

West Wind

The Newsletter of the NZ Zephyr Owners' Association

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Christmas edition of West Wind. Hopefully it will arrive sometime close to Christmas, but end of year pressures meant production was delayed. I also edit the journal for the New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists, and production delays with that publication affected this one.

Hamilton Nationals

Planning for the Nationals in Hamilton is well advanced. The Race Management team for the Nationals had a trial run with this year's Zephyr weekend. Strong westerly breezes prevailed for the entire weekend, some puffs lifting the tops off the wind chop on the lake. This understandably deterred a number of senior skippers so that only 15 starters fronted for the first race. Breakages, unspecified gear failure and general fatigue saw only five face the final race. Graham Bridges (#152 *Zonda*) took out overall honours from Rob Ebert (#84, *Arizona*) after some close racing.

The Hamilton City Council is installing a walkway around Lake Rotoroa at present. The final stage in front of the Yacht club is nearing completion. The walkway has resulted in a makeover for our foreshore area including a wider ramp and new jetty. The downside, if it proves to be one, will be general public access to the yacht club frontage, something we have not had to contend with. The walkway will be between our rigging area and the lake, requiring more awareness from sailors and the public of the hazards around boats. The area is something of a mess at the moment, with diggers, pile drivers and attendant contracting apparatus churning up our rigging area. We have been told that all will be completed by Christmas so all we can do is keep our fingers crossed.

The one area of difficulty for the Nationals is in the recruitment of a Protest Panel for the event. Like most clubs, we don't have many protests and those that hear them tend to be senior members of the club - precisely the ones that sail in the Zephyr class and organise regatta events. We don't have many protests at our Nationals, but on a small lake, with tight courses, we may well have some this year. We may have to call upon the resources within the fleet to resolve any disputes, so bring your rule books with you.

Design Work

Alex alluded to the work going on in the design area. Brett Bakewell-White has taken Des Townson's original lines and produced a full set of plans, a sample of which appears on the back page. More have been posted on the web site. We are in the process of checking these against measurements taken from individual boats, and deciding on the position of bulkheads and other items that were not stipulated in the original design. One result will be the ability to produce a new jig directly from the plans by sending the required number of shapes to a computer controlled cutter of some sort. Bulkheads, side tanks, deck beams, centrecase and other shapes

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FROM THE PEN OF ALEX AITKEN

National President

Celebration of the 2003 festive season is upon us. For the dedicated Zephyr owners around New Zealand this is a time to spend with our families and re-new friendships. We pause for a moment from our busy lives and reflect on the true meaning of peace and goodwill towards all friends and families.

As national president of the Zephyr Owners Association I convey greetings to all. First, a vote of thanks to the executive who dedicate their time in the three regions to make it happen. A number of people put in many hours on the computer and on the telephone relaying information and encouragement to one another. Rob Ebert is struggling at times to keep up to date with the register. The turnover of boats has reflected another healthy turnover in the trading section which is climbing over the \$17,000 mark. Don Currie, Russell Turner, Rob Ebert as a sub committee of ZOA have spent considerable time with the Zephyr design project and just this week plans from boat designer Brett Bakewell-White have been displayed onto our ZOA web site. The sub-committee have also this week called on Brett at his Auckland design office to finalise some technical details and are also consulting with Doyle Sails on modernising some of the manufacturing details of the sail. The aim of all this is to maintain the integrity of the class that was designed by Des Townson in 1956 and update the plans, materials and skills to cope with 21st century technology. A comprehensive report is due and a process of consultation will be undertaken with members. As we will have a good representation of members at the forthcoming national contest in Hamilton I see the opportunity for a "Forum" debate on the subject.

Pleasing to see that nine Canterbury sailors will participate at the 2004 contest. In discussion with Auckland and Hamilton it looks like a fleet of around 30 or so on the Lake. At a recent Canterbury Zephyr Owners meeting it was moved that a letter be sent to ZOA asking that the Executive look at funding some of the inter-island Cook Strait travel costs to encourage participation in national contests.

The overall trading situation looks good and the return to ZOA will mean that we should record better than break even at the end of the financial year. Sold to date: Sails 11, battens sets 6, alloy masts 7, alloy booms 4, rigging 4 sets.

National subscriptions to ZOA for this 2003/2004 season stand at a little over 80 with a possible 30 owners still to contribute towards the running of the association. A friendly reminder, please write a cheque before Christmas, thanks.

