

REVIEW: UPFOLD MID-PILOTHOUSE 16M

# Quiet evolution





## THE CLASSIC BRIDGEDECKER EMERGED EARLY LAST CENTURY BUT

Auckland designer Bill Upfold happily credits it for inspiring his mid-pilothouse motoryachts. They account for around 70% of the 44 boats he has in the water and six in build.

**T**he mid-pilothouse provides the same accommodation space as a flybridge boat for the same length but with a profile that is half a level lower, as illustrated in the diagrams on page 46, in this article.

As Upfold's latest, 16-metre mid-pilothouse, *Bellagio*, demonstrates, the transitions from galley to saloon, and saloon to bridge are left open to maintain easy flow and communication throughout the boat, rather than the definite separation of a flybridge boat.

The mid-pilothouse lowers the centre of gravity and attracts less windage – which makes for a more efficient boat underway and a more obedient boat at anchor. It's also easier to berth in a crosswind and some prefer the aesthetics, too.

However, none of these were Upfold's motive when he adapted the bridgedecker concept to his motoryachts 20 years ago. His mother, then in her sixties, was finding the steep steps to the flybridge increasingly difficult and Upfold realised that split levels in the boat would require fewer steps, at a gentler gradient, to move throughout the boat. The concept reached its full potential when applied to the wider beam of modern launches.

*Bellagio* is owned by Maurice McKenzie and his wife, Daphne. They have visited the town of that name in Italy; it means 'nice place to be'.

McKenzie had admired the 15m Upfold design, *Simply Red*, during its build in the Clevedon yard of Scott Lane. When *Simply Red* was launched, McKenzie commissioned *Bellagio*. She is Lane's third Upfold design; he has started on the fourth, a 60-footer.

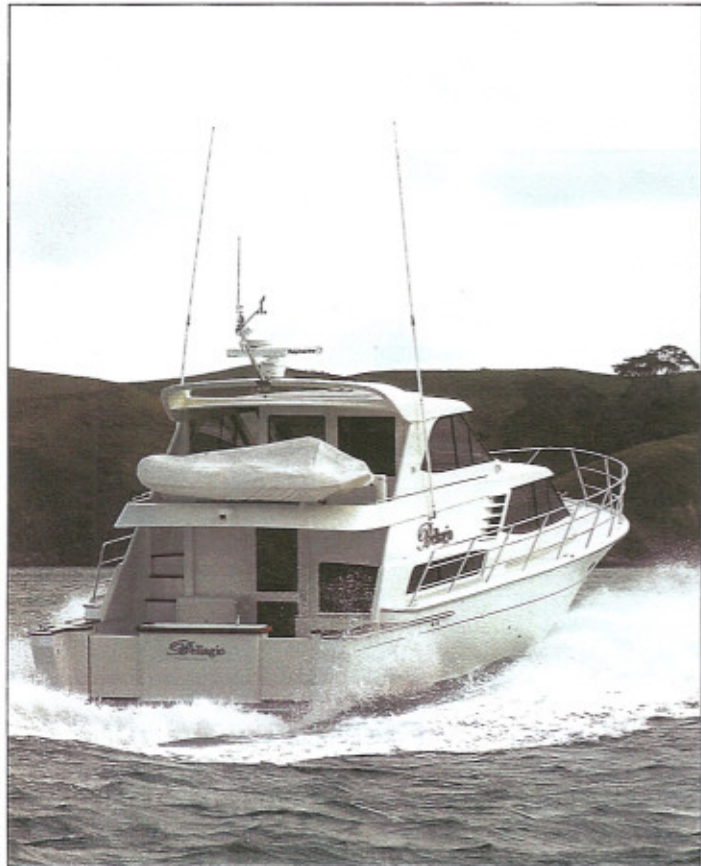
Boating New Zealand experienced *Bellagio* on a day when 25 knots from the west brought through rain squalls just on dock-off and berthing time. Squelch.

McKenzie's previous boat was a 40-footer with stern legs but he was at ease with this 50-footer and besotted with the bow thruster which jostled the boat from its berth and into the fairway. Onboard were Bill Upfold, Scott Lane and his father, Milton Lane.

As we headed out into the blustery slop of the Waitemata we had the breeze up our backside and were warm and cosy on the bridge. McKenzie had the wheel and I took the next

*Bellagio*, the Bill Upfold-designed mid-pilothouse motoryacht. She uses the mid-pilothouse configuration to achieve the same accommodation as on a flybridge launch of similar length, but with a profile that is half a level lower.

STORY BY REBECCA HAYTER ■ PHOTOS BY MIKE HUNTER



FROM LEFT: Bill Upfold, designer;  
Scott Lane, boatbuilder;  
Maurice McKenzie, owner.

best spot beside the skipper on the two-three scater, leather helm seat. There is a sliding hatch above the helm to let in the breeze and allow the skipper to stand and stick his head out the top, as in the bridgedeckers.

