

Swede sensation

Yacht cruising can often be about taking things at a stately pace. Arcona Yachts' new Arcona 435 shows that doesn't have to be the case, says Sam Jefferson





Over the years Swedish yachts have developed a certain reputation for quality, and it's a well deserved one. I don't know if there's something in the Swedish psyche that makes them so exacting that the idea of cutting even the slightest corner is alien to them, but I'd like to think so. Anyway, it has been good news for boatbuilding over the decades and the list of cruising yachts to come out of the country is impressive. The other thing the Swedes have real pedigree in when it comes to sailing yachts is for producing very, very serious bluewater cruisers. When I think of a Swedish Yacht I think of an old school Hallberg Rassy laden down to the gunwales with folding bikes, solar panels, wind generators, huge chunks of Volvo, great bales of Ryvita... you get the picture.

Perhaps for this reason I have often perceived Swedish vessels as being rather, I don't know, stately is perhaps the mot juste. Anyway, it is certainly not a phrase that could be flung at the Arcona 435 as we screamed down the Solent at 11kn plus. Yes, this is a Swede with a need for speed. This is their latest model and I have to say that the concept is one that I am very

ABOVE
The new 435 has a bit more beam carried right aft compared to her predecessor

keep on. Basically, Torgny Jansson, founder of Arcona Yachts, was a man who – quite unusually in yachting – liked both cruising and racing and wanted to do both in the same yacht. Now, the concept of a cruiser/ racer was hardly a new one even when he started working on the premise some 40 years ago. But what Jansson did with the help of designer Stefan Qviberg was hone the concept; marrying Swedish quality workmanship with genuinely quick hulls.

You'll be thinking that this sounds not dissimilar to what X-Yachts does – and you'd be right. Yet X is the Danish version and this is the Swedish one. In fairness, I'd say that X yachts are a bit more 'racy' in terms of image and Arcona are a little bit closer



to the cruising market. But, Lord, we're really splitting hairs now. Anyway, what Arcona has been utterly consistent at is producing beautiful yachts. They don't tend to be slaves to a passing trend and the yachts often catch the eye simply because they are rather handsome.

Evolution not revolution is the key at Arcona and the new 435 is a development of her predecessor, the 430. Back in 2009 the 430 was Yacht of the Year – not without good reason either; she was a beautiful yacht that boasted sparkling performance. So, naturally, Qviberg isn't going to want to move too far away from that template. Yet the 435 is more than just a simple MkII. While the beam remains the same, the width has been carried further aft giving her greater power in her hindquarters. In addition, the sail area has been upped a touch compared to her predecessor. The other striking change is the shape of the coachroof; Arcona has been

one of the last to stick with the very low wedge-shaped deck profile but the new coachroof is a touch more angular and contemporary.

Despite this, the 435 remains a lovely yacht to look at and Qviberg's unwillingness to bend to every passing fad gives the yacht a certain elegance that many other modern yachts lack.

On deck

Step aboard and you're in a comfortable cockpit fitted out



beautifully in teak with twin black carbon steering wheels. It's a nice space and thoughtfully put together. The coamings are thoughtfully angled, there is a cockpit table that drops down on a hydraulic strut beneath the cockpit sole. There are nice little touches, too, such as the fine adjustment of the angle of the twin pods for the chartplotters and wind instruments.

On the 435 I tested, the rear of the cockpit was open to the elements but, fear not, there is also the option



ABOVE
The profile of the new coachroof is a bit of a departure for Arcona

LEFT
The 435 has great poise and even when well powered up she was well-balanced

BELOW (L-R)
Foot chocks and a mainsheet traveller point to her performance capabilities; plenty of skylights on the coachroof mean plenty of light down below; adjustable instrument pods are a nice touch

of either semi or fully enclosing the cockpit depending on what width of bathing platform you're after. In terms of the sail controls, I guess the thing that marks out the Arcona is the mainsheet traveller running across the cockpit sole; an anathema to some truly dyed-in-the-wool cruisers but certainly an asset when it comes to trimming the mainsheet is controlled via a pair of primary winches set just forward of the helm. A second pair just forward are for the headsail while a third pair on the coachroof are for hoisting the mainsail and so on. In terms of storage, there is a pair of aft lazarette lockers and a deep storage locker up forward just abaft the anchor locker which would swallow up all your fenders and assorted other cruising detritus if you so desired.

One thing worth mentioning is that one of Arcona's key philosophies behind producing a fast yacht is to keep it light. Nothing revolutionary there, but it is worth stressing as the 435 weighs in at 8,900kg which is good going. There is also the choice of ordering the hull entirely in carbon which reduces the displacement even more and inevitably pushes up the price somewhat.

