

Boat Report

# NORD WEST 900

*From Sweden comes a fresh name in motorboat building, offering semi-displacement cruisers with traditional values and no rough edges.*







New to the UK is a no-nonsense Scandinavian range of semi-displacement type craft, extending from 33ft to 40ft with varying superstructure styles. We tested the smallest in the line with a sheltered cockpit and mini aft-cabin layout, but there are alternative designs with a full master suite beneath a raised aft deck, or with a flybridge.

The Swedish manufacturers turned their hand to Nord West powerboats after a background in building high-quality sailing yachts. The upshot is an interesting, well thought-out and traditionally fitted-out range of single and twin shaftdrive craft giving comfortable passagemaking at anything from displacement speeds right up to 28 knots.

Our test boat had nothing short of 360hp delivered by just one of Volvo's slim 63-series diesels, giving it the legs to cover some serious ground.

## Design

The metric model designation 900 is to be converted into a (yet to be confirmed) imperial 330 label soon. The useful hull length is actually 31ft 2in (9.52m), with extensions by way of a bathing platform moulding and an anchor platform taking it to 33ft 5in (10.2m).

The hull appears to be hard-chined, but in fact this is not altogether the case. Whilst stepped with a knuckle-type chine around the waterline, the underwater sections then run into a tight round bilge below, which then smooths into a moderate vee from midships aft. There is little by way of keel until

Left: the single-engined version of the Nord West 900 has two curtained-off sleeping areas off a lobby aft (above) and a pukka forecabin with an offset double berth (below). Bottom left: teak decking adds some warmth to the cockpit sole, and to its fixed seating to port and fold-out transom bench. Right: the main saloon area includes the galley and helm position, with joinery in mahogany. Centre right: two large opening hatches offer ventilation and allow the helmsman to stick his head above the parapet. Bottom right: the galley has a built-in oven/grill, a two-burner hob, a fridge, a 1½-bowl arrangement and even a slide-out chopping board.



you get to within about 5ft of the sterngear. From here, a chunky skeg protrudes deep enough to protect the propeller, which is tucked into a slight scoop of tunnel, and to provide a landing for the lower rudder bearing (although twin-engined configurations do not benefit from this protection).

The forward sections have plenty of edge to cut an easy passage, with a couple of pairs of spayrails to push the cleaved water well clear. Additional knuckles set in the topsides help to minimise the amount of water flicked inboard.

## Exterior

To get onto the 900, it is an easy step up from a pontoon to the side decks, some 8in (20cm) wide and angled inwards, and as comfortable a step over the coaming into the cockpit, descending via either the port-hand seat or a dedicated step to starboard. There are plenty of sturdy grabrails to lend a steadying hand.

