

A brief history of the EC12 Class in New Zealand

According to Ian Hull-Brown

The EC12 class was introduced to NZ by myself when I returned from the 1983 Australian National EC12 class Championship with a boat designated as KZ1.

That boat had been constructed by Kevin Humphreys of Lakesedge engineering in Sydney then fitted out and tuned by Max Lewis (Sydney) and Ric Dorey (Adelaide)

I stepped off the aeroplane in Adelaide and was handed the controls of a fully sorted competitive boat. I will be forever grateful to all those concerned in that exercise.

Around the same time Paul Chisholm in Christchurch had a similar interest in the class and imported a boat from Queensland from Brian Delisser. I returned to Sydney the following year for the 1984 nationals and in fact sailed every year in various classes up until 1990 I think. That included the EC12 World Championship held in Surfers Paradise in 1986.

The EC12 class generated some interest in New Zealand as we suffer the same problem as others worldwide which is weed growth in fresh water ponds.

As Max Lewis said and I have quoted many times the EC12 will "just about sail on wet grass" with only an eight inch draft.

To build the class in this country we needed more hulls as sailors were keen to join the class. I looked around for a suitable builder and was given the name of a fellow who was supposedly the gun rowing skiff maker. I commissioned him to take a mould off my Lakesedge boat and produce ten hulls with decks fitted. What a disaster that exercise was. The hulls were built too heavy and as any fibreglass manufacturer will tell you every little flaw in the original hull used as a plug is exaggerated with each flop or copy made. My Lakesedge hull had some idiosyncrasies which I will not expand on but simply say that they were even more evident in the finished hulls.

They sailed well enough when completed and the price I charged made for some happy new skippers. At the same time in Christchurch Paul Chisholm began producing hulls from a mould he had taken from his Delisser hull. Paul under the "Tainui" brand produced some excellent boats and the class flourished in Christchurch. The popularity of anything can be a two edged sword and so it was with EC12's. A group of modellers in Nelson decided that paying \$100 for a regulation hull was far too much and they could build a mould and produce them for around \$25 just the cost of the materials involved. They made a mould using a second hand boat from an unknown origin and produced some hulls which were finished by some of the local sailors. This was of some concern to the elected governors of the class as it was evident that the hull shapes that we had in NZ were becoming diluted by fourth fifth and even sixth generation copies with all the faults becoming compounded with each generation.

I had been in talks with people in Australia regarding the importation of a definitive plug from the USA for use in both countries to try and standardise the hull shapes as I felt things were getting out of hand with the copies.

After making contact with Rod Carr who was able to source a plug which I understand was from the "Flame" series and as close as possible to the original shape this was purchased sent to Australia and put in the care of ??? Ferguson. Unfortunately things became a little confused and complicated at this point which I am not prepared to expand on and a period of years passed before the plug arrived in New Zealand to become the shape used by Davie Norris as the only licensed builder for NZL at that time. All NZL boats within the registered numbers 51 - 127 ? are constructed from that plug.

Around 1995 the Americans moved to standardize the class by commissioning the manufacture of a plug to be used by all those hull manufacturers who wished to remain as licensed builders in USA. I understand this move was a result of a similar feeling that the proliferation of so many different shapes all professing to be authentic EC12 class hulls was confusing to potential owners and needed clarification. The NZEC12OA realised that this was the chance to come into line with the USA and requested their own unit in the series that was produced for all builders who wanted to be part of the class standardization process. This is now the NZEC12OA official mould and is available to any builder who wishes to become licensed by the owners association upon signing the binding contract which ensures construction to certain standards. All NZL hulls from 128? onwards are to this approved shape.

(the exact number is open to correction by registrar.)

What is the difference amongst the various shapes? Well in my opinion as I have stated so many times " they all go the same speed. " However there are subtle differences which are to do with the "manners" of the various shapes. As we all know an EC12 is a prick of a boat to sail. The harder it blows the worse it goes. The early boats were of what is termed the "pinched bow" shape. It seems that Buddy Black or perhaps someone else thought that the forward sections would work better if narrowed a little bit. The hull was pinched in most probably by hand and unfortunately not symmetrical. This seems to result in a hull that rounds up excessively in a gust which we have all experienced. The latest shape is a much better behaved boat IMHO. Being sweeter for me means that I can concentrate more on being in the right place at maximum speed and worry less about keeping the boat on the correct heading. It is no faster just more forgiving downwind especially.

*All opinions expressed are my own and should not be taken as representing any official organization.
Dates and numbers are to the best of my recollection but are not guaranteed to be accurate.*