

BOATING
Test

E Nine — her looks don't tell the story

The reverse sheer, mainsail roach and plumb bow may tell the casual observer that E Nine is yet another super quick Elliott harbour and coastal racer. But NO, this is no mini Peacemaker or Party Pro.



The Elliott 9 is all power, driving purposefully upwind even under a much-reduced rig.

Being aimed at the family market, E Nine has no complicated rig and can be constructed without an exotic price tag. She does, however, have a generous interior like the more race-orientated Peacemaker.

E Nine certainly looks fast, and there is no reason to suspect she will not perform well around the race track. But the Elliott design office is at pains to impress upon us the user-friendly characteristics of this new yacht.

Elliotts, through their racetrack suc-

The Yanmar 20GM (18hp) really cranks the yacht along and with the uncalibrated Silva log only showing 4.6 knots we are convinced it is seriously under-reading the yacht's progress. The engine noise is minimal despite the absence of insulation in the engine bay beneath the companionway.

With still higher wind speeds predicted, the main is hoisted with one reef as we leave Westhaven. The reef proves unnecessary — but all the same no one is complaining about the yacht's performance. Our reach back and forth across the harbour awaiting the photography boat really demonstrates

the new Elliott 9's pedigree — our real speed being more than 7 knots under reefed main alone.

We're all looking forward to the next manoeuvre — setting the PHRF spinnaker and blasting off downharbour before the southwesterly. Popping the chute is a no-drama operation, E Nine stepping away nimbly before the strengthening breeze.

So enjoyable is the ride — to more than 10 knots in the squirts — that we're quickly soon praying for more wind and a bit more sea as well. Any doubts that the new 9m design may prove a handful are quickly dispelled

yacht.

Elliotts, through their racetrack successes, have something of a PR job on their hands convincing family sailors that they can design very competent cruisers.

We are testing E Nine extremely hot out of the boat yard. She has been launched only a week and has just undergone her first sailing trials when we meet the Elliott crew at Auckland's Westhaven. The new 9m design had been scheduled for testing in next month's issue but was promoted when the big cruiser we were to evaluate could not be prepared in time.

With summer threatening to arrive, a number of new yachts are beginning to emerge from boat companies all around the country — none more prolific than Elliotts.

After what seems months of dreadful weather, Auckland turns on a cracker for our boat test of the new 9m Elliott. The sun makes more than a guest appearance, the clouds scatter and the wind powers in.

The southwesterly, in fact, builds during the morning to a point where the generally hearty Greg Elliott becomes a little apprehensive. He knows that all aboard the new yacht will want to push it to the max — not really the ideal recipe for a yacht not as yet totally debugged.

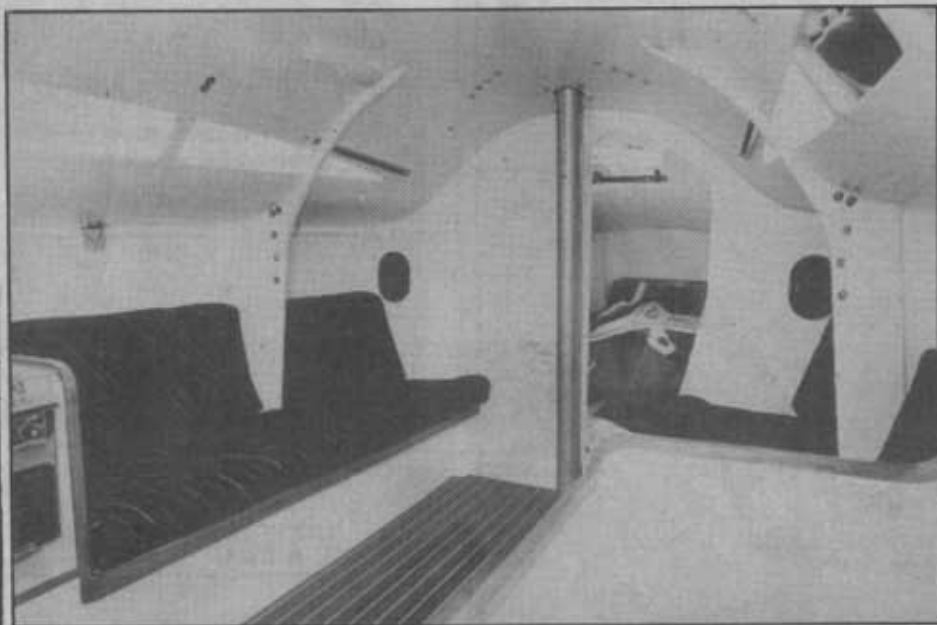
We agree that pushing E Nine along under PHRF spinnaker in winds of 20-25 knots may produce performance pictures which are at odds with the yacht's "family boat" marketing. But then those if wish to sail more sedately simply leave the spinnaker in the sail bin for lighter conditions.

