

JANUARY 1997

# MOTOR BOAT

## AND YACHTING

**Sea Trial:**  
**Nimbus**  
**310 Coupe**





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# Nimbus 310 C

The reputation of Scandinavian boatbuilders is for well-designed craft that might not be the most fashionable but will leave their owners unruffled by conditions that make others blanch. Geoff Hales goes on test with the latest from the Swedish yard of Nimbus. Photos: Richard Langdon





# Coupé

The name Nimbus may not sound very Scandinavian but a first sight of any of the range would probably give you a hint of the boats' Swedish origin: sensible, slightly conservative styling, features showing common sense without frills, and understated joinery and fabrics. None of this is a criticism. Styling that does not date is always easy on the eye and protects the buyer's money – we have all seen what happens with designs that follow the opposite course. Certainly

it's paid off for Nimbus: their boats may not be a particularly common sight in the UK, but they are popular enough elsewhere – especially in Germany and Scandinavia – to have made the company one of Europe's most prolific boatbuilders.

## Accommodation

The sliding door to the 310 Coupé's saloon can be pegged at a variety of ventilation positions – it is a pity more builders do not do the same.

Inside, the windows hinge outward from the

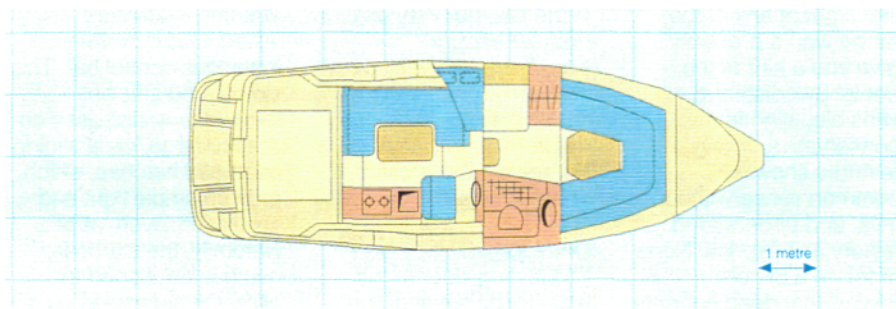
tops and then slide aft, providing no obstruction to movement on deck. The firm, watertight window locks have an ingenious control bar. This simple and efficient technique is also used on the two large, clear sliding overhead hatches, which provide ample light and ventilation, even at sea. Naturally, the starboard hatch is positioned to allow the helmsman an all-round view and the freedom to talk easily to crew on the foredeck.

The unobtrusive galley is to starboard on entering the saloon, ▶





# Nimbus 310 Coupé



and includes an Optimus cooker, which has a remote cut-off, two burners, oven and grill, with a suitable sink beside it (with pressure hot and cold water) and chopping board cover.

All the surrounding space is efficiently used for lockers and workmanlike drawers, with sufficient work surface above. The 2.3ft<sup>3</sup> (65-litre) refrigerator is below the helmsman's seat. Opposite is the dinette with an attractive folding table that allows comfortable dining for four people, or for six particularly close friends. The table can be lifted from its socket and mounted in a similar one in the cockpit.

There is a good view out, whether sitting or standing – and in the latter case, the headroom is 6ft 5in (1.96m), enough so that the sensible overhead handhold is not a threat. The whole style is relaxing but not overwhelming – comfortable and without fuss – and there is sufficient cherry joinery to balance the GRP and fabrics.

Surprisingly, in our 'renewable hardwood conscious' world, there is talk of going back to teak as the standard timber in future.

The forward seat on the port side rolls over to provide a forward-facing seat for two – a feature that one does not see often enough – while there is chart area and stowage forward of both the helmsman and the port side seat. The helmsman's seat slides an adequate distance fore and aft, to provide more comfort than is often the case.

