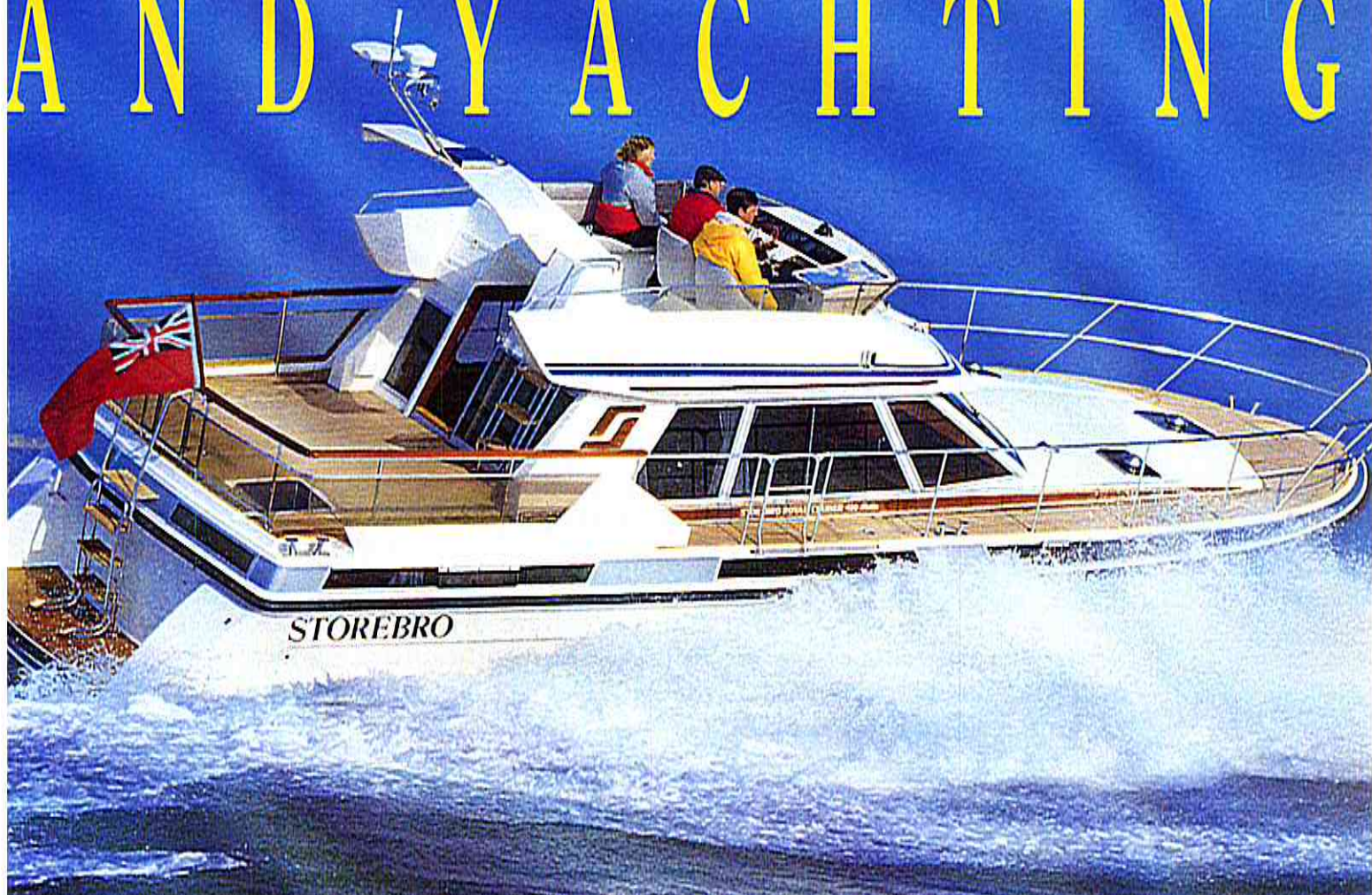


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THE STORY of how refugees fleeing Estonia after World War II brought their boatbuilding skills to an engineering company in Sweden is one of the marine industry's favourite legends.

In those days the Storebro workshops made not boats but lathes for

use in the armaments industry, and even today machine tools are the mainstay of Storebro Royal Cruisers' parent company, Storebro Bruk AB.

