Ship ahoy! At just 40ft LOA, the Nordhavn can handle almost anything.

Swell travelled

There are a lot worse things to be doing in the dark days before Christmas than helping to deliver a Nordhavn 40 across the North Sea. The 6ft seas, the south-westerly 5-7, the cold, the porridge... Text & Photos: Julia Maitland

We had cleared the bright lights of the Solent and were heading into the dark abyss of the Channel proper at a steady seven knots. The idea of joining the crew on board a brand-new Nordhavn 40 en route to the Düsseldorf show had seemed so appealing from the comfort of home. Now, with a swollen sea making its presence felt on the beam and the chill of a December night settling on our unheated boat, I was beginning to have second thoughts. Being the gentlemen that they were Phil Roach and Russell Payne from Nordhavn Europe let me turn in first for an hour or so before the rota of night watches started.

I made my way down below to the master cabin in the bow, slid fully clothed into my sleeping bag and lay on one side of the island bed being careful not to crumple the plump quilt used for display purposes. But since the bow was pitching and rolling and the mattress was still covered in protective plastic, I only stayed there for a few seconds before being flung across to port and back to the starboard side. Here I remained for the next hour clutching the edge of the bed in an attempt not to fall off or chuck up.

Even through my groggy haze, it was clear that this no run-of-the-mill owner's cabin. There's storage everywhere you look: two hanging lockers, overhead lockers both sides and drawers built into the foot of the bed. In sunnier climes the four opening ports and overhead hatch would be perfect for catching the scented wafts of a tropical breeze but tonight they remain resolutely closed. Even the treads of the steps from the owner's cabin are hinged to reveal extra storage.

My musings were interrupted by a prod. It was time for my two-hour watch. Phil headed down below for some shut-eye and Russell briefed me on our position and the location of any passing shipping. The display on the instrument panel showed that the TRAC stabilisers were working hard to ameliorate the worst effects of the shortish beam sea. Just to prove it Russell turned the stabilisers off. Given the Nordhavn 40's unusual top-heavy looks, I was prepared for the worst, but a substantial draught of 4ft 9in (1.45m) helps to counteract the weight up top.

The VHF cheerily piped up with the inshore forecast. It went something like: "Selsey Bill, south-west 5 to 7, later, rough..." I say something like because my memories of that night are a little hazy. The swell must have been 2m, with wind against tide. But from pilothouse to the cabins and heads there was always a grabrail or well-placed handle to guide me on my way with no sharp corners to bump against.

As the lights of Beachy Head came abeam it looked like we had left the worst of the

