

# STEVENS 1060 AMBASSADOR

*We inspected the first of a stylish new Dutch steel range by taking part in a delivery cruise and visiting the De Stevens yard.*

Dutch boatbuilders Stevens are introducing a whole new line-up of steel boats, the Ambassadors, to run alongside their more traditional DL range of displacement cruisers.

Their extra beam allows for slightly more elbowroom in the accommodation than in previous designs, and also a more raked outline to alleviate their stout appearance, although their freeboard is in fact slightly increased.

The first of the new range, a single-engined 34-footer called the 1060, appeared at the



Southampton Boat Show in September. It is intended for inland or sheltered water cruising, but to gauge its full potential we joined the delivery trip from the Solent back to Shepperton-on-Thames.

## Design

The 1060 Ambassador resulted from a decision to give the range a more stylish, modern look, to appeal to the UK market but equally to others where the traditional Dutch look does not have such a big following.

Notable features of the underwater sections include the huge, deep, hollow full-length keel, which gives total protection to the shaft, propeller and sterngear as well as carrying the lower rudder bearing. We were also interested in the hollow aerofoil-section rudder, with top and bottom spoilers, which is claimed to give better steering and more efficiency from the prop.

A hollow transom extension extends the waterline and also serves as the holding tank. The 3in rubber D-fendering to the gunwale is a luxury touch that gives extra peace of mind when coming alongside, particularly in locks, and it is combined with a high tumblehome bulwark all round.

## Exterior

On boarding, the extra height of the topsides is immediately noticeable. It is still just a simple leg up from the pontoon, although a touch more than the





Left: the modern look of the Ambassador range is likely to make it a popular choice around UK coasts. Right: the vertical ship's wheel falls comfortably to hand, although the console would benefit from being angled more.

usual shuffle through the break in the siderails. The cambered 18in (46cm) wide side decks are finished in a painted non-slip that keeps you sure-footed all round the boat, and the stainless steel guardrails top off a reassuring 8in (20cm) of toerail. A pair of bar cleats welded to this amidships take care of springs, while the head and stern lines have T-piece bollards to accommodate them. The foredeck is equipped with a manual Lofrans windlass, although better use could be made of the chain locker beneath if the hatch were of a more generous size. Extra stowage is much needed because the only deck locker, on the starboard side, is principally for two gas bottles.

The seatboxes on the aft deck of our test boat are extras; the davits, welded directly to the transom, come as standard.

Although an interior helm can be specified, the room this would take up seems unwarranted given the snug canvas wheelhouse enclosure that can be fitted as an option to the exterior one. The framed canopy can be folded away when not required, or made fully enclosing with a transparent aft bulkhead when the weather closes in.

The helm seat is cossetting and adjustable, ensuring the vertical wheel is just a comfortable distance away. It would be easier to keep an eye on the engine gauges and any navigation instruments if

the console had more of an angle to it.

The windscreen, which is serviced by a full complement of three wipers, can be folded flat to reduce the boat's air draught to 7ft 8in (2.35m).

## Interior

Access down into the accommodation is via a stairwell from the aft deck. Whilst the angle of this is comfortable, and there is a handy balustrade, the design of the hatch in the coachroof makes the first few steps something of a limbo.

The saloon has the usual U-dinette to starboard, while a bar unit (in lieu of an interior helm) finishes off the run of cupboards under the window line to port. The settee will sit the whole crew around a free-standing table, and can be supplied with a pull-out extension to form a double berth if the requirement is to sleep six. In addition to the cupboards, one of which houses the breaker panel and main battery switches, bulk stowage is to be found in painted-out lockers beneath the seats.

The large windows spill light down into the galley area, which is largely hidden from the saloon by a half-bulkhead. It is generous and well appointed, with an electric/gas fridge, a three-burner gas hob and an optional inbuilt oven/grill. The hob has a deck-vent over it, and there is an opening port.

Cupboard and drawer storage is plentiful, but better use could have been made of the area outboard of the expanse of work surface, and a run of deep fiddled shelving to take crockery and the most frequently used victuals would be handy.

A tiled floor in the toilet compartment opposite is a pleasant touch, the extra weight being of little concern to the displacement boatbuilder. The



compartment is of adequate size, with no shower but a basin with cupboard stowage below. An opening port gives ventilation.

Right in the bow, the forward cabin is furnished with a pair of full-width 6ft 1in (1.86m) berths, with a decent amount of room all the way to their foot. An infill makes creates a generous double, although standing room within the cabin then becomes restricted. Cupboards are set within the bunk-bases, the void ahead taking the optional bow thruster, and there is a large three-quarter-height hanging locker. Light and ventilation come via an opening coachroof hatch and side ports.

