

Against THE wind

BOAT BUILDER RICHARD WARD
HAS DONE THE IMPOSSIBLE...
IMPROVED ON THE SEAWIND 1000

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Richard Ward was suffering from a classic boat builder's dilemma. The Seawind Catamarans boss wanted to build a bigger brother to the Seawind 1000, but considering the 1000's popularity (hull No.142 recently launched, surely Australia's biggest seller) the 1000 was going to be a hard act to follow. The new boat would be bigger, but had to be better in all areas. Including performance.

Richard wanted to adapt the 1000's most popular features, particularly the open saloon, which has no bulkhead between it and the cockpit.

The 1000 has outboard auxiliaries, which retract into the hull; the bigger boat would have saildrives.

"I was worried, because the 1160's saildrive legs and folding three-blade props would add to the drag", says Richard. But everything worked out; the new boat is faster than the old one. And, most will agree, better in all areas.

The 1160's main claim to fame is the multi-panel door system, which folds to a single panel, hinged at the top. Its lower edge is winched up to roof level where it is secured by both its attached

line and a metal bracket that swings down to lock the structure in place. This sounds more complicated than it is, but Richard points out you raise and lower the doors only once whether you are sailing for a day or a week.

For the sceptics among us, when the door structure is hoisted overhead it looks like a large mass of equipment that could break loose in a seaway. We experienced only smooth seas, but we had our usual quota of ferry wakes, which bounced us around and when the doors were raised we forgot about them. The metal bracket kept them secure and they emitted neither creak nor groan.

So the saloon can be completely open to the cockpit, which greatly improves the social interaction. On the day of our test sail, as the breeze kicked in and the chill factor grew, crew and guests moved inside, sat around the saloon table and chatted to me as I steered. Later, as it got colder, they lowered and closed the doors. Which suggests I should improve my conversation skills — or my deodorant.

The Seawind 1160's other big feature is the self-tacking jib, which can be winched from either side. We will discuss that later.

The 1160's hulls are developed from

the 1000, but the inboard topsides are flared to increase hull volume and reserve buoyancy without affecting waterline beam. The keels are a bit over 2m long and strong enough to enable the boat to take the ground and to protect rudders and saildrive legs. The rig has single spreaders, two sets of diamonds and uppers and lowers are both led well aft as there is no backstay.

The first thing I noticed was that the mouldings are excellent and the cockpit area nicely-detailed. All the steps are contoured — gracefully curved, like the contours on a map — and perfectly placed. The foredeck has lockers for lines and fenders and anything else you can think of. Electric anchor winch and anchor chain are stored at the forward end of the bridgedeck moulding.

The boat is offered with three-and four-cabin layouts, each with two heads. The boat shown here had three cabins. The owner's stateroom is forward in the port hull and the big and gorgeous bathroom (featuring glass shower compartment) is in the stern. Between the two is an office/navigation area, with a bench and fold-out seat, and storage for the stuff every boat demands — safety gear, medical kit, tide charts.





This portside stateroom has a huge bed, so long that the person on the inside can leave the berth by moving around the feet of the other sleeper instead of climbing over.

Seawind offer an island berth option, with the berth mounted athwartships, eliminating any gymnastics. The starboard hull has a head in the bow, double cabin, galley amidships and smaller double cabin in the stern. The more accessible head, the one closer to the saloon, is the portside, so it will probably act as the day head.

This arrangement gives six berths in three doubles, but there's more. The dinette table lowers (and rotates) on a gas strut to create another double in the saloon. All you have to do is move aside the settee cushion backs to create a 2m long berth.

This is the best-finished Seawind yet. The woodwork, mouldings and fabrics were



“THE SELF-TACKER SYSTEM MAKES THIS SEAWIND STUPENDOUSLY EASY TO HANDLE”

tastefully chosen and impeccably built.

The cockpit is a good working and lounging area, not the case in all cats. There are two steering wheels and because the visibility through the coachroof is good, you can steer from either side. The mainsheet traveller is on top of the Targa bar and the traveller car is controlled by a Harken device mounted on the Targa's portside strut. This controls a continuous line, so with the winch handle you wind or unwind to adjust the car. A trigger provides instant release.

