

Storebro Royal 31



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BOAT REPORT



Storebro Baltic 31

For

*Exceptional standard of finish
Good handling qualities
Effective hull design
Well fitting windows and framing
Good bilge pumping system
Excellent steering position
and engine controls*

Against

*Lifelines, stanchions not standard
Dangerous boat hook stowage
No extinguishers in engine room
No fender eyes
No gas bottle stowage if required
Wrong wheel*

FOR the first time since the introduction of our full length boat reports, the trials' team packed its bags this summer and travelled overseas to the Baltic. Our destination was Vastervik, on Sweden's east coast where Storebro Bruks mould hulls for their well established range of Royal cruisers. The town is situated on a coast protected by a magnificent island archipelago, an area which lends itself perfectly to a mixture of calm inter island cruising and at times more boisterous passage making in the Baltic proper.

The attraction for us was Storebro's new three boat range of 31-footers, all based on the same hull but offering different deck and accommodation layouts. The Adriatic is a four-berther with a large open cockpit, the Biscay a five-berther with an enclosed wheelhouse, and the Baltic, the boat we concentrated on, a roomy six-berther with a centre cockpit and aft cabin.

What the Swedes have been looking for is an easily produced (all forward accom-

modation and superstructure is common to the three versions) boat which handles without fuss at high and low speeds in the confined waters around the islands, and yet is still capable of thumping through the rough stuff at 15 to 20 knots. Their basic ingredients are large power units, a shallow vee aft, a fine entry forward and a hefty keel.

We were not only looking for a versatile performance, but also comfort in this fast cruiser. We were keen to see if Storebro's traditionally well built interiors were up to scratch, but above all we tried to judge whether the package as a whole would be worth the extra cash required by a UK buyer to cover the rate of exchange.

The situation has been eased a lot recently by the devaluation of the Swedish krona by about 10 per cent and the slow but sure strengthening of sterling. Perhaps the most encouraging sign has been the decision by Boat Showrooms of London to take on the Royal dealership in the UK.

Hull form

Fundamentally, the hull is a shortened version of the 34, a design which originated some 20 years ago, although much more flare has been introduced into the topsides forward. She has excellent qualities for fast offshore work with a fine entry and flare to keep solid water away from the decks. Moving aft the sections flatten out steadily ending in a shallow vee aft.

The design is unusual in that it is a mixture of chine and round bilge form, using the flatter sections of the former to give lift and speed and the rounder sections of the latter to give a softer, easier ride. Instead of the chine itself being angular it is rounded, and this shape is carried forward until it fades into the bow sections. A knuckle has

been introduced into the topsides just above the rounded chine and this is designed to throw back the bow wave and spray. A keel runs the whole length of the boat to give directional stability.

A good deal has been done to update the styling of the coachroof and superstructure from the somewhat old fashioned looks of the 34. The heavily constructed windscreen framing matches the superstructure mouldings well, and a particularly attractive feature is the curved glass screening in the forward facing windows. This does a lot to break up what would otherwise be a rather angular structure.