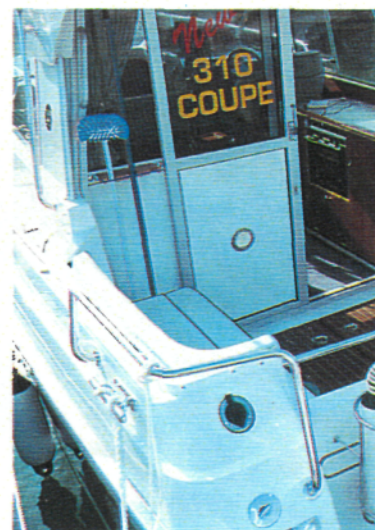
Stepping down forward, one comes to the heads unit to starboard and the guest cabin to port. The former contains all that one needs and in a compact space: the heads is on a fore and aft axis (thus providing sideways support at sea) inboard of a full-length vanity unit, including a wash basin with shower fittings and ample locker storage below it and outboard. The headroom is 5ft 9in (1.75m) and ventilation is provided by an opening port and a sliding port.



The guest cabin has been greatly improved since the change from a Volvo engine to a Yanmar, because this is shorter and so allows an athwartships double berth, 6ft 2in x 3ft 9in (1.88m x 1.14m). Height over the starboard part of this is inevitably restricted to 15½in (0.39m), while the height over the port section and the whole of the 6ft 6in x 3ft 1in/1.98m x 0.94m single berth is 2ft 8in (0.81m), being below the dinette seating.

There is a good-sized hanging locker that at first sight seemed a mistake compared with providing drawers, but later thought reversed this view: clothes that should hang must do so while anything suitable for a drawer can stay in the bag that brought it aboard. Ventilation is via a sliding port and an opening port.

The doorway forward leads to the main cabin, which can have a fixed double berth with drawers underneath, or as in this boat, a lower saloon or dining area with a dinette table and infill cushions. The flexibility of this





# Boat Report

## Design and construction



Above: the 310's saloon. The dinette table can be lifted from its socket and repositioned in a similar socket in the cockpit. Below left: the galley. Below: the sliding door from the cockpit can be pegged at a number of positions.

arrangement seems to us the more attractive option.

The double berth looks too short, but by sleeping athwartships there is plenty of room for a couple. There is a hanging locker to starboard and drawers to port. Ventilation is via two opening side ports and a fixed vent in the fore hatch, which can also be opened of course, and the headroom is 6ft 0in (1.83m).

### On deck

Boarding the boat and working around the deck is simple and worry free. The bathing platform on this model is very much part of the hull and the central section is protected on either side by an anchor, fender or warp storage locker, with an easy access slatted cover, at a height that makes for a convenient seat for swimmers showering off (for whom

the neatly stowed ladder has ample length and civilised teak treads). The door to the cockpit is substantial.

The guardrail arrangement is unusual and raised some eyebrows but proved a good design feature – everywhere except at the actual pulpit, the stanchion base plates are bolted through the side of the boat ▷



### DIMENSIONS

**Length overall**  
30ft 1in (9.18m)  
**Hull length**  
27ft 6in (8.40m)  
**Waterline length**  
23ft 11in (7.30m)  
**Beam**  
10ft 8in (3.25m)  
**Draught**  
3ft 3in (1.00m)  
**Displacement**  
3.7 tons  
**Fuel capacity**  
62gal (280 litres)  
**Water capacity**  
42gal (190 litres)

### ACCOMMODATION

Four berths, a convertible double dinette forward, and a double guest cabin amidships, but the option of a convertible dinette in the saloon. One shower with toilet. Saloon with galley.

### CONSTRUCTION

Spray gel-coat, then hand-laid chopped-strand mat with woven roving in orthophthalic polyester resin. Foam sandwich deck and topsides, and foam-cored stringers.

