



— Boat Report —

VEH A

EUROCLASSIC 50

New to the UK is a motor yacht with serious seagoing capabilities, but designed for displacement speeds and built in Dutch steel.

If you want a comfortable seagoing 50-footer today, most of your options would appear to be fast flybridge GRP models, with their cabins forward and with rakish modern styling. The only exceptions are from the Far East and the United States, but even the majority of these have succumbed to the need for speed, and with large, expensive engines.

On a recent trip to the Netherlands, however, we discovered a long-range 50ft motor yacht designed for displacement speeds, built in steel for the ultimate strength, and with generous accommodation split forward and aft to give its occupants maximum privacy.

The Euroclassic 50 is produced by Veha Yachts, and marketed by Vanderhoeven Yachts, with an agent in the UK. We took one for a test on the IJsselmeer, then visited the builders' yard near Groningen in the north of the country.

Design

The Euroclassic is designed by Dick Boon, a Dutchman widely respected for many years in Europe although his name is less familiar in

Above: the Euroclassic 50 is modelled on North Sea fishing boats, with seakeeping to match. Right: expansive areas of deck are teak-laid.





predominantly for seagoing cruising, with the flybridge itself plus the large aft deck for open-air entertainment. The latter is for owners wishing to cruise the inland waterways of Europe, and has the outside helm on the aft deck, reducing the height above the waterline to 3.25m (10ft 6in), which allows the boat to go under the lowest bridges.

Exterior

There is no doubting the 50's serious long-distance cruising pretensions. The square wheelhouse, bluff bows, sweeping sheerline and tall bulwarks speak of a boat designed to take on the seas.

Yet at the same time the lighter side of boating is catered for by the expansive teak-laid aft deck and flybridge, and by the clever smaller aft cockpit, also teak-laid and right down at water level, giving easy access over the stern for watersports or fishing.

The teak-laid side decks are a generous 18in (450mm) wide all round, with bulwarks alongside them 15in (375mm) high, topped by massive stainless steel guardrails a further 16in (400mm) high. The whole arrangement makes for a safe and dry area to walk around.

Steps aft from the decks lead down to the full-width cockpit, which measures 7ft (2.1m) fore-and-aft. There are 30in (750mm) high rails across the stern, with a walk-through section amidships. Large side seat/lockers and another in the sole will allow you to stow any watersports equipment, diving and fishing gear.

Large stainless steel bollards forward and aft are complemented by stainless steel cleats amidships. A lid in the side deck gives access to the water and fuel fillers, stand-pipes in a self-draining well. On the foredeck, a massive electric windlass handles the anchor through a hawse pipe; the chain stows in a deep locker with a large hatch for access but no partition, so fenders or ropes put down here could jam the cable.

Steps also lead up from the side decks, first to the aft deck and from here up to the flybridge. Both

Left: the flybridge has a single central helm seat facing a fully-instrumented console. The Euroclassic 50 is also available without a flybridge, in which case the helm is relocated to the aft deck.

the UK. His favoured style is the trawler-yacht, with bluff, sea-kindly bows, an easily-driven hull, and sturdy, spacious accommodation.

Modelled on North Sea fishing boats, and with sea-keeping to match, these are vessels which can tackle the oceans of the world but are equally at home around the coasts of Europe or on inland waterways. Boon's designs can be as small as 33ft (10m) or as big as 150ft (45m), with his largest presently being built in aluminium in the USA.

Regrettably he declined to provide us with information on the underwater section of the Euroclassic's hull, or to comment on the suitability of the form for its intended use. Our inspection merely found that it was a multi-chine form, with the aft sections running up rapidly to the transom to give minimum resistance at displacement speeds, so this is more than just a single-chine planing hull driven slowly.

The boat is available in two versions, with or without a flybridge. The former option is intended

areas are devoid of furniture, the Dutch fashion being for loose chairs, but it would be feasible to add fixed settees and loungers, plus a wet-bar, and still have space left over. Tall guardrails and solid dodgers protect the aft deck, while the flybridge has solid surrounds.

On the flybridge, a central helm seat faces a fully instrumented console. Behind this, the stainless steel single mast hinges down for passage under low bridges.

