



CARBON CRUISER

Sam Fortescue went to Stockholm to discover the newest Arcona – the thoroughbred, all-carbon 465

PHOTOS: STEFAN ALMERS



This is a sailor's boat. A pure dynamo generating sailing excitement. Not of the buckle-up and hang-on-for-your-life variety. This is no barely cruisable ocean racer; no IMOCA lite. She is simply a beautifully balanced, gloriously responsive cruiser's dream.

But let's rewind a little. I am putting the cart before the

horse. The verdict should be at the end of the review.

A few years back, I tested the Arcona 380 off Portland under Dorset's Jurassic cliffs. In windy conditions, sailing hard on her ear, the boat impressed me with her grace and ease of handling, even overpressed. So it is fair to say that I made the long journey to the Stockholm archipelago in late October with some expectations – of the boat herself,

if not the conditions that would accompany a Swedish autumn.

Arcona is a quintessentially Swedish outfit that has been going since the 1960s, but very few people outside Scandinavia had heard of the brand until a few years ago. That all changed when Scandophile Tony Bottomley became the boatbuilder's first UK agent in 2003. In the first two years of operations, he expected to sell between nothing and four boats. →



However, that first year alone saw five boats sold to eager UK customers. And ever since, the UK has been one of Arcona's most important markets.

Fast foils

The Arcona range runs from 31ft (9.5m) to the new 46ft 3in (14m) boat. They are pitched at those who want to cruise in comfort, but without wasting time on passage. 'Performance cruiser' is a term too often bandied around, and used to cover a multitude of different boats. But it perfectly fits the 465, which was drawn by Arcona's dedicated naval architect Stefan Qviberg. He is an unsung Scandie hero, and the reason, according to Arcona owner Torgny Jansson, that Arconas go so well to windward. "He is famous for his foils."

This struck me as an odd thing to say, but having tested the boat with a fully battened carbon main and jib in upwards of 20kt, I can confirm that his foils are indeed impressive.

1 PEDESTAL
Arcona plans to beef up the pedestal so that it serves as a true handhold as well

2 WINCHES
Arcona has experimented with new Selden winches, but plans to revert to Harken gear

3 CLEATS
The bulwark-mounted cleats are easily retractable for clean lines

In this sense, we're talking the foils of the spade rudder and the long chord of the bulb keel. In the fjords and islands of the archipelago, the wind gusts and eddies strangely, and we were frequently laid over at 40 degrees plus by a sudden increase in pressure. With her 24m high rig and bulb keel, she heels hard before picking up speed, but her incredible lightness means the wind is quickly transformed into forward motion.

With full main up for nicer photos we were clearly overpressed in 17kt-plus of true wind, but the boat behaved impeccably. If she rounded up at all, a quick tweak on the carbon wheel would bring her back under control. You could feel the weather helm, but it was oh-so-light and easy to overcome. The wheel gave good feedback, but the balance of the boat is so good that only once did she broach into a 25kt gust.

So, handling is good. There is a clever tilting platform under the two wheels which makes it comfortable to stand on even on



● RACE READY
Even for cruising, the large B&G head-up displays on the mast are an exhilarating confirmation of your pace

● BLADE JIB
With the blade jib, it's possible to achieve very tight, efficient sheeting angles, thanks to the barberhauler sheet lead

quite a heel. In lighter airs, a more comfortable position would have been sitting on the quarter, back pressed into the padded guardwires and feet nicely chocked. From here, the helmsman could





● **FOOT BLOCKS**

A nifty pop-up panel at the helm gives the helmsman a nice level footing on the heel

● **PLATFORM**

A bathing platform can be specified on the 465, requiring a split backstay

easily reach the German mainsheet on manual winches just ahead on the coaming. The mainsheet track is recessed into the cockpit just ahead of the pedestals, and we found it easier to spill wind in the gusts using the traveller itself.

Jib sheets are lead through eyes mounted on the sides of the shallow coach roof, where they were well out of the way. With the recommended blade jib, it is possible to set the jib travellers well inboard where they give a tremendously tight sheeting angle, further enhanced by a Dyneema barber-hauler that is led back to the cockpit. This is part of the reason she can point as high as 23-24° off the apparent wind (some 30° true). And by point, I don't mean

ABOVE

The smaller boats (up to the Arcona 410) are built by a long-standing Estonian subcontractor, then floated across the Baltic to Gustavsberg for commissioning. The 430 and the new 465 are moulded on Sweden's west coast in Volvo's former factory at Uddevalla

shuddering along at a few knots. On our test day we steamed upwind at 7.5kt-plus, making bearing off onto a reach feel like carving a gybe as we accelerated up to her effortless maximum cruising speed of over 10kt. As you can probably tell, I really enjoyed sailing this boat.

