

11-15 METRES
36-50 FEET

Bluewater 476

RIGHT: This may have been the way they designed cockpits a few years back, but there's little wrong with a boat that has such an excellent pedigree. **BELOW:** Now that Sherlock have given her the interior she deserves, she's a stunner – the saloon taken out full width to make use of the modest beam

After many years building company boardrooms, dealing rooms and undertaking the finest quality restoration work – the roof of the Royal Chapel destroyed in the fire at Windsor Castle, for instance – Sherlock Interiors' move into yacht building was still a major step. Just who did these people think they were, challenging Oyster and Bowman?

Company MD, Piers Sherlock, an experienced yachtsman, realised that to survive in today's marketplace the boat would have to be good. Sherlock had the craftsmen, the premises, the machinery – probably no boatbuilder in the country has the sophisticated woodworking machinery that Sherlock had for its core business – what it needed was instant experience. Luckily Sherlock Yacht Building is based near the East Coast and could draw on the area's extensive pool of yacht building talent to augment their own skills.

Next on the agenda was what to build. Piers had his own ideas on what would represent the ideal long-distance cruising yacht and was fortunate enough to discover that mouldings for a David Pedrick-designed 14.5m (47ft 6in) yacht once built by Camper and Nicholson were available.

This medium displacement, moderate beam hull has a proven underwater configuration of long separate keel with fully-skegged rudder close to the termination of the waterplane, giving the best of course-keeping qualities with high manoeuvrability, and keeping wetted surface within sensible bounds. The centre cockpit deck version offered many interior options as well as an extremely pleasing profile.



On deck the Bluewater 476 is conventional and unremarkable until you start to look closely at the detail. The stainless steel work, for instance, is all custom made; even the anchor is stainless steel. Stanchions and pulpit tubes are greater in diameter than is common and many fittings have been made with welded stud fastenings rather than through bolts, both for appearance and also for watertightness.

The Bluewater 476, moreover, has massive chainplates, custom-made in stainless steel, carried through the deck and linked to the hull by hefty tie-rods secured to a comprehensive web system bonded into the hull. There will be no movement here and the scantlings are all over-size.

Göiot hatches and opening ports abound, with fixed vents in every hatch. Right forward a large hatch opens into a stowage compartment bounded fore and aft by a watertight bulkhead – effectively giving the yacht two crash bulkheads. Right aft, a further watertight bulkhead separates the lazarette – accessible from a flush-fitting deck hatch – from the after cabin.

A solid pram hood shelters the front of the cockpit – essential equipment for our British wintertime test sail – but there is plenty of space for lounging in the sun when cruising warmer climes and for working the boat when enjoying the sailing performance.

One of the few negative points was C&N's old wheel position; the Whitlock pedestal is too close to the forward edge of the after cockpit seat, making helming when standing very uncomfortable. It would be a simple matter to change it on a boat that is custom built.

As with all custom boats there is a wide choice of rigs, though the test boat sported a conventional Z-Spars masthead sloop rig with a removable inner forestay, fitting close to the bow, for storm jib or in the event of a roller headsail failure.

The sails, by Parker and Kay, were well shaped and ruggedly built as befits a long-distance cruising boat. However,





ABOVE: Classic Pedrick/
Camper & Nicholson
lines, rejuvenated by
a master builder.
Performance is
steady, rather than
electrifying, but
predictable averages
over a long passage
are assured; that's
true cruising comfort,
after all. LEFT:
Reaching, the
Bluewater shows why
this kind of boat
never goes out of
fashion

11-15 METRES 36-50 FEET

RIGHT: It's difficult to convey the standard of joinery in a photo. Suffice to say that, by the use of modern wood working machinery, accuracy of fit, jointing, dovetail and veneer is up there with the very best custom yards

while we can understand the logic of the short battened sail for cruising – none of the complication of batten cars – unless we were seriously planning to sell up and sail off over the horizon, then a fully-battened sail might be a better choice for most people. Sherlock cost in everything, down to all the instruments – VDO in the case of the test boat – and all the equipment.

The Bluewater 476 is a solid rather than spectacular performer, a boat that will be at home on the ocean as well as around the coast, a boat that will look after you well. Over the years this design's forte has been in cruising and in ocean crossing, though one of her class is a Cowes Week habituee, on occasion showing well. When the wind suits, the 476 is no sluggard.