Completing the accommodation is the master

## Scheepswerf De Stevens

This is a typical Dutch steel boatbuilding yard. Founded 25 years ago by its present chairman Jochen Veentje, it is still very much a family firm, with his son Wybo now the managing director.

During this period they have built 700-800 boats, and they currently average around 25 per year. Most of these have been multi-chine displacement cruisers, though some are round-bilge kotters. Their biggest markets are Holland and Germany, where the boats



are sold under the Smelne name, but for the UK the company opted to use the more Anglo-friendly Stevens title and this marque has a growing following, especially on the Thames.

Stevens carry out every stage of the building process themselves, rather than sub-contracting. Steel plates are cut out using an optically-controlled cutter, which the company find simpler than the newer computer-controlled machines and quite

adequate for their needs. The boats are built right-side up, with no jigs, the bulkheads pulling the plates into shape.

The hulls are of 5mm steel, with 4mm for the superstructure, and 45cm frame spacing. The extra millimetre hull thickness compared with some of their rivals' boats is considered by the company to add to the quality and value of their products.

After all the welding has been

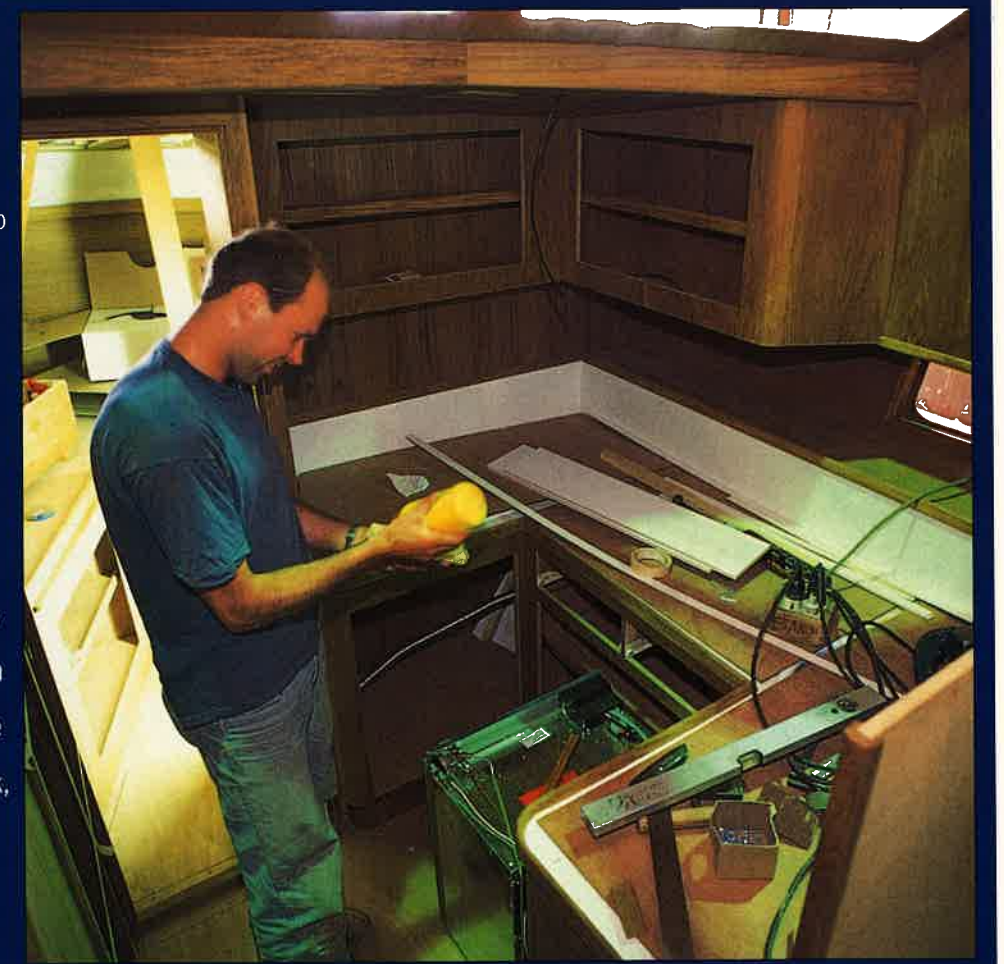
completed, the steelwork is primed throughout. International two-component paints and fillers are used, with a total of nine coats being applied, four of them topcoats which are brushed on. Then the engine is installed, and the fit-out begins.

