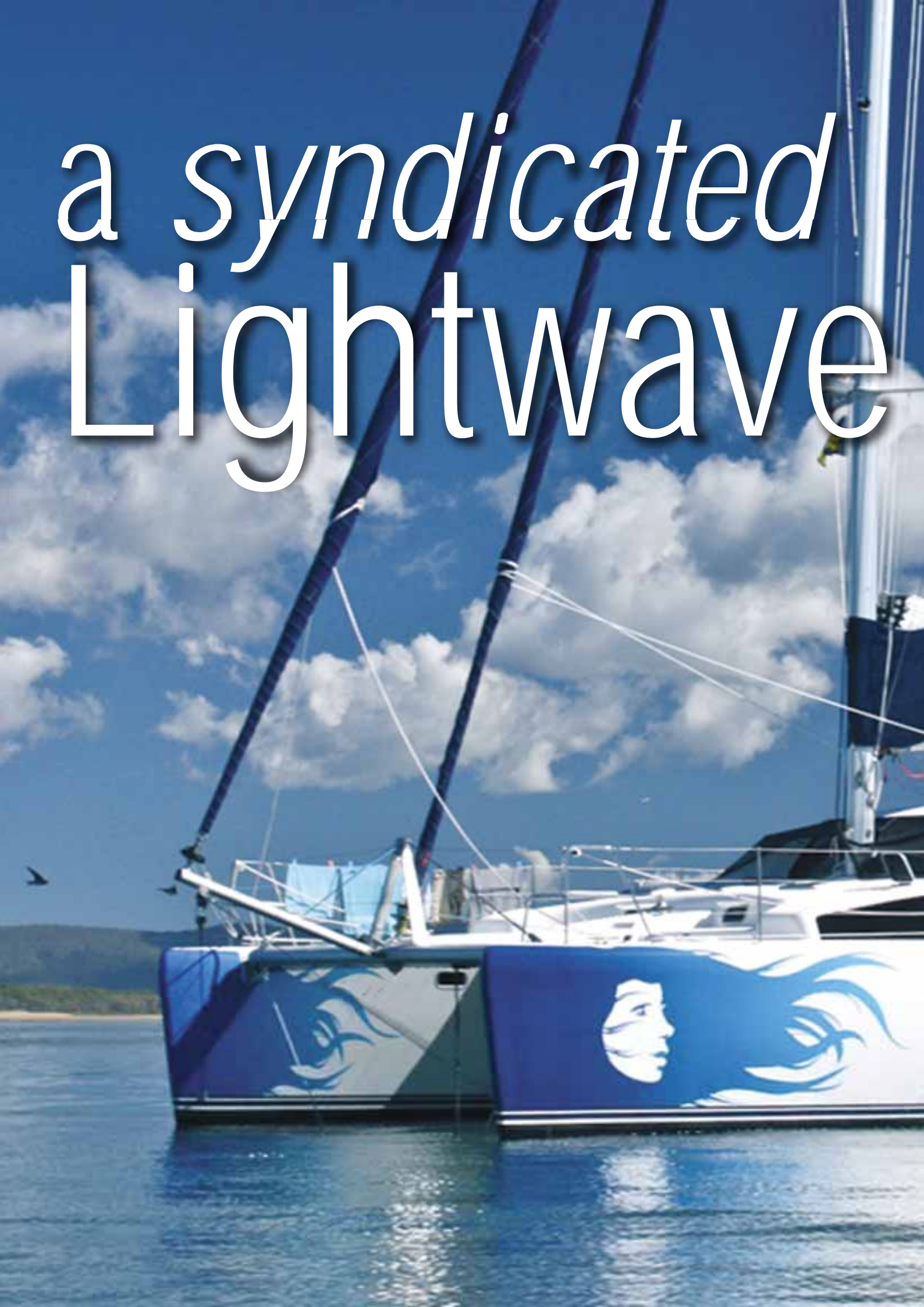


a *syndicated* Lightwave



LIFE

A white sailboat named 'BLUE SPIRIT' is shown from a side profile, sailing on a blue sea. The boat has a dark blue sail with 'BLUE SPIRIT' written in white. The hull also has 'BLUE SPIRIT' written in blue. A person is visible on the deck. The background is a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds. The word 'LIFE' is overlaid in large white letters on the left side of the image.

LW45G

Blue Spirit is set up for long distance cruising with a roaming base location

BY DEBRA SHORTER

“Did you know each other before you joined the syndicate?” This is the question everybody asks when we talk about how delighted we are as syndicate owners of *Blue Spirit*, our brilliant new 45ft Lightwave Grande’ catamaran. The answer is a resounding “no” which often surprises many, especially as we come from different parts of Australia with one couple from Victoria, two couples from New South Wales and one couple from Western Australia.

Louise Overell from Lightwave saw the opportunity to put the syndicate together after she had a number of enquiries from like-minded individuals. We think she must have stirred in a little magic when she handed one of us a bone (fake doggie bone) to gnaw over the idea after our initial meeting during a test sail a new LW45 Grande’ on Sydney harbour.

So how does the syndicate work and what makes it a success?

There’s no doubt we got off on a good footing with lots of support from Lightwave who had been through the process before. A level of professionalism on our part helped as well. We held an AGM, appointed officers and kept formal records of agreements and discussions. At Lightwave’s suggestion, we put together a Standard Operating Procedures Manual (SOP), drawing on the experience of others. Email connected us when regular meetings were not possible.

The financial benefits owning a 45’ luxury catamaran with only a quarter of the price tag are very clear. With all the maintenance costs, fuel and pen fees being shared, the annual pain of expenditure is eased considerably. We also recognised that since we were not going to live on board permanently, a boat of our own would have lots of down-time.