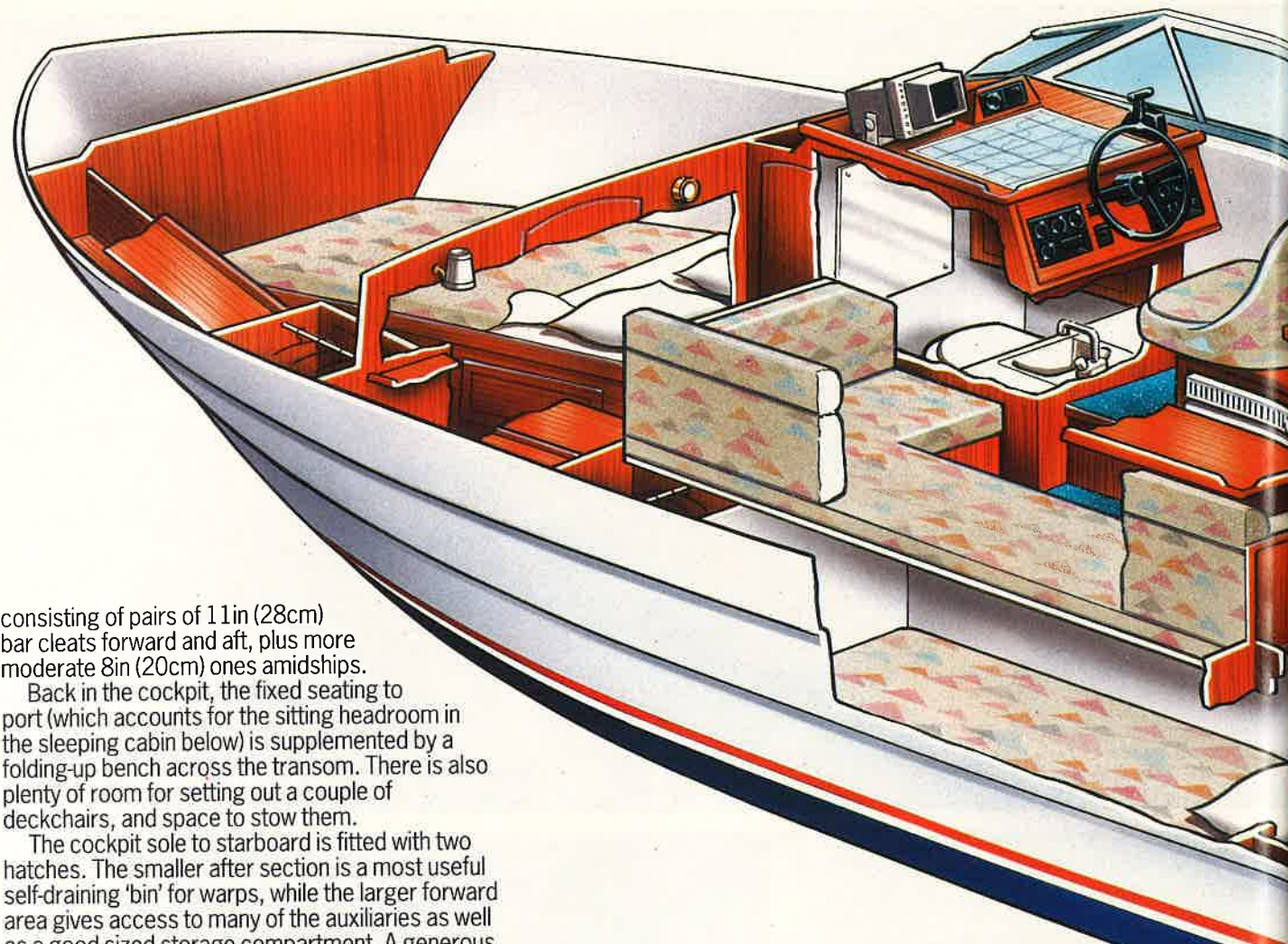
The seating and cockpit are laid with teak decking, which not only offers a most pleasing warm welcome aboard but is also the most practical of surfaces, not showing the dirt like GRP. The coaming is topped off with a run of handrail, with a break across the transom to allow use of the short ladder down to the bathing platform.

The latter is equipped with a shower and the usual Scandinavian concession of an aft anchor warp locker (anchoring from the stern with the bow line ashore is common given the preponderance of steep-to anchorages next to the foreshore). In this case the locker is left for general stowage and the electric windlass is mounted forward, there being a sizeable chain locker here in any case.

Moving to the foredeck is facilitated by a guardrail which runs back to the break of the cockpit with two solid rails, and by handrails to the superstructure and coachroof. Deck hardware is equally solid,







consisting of pairs of 11 in (28cm) bar cleats forward and aft, plus more moderate 8 in (20cm) ones amidships.

Back in the cockpit, the fixed seating to port (which accounts for the sitting headroom in the sleeping cabin below) is supplemented by a folding-up bench across the transom. There is also plenty of room for setting out a couple of deckchairs, and space to stow them.

The cockpit sole to starboard is fitted with two hatches. The smaller after section is a most useful self-draining 'bin' for warps, while the larger forward area gives access to many of the auxiliaries as well as a good-sized storage compartment. A generous length of fender rack is located outboard. The 88gal (400lt) fuel tank and water separator are amidships, and there is plenty of space for the enlarged 110gal (500lt) tank intended for future examples. The forward bulkhead incorporates the 240V electrics panel and the battery charger, and there is also a hatch through to the rear of the engine room, although the stern tube is accessed through a lift out panel in the lazaret itself. Towards the rear the steering gear is carefully boxed in, adjacent to the vented gas-bottle container. The whole compartment is meticulously devoid of sharp GRP barbs and thoroughly painted out.

Proving that the sensible design detail goes from bottom to top, the short aluminium radar mast will

**Top right: you get the same comfortable ride at a semi-displacement 16-18 knots and at a planing 23-24 knots. Bottom right: our test boat had a single 360hp Volvo Penta engine, in a neat, serviceable installation.**

hinge back to reduce the 900's air draught to 9ft 2in (2.8m), while the navigation lights on the cabin top are housed in pukka screen-boxes.

