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NEW BOAT TEST THE UK'S MOST COMPREHENSIVE YACHT TESTS

Bestevaer 45ST Pure

She's a comfortable and practical swing-keel cruiser



She looks like a go-anywhere cruiser, but does she live up to it? Graham Snook and the YM editorial team went cruising in her to find out

Three days sailing the Bestevaer 45ST Pure on a whirlwind tour of Dutch waters, what could go wrong? Well, the editor broke the toilet, we got sideways across a lock, touched the bottom a few times and all came back with bumps on our heads.

Luckily, apart from that toilet handle, we returned the boat to KM Yachtbuilders unscathed, and we all regretted not juggling our deadlines to get more time away on her.

Performance

We sailed in most conditions during our time on board. Our boatspeed tests were done on the IJsselmeer, free of tide and with a Force 5 from the west. Leaving Makkum in a heaped chop, motoring at 2,000 rpm into the head sea and 17 knots of headwind, she was making 6.0 knots over the ground. Any slamming was reduced to dull thuds as her rounded forward sections and solid construction cushioned the larger waves.

With one reef tucked into the mainsail and full genoa, I was surprised that once powered up, the helm was light; only when bearing away was more pressure apparent. In the stronger gusts (the apparent wind in the mid-20s), the lack of a mainsheet traveller meant easing the mainsheet to reduce helm pressure, but she showed no tendency to round up; her twin rudders gripped well.



Her plumb bow maximises waterline length and interior volume

On the lighter-wind days we had Force 1-3 and with her huge code zero-style gennaker she was making between 4.6-5.3 knots at 40 degrees off the apparent wind, with 10-11 knots of breeze blowing over the deck.

At the helm

While she is available with a wheel, this 45ST Pure has a tiller, and what a tiller it is too. Standing at 1.88m (6ft 2in) tall when raised, in sailing position it sweeps over a large arc of the cockpit. With just a couple on board I doubt you'd notice it, but with a full crew moving about on board it can feel a bit restrictive.

The payback, though, is a light helm and even when she was overpowered it was still manageable. You can sit well forward and remain sheltered under the extended coachroof, while still helming, and look forward through the deckhouse to maintain a good lookout. Or you can sit on the coaming, between winches, but to gain shelter from the coachroof you have to sit on the jammers, forward of the halyard and mainsheet winch.

Design & construction

KM Yachtbuilders specialises in round-hulled aluminium yachts. The frames are CNC-cut and delivered to KM to be welded on site. The →

NEW BOAT TEST

Bestevaer 45ST - Performance on test

Point of sail	Apparent wind angle	Apparent wind speed	Speed through the water
Close hauled	33-36°	22-24 knots	6.2-6.6 knots
Fetch	60°	20-22 knots	7.6-8.6 knots
Beam reach	90°	16-18 knots	7.4-8.3 knots
Broad reach	120°	14-16 knots	6.8-7.6 knots
Run	180°	10-13 knots	6.7-7.3 knots

Powered up, she took the IJsselmeer chop in her stride

'She showed no tendency to round up and her twin rudders gripped well'





Sitting on the wide coaming gives a good view forward

frames are built upside-down, and the hull sheets (6-12mm below the waterline, 5-6mm above) are welded to them. Then the hull is flipped and the deck and tanks are added before the fit-out takes place. The water and fuel tanks are under the saloon sole.

The Bestevaer 45 Pure can be supplied with a fixed keel and single rudder or, as in the case of our test boat, a swing-keel which is filled with lead ballast. When raised this sits proud of the hull, but she can be dried out without problems resting on the keel and her splayed twin rudders.

She has watertight bulkheads both fore and aft (the latter forward of the engine) and nothing is drilled or tapped into the aluminium.

Sailplan

She has a deck-stepped, twin-spreader 9/10 Seldén rig. She can also be rigged with a staysail, giving her a slutter/solent rig – running backstays add mast support for this. In lighter winds, a gennaker or cruising chute can be flown on a Seldén pole running through her large bow roller.

