

Boat Report

# STURIËR

## TRAWLER 480AC

*This aft-cabin displacement boat is equally at home cruising at sea or exploring continental waterways. But does Dutch steel necessarily imply confident passagemaking? We went out in an ugly chop to find out.*



St 480  
Sturrier Trawler



**T**he Dutch yard of Volharding Staveren were a new name at September's Southampton Boat Show, but they are by no means new to boatbuilding, having been established for the best part of a century.

Commercially orientated at first, they had moved into the leisure market by the mid-1950s by introducing a range of traditional kottor double-enders. At the turn of the millennium, though, the emphasis is on a range of immensely sturdy steel trawler yachts, running from a pretty open-cockpit 40-footer through to a 52-footer with a raised aft deck and three cabins.

We tested the aft-cabin 480, which caught the eye of many at the show, and is a serious contender for anyone looking for a go-anywhere displacement cruiser.

The model is available with a single engine, this being a 350hp Sabre diesel. But our test boat had a pair of Volvo Penta TAMD41 six-cylinder units in their de-rated commercial guise, producing 145hp rather than 200hp, with their simplicity standing them in good stead for prolonged running.

## Design & layout

When you talk Dutch, you are almost inevitably talking steel, and the 480 has plenty of it, making for a very heavy displacement. But apart from the boat's inherent solidness there is nothing to give the game away that the hull and superstructure are anything but GRP.

Every corner is rounded-off and there is a first-class, faired finish wherever you look. The whole exterior and internal structure is grit-blasted after construction, whereupon all surfaces benefit from a number of applications of two-component epoxy.

The hull is built of 5mm plate, the topsides and deck of 4mm, with stiffeners every 450mm. It also has three watertight bulkheads, plus what constitutes a ship-like collision

## Aft deck

**The aft deck has a teak sole like all other external deck areas, and the robust build quality and attention to detail found here sets the scene for the rest of the boat.**

**The half-height bulwarks have been given definition and shape, rather than left slab-sided, and are exceptionally well finished. Similarly, the commodious bench seats ranged across the transom have cut and shaped metalwork rather than straightforward boxes, and are finished with teak locker lids so they look smart even when their cushions are removed.**

