

# **Royal Cruiser 36 Baltic**

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## Boat report

# Royal Cruiser 36 Baltic

A luxury five-berth cruiser from Scandinavia tested in its home waters

FOR this month's boat report we travelled to Sweden, to test the new Royal Cruiser 36 and to see the factory where it is built.

Storebro Bruks have been making powerful seagoing motor boats for nearly 40 years now, and have concentrated production on the 30ft to 40ft (9-12m) size range. They aim for quality rather than low price, and this combined with an abundance of polished mahogany and well-tried styling has built up a loyal following of owners.

However, in order to expand the appeal of their boats, they have introduced some more modern designs. The 36 is the latest of these, giving comfortable, 25-knot offshore cruising for five people in two cabins.

In layout and performance it bears many similarities to the Fairline 36 that we tested last month, though the recent decline of the pound has made the Royal more expensive. The two will obviously be rivals in this highly competitive sector of the market.

### Hull form

The boat is designed jointly by W.H. Wilke and Storebro's own naval architect, Johnny Lindblom. The hull is a development of previous Royal Cruiser practice, being of semi-displacement form, with fine forward sections, but a round-bilge afterbody to give softer riding at high speeds.

A 3in (75mm) wide flat runs the full length of the boat, starting 4in (100mm) below the waterline at the transom, and rising to 1ft 6in (450mm) above the waterline at the bow, where it tapers into the stem. This throws the bow wave out and down, reducing spray, and preventing water from running up the topsides, which would increase wetted surface resistance. Two further spray rails run from the bow to amidships, on each side of the bottom.

The boat has a deep forefoot, and a keel that runs aft to a point 5ft forward of the transom, to improve directional stability and give some protection to the stern gear.

The deckline is fairly high, giving the topsides a chunky look, but the eye tends to move quickly to the superstructure, which is very well proportioned. The

flying bridge blends in well with the deckhouse and is topped by a raked glassfibre radar goalpost. This is much neater than some of the stainless steel tubular fabrications we see, and is also very rigid, yet it can quickly be hinged down for passing under low bridges.

### Construction

The Storebro approach to construction and production is probably one of the most thorough we have seen, in large part due to the company's long history of manufacturing products other than boats.

Started in 1728, the firm took the name of the town in which it grew up, and over the next 200 years built up a reputation producing machine tools, lathes, engines and agricultural machinery, from castings supplied by its own foundry.

In 1943, Estonian refugees, displaced by the war, escaped across the Baltic in their own boats, and joined the firm's workforce. In their spare time they carried on the craft of building wooden boats



capable of withstanding the severe conditions of this northern sea, and after the war the company utilised their skills to go into production of sturdy clinker-built motor boats.

The most popular of these was the Sea Chaser, a 22ft motor boat with a small cabin, produced in several thousands, from which was developed the Royal Cruiser 1. This was a 25ft boat designed

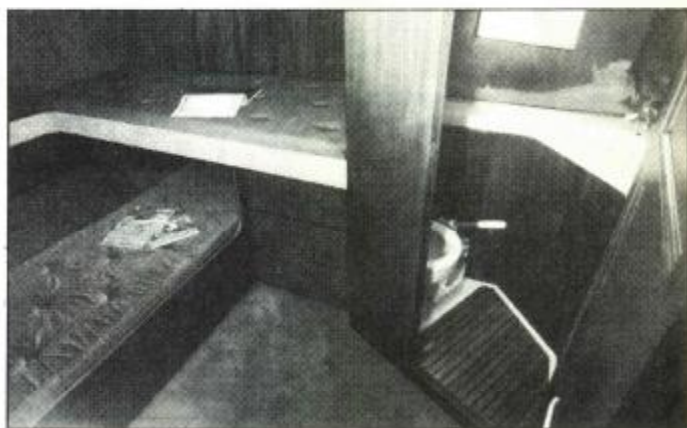
by W.H. Wilke, with a clinker-built mahogany hull. The 34ft Royal Cruiser IV first appeared in 1964, with a carvel planked hull, which was then produced in glassfibre from the early '70s.

Boatbuilding production now employs about 180 men, compared with 340 in the rest of the firm. Production is based both inland at Storebro, and at a new yard 40 miles away on the coast at





*Left: the saloon has plenty of lockers and shelves, and a chart area forward of the helm. Above: the galley is well laid out with fiddles all round.*



*The aft cabin has a double berth with a single over its foot. Headroom over the berths is only 5ft 3in. The ensuite toilet compartment has a shower.*

Västervik, right in the middle of the beautiful Swedish archipelago.