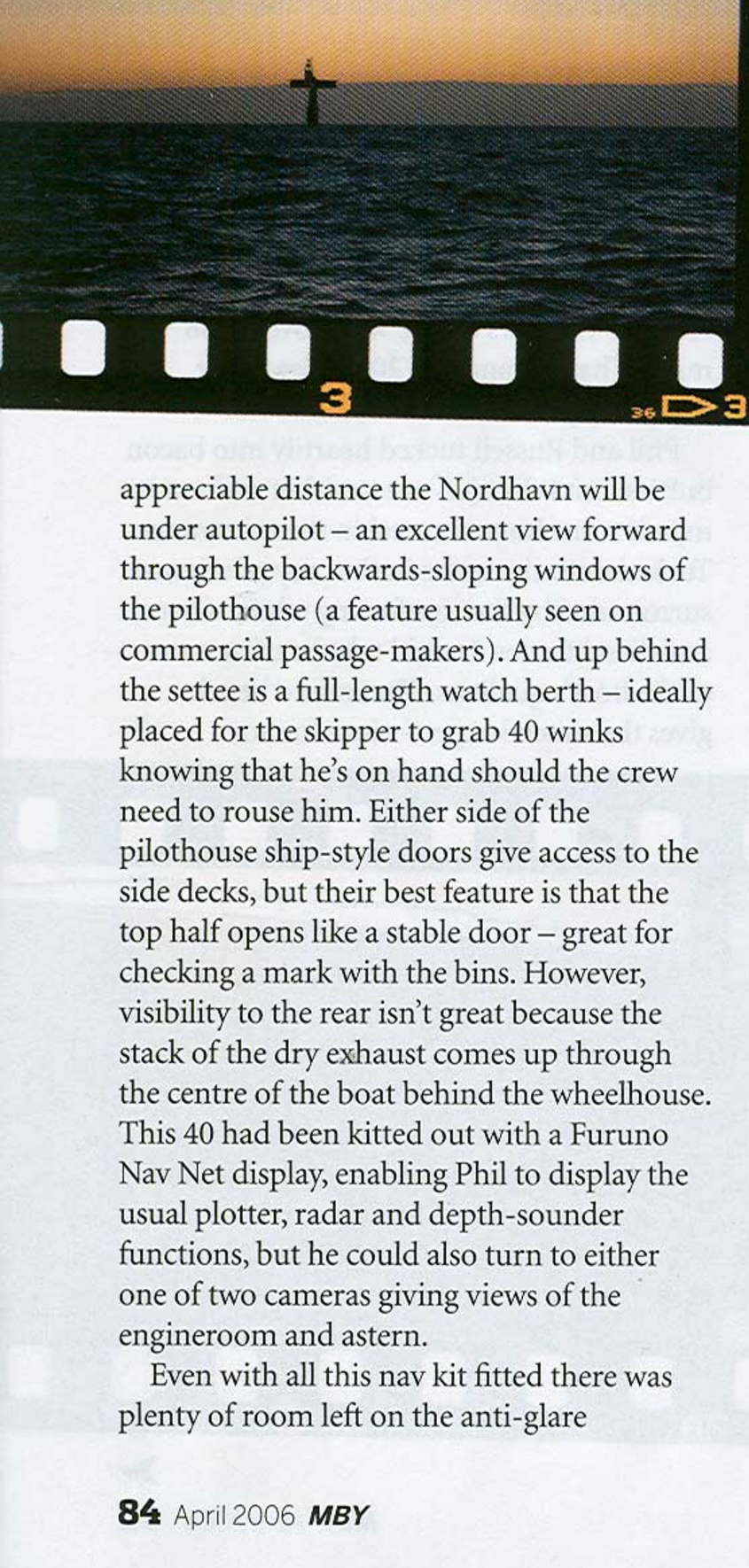
All in a day's work: *MBY's* Julia Maitland joins Phil Roach and Russell Payne of Nordhavn.

