

FIRST TEST

SAFFIER SC8M

Do the best things come in small packages? If they are pocket cruisers like the Saffier SC8m, the answer is yes

Words & pictures **Graham Snook**

SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE Saffier

MODEL Sc8m

PRICE FROM £66,320
inc VAT

DESIGNER Dean
Hennevanger

BUILDER Saffier Yachts

I'm not someone known for gushing praise, but I found myself describing my day out with Saffier as "one of the most enjoyable sails I've had in a long time". She's not big, not worth half a million, she hasn't even got a separate heads compartment, but I could imagine myself having wonderful sailing adventures in her; exploring the quiet reaches of the Fal, pottering around Poole Harbour, hiding away up the Kyles of Bute or exploring the creeks off the River Roach. Dutch brand Saffier might not be a familiar name to the UK audience, however given our coastline, harbours and estuaries we have all round the coast, Saffier has a lot to offer.

Family business Saffier make two distinct ranges: the SE range of long cockpit, lounging-friendly day boats and weekenders for warmer waters, and the classic SC range, designed for longer weekends with the possibility to stay on board for a little longer, the SC are ideal for those who want to day sail, easily, with as little fuss as possible. They can easily be single-handed, and the sails – and the loads from them – are easily manageable, more so with the addition of one electric winch.







PERFORMANCE

The forecast for the test looked bleak; 40 knots forecast in Saffier's home town, the Dutch harbour of IJmuiden. So, hotels and flights were hastily brought forward. Getting caught out in 40 knots is something I'd expect all yachts to cope with, going out in 40 knots is something I doubt any owner would do, whether they owned a Saffier or not, especially if the wind is blowing into the harbour exposed to the fetch of the North Sea. We're *Yachting Monthly*, not *Masochists Monthly* and I'd like to be able to report about more than soakings from the icy North Sea.

Thankfully we were blessed with near perfect conditions, if a little cold, 12-16 knots, bright sunshine, clear of the sweeping breakwaters there was a metre or so of swell, while in the harbour, the seas were mostly flat with the occasional long swell, enabling some 8 knot surfing while flying the code zero on the way back to harbour.

The first thing one notices is how light she is in the helm, only the slight resistance from the fixed

Raymarine autopilot a distraction. Although light it's also responsive, but not twitchy. Hard pressed in 21 knots apparent she showed no tendency of rounding up and still remained beautifully light and in perfect control. It's a wonderful feeling being able to feel her move beneath you as you gently adjust the helm. All boats respond to the helm, but the connection, the involvement, and the lack of effort required was exquisite – the test boat had a two-speed electric winch to raise the mainsail and used to furl the genoa.

Beating into the head sea her V-shaped sections and angle of heel left a flat areas to slam if one leaves the helm one place, but involve yourself in helming her, steering her off or into the waves and she parts them with comfortable ease, even if most of her forward sections were previously airborne. She made good progress through, what were, some hefty quantities of water.

After a beat out of the harbour to see how she handled the conditions it was time to reap the rewards, out came the code zero and up went the speed 6,7,8 knots as she surfed down the swell; there's a really nice connection to the water, without it feeling too close or a receiving a dousing.

Under power she made 5.0 knots at 2,000 rpm with a two-bladed folding propeller, and manoeuvred with ease as the sail drive is close to the rudder and, even in reverse, there was little danger of the tiller being whipped from my hand.

DECK LAYOUT

A spray hood is an option, and might have kept the cold wind at bay, but the cockpit was sheltered, and the generous sheer helps keep most of the wet stuff from the cockpit. Guardrails are also an option, but there is little to go forward for except berthing and anchoring as all other controls are back in the cockpit. There are short grab rails on the coachroof and the shrouds are a step from the cockpit.

There is no bow roller, but Saffier can accommodate owners' requests wherever possible. The deck and toerail was Esthec synthetic teak that looked good; the toerail had stainless-steel rubbing strips where the cleats were located.