E Nine is easily extricated from her marina berth and we begin motoring out toward the Waitemata Harbour.

with a superbly-balanced helm. Control is a fingertip operation.

Gybing is relatively hassle-free as we tear back northward toward Devonport. On the bursts, E Nine leaves a lovely flat wake astern, a sure sign that our progress is a fuss-free affair. By now, having covered a lot of water in rapid-fire style, it is time to contemplate a return to base.

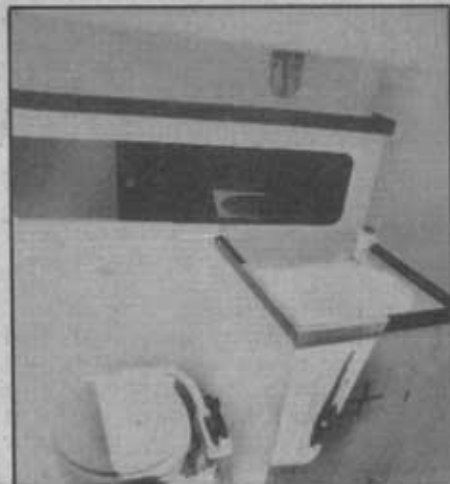
The rounded cedar core cabintop provides plenty of headroom below decks.



It is decided to leave the reefed main in place and pop up the No 3. This a typical cruisy combination — although, admittedly, in our case a trifle high tech. Owners Mervyn and Raewyn Neil have opted for a kevlar/mylar mix in their Windward sail wardrobe.

E Nine drives purposefully upwind despite our lack of sail area. The speed improves to around 6 knots as we get in tune with the new Elliott. Again the helm is delightfully light — a vital component aboard any yacht aimed at family sailing.

Putting the little Elliott about under such a cruising sail area is so delightfully simple we bounce E Nine from



such a cruising sail area is so delightfully simple we bounce E Nine from tack to tack more often than is necessary on the beat home. The only misgiving we have is that if you're busy scribbling notes in the aft quarter when the yacht is tacked you tend to be lashed in place as the traveller zooms down the stern mainsail track on top of you. This feature will certainly discourage crew lazing off down aft.

Packing up and stowing sails is a breeze on a yacht of this size, so it is not long before we're motoring back to the marina.



Simple head arrangement.



The compact galley, sitting between saloon settee and quarterberth.

As we leap below E Nine for an interior inspection, builder Craig Partridge jokes that it's a bit like being inside a fridge. Sure, the all-lacquered white interior does lend a whiteware flavour to the yacht — but for those



E Nine's chart table with large quarterberth in the background.

beneath the settees and none behind the backrests as these fit directly against the hull.

The chart table is to starboard at the foot of the companionway, a hinged lid providing adequate space for summer chart requirements. A locker beneath the chart table is opened to reveal a neat arrangement which allows a portable 12V fridge to slide in and out as required.

A neat electrical panel by Harrison Pacific is fitted above the chart table with a small stowage tray above this. As well as containing the impressive

Alpine stereo system and Sea Ranger VHF, the electrical panel includes neat back-lit circuit information and a digital voltmeter.