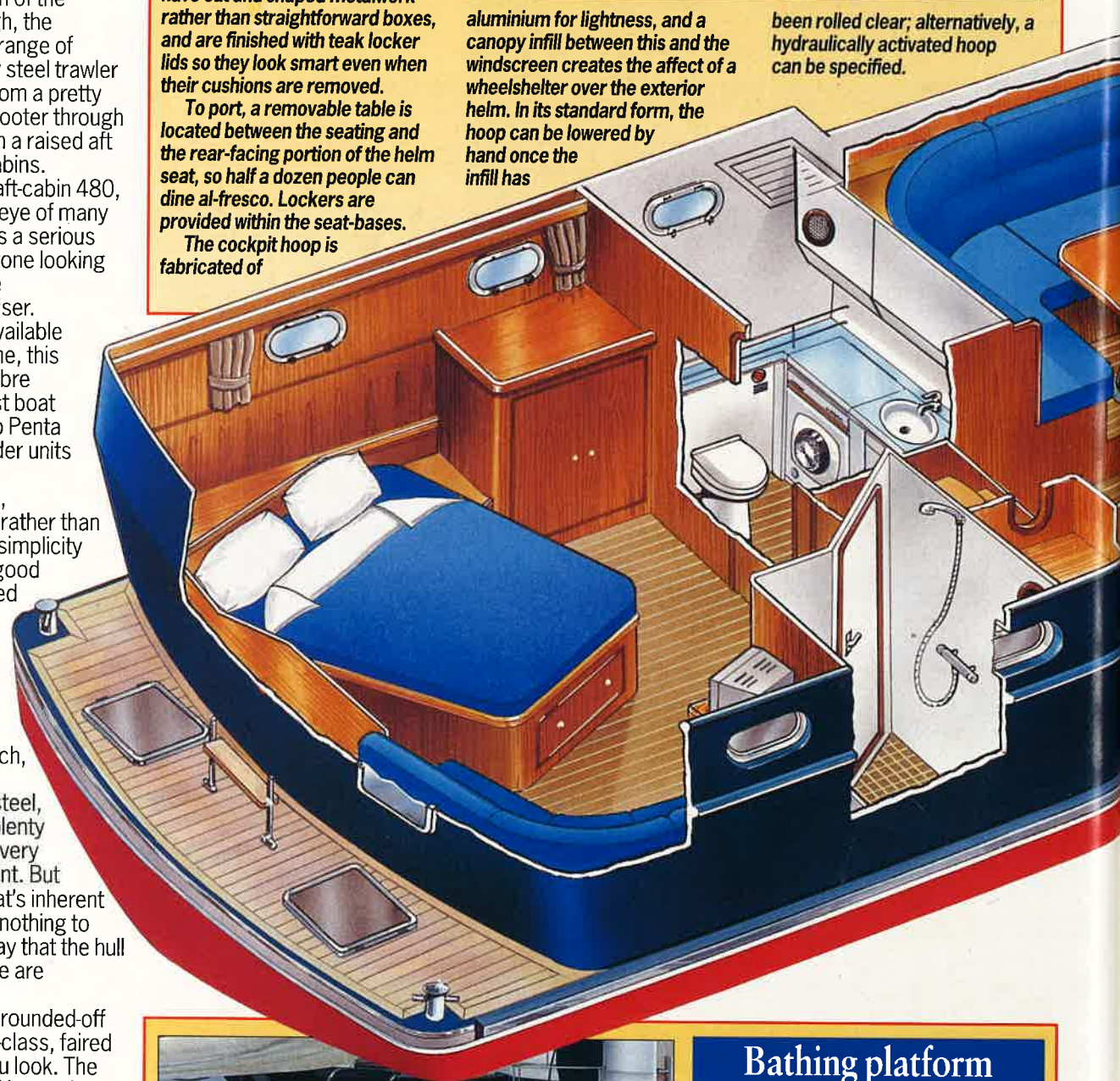
**To port, a removable table is located between the seating and the rear-facing portion of the helm seat, so half a dozen people can dine al-fresco. Lockers are provided within the seat-bases.**

**The cockpit hoop is fabricated of**



**aluminium for lightness, and a canopy infill between this and the windscreen creates the affect of a wheelshelter over the exterior helm. In its standard form, the hoop can be lowered by hand once the infill has**

**been rolled clear; alternatively, a hydraulically activated hoop can be specified.**



## Bathing platform

**Although an integral part of the hull, rather than just an extension protruding above the waterline, the bathing platform is fully separated from the main hull, with a couple of hatches set in it for bulk storage. Davits are included within the very full UK specification, as is teak decking.**

**Access is via a wide central ladder which emerges from the middle of the transom seating once the centre portion has been removed.**



bulkhead right forward, with the chain locker being accessed from the forecabin via an uncompromising dogged-down steel hatch. In fact, 'uncompromising' as an overall description fits the 480 just about perfectly.

The turn of bilge is effected by a chine in the usual way but, in keeping

with a boat clearly intended for extensive offshore use, the bow sections have much more flair and volume than we usually associate with Dutch craft. The added sheer this gives



## Exterior helm

**The protective screen is hugely constructed and generous, to say the least, and with the canopy deployed the feeling is more of a small ship's wheelhouse than an exterior helm position.**

**Three good-sized wipers serve the screen, and demisters are also provided. There are plenty of handholds on the steel frame, and a deep-lipped shelf runs around the top offering handy stowage.**

**The large ship's wheel is right over to port, so the skipper can wedge himself in and make himself comfortable. Ahead is a generous expanse of angled and flat fascia to fill with all manner of**