In addition, the firm has its own apprentice training school next to the Storebro works, where boys spend two years learning basic boatbuilding skills before completing their apprenticeship in the yard.

All glassfibre work is carried out in a temperature- and humidity-controlled

environment, with particular importance attached to the post-cure period. The hulls consist of alternate layers of chopped strand mat and woven roving, stiffened with a very complex system of full-length top-hat section stringers and engine bearers, and floors and frames every 26in (650mm). In addition, the areas under the engines and in way of the P-brackets are doubled up with 20mm

foam and additional mat. The result is an immensely strong hull giving the Royal 36 the ability to withstand very heavy weather.

The stiffening backbone is unusual in that it is laid up in one piece off the boat on a male mould or saddle, then glassed into the hull. This ensures the accurate positioning of each frame, as well as speeding up the production process.



## Boat report

# Royal Cruiser 36 Baltic

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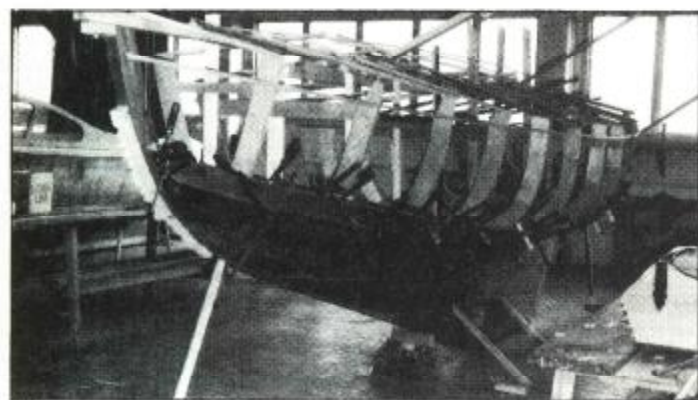
The interior of the hull is then gel-coated throughout to prevent water absorption. The deck and cabin top is a one-piece glassfibre moulding with foam stiffening, and plywood in way of all through-fastened fittings. It is bolted and bonded to the hull, and the join is protected by a substantial rubber D-fender.

The deck is available with laid teak as an option that nearly all owners take.

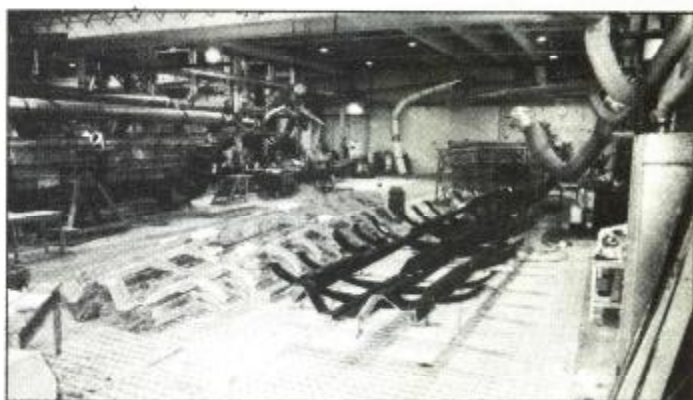
Most of the joinery is made up off the boat, using African mahogany throughout, either solid or veneered, and is then



*Access to the after end of the engineroom is more easily gained by lifting the hatches in the saloon sole than by working through from forward. The hand bilge pump is back-up for three electric pumps.*



*The company has its own training school where apprentices learn the basic boatbuilding skills before completing their time in the yard.*



*The stiffening backbones for the boats are laid up on a male mould before being bonded into the hull. Extractors keep down styrene levels.*

coated with a two-part matt lacquer. All bearers are varnished pine, and very generously proportioned. All hidden woodwork is varnished, including cut edges, which are rounded off to avoid injuring the crew.

## Engines

Standard machinery is twin Volvo TAMD 60B diesels of 221shp each. These drive conventional 50mm stainless steel shafts through Twin Disc MG506 2:1 gearboxes, with 10-degree down-angle output shafts allowing the engines to be mounted virtually horizontal.

It is pleasing to be able to note that for their propellers Storebro come to Hamble Foundries in England. Those on the 36 are unusual in having five blades: the reason for this is to reduce noise and vibration by reducing the loading on each blade, and the overall diameter.