Deck layout

The rear end of the deckhouse roof sweeps aft, sheltering the front half-metre or so of

the cockpit. Over the companionway is a sliding hatch that can be pushed well forward, or just back to the companionway hatch, although doing that leaves exposed corners against which we all clattered our heads during our three days on board. On subsequent boats, KM will be rounding off these corners. The solid overhang may be unforgiving, but it provides very good handholds when entering and leaving the cockpit.

The seat backs in the cockpit had a bare aluminium corner which wasn't overly comfortable on my back, but this wouldn't have been noticeable had we used the cockpit cushions.

In the coaming behind the seat backs are cave lockers for ropes. The

aft end of the cockpit has a fold-down transom for bathing and boarding.

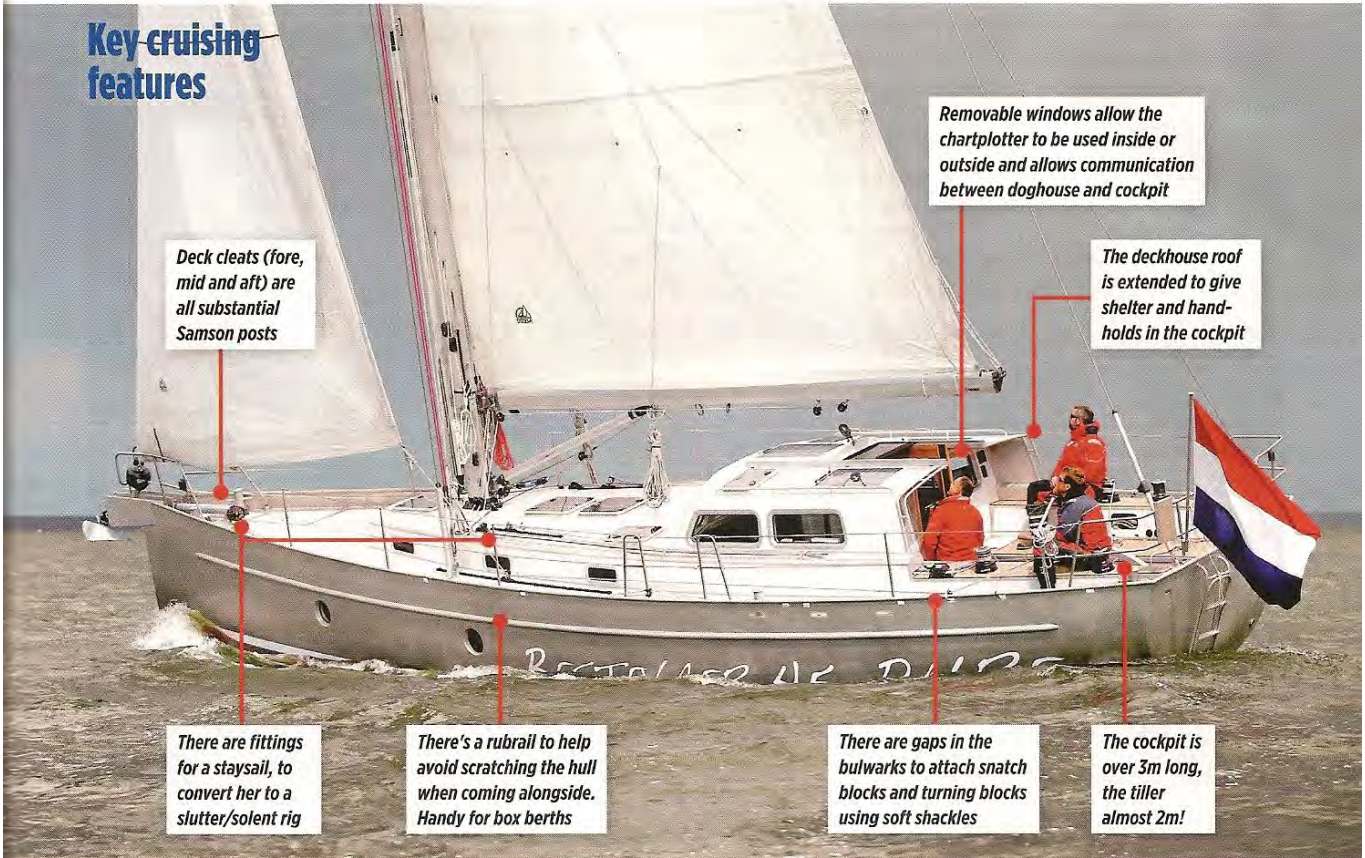
There is plenty of deep cockpit stowage. All but the forward 68cm (1ft 11in) of the 3.07m (10ft 1in) long seating gives access to the locker space beneath. The gas locker is furthest aft on the port side and can hold big Calor bottles with ease. The lids can be secured, but they are heavy and lack gas struts. There were restraining lines, but we were wary when closing the lids. There is also an excellent hull-depth locker in the bow, 1.4m deep, with a ladder to help you climb in. This lid, too, was heavy and secured by a line and clip. One of our crew caught the Dyneema lifeline as he tripped, which shook the clip free; luckily the chap in the locker was ducked down at the time.