### LAY-UP WEIGHTS

(reinforcement only)  
**Keel**  
22oz/ft<sup>2</sup> (6.60kg/m<sup>2</sup>)  
**Bottom**  
18oz/ft<sup>2</sup> (5.40kg/m<sup>2</sup>)  
**Chine**  
30oz/ft<sup>2</sup> (9.30kg/m<sup>2</sup>)  
**Topsides**  
9oz/ft<sup>2</sup> (2.70kg/m<sup>2</sup>)  
**Deck**  
9oz/ft<sup>2</sup> (2.70kg/m<sup>2</sup>)

**DESIGNER**  
Rolf Eliasson

The hull of the Nimbus 310 is derived from that of the 31 (tested MBY January 1995), which was itself a development from the 3003, so it's now a well-tried design that has been used for around 1000 boats. The deadrise is moderate – about 16° at the transom – and it's effectively flattened even more by a wide 'pad' above the sterngear.

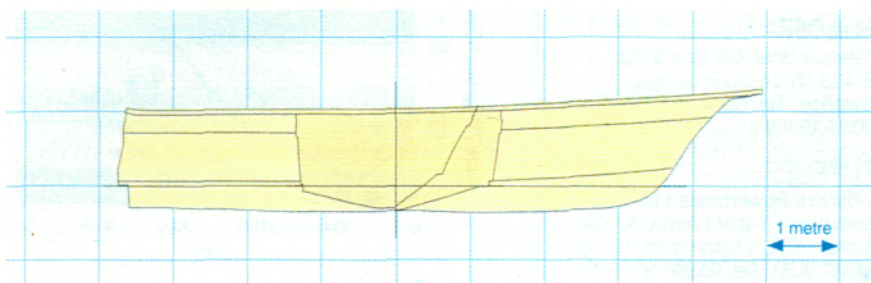
The somewhat harsh ride that might be expected from this configuration, however, is softened by a much finer entry than on many semi-planing boats: the result is that the sharp bow slices through waves, to save the flatter middle and aft sections having to bump over them! Instead of the familiar spray rails, Nimbus

use longitudinal steps at the chine, and there is the same slight step in the hull bottom – approximately below the forward end of the cockpit – as was used on the earlier generation of this hull.

A shallow keel is fitted under most of the forward half of the boat, which must help with the steering, while the area between the propeller shaft and the hull is also filled in as a form of deadwood. From this, a bronze skeg sweeps down and aft to provide a lower bearing for the rudder and, probably more importantly, give the propeller protection from rope and debris.

The Nimbus family resemblance is clear above water too, with the familiar sheer and coachroof shape.

Below: the underwater exhaust outlet projects down abaft the transom.





# Nimbus 310 Coupé



rather than the deck. This immediately gives a more secure fastening, together with more space on deck – always a welcome feature and normally impossible to achieve without restricting the width of the coachroof.

To allow easy side-boarding, there is a necessary gap in the rails abreast the coachroof windows, but the comprehensive coachroof handrails allowed one to walk past this area without any worries.

Sensibly sized cleats are provided for head and sternropes, and amidships springs, while most owners will surely choose the optional Lewmar electric anchor capstan. This handles the combination of 20ft (6m) of chain and 98ft (30m) of warp on the anchor, which self stows into a dwarf bowsprit.

In normal (and sensible) Scandinavian style, the pulpit allows a walk-through when berthed bows to a jetty, but unusually there is not a chain or removable bar to provide protection at guardrail height, as there really should be. The anchor warp and chain

Right: the forward cabin comes with either a fixed berth or, as here, a lower saloon with seats that convert to a double with infill cushions. Below: the view from the single seat helm position is good. Left: the heads to starboard.

stow into a locker, which is solely accessible from the deck, so avoiding any smells below.

The non-slip on the foredeck proved satisfactory and would no doubt be fine on the sidedecks also, but in this boat's case these were covered with the optional teak – and very nice it looked and felt.

