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RUSTLER 44DS



A room with a view

After many months of planning and building, the new Rustler 44DS finally hit the water.

Duncan Kent joined the owner, designer and builder on board during her early sea trials.

Tim and Sally didn't want to forego the seaworthiness of their 36, nor the build quality, but they yearned for a few more comforts when living aboard for long periods and also wanted a decent size, ensuite cabin for their guests.

Naturally, they went back to Rustler to enquire about the Stephen Jones-designed Rustler 42, but it didn't quite meet the criteria of their 'ideal' bluewater cruising yacht.

Without the full long keel or transom hung rudder of the R36, the R42 is a much slicker performer, whilst still having a comfortable motion in big seas. Tim called me as he knew I'd sailed the R42 (once in 45kn+ of wind) and had her high up my list of ideal bluewater yachts.

Without hesitation I vouched for her pedigree, but he had had a particular requirement on his 'wish list' that the R42 didn't have – a raised saloon to enable him to keep watch safely from below on long, inclement passages.

A couple of long delivery trips in pilothouse cruisers had convinced Tim, so he asked Rustler if it would build him a deck saloon model. Stephen Jones suggested an extra 2ft should be added to the R42 and the topsides raised a little to give more headroom below. The Rustler 44DS was born.

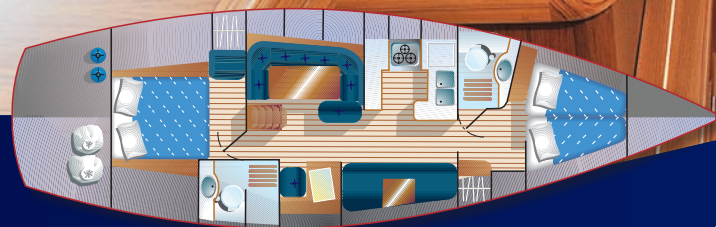
Tim sent a comprehensive specification to several other boatbuilders, but finally decided that, if they could build the right boat at the right price, he would stick with Rustler as he knew he could trust them to build a quality boat that would retain her value. Furthermore, the level of customisation Rustler offered was high, so he could get involved in the project and influence the specification.



About the owner

In June 2002 (ST62) we tested the steadfast Rustler 36, owned by Tim and Sally Shears. Since then they have cruised extensively with their children, Duncan, Anna and Elspeth. For a few years, however, they have hankered after a boat that would take them cruising in a little more luxury. Now they are the proud owners of *Little Dove*, the very first Rustler 44.

PHOTOS
RICK BUETTNER



Accommodation

Although there is a standard specification for the R44 they can be customised to a high degree. Each of the first three R44s ordered has a different layout. One even has the saloon down below and the galley in the deck saloon.

The raised deck level certainly gives her plenty of headroom below – between 1.87m-1.90m/6ft 2in-6ft 3in throughout most of the boat.

1 Raised saloon

Descending a steep set of steps you arrive in a narrow corridor between raised seating to port and a raised nav station to starboard. The U-shaped seating looks a bit cramped in this layout – indeed the next boat will have a slightly larger seating area – but Tim's clever folding/swivelling table design allows four to be easily accommodated for a meal plus two more on extra free-standing stools.

Of course the large

portlights let plenty of natural light in and offer an almost all round view outside, for navigating/steering from below or simply sitting and enjoying the scenery.

2 & 2a Nav station

The nav station is typical of a traditional bluewater yacht – forward facing with its own seat – and there is excellent stowage all round, including two full-size chart drawers in the plinth and deep drawers in the pedestal.



The console is large enough for a 12in chart plotter/radar, because the electrical switch panel is mounted on the bulkhead behind. Tim has the Mastervolt digital electrical system, which has a single, high-current ring main right around the boat with items connected via relay nodes to a low-voltage control system, so that all there is behind the switch console is Cat5 cables.

