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The birth of a bluewater cruiser



The plug from which the 44 mould will be made is being constructed in the shed from a Rustler 42 hull that has had its stern and topsides extended.

In Part 1 of this four-part series on the design and development of a true bluewater cruising yacht, **Duncan Kent** reveals the story behind Falmouth-based Rustler Yachts' latest cruiser, the Rustler 44, and delves into the minds of its owners-to-be.

Back in ST62 (June 2002) we tested one of the most renowned cruising yachts to emanate from the board of designers Holman & Pye, the steadfast Rustler 36. *Little Dove* had been bought by enthusiastic first time boat owners, Tim and Sally Shears. Both Tim and Sally glowed with pride as we sailed her across the Solent that day and the photographs turned out so well we used a close up on the issue's front cover.

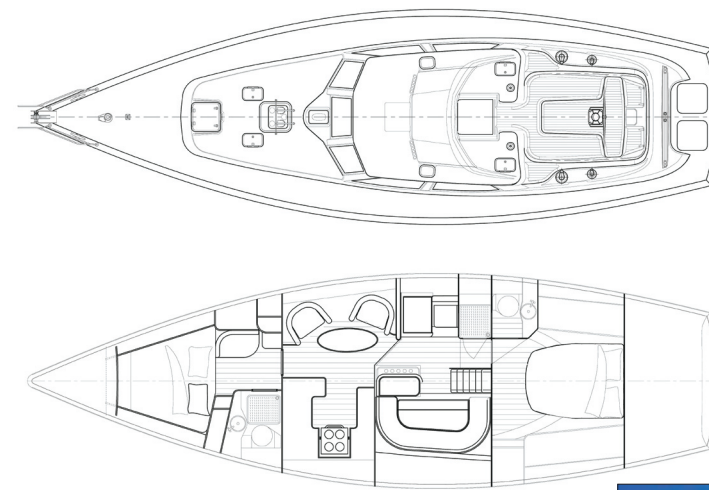
Since that day they have cruised extensively with their children, Duncan (20), Anna (18) and Elspeth (13), who have proved keen to learn.

Over the last few years, however, Tim and Sally have been pondering their ideal boat – one that would take them long-term ocean cruising in a little more luxurious style than the compactly designed Rustler 36

could provide. They didn't want to lose the seakindliness of the 36, nor the quality of build and fit-out, but they yearned for a few more comforts when living aboard for long periods and wanted a decent size, ensuite cabin for their guests.

Naturally, they went to Rustler in Falmouth and asked to look over the new, Stephen Jones-designed Rustler 42, to which they took an immediate liking. But later, on reflection, they felt she didn't completely fit the bill. It wasn't that she didn't offer the same premium build quality as the 36 – Rustler Yachts is so confident of its craftsmanship and attention to the smallest detail that it is happy to let owners follow the construction process of any yacht in build in its yard on the banks of the River Fal – it was just that she didn't meet the design criteria of their own 'ideal' bluewater cruising yacht.

Tim sailed a demo 42 anyway and was impressed with her performance. Without the long keel or transom-hung rudder of the 36 and with a more modern hull shape, the 42 is a quick boat over long passages, but still gives a really comfortable motion in big seas, which is ideal on long ocean passages. Later, Tim called me as he knew I'd sailed the 42 a couple of times – once recently in really light airs (see ST124, Aug 2007) and once just after her original launch in 45kn+ winds. The Rustler 42 has always been high up on my list of ideal ocean cruisers. That wet blast out of Falmouth in a F8-9 was enough to convince me that she had been meticulously designed and built for world cruising, especially as we had both designer and builder on board encouraging us to push her to her limits!



So, without hesitation I was able to vouch for her pedigree, but there was still a problem. Tim and Sally had both put a particular requirement on their 'wish list' that the 42 just didn't have – a raised seating area so that they could keep watch safely from below on long, inclement passages and admire their surroundings whilst sitting idly at anchor, without necessarily resorting to the cockpit.

Tim and Sally aren't alone in their thinking – a good many builders of 40ft+ ocean cruisers are realising the popularity of a 'raised saloon' design. By raised saloon I mean one in which the seating puts the occupants high enough up to see out of the saloon windows – not to be confused with some 'deck saloon' boats in which the coachroof is raised to allow more light in through bigger windows.

HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT

I too liked the idea of extending the sailing season by being able to sit-in and look out, so I chatted to Tim at length over the phone, after which he emailed me with a brief account of how he'd arrived at his 'ideal' cruising boat.

"I took delivery of our Rustler 36, *Little Dove*, in 2001," said Tim. "She was our first boat and

frankly we didn't know what we were buying. Fortunately it turned out to be a good decision and I think that if I now went back with the same criteria I would make the same decision again. At the time, 'salty sea-dog' Kevin Seymour, was helping Rustler at the boat show. We became friends and a couple of years ago I helped him deliver a Vancouver 38 Pilot to Falmouth. I was able to do the whole passage in my pyjamas with only the occasional excursion outside for sail trimming. I filed away in my mind that I liked the idea of extending the sailing season by being able to sit inside and look out.

Then in February this year I helped Kevin deliver a Fisher from Bradford to Falmouth, with a night stop at Yarmouth. It was very cold and I again appreciated the big glass windows and the cabin heater. We arrived safely in Falmouth and that evening I casually discussed my ideal boat with Rustler's Sales Director, Adrian Jones. "I'd like to buy another Rustler," I said. "But you guys don't have what I want." "Oh, what's that?" replied Adrian.



Above: Designer, Stephen Jones (left) explains the latest plans with Rustler's shipwright, Trevor Richards (centre) and MD, Nick Offord. Left: Owner-to-be, Tim Shears, was handed a sketch of the proposed Rustler 44 after telling the company exactly the sort of boat he wanted.



"A strong, sea-going boat, capable of serious passage making, on which I can cope with the sails singlehandedly, safely carry out a watch from inside and see all around the boat when I'm sitting in the saloon. Oh, and she must also have a proper owner's cabin with a double bed, a separate shower stall and the good looks of my 36, while retaining her value like other Rustlers." At this stage Rustler's MD, Nick Offord, walked in. "You mean like this?" he asked, holding up a concept drawing that Stephen Jones had done some years previously, putting a raised saloon on the Rustler 42 hull. Nick said that if they were really going to do it they should take the opportunity to extend the hull as well. "The 42 has quite a wide stern and would lend itself to an increase in volume by continuing the lines aft," said Nick. "The increase in length would also balance out the increase in height necessary to make the raised saloon," he continued and promised to discuss it further with Stephen Jones.

"I was immediately interested and they snapped a picture of me

holding the drawing," said Tim. "I planned to take it home to my wife Sally and tell her it was our new boat. Kevin and I drove back the next day from Falmouth to the Isle of Wight. Five hours in the car was plenty for us to make an initial list of everything we would want the boat to have and over the following couple of days we added to the list and I built a huge mind-map. It wasn't necessarily a specification, more a reminder of everything that needed to be decided. It was all a bit hypothetical at that stage, but by the end of the process I had the bug and, as she had not objected yet, tacit approval from Sally."

"From the mind-map I developed a comprehensive specification. I knew it wouldn't be the final thing, but I wanted something to use as a base comparison for the various alternative boat builders I planned to talk to. I sent the spec to every boat builder producing 40-46ft, quality, raised saloon boats, excluding any of the mass production manufacturers. I did this because I knew I wanted a new boat and I don't like the steep depreciation curves the mass products seem to have. I then visited and, in some cases, test sailed boats that fitted my description: Southerly, Fantasi, Regina, Nauticat and CR Yachts."



L-R: Stephen, Nick and Tim discuss the cockpit layout for the new Rustler 44.

DREAM TO REALITY

In the meantime, Stephen came back with the drawings to confirm that an extra 2ft could be added to the R42 hull without having to relocate the engine or mast. He also suggested raising the topsides to give more room below without having to raise the pilothouse to an incongruous height.