Construction

A humidity and temperature controlled moulding shop, dust-free painting and var-



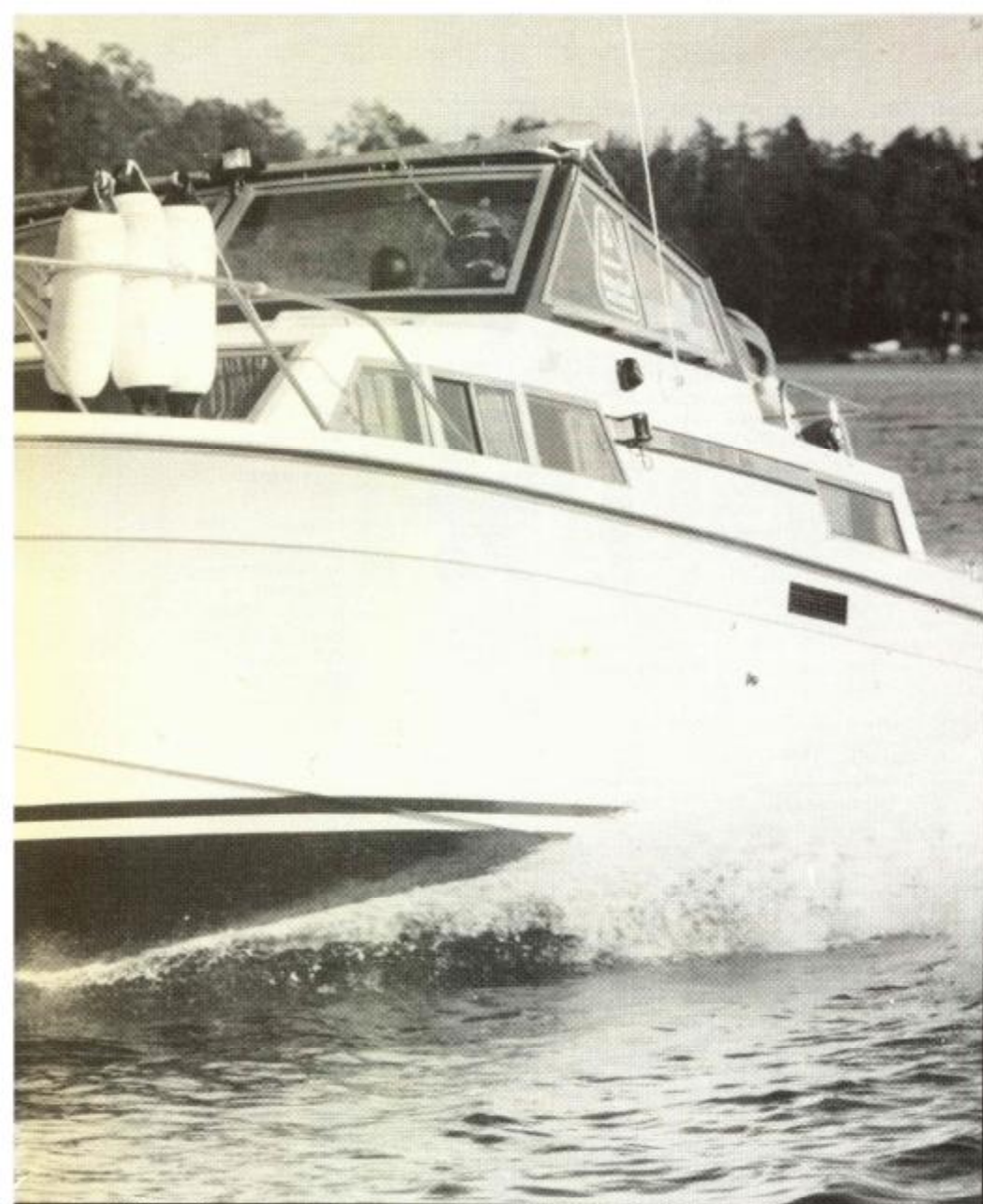
Above, at speed in the smooth, inter-island waters off Vastervik. Right, in the Baltic proper, the knuckle keeps spray low

nishing chambers capable of holding several boats at a time, and enormous ovens which ensure a complete chemical reaction in the curing process in hull and deck mouldings, hopefully mean that Storebro's products reach the water in as near perfect condition as possible. It was difficult to find any fault in the glassfibre finish on our Baltic 31; all hulls are finished to Det Norske Veritas standards (the equivalent of Lloyds).

The hull is strengthened by a complex pre-formed, glassfibre framework which is heavily bonded into the hull. Four main stringers, with bonded in steel plating by way of the engine bearers, run the whole length of the boat, and another stringer runs from stem to stern along the inside of the topsides. The framework is filled with a type of expanded polystyrene, but to prevent capillary action saturating the material in the event of a leak, it is divided into sections so that water can't spread from a single point.