3 Engine room

The engine is installed under the raised saloon sole and is reached by lifting the soleboards and bearers, which offers excellent all-round access for servicing. Not wanting two diesels to maintain, Tim opted for a special 85hp, 4-cylinder Nanni diesel with a shaft-driven AC generator capable of supplying up to 4kW of AC power at 1500rpm. This will supply all power needs when running and charge the 800Ah battery bank. A 1.5kW inverter provides AC when not running the engine.

4 Lower saloon

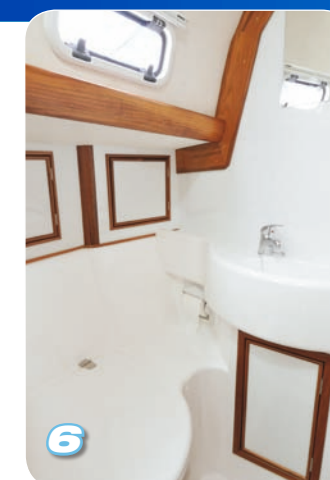
A single step down takes you into the lower saloon area,



where *Little Dove* has a sofa to starboard with foldaway coffee table, a deep, fiddled bookshelf, two accessible covered lockers and yet more stowage underneath.

5 & 5a Galley

This is excellent and better equipped than many domestic kitchens with acres of stowage in numerous deep drawers and lockers and plenty of useable workspace. Its wrap around design makes it easy to use at sea. There are two top-loading fridge/freezers installed, one for daily use under the worktop, a second under the saloon seating for longer term freezing. An inline Seagull water filter provides fresh drinking water from the tap and there is a superb drinks glass cabinet at the end of the aftermost unit, which is typical of the high quality craftsmanship and dedication to perfection found with this Falmouth-based boatbuilder.



6 Heads

There are two heads on *Little Dove*, one forward and another aft. The latter is ensuite to the after cabin and has a separate shower stall and two doors, so that it can be used as a day head from the saloon. It is spacious, well ventilated and features a concealed washing machine in the shower stall.

7 After cabin

It is amazing how Rustler has managed to exploit the extra 2ft, creating a roomy and comfortable cabin with so much more space than the 42. The centrally-mounted berth

measures 1.90m x 1.60m (6ft 3in x 5ft 3in), which is a little short, but apparently all Tim and Sally wanted. There is seating both sides and oodles of locker space. Plenty of ports keep it bright and well ventilated, although the abundance of beautifully finished teak joinery gives her a warm and cosy feel.

8 Forecabin

Designed as a VIP guest suite, this has a large, 2.10m x 2.00m (6ft 7in x 6ft 6in), V-berth with ensuite heads and excellent clothes stowage in a smart set of accessible lockers. The space under the berth is also completely available for the stowage of large items.



SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	13.50m	44ft 5in
LWL	11.04m	36ft 4in
Beam	4.28m	13ft 9in
Draught	2.10m	7ft 0in
Displacement	13,700kg	30,000lb
Ballast	4900kg	10,780lb
Total sail area (cutter)	151.50m²	1631ft²
Total sail area (slutter)	157.20m²	1692 ft²
Fuel	454ltr	100gal
Water	728ltr	160gal
Berths	4-6	
Engine	85hp Nanni diesel, shaft drive	
RCD category	A-Ocean	
Designer	Stephen Jones	
Builder	Rustler Yachts 01326 310120 www.rustleryachts.co.uk	
Price	from £423,000 including commissioning.	



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from going below and the seating and sole are teak.

The sprayhood is a good size and Tim has opted for the full cockpit tent, adding more useable seating space in inclement weather.

2 Decks

Her spacious decks would look gorgeous in teak, but are nevertheless practical and accessible as they are with moulded sand-finish. The raised bulwarks and gloss varnished teak capping sets off her sheer line nicely, as



well as providing a good foothold when heeled.

Although her deckhouse melds nicely into the superstructure, at some angles – particularly from her quarters – she does look a little bit ‘chunky’, due mainly to the high cockpit coamings.

