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Mike and Cheryl Lanigan's Farr 1020 Share Delight in cruise mode.

JANUARY 2025 REFLECTIONS

Farr reaching success: The Farr 1020 story

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The Farr 1020's roots date back to 1975, when Kim McDell and Peter Gribble bought Sea Nymph Boats from Doug Bremner. With generous vendor terms from Bremner, and the addition of silent partner Roger Scherer, the trio bought Sea Nymph Boats in May 1975.

"From running the company for Bremner to owning it was one of the happiest days of my life," recalls McDell.

to add trailer yachts to the Sea Nymph line.



Cameron Thorpe aboard his well raced 1020, *Hard Labour*. Between Thorpe and previous owner Steve Barton, *Hard Labour* has won 10 National Championships, 16 Short Handed Championships and a division win in the 2005 Around the North Island race.

McDell's outstanding experience with Bruce Farr, who designed their 1974 World Championship 18-foot skiff *Travelodge NZ*, made Farr the logical choice to design their new range of trailer yachts.

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Thanks to its strict one-design, high quality, roomy interior, and excellent performance, the Farr 6000 became an overnight success. Subsequently, three other models, the Farr 5000, 7500, and 740 Sport, were added to the range.



The Farr 1020 Rainbow IV

Sea Nymph would eventually build 727 Farr trailer yachts, including many for the Australian market. In May 1979, the National Party's implementation of a 20% boat tax decimated New Zealand boatbuilding overnight. While many boatbuilders shut their doors, Sea Nymph survived thanks to its export sales.

When the market began picking up in 1981, McDell, Gribble, and then factory manager Bill Howlett, started plans to add a one-design 10m cruiser/racer keelboat to the range.



Farr 1020 Rainbow IV punching through the typical inner harbour slop.

Sticking to the same successful formula, the Farr 1020 was designed as a top-quality, strict one-design class yacht with several features designed to speed construction, minimise weight, and improve strength.

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In addition to the factory-finished version, the 1020 was available as a hull and deck package for home finishing to ensure one-design status.

bunks, galley, tanks, and engine mounts were accurately positioned for a professional result. Additionally, key components such as masts, keels, and rudders had to be purchased from Sea Nymph. This approach allowed boat numbers to grow quickly and reach the critical mass for a strong class.

Despite the boat tax, the Farr 1020 still sold well here. However, orders went through the roof when the 1984 Labour Government dropped the boat tax in favour of a comprehensive across-the-board GST tax.

The Farr 1020 was exported, and while it proved popular in Australia, conservative USA sailors struggled to accept its fractional rig and open transom. Sea Nymph eventually built 149 Farr 1020s, of which over 110 were sold here. Around half were finished by their owners.

Sea Nymph and McDell established the Farr 1020 Owners Association with strict rules to protect the yacht's one-design status.

The first Farr 1020 National Championship was held in 1986, and except for one year, when it was lost to COVID, it has been held every year since. To race in the Nationals, all sails must be measured.

The Farr 1020 is a true sailor's yacht, providing excellent performance in nearly all conditions. While its best point of sail is upwind, it can still reach 16 knots under spinnaker in a good breeze. Close reaching under spinnaker can load the helm, but attention to trim minimises this.

A genuine cruiser/racer, a Farr 1020 hull is so easily driven that cruising at six knots or more can be maintained even under reduced sail. The strict one-design rules ensure close racing, and, given a clean bottom, good sails and a good crew, any boat on any day can win races.

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A Farr 1020 still provides excellent cruising. While its interior isn't quite as spacious as some modern, imported yachts, it's a perfect size for a couple.

The Farr 1020 fleet is around 40 years old, and the boats have aged surprisingly well. Temperature and humidity controls and strict layup specifications have made

One known weakness was the port chainplate on the home-finished examples, which has been rectified. The odd case of the interior grid separating from the hull following a heavy grounding has occurred, and hard-raced examples often exhibit bumps, bruises and gelcoat chips.



Farr 1020s racing in the Buckland's Beach Yacht Club Winter Series, July 2024



Farr 1020s racing in the Buckland's Beach Yacht Club Winter Series, July 2024

Small cracks can be found in the early model masts where the forestay attaches, particularly in well-raced examples, but these are relatively easily fixed. Leaking



The exterior gelcoats are often faded, and whether a potential yacht requires a repaint should be factored into the finances.

Original engines should be viewed with suspicion until proven otherwise. If an engine replacement is necessary, the Volvo 20hp is adequate; however, some owners find a larger 30hp engine better for cruising. A competent surveyor should identify any issues fairly quickly.

Combining Sea Nymph's impeccable construction techniques with Bruce Farr's magic, and a strong emphasis on one-design, the result is something truly special – the Farr 1020.

All photos above courtesy of Mike Lanigan, John Macfarlane and Roger Mills.

Farr 1020 owner's comments

Cameron Thorpe

One of the most successful Farr 1020s on the race track has been *Hard Labour*, initially campaigned by Steve Barton after he bought her in 1992. Cameron Thorpe began crewing for Barton on his previous boat in 1991 and has since taken over the yacht.

