

Boat Report

STEVENS

1280S

This Dutch steel displacement boat is aimed at serious cruising, in saltwater or inland. We looked over an example which its owners have had fitted-out for the continental waterways.



Left: Myan Mist's owners Tony and Dorothy Duhig want to use her for exploring Europe's inland waterways liveaboards, and had her fitted-out accordingly.



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MOTOR BOATS MONTHLY



Aft deck & helm

Extending the vessel's full beam of almost 13ft (4m), and also 8ft (2.4m) from the back of the helm area to transom



rails, the aft deck offers plenty of room for arranging patio furniture, either for lounging or eating. But there is no fixed seating as standard; indeed, even the large locker seat to starboard of the helm, and the helm seat itself, are on the options list.

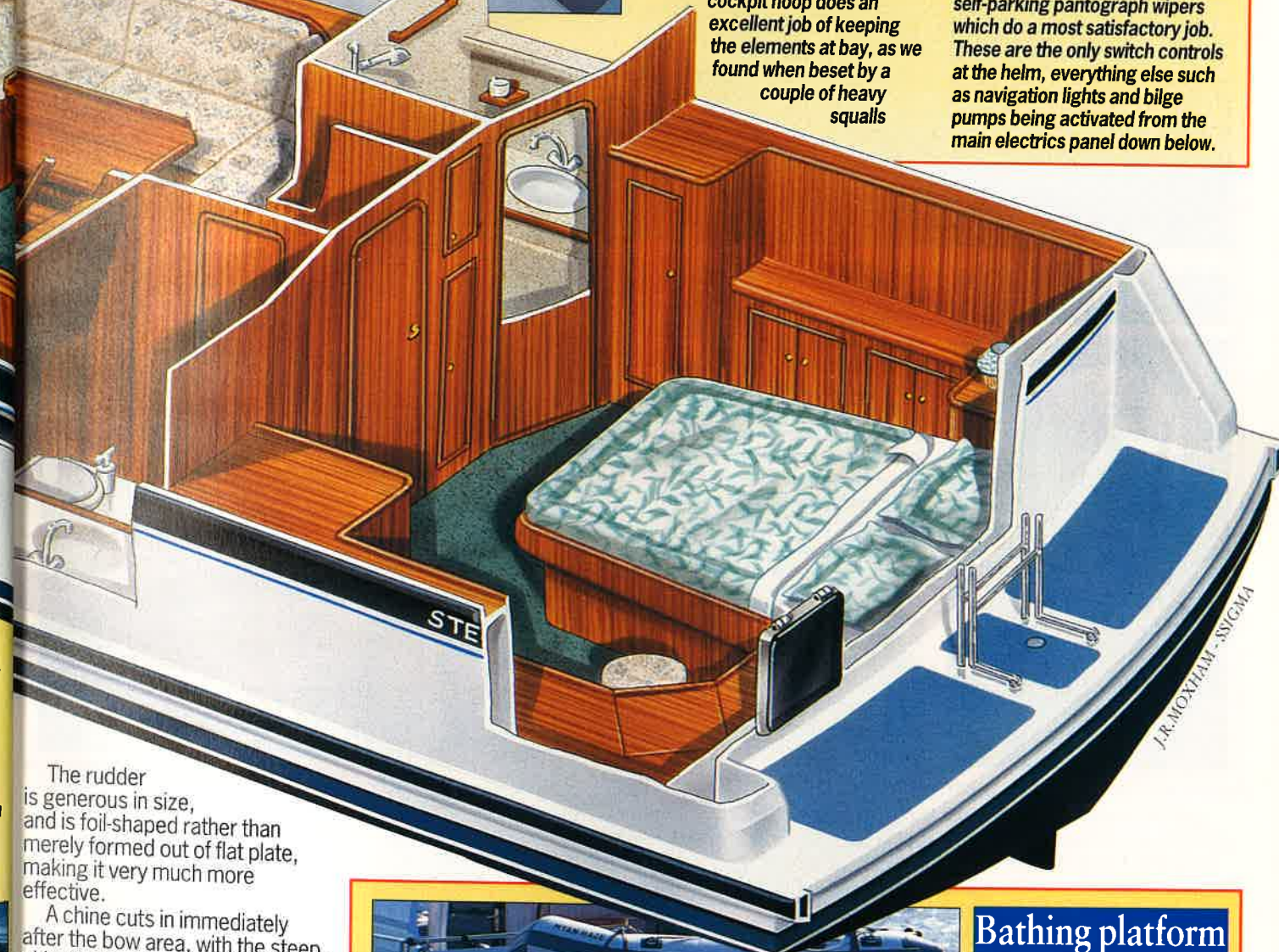
On Myan Mist, the deck has been laid to teak, both for its cooling and aesthetic effects and for the practical reason that this tends not to show dirt as badly as deck paint.