**gadgetry, and the boat's standard specification is a useful starting point, including Robertson autopilot, depth-sounder, log and wind instruments, as well as a Furuno 1832 radar and a Shipmate RS8300 VHF.**

**The main engine instrumentation and ready-use switches are ahead of the wheel, while the co-pilot has more than sufficient space still to set down a chart, pilotbook and tea-tray.**

**Even if the de-rated engines are not exactly state-of-the-art, the builders see no reason why helming should be bereft of refinement. Morse KE-4 electronic controls and a bow-thruster are fitted as standard to ease the workload.**



## Decks

**The side decks are a minimum of 12in (30cm) wide, and bordered by the most substantial of bulwarks topped with stainless steel guardrails, so moving about is safe and easy. With handrails provided right along the split-level coachroof, the arrangement could hardly be more crew-friendly.**

**There is a break in the rail on each side for boarding when alongside, although the bulwark makes this still quite a step up from pontoon level.**

**Up at the bow, the anchor stows in ship-shape fashion within a hawsepipe, and is handled by a serious-looking vertical windlass. The mooring bollards — two forward, two aft and two more on each side for springs — are all of a size that can easily handle a couple of lines.**





makes for a more attractive and purposeful-looking boat.

From the chine, the underwater form runs to a deep keel section, while the twin four-bladed props are all but fully boxed in by a huge amount of steelwork; as well as supporting the lower bearing for the large rudders, the supporting skegs are big enough to double as beaching legs. The rudders themselves are of steel, but foil-shaped for increased effectiveness.

The exterior layout provides a good-size aft deck, with plenty of seating, and a helm position so well sheltered by the screen and removable canopy that the interior helm, hitherto a standard fitment, will almost certainly be dropped as such, although it will be placed on the options list for any owner who wants to retain it.

Down below, there are separate forward and aft cabins, and our test boat had an additional midships cabin in lieu of what can be a second dinette area if preferred.

The sole is of quality teak and holly decking everywhere, with a goodly number of hatches for access to the bilge areas and tank spaces. Carpeting is usually provided to top this off, but in most areas the owner of our test boat preferred to see the wood.

The joinery everywhere is extremely well executed, and each surface and shelf is bordered with a nice depth of fiddle. Headroom through most of the boat is a useful 6ft 4in (1.93m), and the standard inventory includes a 5kW heating system, so this is truly a year-round boat.

## Handling & performance

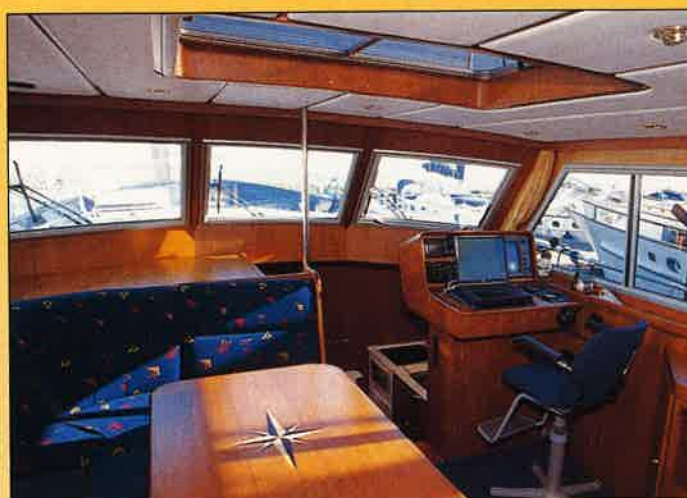
If you decide to buy a displacement cruiser, there is a

## Saloon

**A substantial, gas strut-supported hatch and double door arrangement give easy passage between the aft deck and saloon, with the steps angled kindly and plenty of handholds around.**

**Either side of the stairwell there are a couple of useful cave lockers where you can lodge small items to keep them handy for use out on deck.**