In the cockpit there is a comfortable seat-cum-locker (with a backrest at a decent height) on the port side, and a single moulded step to deck level to starboard. There is ample storage below the deck for a dinghy and the like, and a panel aft gives access to the workmanlike steering gear, where a tongue on the top of the rudder stock offers a simple attachment for the emergency tiller, which is provided.

Forward on the starboard side in the locker area is a neat Nimbus feature: all the pumps, valves and pipework associated with the boat's services, neatly assembled on to panels. While this allows all these systems to be tested and assembled before installation, perhaps an even bigger advantage is that when checking or servicing items, everything is in one place together. A panel in the forward section of this storage area allowed access to the aft section of the engine.

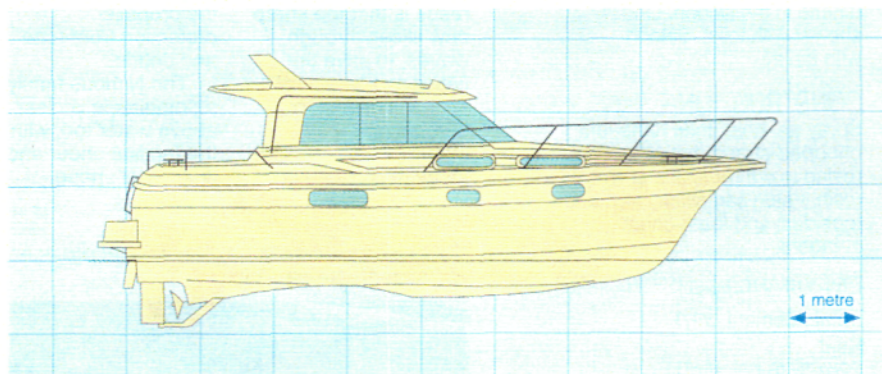
A neat stowage for the boathook and deck brush is provided in the cockpit and the forward section is sheltered by the aftward extension of the coachroof. This in turn provides a convenient base for full side and aft screens, while above the coachroof is a low arch, which carries a stainless steel mast, but could take a radar if required.

## Handling and performance

Nimbus are unusual in producing a 31-footer with a shaftdrive and only one engine, but this is the way they have always done things. Most craft of this size would have outdrives.

Theoretically, the Nimbus route should lead to higher sound levels in the saloon and a quieter cockpit, but in practice the sound in the saloon was never unpleasant and the cockpit noise seemed typical of cruisers of this size.

It is true that handling a single shaftdrive should be more tricky than operating a boat with a single outdrive, where at least one could turn the drive



## PERFORMANCE

**Top speed**  
24.8 knots  
(full fuel, two crew)  
**Cruising speed**  
16 knots  
**Cruising range**  
160 miles

## PRICE

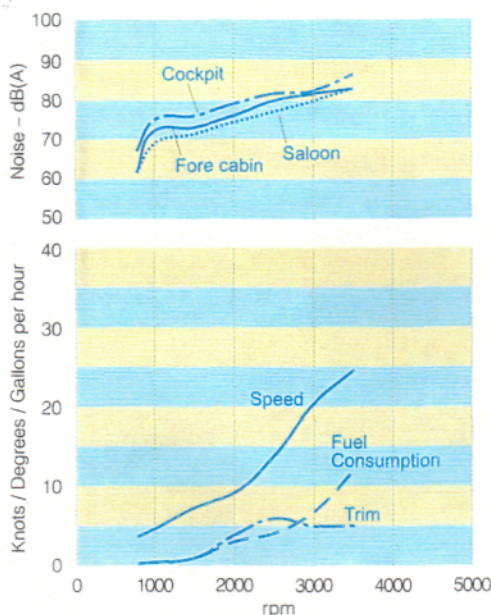
**From**  
£89,546 ex VAT  
**As tested**  
£98,624 ex VAT

## BUILDER

Nimbus Boat AB, Box 5152,  
S-426 05 Västra Frölunda,  
Sweden. Tel: 0031 299310. Fax:  
0031 294698.

