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Cruising from Dartmouth in a Bowman 40

David Clements invited YM's Duncan Kent join him on board his beautifully maintained Bowman 40, *Bagheera*, for a relaxing sail from Dartmouth to Salcombe



PHOTOS: COLIN WORK/PIXTEL.COM



Bagheera of Whitby powering her way through the chop off the Dart estuary

The Bowman 40 was designed by renowned American naval architect, Chuck Paine, and built at the end of an era when a regular production yacht was expected to sail anywhere, in any conditions. Sadly, Bowman – formerly Rival Bowman – turned up its toes at the turn of the century, but the brand hasn't entirely disappeared. Cornish boatbuilder Rustler Yachts still owns the moulds of the extended 42 version and will build you one if you really want – for a hefty price, of course!

Our test yacht, *Bagheera*, came out of the moulds in 1994 and was launched in 1997 after being professionally fitted out

for ocean cruising. Her current owner, David Clements, a retired civil engineer, bought her in 2001 after she had completed just 400 sea miles. Prior to *Bagheera*, David and his wife, Diana, owned and extensively cruised a Rustler 36.

The Bowman 40 is a traditionally developed ocean cruising yacht in which the designer's head has ruled his heart. Its layout is ergonomically practical, both above and below decks, but remaining classically attractive at the same time. She's a typical example of the old adage 'If she looks right, she almost always will be right.'

The Bowman's underwater curves are an idyllic compromise between performance

and comfort. She sports a long Scheel lead keel and her fine, deep-vee bow merges seamlessly into a wineglass-style mid-section with gently turned bilges, resulting in a yacht that points well and exhibits an excellent, sea-kindly motion. As with all of

Paine's cruising yachts her engine is mounted over the keel, with the water tanks and batteries either side – putting the heaviest objects in the centre of the boat, where they should be. Although placing the engine in the living quarters sounds restrictive, it is so well merged into the galley that most wouldn't even realise it was there. It does, however, make engine maintenance somewhat tricky, without dismantling a large chunk of the galley.

The majority of Bowman 40s featured cutter rigs, keeping the sails to a manageable size and giving the owner a very effective 'gearbox' when on passage. In this guise she can still be sailed to

WATCH THE VIDEO

Scan this QR code with your smartphone to watch a video of Duncan testing the Bowman 40 (or go to the link below)



www.yachtingmonthly.com/bowman40



She has sweet lines and powerful bows that shrug off the waves effortlessly

windward in a real blow using a triple-reefed main and staysail alone, unlike many more modern sloop-rigged designs, which would be down to a trysail and storm jib in anything above a Force 8 – and possibly running downwind, too.

She was well built using a substantial layup and stiffened further with full-length stringers and 18mm-thick bonded bulkheads. Her decks were balsa sandwich, for lightness and insulation, and her deck is through-bolted and bonded.

Everything on board is reassuringly stout – from deck gear to handrails – giving the crew full confidence in her durability. David assured me that, despite several challenging cruises to the west coast of Ireland, Galicia and Scilly, the only thing he has ever changed is the yankee – and that's only because he didn't like the cut. Everything else is original and still going strong. The additional benefit to using sensibly sized, top quality deck gear is that it is easier to maintain, which David clearly does. →

David Clements, Bagheera's owner since 2001, has obviously kept her in tip-top condition



ME & MY BOAT

'Her motion through the water is that of a powerful but sea-kindly performer'

Her cutter rig performs well to windward when the headsail slot is correctly adjusted



Although she's quite beamy amidships, she pinches in astern in the traditional way

On deck

Everything about this Bowman screams 'classic' and with that usually comes pragmatic and secure. For instance, her cockpit is deep with large diameter drains and she has a bridge deck at the same height as the seating. This means you feel safely 'cocooned' in rough seas and any green water gets dumped back overboard as quickly as possible, with little danger of it flooding down the companionway.

There's a cut-out around the wheel, which gives the helmsman plenty of room to move about, stretch for the winches or relax on the wide, flat coamings. It also allows quick access to the coachroof winches when required. The yankee sheets lead aft to the first pair of chunky Lewmar 48ST primaries, while the staysail sheets go to a pair of 40STs on the coachroof.