The canopy infill between the folding screen and the supporting cockpit hoop does an excellent job of keeping the elements at bay, as we found when beset by a couple of heavy squalls

during our test day. The fact that the hoop is moulded out of carbon-fibre keeps its weight down, for easy lowering when air draught becomes an issue.

Engine instrumentation is mounted close to the vertical wheel, while an angled portion of fascia provides a landing for smaller instrument heads such as the log and depth units supplied as standard. Any other electronics a buyer opts for might well have to be bracket-mounted on the flat area of console to port.

The screen is serviced by three self-parking pantograph wipers which do a most satisfactory job. These are the only switch controls at the helm, everything else such as navigation lights and bilge pumps being activated from the main electrics panel down below.



The rudder is generous in size, and is foil-shaped rather than merely formed out of flat plate, making it very much more effective.

A chine cuts in immediately after the bow area, with the steep, chiselled sections here giving way to a 20° deadrise amidships and flattening even further towards the transom. This gives the boat plenty of internal volume, leaving the keel to do the gripping.

Rather than being completely slab-sided, the topsides ease out to give the hull some shape, and everything blends nicely together, including the protective rubbing strips that break up the lines and the rubberised section which adds protection to the vulnerable full-beam stern sections.

The boat is available in both

A week's cruise is one thing. But when MBM readers Tony and Dorothy Duhig decided to explore the inland waterways of Europe as liveaboards, a rather different set of priorities emerged.

Their chosen boat would need spacious accommodation, domestic-sized appliances, serious galley and ablution facilities and genuine stowage considerations, as well as the ability to welcome family and guests aboard. And it would have to be up to heavy usage, often on commercial waterways.

Applying their experience of some 20 years boating to the task, they chose a Dutch-built aft-cabin steel cruiser, the Stevens 1280S.

We tested Myan Mist prior to her departure across the English Channel, when she joined the MBM Club's Shakedown Cruise around the Thames Estuary in May, and contacted the Duhigs after their arrival in foreign climes to find out how the boat is looking after them.

Design & layout

The Stevens yard is not the biggest, but has a growing reputation for build quality. In the case of the 1280S, 5mm plate is used for the hull sections and 4mm for the superstructure, and the finish is quite superb. Above the waterline, certainly, the steelwork is contoured and curved in such a way as to belie its origins.

A box keel runs almost the full length of the hull. Nothing short of 2ft 0in (0.61m) at its deepest, which means there is plenty of boat in the water, it extends into a channel-section shoe which both supports and protects the rudder and prop.



Decks

It is a simple step up onto the side deck from pontoon level, and with regular lockwork in mind it is good to see that the deck here is never less than 18in (46cm) wide and bordered with a good depth of toerail, mini-bulwark in



style.

The slight inward slope of the superstructure gives you plenty of shoulder room, helping you move to and fro without

8½in (22cm) T-bollards fore and aft, and bar cleats amidships, although a second pair of the latter would be handy on a vessel of this size.

