

BRITAIN'S BEST SELLING MOTOR CRUISING MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 1997

MOTOR BOAT

AND YACHTING



TESTED

THE STOREBORO J32

Boat report

Storebro J32

Length

33ft 3in (10.13m)

Top speed

31.0 knots

Engines

Twin 230hp Volvo Penta
TAMD42WJ with twin
Hamilton 211 waterjets

Price from

£96,605 ex VAT



Wild thing

The notion that Storebros are the Volvos of the sea – safe, solid cruising boats that occasionally lack a little inspiration – may have to be revised. David Marsh goes on test with the J32, a waterjet-powered 33ft sportscruiser. Photos by Lester McCarthy



Let's be honest: manoeuvring a boat inside a crowded, tidal, windswept marina is sometimes the most challenging aspect of a day's cruising. At the end of our test, I drove the J32 completely sideways across a bustling Dutch marina into a space only inches bigger than the boat. I was able to balance the controls so the J32 took up a 'holding' position against the prevailing wind and tide, leave the helm, step ashore and make fast the mooring lines, finally climbing aboard to

turn off the engines. The twin waterjets provide the J32's skipper with a degree of control and manoeuvrability that would leave Michael Schumacher in awe of his driving skills.

Storebro's innovation is not restricted to the use of waterjets. We first glimpsed the J32 on a gloomy day in April, but the boat still made a dramatic impact on the visual senses. I spent three days in rain-swept Holland, investigating Storebro's spectacular entrance into uncharted territory. ▶

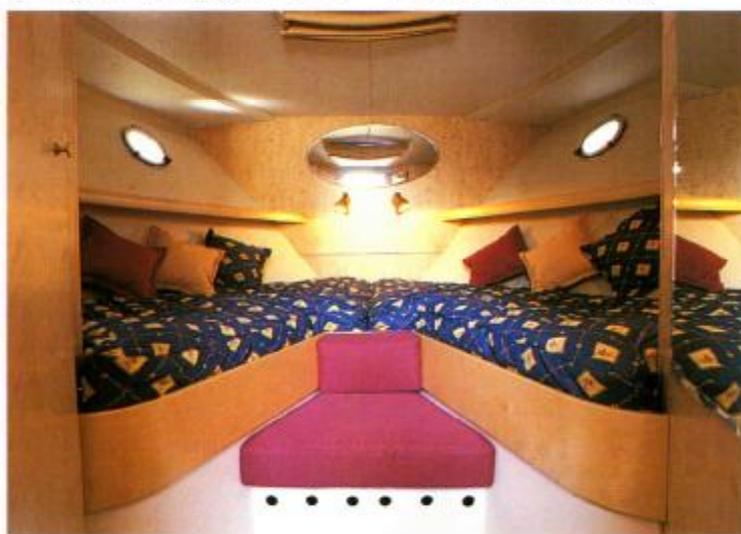
ACCOMMODATION

Forward cabin

The increase in the average size of westerners shows no signs of abating – it is quite normal to find 14-year-olds that are 6ft and taller. Fortunately, the vee-berths on the J32 are a generous 6ft 7in (2.00m) long and correspondingly wide. Storage is equally good, with a

huge hanging locker to port and shelves above the berths.