Three major bulkheads, one either side of the engine compartment and another aft of the fore cabin, divide the boat. For a solid bond between deck moulding and hull, a steel band is glassed into the gunwale.

Apart from the decks, which are teak laid, all wood work on the upperworks is



solid mahogany, brought up to a mirror finish with eight coats of varnish. Below, solid mahogany or mahogany faced ply is used for joinery of exceptional quality. Mitre joints were spot on, all counter sinking was dowelled off beautifully and every locker door, apart from being edged, had been built in panels to prevent warping.

Cave locker lids were varnished (front and back) and soft wood structures forming bunk supports all had a protective coat of paint.

The aluminium window framing, so often a problem with production boat building, looked robust and well fitting and although we were unable to get enough water aboard to test their watertightness. Storebro said they have never had to think about changing them. They come from Norway and are made by Golar Metal.

Once below in the 31, there is little to indicate that she is of glassfibre construction, with mahogany faced panelling hiding the topsides in the main saloon, and vinyl material and headliner panels covering up neatly in the fore and aft cabins.

Engines

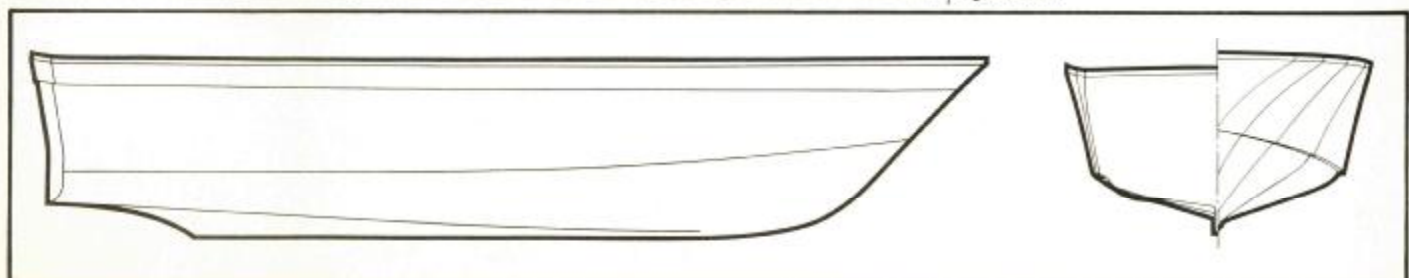
Our boat was fitted with the most powerful option available — twin Volvo Penta TAMD 60 diesels each producing 192hp (141kW). The most popular option however is the less powerful Volvo Penta TMD40 twin installation with each unit delivering 125hp (90.1kW). Its popularity probably stems from the saving in price which works out at something like £6000.

These big engines were installed with room to spare beneath the cockpit flooring (lifted in panels for access) and there was no difficulty in getting to the outboard side of each motor. Oil dip sticks were located on the port side of both engines and were perfectly easy to get at.

Extensive sound insulation, consisting of a lead backed rubberised foam made up in the Storebro factory, tidy wiring and excellent engine compartment lighting were among some of the good features.

The engines themselves are flexibly mounted on level beds and drive through Twin Disc 1:1.5 reduction boxes which accommodate a 10° drop in angle to link up with the shafts. Props are handed and the small rudders are positioned slightly off centre so that shafts can be drawn without having to dismantle the steering gear. Stern gland greasers are conveniently positioned in a locker in the cockpit. Separate stainless steel fuel tanks are solidly installed either side of the engine compartment and feed through flexible fuel lines via filters and watertraps for each engine.

Tailor made battery boxes, which drain overboard, hold separate banks, two 60 amp hour heavy duties for domestic supply and two 160 amp hour batteries for engine starting. These are outside the engine room immediately behind the aft bulkhead in the aft cabin, easily accessible for regular inspection.





continued

Apart from a manually operated Whale Gusher 25, the boat is equipped with three separate, automatic, electric bilge pumps; one for the engine compartment, one for the bilges aft and another to cope with saloon and forward bilges. These are Jabsco units and pump at a rate of 3.5gpm.