The anchor is set in a central hawsepipe, and a horizontal windlass sits businesslike on the roomy foredeck. However, this is only a manual unit as standard, which surprises us given the bulk and prestige of the vessel.

shuffling. Add to these considerations the excellent solid guardrails, and the handrails along the coachroof, and deckwork becomes safe and easy.

Mooring hardware consists of



Bathing platform

When stern-to, even with the dinghy in situ, it is easy to board via the 2ft 0in (0.6m) deep bathing platform and the short transom ladder.

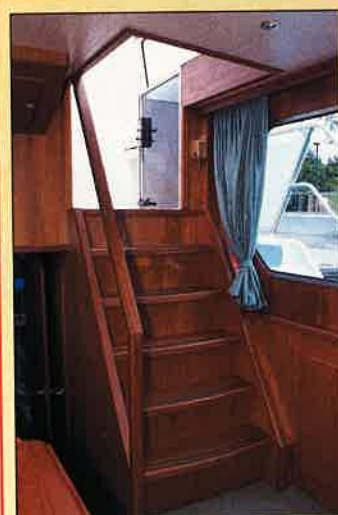
As on many Dutch craft, the platform fabrication incorporates a holding tank, in this case with a useful capacity of around 100gal (450lt).

Also welded on here is an outboard bracket, but we feel this is mounted too low. In a seaway there is a possibility that the engine might get dunked.





Saloon



The saloon is extremely light and airy, not least due to its 6ft 6in (1.98m) headroom and its light ash deckhead, and the wide companionway and steps make it easy to move to and from the aft deck. A further help is that the treads of the wooden steps are inset with rubber borders to stop shoes from slipping when wet.

The sideboard to port has a good array of cupboards, with fiddled shelving, and also houses a television and video player.

The main battery switches, together with the 240V electrics switches, are tucked out of harm's way in one of these, with the main DC panel positioned at the end of the sideboard, on the return down to the galley, so it is easier to get to.



The control panel for the boat's optional generator is also sited here, so it is easy to get at whether you are relaxing in the saloon or using the cooking facilities.

The seating to starboard is largely to be used as a lounge area, bearing in mind that there is a separate dinette, and everything is well proportioned for comfortable day-to-day living.

The fiddled table here, seconded from another model in the Stevens range, is ideal for use as a desk or chart table, with a hinged top and segmented stowage to tidy away a host of gadgetry, pilot books, writing implements and other bits and pieces.

The deep side windows allow the crew a clear view out while seated, and the lockers beneath the seat cushions are accessed by good-sized hatches.



Galley

We would not foresee any problem living out of this galley on a permanent basis, there being plenty of work surface as well as a good array of stowage for foodstuffs, crockery and utensils.

Appointments include a good-sized single-drainer sink, a built-in gas hob and oven, and a multi-power fridge with a freezer compartment. Like the microwave oven fitted to our test boat, the extractor over the hob is an optional extra, which in our view is a little mean given the boat's overall quality.

Toilet compartment

The roomy WC, accessed via a door from the aft lobby, acts as a daytime 'cloakroom' as well as providing the ablution facilities for guests in the forecabin.

The sink is set in a vanity unit which will catch any splashes, and the toilet has plenty of headroom despite being tucked within the recess afforded by the main companionway stairwell.

An opening side port provides ventilation, and an under-counter cupboard offers stowage.



sleeping cabins, fore and aft, the latter particularly well suited to the liveaboard lifestyle. Buyers are offered a number of different options with regards to the layout of these and their facilities; the preferred one, as on our test boat, is to have a roomy, shared cloakroom-style toilet and basin compartment off the rear lobby, and a separate shower and basin room linked to the aft cabin, although another possibility is for a second toilet/shower compartment to be incorporated up at the sharp end, taking some space from the cabin and galley.

Throughout the accommodation, the workmanship and finish of the joinery is first class, whether it is in view or not.