The small galley opposite includes a Mariner Prince gas oven with an electrical switch for the gas bottle stowed in a rear cockpit locker. A small sink is recessed into a tiny bench alongside the oven while two small rounded drawers accommodate the yacht's cutlery and other galley weaponry. Galley stowage is provided in the form of two lockers beneath the stove and a per-

spex-fronted locker under the side deck.

The yacht's auxillary, an 18hp Yanmar GM20, is fitted beneath the cockpit in an extremely neat installation. The positioning of batteries and wiring has obviously been carried out with much experience. Despite this, access is lousy — no way would we like to be carrying out any major servicing in here. An 80-litre stainless steel diesel tank is fitted beneath the cockpit with directly overhead filling through the cockpit floor.

E Nine's quarterberths are de-

who want a clean, light and airy accommodation this is the way to go.

E Nine is certainly not so white as to be sterile. This yacht, while simply appointed, is not spartan.

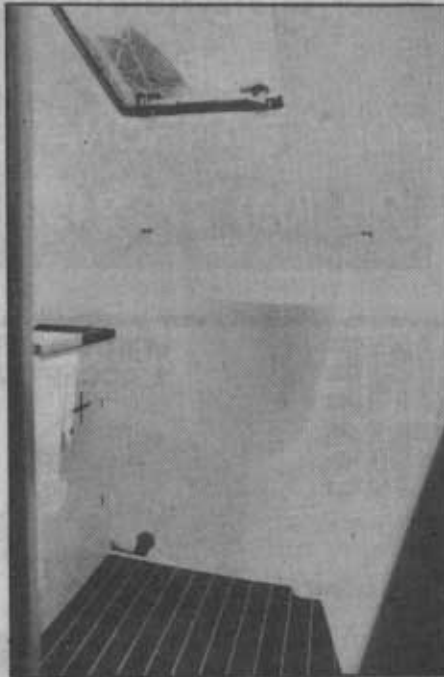
Headroom is excellent, courtesy of the high rounded cabin. The forepeak area is surprisingly large for a 9m yacht, there being more than enough space for a huge selection of sails. A Lewmar hatch provides easy access for sails to the foredeck as well as ventilation.

A simple head arrangement is positioned to port forward of the mast bulkhead. This includes a Brydon pump toilet, a basin with a pressure water

head. This includes a Brydon pump toilet, a basin with a pressure water system, a stowage locker beneath the bench while two slide perspex doors hide another locker below the side decks. A large hanging locker opposite offers ample space for larger cruising items.

The saloon offers heaps of space for after-voyage relaxing — the fridge-like whiteness broken up nicely by the teak and holly flooring and black fabric squabs covered in cheerful coloured slashes.

Inflatable rubber water tanks with a capacity of more than 100 litres aside are fitted beneath the saloon settees. There is little room for further stowage



The large clean forepeak has ample space for a large selection of sails.

finitely of proportions we'd expect aboard a larger yacht. A comfortable double each side can be enjoyed without any structural interference due to the clean interior produced by strip-planking.

With the interior well noted and photographed, we head topsides for a look around E Nine's decks. A small, shallow anchor locker adorns the fore-deck with adequate room for cruising ground tackle.

