

The New Seawind 1200 TEC Series

By Barry Tranter – Featured in 'Multihulls World' magazine.

The photographs of successive Seawind 1200s tell the story. Since the cruising cat was introduced it has undergone a series of refinements - nothing dramatic, but a series of detail improvements.

Pictures of an early model tested in this magazine show an open cockpit. Then came a tubular stainless steel targa bar which supported the solar panels, but the mainsheet traveller was still carried on the aft crossbeam.

The latest style is the most refined and the most attractive. Seawind have produced a substantial fibreglass structure - more than a targa bar, almost a coachroof but not quite a deckhouse - which effectively tidies up the whole cockpit area and is referred to as the TEC (Targa Enclosed Cockpit), or more fondly the TEC Deck. It provides considerable weather protection with the aid of fabric sections which roll up and away for the open-air feel. A fixed duckboard aft of the main cockpit expands the area; the optional stainless barbecue mounts on the aft railings, as does a mounting pad for the tender's outboard. The entire cockpit area is much better-defined and easy to use.

The traveller is mounted on top of the TEC Deck, clearing the cockpit area completely. The targa structure supports the boom when the mainsail is lowered, and the crew can step up onto the roof to tidy up mainsail stowage in the boom sock. With the old arrangements you could not reach the after end of the boom.

The rear hoop also supports the optional davits (tubular stainless) for the inflatable tender.

And the new TEC Deck is attractive. Whoever did the sketches did a good job of keeping the vertical lines in harmony with the rest of the boat, so the attractive basic lines are enhanced. The new TEC combines with other detail refinements to create, in effect, a new generation classed as the Seawind 1200 TEC series.

Other changes include the option of choosing Yanmar diesels as alternatives to Volvo Penta. The trampoline layout has been improved with a new polyester fabric, and one of the boat's special features - removable glass windows in the aft bulkhead of the main saloon - have been modified in shape and include roll-up clears that can be fastened to the window frames.

Three basic interior layouts are offered. The three double-cabin (Seawind 1200 TEC3) version places the main bathroom in the stern of the port hull. Amidships in the port hull is a desk and chair which can act as the navigation area, and double as the office/communications centre in an era when many people cannot be separated from their email without suffering from communication deprivation anxiety.

The four double-cabin option (Seawind 1200 TEC4) places the main bathroom amidships in the port hull. The latest accommodation option (Seawind TEC4.2) is a variation on the four-cabin arrangement, where the large double bed in each aft cabin is replaced by a narrow double and a single, to cater for corporate outings or for somewhere to put the kids.

The interior is trimmed in rose gum which generates a warm, honey-coloured

ambience. The wood trim is complemented by interior steps made from Jarrah and lined with silver ash. The saloon features a beautifully-crafted table in Brazilian flamed mahogany with polished stainless steel legs.

The Seawind's basic configuration is unchanged. The 12.1-metre hull has a beam of 6.5m. The fixed keels draw 1.1m. Displacement has increased over the years; the latest version is listed at 8100kg, the price of refinement.

The driving position is much better, the larger wheel enabling the helmsman to sit at a level high enough to view over the saloon and bow of the boat while protected by the TEC Deck.

The screens in the front of the TEC are soft and can be rolled up to get air through the cockpit, while fabric panels each side of the roof's spine can be open or closed. When they are rolled back towards the centreline, the cockpit gets plenty of sun and the helmsman can see the mainsail, essential in any sailing craft if you enjoy the art of sailing well.

The main traveller control lines are led down each side of the new structure to camcleats mounted on the main bridgedeck, which means you could sit on the beam, brace your feet against the targa leg, and give a mighty heave on the traveller lines. Winches would make this process easier, but the builder prefers camcleats to winches because the cams are quicker to release. The mainsheet is led down to a #46 Harken winch on the aft crossbeam. Headsail sheet winches are #53s; the 1200s hardware is all Harken.

The fundamental character of the Seawind 1200 is unchanged, and neither are its sailing abilities. It tacks easily without needing to back the jib. To windward it points well and makes modest leeway - two distinctly separate characteristics.

Some time ago I raced with Seawind builder Richard Ward in a mixed multihull fleet. We rounded the bottom mark to start a long windward leg, with a couple of hot F28 trimarans on our tail (the race division started later than the cruisers). The tris had no trouble sailing through us to windward - as they should - but on a long, long leg to windward the cruising cat matched the trimarans for pointing ability. I had expected them to climb away from us, given that they have centreboards and a considerable speed advantage with which to make their boards work.

The 1200 is docile to sail and easy to handle. Under 10 knots of breeze the standard headsail is too small; a second set of tracks is provided for bigger headsails.

The Seawind 1200 was always a comfortable craft, easy to live with and sail. In its latest incarnation it has moved beyond comfortable to borderline luxurious for a base price that has increased only slightly over several years.

Barry Tranter is a weekly column writer for 'Modern Boating' and has a lifetime of experience racing and cruising various sized mono and multihull yachts. Barry wrote this article as an exclusive for Multihulls World Magazine No. 51, 2001.