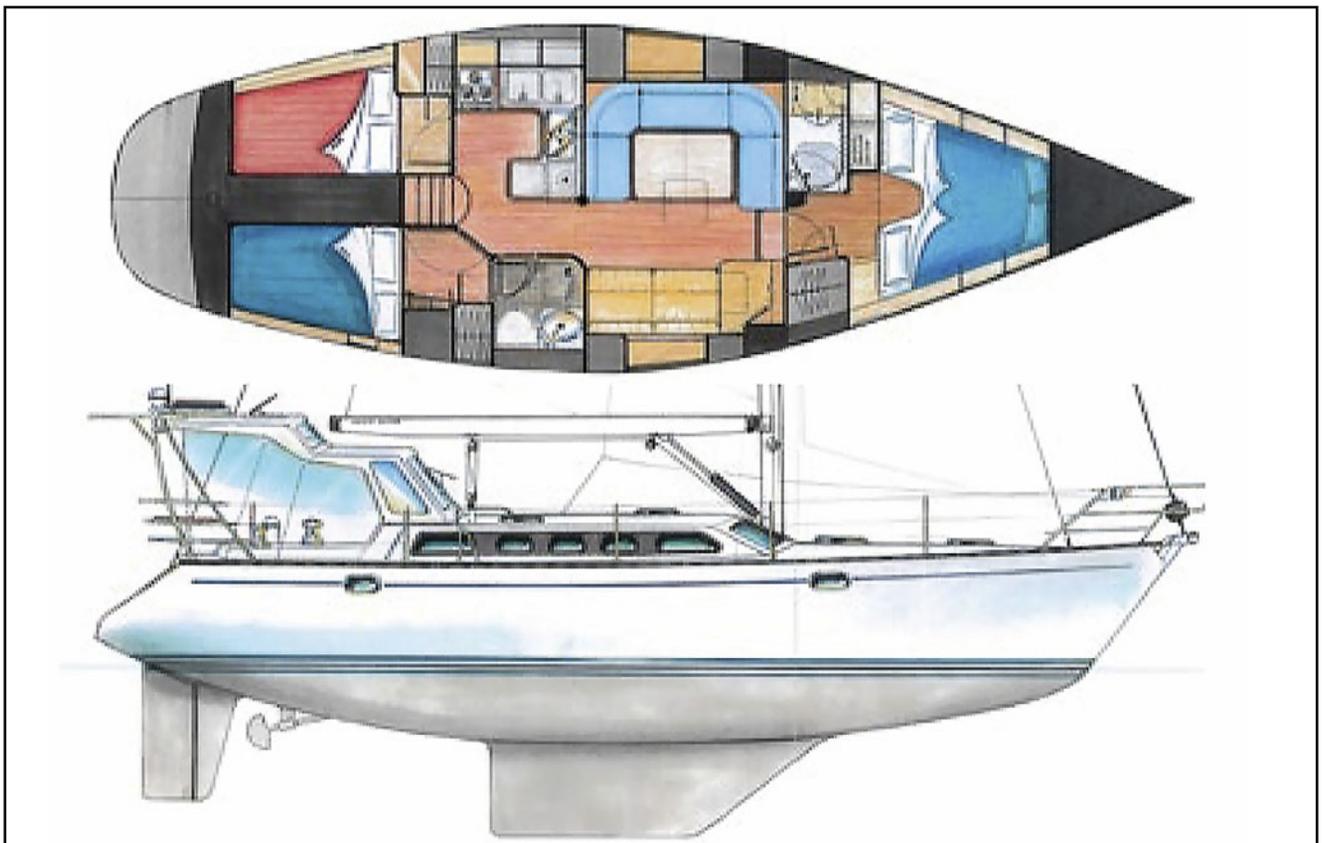
(literally!) we planned on leaving for Mackay. The wind was forecast for about 25 knots which was a little stronger than I was used to, but it was a southerly, and behind us, as we continued north to Mackay, so we knew it should be okay.

A challenging overnight sail was to be had. Neither of us had sailed this way before, so it was all new territory for us. We left early in the morning at 6am, and had a good sail toward Island Head Creek. Then the decision had to be made to sail between Duke and Percy Islands (which is what we had originally intended) but as 5.00 pm drew closer, Skipper David decided best to stay out in the shipping channel to avoid any obstacles such as an island (we've all heard the stories!), so we ended up playing safe for a night passage, going around the islands in the shipping channel.