Interior

Two standard layouts are offered, giving either two or three double cabins. The boat we tested had the latter, with a master cabin and en-suite bathroom forward, and two twin-bedded guest cabins sharing a large WC and a separate shower aft; as an alternative, the aft area can be opened up to form one large stateroom.

You enter the saloon via a hinged glass door from the aft deck, and a flight of five curved steps. The substantial polished brass handrail here is both practical and attractive, giving an initial clue to the concept of the interior.

The woodwork is in what the builders call 'blond' teak, a good description for the light colouring of this familiar timber. It gives the boat a traditional but not gloomy finish, aided by large windows all round and by the use of white stained wood for the overhangs. The standard of the joinery is high, with attention paid to the interiors of lockers and cupboards as well as to more visible surfaces.

We were pleased to see a sealed removable section in the overhead, which would allow the engines to be lifted straight out for major repairs if required.

The saloon has an L-shaped five or six-person settee to port, facing a solid table with a fiddled top and lockers in its base. To starboard is a sideboard with three good-sized lockers, and a wide shelf on top.

The lower helm position is forward to port, with a

portable helmsman's chair. The simple console has the two standard Volvo engine instrument panels ahead of a teak wheel. To the left are the radar, chart plotter and generator panel, while overhead are the GPS, VHF, autopilot, echo sounder, log and rudder indicator. Vetus electronic engine controls are fitted, which give light, precise control.

Outboard to port is a comprehensive electrical switchboard, behind a perspex door. Ahead of the helm, the five windscreens each have their own separately switched pantograph wiper, washer and demister fan, the latter being a vital accessory on a serious cruising boat because condensation can completely obscure your vision. Surprisingly, there is no dedicated chart area, though the serving pier to starboard would double for the purpose.

Three steps down forward lead to the galley. This is large and well equipped, with a polished marble-effect worktop, in which is set a four-ring halogen hob, and a domestic-sized sink. Appliances are the best, including Bosch Combi oven, dishwasher and fridge, plus a freezer under the floor. Additional domestic equipment includes a washing machine and dryer in one of the aft cabins.

Galley storage space is surprisingly limited for a boat of this size and these cruising pretensions, with just three medium-size lockers under the worktop and, we are told, extra space being provided under the floor.

Two further steps down forward lead to the master cabin, which has a large central double berth, and 6ft 3in (1.90m) headroom over its entirety. To starboard is a three-quarter-height hanging locker, opposite is a matching cupboard full of shelves, and set in the foot of the bed are two large drawers.

To port is the large walk-in toilet compartment. The finish of this is plain, white and simple, but effective. The shower area is designated merely by a recess in the floor, although the step in front of this is hard and sharp, with toe-stubbing corners. A large Alape sink is set in an expansive worktop; there is a double locker underneath, but a shelf above would

From plating to painting

Veha Jachtbouw have been building steel craft for more than 25 years. Until recently these have all been displacement-speed cruisers up to 40ft (12m), with over 1200 produced in all. Last year they introduced a semi-displacement model giving up to 24 knots; this year they followed it with their biggest boat yet, the Euroclassic.

The construction of all their models follows a pattern which is typical for the Dutch boatbuilding industry. The steel hulls are produced for them by a sub-contractor, move on to a fitting-out yard and finally emerge from a specialist painting facility. We followed the process through from start to finish.

All the plating is cut out by a specialist steel facility, Centralstaal, in nearby Groningen. They take the drawings of the hull, either on paper or straight from computer disc, and deliver a complete

pack of components, cut-out to millimetre accuracy and shaped if required. The same company produces the plates for some of the largest and most prestigious Dutch builders, including Feadship and Huisman, who turn them into international megayachts of up to 75m (250ft), so the Euroclassic has indeed a classic pedigree.

The Veha steel fabrication works looks like a scene from an Edgar Allen Poe



novel, with the hulls set up in a vast, shadowy, cathedral-sized barn, but there is no faulting the modern processes involved. The same welder has been putting the hulls together for Veha for over 25 years. Even at the age of 63, his average time to complete a 40ft hull is just 10 days, from the plates arriving to the completed shell leaving the works.