Tim scanned the preliminary plans into his laptop, so he could 'play around' with them. It wasn't that he didn't like the interior layout that Rustler had presented as a possible 'standard', it was just that he takes a great deal of pleasure from getting involved in every aspect of the design. When I asked Nick how he coped with such a demanding client, he replied diplomatically: "Tim is a very enthusiastic boat owner with many good ideas of his own and we appreciate him sharing these with us." And this was when Tim was only threequarters of the way through his 150-page tome of 'must haves'! Adrian added, "Tim is a very typical Rustler owner – not so much demanding as just knowing exactly what he wants." He also stated: "It's our job to interpret the client's ideas and needs and incorporate them wherever possible, unless we feel any modification might endanger the integrity of the yacht in any way, when we'll do our best to work around the problem. After all, we build custom yachts – that's our job and that's why people come to us."

Tim decided that if they could

make the right boat at the right price he would choose Rustler, for several reasons. Having owned a Rustler before, he trusted them to build a quality boat that would retain her value. Also, the level of customisation they offer is high, so he could get involved in the project and influence the specification of the 'standard' boat. Tim said: "I did a very elaborate market survey with over 500 photographs of other boats available, so I was sure we could build a 'best of breed'."

TAKING SHAPE

At the time of my last visit, late in October 2007, the yard was just about to fair off the newly Rustler 44 hull plug, ready to make the final mould tool. The plug has been

created from a standard 42 hull by adding 2ft on to her transom to give her a counter stern and a foot or so to her topsides. The deck will retain just the cockpit well and foredeck of the 42, with the rest being created from scratch to accommodate the raised coachroof and wider side decks.

Tim has thought long and hard about the rig and has decided to go for what is commonly called a 'slutter' rig – ie part sloop, part

downside, however, of having the two forestays close to each other is that the genoa will need to be furled at least half way in before it can be tacked easily and probably all the way in for a gybe, unless the lazy sheet is taken right around the outer headstay and the sail 'inverted' during the gybe.

After very lengthy discussions with all concerned, Tim has chosen in-mast mainsail furling, the first Rustler ever built with this option, so that he or Sally can reef her quickly and quietly without a struggle when alone on watch. To make up for the lack of draught available in the furling sail, Tim has chosen to use a vertically battened mainsail, which will increase the tension in the leech often sacrificed in non-battened, in-mast mains.

So far Rustler has not refused any of Tim's requests, apart from relocating the steering pedestal – deemed too much work for a little extra legroom behind the wheel.

Tim's final word to me was: "One of the things I have loved about the 36 is the way that when you go into a harbour or are close to another vessel, quite often someone will call out and say 'lovely boat' or 'I have always wanted one of those'. That even happened to me in the Kiel Canal when tied alongside a stunning classic yacht that I was drooling over. Call it vanity or pride of ownership, but I do hope we end up with a similar result."

In Part II (ST April 2008), we will look in detail at Tim's final specification and how Rustler is planning to make it all happen.



L-R: Nick Offord, Tim Shears, Stephen Jones and Adrian Jones.

cutter, with two headstays fairly close together. He wants the flexibility of two headsails – a self-tacking jib on the inner forestay for every day use in winds of F4+, but with a much larger genoa on the outer forestay for reaching in lighter airs. Both will have mechanical furlers, but could be driven by an electric winch if necessary.

Close to the top of Tim's list was the ability to sail her shorthanded, hence the decision to choose a self-tacking jib. He also wanted to avoid the complication of running backstays that would have been needed with a cutter rig, so the spreaders will be well swept. The

RUSTLER YACHTS

Rustler has been building well found cruising yachts since 1980. Originally Orion Marine, it has moved and changed ownership, but the yard has never left Falmouth, Cornwall. To date, 117 Rustler 36s have been produced and the yard is currently fitting out its 17th Rustler 42. It recently introduced a gorgeous 24ft dayboat and now, of course, there will be the



all-new, raised saloon Rustler 44.

The company also owns the moulds and building rights to the Starlight 35 and 39, and the Bowman 42, 45 and 48, which it is happy to build when requested. Sales Director Adrian Jones says that they will also be investing in a new range of Starlight Yachts, again designed by Stephen Jones. These performance cruisers will be more of a standard production yacht,

unlike the custom-built Rustlers and Bowmans, but will be fitted out to a quality similar to the Rustlers.

Currently, all hulls are moulded by Cygnus Marine, upriver in Penryn, but it is looking into having the new Starlights built elsewhere, because Cygnus is working to its full capacity.

All the cabinetry is made in its own woodworking shed, so that it can modify the furniture to suit the customer's exact requirements.

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