## Interior

Practical details are evident throughout the accommodation also, starting with the angled sliding companionway door, which is under enough of a coachroof extension to allow it to be left open in inclement weather without the rain driving in.

The main cabin combines helm, galley and saloon, with two large opening hatches in the lined deckhead forward opening it up a reasonable amount to the elements. The starboard one is directly over the helm position, making it possible for the skipper to stick his head out and offer polite advice to deck crew, although if you really require an exterior helm you can have a second console fitted on the starboard side of the cockpit.

The joinery throughout the interior is in mahogany, executed to a high standard, with all flat surfaces finished with sensible rounded fiddles. More traditional still is the teak and holly decking, covered by bound-edged carpeting. Every piece of sole, wherever you are in the boat, can be lifted to inspect the bilge or gain access to the seacocks. Headroom is a generous 6ft 5in (1.96m) throughout the main cabin area.

Immediately to starboard as you step in from the cockpit is the galley, with a built-in oven/grill and a two-burner hob tucked beneath a hinged portion of countertop. There is a useful 1½-bowl arrangement



Cutaway illustration by John Moxham/SSigma

in stainless steel, and a good-sized fridge with a small freezer compartment located beneath the helm seat, which itself hinges clear to give some additional work surface.

Even a slide-out chopping board is provided.

Decent-sized drawers run to one side of the cooker, a large cupboard with a shelf to the other, and there is room for small pots and pans below. Above the hob is additional eye-level stowage and a combined extractor fan and light unit.

Running along the port side of the saloon is a generous drop-leaf dinette. There is limited stowage beneath the seat base, because a quarter-berth runs beneath it, but plenty elsewhere with every nook and cranny made use of, from behind seatbacks to beneath stair treads.

The helm seat is comfortable and, although not adjustable, should be well positioned for most people, with the slightly off-vertical wooden wheel and the throttles falling easily to hand. Each section of the three-part screen is serviced by a robust self-parking wiper, complete with washer.

Engine instrumentation is located to the left of the wheel, leaving trim tabs by the throttle hand to the right. An additional area of console here takes care of the ready-use switches, whilst the main section



## Nord West 900

Engine single Volvo TAMD63P diesel, 370hp at 2800rpm, 6cyl, 5.46lt.

Conditions wind SW Force 2, sea slight. Load fuel 100%, water 100%, crew 4.

sound levels dB(A)									
rpm	knots	gph	lph	mpg	range*	trim	saloon	fwd cab	cockpit
1500	9.0	3.5	16	2.57	226	4.0	77	76	81
1800	12.1	5.7	26	2.12	187	4.5	79	79	83
2100	16.1	8.4	38	1.92	169	5.5	82	80	84
2400	20.8	10.9	50	1.91	168	5.5	85	83	89
2700	23.6	13.7	62	1.72	151	5.0	86	85	90.5
2800	24.8	16.2	74	1.53	137	5.0	88	86	91

Acceleration 0-20 knots, 13.6sec (\* 20% margin with 110gal tank)

Loa

33ft 5in (10.20m)

Hull length

31ft 2in (9.52m)

Beam

10ft 10in (3.30m)

Draught

2ft 10in (0.85m)

Air draught

9ft 2in (2.8m)

Displacement

4.5 tonnes

Fuel capacity

110gal (500lt)

Water capacity

44gal (200lt)

Price

£90,600 ex VAT

as tested



allows plenty of room for a chart. Larger navigation instruments can be bracket-mounted, while there is room for smaller ones within a pod towards the screen, overhead or adjacent to the wheel. An Autohelm Tridata and compass are fitted as standard.

Forward, a couple of steps take you down to a small lobby, the treads here (as elsewhere) being fitted with anti-slip plates. Off the lobby are doors to the forecabin and starboard toilet compartment, and there are also a couple of good-sized lockers here. One is fitted with shelves, another is for hanging clothes, and across the top of the outboard one is a most useful additional stowage for odds and ends such as a torch and spare batteries.

The forecabin has an offset double berth measuring on average 6ft 2in x 4ft 3in (1.89m x 1.29m) and a small dressing area with full headroom. Stowage is by way of a smallish hanging locker, a large cupboard inset into the bunk-base, another good-sized locker outboard and shelving; raising the mattress and lifting clear some well-finished ply panels allows you to stow bulkier items and spares. An opening hatch provides ventilation, and small fixed ports provide extra light.