The square-sided coachroof gives good bracing when going forward, and helps keep your centre of gravity outboard. There are good handrails on top of the doghouse roof, but none further forward; she is of course aluminium so fitting longer rails would just require a few words to KM. Excellent mini-bulwarks surround the deck and are at least 15cm (6in) high, with a tube on top that serves as a fairlead for mooring lines.



The cockpit is well sheltered and practically laid out

Key cruising features



Deck cleats (fore, mid and aft) are all substantial Samson posts

Removable windows allow the chartplotter to be used inside or outside and allows communication between doghouse and cockpit

The deckhouse roof is extended to give shelter and hand-holds in the cockpit

There are fittings for a staysail, to convert her to a slutter/solent rig

There's a rubrail to help avoid scratching the hull when coming alongside. Handy for box berths

There are gaps in the bulwarks to attach snatch blocks and turning blocks using soft shackles

The cockpit is over 3m long, the tiller almost 2m!

Living aboard

Ducking below the solid sprayhood and integral sliding hatch that form the aft end of the coachroof, and remembering to lower the one-piece clear washboard (it hurts a lot if you forget to do either), it's a step into the deckhouse then two steps down to the sole, or a step across to the short (1.38m, or 4ft 6in) bench seat either side. There's stowage under the steps, in the footrests and under the sole.

The deckhouse gives you a splendid 360-degree view out and is a perfect place to retire when the temperature outside falls, whether you're on passage or in port, while still enjoying a good view of your surroundings. There's a flat surface on the starboard side for charts – or drinks and snacks – while the port side is open to the galley below. There are good stainless steel handrails at the entrance and further forward to help you get to the galley or saloon.

With white hull sides, bulkheads and headlining, you may not notice that her windows are relatively small. This boat had a smart and stylish bamboo interior that was really nicely finished off. The 1.5m (4ft 11in) long table dominates the saloon and houses



The deckhouse offers 360° views – good for watchkeeping

the swing keel mechanism. It has 3cm diameter stainless steel handholds at each end. Getting chunky legs around the aft end was a bit of a squeeze, but it's easy at the forward end. There are lockers flanking the recessed portholes on each side. The forward lockers are a little shallow, at 10cm (4in). Raising both leaves of the table makes it 1.15m (3ft10in) wide and comfortable to eat around, but you do need to swing your legs up to raise and lower the leaves.

Moving around at sea is safe and easy. The fiddles on the galley worktops make good handholds. Some overhead or deck-level grabrails would have been nice, some owners want them, others don't; we didn't need them.

Opposite the galley, to starboard,

is the heads. Having given space over to the saloon and its 2.05m (6ft 8in) parallel seating units, the heads not that big. It doesn't have a separate shower compartment, but does have a roller blind to cover the sink and toilet while showering.

Headroom is a bit tight when sitting on the toilet and showering leaves a wet floor – annoying if you're shoeless and need the loo in the morning.

The forecabin berth is 1.4m wide (4ft 8in) with a 90 cm (3ft) step up, which is a bit awkward. This has been reduced to 72cm

(2ft 4in) on subsequent boats. There's lots of stowage beneath the berth, plus a good hanging locker forward and a shelved locker outboard.

