

# the dream



# FACTORY

TO SET UP A BUSINESS DOING WHAT YOU LOVE, WHERE YOU LOVE AND WITH who you love ... It's one of those eternal dreams for almost everybody. In the case of The Cat Factory's Lloyd Powell, it's a vision come true as he and wife Kate continue to build high quality multihulls for an evergrowing clientele of more than happy customers.



Lloyd at the helm of *Bedar* the Crowther he built for his father. (above)  
Lloyd and his Dad on *Bedar*. (far left)

by JO DJUBAL

**B**UILDING CUSTOMISED multis in Western Australia? Why not! Lloyd and Kate approached their business venture with confidence, skill, determination and a no nonsense CV of experience behind them.

In addition to a love of recreational sailing, Kate brings 15 years of family business and management experience to her role as Business Manager for the Cat Factory. This role encompasses all the

'non production' aspects of the business (finance, marketing and business development, compliance), which allows Lloyd to focus on what he most loves doing – 'hands on' building with his team.

Lloyd grew up in Wales where he did his first RYA course at 12 years of age.

"I won my first race and that was it. I was hooked! Sailing the *Mirror* that my father bought for my brothers and I in Wales was the start of a lifelong love affair with boats and the sea," he said.

In 1983, at just 16, Lloyd began his three year Yacht and Boatbuilding apprenticeship at the Falmouth Marine School in Cornwall. Of course he managed to get some sailing in as well! Not least of which was the 1988 Fastnet aboard *Heavens Above* an Oyster 42. The boat won the distinction of being the second cruiser over the line.

"I've also been lucky enough to experience numerous French/English Channel crossing races and several successful Cowes Week campaigns," Lloyd said.

"And since moving to WA 20 years ago, I've been happy to win three state

titles aboard local one design S80's and also numerous match racing successes."

Despite being a seasoned racer, Lloyd loves to cruise and spent a number of summer seasons in his 20s crewing on boats in the Mediterranean.

"One of my favourite places to sail is still the southern Turkish coast – it's where I experienced some of the best times – and the most dramatic when I became involved in a midnight salvage operation of a drifting Italian monohull in the middle of a storm. Team work definitely won the day and we returned the vessel to its very grateful owners without charge!

The Turkish coast also happens to be where, 22 years ago, I met my wife. At the time she was working on a 60ft schooner as cook and hostess, her cooking was definitely a whole lot better than mine!

Memories of that fantastic Mediterranean climate and lifestyle were part of the reason we chose to come to Perth, that and its great sailing conditions and community – and we haven't been disappointed! We still try to get out



Cruising in Turkey.

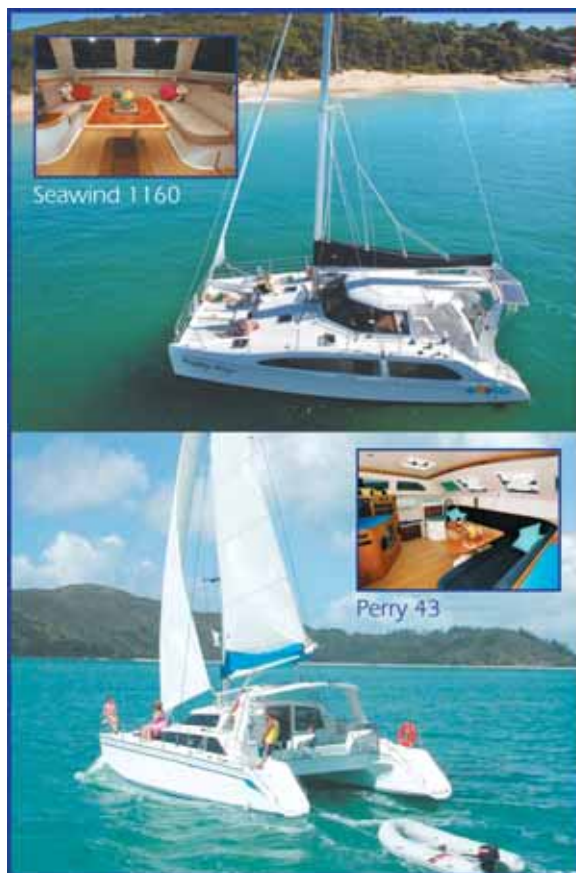
sailing whenever we can and love sailing over to Rottneest Island and mooring up there for a weekend or longer. WA may not have the same island hopping opportunities that are available in Queensland but there's still plenty of great coastal cruising to be had both south and north. It's particularly beautiful up around the Kimberley Coast or south around the Margaret River region and further down to Albany and Esperance."

Lloyd's first boat building management project was for his father. "Building for a family member can be hazardous to your relationship!" Lloyd remembers. "I have

to say this project was not without its pitfalls in this regard, but overall it was an immensely enjoyable and rewarding experience for both of us. Dad had decided on a Crowther 42, a leading design in its day, and he spent many happy hours pottering on it."

Lloyd has been involved in building multihulls in WA for the last 15 years but the Cat Factory was officially established in 1999. "Prior to that I had been building customised multihulls under my own name and with other builders. Multihulls have always been my passion and I believe offer a level of performance combined with comfort and safety just not achievable for the same water length in a monohull. We've built cats for a number of monohull 'converts' and for them there's no looking back."