All the control lines are led back to the cockpit, with twin halyard winches by the companionway – one of which is helpfully electric. In all honesty, the primary winches on a boat of this size and power makes short tacking exceedingly sporty. It would be worth looking at a Pontos four-speed winch or an electric option here as well, depending on how much elbow grease you are prepared to put into it.

Work in progress

Hull number one has been built as a plaything for Torgny himself, and refinements are in the pipeline. One of these will see a carbon-fibre bowsprit added, to make it easier to fly an asymmetric or a Code Zero. Another will see the jib furler, which is mounted under the foredeck in the anchor locker, swapped for a Harken to provide more power for a lower profile.

Stowage on deck is good, if not exceptional. Up at the bow is a full-depth sail locker that lends itself to storing fenders, rolled-up tenders and inflatable sailing toys. This is complemented by a vast aft lazarette, known by Torgny as the *centrallager* or warehouse, running the full width →



and depth of the transom. Gas bottles are stored in a light plastic box here, with drainage through the transom.

One more thing before we go below: there is a cockpit table, but it remains hidden under the sole in cruising mode. Unlock the long chock that runs the length of the cockpit (it makes a useful foot block on a stiff beat), lift two teak boards and the table rises majestically on a gas strut. Fold out the leaves and away you go. The length of the cockpit seats is enough for a person to lie down, so the cockpit table would happily sit six.

Traditional finish

Being a Swedish-made boat, there are certain standards and traditions to uphold, notably in the finish of the joinery below. The standard option is for rich, red mahogany joinery, with white panelling against the hull – around the narrow hull lights, for instance. In principle, anything is possible, but there's something about the way Torgny blows out his cheeks when I ask this that suggests he would strongly counsel the mahogany finish.

The standard layout makes this a three double cabin boat – two good

ABOVE
The finish is resolutely Scandinavian, with a woody interior and traditional layout, giving pride of place to the social area around the table

BELOW
The owner's cabin is up forward with its own en suite heads and shower

BELOW RIGHT
Arcona was loath to try armchairs at first, but once they were in, there was no way back

doubles aft, with plenty of light and good headroom under the cockpit seats, and the owner's cabin forward with a deep island berth and a good sized heads and shower. The saloon is designed to leave a wide gangway to starboard, where there are two comfy armchairs. To port is the saloon table, which can seat eight with the movable stools that Torgny is planning to install amidships.

That leaves space for a medium-sized chart table and nav station. In truth, most boatbuilders would class this as a large table these days, and it gives access to the tidily wired switch panel. Being slightly higher than the saloon seating, this feels naturally like the skipper's perch, and the whole space has been laid

out to make it convivial for a cup of coffee or a whisky after a meal.

To port the galley in hull one is a classic semi-horseshoe; well enclosed for working under way and with easy access to the cockpit for handing out cups of tea. There is a large fridge cleverly divided up with wire baskets and with two hatches. Another (drinks) fridge opens out of the end of the galley cabinet. There is room for a microwave if it were needed, and even a dishwasher. This sort of equipment would require a generator, probably sited in the large aft locker.

Electrically, the boat is designed to be as simple and light as possible. She has three 90aH lithium ion batteries from Victron, and a straightforward mains battery charger which can pump the batteries half full from flat in just 90 minutes. Lithium is a third the weight of lead-acid, but of course, cheaper standard batteries could also be specified.

For serious long-distance cruising you'd probably want an inverter and some additional batteries to lengthen sail time between charges. One option that Arcona owners are increasingly interested in is a hybrid engine, with a regenerating propeller – a really neat way of keeping batteries topped up. There's also room for solar panels on the coach roof, although it is worth remembering that this area will often be shaded by the boom.

One of the USPs of an Arcona is the galvanised steel cradle set into the bilges, taking and spreading the load from the keel, mast and chainplates around the hull. This structure weighs around 200kg on the 465, and actually helps to provide useful ballast – remember, the vacuum-bagged carbon hull is exceedingly light. But its main purpose is to provide that incredible hull stiffness we'd enjoyed during our sail. ✨



SAM'S VERDICT

As you can tell from the words above, I loved this boat. She wasn't showy or loud, wildly modern or overly traditional. She looks designed to do exactly what you'd want a boat to do, and do it with ease.

She handles exceedingly well, so light in the water she seems to skim across the surface, with speeds to match – an easy 8-10kt. But she doesn't fight you hard, even in a blow.

The interior is relatively simple by today's standards, but still well equipped. You could add

more mod-cons if you wanted to, as well as bluewater kit – even a bathing platform.