Wishing you all best wishes for the Christmas season and I look forward to meeting up with a number of you at the contest in Hamilton.



OLD WOOD

A quick look around the rigging up area on any race day will confirm that the great majority of boats raced at the club are made of wood. Most boats are a combination of plywood and solid wood, primarily connected with glued joints. Many of these boats were built at a time when a high level of knowledge was assumed about maintenance of such boats. They can't be left outside in a carefree way like a Laser. Wooden dinghies can last and be competitive for 20 or 30 years, and longer with a rebuild, but only with a bit of regular maintenance.

To understand a little about how to look after a wooden boat first we need to know something about wood itself. Wood is great for small boat building because it has a good strength to weight ratio, because it is easily reduced to the necessary sizes, and because it can be curved and laminated into the necessary shapes with simple and inexpensive tools. Wood also has tremendous fatigue characteristics – that is to say it can be repeatedly bent backwards and forwards (within limits) without hardening and cracking. That's the good news.

The bad news is that wood does not like repeated cycles from wet to dry, can rot with the right combination of moisture and temperature, and is weaker when wet than when dry. The structure of wood means that dry wood can absorb water fairly quickly through a puncture, and if the surface of the piece of wood is coated with paint the moisture can not evaporate quickly. If the surface is not painted, and is exposed repeatedly to wet and dry cycles the surface of the wood will "check" (open up cracks) which become a home for mould spores and eventually rot spores.

So the rules for looking after a wooden racing dinghy are fairly simple – Get the wood dry, then protect it with a layer of paint and/or varnish and/or epoxy to keep it dry.

Wet wood is heavy wood, as well as weak wood (waterlogged timber can be typically 25% weaker than reasonably dry timber). Obviously for a racing dinghy we want a light strong structure, so the winter layover is a good time to fix any water soaked timber. First step is to make sure that all water lying in the low parts of your boat is sponged up. Next make sure all inspection ports are opened, bungs removed, and the boat is exposed to some sun and wind. Make use of any good old Nor' wester days!

Now to the trouble spots. Look for areas where moisture can get under paint/fibreglass or fittings. Old boats often have layers and layers of old paint, especially in the difficult to sand areas. It's all too easy to just brush on another layer of paint over the top and leave the hard sanding till next year. Eventually the wood will move more than the hardened old layers of paint can flex, and a crack will occur. Now the paint becomes the enemy because the water can get under the paint, but the layer of paint prevents the wood from drying out. Check around the keelson and centrecase, and around the corners of your cockpit. If there are cracks in the paint you can bet water has got in. Think about it – the last place you want a weakness in your boat is around the keelson and chines.

Get a sharp scraper and carefully clean out the damaged paint until the scraper no longer lifts paint away from the wood. Now allow time for the wood to dry out before refinishing. There's no point in just painting over the damp wood – that just locks the moisture in. Incidentally that's one reason why I'm still a fan of single pot paints inside a boat – they tend to be a little softer and less likely to crack where a boat's structure "moves" a bit with changes in moisture content. Hard 2

pot paints are great on the outside where you can keep an eye on them, but inside the old fashioned way ain't bad!

Fastenings (bolts and screws) holding down fittings are another potential problem area. Look at any old varnished wooden mast or boom and you'll see telltale black stains around screw holes. These are caused by water entry. The water can get in, but the combination of fittings and paint/varnish means that once in, the water can only evaporate out slowly. You may have a perfect coat of fibreglass or paint over your boat, but that protection will be punctured in places by fastenings. So if water has got in through fastenings the first step is to remove all the fittings, sand back the surrounding areas of paint and let the wood dry out. Then repaint, but when reinstalling fittings, bed them in a little clear silicone sealant (careful to keep the sealant out of sheaves and cam cleats!). Modern silicone sealants are a real boon for the wooden boat owner – you don't need anything flash, the stuff from the hardware shop will do.

If the fitting has been moving under load see whether there is room to go up to the next sized screw so the movement doesn't continue. (There is also a lot to be said for making a custom fitting "pad" out of epoxy filler onto which fitting can mate perfectly – this is a bit outside the scope of this article but talk to me if you want to know more.)

If there are areas of wood that you can't easily monitor (like inside buoyancy compartments) then make sure you mop out any water after every race, and provide enough ventilation for remaining moisture to evaporate quickly.