**Our test boat had an interior**



**helm position, but when this is dropped from the standard layout the existing sideboard arrangement to starboard will simply be elongated. There is already room for an entertainment centre.**

**To port, the comfortable dinette seats six easily and, being raised, offers a good view outside. The seat-bases incorporate top-**

**loading lockers and are well finished in varnished wood.**

**A run of cupboards stretching across the aft bulkhead provides more day-to-day stowage, as well as access to the innards of the upper helm station.**

**The windows are double-glazed, and further light is let in by a large opening skylight set into the deckhead.**



## Galley

**The galley is a spacious affair, with plenty of room for two people to work. It is also all-electric, with an 8kW generator being fitted as standard; a Mastervolt inverter is also supplied so you do not have to start the gennie to boil a kettle for a late-evening cocoa.**

**The outboard flank of the compartment incorporates most of the appliances, including a very neat dishwasher built in below the main cooker, and a domestic sized fridge/freezer. A cubbyhole for the microwave is found across the way, above a further run of work surface.**

**There is plenty of well thought-out stowage, both for small and**

**large items, including an enormous larder so you can stock up for those long-distance cruises.**

**Our test boat had Corian work surfaces, but as standard they are laminated; either way, they are finished with stainless steel fiddles. We were also pleased to note the number of handholds, which are important considerations in areas of standing space.**

**Ventilation is provided by a couple of opening ports and an overhead hatch.**



great argument for getting the heaviest and longest craft you can manage. Quite why you should do this was admirably illustrated by the conditions on our test day, a fresh wind gusting in an ill-tempered fashion against a lively tide.

Despite the ugly, vertically-sided, waves of up to 6ft that were our lot, the Sturiër's momentum allowed it to push through when running upwind

without faltering. The hull length not only imparted an easy 8 knots with no sign of the stern digging, but also allowed the short troughs to be bridged without any sign of the skyrocket/submarine ride that can sometimes start to occur in these conditions.

There was no slamming. The boat's high topsides and the flare of the bow meant that the worst of the water was swept

## Midships cabin



**The area immediately opposite the galley can either be a second dinette or, as in this case, a third cabin. It would also make a neat office/study, for liveaboard owners who need a dedicated area to keep tabs on things at home.**

**As a cabin it is fine in size, with plenty of dressing room and a useful wardrobe, and the bunk berths are adequate in length and breadth.**

**But one thing that needs looking at again is the vertical space between the upper and lower bunks; you have to slide into the lower one, and it offers no sitting headroom at all. Fortunately, with what is semi-customised building, this can be readily put right.**

## Forward toilet

**With weight being less of consideration on a fully displacement boat, the 480 benefits from part-tiled WCs. It also has a single 110gal (500lt) holding tank to which all wastewater runs, which makes it suitable for inland waterway use and also reduces the number of through-hull fittings required.**

**There is plenty of space for ablutions in the forward, day toilet compartment, and you are never short of headroom, elbowroom or stowage. The toilet itself is electric, and the corner shower cubicle is curtained off from the main floor area.**

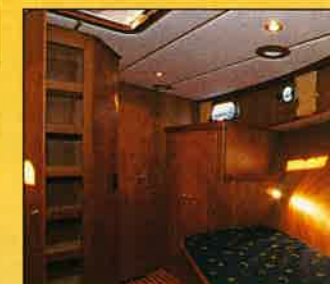


## Forward cabin

**With the privacy of being more than 30ft away from the master suite, the forecabin has enough in floorspace for a disco, never mind just dressing and undressing.**

**And the standard vee-berth arrangement is so expansive that there is little chance of playing footsie even if you want to: the mattresses are no less than 7ft 0in (2.13m) long by 2ft 6in (0.76m) wide, with a separation zone at their foot. A double-berth layout is available instead if this sounds too unsociable.**

**Stowage is plentiful too, with both a double hanging wardrobe**



**and a full-height nest of shelves. There are also huge cave lockers built-in beneath the berths, and fiddled shelves above them.**

**At the bow is the access to the chain locker, which comprises a dogged steel hatch behind a teak door, and there is also easy access to the bilge.**



aside, rather than shipped aboard. Any solid spray that did arrive was quickly cleared by the freeing ports in the bulwark.