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RIGHT
Room to store
a person in the
aft lazarette

BELOW (L-R)
Plenty of light
in the main
saloon and a huge
table; the glossy
sheen on the
Kiyaa mahogany
panelling is
impressive. The
master suite is
at the bow and
features an ensuite

Swede speed

The test took place at Lymington on a fairly moderate day. The breeze obliged with an occasional 18kn puff and never dropped below 10kn. You might have thought that made for somewhat sedate sailing but the Arcona ensured that was far from the case. After beam reaching across from Lymington, we put up the gennaker and roared off down the western Solent. Once the big downwind sail cracked into life we scooted along effortlessly at 11kn in 12-15kn of winds. Now, I realise that certain cruising sailors are not really that keen on big downwind sails and all the associated fun and games, but I have to stress that the 435 was easily handled in these circumstances. She was so reassuringly comfortable in her groove that it was impossible not to simply enjoy that most simple and wonderful pleasure of skimming across the water propelled forward by nothing but the wind. To do that at speed is, for me, the real joy of sailing. I suspect the same could be said for Torgny Jansson. The 435 also demonstrated fairly impressively that a single rudder can provide more than enough

grip on a conventional hull shape. At times we were trying to get the boat to heel a lot just to show off for the camera really, so we were pointing high in order to overpower the gennaker. Despite this, the Arcona remained utterly unruffled and the helm was as crisp as a Ryvita fresh out of the packet.

Dropping the gennaker, we headed upwind and were soon scooting along at 8kn plus – and pointing absurdly high. The 435 has a big sail area and is also very stiff thanks to a bulb keel comprising of a steel blade with a lead bolted on. She certainly felt very well balanced. In common with almost all brands, Arcona has moved toward smaller and smaller headsails and there is an option for a self-tacker on the new 435. As it was we had a 106% overlapping headsail and the boat felt very balanced and pointed extremely well with that. Sail handling was simple although the lovely crisp North 3di sails were predictably difficult to stow – but that is surely a price worth paying to have such beautiful sails.

Ultimately, the yacht sailed like a dream. Given that the hull shape is fairly conservative, I would also

imagine that she would look after you in a blow and also offer you a decent opportunity to outrun adverse weather.

Down below

Scandinavian yachts have developed a certain inimitable style over the years when it comes to interiors and Arcona is definitely signed up to that. The basic premise is fairly dark woods combined with excellent quality of finish. I guess the 435 got a big tick in both these boxes. The panelling was Khaya mahogany that appeared to have been burnished to a high gloss sheen. Two large skylights ensure that this is far from an oppressive space and the general feeling was that this was a nice place to be. The ample light also afforded me an opportunity to gawp in wonderment at the astonishingly glossy finish to all the varnishing.

The layout is extremely conventional; L-shaped galley to port, decent-sized chart table to starboard, roomy seating area, double berth forward of that with ensuite. Then if you move aft you have the option of either one double berth aft or twin double berths. These share a heads between them.

Ultimately there is something very Nordic and sane about down below. There has been no attempt to deviate from the tried and tested layout formula that has served yachts well for many years. All Arcona has done is specify a simple layout and then ensure it's built to the highest standard. One thing I will say is that the general 'feel' down here is certainly not that of a stripped-out racing yacht. It's cosy in that very Scandinavian style – I wonder what the Swedish word for *hygge* is. I suppose the only thing that really betrays her racing pretensions is slightly less storage in the cabins and the bilge – plus the mast is keel stepped – as you would expect.





SAM'S VERDICT

I was once asked by an exasperated broker from a rival dealer about why the yachting press always raved about Arconas. The answer is simple; they sail bewitchingly, they look good and they are easy to handle. Yachts are all about compromise – few more so than the cruiser/racer – but in the case of the Arcona it genuinely feels like they have hit the sweet spot. No one likes to sail slowly and no one likes to go

down below and feel uncomfortable. Arcona navigates past both of these problems with aplomb. Of course, that is reflected in the price, but this is a yacht for the discerning sailor who probably fully understands that you get what you pay for in this world.

PERFORMANCE: ★★★★★
COMFORT: ★★★★★
BLUEWATER CAPABILITIES: ★★★★★

THE SPEC

LOA: 13.2m (43ft 3in)
LWL: 12.2m (40ft)
Beam: 3.98m (13ft)
Displacement: 8900kg (19,000lb)
Draft: 2.00/2.30/2.6m
(6ft5in/7ft5in/8ft5in)
Ballast: 3200 kg (7054lb)
Sail area: (upwind) 114 sq m (1227sq ft)
Engine Yanmar: 4 JH 45C / SD 60
(45 hp diesel)
Price: (base): £288,500
Price: (as tested): £374,000
Contact: arconayachts.com
E mail: info@arconayachts.com
Tel: 023 80 45 77 70



ALTERNATIVE YACHTS



X4 (3)

Danish X Yachts is probably the brand that is the closest rival to Arcona. It shares a rich heritage in cruiser/racers combined with that very distinctive Scandinavian styling and extremely pleasing turn of speed. Launched a couple of years back now, this remains a stunning yacht.

x-yachts.com



GRAND SOLEIL 43

This Italian take on the cruiser/racer is a lovely yacht which draws together fine sailing qualities and good levels of comfort. Being an Italian yacht she's very stylish and the interior design is perhaps a touch more contemporary than her Scandinavian rivals.

keyyachting.com



ITALIA 12.98

Another Italian yacht that treads the fine line between cruiser/racer with aplomb. Thoughtfully designed with many interesting and innovative touches. This is another yacht that has a niche following of very loyal owners.

italiyachts.com

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