There is a hull-depth locker to starboard, aft of the wet locker and heads below, which is large enough to take an inflatable dinghy, fenders, oars and most of the general cruising detritus you're likely to

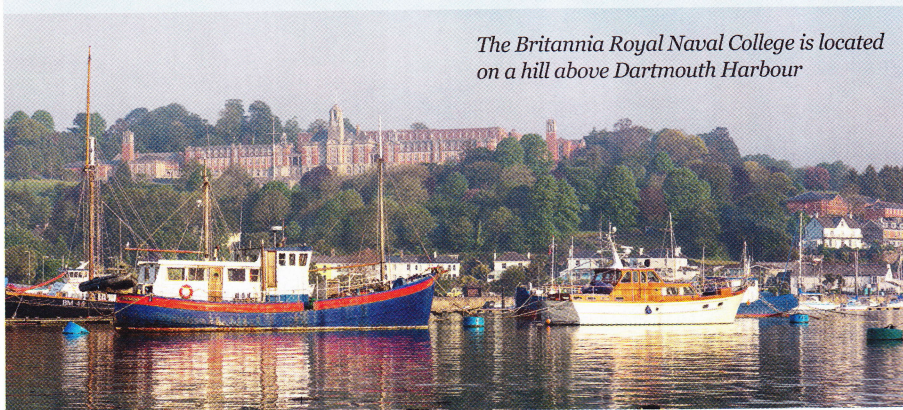
'Why I keep my boat in Dartmouth'

David is now fortunate enough to live just a mile or so from his boat, on the east side of the River Dart. He has always been closely associated with Dartmouth and says 'In 1955 I first sailed on the Dart in a Dart One Design – and swore that if I ever was lucky enough to own a boat, I'd keep it in the Dart!'

Port entry

The River Dart has a deep, safe entry (day and night) and is navigable all the way up to Totnes (with careful tide calculations). The approach is from the SSE, leaving Castle Ledge Buoy to starboard and Homestone buoy to port. The entrance narrows past Kingswear

The Britannia Royal Naval College is located on a hill above Dartmouth Harbour



Castle and it gets very busy – especially where the lower ferry crosses from Kingswear to Dartmouth town. At night a white sectored light leads you right in through the narrows.

Dart Harbour

Dartmouth is one of Devon's most beautiful ports where there's nearly always something happening on and around the water in the summer season, including its famous regatta week, when the harbour is teeming with classic yachts and dinghies. There are three marinas: Dart Marina on the Dartmouth Town side, Darthaven Marina in Kingswear and Noss Marina further upstream, but there are hundreds of mid-river pontoon berths and swinging moorings – one of which is where David keeps *Bagheera*.

The harbour is well served with water taxis at all hours and ashore there's a wide choice of shops for provisioning, pubs, restaurants and banks. Being such a popular destination means that berths in Dartmouth are highly sought after and not at all cheap – especially in the smallish marinas.

take with you on long trips. There are also deep lockers in the helm seat, one of which holds up to three large Calor gas canisters.

Stepping out onto the side decks is easy and safe thanks to flat-topped, teak-capped coamings, and the decks themselves are unusually wide and easy to negotiate. Her high, teak-capped bulwarks add a further sense of security when you're creeping your way to the mast in a gale. The encapsulated fairleads and large, stout cleats ensure her warps can be well secured.

Her foredeck is uncluttered and spacious, thanks to the chain locker being situated below with no easy deck access – this can be both a bonus and a pain. There's plenty of room for flaking out chain, for instance, but if you get a 'pyramid' of chain in the locker, you've got to run to the forecabin to clear it from the chain pipe.

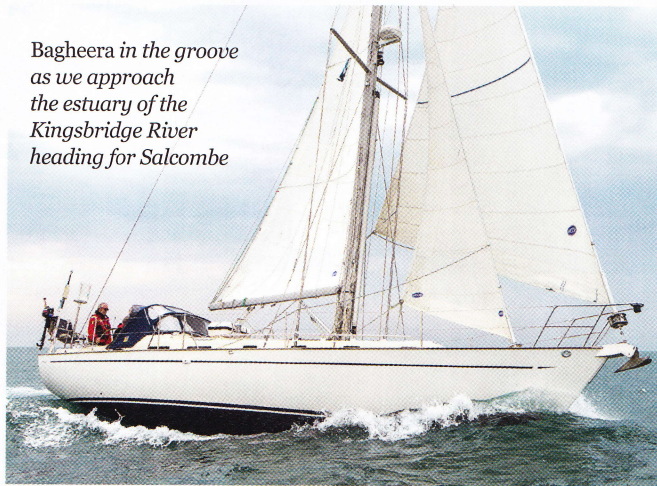
Rig

Bagheera is masthead cutter rigged, conveniently dividing up the headsails for easy handling, and offering the crew a useful range of sail configurations when the weather blows up. The inner forestay comes to the roots of the second pair of straight spreaders where, on *Bagheera*, she has an additional diamond stay to remove the need for running backstays. This makes tacking a good deal less complicated when sailing short-handed.