By now the wind was blowing up to 25+ knots, and we had a problem with the autopilot steering settings, and the boom was gybing frequently. When the boat swung around and did a 180 degree turn, it was totally disorientating in the dark, no moon out, no lighthouses, no ships. It

***Right: Two 'seals' and a minnow (!) prepare to dive in those warm northern waters.***

***Below: One of several available Bluewater 420 arrangements; these craft are virtually hand built (and in Australia at Cardiff, NSW, too) so owner input is strongly encouraged.***





would have been scary in daylight – but not being able to see the waves, made it even more difficult. We just had to feel the motion of the boat and keep her riding the waves as best we could. Staying on course was a challenge. So here we found ourselves hand steering for about 3 hours with waves about 2.5 - 3m. It was great to see the sun come up again so we could tidy lines, sails, etc and get everything back under control.

We sailed past some of the anchored ships and made our way to Mackay Marina. Again, so good to get safely into the marina, especially so when other yachties give you a hand with your lines . . . and asking “How did you go out there?” when you are looking and feeling quite exhausted. Support like this from fellow yachties, at the end of a fairly rough passage, is always a nice feeling. By the time we were secured,



*Click on picture to start video*

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relaxed, and had the coffee brewing, the wind was 30+ knots, so the decision to call into the marina was certainly a good one.

### **Nearly In the Whitsundays**

We were getting closer to our destination. We stayed for a week and hired the marina car to reprovision, and do some sight seeing and shopping. We also had the bottom cleaned so we could be as competitive as possible before heading to Hamilton Island Race Week.

Highlights of the trip included Whitehaven Beach, staying at Airlie Beach Marina and using the facilities - especially the rock pool which the kids loved. We also loved seeing whales and dolphins numerous times, enjoying local produce and restaurants, experiencing beautiful scenery and walks, and always looking forward to coming back home after a day out exploring to our beautiful Bluewater 420 China Girl.

### **Heading South, To Home**

On our return trip from the Whitsundays (commencing October 2016) we called back into some familiar ports but wanted to try and

stop at some other new locations.

These included anchoring off St Bees Island, and this time, we came back overnight through the Percys and Duke Island, then making our way back down to Roslyn Bay (Great Keppel Island). At this time it was about 6am and we were in the shipping channel again, and the SW started to kick in earlier than we had expected, so we were pushing into it, moving about 3-4 knots, although it felt as though we were not making any ground. Waves were breaking over the boat, so we beared away a few degrees to make it more comfortable pushing over the swell, and tried to sneak in behind North Keppel Island. Five hours later (!) we made it into Roslyn Bay. The weather had all calmed down again by then.