The anchor locker was big enough for anchor and warp and has the water filler in its base, but most of the deck stowage was in the locker aft of the rudderpost under the aft deck, and under the port cockpit seat. There are rope bins and cup holders

While helming, there's a great connection with the water; the sheer and cockpit coamings keep it where it should be



moulded into the forward end of the cockpit as part of the deck mould, a neat and practical solution. All lines are led back to the cockpit to a single-speed Harken 20ST winch to port and a two-speed electric 40st (optional) and are all within reach of the helm.

There are two reverse-mounted jammers (the rope exits forward) in the inside of the cockpit coaming, the lines can be led forward to the coachroof winches – to starboard is the tack line for an asymmetric, to port is the furling line for the genoa. Seating in the cockpit is generous at 2.04m (6ft 8in).

AT THE HELM

She's tiller steered, and the helm is wonderfully balanced and light. Around the helm is the high supportive coaming the right height to make a comfortable armrest. The seats are wide enough to be comfortable when heeling so you don't feel like the backrest is sliding you off the seat. Bracing across the cockpit is good, although the helm does have to be a little cautious on a port tack not to put their feet in the engine control panel – under the seating to starboard. The 4:1 mainsheet is attached to a fixed point aft of the rudder post, but cleverly, and to prevent the helm having to turn around all the time, the sheet is brought back along from the end of the boom, over

the helm's head to a ratchet block mounted on a short stainless-steel post on the cockpit sole. It means the mainsheet is always to hand in front of the helm.

DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

Saffier is owed by brothers Dennis and Dean Hennevanger, whose father, Richard, started the company in 1980. The brothers were born in Australia, but spent eight years in the family boat, sailing back to Richard's homeland of the Netherlands. Dean designed all the yachts in the Saffier's range, and, as you'd expect from two brothers who spent many years afloat, much of their experience has made its way onboard their boats. On the Sc8m for example, there are cup holders and rope

The mainsheet is lead forward to a short stainless-steel post in the centre of the long cockpit



It's wonderful to feel her move beneath you as you gently adjust the helm





The finish is good, and seeing solid teak corner posts in the cabinetry is a nice detail not often found on smaller boats



The small galley has enough for one-pot meals or hot drinks. The alcohol stove removes the need for a gas installation



There are handy lockers and solid wood aplenty in the forward sleeping area. The aft two cushions of the forward berth need to be removed and the bunk base hinged up in order to use the heads – not great if someone is asleep

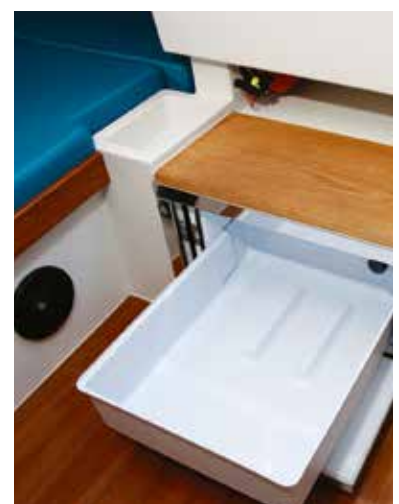
The heads is under the forward berth. Note the well for the log transducer forward



A rubber stopper protects the locker door from being damaged by the drawer



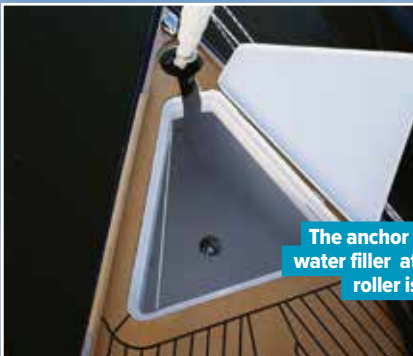
The seat backs on both sides of the saloon lift up, hinge back and clip to the hull sides to maximise berth width when sleeping



The optional drawer fridge is well located to reach a cold drink from the cockpit

POINT OF SAIL	AWA*	AWS**	SPEED
Close Hauled	30°	17-21 knots	5.7-6.4 knots
Fetch	60°	18-20 knots	6.2-7.3 knots
Beam Reach	90°	10-14 knots	6.1-7.4 knots
Broad Reach	120°	5-7 knots	5.5-6.4 knots
Run	180°	3-5 knots	4.5-5.3 knots

*APPARENT WING ANGLE **APPARENT WIND SPEED



The anchor locker has the water filler at its base. A bow roller is optional



The engine controls are to hand at the aft end of the cockpit



bins incorporated into the deck mould, and the ergonomics around the cockpit for control lines are excellent.