The early wooden Royal Cruisers progressed from clinker construction to seamless carvel planking,

and good examples are now sought-after classics. Glassfibre production started in 1968 at Västervik on the Baltic, but instead of exploiting this as an opportunity for massive expansion, Storebro decided to stick where they knew they were achieving good results, at the top-

BOATREPORT

STOREBRO ROYAL



quality, low-volume end of the marine market.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

The last Royal we tested was a 400 Baltic in January 1990. That boat had a hull form typical of the marque, with a deep forefoot and

noticeably convex bottom panels running back to a very modest deadrise of around 9°. The idea behind the design, by Winifried Wilke, was to produce an easily driven hull with good seakeeping that didn't slam upwind in a chop. It was a moot point as to whether

this gave planing or semi-displacement performance at the boat's maximum speed of 24 knots.

A move into the 30-knot bracket, however, obviously persuaded Storebro that a new approach was needed. The 420 has a more conventional medium to deep-vee hull ▶

420



Storebro Royal cruisers don't come cheap, but for the price you are promised a high-quality, expertly made craft with more than a little class. Tony Jones tries out their new 42-footer. Photographs by Lester McCarthy

BOATREPORT

STOREBRO ROYAL 420

CONTINUED



with an almost constant deadrise of 23°. The generous chine flats are down-angled fore and aft but horizontal amidships, and the single spray rail starting just aft of the stem terminates amidships.

The boat's construction is conventional, conservative, and to Det Norske Veritas standards – which says it all. Her external appearance follows traditional Royal practice with a nicely proportioned superstructure atop a fairly deep, high-volume hull that somehow manages to avoid looking boxy. Instead

of a radar arch, there's a rather radical pylon-mounted wing with drooped tips and a short mast to carry the upper navigation light and antennas.

ONDECK

Getting aboard a high-sided boat should be easy: all you need is a ladder attached to the gunwale and a gate in the guardrails. Storebro's solution is simple and elegant, neatly combining the two in a swing-up tubular stainless boarding ladder that doubles as a gate.

On deck everything is as you would

Navigator and driver sit side-by-side in the ergonomically arranged lower helm position.

want it. The sturdy guardrails and stanchions are the correct height and beautifully fabricated – the welds being all but invisible. Perspex dodgers around the aft deck are less obtrusive than fabric or solid GRP and provide excellent security and comfort. A teak capping rail provides the finishing touch. From here a tubular ladder with teak treads leads down to the bathing platform and on our boat the swim ladder stowed up against



The mahogany finish in the saloon is to Storebro's usual excellent standards.

it. However, future boats will have the swim ladder retracting into the port buttress locker, leaving the bathing platform unobstructed. The starboard buttress can be used either to store swimming gear or to house the optional 15kg (33lb) stern anchor and windlass.

Six 12in (30cm) cleats take care of mooring duties and a powerful capstan winch - hidden out of sight in a recessed foredeck well - handles the 20kg (44lb)

Bruce anchor which self-stows against a stainless steel stemhead plate. Remote operation is possible from both helm stations, and a hand controller on a wander lead is a superior option to foot buttons for when you need to see what's coming up along with the chain.

The standard deck finish is non-slip GRP, but this particular boat had the optional extra teak overlay. Fender storage is in lockers beneath the sidedecks, a neater and more secure solution than the usual wire baskets. Another classy touch is the provision of

two 8ft (2.74m) boathooks in tubes on the underside of the flybridge.

ACCOMMODATION

Anything other than a restrained classical elegance would come as a nasty shock on a Royal.

Despite this, the interior packs immediate impact thanks to an air of quality that seduces the senses. The mahogany joinery is clearly the work of cabinet-makers rather than carpenters, and the buttoned upholstery has an almost feline look of perfection. But >

BOAT REPORT

STOREBRO ROYAL 420

CONTINUED



then Royals have always been as much about the 'how' as the 'what'.

The saloon is down four steps from the aft deck and measures a generous 9ft 0in \times 9ft 6in (2.71m \times 2.90m) at window level with plenty of headroom. The U-shaped settee to port seats five around a drop-side teak table, and opposite there's a full-length sideboard that extends beneath the helm seat to provide a wet-bar, drinks cabinet, fridge and entertainment centre.

In accordance with standard Royal practice, the forward arm of the settee

flips over on an ingenious mechanism to provide a two-person forward-facing bench seat, and there are innumerable other thoughtful and unusual features. Extra chart storage (roof-mounted in a drop-down tray above the settee) and a removable teak grating and recessed dirt trap on the top step leading from the aft deck are just two examples.

Others include the way the complete overhead instrument console is released by unscrewing two large knurled knobs, whereupon it drops down on straps to a convenient height to give superb access

More fine woodwork is on show in the galley, which is equipped with twin sinks and a two-burner hob.

to the wiring, and the positioning of the engine coolant expansion tanks in little side lockers where you can see the level without having to lift hatches in the sole and unscrew the caps. Look in the bottom of the sideboard lockers and you will find unobtrusive hatches covering the sensor units in the tops of the fuel tanks. Of course, you may never need to get to these, but if you did . . .