The engines are mounted under the saloon, and normal access is gained by lifting up the steps leading down from its forward end. However, this only allows you to work on the front of the engines, as they are set close together, with their shaft lines only 3ft 4in (1.0m) apart. To reach the stern glands, gearboxes and fuel filters, it is simpler to lift the easily-removed hatches in the saloon sole and drop down into the after end of the engineroom. Space here is greater, and

there is room for an optional 8kW generator to be fitted.

Fuel is supplied from two independent stainless steel tanks mounted outboard of the engines. All piping is of a good size and well clipped, with a very large filter and water trap in each line.

Bilge pumping is taken care of by one of the most comprehensive systems we have seen on a boat of this size. The hull is divided into three compartments, each with its own PAR electric pump, which has both a strumbox and in-line filter in its suction side. Back-up is provided by a manual pump mounted under the saloon settee, with 16ft (5m) flexible suction and discharge hoses allowing it to reach any part of the boat.

Fire-fighting equipment consists of a BCF flooding system for the engineroom, operated from the saloon, one 2kg dry powder extinguisher mounted under the saloon steps and clearly visible, and a second above the galley.

The whole engine compartment is covered with foil-faced foam acoustic material, including the fuel tanks, and all the edges are sealed to prevent absorption of diesel. Every hatch has a rubber seal around it, and the installation proved very effective under way.

Electrics on the boat are 24V, with three 165Ah systems, one for each engine, and one for services. The batteries and master switches are located in the

after cabin, an unusual arrangement, but one that works well once you have got used to it.

The main control panel and all the wiring are made up in a loom off the boat, then installed as the joinery goes in, car fashion. All wiring runs in conduit, except where it connects to the engines, when it is run in reinforced rubber exhaust hose, to give protection but flexibility.

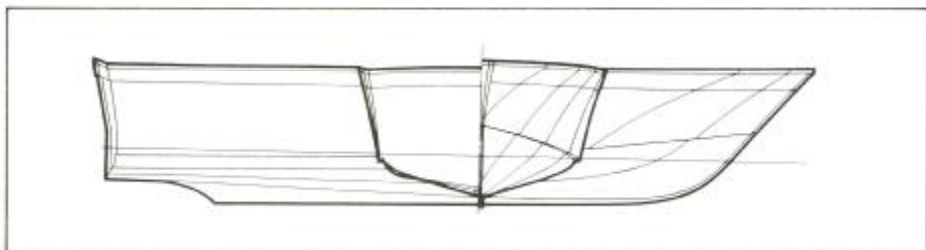
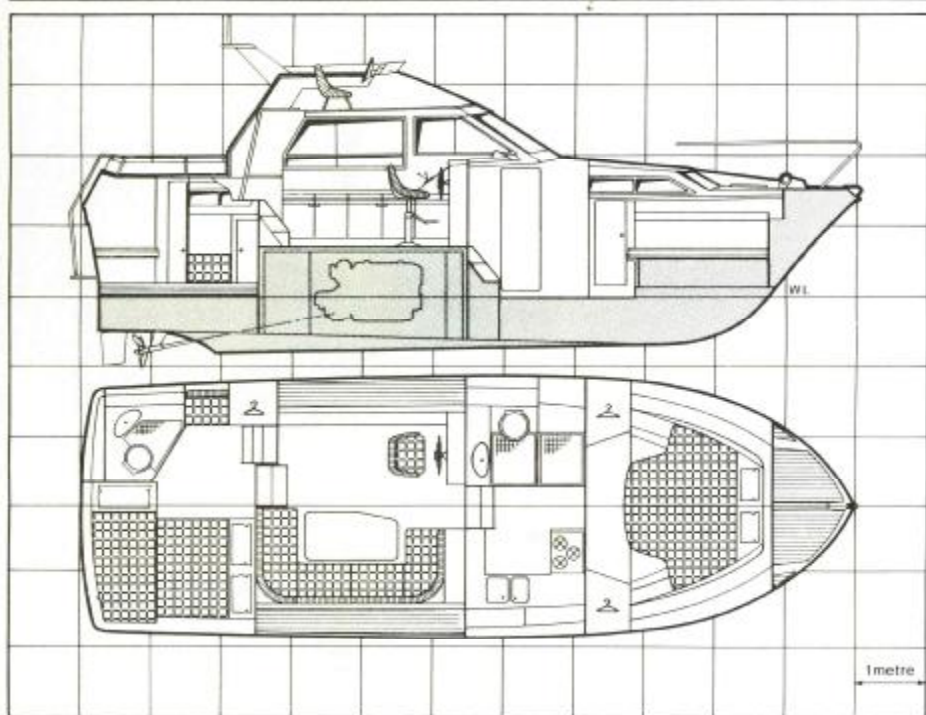
The control panel is mounted on the helmsman's left, with lit-up switches for all circuits. The switches are protected by a perspex cover, a hangover from the days when many of the company's boats had open cockpits. However, this is unnecessary now, and we have commented before that the cover gets in the way of your fingers when feeling for a switch, and can be dispensed with. The panel hinges out for access to the distribution board behind.