They describe their boats as being nearly custom-built, every one produced to order, with buyers having considerable involvement in design and layout. Some of their models are available with open aft cockpits in place of the aft cabin, a layout particularly popular with former sailing boat owners.

All craft are available with interior helm positions in the saloon, and most new owners opt for this arrangement. However, after a few years many find they never use this station, and graduate to having an outside-only helm with a weatherproof hood and enclosure.

On our trip around the factory, we were intrigued to see that the saloon side-window cut-outs are used as the main access into the boat during construction, allowing the largest pieces of joinery to be built in the workshop.

The excellent standard of the steelwork, stainless steel, joinery and paintwork is a tribute to the workmanship of the yard, and a clue as to why Stevens have so many repeat German customers. The same qualities should appeal to the experienced British boatowner.





cabin aft, with en-suite facilities including a separate shower cubicle, again with a tiled floor. The 6ft 5in x 4ft 10in (1.98m x 1.49m) double berth is offset to starboard, but with access right around it.

The outboard side has a small table, and clothing is taken by a hanging locker and adjacent cupboard. The void beneath the bunk-base could have been put to better use by being fitted with drawers rather than left for bulk storage via a lifting hatch.

A second hatch to the head of the berth allows inspection of the steering gear and the macerator pump. Also under here is a fair amount of ingot ballast, not an uncommon sight on transom-stern displacement craft, where the buoyancy of the large underwater section needs some extra weight to trim the boat correctly.

A run of sliding windows on both sides of the cabin let in a reasonable amount of natural light, but perhaps some further fixed ports high in the transom would not go amiss.

Our test boat's fit-out was in teak, although oak, cherry or mahogany are also available. The joinery is

to a good standard, with most hidden areas benefiting from a lick of paint or varnish. However we would have to criticise the potentially harmful sharp finish to some corners of the aluminium window frames, a matter which we understand Stevens are looking into.

Headroom in the saloon and most of the cabin space is at least 6ft 5in (1.96m). The deckheads are for the most part clad in an attractive fabric and wood batten style, with inset spotlights.

## Engines

Our test boat had the turbocharged but not aftercooled model of Volvo's 31-series diesel, rated at 100hp. Service intervals on this unit are every 100 running hours (or annually, whichever is less); this is on the low side for displacement craft, but can be extended to 200 hours (or annually) without breaking Volvo Penta UK's three-year warranty conditions, provided the manufacturers' VDS-grade engine oil is used. In our experience, most Volvo

**Below: the saloon is dominated by a U-dinette whose settee will accommodate the full complement of crew and converts into a double berth. Owners can choose between the wet-bar or a second helm. Large windows spill light into the galley set on a lower level behind a bulkhead. Right: the 1060's side decks are wide, cambered and painted with a non-slip surface. Bottom right: both toilet compartments have tiled floors, the master cabin's en-suite facilities including a separate shower cubicle.**



dealers' service all boats with that oil without being asked, but it would of course be worth checking.

Non-standard on the installation was an Aquadrive flexible-shaft coupling and more abundant noise insulation, the benefits of which became obvious.

You reach the compartment by turning back the loose, unbound carpet, whereupon up to three hatches can be lifted depending on whether a brief inspection or fuller maintenance is required. There is plenty of room right around the bay to stand and work, even if the the volume of the 'sound box' has been reduced by installing ply bulkheads to the wings where the twin water tanks are located.

The fuel tank is situated at the head of the compartment, with a stopcock on the feed line, and the primary filter is as simple to view and service as

the raw-water filter. To starboard is the calorifier, and a chunky, fabricated tray for the starter battery. An automatic submersible bilge pump is the only one fitted; further pumps forward and aft would be preferable.

A fourth saloon hatch, outboard to port, opens up a smaller compartment in which you find the domestic battery and freshwater pump. Access to the shaft log is through a cut-out in the aft-cabin sole.

## Performance and handling

For our delivery trip the weather could not have been more kind, catching the onset of this year's truly mild and mainly settled Indian summer.

The passage was planned over three days, with a





morning start from Southampton, calling in at Portsmouth before overnighing in Brighton. Then a passage to Ramsgate, before heading up the Thames to Shepperton. This gave us plenty of time to gauge the boat's capabilities both at sea and in inland waters.

The case for the former was slightly marred by the fact that the lumpiest water we encountered was the wash from ferries in the Dover area. These relatively large, fast moving bodies of water caused plenty of movement if taken on the beam, and necessitated some exercise on the helm if caught as a following sea, reducing the effectiveness of the good-sized rudder. Although appearing to ride level, the Stevens felt as though she was trimming by the bow, and it may well be that a further increase in ballast will solve the problem.