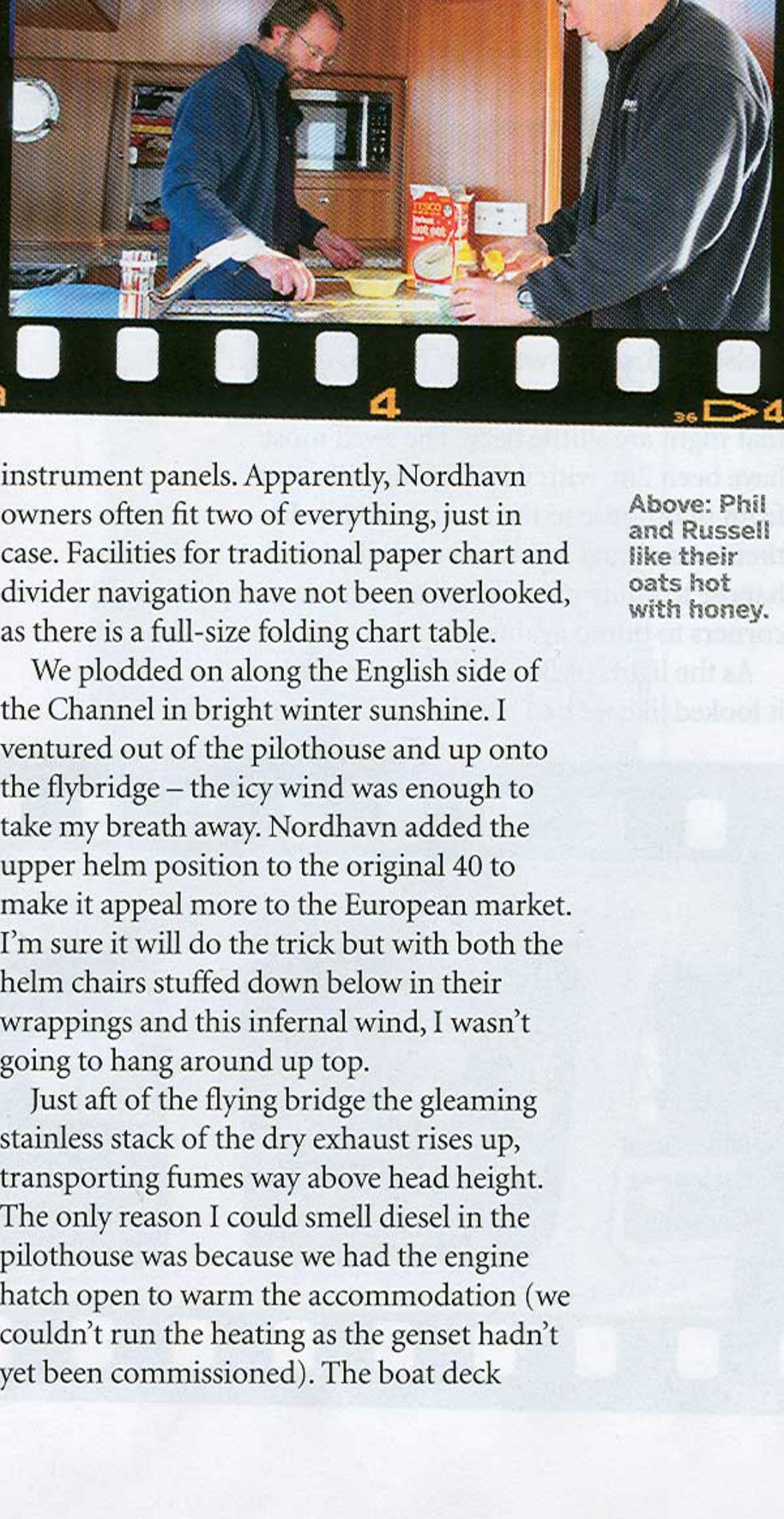
weather behind. The dawn lifted reluctantly over the horizon and we plodded past Royal Sovereign buoy, looking uncannily like the Angel of the North statue. The swell eased and veered onto the Nordhavn's stern, an altogether kinder motion. Since leaving the Hamble 12 hours before we'd covered 88 miles. That left another 200 miles to my departure point of Rotterdam.

Phil and Russell tucked heartily into bacon butties, but I decided not to risk it and made myself some hot oat cereal in the microwave. Tucked onto the settee in the cosy pilothouse surrounded by the comforting whiff of bacon and diesel fumes. I could take in a few more of the boat's qualities. That raised bench gives the watch keeper – since for any

Chugging at 6.5 knots the 30-tonner has a range of over 3,000 miles

I spy: the top half of the side doors open so it's easy to take a peak.





appreciable distance the Nordhavn will be under autopilot – an excellent view forward through the backwards-sloping windows of the pilothouse (a feature usually seen on commercial passage-makers). And up behind the settee is a full-length watch berth – ideally placed for the skipper to grab 40 winks knowing that he's on hand should the crew need to rouse him. Either side of the pilothouse ship-style doors give access to the side decks, but their best feature is that the top half opens like a stable door – great for checking a mark with the bins. However, visibility to the rear isn't great because the stack of the dry exhaust comes up through the centre of the boat behind the wheelhouse. This 40 had been kitted out with a Furuno Nav Net display, enabling Phil to display the usual plotter, radar and depth-sounder functions, but he could also turn to either one of two cameras giving views of the engineroom and astern.

