

Ribcraft 6.8 Offshore

Irving Stewart tests a Ribcraft 6.8m commercial RIB with a 200hp Mariner Optimax.



loading and unloading; whilst at speed the tubes are clear of the surface.

The craft feature deep Vee hulls with very pronounced spray rails. Due to the in-house tube production facility at Ribcraft, and the infinite range of different colours of Hyperlon stocked, most of these craft have unique hull and tube colour combinations making them stand out from 'run of the mill' competitors' craft. This boat will take a single outboard up to 200hp, twin 115s, inboard diesels or even jets.

Despite an excellent exterior hull finish these boats are laid up to full commercial specifications and the hulls are reinforced by a very tough 'egg box' of plywood.

In fact there's probably more marine ply used under the deck of a Ribcraft than in any other currently built RIB; all of which is then overlaid and laminated into place. Decks are similarly reinforced, wet bonded to the hull and strainers and then finished in non slip surfacing.

Fuel tanks are mounted amidships under the deck, and to maximise space they're fabricated to the most complex shapes, works of art in stainless! All cabling runs are under the deck in specially built ducts, and there are even sealed flush hatches set into the deck to give access to bilge pumps and transponders.



The consoles on these Offshore boats are set well forward providing an opportunity to mount a wide variety of seating options whilst still maintaining the balance of the craft. Options of console styles range from simple 'stand at the helm' commercial versions to wide curved creations with

built in 'suicide' seats, tinted screens, huge dashboards for instruments and as many safety rails and grab handles as your budget will permit. Generally the space in front of the console is kept clear to provide additional load space or simply to permit ease of movement around the boat.



As virtually everything is fabricated in-house Ribcraft can tailor make every RIB to precise customer specifications.

THE 6.8 ON WATER

Well Ribcraft could have simply laid on a new boat and engine all ex showroom and fully tested - but they didn't! Instead a customer, Keith Ferris of West Bay Diving, volunteered to take us out in his 6.8 dive RIB. Now, please understand, this is a working boat.

Although it's only been in service since last year it has hundreds of hours on the clock. If you're familiar with those who 'do it in rubber' you'll know that divers carry tons of very heavy and unsociable equipment and consider boats a necessary evil - purely transport. In addition they feel that boats should have only two speeds; flat out to get to the dive sites and stationary. This isn't the best scenario for a boat, or an engine!

At sea the Ribcraft does precisely 'what it says on the box'. It shrugs off bad conditions,

gives a comfortable reassuring ride and manoeuvres without fuss or bother at all speeds. If you're daft enough to try and induce it to misbehave it'll simply sit back on its tubes and wait for you to come to your senses. You can stand at the helm with plenty of foot space or relax on one of Ribcraft's well padded seats and enjoy driving a pedigree boat. With 200hp of Mariner on the stern this is a mean machine capable of serious performance in all conditions.

Above all you can load the boat until it groans in certain knowledge that your nerve will break before it does! After all the use the test boat had endured it didn't have a single rattle, crack or even a loose fitting. The multi

layer tubes bore signs of numerous impacts but had never suffered leakage of any sort.

In short Ribcraft offer fully commercially compliant craft finished to recreational standards of finish and style. All you have to do is decide whether you're a serious Ribster or not - there are RIBs from 4.2 right up to 9.5 to choose from!

And if you think all Ribcrafts are 'industrial' forget it! The new 7 and 7.5m boats came straight off a computer and have modern styling that would upset a Turin designer!

Our thanks to Jason and the team at Ribcraft for organising the tests, Keith Ferris for the loan of the boat and skippering for us and Garmin, Silva and Aquapac for our test gear. ■

Ribcraft have quietly been building seriously tough boats for over two decades and have moved into a new, far larger factory in Yeovil. Unlike many other 'serious' RIB builders Ribcraft haven't come from a background of racing or high performance craft.

Instead they've concentrated on far less publicised, but far more demanding, customers such as the Military, Police, Coastguards and coastal bodies as well as Fisheries and Protection bodies. Their craft are eagerly sought by those into serious long distance cruising or those who spend literally thousands of hours at sea per year.

Ribcraft have been forced to admit defeat as their expertise has become publicly known. They've been forced to build production to cope with an extra ever growing demand from serious recreational users. In terms of production they're probably running a close second to Avon with

production approaching four boats a week leaving their factory at the time we visited.

COMMERCIAL USES

Originally specifically designed to be commercial boats able to withstand, and cope with, foul weather the Ribcraft 6.6 and 7.5m Offshore RIBs have been proven all over the world. Many hundreds are in service having been custom built for a wide spectrum of users ranging from 'probably military', through oil terminals support craft, to serving on the French Lifeboat Stations. There are even Ribcraft Offshore Fast Rescue RIBs on the Nile and on Swiss lakes!

SERIOUS RIBS

These are serious RIBs with long steep bow sheer and a wide beam of over 2.7m. They've big tubes that sit on the water when the boat is at rest to providing stability for

FACT FILE

SPECIFICATION

6.8 OFFSHORE
 Price of hull and tubes only: £9,995
 Boat as tested & braked roller trailer: £31,000
 CE 'Cat B' 12 people + 1,000kg of kit!
 MCA 'Cat 4' 2 crew + 10 divers + kit

PLUS POINTS/MINUS POINTS

- + A commercial standard of build with recreational finish
- + Every boat is custom built to customer specification
- More expensive than lesser craft
- If you want one you'll have to wait!

SIMILAR BOATS TO CONSIDER

- Ocean 700
- Tohatsu 7.1
- Avon SR 7.0m Searider

WHO TO TALK TO

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TEST FIGURES*

	PLANING	CRUISING	OPTIMUM	MAXIMUM
Speed	20mph	30mph	40mph	45mph
RPM	3,000	4,000	4,500	5,000
Run1	0 - plane: 3.28s	0 - cruise: 7.79s	0 - optimum: 10.91s	0 - max: 14.58s cruise - max: 8.16s
Run2	0 - plane: 3.61s	0 - cruise: 8.67s	0 - optimum: 12.5s	0 - max: 15.01s cruise - max: 8.95s

* With 21" pitch prop
 Maximum speed obtained during test 48.5mph at 5,100rpm