In the modicum of wind-against-tide chop we found on the Thames estuary, the 1060 remained noticeably dry for a heavy steel design (a subtle break in the bow plating prevents the bow wave from riding too high). The helmsman was snug in the neat canvas wheelhouse and could usefully select zip-out panels to be removed for better visibility. That said, the windscreen frame tended to fall just on the horizon, which could prove tedious after a while, and the steaming light was located right on the eyeline, making it highly inconvenient for night passages. It was also lower than the 1m (3ft 3in) height above the sidelights called for in the international collision regulations.

The exterior helm with its comfortable seat proved most satisfactory for what were lengthy spells at the wheel, given that there was no autopilot installed. The Vetus hydraulic system was finger-light, causing some oversteering at first by those used to having to apply more muscle, but making it highly suitable for all members of a family crew.

Manoeuvring at slow speeds with the single engine, whilst satisfactory, did not produce the tightest cornering seen on some other displacement craft, the rudder having only average bite. However, the light force on the helm made lock-to-lock exercises a joy rather than a workout, the modern Morse control was equally light but gave a positive click for gear changes, and the bow thruster provided able assistance in the light winds encountered during our test.

Speeds measured by our radar gun were used to calibrate the log. The 3200rpm at which we cruised most of the time equated to a useful 8 knots, the 40-mile leg from Portsmouth to Brighton being achieved in just under five hours. Above these revs nothing much extra was achieved; pushing the

TMD31 up to a full throttle 3600rpm gave little more than an extra half a knot and produced a lot of black smoke and oily residue in the exhaust. This, and the fact that the TMD31 should reach 3800rpm, suggest the boat would benefit from a slightly finer-pitched propeller.

Dropping to 2700rpm we clocked 7 knots, while for inland work around 5 knots can be maintained at 1800rpm.

At these river speeds there was little by way of noise, and we measured 67dB(A) on the aft deck, an easy-to-bear 62dB(A) in the saloon and aft cabin. In fact this is one of the quietest Dutch steel boats we have ever experienced; at tickover, out on the aft deck, the instruments were the only indication that the engine was working at all.

Back on the open water at 3200rpm, it was a still-comfortable 73dB(A) on the aft deck and 72dB(A) in the saloon, but a slight drumming 78dB(A) in the aft cabin, probably caused by close proximity to the prop wash.

Empirical fuel consumption data for the TMD31 suggests 3.1gph (14lph) at 3200rpm, which was borne out when we topped up with 50gal of diesel at Ramsgate after some 17 hours running, with some 130 miles logged at that point.

## Conclusions

The 1060 we tried was the first boat of a new range, and it was inevitable that we would pick up one or two teething troubles, especially on such an extended trial. On the whole, though, it withstood our very detailed and lengthy scrutiny and in the process justified the confidence of Boat Showrooms in handing over the keys for three days, a rare and commendable act for companies offering test boats to magazines.

The extra beam and height, plus the deletion of the interior helm, make this a roomy, open boat, albeit with some areas needing to take better advantage of the volume for improved stowage. Overall finish and engineering seemed satisfactory, a few small modifications suggesting themselves but nothing which cannot be addressed.

Displacement craft are, by definition, out at sea for much longer than their faster counterparts, and good soundproofing is a great benefit for relaxed cruising. The 1060 excels in this area, and can keep going all day and night without fatiguing the crew.

Looking to the future, the Ambassador range, which will run up to at least a 40-footer, offers an interesting alternative to Stevens' more traditional DL line-up of inland and coastal cruising craft. □

## Stevens 1060 Ambassador

**Loa** 34ft 10in (10.6m).

**Hull length** 33ft 11in (10.3m).

**Beam** 12ft 6in (3.8m).

**Draught** 3ft 5in (1.1m).

**Air draught** 7ft 8in (2.4m).

**Displacement** 10.6 tonnes.

**Fuel capacity** 132gal (600lt).

**Water capacity** 99gal (450lt).

**Engine** single Volvo 100hp TMD31.

**Price** from £89,392 ex VAT; £105,454 as tested with TMD31, bow thruster, modified transom with holding tank, and including delivery.

**Builders** Scheepswerf De Stevens, Netherlands.

**Suppliers** Boat Showrooms of London, Shepperton Marina, Felix Lane, Shepperton, Middlesex TW17 8NJ.

Tel: 01932 243722.