She would make a very comfortable base for four people, or for two, and can accommodate more as well.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★

COMFORT: ★★★★★

BLUEWATER: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 46ft 3in (14.1m)

LWL: 43ft 5in (13.25m)

Beam: 13ft 11in (4.2m)

Draught: 7ft 2in/9ft 2in (2.2m/2.8m)

Displacement: 9,550kg (21,050lb)

Engine: Yanmar 57hp

Sail area: 74.7m² (804sq ft), jib 54.4m² (586sq ft)

PERFORMANCE

Sail area/displacement: 28.7

LWL/displacement: 113.1

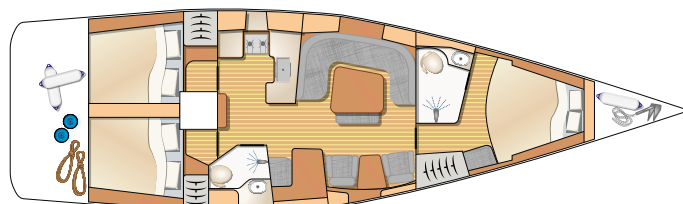
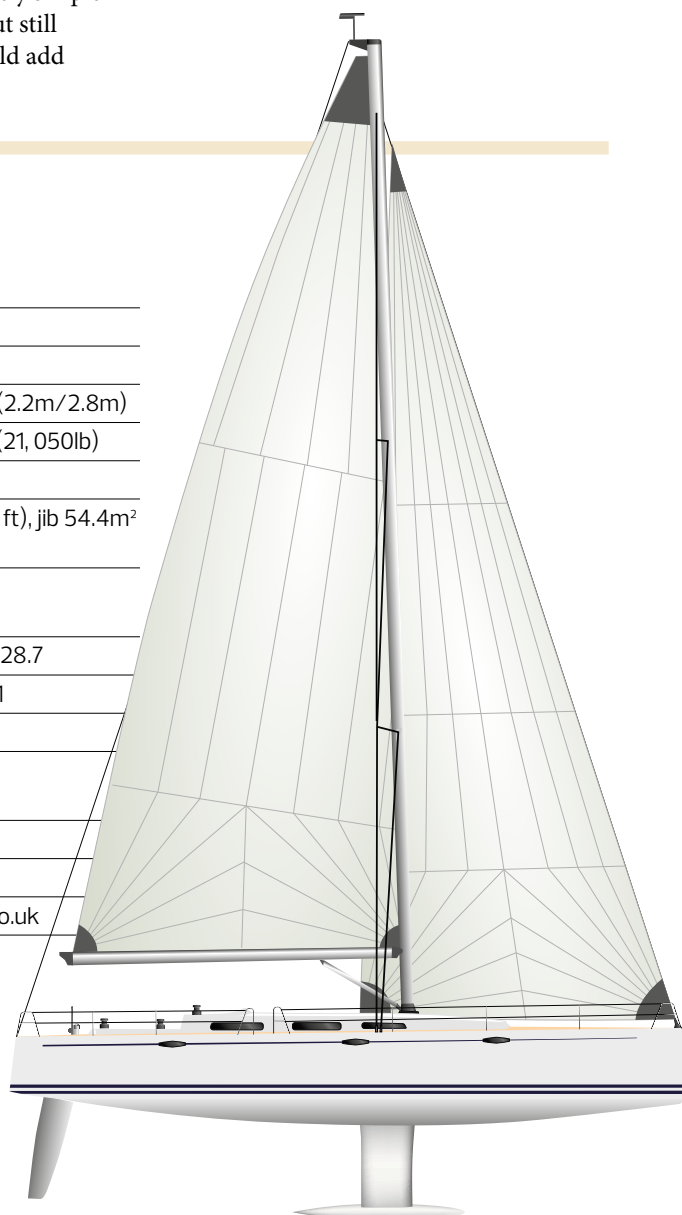
AVS: 126°

PRICE

As tested: c£490,000

Base: c£385,000

Contact: arconayachts.co.uk



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NEXT MONTH

Delphia 46
On sale 27 January

ALTERNATIVE YACHTS



ADVANCED A44

€650,000 (€548,000)

European Yacht of the Year in 2015, this speed machine has a stylish interior. The hull is GRP with carbon reinforcement and carbon rig. It is pitched as a daysailer, but would serve for short cruises.

advancedyachts.it



NAJAD 450

€505,000

This expensive and singular boat has the classic Swedish centre cockpit and large aft cabin, with a modern twist. Her conservative lines promise good handling but she's a weatherly boat not a racer.

boatsales.co.uk



X-YACHTS X4

£254,000

The Danes have realised there is a gap in the market between their cruising and performance lines, and the 41ft X4 is designed to plug it. With a fo'c'sle owner's cabin and one or two cabins aft, there's lots of room, and the finish is a step up from previous models. She also has a bulb keel and a centreline rudder.

x-yachtsgb.com