## SUPPLIER

Offshore Powerboats Ltd,  
Lymington Yacht Haven, Kings  
Saltern Road, Lymington, Hants  
SO41 9QD. Tel: 01590 677955.  
Fax: 01590 671890.





# Boat Report

## Engineering



to pull or push the boat in the required direction at low speed. However, Nimbus counter this by offering the option of a QL bow thruster. This makes a potentially attractive combination, with the added bonus that the gear controls working with a fixed gearbox are much smoother and less effort than they would be if working an outdrive.

It was surprising, therefore, to learn that about half the owners do not take up the bow thruster option, because they berth or moor in roomy areas where tight handling is not required. But what if you go cruising to tightly packed marinas? Perhaps they deserve admiration for their obvious skill, or perhaps I am too cautious. Certainly the Nimbus installation, with bow thruster control duplicated on the end of the gear lever stalk, makes life straightforward and tricky berthing becomes possible.

Under way, the boat proved easy to steer regardless of wave conditions, though surfing back over the Bridge shoal by the Needles was made easier by increasing speed to get more flow over the rudder. Enough feel was

transmitted to the teak wheel by the hydraulic steering. The ride was comfortable then, and when going upwind into sea over the same shoal: no untoward slamming or jerky movement, and the big self-parking windscreen wipers and optional washers did a fine job of keeping the view clear.

The sound level curves fluctuated, possibly due to propeller whine and increased engine noise as the turbo was cutting in. Interestingly, the fuel consumption and speed curves combined to show that between about ten and 20 knots the 310 was always running at about 3mpg. It was more economical below this threshold of course, but still achieved better than 2mpg at full speed.

Barrus, the Yanmar agents, explained that we achieved higher revs than theoretically possible because they always recommend a propeller that allows the engine to rev high when light and the boat is clean. Later, when it is having to work, the engine will settle to the correct figures and produce its rated output.

## Conclusion

The Nimbus 310 makes a refreshing change from the great majority of motor cruisers in her size range. The ingredients of shaftdrive, single engine, restrained styling, and a carefully continued development from earlier models are right for producing a classic. The fact that Nimbus owners usually find they get the same number of pounds back when they sell their craft as they paid for them, means the boats are obviously in demand – another ingredient for the recipe.

The company's assessment of the market is accurate. Building a fine sea-going cruiser to suit the demand is proving just as successful as they hoped – and giving their owners great satisfaction. □

**ENGINES**  
Yanmar 4LH-STE driving a 19in x 23in (480mm x 585mm) four-bladed bronze propeller through a Hurth 2.04:1 reduction gearbox  
**Capacity** 3,455cc  
**Cylinders** 4  
**Max rpm** 3,300  
**Max hp** 230 (1,69kW)

The single Yanmar 4LH-STE develops 230hp (164kW) and all routine check items can be reached easily by lifting a saloon deck panel (gas strut supported) or from the access panel below the cockpit. The log impeller is also accessible from there. There is more room around the engine than is often the case, so topping up levels or checking pipes and fittings is not a problem. Pipework is well done.

The underwater exhaust outlet is a special Nimbus feature, which projects straight down abaft the transom like a skeg and no doubt acts as one.

The four 12V 75Ah batteries are secured in their own locker under the cockpit seat (forward of the 62gal – 280-litre – fuel tank) and the visible wiring is neatly done.

The gas system has the bottle fitted in a draining locker and there is a remote shut-off in the locker abaft the cooker.

A manual bilge pump is situated right aft in the cockpit, with a second at the forward end of the engine room. An electric pump, fitted in the engine room, is an option. The Par manual heads discharges into a holding tank, which has a sea discharge.

The steering gear is a straightforward hydraulic system by Sunstar and does not require engine-driven power assistance, while the trim tabs and optional bow thruster are both by QL. Ardic is the chosen supplier for the optional heating system.

