



Ribcraft

30 years producing RIBs and having one of the most reputable names in the RIB industry is no mean feat...

Ribcraft have carved an enviable name in the market so what of their latest builds? Paul Lemmer takes a brace and puts them to the test!



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Ribcraft are to many ribsters what Land Rover products are to serious off-road 4x4 users, and I quote, ‘transport for tough, no-nonsense applications, with the ability to get through the harshest environment in the knowledge that the vehicle has evolved over the years to become a benchmark for others to achieve’.

Unlike many RIB producers, Ribcraft endeavour to manufacture as much of the craft as possible in-house, thus ensuring tight quality control and fewer after-sales issues. Apart from the Hypalon fabric, GRP materials and various basic materials required to construct a RIB, everything is sourced and manufactured in Ribcraft’s own factory. The moulding and building of the hulls, consoles, seats etc, the construction and fitting of the buoyancy tubes, upholstery and stainless-steel items such as fuel tanks, ‘A’ frames and handles and finally all the engineering work, including the rigging of the motors, are entirely carried out by Ribcraft’s own personnel.

The construction technique is largely unchanged since the original craft back in the late 80s, and whilst improvements and advances in materials have been embraced, the basic ‘bulletproof’ building method and layout is still one of the main reasons why Ribcraft enjoy such a dedicated following. Some five years ago HMS, the editor of this journal, together with his 14 year-old son Tom, completed a tough circumnavigation of the UK, including Cape Wrath and the Pentland Firth, in a Ribcraft 4.8m. Not only was this an extraordinary achievement but the craft also returned to its base without a single blemish and, perhaps more importantly, without frightening the crew!

So with the credentials in place, how do the latest offerings perform and what changes have been made to keep the craft at the forefront of the RIB market?

Our test took place in Weymouth, the most convenient location to Ribcraft’s base in Yeovil, with the established 6.4m and newer 750 Sport fitted respectively with the latest Suzuki 175hp and 300hp outboard motors. As we were preparing for the test, to our surprise and excitement, we were also given the opportunity to go up in a helicopter for some aerial shots, although having only one lens on the camera we were not really able to do justice to this unexpected photographic opportunity.

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experiences in conjunction with this latest test confirm that it still ranks amongst the best in class. With a 22-degree deadrise hull and an unusual planing pad situated aft on the keel line, the 6.4 gets on the plane with very little bow-up attitude and rides completely level right up to her maximum speed of just over 40 knots. At rest, the tubes are in contact with the water, giving



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with a raked bow and swept-back spray rails giving the impression that she is leaning more towards performance than the older designs, but we were in for a surprise: rather than showing a marked improvement over the older 6.4 design, the 750 only achieved another 6 knots with her extra 125hp! Whether this was down to the choice of propeller, the extra weight of the larger craft or a combination of the two, we were not sure, but it could simply be that the older design is very efficient. Whilst the top speed of 48 knots can hardly be described as slow, we were expecting slightly better performance figures from a 7.5m craft with 300hp on the transom, but perhaps even more surprising is that the 0 - 30 knots time was also faster on the smaller, less powerful boat!

With her 273-litre (60 gallon) under-deck fuel tank, and the Suzuki 300 turning over at an economical 4000rpm (30 knots), the 750 has a useful potential cruising range of 240 miles.

Outright performance aside, we could not fault the handling of the 750, and she could be chucked about with total confidence in the flat waters of the sheltered harbour. Sadly, during the day we could not test either craft in any meaningful sea state, but we are told that the new 24-degree deadrise hull is even smoother and drier riding in rougher seas than the excellent, older 7.5m hull that she replaces; if that is the case, then the 750 Sport should be a winner.

As with the 6.4m, the 750 interior is practical and functional rather than sumptuous, with a larger version of the 6.4 console exhibiting all the good traits of its smaller sister, but with the added bonus of

excellent stability, but underway the planing pad seems to lift the stern so that the tubes are clear, creating less drag and therefore more efficiency. Cornering is the ‘on rails’ variety and, once again, is probably helped by the lateral grip provided by the sides of the planing pad which prevent water from escaping under the hull on tight turns.

One could describe the interior layout of the craft as ‘traditional British RIB’. A stand-alone steering console and surprisingly efficient dashboard screen/surround arrangement, obligatory two-person ‘suicide’ seat with storage beneath and six independent sit-aside jockey seats, each with a high backrest and properly hinged and fastened seat cushions, make this a model of practical efficiency. In the bow is an anchor locker and at the stern a conventional transom, with no outboard-motor splash well to prevent water splashing over if the craft was stopped abruptly; should this occur however, or should the craft take on water in a rough sea, two large-diameter, elephant trunk-type bailers, backed up by two drain ‘sumps’ fitted with large capacity electric bilge pumps, effectively take care of bailing. There is a substantial stainless-steel ‘A’ frame and a useful 180-litre (40 gallon) fuel tank which, at cruising speeds of between 25 and 30 knots, should give the craft a comfortable range of 150 miles.