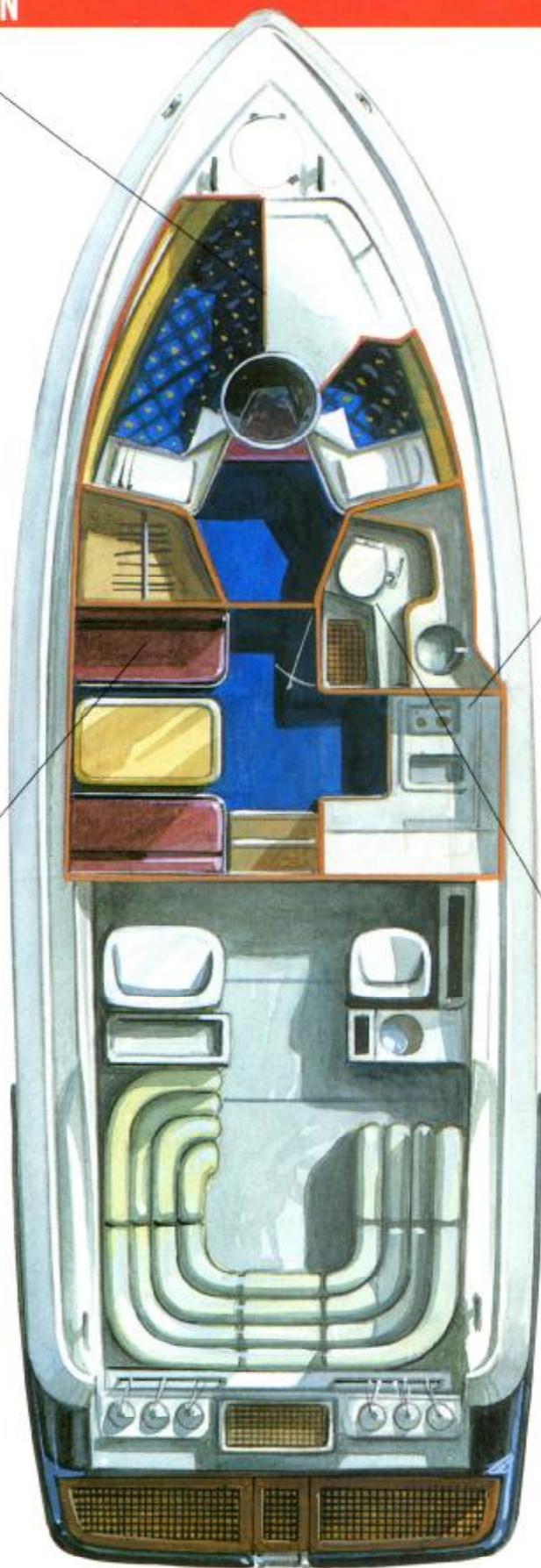
Three lids under the berths provide access to the bilges – incorporating moulded lockers would make this dead space more useful. As usual, Storebro have made sure that there is a lot of good ventilation throughout the boat. Headroom is about 6ft 2in (1.88m).



Dinette

The next time you sit at a standard British Rail table facing your two companions, you will be sharing an area 6ft 2in long by 3ft 4in wide (1.88m by 1.02m). By comparison, Storebro's dinette is the same width

but 7in (180mm) shorter, so this is a 'cosy' area. The seat bases are far too short for comfort, measuring only 15in (380mm) from the backrest cushion to their front edges. Removing the rear backrests reveals a 'trotter box', allowing the dinette to convert to a double berth.



CRITICAL DATA

LOA
33ft 3in (10.13m)
Hull length
31ft 6in (9.59m)
Beam
11ft 2in (3.40m)
Displacement
4.4 tons light
5.0 tons loaded
Draught
20in (0.51m)
Air draught
8ft 0in (2.43m)
Fuel capacity
154 imp gal (700lt)
Water capacity
33 imp gal (150lt)
Engines
Twin Volvo Penta TAMD42WJ
230hp @ 3,800rpm
6-cylinder 3.6lit turbo diesels
Twin Hamilton 211 waterjets

RPM	SPEED	TRIM	GPH	MPG	RANGE
600	2.8	0.0°	n/a	n/a	n/a
1,500	5.3	0.5°	1.3	4.06	499
2,000	7.0	1.0°	3.2	2.21	272
2,500	9.1	1.5°	6.0	1.52	188
3,000	12.5	4.0°	10.8	1.15	142
3,500	26.0	2.5°	17.2	1.51	186
3,800	31.0	2.5°	23.3	1.33	164

*Range figures allow for 20% reserve.
25% fuel, 50% water, 2 crew
Sea state: 15in (380mm) chop
Wind strength: Force 2-3
Maximum speed and range
31.0 knots, 164 miles at 3,800rpm
Cruising speed and range
26 knots, 186 miles at 3,500rpm
Price from
£96,605 ex VAT
Price as tested
£105,107 ex VAT
Builder
Storebro Bruks AB, S-590 83,
Storebro, Sweden.
Tel: 0046 492 19500
Fax: 0046 492 30300
E-mail: info@storebro.se
UK agent
Paul Hadley Boat Sales,
Northney Marina, Hayling
Island, Hants PO11 0HN.
Tel: 01705 461672
Fax: 01705 463492
Email: paulhadleyboatsales@msn.com*

SOUND LEVELS dB(A)	SALOON	COCKPIT
Cruising @ 26 knots	81	82
Maximum @ 31.0 knots	82	85

It's dangerous to arrive for a boat test with preconceptions, but as I hadn't received any of Storebro's publicity literature before flying out to Amsterdam to collect the J32 for a trip through the canals and across the IJsselmeer, I had made several assumptions.