The aft cabin, to starboard, felt a bit disjointed. You have to be careful getting into bed as the seating in the deckhouse takes up headroom over the berth and leaves a corner to bump your head on. The large porthole is nice, as is the capacious drawer under the bed, although you have to stand outside the cabin to reach into its far corners. Both this cabin and the large pilot berth on the port side had a big shelf above the end of the bed, which is handy for stowage.

One thing we did find annoying was the water pump, housed





Lots of white space, bamboo furniture and a walnut floor make her interior bright and stylish

under the port-side seating in the saloon, which would resonate loudly through the boat with a peculiar, siren-like wail. It was attached with rubber grommets as it should be, but was still noisy. KM are looking into the source of the noise.

Chart table

For such a purposeful cruiser it was a surprise not to see a chart table, although one can be added. I'd want one. The saloon table can be used for passage planning but not having a dedicated place to keep an open chart and pilot books while you're sailing is inconvenient. You can put them on the space forward of the deckhouse seating, above the starboard aft cabin,

but it wasn't an ideal place to read or work on a chart.

Galley

The J-shaped galley has plenty of handholds and bracing points to be secure in the roughest conditions. The J-shape allows you to tuck in and use the sink or tend the stove without needing to hold on. There is a stout vertical post to hold onto and move around inboard, and good use of space for lockers, spice racks and bottle stowage. Outboard is a top-opening pantry locker, 39cm deep (1ft 3in) that can be made into a coolbox if the front-opening fridge in the 'return' of the J isn't big enough for your needs.

Sailing close-hauled on starboard

tack, a little water flowed into the sink when we pulled the plug out. Re-routing the pipes would solve this. There's no splashback on the sink, but as with most of my observations so far, one could easily be fitted. The line of lockers outboard were top-hinged but will be bottom-hinged in future.

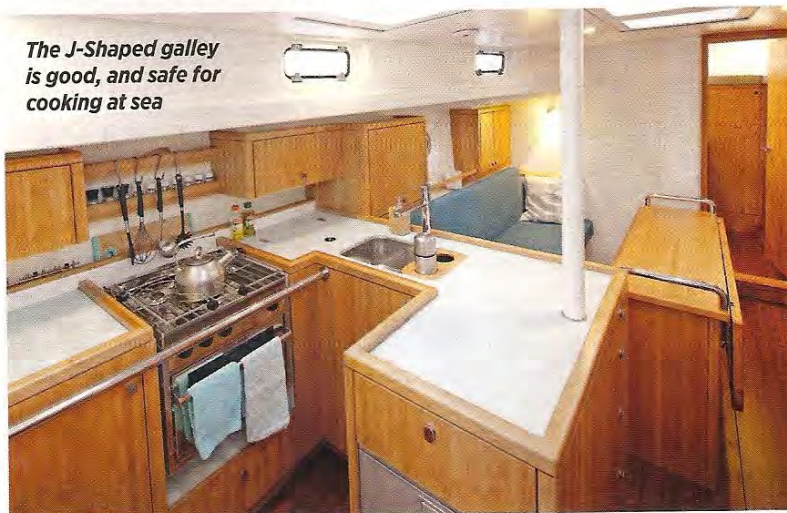
On cold evenings we found, when cooking, that condensation forms on the deckhouse windows and their aluminium frame, so the cook gets the odd drop of water dripping down.

Maintenance

Most areas are easy to access, but one of the most important wasn't – the engine. Parts of it can be got at, but having to remove the contents of the port-side cockpit locker to check the oil will become tiresome.

What really irked me was the inaccessibility of what's usually called the front of the engine (it's mounted backward with a saildrive). To replace the belts, you'd need to remove access panels at the rear of the engine (along with the rudder angle sensor and primary fuel filters), or find a left-handed child who's good at engine maintenance. KM assures me that access to this area has been improved on subsequent boats.

There is a provision to remove the cockpit sole, but you'd need to cut the caulking. There is an option for a panel in the cockpit sole to be easily removable, which I'd advise anyone buying one of these boats to consider.