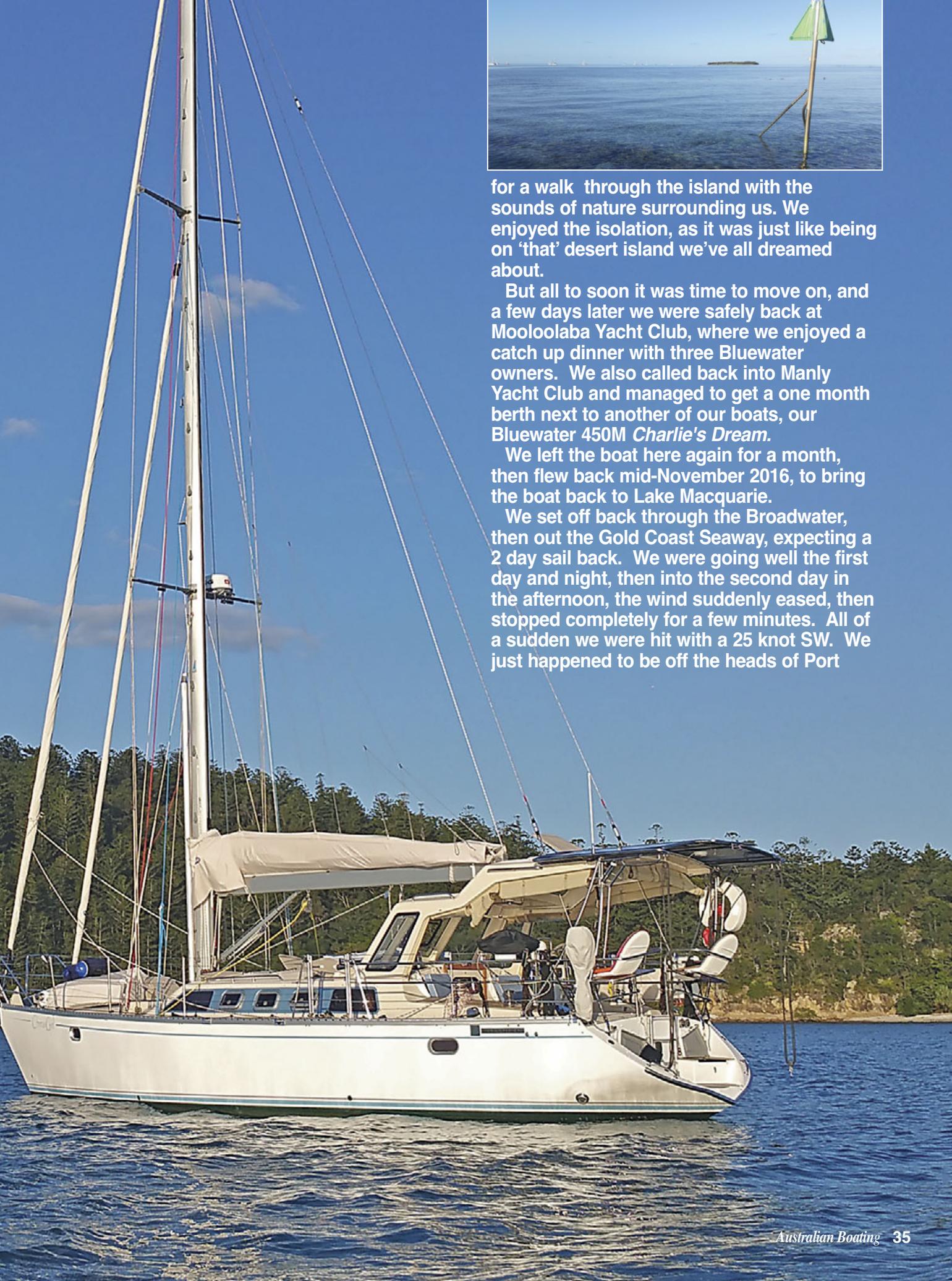
### **Back Via Lady Musgrave Island**

The other great stopover worth mentioning, was a visit to Lady Musgrave Island.

It took us about 8 hours to cross over from Pancake Creek (on the mainland) to Lady Musgrave, where we entered the lagoon through a stunning entry channel over beautiful coral beds.

There were about 30 boats anchored in the Lady Musgrave lagoon when we arrived, and after anchoring and settling down, we went





for a walk through the island with the sounds of nature surrounding us. We enjoyed the isolation, as it was just like being on 'that' desert island we've all dreamed about.

But all too soon it was time to move on, and a few days later we were safely back at Mooloolaba Yacht Club, where we enjoyed a catch up dinner with three Bluewater owners. We also called back into Manly Yacht Club and managed to get a one month berth next to another of our boats, our Bluewater 450M *Charlie's Dream*.

We left the boat here again for a month, then flew back mid-November 2016, to bring the boat back to Lake Macquarie.

We set off back through the Broadwater, then out the Gold Coast Seaway, expecting a 2 day sail back. We were going well the first day and night, then into the second day in the afternoon, the wind suddenly eased, then stopped completely for a few minutes. All of a sudden we were hit with a 25 knot SW. We just happened to be off the heads of Port



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Stephens by then, so thought it best to head in.

We got on the radio to the Coast Guard and asked about the condition of the entrance, and the helpful operator advised another yacht had just made it in, *“but have a look for yourselves.”*

Here we were again, bashing into it. The change had again come in earlier than expected but the boat handled well. We beared off again just to give us an easier motion over the waves. Much spray came over the boat again, sometimes hitting the hard dodger windscreen. Fortunately, David had been into Port Stephens a few times, and was familiar with the entrance.

So we pushed on through the confused seas, and after a long, bumpy couple of hours working around Port Stephen’s various nearshore islands, we made it through to D’Alboras Marina “inside” at Nelsons Bay. It’s always *soo* good to finally tie up safely!

### **Kids vs Schooling Vs Work - And Cruising!**

With work, school and time constraints, we ended up leaving *China Girl* here for a month.

We bumped into two of our Bluewater builds here. The first being another one of our Bluewater 450M’s *Friday’s Child*, and our Bluewater 420 *Sabbatical 11*. Both boats are looking good!