From here each hull is taken to a grit-blasting company, where the entire shell is blasted, inside and out, in a giant air-tight booth before receiving its coat of primer. The paint used is a two-component system from Sikkens, with epoxy for the primers and fillers, and polyurethane for the top coats. Again these are the same materials used by Feadship and many other Dutch builders.

Next, the hull moves another couple of kilometres down the road to the fit-out yard, where the joinery and

engineering are completed.

Finally it returns to Veha, where the finishing coats of paint are applied and the electronics installed. It is a tribute to the Centralstaal system, and to the welders, that only minimal amounts of filler have to be used under the paint, with the plating being almost perfectly fair when it arrives.

Although the construction process appears unnecessarily involved, it in fact allows the boat to be produced efficiently, to a high quality and, more importantly, with maximum flexibility and customer choice. No one firm has to invest in costly moulds, long-production runs or large labour forces, and the owner can choose from almost any variation of interior layout and design.

At the same time, there is no need for heavy marketing and advertising campaigns to feed an order-hungry production line, so the cost of the final product is kept down. The process must be working well: Veha's largest export market is Germany, whose buyers are notoriously particular about the quality and reliability of their purchases.



Bright sparks. Welding together a 40ft hull (above) takes just 10 days. The shell is then transported to a different yard to be grit-blasted and another for fitting-out (left).



Clockwise from left: the lower helm is forward to port, with a simple console and a teak ship's wheel. One of the aft cabins has twin berths, the other twin bunks. Galley equipment includes a halogen hob, oven, dishwasher, fridge, freezer and plenty of worktop, but limited storage. Stark but spacious, the toilet compartments even have heated towel rails. Right: Veba's published layout diagram differs from the actual layout of our test boat aft, where the WC and separate shower were not en-suite.



Veba Euroclassic 50

Engines twin Volvo TAMD41B HD diesels, 145hp at 2500rpm, 6cyl, 3.6lt.

Conditions wind NW Force 2, sea calm. **Load** fuel 50%, water 50%, crew 4.

rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range*	trim	sound levels dB(A)			
							saloon	fwdcab	aftcab	deck
1000	4.8	—	—	—	—	—	62	58	62	60
1500	7.2	2.9	13	2.48	1310	—	63	61	67	66
2000	8.6	6.4	29	1.34	710	—	69	67	71	68
2500	9.6	11.0	50	0.87	460	—	72	70	75	70
2600	9.8	12.3	56	0.78	412	—	73	71	76	71

(gph, mpg and range are based on builders' propeller law curve) (* allows 20% margin)

Loa	51ft 2in (15.60m)	Air draught (no flybridge)	10ft 6in (3.25m)
Hull length	49ft 10in (15.20m)	Displacement	25 tonnes
Beam	15ft 9in (4.80m)	Fuel capacity	660gal (3000lt)
Draught	3ft 11in (1.20m)	Water capacity	360gal (1650lt)

Price from £240,000 ex VAT; £330,000 as tested



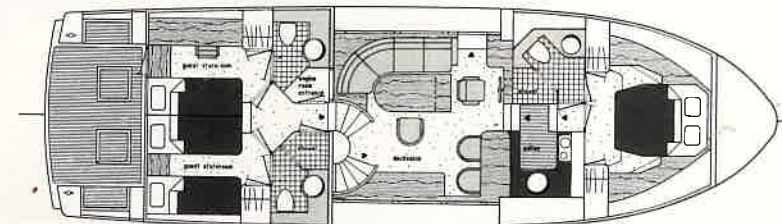
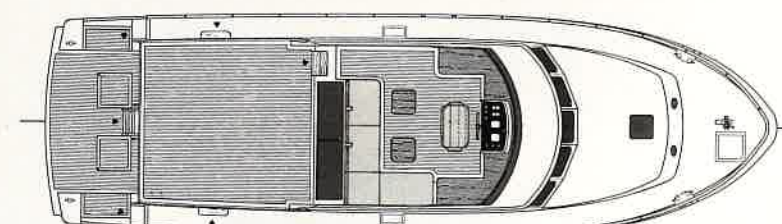
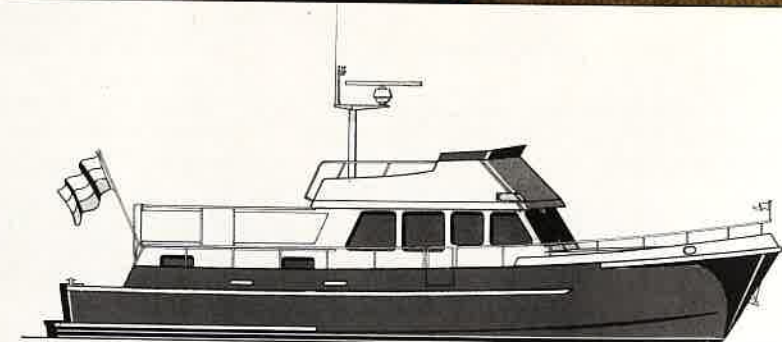
be useful too. The heated towel rail is a nice touch, one many of us take for granted in our homes but find less frequently afloat. The toilets, here and aft, are electric Raritan units, discharging overboard as standard but with the option of a fitted holding tank.