Even with all this nav kit fitted there was plenty of room left on the anti-glare instrument panels. Apparently, Nordhavn owners often fit two of everything, just in case. Facilities for traditional paper chart and divider navigation have not been overlooked, as there is a full-size folding chart table.

We plodded on along the English side of the Channel in bright winter sunshine. I ventured out of the pilothouse and up onto the flybridge – the icy wind was enough to take my breath away. Nordhavn added the upper helm position to the original 40 to make it appeal more to the European market. I'm sure it will do the trick but with both the helm chairs stuffed down below in their wrappings and this infernal wind, I wasn't going to hang around up top.

Just aft of the flying bridge the gleaming stainless stack of the dry exhaust rises up, transporting fumes way above head height. The only reason I could smell diesel in the pilothouse was because we had the engine hatch open to warm the accommodation (we couldn't run the heating as the genset hadn't yet been commissioned). The boat deck offers a substantial area for lounging or storing a tender, which can be lifted aboard from either side with the crane. One potential owner had even asked if it would be possible to lift a Ford Ka onto the boat deck!

Above: Phil and Russell like their oats hot with honey.

Every hour Russell filled in the logbook, marking the 40's position on a paper chart. Chugging at around 1,550rpm the 105hp L668D Lugger engine pushed the 40 at between six and 8.5 knots over the ground, depending on whether the tide was in our favour or not. Flat out, if that is the right term to use, Nordhavn say the 40 will reach 8.3 knot or so. But then it ain't no Lindford Christie; like Paula Radcliffe it's sole purpose is to go the distance. Chugging at 6.5 knots the 30-tonner has a range of over 3,000 miles – enough to cross an ocean non stop.

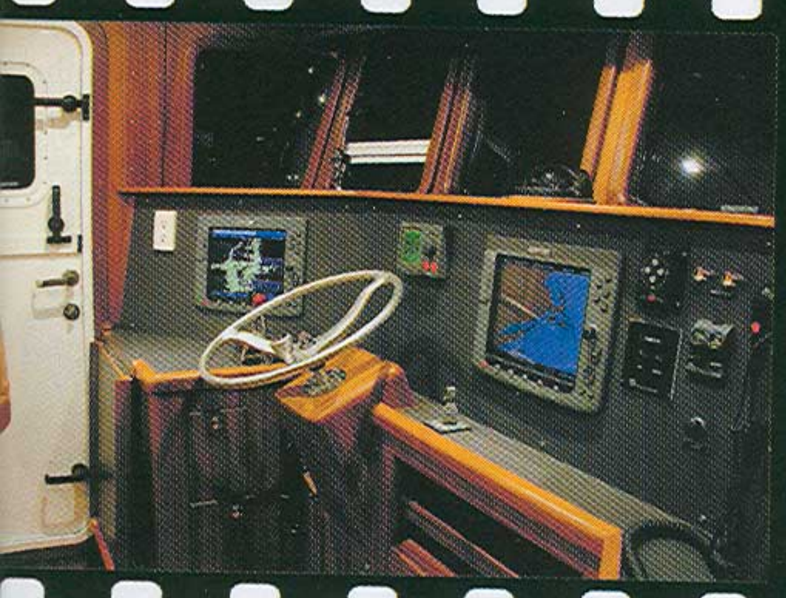
The engineroom itself is accessed via a hatch in the saloon sole or, more conveniently, through a well insulated door in the guest cabin. There's enough room to move around the main Lugger,

Home comforts: carefully matched teak abounds in the well-equipped saloon.

Coming full circle

The original Nordhavn 40, launched in 1998, proved itself to be the ultimate long-distance cruiser when hull number 21 circumnavigated the globe in 151 days. And it is even more of an achievement considering that the boat, imaginatively named *Nordhavn*, was an off-the-shelf version, not bristling with loads of extras.