The carpet is the sort that makes you



want to kick off your deck shoes for the sheer sensual pleasure of walking across it barefoot, and, of course, it has properly bound edges. Beneath it, the teak and holly sole extends right out to the edges of the hull, under the settee and below the sideboard.

Four steps down from the saloon are the galley and dinette. The latter is raised above the normal floor level and arranged in a cosy little alcove which can be curtained off for even greater intimacy. The table drops in a trice to convert the area into an occasional 6ft 3in x 4ft 1in (1.90m x 1.24m) double bed with a small standing area at the foot. Alternatively, a permanent double cabin with two single bunks can be specified.

The U-shaped galley to starboard is an intricately crafted cabinet-maker's showpiece with twin sinks, two-burner hob, microwave oven, fridge and freezer. Storage on the outboard side below the sidedecks includes excellent glass and plate racks which supplement

the drawers below the worktops and the high-level lockers fore and aft.

Forward of the galley/dinette area, through a sliding door with a secure latch-back facility, is the guest cabin with civilised separate ensuite toilet and shower facilities to port and starboard. This still leaves plenty of standing room with 6ft 6in (1.95m) headroom at the foot of the centrally placed bed.

A chest of drawers and a hanging locker flank the foot of the bed and there's a wide shelf along both sides of the hull. Double doors in the bed base open onto a cave locker which can also be loaded with bulky items from the top by lifting the bottom of the mattress. Forward of this is another top-loading space for occasional bedding.

The owner's aft cabin has its 6ft 6in x 5ft 0in (1.95m x 1.50m) bed slightly offset to port to make room for spacious toilet and shower facilities and a wide sideboard on the starboard side, the shower cubicle in this case being separated from the toilet compartment by a

The dinette occupies a raised alcove. The area converts easily into a 6ft 3in x 4ft 1in (1.90m x 1.24m) double.

folding glass door. The mixer tap at the washbasin has an additional pull-out shower head for hair washing.

Here, as throughout the rest of the boat, all the fixtures and fittings are first class: both ends of the boat are equipped with Raritan electric heads and have teak grating soles, and even the plumbing fittings are in brass rather than the usual plastic. The lack of extractor ventilators in the heads compartments is an uncharacteristic oversight.

The main cabin is light and airy thanks to the skylight escape hatch and the strip windows running down both sides just below the gunwale and right across the transom. There's a substantial amount of very solid joinery on both sides of the cabin. This limits the room either side of the bed but provides two good-sized hanging lockers and plenty of shelf space. Surprisingly, the under-deck area to port beneath a large mirror ▷

BOATREPORT

STOREBRO ROYAL 420

CONTINUED



The arm of the saloon settee (left) flips over to form a forward-facing bench for two people (right).



seems to have been ignored. The space below the bed, with its special interior sprung mattress, is taken up mostly with water tanks and batteries, plus a flare pack and first-aid kit.

ENGINES

Storebro have chosen twin 430hp (316kW) Volvo TAMD72s to power the 420, giving a power-to-weight ratio of 64hp per ton. Twin Disc gearboxes feed the power to the rather special (and expensive) five-bladed Hamble props.

The entrance to the engineroom is behind the galley steps and all routine maintenance points are easily accessible. Big Perspex raw-water strainers and primary fuel filters are arranged in pairs on the forward bulkhead.

The stainless steel fuel tanks are located outboard of the engines. On this boat they were entirely separate, but on future 420s interconnect and transfer facilities will be available.

A traditional Royal feature is the exhaust system that exits below the waterline via transom-mounted trunking, and on this boat the integral bathing platform helps to further reduce noise levels and visible smoke.

Heating, air-conditioning and a generator are available as options. An excellent standard feature is a rack of six neatly labelled diaphragm pumps to deal with water pressure and bilge pumping duties. A typically thoughtful touch is the provision of a clip alongside the heater so that even the glowplug spanner has its own proper place.

Detailed inspection of the Royal's main and auxiliary systems reveals a totally uncompromising approach. Quite simply, the highest quality equipment is installed using the very best engineering practice. In an ideal world, all boats would be engineered to these standards.

HANDLING AND PERFORMANCE

Both helm stations are neatly and ergonomically arranged. On the flybridge, twin bucket seats face an attractive and effective console with simplified instrumentation arranged in a strip above the wood-rimmed wheel. The twin-lever controls, trim-tab rocker switches and bow-thruster control all come nicely to hand.