At the opposite end of the saloon, the curved stairs continue down to the aft accommodation. At their foot is a lobby, with either four or five doors off it. Veba's layout plan shows two doors leading to cabins (each with an en-suite toilet), one to a separate shower and one to the engineroom. On our test boat, neither cabin had en-suite facilities, so there was an extra door from the lobby to a separate WC.

To port was a surprisingly large shower room, perhaps over-generous with the available space in fact, and opposite was an equally large WC, with basin, toilet, three large lockers and another heated rail. The latter compartment had a large window, and ventilation both here and in the shower room was provided by extractor fans.

Right aft to starboard, the first guest cabin has two single berths and 6ft 4in (1.93m) headroom. Storage is provided by a half-height hanging locker, a matching shelf locker, four overhead lockers and more under the berths. The latter had the only disappointing joinery on the boat, with roughly cut-out lids.

To port, the second guest cabin has two single



bunks. The full length of the outboard side is taken up with three-quarter height lockers, one containing the washer/dryer. Two large windows provide light, but for some reason they do not open. The only ventilation comes from opening the three-quarter-height aft door that leads out onto the cockpit.

Engines

Single or twin diesels are available, with total power ranging from 150hp to 300hp. The single would be most appropriate for inland use. Our test boat had a pair of 150hp Volvo TAMD40 HDs, the heavy-duty versions of this familiar turbocharged engine, but Veba are considering fitting naturally-aspirated 135hp Perkins Sabres in future.

The engines are mounted under the saloon, and accessed via a door from the aft lobby. The engineroom is large and open, with 5ft (1.50m) headroom. We were puzzled, however, that as you enter you step straight onto the rubber exhaust pipe and port propshaft, as well as catching the gearshift cable. A false floor should be fitted here.

The two Volvos are lost in the space, with ample room to work around and between them. Large Vetus inlet strainers are mounted on 3ft 6in (1.1m) standpipes, keeping them above the waterline. Steel fuel tanks port and starboard drain to a central day-tank, and then to the engines via armoured flexible hoses. Sight tubes in the sides of the tanks have automatic shut-off valves. The fuel filter/separators are above the aluminium treadplate floor between the engines, and could do with protective boxes.

Three banks of batteries are mounted in racks, with 24V and 400Ah for the domestic systems, 24V and 200Ah for engine-starting, and 12V for the generator. The latter is a 12kW Vetus unit mounted in a soundproof box at the forward end of the compartment. A Mass combined charger/inverter provides recharging, and 2500W of AC power when the generator is not running.

Handling and performance

We had two trips on the Euroclassic, one on the open waters of the IJsselmeer and the other on the river close to the factory.

We used the river run to take our performance figures, and these indicated a top speed with 50% fuel of 9.6 knots at the downrated engines' 2600rpm maximum. The depth of water here was only 4m, and it is likely that out at sea you would get closer to the builders' claimed 10.5 knots. A comfortable cruising speed seemed to be 9 knots at around 2250rpm, while for maximum range you would be likely to run at around 7 knots.