The bowsprit folds up when not needed; the screacher (multi-hull talk for reaching headsail) sheets to tracks on the sidedecks. The sail is a good size, easy to control.

The self-tacker makes the Seawind 1160 stupendously easy to handle. We deliberately short-tacked the boat — three or four tacks only a few seconds apart with no time to regain speed — and although she steadily slowed during the procedure (as any yacht would) she never hesitated to tack.

Although we had a decent breeze it was full of holes and constantly swung by 30 degrees; the biggest knock I saw was 60 degrees. But because the headsail arrangement makes tacking so easy, I found myself tacking on the knocks without thinking about it. On a day-sail on a cruising cat I would usually not bother, because (a) most cats need a bit of persuasion to change direction, (b) the

crew would go on strike and (c) a multi-hull gets you where you are going quite quickly anyway. On the 1160 you do not need to call the tack before putting down the wheel, because if crew and guests are not paying attention they don't notice. The 1160 is the most manoeuvrable cat I have ever sailed.

She tacked through about 100 degrees, but it was hard to get a fix on that, because the breeze was so shifty and she may do better. Sailmaker John Penfold, from Halsey Lidgard, was onboard to check on his

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: She certainly is an easy boat to sail short-handed. Sit back, relax and enjoy the conversation. Get down in that kitchen and rattle those pots and pans. This full-sized galley will be a definite winner with the ladies onboard. The support in front of the bowsprit is for a screecher sail. There's much more room on a multi-hull than a similar sized mono. Navigation station, staterooms and storage, this boat's got the lot.



working sails. He reckoned the battens on the brand-new main needed re-tensioning, but he also recommended cutting a slice from the mainsail roach because the conventional glass battens may have trouble



supporting the roach area. Attention to this would help pointing ability. And we did not fiddle with mainsail traveller position, so I reckon the 1160 has more to give in windward performance.

We saw 7.4 knots on the wind in 16 knots True and, more impressive, around 5.5 in 7-8 knots True, good figures for a cruising boat.

The 30hp diesel saildrives (Volvo on this boat, Yanmars are options) are quiet and push the boat to around 7.6 knots at 3000 revs, high sixes at 2500.

As we put the boat away we noted the 2:1 mainsheet halyard and the ball-bearing batten cars. The lazyjacks work well; so does the boom bag, which looks neat and catches the main without human help. The roof moulding extends aft to meet the Targa bar, so you can walk to the aft end of the boom to tidy the mainsail stow. Seawind will add a step to make the climb onto the coachroof easier, and there will be more grabrails inside.

Complaints? The cable steering is a bit heavy and it can surely be improved (the boat was brand-new). And you have to swing your torso around the lower shrouds when going forward.

Richard Ward is ecstatic that the 1160 works so well straight out of the box. "We spent at least a year in the design process before we started tooling", he says. "Now that we have sailed the boat there is almost nothing I would change. I expect boat No.100 to be the same as this one".

YACHT TEST / Seawind 1160



ABOVE: One good aspect of cat sailing is the level attitude these boats maintain – great for family sailing.
RIGHT: Saloon door stow in the aft cockpit roof.

There is almost nothing I would change, either. The 1160 is a comfortable habitat, very easy to move around and very easy to sail.



Some people may think that the 1160's stroke of genius, the Eureka factor, is the stowable doors. It is, but equal billing should go to the self-tacking jib that makes the boat a true single-hander, so the family does not have to get caught up in winching duties, or anchoring, or any of the salty work that dads




love and families hate.

When you consider these details in the multi-hull context (no heeling, no fuss, no discomfort) you become aware that this is a true family boat — those who want to stay warm, dry and secure can do so. But to return to the builder's dilemma I mentioned at the start of this story, the 1160 is rewarding to sail, so the skipper will not tire of his toy. Balance has been achieved, as in all things in life.

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA:.....	11.60m
LWL:	10.9m
BEAM:	6.2m
DRAFT:.....	900mm
DISPLACEMENT:.....	6500kg
MAINSAIL:.....	54.6sq m
JIB:	23.8sq m
ENGINES:.....	Twin 30hp diesel saildrives
FUEL:	360lt
FRESHWATER:	750lt

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-  Self tacker
-  Rear saloon door
-  Heavy steering