To the right there's a Perspex-covered chart area ideal for pilotage, and room for autopilot and nav system repeaters, but no cup holders were fitted to this particular boat.

The lower position is naturally more comprehensive. The helmsman and navigator sit side by side with the wheel and throttles on the left and a large, flat chart area immediately in front of the right-hand seat. Ahead of this, a full range of engine instruments is set in a full-width pod, and the switch gear is nicely arranged in another console beneath the port window.

This layout makes it easy for the helmsman to con the boat single-handed if necessary without having to leave the wheel, but I have reservations about mounting the radar vertically under a flap in the chart table. The square grid-like object to the left of the throttles is an ashtray, but again there are no cup holders.

The seat adjusts horizontally, and there's an excellent fold-away footrest. The powerful demister system and hot and cold windscreen wash system are exemplary, and fitted as standard.

The 420 exhibits docile handling during docking manoeuvres. The boxes engage smoothly and there's none of the lunging back and forth too often experienced on lesser boats; the five-bladed propellers may have something to do with this.

On the open sea, typical Royal characteristics become immediately apparent.

Storebro like their boats to ride as flat as possible at normal cruising speed, without resorting to the trim tabs to keep the bow down. This works perfectly well unless you want to play hooligans and chuck the boat around at high speed, when the secondary effect of full rudder depresses the bow just a bit too far, whereupon sheets of water are thrown up by the inside chine.

A bit more aft trim might also come in handy when travelling downwind in a seaway, but conditions on the day of our test didn't allow us to check.

Brutal application of full lock when running flat out also revealed a slight tendency for the rudders to stall, but Storebro have already implemented modifications to correct this.

The excellent low-speed torque of the Volvo TAMD72s pushed the boat up onto the plane without a moment's hesitation and produced a maximum speed of 29 knots with a two-thirds fuel load, full water and three crew.

At this rate the engines are gobbling fuel at 42.5gal/h (193lt/h) - which is equivalent to 0.7mpg - but consumption can be virtually halved by reducing revs from 2,600 to 2,200 and settling for a very respectable cruising speed of 26 knots. At this speed the Storebro Royal's cruising range, allowing for 20% reserves, is nearly 320 miles.

Noise levels remained reasonable throughout the boat, and the five-bladed propellers certainly seemed to reduce high-speed vibration.

CONCLUSION

There are certainly other 42ft motor cruisers capable of doing what the Storebro Royal Cruiser 420 does for far less money. But pride of ownership is what Royal Cruisers are all about, and this new addition to the range can only enhance Storebro's already enviable reputation. The very best will always be a rare and expensive commodity. □

TECHNICAL DATA

DIMENSIONS

Length overall	42ft 3in (12.88m)
Hull length	42ft 3in (12.88m)
Waterline length	36ft 10in (11.23m)
Beam	13ft 9in (4.19m)
Draught	3ft 11in (1.19m)
Displacement	13 tons
Fuel capacity	350gal (1,591lt)
Water capacity	132gal (588lt)

ACCOMMODATION

Two double cabins with ensuite toilets and showers, convertible double dinette. Galley. Wheelhouse/saloon. Flybridge and aft deck.

ENGINES

Twin Volvo TAMD 72 diesels driving 25in x 33½in (635mm x 851mm) propellers via MG507A gearboxes.

Capacity	6,700
Cylinders	6
Max rpm	2600
Max hp	413

PERFORMANCE

Top speed	29 knots
(¾ tanks, three crew)	
Cruising speed	26 knots
Cruising range	320 miles

CONSTRUCTION

Hand-laid chopped-strand mat and woven rovings in polyester resin.

Foam sandwich deck and hull.

Hollow top hat frames and stringers.

Lay-up weights (reinforcement only)

Keel	7oz/ft ² (2.10g/m ²)
Bottom	11oz/ft ² (3.30kg/m ²)
Chine	31oz/ft ² (9.35kg/m ²)
Topsides	18oz/ft ² (5.75kg/m ²)
Deck	29oz/ft ² (8.75g/m ²)

PRICE

From	£283,333 (ex VAT)
As tested	£21,101 (ex VAT)

BUILDER

Storebro Royal Cruisers, S-59083, Storebro, Sweden. Tel: 010 46 492 30160.

SUPPLIER

Paul Hadley Boat Sales, Northney Marina, Northney Road, Hayling Island, Hants PO11 0NH. Tel: 0705 461672.

DESIGNER

Johan Bjorklund/W. H. Wilke (1991)