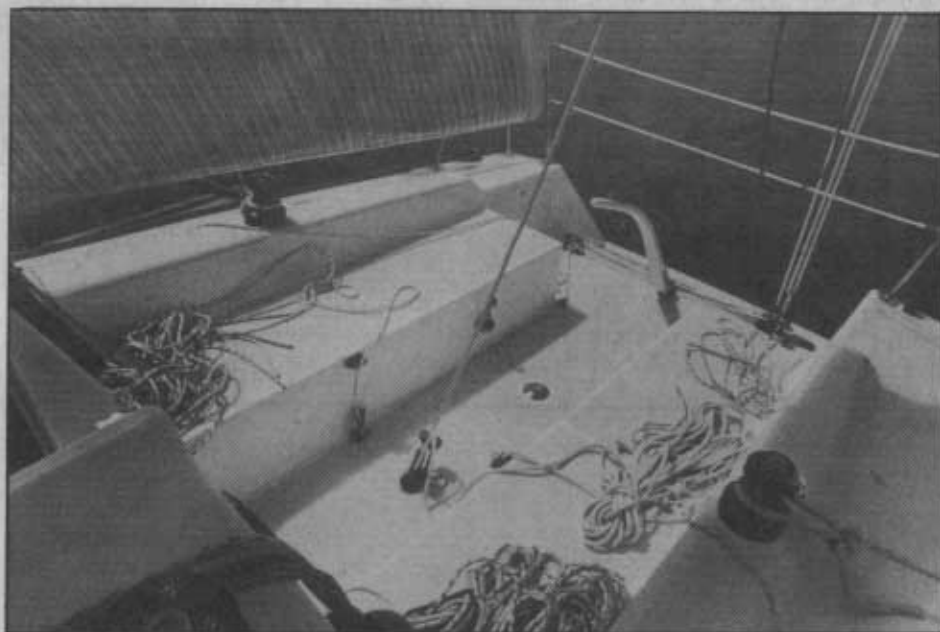
To overcome the problem of heavy anchor gear attacking the yacht's plumb bow, E Nine has a removeable anchor fairlead extension. This stainless steel fitting allows the anchor to swing well clear of the topsides.

The headsail foil is a Tuffluff, being supported by Riggana rod rigging and rigging screws. The twin well-swept spreader rig is by Mast and Spar, the spinnaker pole being stowed, dinghy-style, on the boom.

Headsail tracks are attached to the side decks and cabin side, all deck blocks being Ronstan. All mast controls make their way aft to RC Marine rope clutches and Lewmar 30 self-tailers at the aft end of the cabintop.

The rounded cabintop is a bit of a trick to wander along but the Epiglass non-skid system appears to work well. The non-skid may have to work overtime with a little water on deck as the cabintop shape does produce pretty steep angles at some points of heel.

E Nine's cockpit works well both whilst sailing and at rest. To allow a free walkway right through from the



The cockpit worked well, the stern-mounted mainsail track allowing for easy walk-through access from boarding platform to companionway.

boarding platform to the companionway, Elliott has prescribed a stern mainsheet track in favour of a removeable track "bridge" over the cockpit.

Mainsheet tensioning is through a cockpit floor-mounted block while traveller control lines lead for'ard onto jamcleats — which allows both to be operated by the helmsman when sailing short-handed. With no backstay, the cockpit work is kept pretty simple.

Lewmar 30 self-tailers sit each side on the cockpit coamings to handle the spinnaker, the cabintop winches being used for the headsails.

The sailing instruments and compass are all by Silva — and all are easily visible from the helm position on all points of sail.

Mounted to port on the cabin is a Silva 3200 depth readout while to starboard is the Silva 4000 windgear and

Silva 2200 log. A Silva compass resides each side.

The Yanmar engine controls are built into the port cockpit wall behind a perspex cover while the throttle/gear lever is to starboard — all easily accessed from the helm position.

E Nine is fitted with a lacquered white tiller which, although fitted with an extension, was a little shorter than we'd have preferred.

A filler cap in the cockpit floor allows safe and easy filling of the diesel tank below. A manual bilge pump is built into the cockpit wall, well positioned for easy use in an emergency.