The J-Shaped galley is good, and safe for cooking at sea

Bestevaer 45ST Pure



FACTS AND FIGURES

- **Price** €804,830
(about £695,565 inc VAT)
- **LOA** 14.45m (47ft 5in)
- **LWL** 13.00m (42ft 8in)
- **Beam** 4.05m (13ft 3in)
- **Draught** 1.40-2.95m
(4ft 7in-9ft 8in)
- **Displacement**
13,000kg (28,660 lb)
- **Ballast**
4,850kg (10,692 lb)
- **Ballast ratio** 37.3%
- **Sail area** 105m² (1,130sq ft)
- **SA/D ratio** 19.3
- **Diesel** 580 litres (128 gal)
- **Water** 460 litres (101 gal)
- **Engine** 54hp
- **Transmission** Saildrive
- **RCD category** A
- **Designer**
Dykstra Naval Architects
- **Builder** KM Yachtbuilders



The locker in the bow is deep, with lots of space

- **UK Agent**
North Sea Maritime
- **Tel** 01702 584 821
- **Website**
www.northseamaritime.com



The forward cabin has cavernous under-berth storage

GRAPHICS: MAXINE HEATH

OUR VERDICT

What's she like to sail?

She's an interesting boat to sail. While she is available with a wheel, our test boat had a tiller – and what a tiller it is! More than 6ft long, it sweeps forward, enabling the helmsman to hunker down and shelter under the overhanging coachroof or sit up on the coaming. Although she is 45ft long and tiller-steered, the length of the tiller made her really light on the helm. With the sails balanced it was finger-light and she was reasonably responsive. Her twin rudders maintained her composure at all angles of heel, even when pushed beyond what was prudent.

All lines are led back to the cockpit and with the help of six winches on the coamings, she can easily be sailed short-handed. With the tiller, and four crew on board, moving around the cockpit was a bit cumbersome at times. If you do opt for a wheel, be aware that it will make the helm more exposed, further aft.

What's she like in port and at anchor?

Manoeuvring her with the long tiller, it's a bit awkward if you need to step from one side of it to the other. And unless you use your foot on the engine control, when you bend down to use the throttle or bow thruster switch, the deckhouse obstructs your view forward. Also, with your head down and the thruster switch mounted fore-and-aft, it's easy to press the wrong end and find her spinning in the opposite direction to what you intended. To avoid this, her builders are trying other locations for the switch.

Like any twin-rudder boat, there's no propwash over the rudders so you need to get some way on before you can steer. In gusty conditions the wind can catch her high topsides, so I'd say the optional bow thruster is a necessity, rather than a luxury. With it, manoeuvring is easy.

She has a substantial, high-cheeked double bow roller that houses the removable bowsprit on its starboard side and the bower anchor to port.

Living aboard was good, made better by the 25cm (10in) diameter portholes in the forecabin, saloon and aft cabin, which all give a useful view out. With plenty of white surfaces, her interior is bright. The J-shaped galley offers lots of work surface and useful stowage.

Would she suit you and your crew?

She's a purposeful, go-anywhere cruiser that will put fear in the heart of any GRP boat owner you choose to point her at. Below decks, the single heads is a little small and lacks a separate shower compartment. She does however have a wonderful deckhouse that provides total shelter and a commanding view. Even when a biting north wind blows, you can be tucked up in the warmth keeping watch.

It was strange to find her engine access limited. I'd opt for a cockpit sole hatch so I could service the engine without having to remove the contents of both lockers.

There's a lot to like about the Bestevaer 45 Pure. She's an eminently practical and comfortable long-distance cruiser that's also rewarding to sail. Her starting price is £554,000, but it would be hard not to spend a bit more.

Would she suit your style of sailing?

CREEK CRAWLING
★★★★☆

COASTAL PORT-HOPPING
★★★★☆

OFFSHORE PASSAGE-MAKING
★★★★★

TRADE WIND VOYAGING
★★★★☆

HIGH-LATITUDE ADVENTURE
★★★★☆