Handling & performance

Given its beam, weight and generous keel, this is not a boat that is going to be knocked or blown around easily. That said, neither does it appear to suffer from a trait common to boxy, displacement craft, that of wallowing through wakes and swells. The depth of the keel and rudder clearly provide plenty of resistance low down.

Straight-line stability is exceptionally steady, but conversely this big, heavy boat turns in little more than its own length, with only the slightest of outward list, whether motoring at speed or pirouetting around a confined marina.

The helm is well balanced and the steering light, and Myan Mist's combination of Vetus 800kgf bow- and stern-thrusters, giving 6.5hp apiece, punch the ends around with consummate ease.

The Duhigs' first seawater

Forward cabin

Our test boat's forecabin was fitted with a double berth offset to port, measuring 6ft 3in (1.91m) by 4ft 3in (1.30m), a width which it manages to maintain right down to its foot.

The cabin has adequate standing headroom and plenty of clothes stowage, by way of a double cupboard beneath the dressing table and a couple of three-quarter-height hanging lockers. There is also a cupboard beneath the berth, with further bulk stowage lockers and access to the hull sides once the false bottoms are removed.



single and twin-engine configurations, largely drawn from Volvo Penta's 31 and 41 series diesels. The most potent option is a pair of 200hp TAMD 41s, although the most

popular twin installation is likely to use the 130hp four-cylinder 31s. Myan Mist is fitted with a single naturally-aspirated 135hp Perkins Sabre, turning over at a lazy 2400rpm, and her owners have

specified not just a bow-thruster but also a stern-thruster fitted within the box-section keel. This extremely neat arrangement gets around the problem of running two engines under only light load within the confines of inland waterways, while still giving ample manoeuvrability.

Like Stevens' Ambassador range, the 1280 has just the one helm station, outside on a raised aft deck which can be battened down for shelter from the elements. This leaves an uncluttered saloon to serve as a handsome lounge area. A couple of steps down forward from here are a spacious galley and dinette borrowing lots of daylight from the rake of the screen and the side windows.

There are two generous

Dinette

The four-seater dinette opposite the galley is extremely light and airy, and there is a good amount of stowage within the seat-bases, plus a shelf outboard.

The table drops to make a 6ft 0in (1.83m) by 3ft 8in (1.12m) berth, and the early dawn can be blocked out thanks to the windscreen above being thoughtfully provided with top and bottom-hung curtains.



Aft cabin

The very pleasant master cabin is of generous proportions, stretching to the boat's full beam and offering enough wardrobe and cupboard stowage for a world cruise.

The berth itself is one of the largest we have seen afloat, a full 6ft 6in (2.00m) long by 5ft 10in (1.77m) wide, and there is plenty of floor area for the occupants to wander around and dress without getting in each other's way.

The pukka dressing table



across the port quarter is supplemented by loads of clothes storage, while removable panels beneath the mattress give on to the steering gear, macerator pump, optional weed hatch and on our test boat the stern-thruster.

The en-suite shower compartment will never leave you short of elbowroom, no matter what your size, and it also has a basin unit set within a handy length of countertop with cupboard beneath. An opening port provides ventilation, although an extractor would be a welcome addition.



Engine room

Hinging clear the treads of the rear stairs will suffice for a quick visual check, or maintenance to the stern gland, but does not give enough access to day-to-day service points. For this you have to roll back the carpet and raise the main saloon sole.

There is plenty of room, at least with our test boat's single installation, right around the engine bay to get at both the engine and the auxiliaries. Our only criticism would be the location of the water/fuel separator quite low down on the forward

bulkhead, when there is plenty of room to make it more easily accessible higher up.



The fuel tank runs across the forward part of the compartment. We were glad to find it fabricated with a sizable inspection plate, but would have preferred to see a remote way of shutting off the fuel feed, rather than simply a



stopcock on the tank itself.

Insulation is of the foam type as standard, but in a further attempt to keep engine noise to a minimum the Duhigs have had a loaded-rubber sound-deadening layer sandwiched into the ply sole itself, an idea which works to good effect.

