

CORBY 29



PHOTO ANDI ROBERTSON

John Corby's latest design has already shown itself to be competitive out on the racecourse. **Andi Roberston** took the Corby 29 for a spin.

Success under IRC has been plentiful for John Corby designs, indeed few UK designers have displayed such a consistent understanding of what works under the rule.

Boat tests are not the place for either supporting or attacking the philosophy of one-off IRC boats and rule beating, other than to say that this approach has largely been the domain of those prepared to throw a reasonable chunk of money at winning. With the success of the Corby 25 and now the 29, John Corby is answering the

demands of committed racers who want one-off performance and success at production prices.

The boats are built well and cheaply in eastern Europe, Latvia and Poland respectively and have already done well, both commercially and on the water. Honours for the 25 include Cork Week last year where one finished second, third and fourth in IRC 6, took fifth and eighth in a 60-boat ORC Club class in this and last year's Gotland Runt, and won under ORC Club in the Hyères Autumn Series last year. This year in Ireland the 25 'Kinetic' took second at Sovereign's Cup and second in the Dun

Y&Y
TEST



Above The hull is relatively narrow and flat sided with a fine entry.



Above middle The interior is functional, if not luxurious.



Above right The main track runs the full width of the cockpit floor and places the mainsheet trimmer behind the helm



PHOTOS ANDI ROBERTSON

Right The boat feels very quick downwind, although spinnaker area is relatively cheap under IRC so kite size could possibly increase.

Laoghaire regatta, and the 25 'Drake's Drum' won the ISC group overall at Round the Island.

The first 29 only hit the water for the first time in late May. Boat number two, Adam Gosling's 'Yes!', has already taken second at the IRC nationals, won the 200-boat IRC Group 2 Round the Island and has just finished second to the Corby 35 'Antix' in the Dun Laoghaire regatta.

To date Corby has sold six 29s – five off the plans – and interest is such that a second set of tooling is due to be installed to keep deliveries on target.

Design and build

The 29 is a logical development from the 25. The objective was to offer more internal volume and yet keep it as a relatively compact, easily worked and maintained boat. Thirty foot was deemed to be too big for those blessed with the small boat mindset, and the target was to keep the IRC rating below 1.00.

Simplicity is the watchword written throughout the project. It is very much a production boat and Corby and his Swedish partner Bergstrom expect the boat to sell in their 10s, rather than simply a niche run of nice boats.

Construction is a basic, straightforward glassfibre lay up with a foam core for the hull and the deck. The keel and rig loads are taken by a foam-glass grid. Overall the finish looked good, both in terms of the producing a very fair hull, and most of the detailing is tidy and well executed.

Our test boat was the first from the mould, Tom Brennan's Kinsale-based 'Respect'. 'Respect' has gone with the package of coachroof windows, rod rigging, Formula Spars alloy rig, B&G and all North Sails inventory, while 'Yes!' uses Dyform rigging, TackTick instruments and a Z Spars rig. The standard package is settled now with Formula

Spars rig, Dyform rigging, carbon pole, hydraulic backstay and five TackTick instruments.

Corby has striven to keep improving his foils. The 29 has a big, modern, slender torpedo-shaped T-bulb which allows the centre of gravity to be kept forward and so produce a faster hull shape. The boat has proven very quick downwind and Corby is planning to increase the thickness of the leading edge of the keel just to trade a little of the downwind speed for a slightly more forgiving, user-friendly groove.

'Yes!' is still very much a standard boat and they have not changed the keel profile significantly. They moved to the hydraulic backstay first. But otherwise the boat is pretty much as standard. The hull has a relatively narrow and flat sided with a fine entry but is kept quite nice and rounded in the forefoot, so it should not slam in a seaway. The overall impression is of a chunkier, fuller hull profile than some of the previous generation IRC leadmines, giving a little more form stability. With a very plumb bow, flat transom with minimum overhangs and quite pronounced flare in the stern sections, it is businesslike in appearance rather than pretty, but then beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Effective waterline length on as many points of sail as possible seems to be the main objective in this all-rounder rather than aiming for power and lift in the stern sections.

The coachroof follows the same ethos, boxy and short giving good headroom below and decent space in the working areas below decks, but does not impinge on the deck space.

Layout

The deck layout makes a virtue of cleanliness and simplicity. The cockpit is big and workmanlike. There is a large opening hatch behind the main

track which gives access to the rudder stock, and provides some additional stowage. The main track runs the full width of the cockpit floor and places the mainsheet trimmer behind the helm. The rudder is set quite forward in the cockpit, but there is ample space. There are excellent kickbars shared by helm and main trimmer and there are good, full length longitudinal footbraces running the length of the cockpit. The deck moulding is excellent with good non-slip and tidy detailing.

The non overlapping headsails require only short tracks with easily adjusted pullers. The boat is pretty close winded anyway, so no-one so far has added inhaulers, although some do use the weather sheet just to bring the clew inboard a little in light to moderate airs. Primary winches are Harken 44s with 32s on the coachroof.