The entire electrical system is protected by circuit breakers which are housed in a panel to the left of the steering position. Storebro have done a very neat job here and, with the help of the wiring diagram they supply, a problem in this department should be diagnosed rapidly. The only difficulty is that the panel has to be unscrewed before it can be hinged back; a simple, secure catch would have been better.

Apart from a 2kg manual fire extinguisher fitted in the cockpit there was no fire equipment fitted in the engine room, something we would have liked as standard. Petrol engine installations (Chryslers can be fitted) have automatic Halon extinguishers fitted.

Accommodation

The designers haven't tried anything revolutionary in accommodation layout, but the clever use of lighting and attractive partitioning between the main saloon and the fore cabin are two simple but effective features.

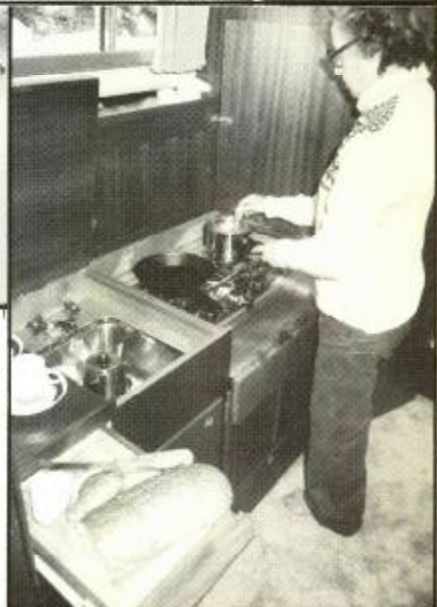
The full length vee berths forward are comfortable, have plenty of width and there is an enormous amount of good stowage beneath each bunk. A tough looking, easy to open fore hatch is well positioned in the centre of the foredeck to provide an escape route if there is trouble below.

But what we liked most about the fore-cabin was the effective division from the main saloon consisting of a bulkhead with a window set into it to port and two doors also fitted with windows. The windows, made of Perspex for safety, maintained a light, airy feeling in the cabins but when curtained provided plenty of privacy.

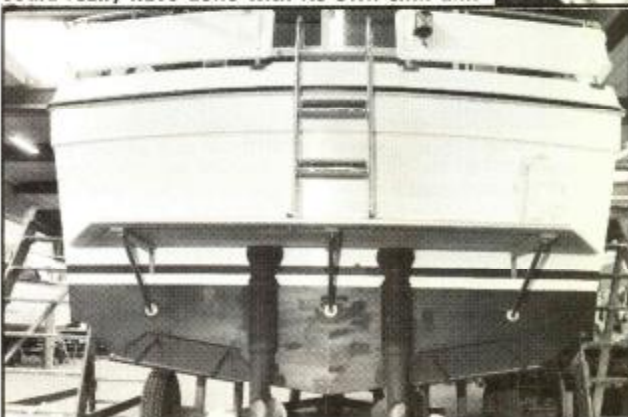
In the main saloon there is a dinette arrangement to port and plenty of seating for four or five around the table. The seating is high enough to allow people sitting down to see out of the windows, and the concealed lighting behind pelmets above the windows gives a very cosy atmosphere in the evenings.

Opposite is a large galley. It is equipped with a meths pressure stove which had the normal, rather alarming starting procedure. Customers in this country who don't like spirit stoves could change but there is no purpose built gas stowage. A good, deep sink, a hot and cold water pressure system (throughout the boat), plenty of stowage and wooden sliding doors which actually slide were among some of the good points in the galley.