Under Barton's stewardship, *Hard Labour* has won the Farr 1020 Nationals ten times, five with Thorpe helming. Together, the pair have campaigned *Hard Labour* to many Short-Handed Championships, with the yacht now holding 16 titles. They also sailed *Hard Labour* in the 2005 RNI race, winning Division 4 on line and handicap, plus IMS winner overall.

"What I like about the 1020 is that it's probably the fairest one-design yacht available. You could take any 1020, sand the bottom, get a good crew and decent sails, then go out and win the Nationals. It's a really good all-rounder," said Thorpe.

Given her hard-racing life, *Hard Labour* presents exceptionally well externally and internally, which is no accident. "Just because you race it doesn't mean you have to abuse it."

The pair re-engineered *Hard Labour* a decade ago by swapping out the original Volvo 2002 for a Volvo D1-20. The latter produces the same horsepower but is smoother due to its extra cylinder.

Hard Labour spends the winter in race mode, stripped of cruising gear for the Nationals and SSANZ series, after which the gear is returned for summer cruising.



While the Farr 1020 initially made its name in one-design keelboat racing, it is equally at-home cruising. In conjunction with various co-owners, Larry Paul has owned the Farr 1020 *Spellbinder* for over 20 years.

"She's an ideal size for us; not too big, not too small, and easy to sail single-handed if I want to."

Paul appreciates the Farr's ability to cover the ground regardless of the conditions; whether sailing or motoring, *Spellbinder* can comfortably maintain six-plus knots.

As Chairman of the Classic Yacht Charitable Trust, Paul is responsible for maintaining a fleet of six elderly timber boats, the youngest of which was built in 1906, so he appreciates the Farr's virtually maintenance-free GRP construction.

When the original Volvo 2002 reached its use-by date, Paul installed a Yanmar 30, significantly improving motoring performance in adverse conditions. He's also replaced windows and hatches and installed a roller furler. Paul and his wife Fiona really appreciate Farr's open transom, easy helming, and comfortable, practical layout.

"It works well for two people."

Paul buys sails from upgrading racers, which means significant cost savings over purchasing new ones.

Paul's main tip for any aspiring Farr 1020 owner, echoed by several other owners, is that given the yacht's easily-driven hull, it's a case of taking sail off earlier rather than later. The yacht will be just as fast and much easier to handle.

Mike and Sheryl Lanigan

Another happy pair of Farr owners are Mike and Sheryl Lanigan, who have owned the Farr 1020 *Share Delight* since 1996. One of the most used 1020s, *Share Delight*, has done it all: countless class and club races, National Championships, and thousands of miles of coastal cruising. The Lanigans also put *Share Delight* into MNZ certification and used her for a sailing school for many years.

Apart from an engine transplant and the modifications required for MNZ certification, *Share Delight* has needed little more than routine maintenance and standing rigging replacement.

Lanigan, a three-time past Chairman of the Association, is currently the class historian.

"The association keeps the class as a true one-design class. Right from the beginning, the rules have been very solid. We've only allowed



While the class's heyday in numbers was in the 1980s and 1990s, fleets of Farr 1020s are found in Half Moon Bay, Westhaven and Gulf Harbour. The last Nationals saw 12 boats competing, marking a mini-revival of the class in the Auckland region.

"The class racing is very good; sometimes, you'll cross the line with four or five boats overlapped."

Another advantage of the 1020 is that examples can be found in most yacht clubs nationwide.

"You will find Farr 1020s wherever you go, and its handicap is well-established, so you can race anywhere and be in the running."

Andrew Neame

Andrew Neame, the current Chair of the Farr 1020 Owners Association, is a more recent convert to the class, having bought *Diamonds* around three years ago.

"We looked at many yachts, but the 1020 stood out as the best all-round 10m cruiser/racer for our needs."

Neame has two partners in *Diamonds*, which lowers costs and ensures the yacht gets plenty of use.

According to Neame, the association is in great shape, with around 60 boats on its register. While most members are in this country, some reside in Australia, and a couple in the USA.

"We hold our AGM online these days, so any member, regardless of where they are, can participate."

Besides the Nationals, the association also holds regular social events like beach picnics.

Jim Pasco

Jim Pasco is one of the few, possibly even the only, original owner of a Farr 1020. In 1988, he bought a brand-new factory-finished Farr 1020 with two friends. Over time, the other two owners moved on to other boats, and Pasco became the sole owner in 2007.

Over the years, *Acushla* (Irish for darling), has been extensively used for racing and cruising. In the early days, the Pasco family – Jim, his wife, and their three sons – spent many weeks per year cruising. These days, Pasco races *Acushla* every two weeks, in the summer series with the Waikato Yacht Squadron and the winter series with the Pine Harbour Cruising Club.

Considering her hard use, *Acushla* still presents well. While many upgrades have been made over the years, the gelcoat is original, and there has been no osmosis.

Following a mast breakage, Pasco replaced the entire rig in 2015 and, at the same time, swapped the original Bukh 20hp for a new 27hp Volvo. The new Volvo engine is lighter, smaller and smoother than the hefty Bukh.

Pasco has also installed a roller-furler to aid singlehanded sailing.

Pasco's wife passed away just over a year ago. However, the spritely 84-year-old has no intention of swallowing the anchor anytime soon.

"I'll keep sailing *Acushla* as long as I can," he chuckled.



Farr 1020