Sailing

We headed out on an evening's sail from Kinsale, for a couple of hours in flat water and a puffy 7-11 knots of breeze which was enough to get a good feel for the boat's handling. Complementing this we also watched the boat in the first two races at the Sovereign's Cup which gave us a good feel for the pace of the boat against others in its class.

The boat powered up nicely in 8-9 knots of breeze and tracked well. We were a little underpowered for the breeze with a smaller headsail up which made the boat a little dotty in the lulls, but as soon as the foils were loaded and we were moving forwards at hull speed the boat felt great. Steering-wise, it did seem happy to find a groove and keep the pace on through the lulls with little attention to the helm. The helm felt well balanced but quite positive, ideally so to help refrain from over-use and putting the brakes on. Certainly the 29 accelerated well and held its way well as the breeze dropped. Upwind we were looking at about 6.2 to 6.4 knots without too much trouble. Reaching in 11 knots of true breeze we were making between 6.7 and 7.3 knots with the wind at 80 degrees.

It does feel like quite a finely balanced boat and you are much more in raceboat territory than a stock production Beneteau, Elan or similar, but the

performance gain for its size is noticeable. Around the racecourse the boat would hold pace with the faster-rated, bigger X-332s, some of the Beneteau 36.7s, the J/109 and others, depending on relative ability.

Achieving the IRC rating requires rated sail area to be minimised so it does reward good trimming in marginal conditions. In terms of maximising speed upwind the feeling is that it sails best slightly more upright. By design the 29 will find itself among the smaller, slower boats in many IRC big boat Class 1/2 fleets and this does need to be taken into account tactically. This is a quick 29-footer but it is not magic. Hence it is vital to get clear air, sail to the polars and perhaps miss the odd shift rather than fight the traffic and dirty air of bigger, faster-rated boats.

Certainly the boat feels and is very slippery downwind, and can go quicker. Spinnaker area is relatively cheap under IRC and so the kites could go bigger, but that also depends on staying within the required class handicap band.

Interior

It was a key part of the brief to have the 29 as a 'proper little yacht' and hence it has a quite acceptable, if not exactly sumptuous interior. But it does follow that those looking to get an IRC race boat at a really sensible price might not want to then spend their money on shoreside accommodation and certainly for the likes of Cork, or busy regatta weeks where prices are at a premium, there is enough space and comfort to sleep some of the crew on board.

Truth is there are six good berths. Two in a cosy double up forwards, two good-sized settee berths and two quarter berths aft. At the bulkhead there is a sink and double burner stove to starboard and little nav station with a locker below to port.

There is an offset heads, which could be closed off from the main saloon with a simple nylon/velcro door arrangement. The companionway is formed by a simple two step alloy ladder. The front of the engine cover is a sailcloth panel which has neat stowage pouches, which also means engine access is excellent.

The interior finish is low maintenance but pleasingly executed to provide a moderately

Below left Upwind the 29 tracks nicely, the helm feeling well balanced but quite positive.



PHOTO ANDI ROBERTSON



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ANSWER BACK

from ?

homely interior. Certainly this boat will be competitive for the usual short coastal offshore races, and comfortable enough for deliveries.

Overall

The market's love affair with cruiser racers waxes and wanes. At the moment I think it is waning as the realisation that what people want to spend their money on boats which are first and foremost competitive and fun to sail, engaging all the crew, and interior furniture comes second or somewhere else lower on the list.

The Corby 29 is a good, competitive race boat which will prosper and should continue to prosper under IRC. It will appeal to the serious racers all over the UK and Ireland who want to win trophies at a genuinely sensible price on a boat which should hold its value well. I can see a good measure of sales success for this boat, but it does remain a relatively tightly defined niche. ■

Above Achieving the rated speed will require careful trimming, especially racing against larger boats under handicap.

Specification Corby 29

LOA	8.8m
LWL	7.7m
BEAM	2.85m
DRAFT	2m
DISPLACEMENT	2.750kg
SAIL AREA: UPWIND	54sq m
SPINNAKER	70sq m
ENGINE:	Yanmar 10hp
IRC RATING:	0.998
PRICE (EX-SAILS):	£62,200

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COMPARISONS...



X-332

Closest production boat under IRC but it's bigger and more expensive. Excellent all-rounder with strong UK class association. Well finished with strong re-sale values.

LOA:	10.06m
BEAM:	3.30m
DRAFT:	1.8m
DISPLACEMENT:	4,350kg
SAIL AREA:	
Upwind	58.9sq m
Spinnaker	67sq m
GUIDE PRICE:	£55-75,000**



Beneteau First 31.7

Not as quick and so down a couple of classes under IRC at most big regattas, but good for space, comfort and IRC performance with the added attraction of class racing at some major regattas. Increasingly popular around the coast.

LOA:	9.66m
BEAM:	3.23m
DRAFT:	1.9m
DISPLACEMENT:	3,750kg
SAIL AREA:	
Upwind	53.4sq m
Spinnaker	70sq m
GUIDE PRICE:	£69,800*

*Guide prices are approximate and exclude sails **Second-hand price