Sliding the companionway door vertically down into its

ingenious concealed housing, I'd already anticipated how the tremendous interior volume (provided by the raised topsides) would add to the feeling of spaciousness on the archetypal layout for this size of boat – typically a large U-shaped dinette/double berth forward, heads opposite the amidships galley, and a double berth

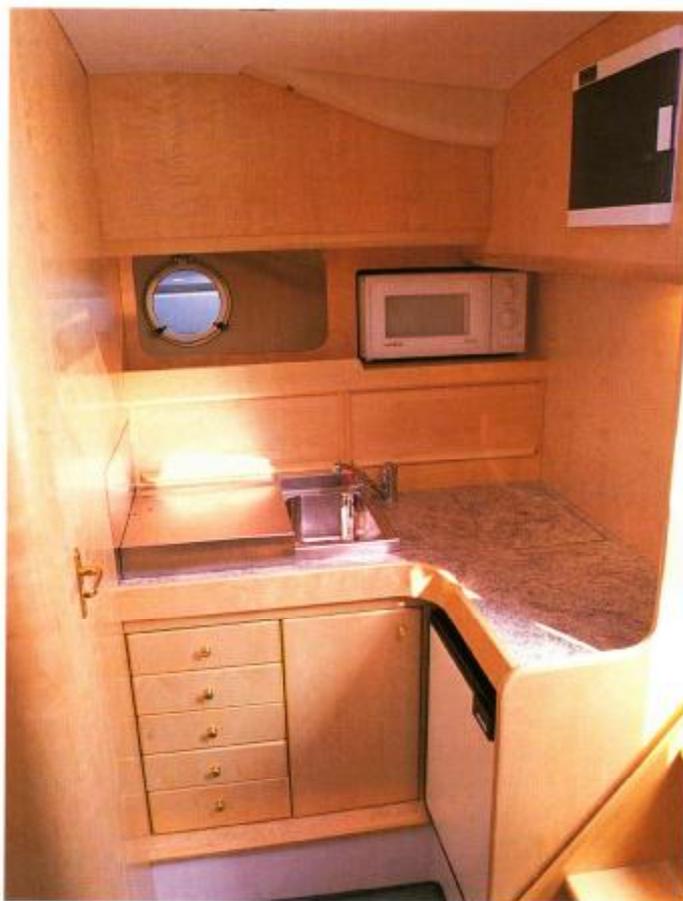
tucked under the cockpit.

What greeted me was a cabin only 5ft 7in (1.70m) long. Storebro have boldly chosen to split the accommodation into two areas: a saloon and a forward cabin. The major benefit is that this provides significant extra cabin privacy that can't be matched by just curtaining off the area.

Galley

Storebro have cleverly squeezed a great deal into a compact space which measures only 3ft 11in (1.19m) long. Where drawers are often forgotten on smaller boats, there are five on the J32, in addition to a fridge, freezer, microwave, sink and two-burner stove. I find Storebro's 'roller-blind' type doors are the easiest and safest to use in a galley, and there are two of these outboard, concealing dedicated crockery and tumbler lockers. At 3ft 2in x 1ft 5in (0.96m x 0.43m) the remaining worksurface is adequate for weekend use, and the adjacent dinette table can be used as an extension of the galley.

Many of the catches on the boat are magnetic, which in a seaway will inevitably disengage. Headroom in the saloon is around 6ft 3in (1.90m).