The Sc8M was launched in 2014 and has the same hull as Saffier's Se26 launched in 2007, however a shorter cockpit and raised coachroof increase the interior's size. The hull is solid laminate while the decks are foam cored, except where backing pads are required; here there is a marine ply core.

Once the hulls arrive the internal tray mould is bonded and laminated. Where anything is laminated to the hulls (such as the wooden bulkheads on other models) the finish is excellent and there are no sharp fibreglass shards left over as it's all been sanded. The deck is bonded and screwed in position. The inner tray mould has box section stiffeners under the cabin sole and also makes up the seat structure, including the under seat stowage – this finishes them nicely so there's no way any water from the bilge will enter them and, of course, the finishes is baby smooth.

All skin fittings below the water are bronze, and trimmed down to reduce the leverage from the action of using the sea cock.

RIG & SAILPLAN

A double-spreaded anodised aluminium rig is standard, but the painted Seldén rig does add a touch of class. A self-tacking 95% jib is standard, a 110% jib is optional for those who want more work to do, but, having sailed with the self-tacking jib, I do wonder



why someone wouldn't choose that option. The drum for the furling jib is fitted below the deck to maximise sail area in the forward triangle.

Cup holders and rope bins are moulded into the forward end of the cockpit where there's also instrument space

ACCOMMODATION

There are four berths, all over 2.0m long in the open-plan interior. Forward of the galley bulkhead, under the berth, was a chemical toilet (a sea toilet is an option), if you have guests they may prefer the optional privacy blind; the washboards are clear and smoked, but offer little concealment.

The saloon has 1.31m (4ft 3in) head room, the seats are comfortable to sit on and have 92cm (3ft)



Out came the code zero and up went the speed 6,7,8 knots as she surfed down the swell



headroom above them and decent height to, so the seating is free from the awkward squatting feeling. The seat backs hinge up, and hook onto a stainless steel eye on the hull side, this keeps them out of the way while broadening the seat from 47cm (1ft 7in) to 75cm (2ft 5in). The fabric on this boat was waterproof and slippery which caused the seat back to slip at the bottom, but this doesn't happen with a piled or textured fabric. There are lockers beneath each berth with plywood lids making the seat bases.

The forward vee-berth is large; the headroom is 62cm (2ft 1in) over the forward part of the bunk, rising to 77cm (2ft 6in) at the head end. Above the berth on both the hull sides is a shelf with neat, if small, lockers, with solid wood frames around the doors, and a decent solid wood fiddle running forward along the non-locked section of the shelf.

CHART TABLE

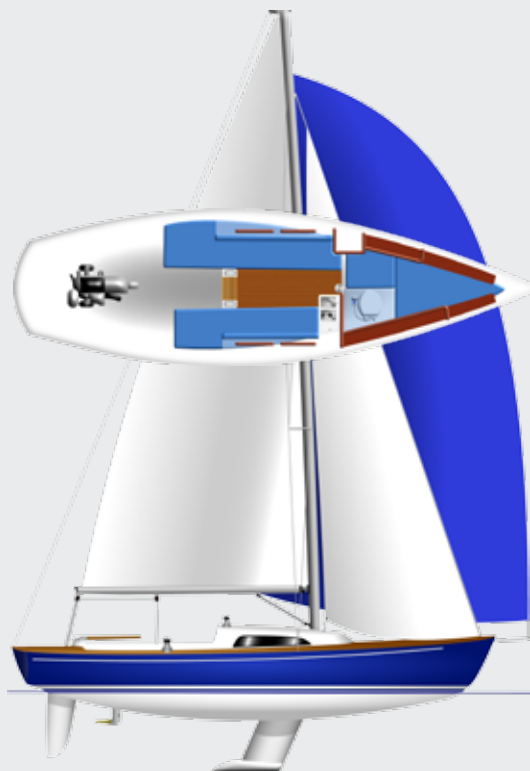
There's no chart table on board, however there is the option of a removable saloon table, and/or a chart plotter on the aft end of the coachroof.