Remember too that fresh water can in some ways be more of an enemy to wood than salt water. Hosing your boat down after a race protects the paint and metal fittings. It also allows sails and ropes to dry out properly (salt will hold moisture and prevent sails and ropes from drying out). But it's a two edged sword – salt water does not rot timber, fresh water can. So yes, wash the boat down, but also be sure to mop out your boat carefully afterwards.

If your boat stays outside it's a good idea to store it upside down – even the best covers can leak a little, and water lying all winter down in the bilges alongside the keelson will do the boat no good at all. Covers can also produce something of a "hot house" when the sun is out. Combine a bit of warmth with water, dirt and leaves in the bilges and you have a pretty good recipe for rot. Better with a good coat of paint on the bottom, all the inspection ports open, and upside down with no cover, or the cover just protecting the paint, with plenty of room for ventilation between the ground and the boat.

With these few simple precautions you can keep your boat light, strong, and protect its value. If you own an old wooden boat then to a degree you have been entrusted with a small piece of yachting's history. Look after it carefully. Go on, go and check it now!

Don Currie

Christchurch

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2003-04

There are still a number of subs outstanding.

Please help by contributing to the ZOA

ACCOMMODATION FOR THE NATIONALS

Some local sailors have offered to help with this, so let us know if you need a place to stay.

SPECIAL OFFER

Zephyr Cedar Hull # 260.

This is a new hull built by Pearson & Way for the Zephyr Owners Association. Your association at its 2003 AGM agreed that this hull be offered for sale at a "packaged deal" as follows:

- One Zephyr Cedar glassed hull #260 completed with mahogany veneered deck, faired, undercoated and ready for final sanding and finishing coat.

This hull will be supplied with the following equipment:-

- One alloy mast, anodised, rigged with sliding gooseneck, halyard lock, mast plug, T cleat, halyard strop and tail.
- One alloy boom, anodised, rigged with plug, 3x block hangers, adjustable outhaul system complete.
- Stainless steel wire rigging set with hook swages, backing plates, rigging screws and hard eyes.
- One Zephyr sail complete with window, tell tails, wind indicators, sail numbers, insignia (black, blue, red or green). Supplied with tube sail bag.

This total package will be supplied freight paid anywhere in New Zealand.

Total price including GST. \$7630.00

Terms and conditions.

1. This offer package is available to paid up members of ZOA as a one off transaction.
2. A deposit of \$1500.00 is payable with order.
3. Delivery of this packaged deal will be by arrangement between the buyer and ZOA.
4. Payment of \$6130.00 is due within seven (7) days of delivery.

Please contact either Alex Aitken (03 3584 600) or Russell Turner (09 534 7747)

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will be able to be produced in a similar fashion. This work may not quite be complete by the Nationals, but we will be able to report on it in more detail. It is exacting work, and the design sub-committee are determined to get it right. At its conclusion, the likely recommendation will be to scrap the existing jig and build a new one for any future building programme.

Sail Construction

We have also taken a look at the construction of the sail, which, after being converted to a computer file, had gone back to being cut by hand. The size and shape of the panels used do not lend themselves to computer cutting. This means that the processes used to produce Zephyr sails in the Doyle loft differ from those used for all other sails and that the knowledge required for a quality job is not always available. Basically that means that Chris McMaster has to produce the sails himself or closely supervise their construction and that is not always possible. We have asked for a proposal to modernise the construction of the sails without changing their performance. We have not thought much about how this would be approached, and any proposal will follow the normal class consultation processes. It might involve building and trialling prototypes for a period before a decision is made. As an Executive there is obviously a balance to be struck in proposing measures that change a class. There is a risk that they may undermine its existence, but sometimes not moving forward with new technologies can have the same effect.



Jubilee Trophy

Patron Noel May has been hard at work constructing the trophy depicted here. The scanned photo copied here does not do it justice and there is a better one on the web page. It is a replica of the original trophy that filled up with names and is now lodged with the Tamaki Yacht Club.

Rob Ebert

THE ZEPHYR OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

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SUBSCRIPTIONS 2003-2004

Subscriptions for 2003-4 are \$20 for the NZZOA, and \$10 for local associations in Auckland, Hamilton and Christchurch. If you are an "orphan" outside these areas, the \$20 NZZOA sub can be forwarded to Alex Aitken, President, or Rob Ebert, Secretary. Please include your boat name and number, so we can update the Zephyr Register.

We need your support for all sorts of reasons!