Estimated fuel consumption would indicate 11gph (50lph) at 9.6 knots, giving 0.87mpg, and a range of 460 miles with 20% reserve. At 8.6 knots these figures improve to 6.4gph (29lph), 1.34mpg and 710 miles respectively, while for real ocean passages you would get 2.9gph (13lph), 2.48mpg and 1310 miles at 7.2 knots.

Noise levels throughout were good, though at maximum speed the engine started to intrude. This was particularly apparent in the aft accommodation, where a combination of gearbox and propeller noise pushed the figures up throughout the range.

The boat's handling took some getting used to. At half-load, the Euroclassic weighs some 26.5 tonnes, and this mass has a momentum all of its own, which tends to make you oversteer. On our test this was not helped by air in the hydraulic steering, but even out on the open water the boat would swing if not corrected without delay.

In the short, steep seas of the IJsselmeer, the boat also rolled somewhat, suggesting that stabilisers might be a useful addition, but in the longer waves once out to sea and away from the coast, this would probably even out.

In any case, for serious long-distance cruising, a long, slow roll is preferable to a short, sharp action.

Conclusions

The boat as tested, with a comprehensive inventory of equipment, costs about £330,000 ex VAT at a Guilder exchange rate of 2.75. A basic boat with a single engine, no teak decks, no generator or freezer, and a reduced navigation instrument package (ideal for travelling the inland waters of Europe), is available for £240,000.

Clearly, the Euroclassic 50 offers a lot of boat for the money, with a layout that can be adapted to suit the whim of any serious cruising owner. □

Builders

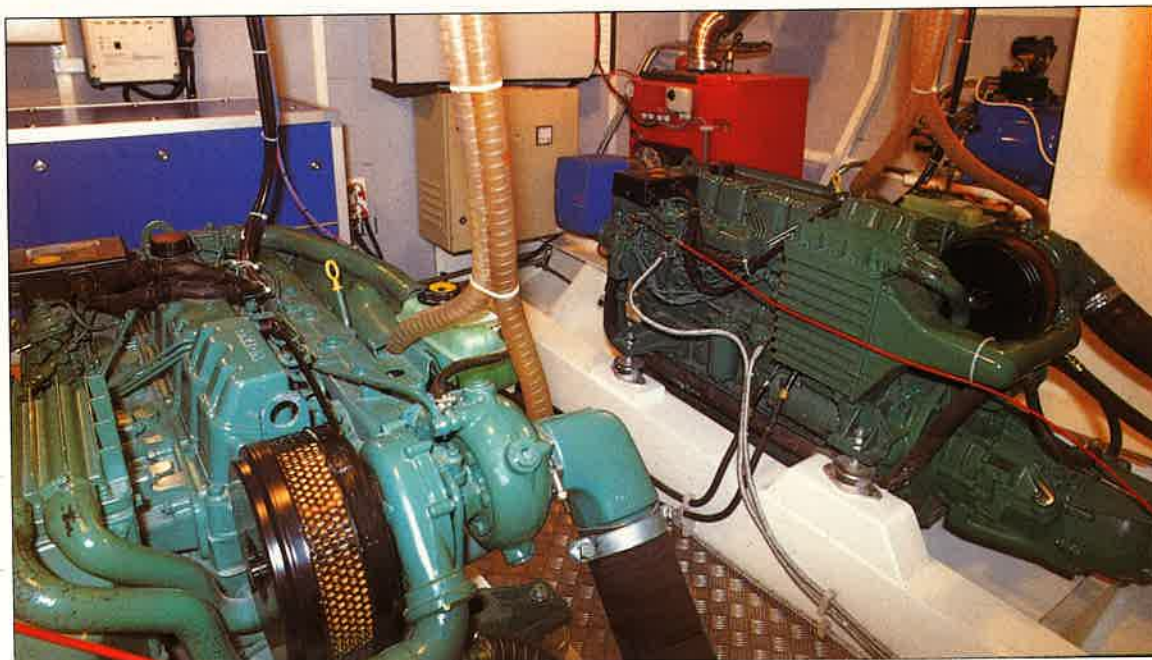
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The twin Volvo Penta TAMD40 heavy-duty diesels installed in our test boat seemed lost in the available space. An aluminium treadplate is provided between them.