In November 2001, the 40, crewed mainly by staff of PAE including its designer Jim Leishman, set out from California bound for Hawaii, over 2,300 miles and an ocean away. With frequent crew changes, *Nordhavn* plugged her way across the Pacific to Singapore and onto Oman before transiting the Suez Canal and entering the Mediterranean. The Med revealed its stormy character but *Nordhavn* continued without mishap out across the Atlantic via the Canaries and Cape Verde Islands to Barbados. With a short cut through the Panama Canal *Nordhavn* returned to her home port and became the smallest production powerboat to circle the globe.



Above: the engineroom has 5ft of headroom for easy access to service items.

Yanmar wing engine and Northern Lights genset relatively painlessly.

"Diesel from the two fuel tanks is gravity fed into a day tank so that you can monitor how much is being used on a sight gauge," explained Russell. "You can then select where the fuel in the day tank goes – to the main engine, wing engine or generator." Sight gauges allow you to shift the fuel around to adjust the boat's trim and if dirty fuel is suspected you can pump it round the system filtering it at each stage to remove any impurities. It's the kind of detail that Nordhavn know will impress their adventurous owners who like to cruise in places where the quality of diesel cannot be taken for granted.

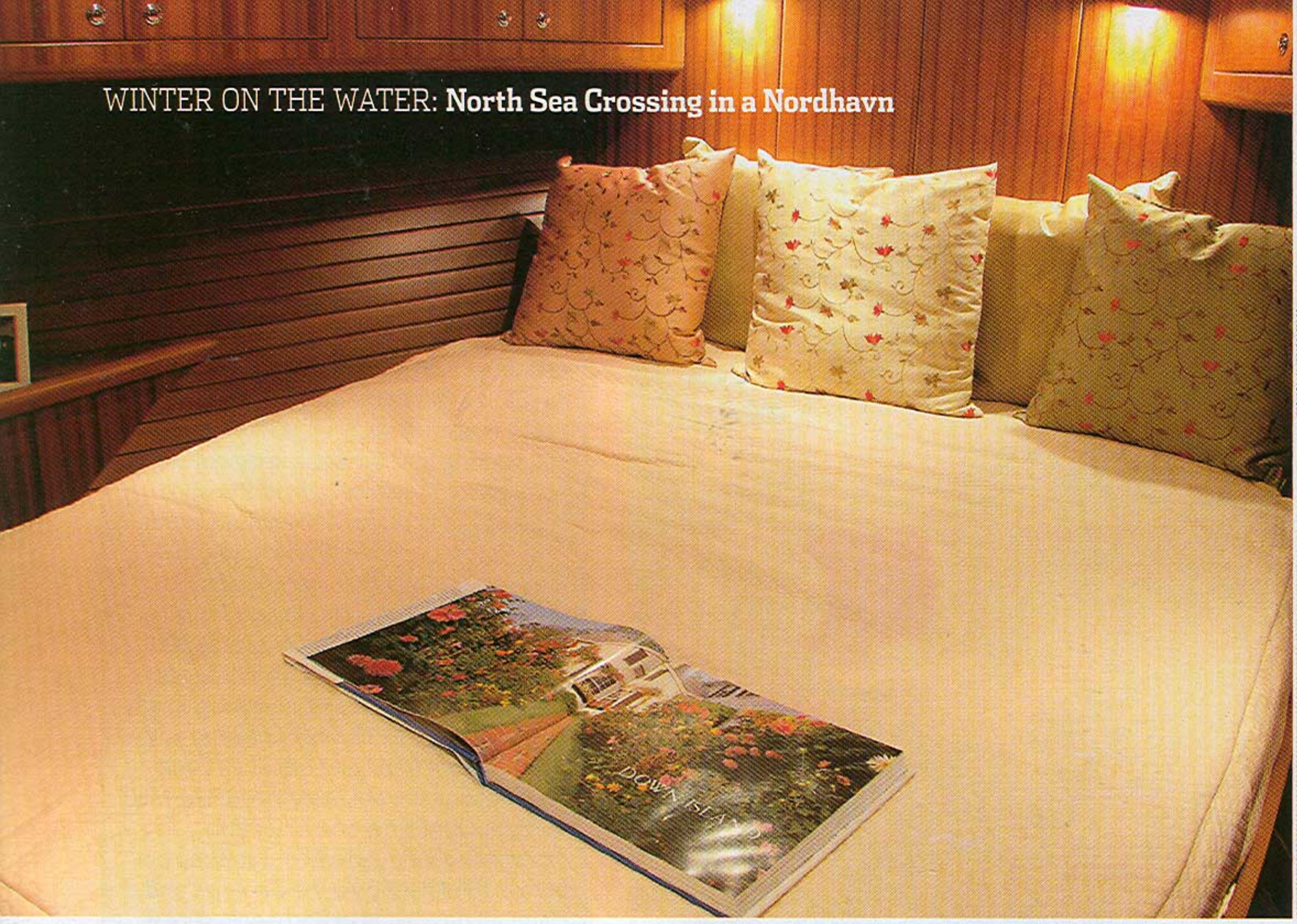
With the white cliffs of Dover looming into sight and Folkestone on our port side it was time to skirt across the shipping lanes to the French side of the Channel. We waited for a gap in the procession of container ships, made a sharp turn just to the north of Varne light vessel and trundled towards the French coast with all the alacrity that our 30-tonne steed could muster.