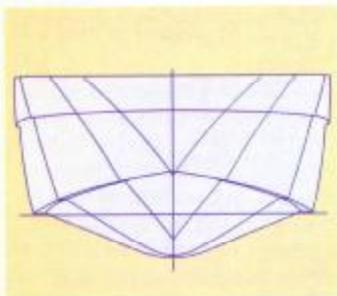
Heads

There is plenty of natural and halogen light in the heads. An opening port provides natural ventilation near the toilet – always a great improvement over

forced air alone. A continuation of the toilet plinth running around the heads limited how close you could stand to the basin, making it awkward to use. ▷



DESIGN NOTES



1 Jet-drive boats inherently have less directional stability than craft with outdrive legs or conventional sterngear. The very things that provide the turning force on most boats (the rudders) also provide vital lateral grip. And many contemporary planing powerboats now incorporate tunnels in the aft sections for the rudders and propellers, which effectively create a stubby 'keel' near the stern. As well as lacking both these features, the J32 is also missing the sharp vee normally found on the keel sections aft. These three details show themselves as a distinct lack of directional stability (see Handling and Performance) when crossing waves.

Hinckley spent considerable time optimising the size of two small skegs before they found the ideal balance of turning ability and directional stability for their jet-drive Picnic Boat (see *MBY* September 1997). The J32 clearly needs something similar.

2 As well as remarkable manoeuvrability, there is a host of other jet-drive benefits. These include an extremely shallow draught, the ability to 'crash stop', the capacity to beach the boat and the lack of protruding appendages that can be easily damaged. Also, for increased safety, there are no propellers to harm swimmers or become entangled with, for instance, lobster pots.

The J32's helm position caters for the driver's comfort, with adjustable seats and decent screens to keep the weather out. Far right: the Storebro Solo, built in numbers until 1977.



ON DECK

When you think of Storebro, radical styling doesn't spring to mind, so it might be a surprise to discover that they found inspiration for the J32 in their own history. Between 1951 and 1977, the company produced more than 2,800 Solo boats (far right), and this style is evident in the sheerline and screens of the J32. Unfortunately, in a few

areas Storebro have allowed style to triumph over function. For instance, the expansive foredeck has a mirror finish, and the steady drizzle that persisted during our test days instantly turned this into a skating rink. So although the non-slip along the 8in-wide (200mm) sidedecks was effective, walking forward without the psychological benefit of external guardrails was an unnerving experience, even in the confines of the enclosed harbour at Hoorn. You could grasp the bulbous glassfibre screen mouldings to help you as far as the front of the screens, but even these disappeared once the canopy was erected.

It's surprisingly rare to find a helm position that works as well as the J32's. Storebro have provided supportive and adjustable seats, intelligently sighted instruments and switchgear, controls that can be operated without stretching, and moulded trays for the vital oddments (VHF,

ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION

Despite numerous advantages, waterjets are a rare sight on production powerboats because they are expensive. The twin Hamilton 211 waterjets are not the only option; more conservative buyers can use the same 230hp KAMD42 engines to drive conventional Volvo Duoprop Aquamatic outdrive legs.

Waterjets allow builders the option of dispensing with the gearbox because reverse thrust is a function of the jet. However, Storebro have generously included two Hurth gearboxes, so that if either jet intake becomes blocked,

reversing the gearbox allows blow-back to clear the obstruction.

Having to move eight of the ten cockpit cushions to allow the engineroom hatch to open properly was particularly irritating, especially as the hatch overlapped the cockpit seats by a single unnecessary inch.

Working on the engine's own service items was fine, but reaching the outboard fuel filters and hydraulic reservoirs would involve a Houdini-like squeeze through a 13in (330mm) gap at the front of the engines. And the raw-water strainers are mounted behind the engines on plywood plates that impair access to the jet-drives.



Forward of the engineroom is a secondary machinery space with the fuel, water and holding tanks, batteries, and calorifier. Moving the fuel filters and hydraulic reservoirs into this area would solve the problem of their accessibility.

HANDLING AND PERFORMANCE

The remarkable manoeuvrability provided by the waterjets is only one aspect of the marvellous control available. Because the adjustment on the buckets is incremental, it's possible, if necessary, to move very slowly – substantially slower than the four or five knots that is often the rapid minimum tickover speed associated with conventional drives. And finally, the thrust can be controlled in a way that allows a 'holding' position to be adopted against the prevailing wind and tide, a difficult task even on a



boat fitted with twin engines and a bow thruster.