Crowther, Schionning, Lidgard and Grainger are some of Lloyd's most revered designers. "I believe Lock Crowther was instrumental in exposing the general boating public to a different way of sailing while Jeff Schionning made DIY building a real possibility for so many. Gary Lidgard and Tony Grainger are



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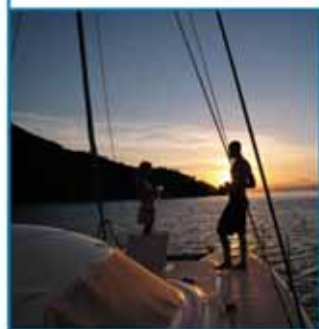
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undoubtedly at the forefront of design advances in multihulls today.’

The Cat Factory is located in the Australian Marine Complex at Henderson, just 15 minutes south of Fremantle and 40 minutes south of Perth. They are the only builders of specialist composite sailing multis in the complex.

What motivated Lloyd and Kate to set up business on the remote west coast?

“We saw a gap in the market in Perth for a custom composite multihull builder. We wanted to be able to offer the level of service we felt was missing for clients who really wanted a ‘designer boat’ not just something ‘off the shelf’. We’re sailors as well as builders and feel very comfortable talking to clients about every aspect of a catamaran’s performance at sea and

comparing designs so that the owner can really make an informed decision and build what’s best for them. We also saw there was an opportunity to offer peripheral services to customers and as a consequence, now offer building advice and consultancy to owner builders, including partial construction options, the Fusion 40 WA agency (providing kit and parts sales) plus the Fusion Share Boat option (see advertisement [in this edition](#)) To cater to the small racing cat enthusiast, we also now offer the Lightwave Raider Kit for sale and assembly to WA customers.”

The company has never approached their venture with a ‘churn em out’ attitude to the building process and as such, run a small team of enthusiastic and committed tradesman and apprentices.

“We’re not a ‘production line’ factory, our focus has always been on quality rather than volume,” Lloyd explained. “and very particularly on building a boat that fits exactly to our clients

specifications. We deliberately have the capacity to build only two boats at once, although more often than not it’s been one project at a time with only a brief overlap of a second project. This means we’re extremely focused on the project and ensures the utmost attention to detail at all times.”

And clients are more than happy with their Cat Factory multis.

“The guys love the ease of handling and performance,” Lloyd said. “The girls love the galley up and that they don’t need to ‘stow’ anything when sailing. They all universally love the space their cat offers and that their catamaran is something the whole family can enjoy, young and old, regardless of sailing experience. Many husbands have been delighted to have gotten their wives ‘on board’ – if it had been a monohull – no chance!”

The Cat Factory has constructed nine vessels to date which include Crowthers, Schionnings and Fusion 40 designs. “In the future we intend to continue to offer both Schionnings and Fusions but are also happy to undertake a build of any other recognised design that we consider offer the level of performance and comfort of these two industry benchmarks. We would love for example, the opportunity to build a Grainger design – and also one of Craig Schionning’s Spirited Designs.”

As a boatbuilder of experience, Lloyd has utilised a wide range of materials ... “I’ve used all the usual suspects!” he said. “Polyesters, vinylesters and epoxy resins. Some pre-preg foam, balsa, Western Red Cedar, Nomex. Ordinary E-glass to carbon fibre and Kevlar. Nowadays I would prefer to use epoxy based material, purely from a health and safety point of view. But, with the advances in vacuum infusion, that cuts down on the fumes and dust when using polyester/vinylester based products which are cheaper ... Like most things, it comes down to cost in the end!”

Lloyd believes exciting times are ahead for the future direction of Australian multihull design and build methods ...

“Whilst the die hard America’s Cup followers will be squirming in their seats to think that multihulls will be used to fight for ‘the Auld mug’! I think the design/technology and building techniques

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On the winning S80 – 1994 State Champions.





Time out – Palm Island, Whitsundays. (above left)  
Enjoying the Fusion 40 under sail. (above right)



that will feed down to the multihull industry will be fantastic for all involved. It may even convince some people to come over to 'the dark side!'

As for The Cat Factory, a steady, unheedy approach is planned for the future with uncompromised regard for clients needs.

"Our vision is to continue to "help our customers realise their dreams". We plan to do this by consistently delivering on our customers' expectations to the highest possible standard, and becoming recognised in Western Australia as the builder of choice for those wanting quality built, customised designer catamarans.

We're well on our way already but would like to see that reputation consolidated. We have no plans to expand as we believe our place is firmly in the niche custom sector of the boat building industry. Being small means we can respond quickly to change and requires us to be at the cutting edge of what the industry can offer. Our plan is to keep learning and get better and better at what we do! If you know what you want but haven't been able to find it then come and talk to us, our quality workmanship, professionalism and a creative eye for practical detail will turn your dreams into reality."

Lloyd's own dream has been realised through adherence to a simple yet sincere philosophy. "I always treat every project as if I were building my own boat. Integrity and honesty at all times is the key. Our values statement really sums up our guiding principles ...

**Customer Focus:** We seek to provide winning solutions to our customer's requirements; everything we do on a customer's project must contribute to meeting their needs.

**Trust:** Integrity is never compromised; we are committed to the highest standards of behavior and practice and to always doing the right thing in our relationship with others

**Superior Performance:** We stretch ourselves to continuously improve what we do and how we do it.

**Teamwork:** We all work together to achieve our vision. We respect the diverse ideas and skills of each individual. We support each other when things are going well and not so well. We try to have fun along the way.'

The Cat Factory is a company where old fashioned values are combined with cutting edge design and state of the art materials to create very special multihulls. This highly successful approach will no doubt see Lloyd eventually realising his ultimate dream ... "Sailing off into the sunset with my wife in a catamaran I built myself!"

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