Downwind handling was equally easy, with a slight waggle of the stern to salute the waves but no sign of any wayward traits, either with manual steering or on autopilot. Only when the sea was dead on the beam did the Sturiër become less comfortable, quickly settling into a harmonic motion that wouldn't suit everyone, especially those unused to displacement cruising. A course change of 15°-20° in either direction soon steadied the ship, and allowed the coffee pot to go into action once again.

All that weight and underwater bulk comes into its own around the marina, too.

Rule one is that nothing happens quickly on the Sturiër, and as long as you remember that fact, you are halfway there. Held still in the water and beam-on to the wind, the bow eventually drifts off, but only in an 'okay if you insist' kind of way. Idle speed on two engines is just over 2 knots; on one engine it is just over 1 knot. The 480 readily carries her way for some time after being slipped into neutral, but astern thrust does give effective braking.

Rule two is always to use the wheel, for the size of the 480's keels and rudders mean that manoeuvres under engines alone are virtually impossible. Far from being a handicap, though, having such positive response to the helm allows the boat to be placed where you want it with a gratifying degree of precision. A bow-



## Aft master suite

**The master cabin extends to the full 14ft (4.3m) beam of the hull, with a portion nibbled off for the separate shower room which is located forward, to starboard.**

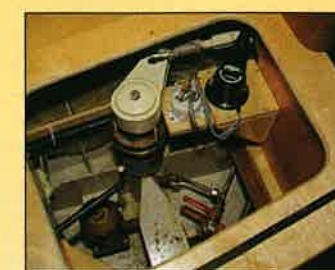
**A nibble it might be, but the shower is roomy, with tiled flooring and a deep fiddled shelf for your shampoo. Ventilation is provided, but there is no forced extraction fitted.**

**Over to port is the second half of the ablution facilities, another generous separate compartment comprising not just an electric toilet and a basin but a washer/dryer as standard. There is stowage both below the countertop and in a deep fiddled shelf, although a further eye-height locker would be welcome.**

**Back in the main part of the cabin, the diagonal berth is a full queen-size, with a quality sprung mattress. Stowage is plentiful, and there is a settee to starboard, although we were a little surprised to find no dressing table as such.**



**Access hatches beneath the settee base and berth allow access to the sterngear; the former also reveals the remote greaser for the stern tubes and the steering.**





## Engine room

A heavily dogged door from the aft companionway gives easy access to the enginespace, where the twin Volvo Penta diesels in no way fill the compartment. With sufficient room right around and over them, day-to-day checks and even most servicing can be accomplished without

disturbing the saloon sole hatches.

Moreover, the treadplate ensures there is plenty to stand on, as well as guarding possible danger areas such as the couplings.

One mystery surrounds the placement of the raw-water filters and primary fuel filters which, while certainly accessible, could have been made easier to check and service if positioned slightly better.



There is room to spare, so it should be possible to improve this.

Our preference would also be for more sophisticated primary filters with transparent bowls and removable elements, rather than the canister types fitted. That said, it was good to find that the primary filters are doubled-up, so that you can simply switch over.

Overall, the installation is extremely well found, well insulated and with all pipework and wiring tidily executed.

The engines are fitted with additional alternators, as the vessel's main supply circuitry is 24V rather than 12V. And the Kohler 8kW generator is located just adjacent to the access door, with a neat stowage area above it for spares.

There are three fuel tanks, all residing within the enginespace, with remote shut-offs located in the galley. The centre tank is used to top-up the two main wing tanks when required.

thruster was fitted to our test boat, but remained silent except for a final tweak just moments before putting lines ashore.