***Will Bradburn, seen here on Hamilton Island checking out the pre-Covid-19 world of the Aussie newlyweds, family tourists and thousands of HIRW yachtsmen who are wondering if - or when - life will return to ‘normal’.***

Having the kids onboard still means they had to keep up with their school work, and interestingly enough, they seem to have done better in their end of year school reports, which is an encouraging sign. Many card games, boggle, concentration, and DVD movies are watched, and we try to sneak some educational ones in there.

Now, with hindsight, it seems that given the business, school, family and the various time constraints we have, it appears a commitment to a part-time (or should that be a “split” cruising lifestyle) for us is a definitely possible.

In all, *China Girl* has been away for 7 months in 2016. It was good to arrive back home again in Lake Macquarie, to start preparations for our next adventure – Lake Macquarie, NSW, right down to Tasmania and return.

*Note: The **Cruise Of China Girl** and the Bradburn family will continue in July AB with their voyage down to Tassy. Don’t miss it, as it is a fascinating look at a very special section of Australia rarely seen and with a great deal to offer cruising and visiting boatowners.*

**AB**

# Bluewater 420 Tri-Cabin Cruising Yacht



*'China Girl' almost home - back through the Swansea Bridge.*

## *Look at the possibilities you can have on your Bluewater 420 . . .*

- Collision bulkhead and watertight main bulkhead – extra security in case of collision / holing.
- 135° + AVS – very high stability making Bluewater 420 more forgiving and stable in rough conditions.
- 10-12m<sup>3</sup> storage capacity / Over 50 lockers– when living aboard, this is crucial.
- 6'7" Headroom main saloon – generous proportions and feeling of space.
- Flush foredeck – easier to move around on in rough conditions.
- Bulwarks – Bluewater 420 Raised Saloon provides extra security and safer to move around on.
- All features of home built-in for long term cruising such as optional laundry - 3kg front loader, and work bench & tool storage; it even includes a built-in shed.
- Kingsize owners V-Berth – large beds for maximum comfort, a home away from home.
- Deck water catchment – means more self-sufficiency and not relying on technology (watermaker).
- Up to 22 opening ports and hatches – excellent ventilation even in the hottest conditions.
- Fully enclosed cockpit with optional hard dodger for added safety or to create a year round extra living room.
- Optional integrated davits / solar panel / stern seats – all the features needed for comfortable cruising.
- All locker lids positive locking – including floor inspection lids and seat/bunk top openings. These boats are built with the roughest conditions in mind.
- Optional twin living / lounging area – in all weather.
- Good privacy and visibility below deck – important when in close proximity to other boats.
- Optional self tacking staysail furler–a must for shorthanded, heavy weather sailing.
- Your choice of internal timbers, laminates or even a

Corian® kitchen bench for added luxury and serviceability.

- 80 amp alternator or upgrade to large frame 130 amp alternator to provide more efficient battery charging at low revs.
- Engine exhaust high riser fitted - prevents water entering cylinders in rough conditions.
- Proven seagoing Adams Design cruising hull – excellent load carrying for extended cruising, good all-round sailing performance, excellent upwind.
- Built to offshore survey (USL) specifications – integrity is built into every aspect.
- Integral keel – can't fall off, no leak issues, no cracking.
- Skeg hung rudder – maximum support and protection of rudder.
- Standard Yanmar 55hp diesel engine or a 75hp upgraded engine package – giving more efficient cruising speeds and increased propulsion and acceleration for rough conditions.
- Lead ballast – higher AVS and stiffness.
- Standard 900lb electric windlass or upgrade to HR2500 Horizontal windlass – used on vessels up to 55'. Easy to use manual backup.
- Standard pulpit or upgrade to optional bowsprit – extended 600mm forward of forestay to enable gennaker to be flown unrestricted and on its own furler. Can accept latest designed anchor eg. Rocna 33kg.
- Standard 1400 litres water capacity – all built under saloon floor, epoxy lined and coated. Maximum capacity in its class.
- Standard 450-620 litres fuel capacity – 2.5mm 316 pressure tested, built to Survey specifications.
- Solid glass hull (up to 38mm thick) – no concerns re water absorption, core sheeting, impact resistant.
- Kevlar reinforcing forward main bulkhead – maximum impact resistance in case of collision.
- All Bluewaters are custom built to suit your individual needs and with a starting price of just \$684,500 (inc. GST) you are truly in control.

**AB**