A further section of sole comes up to port to allow the generator to be got at. Again the compartment is a good size and everything is extremely accessible, including the domestic pumps and water tank.

A manual bilge pump located here backs up the large submersible unit located towards the head of the main engine bay.

sortie, down the Thames Estuary, confirmed our fuel consumption figures for the 135hp Perkins Sabre engine, averaging around 4gph at 2200rpm. This is none too bad, although a glance at our full set of mpg figures indicates that matters can be improved handsomely if you are willing to pull back to 2000rpm, thereby sacrificing a mere third of a knot in deference to the 1280s's hull speed and thereby achieving 3mpg.

One non-issue on this particular boat is noise, with sound levels

unintrusive at any rpm, and no matter where you are. We were particularly impressed by the lack of vibration and the associated lack of noise in the aft cabin, bearing in mind the proximity of the drivetrain and propeller.

Conclusions

The roominess, layout and build quality of the 1280s clearly make it a serious cruising boat, ideal for those who want to combine home comforts with practical boating considerations. The finish and

fitout are smart-traditional, and the engineering is there to be got at as and when required.

Not all buyers are going to be liveaboards, of course, but if the layout and ergonomics are good enough for Tony and Dorothy's requirements then weekends and fortnight cruising, whether coast-hopping or inland, are going to be enjoyed with the utmost ease.

As Myan Mist's crew began the Canal de l'Aisne leg of their journey, through the champagne capital of Reims, Tony confirmed that the Stevens was working even better than they had hoped. The sea passage from Ramsgate to Calais had been completed with Mike Oram of Dover Sea School aboard, and dealt with easily in a four-hour crossing. And the no-nonsense steel hull was inspiring them with confidence as they began to tackle heavy lockwork and rub shoulders with big commercial barges.

At the point of our last telephone call, the Duhigs had completed 265 miles in some steady motoring over 12 days, with more than 70 locks successfully negotiated. Nice work if you can get it!



BUILD

steel

DIMENSIONS

LOA

42ft 0in (12.80m)

HULL LENGTH

40ft 0in (12.20m)

BEAM

12ft 11in (3.95m)

DRAUGHT

3ft 9in (1.15m)

AIR DRAUGHT

9ft 3in (2.85m) with both screen and hoop lowered;
10ft 6in (3.23m) with hoop alone lowered

DISPLACEMENT

11.8 tonnes

FUEL CAPACITY

110gal (500lt)

WATER CAPACITY

100gal (450lt)

ENGINE

single Perkins Sabre 135L

6cyl 6.0lt diesel

135hp at 2400rpm

PRICE

£135,537 ex VAT
as standard with engine
as tested

SUPPLIERS

Boat Showrooms of London
Shepperton Marina, Felix
Lane, Shepperton,
Middlesex TW17 8NJ.
Tel: 01932 243722.

BUILDERS

Scheepswerf De Steven
De Steven 26, 9206 AX
Drachten, Netherlands
Tel: (31) 512 51 26 69

STEVENS 1280S

PERFORMANCE & CONSUMPTION							SOUND LEVELS dB A		
rpm	knots#	gph†	lph†	mpg†	range*	trim	saloon	aft cabin	aft deck
1400	5.5	0.9	4	6.11	537	—	63	60	62
1600	6.8	1.3	6	5.23	460	—	65	66	65
1800	7.5	1.5	7	5.00	440	—	69	70	67
2000	8.0	2.6	12	3.08	271	—	70	74	69
2200	8.3	4.0	18	2.09	184	—	72	75	70
2400	8.8	5.5	25	1.60	141	—	72	75	70

Measured by radar gun. † Calculated from engine manufacturers' figures. * Allows 20% margin.

CONDITIONS ~ wind southwesterly Force 4-5, sea slight

LOAD ~ fuel 90%, water 100%, crew 3