At close quarters handling is predictable, but don't expect the boat to spin on her heel like a fin-keeler. The length of the keel makes turns in her own length a matter of the use of ahead and astern rather than of just putting the helm down and hoping not to get dizzy. But, after all, this boat has no pretensions as a round-the-buoys flyer.

Any boat built by a company which restored the Queen's roof can be expected to be of the highest standards. Piers Sherlock goes to great lengths to ensure that you look not only at the superb veneer matching – slip-matched American light oak on this boat – but also beneath, where there are revelations like varnished hardwood sole bearers to support the teak and holly boards, not softwood.

Sherlock's laminating skills, made possible by such modern machinery, are evident in the beautifully crafted cabinetry. Notice the small but essential details such as the moulded margins to the settees and furniture so that lifting or replacing the sole won't scratch the grain-filled and lacquered surface, and the laminated fiddle corners, in the door frames, in the mast cover, in fact in every curved surface.

The circular table, with its quarter-matched veneering, seats four or more on the settee, while director chairs are provided for any guest 'overspill'. Opposite the table the starboard settee has been built with an ingenious slide-out mechanism that converts it to a double berth, though there is still some work to do at the foot, as it forms the navigator's seat and the two functions co-exist uncomfortably.

Beneath the cabin sole the yacht's systems are on show: stainless steel tanks held down with strongbacks; wiring and piping easily accessible under the sole and not buried in hull-side conduits or in the bilge; tank breathers not just taken on



deck, but up inside the mast – water venting above the deck, diesel venting at the first spreaders to ensure that there will never be a spill.

Layout choice is to the owner's whim, but on the test boat there was a rather featureless double cabin forward which leads to a roomy heads and shower compartment, and wet and dry hanging space further to the bow. The cabin is finished with consummate craftsmanship; the drawers under the bunk, and throughout the boat, are of dovetailed carcass construction – something seldom seen on even the most super superyacht.

In contrast to such cabinetmaking pyrotechnics the hull sides are rather plainly battened and the

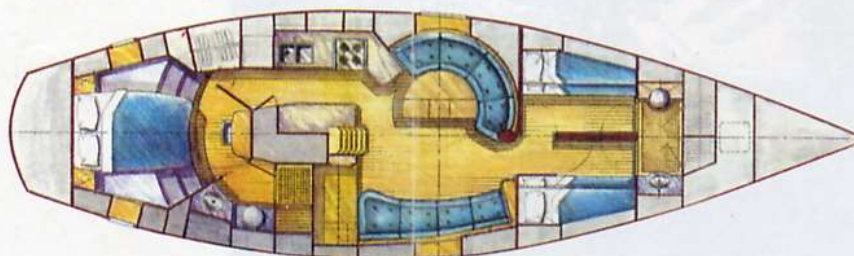
upholstery left in simple blue that lacks pizzazz. In the Bluewater 476, however, you can specify whatever you want, and a little work on the Sherlock CAD system will surely come up with the right answer for you.

Head aft from the saloon, via the very workmanlike and excellently equipped galley – more evidence of Sherlock's skills in the exquisitely crafted Corian tops and the custom stainless steel fridge cabinet – and you come to the main cabin. Here a high, central double berth dominates, the mattress sensibly split for lee cloths.

Every nook and cranny has been utilised for stowage and the sweeping curves and changing planes of the cabinetry make a visually satisfying scene – and a highly practical one too. The usual facilities are provided for dressing and make-up, while the comprehensive head and shower compartment – separate stall shower – should satisfy the most fastidious.

Sherlock seem to have hurdled the experience gap with their first boat, using their obvious skills in joinery and cabinetmaking to fine effect. They have chosen a sensible design from which to begin their attack on the market and the result is a boat that will appeal immensely to the owner looking for a sensible, conventional yacht aboard which to spend many hours safely and comfortably whilst covering the sea miles.

Amid such solid proficiency it was tempting to nit pick, and I did find some slightly awkward piping and wiring runs in the engine compartment, detracting from the otherwise seamanlike work throughout the boat. That aside, the Bluewater 476 can stand alongside the very best examples of custom yacht building in the traditional sense, an indication of the strength of England's East Coast boat building skills in particular and of the country's as a whole.



BLUEWATER 476

LOA	14.45m (47ft 6in)
LWL	11.05m (36ft 3in)
Draught (shoal keel)	1.78m (5ft 10in)
Beam	4.16m (13ft 8in)
Displacement	15 tonnes
Engine	Perkins M90
Naval architect	Pedrick Yacht Design
Interior designer	Dusan Savic
Builder	Sherlock Marine