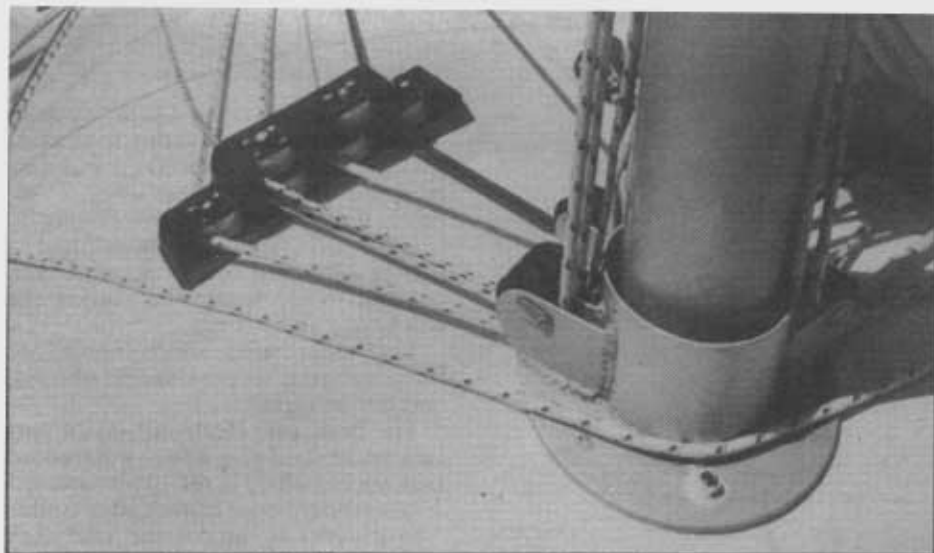
A good-sized gear locker is built into each side of the cockpit at the transom — ideal for gas bottles and heaps of cruising gear.

One disappointing feature of the cockpit is for'ard visibility. A combination of reverse sheer, high cabin and low cockpit seating means only the super lofty can see the bow whilst seated at the tiller.

Summary

While we may have initially been somewhat sceptical when informed that this new Elliott is aimed more at family sailing than red hot racing, we came away from the boat test convinced that the design has all the attributes for fun summer cruising.

E Nine, with her moderate rig, no backstays and well-balanced helm is extraordinarily simple to handle. There is no reason why the Elliott 9m



The rounded cabintop — some care is needed to avoid an unscheduled skate down to the side decks.

cannot be sailed efficiently even short-handed.

While conceding that the new Elliott is an admirable family cruiser, there is no disguising the fact that the yacht has a distinct performance flavour.

During our test we drove the yacht harder than would be the case on a summer cruise yet E Nine always remained well behaved. The yacht faithfully answered even the slightest helm adjustment without ever threatening a roundup.

As previously mentioned, E Nine drove efficiently upwind and was a delight to tack with the tiny headsail we used on test day.

Below decks, the E Nine is well endowed with accommodation space but, surprisingly, there appeared to be a shortage of stowage space for all the summer cruising paraphernalia. The cedar core construction gives a nice clean interior which allows maximum use of space in such areas as the quarterberths and saloon settees.

Despite her very recent launching, the Elliott 9's deck layout appeared to be almost through its teething problems and worked well during our hours

at sea. The cockpit coamings were particularly comfortable when stacked out.

Our major reservations topsides concerned the rounded cabintop. While this does present a reasonably horizontal surface to walk on while heeled, it is not a comfortable surface when tied up or at anchor. We'd envisage a few ungainly skates down the cabinsides until this is mastered. The cabintop, built high to allow full headroom below decks, also blocks good visibility top the bow when seated at the tiller.

Sure, the Elliott 9's appearance will not suit the traditionalists. The reverse sheer and plumb bow may not give the yacht a pretty appearance from some angles — but few will deny she looks purposeful.

Our doubts about the suitability of the Elliott 9 as a family yacht did a full 180 degrees during our time aboard this delightful little yacht. We would happily cruise E Nine over the promised hot summer months ahead — but then again owners Merv and Raewyn Neil will probably argue they have a prior claim.

The Vitals

LOA	9m(29ft 8ins)
LWL	8.2m (27ft)
Beam	3.1m (10ft)
Ballast	1000 kgs (2204 lbs)
Displacement	2800 kgs (6172 lbs)
Sails	Windward Sails
Rig	Mast and Spar
Instruments	Silva
Winches	Lewmar
Motor	Yanmar 20GM
Builder	Partridge Yachts