To the contrary *Blue Spirit* is used everyday. One syndicate member flies in as the other leaves. This means the boat is always in action and syndicate members ensure the boat is left in good condition at the end of their three to six week sail. This results in maintenance issues being attended to quickly and efficiently. Change-over night is a time of great companionship when we meet to tell a tall tale or two and pass on any new developments on the boat.

As a boat without a home, *Blue Spirit* roams according to our predetermined sail plan for the year. This year we have cruised as far north as Lizard Island and Bligh’s Boat Passage. Next year we have the bigger adventure of New Caledonia and New Zealand firmly in our sights.

Many enjoyable months were spent planning *Blue Spirit* with the help of Roger Overell and his very skilled team at Lightwave. Common agreement was found easily on most items. Each syndicate member played a role researching, investigating new gear and purchasing part of the equipment.

We love the layout on *Blue Spirit*. The cooks amongst us love the ‘galley-down’ with its large windows that give it a light and open feel. The reduced height at the back of the starboard saloon seating allows for good visual presence from the saloon into the galley. You never feel left out, nor is the galley in the way of the main entertaining areas. The three cabins with queen size beds on *Blue Spirit* have proved very workable and comfortable. The third cabin breaks down into two singles and the lounge seat on the transom makes a more than attractive bed when we sail with six or even eight on board. It gives us great flexibility with older kids on board.

Although we constantly remind ourselves the objective is to cruise and ‘smell the roses’ Airlie Beach Race week provided us with the opportunity to ‘see what she could do’. We didn’t officially enter the racing but we tagged along for a few days enjoying the spectacle and occasionally, just occasionally, testing our speed and pointing ability against the fleet. It was great fun.

We found that unlike racing monohulls, it was best to let the autopilot steer the boat as there is very little ‘feel’ in the





LW45G *Blue Spirit's* dynamic graphic design, exclusively designed by John Pallet (Perth) with our blue lady illustration by Tan Teck Weng (Melbourne)
 "Yes, we have caps and shirts too!" (top)

Co-owners enjoying spending shared time on board. The sheltered cockpit area offers an outdoor dining and lounging area, completely protected from the elements, and not isolated from the skipper! (above left)

Co-owner Debra loves the open, airy and seamless flow between galley and saloon area – "You never feel left out, nor is the galley in the way of the main entertaining area". (above right)



Photographer Ziggy Zelgler captures LW45G *Blue Spirit* smokin' at 16.5kts.

helm. This worked well both on and off the wind. We are still experimenting with downwind sailing angles but in general we sailed at least 10° off directly downwind and as much as 15°. If the boom was more than about 10° outboard of being directly above the leeward mainsheet fairlead we used a handy-billy to prevent the boom rising and the leech twisting off, reducing power.

Upwind, we always used the daggerboard. We feel it probably lifted us by four to six degrees. The guys found the boat was slowish out of the tacks, but once again it's all relative to their experience in smaller, more agile monos. The trick was to sail a smidge broad, building up speed again for a few seconds before hardening on the last two or three inches of sheet and picking up the last five degrees or so. We got much better at it the more we raced. It all comes back to getting to know your boat.

For the petrol heads, our top speed was 16.5kts. We regularly achieved 8-9.5kts working into the 15-18kt breeze. It seems *Blue Spirit* can point as well as 95% of monos, but we've found it better to go disproportionately faster by easing down just a smidge. She achieved 12-14kts consistently off the wind – fantastically enjoyable.

At Airlie we kept well out of the way of the starts and never actually crossed the finish line to ensure that we were not in the way. On several days we were distracted answering the call of a cold, crisp Reisling and stopped in a beautiful bay along the way. *Blue Spirit's* fridge set up, with double

drawers in the galley, freezer under the helm and an ample drinks fridge under one of the cockpit seats, is fantastic. We wouldn't want to run out of chilled refreshments! After all she's a cruiser not a racer we remind ourselves. Despite this, to our delight we found that *Blue Spirit* could be a pretty serious contender and that we could point and foot with the fastest boats in the various divisions.

So what makes the syndicate work? Part of it is very obviously having individuals at the same stage in life, retired or on the brink of retirement, with children who are in their 20's and 30's. Our kids and grandkids, quite apart from giving us much common ground, also give us great pleasure when they share with our friends in the enjoyment of being on board.

Perhaps the greater part of what makes it work however is the chemistry between us and it is hard to describe the alchemy of the mix. In equal measure it is adventure, challenge, good food and wine, and a love of sailing. Oh, did I mention patience, tolerance, much give and take and a great sense of humour?

Eight months is undoubtedly 'early days' in what will be a three to five year partnership but through *Blue Spirit* we have all become firm friends. Already this beautiful Lightwave 45 Grande has provided us with the perfect vehicle for a spirited life on the blue.

BLUE SPIRIT – LW45G MAIN PARTICULARS



Manufacturer	Lightwave Yachts
Length	13.7m
Beam	7.3m
Max Disp. DWL	9500kg
Layout	Owners hull configuration (3 cabin 2 bathroom). Customisations include portside daggerboard
Sail area Main	75m ²
Spinnaker	180m ²
Mast height	Custom 21m
Engines	55hp Yanmar
Watermaker	143LT ph Echotech system
Air conditioning	2 x 16,000 BTU system

About the author:

Debra lives with her husband Bruce in Western Australia and owned powerboats for many years. As novice sailors they have relished the opportunity to learn from the other very experienced sailors in the syndicate; Hugh and Leigh Hodgkinson (NSW), Greg and Janene Charlesworth (NSW) and Michael and Pat Quinn (Vic).

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