The window wipers gave us glimpses of the Waitemata harbour but I was still taking in the screens and dials on the helm console. They were mostly in duplicate, for the twin 450hp Caterpillar 3126B engines. The two Caterpillar fuel management screens dominated the

dashboard, monitoring exhaust temperature, boost, percentage of engine load being used – usually about 52%, litres per hour – around 90 litres depending on our speed.

Above eye level, a Raymarine monitor provided four screens in one – including a sounder and a camera view of the engine room or the cockpit. The Raymarine chartplotter/radar was mounted next to it. McKenzie seemed on first-name basis with all of them.

Bellagio's planing hull is typical Upfold: a fine entry and warped plane aft. She felt the sea state but it was a comfortable, smooth transition from wave to wave, a ship-like feel, rather

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than the jerk-lunge of a smaller boat.

We were cruising at 17 knots at 2100rpm. She has trim tabs, to achieve the best attitude for different sea conditions. When running downwind, McKenzie often hands over to the autopilot which, he says, avoids the temptation to over-correct and steers a straighter path than a human pilot.

At Motuihe Channel, we turned to port, and took the wind and sea beam-on. The roll was minimal; the lower profile would help here, however it was easy to be comfortable in the spacious bridge area. It has lounge-style seating either side, in broad, gold and navy stripes. The interior décor was by the McKenzies'

favourite interior decorator, Simon Pritchett of Howick, in consultation with Daphne McKenzie. The saloon is sumptuous elegance, but the bridge maintains a nautical flavour.

A sliding door, aft, opens to the upper deck, which has a seat for passengers running athwartships. Most of the space is taken up by the tender, cutely named *Baby B*, and its crane. The steps curve down to the cockpit to starboard.

We anchored for lunch in Station Bay, as the gusts brought cat's paws over the water. The wavelets passed quietly down the waterline without chine slap.

Maurice and Daphne McKenzie have two sons, both married with small chil-

dren, so *Bellagio's* interior configuration uses the saloon to ensure Grandpa and Grandma sleep undisturbed. The little ones can sleep in the three-berth cabin for'ard. Their parents take an adjacent double cabin, to starboard. The bathroom with separate shower is to port.

These cabins have good stowage; every drawer in the boat is lined with frontrunner to stop items rattling about, even the cutlery drawer.

The saloon feels like your best friend's sitting room: wide, comfortable settees either side and a coffee table, which leaves the space open. The settees have disguised, pull out drawers for storage. The cabinetry conceals a spirit bar and a

**ABOVE LEFT:** Plenty of electronics, including engine monitoring, on the helm.

**ABOVE:** The twin, 450hp Caterpillars in glossy splendour.

small bar fridge.

Taking centre stage is the Panasonic Entertainment system including plasma television – a dream invention for boat designers, DVD and MP3.

McKenzie is as adept with the MP3 as he is with the boat's bridge electronics and slick thumb work on the remote soon had the sub-woofer boofing the beat for Lynyrd Skynyrd's *Call me the Breeze* – Lynyrd obviously hadn't



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ABOVE: Bellagio's salon, looking aft towards the galley, left, and bridge.

ABOVE RIGHT: The bridge, viewed from the aft deck.



temperature selected and frosted glass-fronted storage including a full height pantry – no more fiddling around in the backs of lockers for the sugar.

Those who have trouble finding dishwashers will have an excuse – it has the same paneling as the other cupboards. Another trick is the floor boards in the sole. Lane decided that latches would collect dust, so he and a stainless steel expert devised two concealed chokes which remotely lift the floorboards.

Opposite the galley is the owners' double cabin – a long way from the kids' cabin up for'ard. Its ensuite is also the day head, close to the cockpit. Each bathroom has a 75-litre hot water cylin-

der to avoid losing heat as the water travels the length of the boat.

Just aft of the galley, inside the sliding door to the cockpit, is the boat's only dining table, suitable for four people. A cupboard opposite holds the fishing rods.

McKenzie welcomed input from others in the project – but not in the cockpit. Here, mid-transom, he has an island where a man can fillet fish on the large baitboard – his friends tell him it's hugely optimistic; wash down the mess, wash his hands in the basin and put waste in the two, enormous pull-out bins.

The island is also home to the boat's name, beautifully crafted in Perspex with a large, swirling 'B' and painted in

silver, all lit by hidden strip lighting. There is an automatic security light so if the McKenzies go visiting in daylight and return after dark, it'll be a lot easier to find their boat in the anchorage.

The watermaker and genset are beneath the cockpit sole.

Two sliding panels close off the cockpit either side, making the boat a great place for grandchildren. An aft helm, to port, helps with berthing.

The full-size barbecue is inside the cockpit, up against the main bulkhead and concealed under a cover. A small bar fridge keeps the cockpit fishers cool.