With her well-finished, dark blue buoyancy tubes, full-length lifelines and heavy ‘D’ fender around the entire craft, there is no doubting the dual purpose application of this craft, and one would feel equally happy using her for a multitude of leisure or commercial duties.

Moving to the new Ribcraft 750 Sport, one is immediately aware that this hull is from another drawing board. Unlike the 6.4 hull, the 750 has a modern look about it,



Ribcraft 6.4

TECHNICAL DATA METRIC

Length overall:	6.4m
Width:	2.55m
Weight:	Depends on specification
Persons capacity:	12
Max hp:	200hp
Recommended engine:	150hp -175hp
Deadrise 'V' @ transom:	Warped deep-V 22" at transom
Tube diameter:	20"
Number of chambers:	5
Max. load capacity:	1750 kgs
Tube material:	Hypalon 1300gsm
CE category:	B
Warranty:	5 years

STANDARD FITTINGS

Deep-V GRP hull with fwd 'D' ring and transom 'D' rings
Hypalon buoyancy tubes, lifelines and 'D' rubbing strake
4" elephant's trunk-type bailer, sump and auto/electric bilge pump. Under-deck trunking for cables. Bow anchor locker, anti-slip deck, foot pump and repair set

PERFORMANCE

6.4m	Knots	Seconds
	0 to 30	8.2
	0 to 40	13.1

RPM	Fuel consumption litres	
2000	6.5	6.8
3000	14.0	14.0
4000	23.5	23.9
5000	32.0	36.8
6400 max. top speed	42.1	56.8

PRICES (incl VAT)

From: £ 22,000
As tested: £ 29,950

Ribcraft 750 Sport

TECHNICAL DATA METRIC

Length overall:	7.5m
Width:	2.7m
Weight:	1500kg excl.engine
Persons capacity:	12
Max hp:	300hp
Recommended engine:	200hp - 250hp
Deadrise 'V' @ transom:	24"
Tube diameter:	tapered tube 19" at transom
Number of chambers:	7
Max. load capacity:	12 persons
Tube material:	Hypalon 1300gsm
CE category:	B
Warranty:	5 years

STANDARD FITTINGS

Bow anchor locker, 225-litre (50 gallon) stainless-steel fuel tank
SeaStar hydraulic steering, Helm console with windsceen, grab handle and upholstered forward seat, Four one-person jockey seats with backrests and three-person moulded rear bench seat with backrest, Contoured 2" stainless-steel 'A' frame with top ski pull point

PERFORMANCE

750 Sport	Knots	Seconds
	0 to 30	9.6
	0 to 40	12.8

RPM	Fuel consumption litres	
3000	20.3	20.5
4000	32.0	34.8
5000	40.2	55.0
6000 max. top speed	48.0	95.6

PRICES (incl VAT)

From: £ 37,000
As tested: £ 39,500

MANUFACTURER

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more space and a large waterproof deck hatch mounted in the back of the console, giving excellent access to the very neatly executed electrics etc. inside. The four jockey seats differ from the 6.4 by being tapered on their forward sections, and this simple improvement makes an enormous difference when standing, allowing the legs to clear the edges without impinging. Aft there is a comfortable, contoured, three-person rear bench seat set into a one-piece moulded section that includes a rear splash well, and above this is a stylish stainless-steel 'A' frame-cum-ski-pole arrangement. This unusual, substantial and modern-looking frame enhances the sports nature of the craft and will certainly appeal to wakeboarders and skiers alike. The rear seat has a wide, upholstered, lower backrest support, above which are three stylish individual upholstered Audi TT lookalike stainless hoops, plus the seat base lifts to reveal dry storage for equipment etc.

Our test craft was fitted with the optional, very smart Tek-Dek pseudo teak decking, which contrasted well with the two-tone light grey and dark blue tubes/upholstery and white GRP hull/mouldings.

Overall I thought the two Ribcraft test RIBs were exactly as expected. They are strongly constructed to accept the worst that Nature can throw at them, whilst dealing with the rough and the smooth with equal ability; they are eminently practical and capable, even in poor sea conditions, and they hold their value well in the used-RIB market due to their deserved reputation for quality and durability.

What more can we say, except that the helicopter trip was excellent! Portland Bill was stunning from the air, and the camera lens was just not powerful enough to get any meaningful pictures. But hey, I enjoyed the experience!

Paul Lemmer