Her foredeck is clear of clutter and wide enough to enable the ground tackle to be launched and retrieved safely.

3 Sails and rig

As standard she will have a cutter rig with a battened mainsail. Tim has opted for a ‘slutter’ – that is a second, masthead inner forestay just inside the primary one. This way he can have a large overlapping genoa permanently on the outer forestay for reaching in lighter winds and a self-tacking jib, also on a furler, on the inner. Unfortunately this means the genoa has to be furled during tacks, due to the proximity of the two forestays.

Her deck-stepped Selden mast has two slightly swept spreaders and single lowers. There is some pre-bend. Tim opted for in-mast furling to make life easy when sailing two-up with only he or his wife, Sally, on watch.

Performance

1 Performance

Understandably, the sailing characteristics of the R44 are not unlike those of the R42, which I have sailed twice – first in winds that rarely dropped below 30kn, the second in a gentle F2.

From the first experience I can say categorically that she is well mannered, extremely powerful, reasonably quick for a bluewater cruiser and comfortable to live on when the going gets rough.

With a double reefed main and full staysail in heavy seas and winds gusting to 40kn+ we sailed her between 40-45°

off the apparent wind, making a comfortable 6kn and even kept fairly dry in the cockpit. The more the weather threw at us the more she dug in and got on with it. She tracked as if on rails and her steering gave no clues to the ordeal we were putting her through. In one gust of 45kn her coachroof portlights even took a ducking, but still she refused to abandon her course. With the yankee unfurled we surfed back into the River Fal at 10kn+ on a broad reach, but never once did she appear over pressed.

The second sail confirmed she needs a large spinnaker to keep up the pace in light airs.

2 Closehailed

The R44 is well balanced with light but positive steering and has a powerful feel to her. Closehailed, she falls into a groove with ease and tracks straight with little help from the helm. Tim's 95 per cent self-tacking jib makes tacking a cinch and removes the need for excessive winch grinding when beating up a narrow channel or river. Tacking the genoa, however, requires furling it first, because there



Verdict

The Rustler 44DS is most definitely a yacht for the discerning owner with a love of sound, traditional craftsmanship and conservative design. Although the R44 has ‘evolved’ from her smaller sister, she has a personality of her own and offers the long-term liveaboard a level of comfort found only in the most luxurious yachts.

Her performance under sail is almost legendary and I'm sure a visit to Rustler's Falmouth premises would soon convince you that only the highest standards of build quality are recognised at this small, but thriving custom yacht builder.

For

- Build quality excellent
- Steadfast sailing performance
- Ability to customise

Against

- High coamings give her a top-heavy look in the cockpit area

in the open sea and displays a wonderful ability to shrug off the waves without veering from her course. Undoubtedly she will make good passage times and, more importantly, give the crew a comfortable and safe ride along the way.

4 Downwind

By the time we turned for home the wind had dropped and, as we had no spinnaker, we crept gently back towards Falmouth making the tea. The first time I helmed the R42 on this course the wind was a steady 35kn with 45kn gusts, but I distinctly remember her being as responsive and easy to steer as she was here, in a mere 10kn of wind.



Deck, sails and rig



1 Cockpit

Although her hull remains very similar to that of her smaller sister, the R42, the deck underwent a total redesign to incorporate the extra length and raised coachroof. The extra 2ft aft has provided two massive lazarettes that could house essential bluewater cruising items such as a generator, water maker etc. Two more lockers in the cockpit provide a 3-bottle gas compartment and a rope locker.

Her transom has the traditional reverse rake and a little overhang, which, though it looks smart, isn't the most practical of designs for bluewater cruising. I would have preferred some sort of platform – retractable maybe so as not to spoil her lines.

She has a single helm with cutaway seating around it for easy access. Her headsail winches are within reach, as is the mainsheet, which is across the aft coaming. A high bridgedeck keeps the water