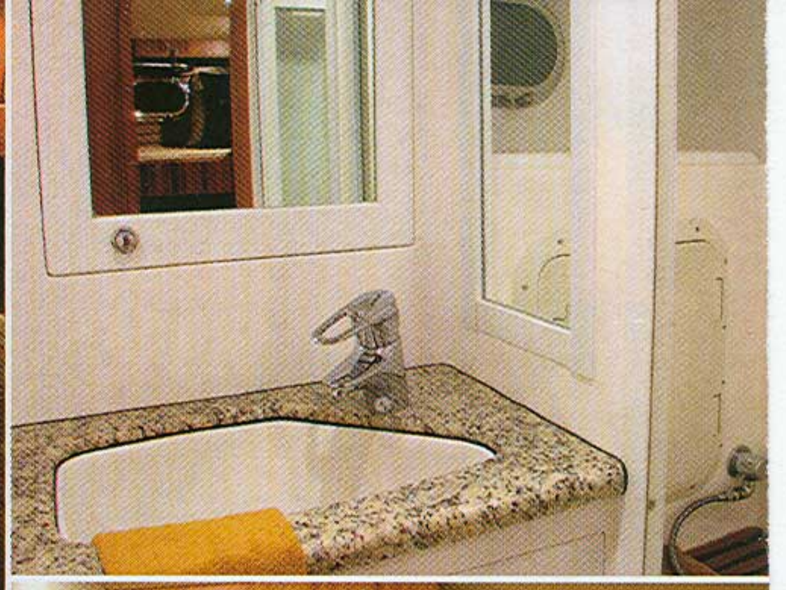
Lunch came and went. Predictably, the provisioning had a man's touch to it, and unfortunately he wasn't Jamie Oliver. A gallop around Tesco on Sunday had resulted in a mountain of mince pies, apple pies, Kit-Kats and the like; a minuscule frying pan; a gaudy plastic picnic set; tea bags; a split bag of sugar; three shepherd's pies and a heap of bacon. "You're not a veggie, are you?" Russell had asked when I came aboard.

Tea making could be a hit-and-miss affair. With the plastic beakers balanced in one of the deep sinks I sloshed hot water then milk in their general direction. Since the stove had not yet been set on its gimbals the kettle had danced about the hob during the previous night. But I did gain a Brownie point or two when I found a pot-holder wrapped in cardboard in the oven.

One striking feature in the galley (and the heads), which won't be found on your average sportscruiser, is the solid granite work surfaces – weight is not an issue here. Whoever draws the short straw as cook will find their task made easier because all the essentials – cooker, sink, oven, microwave, freezer and trash compactor – are perfectly sited. Storage is abundant, and ventilation, which is important in an open-plan galley-cum-saloon, is taken care of by an extractor fan and two opening ports.