She has a thick-sectioned Kemp mast with twin spreaders and gas-sprung vang. The 1 x 19 standing rigging is thick (9mm) and well anchored to substantial through-deck chainplates. The single backstay has no quick adjuster.

The Hood sails supplied with the boat have stood the test of time on *Bagheera*.

Bagheera in the groove as we approach the estuary of the Kingsbridge River heading for Salcombe



Under way

The day we set sail from *Bagheera's* home port, Kingswear in Dartmouth, it was overcast with very little wind. The heavy Bowman needs at least 8-10 knots to get her moving under sail, and preferably 12 knots or more.

We were about to give up and start the donkey when the wind picked up from the south-west, and within five minutes we were tramping along at 6.5-7.0 knots in 12-15 knots of apparent wind. She sails well with both headsails set to create the perfect slot, and tacking is little problem – sorting the larger yankee first, before letting the smaller staysail cross the decks. The tracks for the latter are mounted on the coachroof, so a tight sheeting angle is possible.

She tacks through 75-78° – not exactly like lightning, but the right pace to allow a single-hander to carry out the required

tasks smoothly and without drama.

She sails fastest at around 40° off the apparent wind, when our log stayed in the high sixes. Once the wind comes round beyond a close reach the efficiency of the headsails is starting to wane, and it's debatable whether to keep the staysail →



Lying to anchor after feasting on fish and seafood at Salcombe's superb Boatswain's Brasserie



Dartmouth has pretty much everything you might need for a boat and her crew, including nice pubs and restaurants

Where to go

Dartmouth is an ideal setting off point for cruising the West Country. Salcombe, on the Kingsbridge estuary, is an ideal daysails destination. It always has room for visitors, with its numerous buoys and anchorages, and being a conservation area, it is stunningly beautiful, yet still quite tranquil further upriver.

Going east takes you into the shelter of Torbay and the lovely fishing port of Brixham, where there are smart, efficient marinas.

Berthing costs

Visitors may berth in Dart Marina (£4.20/m) or Dart Haven Marina (£2.70/m) if there are vacancies. Alternatively, there's the town

quay (1700-0845 only, £24/day, max LOA 12m) and river pontoons (£0.85/m/day), which have water and power. The town quay berths fill up very quickly in the summer. The cheapest berth in Dartmouth is the traditional anchorage, just east of the fairway opposite the town centre, but even here, you'll pay modest harbour dues.

Key cruising features

An extra window in the sprayhood makes sail-trimming easier

Her stout spars, oversize rigging and powerful gas-sprung vang are built to take a lot of punishment

In heavy weather just the stay sail and triple reefed main is all you need in a blow

HOOD

Encapsulated fairleads lend her the look of a 'proper little ship'

She has a deep cockpit with big drains and a high bridge deck to keep water out

Beaching legs fit into sockets on the gunwales so she can dry out upright

These full-length handrails make going forward much safer in choppy seas



No wide open spaces but there is ample room for six to dine in her comfy saloon



David prepares lunch under way in Bagheera's well-appointed galley

set beyond around 75° to the apparent wind. Going downwind, she needs a spinnaker to make up for the lack of area in her high-cut yankee, but you could easily rig a large cruising gennaker or cruising chute if preferred.

Her motion at sea is confident and reassuring, with her deep-vee bows slicing through the waves rather than slamming. She is stiff, thanks to ballast more than form, and she tracks well downwind due to her deep keel and skeg.

When asked about heavy weather sailing in *Bagheera*, David said: 'We experienced a full gale in the Orkneys early on, but never felt the boat couldn't cope. She always has a comfortable motion. Her only downside is in lighter airs, when she can be a little slow.'

Down below

This is where she feels like a traditional 'little ship'. Solid teak abounds and there's an abundance of lockers. The layout is clearly intended for ocean passages and long-term living at sea, with handholds exactly where they're needed and plenty of places to wedge yourself in underway. Her galley is impressive, due partly to the midships engine over which the cabinetry and worktop has been extended. It has a deep fridge and a proper four-ring cooker with a big oven, and there's bags of stowage for utensils and foodstuffs, with more for bottles and bulk items under the sole.