The for'ard double cabin has access to the engine room, another nice place for

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The galley, with dining table aft, just beside the sliding door to the cockpit.

the owner to be. The twin Caterpillars, in full-gloss, stark white splendour, are well forward in the boat which is good for trimming the hull but the prop shafts are six metres long – about the limit for prop shafts. They are supported by three bearings.

The boat has no air conditioning to save weight and Upfold was confident that 450hp engines would easily meet the owner's request for 20 knots cruising speed. However, Upfold suggested the cost saving go towards high quality propellers. *Bellagio's* Brunton props give her a top speed of 28 knots. She displaces 18 tonnes.

The hull is built over computer-cut

temporary frames. The lay-up is ply-glass-balsa-glass with the ply as the inside skin. This makes a stable structure with a clean interior that requires less fairing than the strip plank methods.

For our homeward trip, I took the helm and pointed the bow through the Rakino Channel, into the wind-against-tide that was creating big holes in the sea. At 17 knots, *Bellagio* found the odd trough and took spray over her foredeck until Upfold pushed the twin throttles forward to 20 knots – from there on, we cruised smoothly over the tops and could switch off the windscreen wipers.

Off Rangitoto Light, we met up with the camera boat and put *Bellagio* through some hard turns for the photos. She felt totally secure in the corners, the skeg and the props hanging on but it was hard work bringing the wheel from lock to lock in the esses. Upfold said this is more pronounced on *Bellagio*.

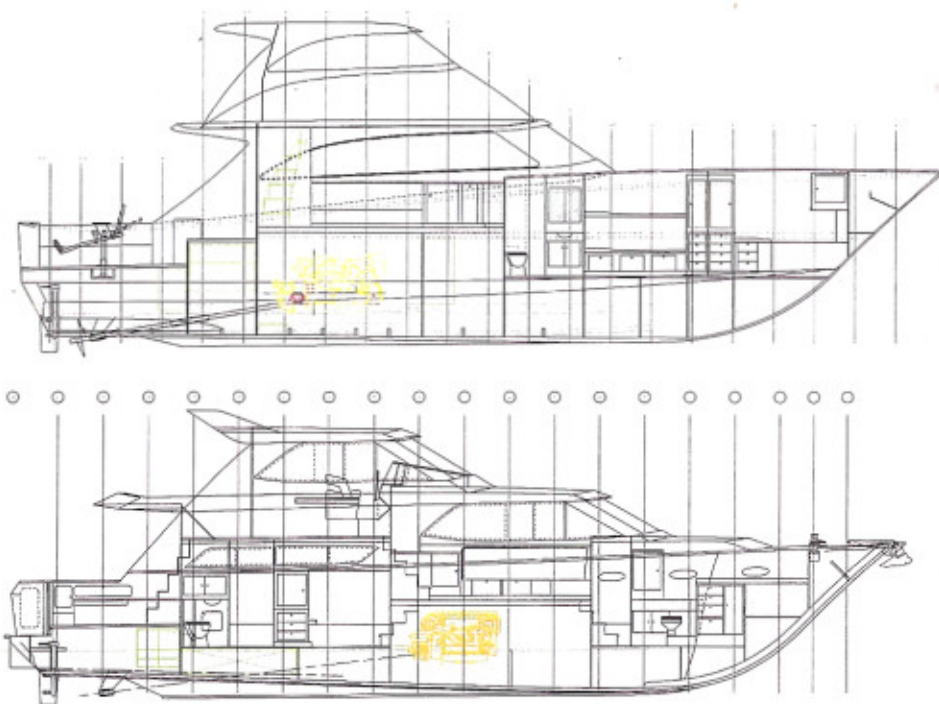
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The drawings show the profiles and configuration of Upfold's flybridge model, top, and *Bellagio's* mid-pilothouse.

possibly a reflection of the propellers' determined grip on the water.

*Bellagio* continues to meet the high standards of Upfold design and Scott Lane's boatbuilding. She's a fantastic family boat, with internal access throughout and the power to explore the extended coastline. Wherever she goes, she'll be a nice place to be. ■

**SPECIFICATIONS**

loa	16m
beam	5m
draft	1m
disp	18t
fuel cap	2000L
water cap	1000L
engines	2 x Caterpillar 450hp

Suppliers to *Bellagio* include: M&D McKenzie: owner; Bill Upfold: design; Scott Lane: boatbuilder, cabinet work; Steellotts: stainless steel; Chatfield Engineerin: shafts; Brunton: propellers; Caterpillar: engines; McCauley Contractors: engineering; BEP: switchboard, sea recovery, watermaker; Capilano: steering, Raymarine: sounder, radar, GPS; Bennett: trim tabs; Jabscow, searchlight; Brother: fax; Muir: winch; Sealand Vacuum: heads; Fisher&Paykel: dishwasher; Meile: oven; Ocean Air: refrigeration; Panasonic: TV/video; Aquapro: dinghy; Howick Upholstery