The directional stability of the J32 in waves needs considerable improvement (see Design Notes). At very low speeds, the tendency to wander can be reduced by simultaneously increasing the revs and 'decreasing' the bucket. However, at higher speeds, the boat would often veer sharply off course – when, for instance, it was crossing the wake of the larger (43ft/13m) Storebro. In the stronger crosswinds encountered, we had to apply compensating helm to counteract the sideways drift caused by the higher-than-average topsides catching the wind. The drift effect would probably be reduced if the directional stability were improved.



Verdict

Storebro are much more innovative than their conservative image suggests, such as in their extensive use of Cadcam and moulded internal monocoque structures. But they are still to be congratulated for developing such a pioneering and inventive craft.

However, Storebro's new boat is like a wayward child – it has such a strong personality and looks so different that it sometimes forgets who its parents are. And of course, its parents are famous for their excellent engineering, tremendous safety and security, and consummate attention to behind-the-scenes finish and design detail.

It's not really the little J32's fault. In all the excitement, Storebro have allowed it to get away with behaviour that their normal offspring would be chastised for. Discarding the non-slip just so the boat can have a shiny foredeck is simply reckless, and unlike Storebro. And a few other details hint at a premature birth: undersized dinette seats, poor access to

some service items, magnetic catches, having to remove cushions to access the engine room, and the lack of directional stability across waves. The good news is that a spot of minor 'counselling' would easily bring the J32 into line. And it's not all one-sided – the boat has a great helm, good galley, a big forecabin, a well-designed cockpit; and the mooring cleats are works of art.

Although the J32 is available with outdrive legs, I think that a considerable part of its appeal relates to the jet-drives. The combination of shallow draught, the ability to beach the boat and the lack of underwater appendages can often open up new cruising grounds.

Unsurpassed manoeuvrability is perhaps the most immediately impressive quality of the jet-drive J32. As I stepped ashore at the end of the test, after driving sideways under complete control across the marina, I knew it would be a long time before I skipped another boat that would cause amazed onlookers to burst into spontaneous applause. □

chocolate, binoculars and so on). Storebro have sensibly resisted the temptation to cut down the screens – this allows the helmsman to sit down properly and benefit from the screen's weather protection, while still maintaining good sight lines over the bow. The sight lines also profit from the J32's modest trim angles, which drop to below 3° once the boat passes over the hump at 3,300rpm.

CONSTRUCTION

Conventional hand-laid chopped-strand mat is used for the hull and deck structures. Storebro have stuck with orthophthalic polyester resins, although most firms are now switching to isophthalic resins – at least on external laminates – to reduce the risk of osmosis.

LAY-UP WEIGHTS

(reinforcement only)

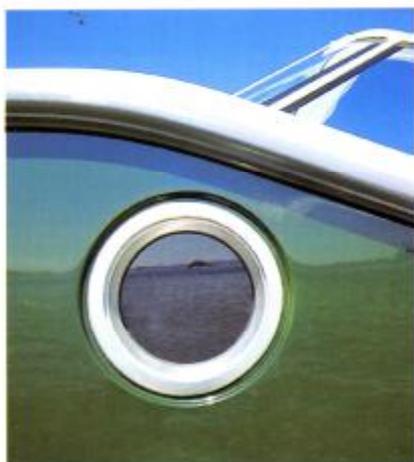
Deck
6.9oz/ft² (2.1kg/m²)

Topsides
9.5oz/ft² (2.9kg/m²)

Chine
33.3oz/ft² (10.2kg/m²)

Bottom
19.7oz/ft² (6.0kg/m²)

Keel
39.3oz/ft² (12.0kg/m²)



HAVE YOU MET GERMAN FRERS' LATEST LITTLE BABY?

"I wanted to design a boat for people who see motor boating as an important ingredient to their high standard of living, but not necessarily as a lifestyle.

At the same time, I wanted to create something unique.

To achieve this we chose to merge Storebro's heritage with the most advanced boat building technology.

From the fifties we borrowed the beautiful lines of Storebro's classical Solö boats.

From the nineties we profited from the use of our computer software to give her a seakindly hull shape which is perfectly matched to the water jet technology.



The past meets the future and the first new Storebro weekender in almost 50 years is born. We named her Storebro J32 and she is everything that we expected."

German Frers

Meet German Frers latest creation, the Storebro J32, at the London International Boat Show, stand no 43 C, January 9-18, 1998. If you can't be there, have a peek at her on the Internet; www.storebro.se.