The afternoon was all too short before the final dregs of the orange winter sun disappeared below the horizon. Russell negotiated our way through the series of banks that lie parallel to the French coast. It was a relief that the evening was cloudless and bright, making it much easier to spot the cardinals guiding our way between the Outer Ruytingen and the Dyck banks to the north-east of Calais.





The locker room: the owners won't want for stowage in the main cabin.

Night watches came and went as we motored up the Belgian coast and crossed into Dutch waters. I finally found my sea-legs and managed to snatch some sleep. The guest cabin on the port side proved to be a much better spot to kip in rough weather – particularly the bottom bunk where the motion is kinder. Storage is provided in a hanging locker, under a seat and beneath the lower berth. However, the stabiliser mechanisms fitted to our boat took up much of the space beneath the bed. This 40 also had an optional washer/dryer fitted in a dedicated cupboard next to the hanging locker.

With the tide against us, plodding at just six knots, we finally approached Oostende. To the north we could see the lights of a dozen or more ships anchored in a close formation. The Furuno chart plotter with the radar image overlaid came into its own as we could see that the brightly lit ships in the West Hinder anchorage were well spaced, a mile or two apart, and not the intimidating melee that we had originally thought. Even so Russell gave the group a wide berth just in case anyone decided to up anchor and make a move.

The sun had not yet risen as we approached the channel leading to the massive port of Rotterdam. Movement of craft in and out is controlled and monitored by the Traffic Control Centre in the Hook of Holland, and we called to report our position, from where would be tracked as we approached Rotterdam.

Russell called up Maas Entrance and asked for permission to cross the Traffic Separation Scheme. Permission granted we legged it north across the channel at 8.5 knots to reach the Inshore Traffic Zone and we could breathe more easily. In the gloom of the new morning Rotterdam was damp and grey, tall cranes and blocks of utilitarian flats rising out of the mist. A low-slung barge laden with sand passed us, coloured fairy lights on a tree in one of the cabin windows reminding us that it was almost Christmas.

It was 10.15am Dutch time when at last we passed under a bridge into Entrepothaven marina. We'd been at sea for 38 hours and clocked up 276 miles. A pilot was due to join the boat to guide her up the Rhine to Düsseldorf. I had a few minutes to peel off the clothes that I'd been wearing since we'd left the Solent and jump in the on-board shower. With the pilot aboard, I was left standing on the pontoon as the 40 continued on its way. It may not have been the most comfortable of cruises but there's no doubting the boat's integrity as a blue-water cruiser. I waved it on its way, wishing silently for a reunion in sunnier climes but looking forward to a proper meal ashore. I just hope the pilot liked mince pies. ***MBY***