All the wiring and engineering throughout the boat is to a very high standard, and it is clear that the layout is planned well in advance rather than as construction progresses.

We were particularly impressed with the bonding system for protection against electrolysis — all through-hull fittings are included, and spare anodes are supplied.

Further spares, together with a comprehensive tool kit, first-aid kit, flares and gel coat repair kit, are housed in a





The master cabin forward has a large double berth, hanging lockers, and its own door into the toilet.

purpose-built glassfibre tray under the forward bunk, a detail that reinforces the impression that everything has been thought of on this boat.

## Accommodation

The Royal aims for comfort rather than maximum number of berths, and offers accommodation for 4/5 in two cabins. The master cabin is forward, with a large central double berth.

Two wardrobes, a large shoe locker under the bed, and full-length shelves give ample storage space, though one or two small drawers would be useful.

Access to the anchor chain locker is through a neat hatch in the forward

bulkhead, which has a rubber seal round its edges, and a wedge-shaped striker plate on its catch so you can really pull it shut and keep out any smells or water.

The cabin has its own door into the main bathroom, which can also be reached from the saloon. In here there is a separate shower compartment, sink and WC, many lockers and shelves, and plenty of elbow room.

The after cabin is for guests or children, and has a large double berth to starboard with a single berth running athwartships over its foot. Stowage is taken care of by a large hanging locker, three deep drawers, and several shelves.

The cabin has its own ensuite shower/toilet compartment, with several lockers

and shelves for personal effects and six towel hooks. Headroom over the berth is only 5ft 3in (1.60m) as opposed to 6ft 3in (1.90m) over the rest of the cabin. This is done to keep the height of the after deck above down, allowing the boat to have a cockpit where people will be happy to sit while under way. In this the designer has succeeded, but we would recommend that Storebro overcome their love of woodwork just once and cushion the projecting corner in the cabin below, or they will be getting some heavy bills for sticking plaster in the future from customers with damaged foreheads.

The saloon has a large L-shaped settee to starboard, with a sturdy table that can be wound up or down as required. Visibility out of the windows is good, and there is an abundance of lockers, shelves and glass holders.

Forward to port is the helmsman's swivel seat, and in front of him is a large area that can be used for chartwork. There is an ingenious locker for the radar, with a lift-up lid over it, but having this open would reduce the chart area.

Visibility from this position is good, and is assured in bad weather by two-speed, self-parking, pantograph wind-screen wipers, which have powerful washers attached directly onto the arms.

Steering is Morse double-cable, push-pull, with a changeover control for transferring operation to the flying bridge. A compartment below the helm is designed to take an autopilot, another example of pre-planning.

The galley is located four steps down from the forward end of the saloon, to starboard. It is U-shaped to give maximum ease of operation of the cooker, sink, fridge and many lockers and drawers, and has ample work top area. Not only are there fiddle rails all round to stop things flying off in a seaway, but these are stopped short at the corners to allow for cleaning of the surfaces.

A view out is provided by an opening portlight, and for serving there is a fiddled shelf between galley and saloon.

Throughout, the accommodation is beautifully finished in polished mahogany, tastefully set off by blue upholstery and carpets.

## Deck layout

The deck of the boat we tested was laid teak, giving the ultimate in comfort and non-slip. Moving about is further made secure by well-placed stainless steel and wooden handrails and securely fastened stanchions.

Flush lockers set in the side decks port and starboard give quick access to fenders, and ropes are stowed either in a flush locker at the bow, or in the cockpit locker.