GALLEY

The galley has a single sink and pressurised cold water, inboard is an alcohol stove, doing away with the need for gas on board – one less thing to worry about. Outboard again is a small lined pantry locker. Under the sink is a cupboard door with a pull out drawer. One nice touch, typical of Saffier's attention to detail is a rubber stopper to stop the drawer rubbing on the inside of the locker door. Other boat builders might not care how scratched the inside of a cupboard door will get. Saffier do. There is the option of a decent sized 32-litre drawer fridge under the companionway step, ideal for grabbing a cold drink from the cockpit.

MAINTENANCE

The engine is reverse mounted and accessed via a hatch under the tiller. There's a removable panel in the aft deck locker to make getting to what would be the front of the engine easier. As the boat is simple with regard to services what little there is to access is easy. The bilge is shallow, but there is fabric around the edge of the floorboards to stop any unwanted squeaks from the boards.



SAFFIER SC8M

THE TEST VERDICT

I thoroughly enjoyed my time on the water in the Saffier. She was a delightful boat to sail, even in the North Sea in January – albeit the last two days of the month. To my eyes she's an attractive boat, and while she doesn't have the accommodation of larger boats I would relish the opportunity to have one if I lived close enough to her to pop out for evening sails, maybe to anchor in a quiet creek, relax a while before the sunset and it was time to head home. She's perfectly suited for single-handed sailing; everything on board is easy to operate. She's a rewarding boat to sail, and obeys the helm which gives a great connection to the boat and the water. The tiller could be handled with just fingertips, and a solid grip round it was rarely needed, one only has to rest a hand on top to feel in effortless control of this great little cruiser, and in a way that typifies this boat, she's set up and designed to be easy to sail.

WOULD SHE SUIT YOU AND YOUR CREW?

She's best used for weekends or nights away, but there is little stopping someone coastal cruising or even sailing her across the channel. If you're luckily enough to live near a harbour or estuary you could get so much use out of a boat like this if you are on your own or with a partner. Hop on, unzip the stack pack, connect the code zero and away you go.

She could port hop her way around most of Great Britain or Ireland, or, if you have a car with enough grunt, she can be towed which opens up another level of cruising options. She's not cheap, but well-built small boats rarely are, however it's rare to find such an all-round nice boat. The Sc8 doesn't have stacks of complex systems and that's one of her many charms, there's less to go wrong, but just enough to be comfortable to stay on while retaining her eager to please nature.

PROS

- + Great feel to the helm
- + Easy to sail singlehanded
- + Build quality and attention to detail

CONS

- Non frosted washboards
- Engine panel position

FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE as tested	£88,690
LOA 8.60m (28ft 3in)	
HULL Length 8.00m (26ft 3in)	
LWL 6.90m (22ft 8in)	
BEAM 2.45m (8ft)	
DRAUGHT 1.3m (4ft 3in)	
DISPLACEMENT 1,800kg (3,968 lb)	
BALLAST 760kg (1,675 lb)	
BALLAST ratio 42.2%	
DISPLACEMENT / Length 155.3	
SAIL area 36m ² (387sq ft)	
SA/D ratio 24.8	
DIESEL 40 litres (8.8 gal)	
WATER 60 litres (13 gal)	
ENGINE 15hp	
TRANSMISSION Saildrive	
RCD category C	
DESIGNER Dean Hennevanger	
BUILDER Saffier Yachts	
UK Agent Imperial International Yacht Brokers	
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