The toilet/shower compartment is almost entirely finished in mahogany trim, which looks warm and smart although a half-and-half moulding might be easier to keep clean. There is an opening port and a vent, and plenty of stowage beneath the sink and in cave lockers outboard. As standard, the pump-out toilet flushes into a holding tank in the enginespace, which is then discharged with its own electric pump, although alternative changeovers can be fitted.

To the rear of the dinette, a smaller lobby area gives onto one or two further sleeping compartments, depending on the engine installation. Curtained off, these are in fact little more than mattress areas with sitting headroom, a modicum of cave locker stowage and opening ports. The larger one runs aft, beneath the port side of the cockpit, and measures 6ft 4in x 4ft 0in (1.93m x 1.22m). The smaller one, a similar length but only 2ft 6in (0.76m) wide, runs beside the engine compartment, with a hatch into it, and is done away with if you opt for twin engines.

The communal lobby has a cupboard with shelving, and also accommodates the main battery isolators out of harm's way; the batteries themselves are under the aftermost bunk.

## Engines

As you would expect from Swedish boatbuilders, the standard power options come from Volvo Penta, although alternatives can be arranged. Single-engine installations run from 230hp to 360hp, our test boat being fitted with the most potent of these. The only twin option listed is a pair of TAMD31 units giving 130hp apiece, and with this configuration you lose the quarter berth.

A forward portion of cabin sole lifts away to give access to the engineroom. There is standing room, on a bilge duckboard, to the head of the compartment, and from here you can get at most of the usual maintenance points on the unit itself, along with the pumps and calorifier on the starboard side. If you want a peek while underway, the hatch in the side of the quarter berth is the easiest way, as well as giving access to the dipstick.

For major work, the rest of the sole comes up easily. Attention to detail is high, providing a very

neat installation which is nevertheless readily serviceable; the two do not always go together.

All the hatches have drop-in foil-faced foam pads for sound-deadening, and similar material adorns most of the bulkheads. The bilge is serviced by both an auto/electric pump, together with a manual one located in the cockpit.

## Performance and handling

The combination of a relatively big rudder and a 4hp bow-thruster, which comes as standard, makes slow-speed manoeuvring a simple affair.

The boat turns tightly enough to tuck alongside a finger pontoon in one pitch, with full lock and a burst on the thruster to help swing the bow. Pulling out of the berth, there is sufficient steerage once you are making way astern to keep straight before paying the bow off and turning along the trot. Underway at displacement speeds, directional stability is excellent, with none of the wandering associated with many single-outdrive boats.

Once clear of Poole Harbour's speed restriction area, we opened the tap. The hull quickly brings its bow up, and handling at speed is equally easy and positive, the hydraulic steering making light work of it, and the tabs are used solely for levelling up any slight wind-induced heel. Winding on the helm gives sharp enough turns, again with minimal heel. And, make no bones about it, this is a solid boat with never a clonk from the hull or creak from the fit-out.

The 900 gives the same comfortable unassuming ride whether in semi-displacement mode at an easy 16-18 knots, pulling 2100-2300rpm, or bowling along near the top end at 23-24 knots. Only the change in noise levels gives the game away; whilst they could be deemed reasonable at our jogging speed, measuring 82dB(A) in the main cabin and 84dB(A) in the cockpit, they quickly become intrusive at 2400rpm and above.

Pushing the TAMD63P all the way to 2800rpm, we clocked a shade under 25 knots, with a modicum of early summer hull fouling. Trials in Sweden have achieved closer to 28 knots.

Fuel consumption data set against speed tells the usual story for a semi-displacement hull, happily moving through the mid to high teen speeds that planing hulls often find awkward. In this case, the band between 16-20 knots maintains a useful efficiency figure of around 2mpg.

## Conclusions

In both external and internal styling, and in ambience, the Nord West range smack of something traditional and solid. The clever use of every available nook and cranny, together with the high quality but practicality of the fit-out, clearly emphasises the builders' understanding of what makes a boat more pleasurable to own. And the 900's ride and performance fit easily with the semi-displacement persona of a steady comfortable seaboard to keep you cruising once the weather picks up.

Single engine motorboats in this price bracket are a well understood commodity for buyers on mainland Europe, but still a relatively rare beast on this side of the Channel. Any conservative Brit has got a twin option on offer for the same money, albeit at a penalty on performance and accommodation.

Either way, if you are in the market for a sensible and well-appointed and comfortable cruiser, check this one out at the Southampton Boat Show. □

## Builders

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