You can run quite happily on one engine, as the Sturiër answers to the helm either way without fuss. It also turns through the wind with ease, ahead or astern, provided that you remember to use the rudders to best effect.

It takes 6½ turns to get from lock to lock, but the hydraulic steering is nicely set-up: not too light, not too heavy. Our only criticism of our test boat was that the wheel was set both a bit too low and it was also too tight against the legs.

Visibility from the helm is good at sea, with only small, barely noticed, blindspots at either quarter. It is only on the final approach to a berth that you start to notice a downside to the high

topsides and bow. Opting to arrive on the same side as the helm, to port, will deal with the former, but stationing a person forward to call distance-off will be a useful tactic if approaching an unfamiliar pontoon.

That is not to say that the Sturiër needs a cast of thousands to manage. Easily worked decks and serious fittings make crewing easy, and there is no reason why an experienced husband and wife team should have any difficulty with what looks and feels like a proper little ship.

## Conclusions

Just because a boat is built of steel does not inevitably make it a confidence-inspiring passagemaker, but clearly Volharding Staveren design and build with this in mind. The 480 has stability characteristics that

make it possible to plate it under the Recreational Craft Directive's toughest 'A' category, even if its lack of transoceanic range makes this a bit of a hollow exercise.

More relevantly, the 480 has plenty of offshore capability, and will not be troubled by being caught out in poor weather. Our expectation is that it should gamely plug along at 8 knots, fair or foul.

It is clearly also well geared for continental inland waterways cruising with an air draught to suit, and its high-spec fitout makes for a highly self-contained liveaboard craft.

The exterior helm is really all you will ever need, and doing away with the interior one should make the already roomy saloon more versatile. The rest of the layout works well, and there is certainly oodles of space both for people and gear, even if the optional midships cabin could do with being reworked.

Fit-out offers all the plushness that most owners will want, but can still be readily maintained and survive substantial use.

If there is a major question left to answer, it is one asked of the prospective owner rather than the builder: should this boat have two engines or one? The twin-engines-with-everything demands of the British market meant that our trial boat had a pair of smaller diesels, but we found nothing to doubt that the 480 would also work well with a lazy single motor of much larger cubic capacity. □



### BUILD

steel

### RCD

category A

### DIMENSIONS

#### LOA

47ft 9in (14.54m)

#### HULL LENGTH

45ft 2in (13.78m)

#### BEAM

14ft 6in (4.42m)

#### DRAUGHT

4ft 3in (1.29m)

#### AIR DRAUGHT

11ft 3in (3.40m)

#### DISPLACEMENT

27.5 tonnes

#### FUEL CAPACITY

440gal (2000lt)

#### WATER CAPACITY

330gal (1500lt)

### ENGINES

twin Volvo Penta TAMD41Hs

6cyl 3.6lt diesels

145hp at 2700rpm

### PRICE

from £350,000  
ex VAT according to  
exchange rate

### UK REPRESENTATIVES

Volharding (UK),  
Latchmoor House,  
Brockenhurst, Hampshire  
SO42 7UE.  
Tel: 01590 624419.

### BUILDERS

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Kooyweg 8, NL-8715 EP  
Staveren, Netherlands.  
Tel: (31) 514 68 12 07.

## STURIËR TRAWLER 480AC

PERFORMANCE & CONSUMPTION						SOUND LEVELS dB(A)		
rpm	knots#	gph†	lph†	mpg†	range*	saloon	aftcab	aft deck
1400	6.5	2.4	11	2.71	954	61	58	67
1600	7.1	3.5	16	2.03	715	62	60	68
1800	7.7	4.8	22	1.60	563	66	68	70
2000	8.3	6.6	30	1.25	440	68	70	71
2200	8.7	8.4	38	1.03	363	70	72	72
2400	9.2	12.1	55	0.76	268	72	78	74

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

CONDITIONS - wind easterly Force 4-5, sea moderate

LOAD - fuel 90%, water 100%, crew 4