Her main heads is immediately to starboard on descending the steep companionway steps, which allows the crew to dump their soaking oilies in the wet

locker without dripping water across the saloon. She has two heads, the second to port, which means there is always a useable loo, whichever tack you're on.

Her saloon is warm and cosy, although somewhat dark by more modern standards. She not only has two comfortable and straight settees for sleeping at rest, but also two clever roll-out pilot berths above for sleeping under sail. Ventilation is excellent, with most portlights opening and good all-weather vents above.

She has a neat saloon table with good fiddles that folds in half over itself, allowing six to dine comfortably when unfolded, but giving clear access forward when stowed.

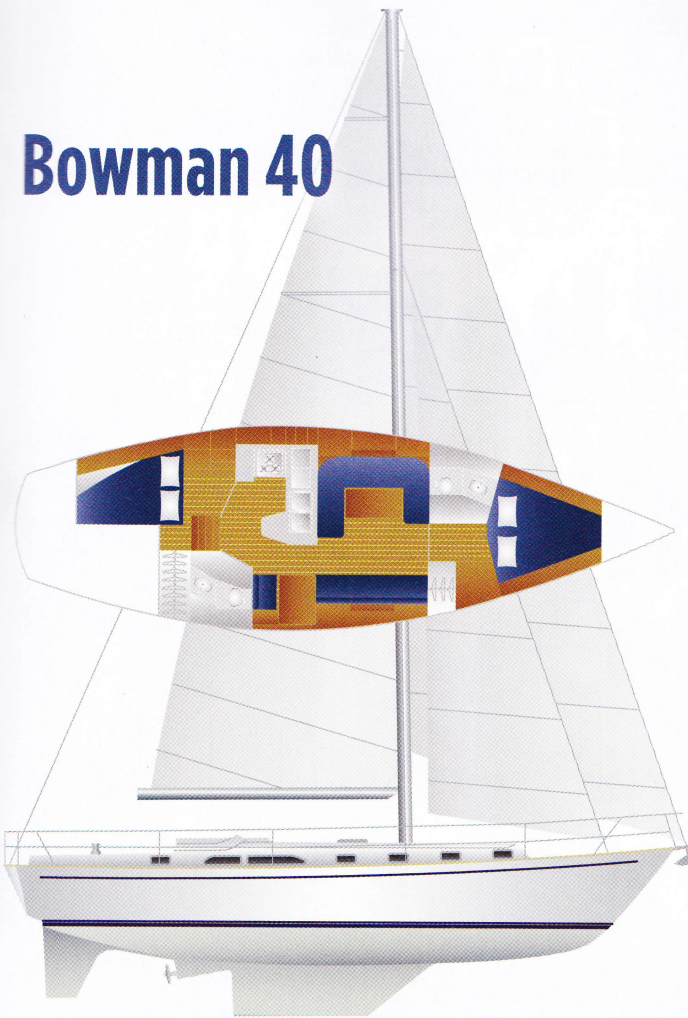
Like all proper offshore cruisers she has a decently-sized navigation station with an Admiralty size chart table and loads of console space for instruments, as well as stowage for charts and pilot books.

She has two double sleeping cabins. Both are spacious with plenty of useful stowage, although the forecabin is clearly intended as the owner's suite, with a lot more dressing space and an en suite heads. ▲

Thanks to Dartmouth Harbour's deputy harbourmaster, Nick Clarence, for providing a platform for our photographer and his advice on the area.