A sliding window over the stove provided plenty of ventilation and individual bulkhead lights, which could be switched to a soft or bright level, provided more



Top, Lars Bjureus, David Glenn and Betty Coltham sampling herring and Swedish beer in the comfortable saloon. Note the Perspex panel in the fore cabin/saloon partition. Centre, the cockpit was large and well equipped, spoilt only by the small, spoked wheel. The canopy can be seen here neatly stowed forward on top of the windscreen framing. Storebro weren't keen on having to move all the floorboarding just to check oil and water levels and they are working on ways of carrying out checks via a small cap set into the flooring. Above, the simple two berth aft cabin could really have done with its own sink unit



Above, the well equipped galley with a deep sink, tons of stowage and an alcohol stove, which once afloat performed very well. Note the cutting board, left, which slides under the draining board. Left, a lot of gear hanging on the transom including the bathing platform, underwater exhausts, fixed trim tabs and the neat, folding bathing ladder. Note the rounded chine and knuckle above which runs right forward



Top, reaching for the oil dip stick on the port engine wasn't as difficult as it perhaps looks. There wasn't a great deal of room to spare in the engine compartment but most essential items were get-at-able. Note the stern gland greasers in the cockpit locker, bottom left. Centre, the beautiful teak laid decks were a good feature of this boat. The open ended pulpit is to make Scandinavian style mooring easier. Above, left, the neat tool box situated in the saloon, rather far from the engines themselves and not the best place to stow flares and a first aid kit. However, a very neat idea. Above, right, plenty of room in the toilet compartment, in this case fitted with a chemical loo. Boats can be fitted with a fully flushing loo. This compartment was also fitted with a shower unit and the whole boat had hot and cold running water. Shower water flows through a teak grating to a holding tank

than enough lighting at night.

Under the after end of the dinette seating area was an impressive, specially made tool box. It consisted of a moulded glass-fibre tray which was specifically compartmented with spanners, belts, touch up varnish and brushes, light bulbs and many other bits and pieces. It even contained flares and a first aid kit. Although comprehensive we didn't think it a handy place for flares or a first aid kit, and the tools were some distance from the engines themselves.

The toilet compartment comprised a moulded sink unit, cupboards, shower and a chemical lavatory. Fully flushing sea toilets can be fitted if desired.

The layout of the after cabin was simple with two full length berths either side, a vanity unit with a cupboard and mirror and a large wardrobe. More effort should have been made to make this cabin self-contained and the addition of a basin would have helped.

Although there is a good deal of stowage in the large wardrobe, space under the bunks is slightly restricted because the main water tanks are positioned here. We were surprised to find plastic tanks but Storebro said they had tested them thoroughly and there had been no sign of splitting or leaking. The inspection hatches were simple screw on lids which made access for cleaning easy.

The high standard of joinery, the conventional, well tried layout and the excellent lighting and ventilation combined to provide comfortable accommodation. We spent a night aboard and the closer we looked at the craftsmanship the more evidence we found of attention to detail and simple, high class finish.

Deck layout

One of the most attractive aspects of this boat was the teak laid decking, an extra costing about £1670. An expensive extra perhaps, but having compared a boat without the teak, there was no doubt that this would come high on our list of extras, particularly as it provided good non-slip.

UK buyers might be put off by the lack of stanchions and guard rails which are again an extra. One has to bear in mind that the Baltic version of the 31 is designed as a quick cruiser with sportsboat handling qualities — Storebro thought that rails just wouldn't look the part so they depend on heavy, teak grabrails on the coachroof. Nevertheless, one felt a little vulnerable when moving forward underway, and there certainly should have been fender eyes in the absence of stanchions.

The fore deck was well equipped with fender stowage in racks on the pulpit, anchor stowage (rather on the small side) set neatly into the teak decks and two decent sized bollards. Disappointingly, there were no backing plates, but at least the nuts and washers on the underside of the fore deck were easy to get at. There is ply reinforcement in the moulding.

Another point we weren't keen on was the stowage of the boat hook on the side deck alongside the coachroof. It was easy to trip over and dislodge from its stowage brackets.

We liked the robust bathing platform on the transom and the neatly designed bathing ladder which folded over the platform and dropped vertically into the water. If it was in the up position it could be lowered by a person in the water.



continued

The cockpit was well finished with the steering position and all instruments to port. The spoked wheel was rather on the small side and really not the right type for a boat like this; Boat Showrooms will be fitting larger wheels with a continuous outer rim.