Careful design of the after cabin described earlier has meant that the after deck provides a comfortable and secure cockpit, with cushions available for lounging. The feeling of privacy is heightened by very clever use of smoked

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# Boat report

## Royal Cruiser 36 Baltic *continued*

perspex wind breaks all around the aft area, which being transparent do not impede the helmsman's rearward vision.

The flying bridge has a single bucket seat for the helmsman, plus a double seat which converts by dint of a lot of Swedish cunning into a full-length sun bed.

### Handling

The Baltic was too calm for our liking, but fortunately the Solent provided us with a force 8 on a subsequent test, and we were able to confirm the seaworthiness of the Royal. The semi-displacement hull gave a smooth if wet ride, and easily maintained 16 knots into some extremely heavy seas leaving everyone on board very confident in its capabilities.

Slow-speed handling was very precise, though the latch mechanism for the dual position steering takes a little getting used to.

Storebro have for many years taken the engine exhausts of their boats down the transom using special glassfibre trunks, with the gases emitting below the waterline. The effect is to reduce noise levels, especially at slow speeds, and to avoid the cloud of diesel fumes and spray which often follows other boats, and we can confirm that the system works well.



The Royal 36 battling its way through a force 8. Note the perspex wind breaks around the aft cockpit.

### Conclusion

At first glance it may not be clear why the Royal Cruiser costs so much more than its rivals, but closer inspection reveals the reasons. Step aboard, and a feeling of quality surrounds you. The cabin door slides open effortlessly, while the top step into the saloon has a removable teak grating to catch the worst of dirt and water from people's feet, and to give a non-slip effect.

Lift up a settee cushion, and the locker top comes out at the same time; no more scrabbling with loose lids.

Roll back the carpets, and all the soles are beautifully varnished ply, with their finger holes rounded off, and no tight fits. Look into the bilges, and there are no ragged glassfibre edges to be seen; all is

smooth and sealed, and more importantly all parts of the hull are readily accessible for inspection.

This attention to detail typifies the whole boat, and helps to ensure two things. Firstly, peace of mind when you are out at sea and the weather turns rough. Secondly, a minimum of those annoying little faults which can spoil even a weekend tied up in the marina.

Add to this a strong seaworthy hull, and you have a powerful luxury motor yacht. Devaluation of the Swedish Kroner has made it more attractive, but its price will still vary as exchange rates fluctuate wildly, so we can only quote a price at today's rate of exchange of 11.80 Swedish Kroner to the pound. The basic boat price is £82,160 ex VAT, with extras costing £4800. □

## Technical data

### Dimensions

L.o.a.	36ft 1in (11.00m)
Beam	12ft 6in (3.83m)
Draught	3ft 11in (1.20m)
Air draught	
Mast up	12ft 10in (3.91m)
Mast down	10ft 2in (3.34m)
Height of deck	
Forward	4ft 10in (1.50m)
Midships	4ft 6in (1.37m)
Aft	5ft 6in (1.7m)
Displacement	9 tons (9150kg)
Fuel capacity	2x145 gal (1320lt)
Water capacity	90 gal (400lt)
No. of berths	5(2 dbl, 1 sgl)

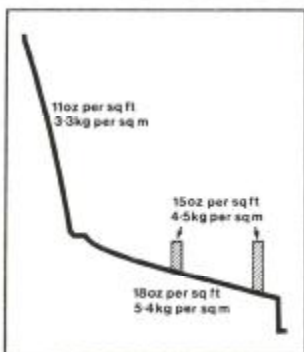
### Engines

Twin Volvo TAMD 60B diesels driving handed five-bladed propellers through conventional shafts and 2:1 ratio Twin Disc MG506 10 degrees down-angle gearboxes.

Capacity	5480cc
No. cylinders	6
Max rpm	2800
Max shp	221

### Hull and deck

**Material:** Hand laid-up polyester resin with alternate chopped strand mat and woven roving reinforcement in female moulds.



Six full-length, top-hat section stringers, plus top hat frames every 26in. Deck is glassfibre, with foam and ply stiffening, and laid teak as an option.

**Colour:** Cream with blue style lines.

**Price:** £82,160 ex VAT + £4800 extras.

**Builder:** Storebro Bruks AB, S-590 83 Storebro, Sweden.

**Supplier:** The Boat Showrooms of London, 286-290 Kensington High Street, London W1. Tel: 01-602 0123.

**Designers:** W. H. Wilke and J. H. V. Lindblom.