Bowman 40

ARTWORK: MAXINE HEATH



FACTS AND FIGURES

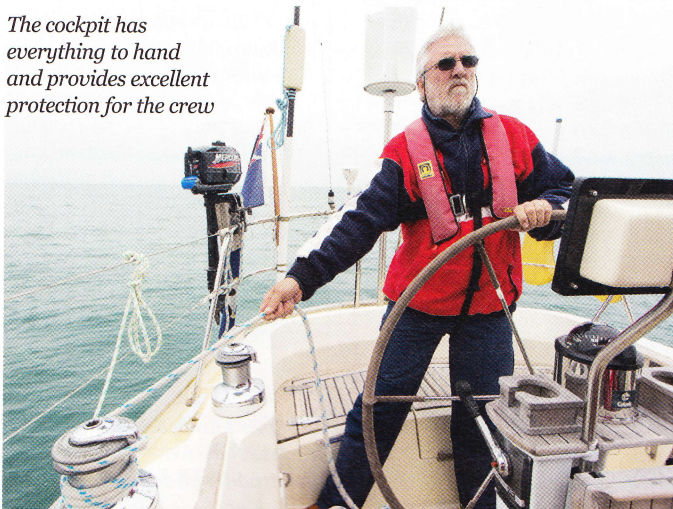
- **Guide price** £125-140,000
- **LOA** 12.17m (39ft 11in)
- **LWL** 9.75m (32ft 0in)
- **Beam** 3.94m (12ft 7in)
- **Draught** 1.50m (4ft 11in)
- **Displacement**
8,620kg (19,000lb)
- **Ballast** 3,275kg (7,200 lb)
- **Yankee** 39.76m² (428sq ft)
- **Staysail** 27.96m² (301sq ft)
- **Mainsail** 31.22m² (336sq ft)
- **Engine** 50hp
- **Fuel** 320ltr (70gal)
- **Water** 545ltr (120 gal)
in two tanks
- **Ballast ratio** 38%
- **Sail area/displ ratio** 17
- **Designer**
CW Paine Yacht Design



Her foredeck has a powerful windlass, twin roller, chunky cleats and captive fairleads

- **Builder** Rival Bowman Yachts, Southampton
- **Class Association**
www.rivalowners.org.uk

The cockpit has everything to hand and provides excellent protection for the crew



OUR VERDICT ON THE BOAT

What's she like to sail?

The Bowman 40 is a medium-to-heavy displacement yacht designed to sail across open oceans with ease. She is deep-bilged with an overhanging bow and narrowish shoulders, so her motion through the water is that of a powerful, but sea-kindly performer.

This easy motion means life at sea on a long passage is not only possible, but positively enjoyable. On many boats, you can get utterly fed up with being thrown about down below for days on end, but that's certainly not the case with the Bowman. There's always a handhold within reach, both below and above decks, and there are very few sharp edges to hurt yourself on.

Equally important is the general balance of the hull and sail plan. With her ample ballast, plus the engine weight over the keel and water tanks each side, she's stiff and easily capable of standing up to her canvas. Her steering is light, but positive and she tracks well thanks to her longish keel and skeg. The cutter rig keeps the sails small and offers greater flexibility in a gale, and the quality of the deck gear and fitting gives you confidence that she won't fall apart when confronted with stormy conditions.

She's no racer, but neither is she a slouch, with her momentum and ability to carve through heavy seas, often she'll arrive at a far destination at the same time as a much lighter performance yacht might, only her crew will be far more relaxed!

What's she like in port and at anchor?

Those more used to voluminous saloons and huge double berths might think the Bowman a little cramped, but to my mind and in the option of many long-distance blue water cruising yachtsmen, too much space can be undesirable under way.

Her shoal draught is a boon upriver and at anchor, and she'll dry out easily alongside a wall on her long keel base, but she does lack family living space and her cockpit isn't exactly designed for easy Mediterranean lounging. You need a ladder to climb up her transom and there's no platform for showering after a swim.

On the entertaining stakes she easily matches a more modern design. With her massive and extensively equipped galley and large saloon table you can easily cook dinner for six adults.

Sleeping is limited to two cabins and the saloon, but in return for the lack of a second aft cabin you get a much larger heads, a useful wet locker and a full-depth cockpit locker – far more important for blue water cruising unless you're taking a large family with you.

Would she suit you and your crew?

The Bowman 40 was primarily designed for taking serious sailors offshore in all weather and sea conditions. Very few sacrifices in seaworthiness have been made to make her more inviting for a horde of guests, but to me this feels right. And to prove it, take a look at the Scandinavian blue water cruising yachts built today – most of them don't look a lot different to this boat, do they?

She is great for a couple who want to sail anywhere, anytime and still feel safe. There's room for a guest couple, and even the kids, so long as they don't expect to stay forever. I love the acres of lockers and the sensible use of any empty cavity for handy stowage, which is exactly what a cruising yacht needs.

You really couldn't go far wrong choosing a Bowman 40 for cruising, and being so solidly constructed and well equipped means she'll hold her value in today's second-hand market.

Does she suit your style of sailing?

CREEK CRAWLING



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