Chart stowage in front of the steering position is good and there is a purpose built slot for an auto pilot beneath this if required. The steering position itself was good with a comfortable seat and a solid footrest which one could stand on to look over the windscreen. The screen itself is well equipped with wipers; washers and defrosters (ducted air from the Eberspacher central heating unit) are extras.

Our trials were carried out in fine weather but in poor conditions and at night a well fitting canopy can be erected.

Handling

We carried out our speed trials along a smooth stretch of water completely protected from the Baltic by a group of islands. In these calm conditions she handled positively, planing at about 12 knots and levelling out gradually as one approached top speed of 26 knots. Noise levels were acceptable at all stations, except in the after cabin where recordings at full rpm were on the high side.

We were pleased to see this boat fitted with dual lever controls which meant that manoeuvring in a confined space was simple. She turned more or less in her own length and when we had to go astern to reach a mooring the amount of control was impressive.

Once clear of the islands we found open sea and a bit of chop to try her in. Idling along at about 10 knots she bobbed from wave to wave, but kept dry. Once up on the plane she powered her way through the sea throwing up a lot of spray most of which was successfully deflected well away

either side. The seas were just moderate enough to allow full throttle and at this speed she was exciting and easily manageable, although one was confined to sitting down and hanging on tightly. Her ride was soft and steady upwind and she only came down with a big thump on a couple of occasions when we hit the wash of our photographic boat.

Unfortunately during the sea runs a bracket retaining the Morse steering cable close to the rudder heads came away from its mounting, and this affected her turning circle and general responsiveness on the helm. On our downwind leg home this meant we had to spin the wheel to counter-act even the slightest tendency to broach as she planed down the faces of waves.

Later we were able to try a similar boat and although the turning circle seemed a little on the large side at high speeds she was responsive and light on the helm and handled well in confined spaces.

Her most comfortable cruising speed was around 2400rpm, a considerably quieter setting than flat out, but one which gave her a good turn of speed.

Conclusions

Anyone wanting a fast family cruising boat would be hard pressed to find a boat to better the Baltic in terms of performance and finish. She is traditional in style and the standard of finish achieved is quite remarkable. There has been no attempt made at ultra-modern styling which seems to be the tendency with many new boats these days — instead all effort has been put into getting a well proven design absolutely right. The result is very satisfying.

As previously mentioned, the exchange rate situation in this country is a great deal better these days and Scandinavian boat prices have suddenly improved. Nonetheless, this boat, particularly if fitted with the larger engines, is still a good deal more expensive than some of her competitors and only with the smaller engine option does the price begin to match others.

We liked the Baltic very much and feel sure that an owner who knows what he is after will have little to grumble about. He is paying for fine craftsmanship and years of development in the hull design which have been combined to produce a compact, high class motor cruiser.

Technical data

Dimensions

L.o.a.	31ft (9.30m)
Beam	10ft 6in (8.05m)
Draft	3ft 8in (0.95m)
Displacement	8960lb (4068kg)
Fuel capacity	143 gal (650lt)
Water capacity	61.6 gal (280lt)
Number of berths	6 (4 singles, 1 double)

Engines

2 x Volvo Penta TAMD 60 diesel, shaft drive	
Capacity	5480cc
No. cylinders	six in line
Max rpm	2600
Max hp	192 (141kW)

Hull and deck

Material	Polyester resin and chopped strand mat and woven roving reinforcement in female moulds. Balsa reinforcement in decks.
Colour	Off white hull with black boot topping. Superstructure off white.



Price

Delivered to customer in UK, £36,850 (ex VAT) with TAMD 60s. £31,005 (ex VAT) with TMD 40s. Extras total £2,154

Builders

Storebro Bruks AB, S-590 83 Storebro, Sweden

UK dealers

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Designer

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