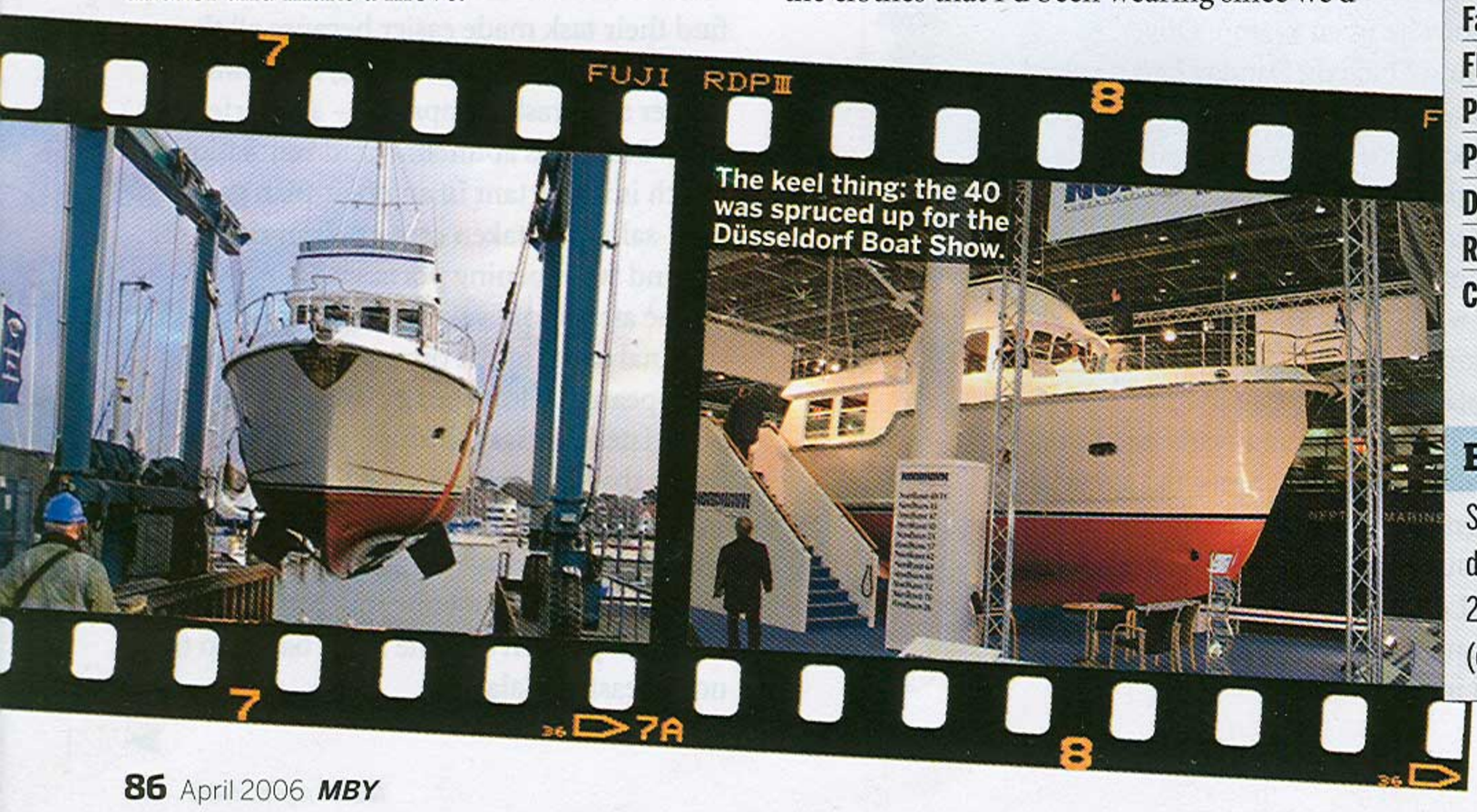
Datafile **Nordhavn 40** Mk II

Data

Length overall	39ft 9in (12.11m)
Hull length	39ft 9in (12.11m)
Beam	14ft 6in (4.42m)
Draught	4ft 9in (1.45m)
Air draught	29ft 0in (8.84m) (mast up) 13ft 6in (4.12m) (mast down)
Displacement	22.4 tonnes light, 30 tonnes loaded
Fuel capacity	7,659gal (3,483 litres)
Water capacity	183gal (833 litres)
Slow cruising	6.5 knots, 3,250 miles @ 1,600rpm
Fast cruising	7.5 knots, 2,800 miles @ 1,800rpm
Flat out	8.2 knots, 1,500 miles @ 2,150rpm
Price from	$445,000 ex tax (approx £300,600 inc UK VAT)
Price as tested	$639,000 ex tax (approx £431,600 inc UK VAT)
Designer	Jeff Leishman, 2005 (Mk II); 1998 (Mk I)
RCD category	A (for 6 people)
Contact	Neil Russell, Nordhavn Europe Tel: +44 (0)23 8045 6342 Website: www.nordhavn.com

Engines and drive sy stems

Single Lugger LP668D 105hp @ 2,200rpm 6-cylinder 6.8-litre diesel,3:1 gearbox ratio, 4-bladed prop, 28in (710mm) diameter, 24in (610mm) pitch. Single Yanmar 3GM30F 27hp wing engine (optional), folding prop



The keel thing: the 40 was spruced up for the Düsseldorf Boat Show.