

# RING 1200

Not that long ago an 8m RIB would have been considered one of the largest practical RIBs to be privately owned, but today that length is commonplace and we are now regularly seeing 9m and over being purchased by clients who have the need for such craft.

**W**hether for leisure or commercial use, it has become generally accepted that RIBs are, for their size, probably the safest way to go to sea. But size-wise, where does one draw the line? For instance, the specialist America's Cup 20m support craft have a specific reason for the protection that an inflatable collar provides, but unless the boat operator has a similar requirement, why bother to have buoyancy tubes at all? The argument for buoyancy tubes is easier to understand with commercial and rescue operators, but one particular Scottish family, the Gillespies, wanted a RIB with inflatable buoyancy tubes solely for leisure use. Holding strong views on the subject, they made a statement by acquiring one of the largest privately owned RIBs in Britain.

Having used RIBs for a number of years, the three Gillespie brothers have acquired a wealth of experience cruising around Scottish

waters, with the odd foray to Ireland and Norway thrown in for good measure. After selling their last diesel-powered 8.5m RIB, they were in the market for something faster and more capable offshore. Following lengthy deliberations on what was available they finally settled on a new craft that appeared to tick all the right boxes, a twin diesel-powered Ring 12m (40') RIB.

The Ring range of RIBs is designed and built in Arundel, Sussex, by ex- powerboat racing champion, Mike Ring. Mike has been building high-speed boats for over forty years and his designs are famous for their uncompromising hulls which provide a performance/handling combination that is second to none. Not known for publicising his craft to the public, for the past few years Mr Ring has quietly been carving out a niche-market for his larger RIBs to a discerning overseas clientele that requires fast craft,

capable of maintaining high speeds in all types of sea state.

Our test craft was the Gillespies' privately owned, triple-stepped hull 12m version, powered by twin Volvo D6 350hp diesel sterndrive motors. The interior was conventionally fitted-out for extensive family cruising with a wide stand-alone driver's console, four jockey seats and a full-width rear bench seat, leaving a huge uncluttered foredeck area that housed a fully inflated 3.5m dinghy! Whilst there was comfortable seating

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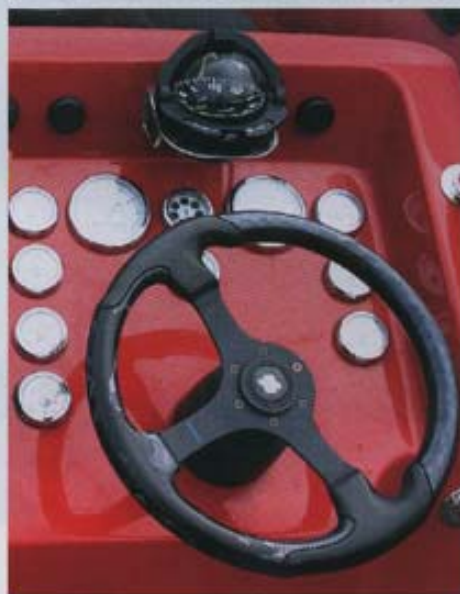
for seven, there was still enough space to seat a couple of football teams; such was the internal volume of the craft.

Starting with the hull; this is definitely unusual in sporting three steps to provide speed and a flat planing angle to the surface of the water for better balance in rough seas. Evidently, the forward step is really a diffuser to aerate the water beneath the hull before it reaches the two main steps further aft, which in turn creates less drag and, therefore, more speed. The bows are extremely fine and high for punching into head seas and preventing 'stuffing' in a following sea, and the 25-degree deep 'V' is carried right aft to provide a soft ride in rough sea conditions. The construction of the hull and deck is conventional and extremely robust, with four, full-length stringers providing immense rigidity and, although marine plywood is used on this particular craft for the stringers and deck, the option of modern, lightweight Divinacil foam is offered to those who require less weight for increased performance.

The 1100 denier 9-chamber Hypalon 53cm (21") buoyancy tubes are dwarfed by the sheer size of the craft and are set so high above the water that they offer no tangible stability. According to Mike Ring, because these 12m craft are mainly sold to commercial users, the tubes have to be set this high so they do not drag in the water when the craft are heavily laden. Future craft will have the option of lower topsides and tubes for the leisure market and I personally feel that this will give the craft a sleeker appearance, although it is still a striking-looking craft. A point that the owners made about the height of the tubes was that when they were caught out in a Force 9 severe gale whilst delivering the craft to Scotland on its inaugural trip, they were grateful that the tubes were high as they offered security, and ultimately stability, in the horrendous seas they encountered. Fair play!

The excellent finish of the mouldings, the properly padded and shaped upholstery and full teak decking/engine cover give the craft an air of quality that is only seen in a handful of today's new RIBs, and the engine installation is a model for others to emulate, with all wiring and fittings properly routed and protected.

The twin Volvo D6 350hp diesel sterndrives weigh in at a hefty 750kg each so, with one and a half tons of stern weight, one could expect the craft to squat. However, it has so much hull volume that it sits level whilst at rest and, with the help of the hull steps, runs normally whilst underway. On the subject of the motors, an issue arose relating to propeller sizes, and it soon became apparent that Volvo did not have coarse enough props to realise the full potential of this ultra-efficient hull; with Volvo's largest props fitted, the engines would prematurely hit maximum revs. After much discussion with numerous propeller specialists, Poole-based firm, Propeller Revolutions, modified the existing units, taking them to the



limit of the blades' potential and increasing the craft's top speed by five knots! With such a superb piece of engineering from a leading marine diesel manufacturer, I find it curious that larger props are not available, but there is probably a sound reason and we have subsequently learned that Volvo now offers alternative gearing to address the matter. The Gillespies, however, are not too chuffed to learn of this now!

Underway, there appears to be very little turbo-lag, and the five-ton Ring positively surges onto the plane with the lightest touch of the twin 'fly-by-wire' control levers. The

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### TECHNICAL DATA

TECHNICAL DATA	METRIC
Length Overall:	12
Width:	3.30
Weight:	3.75 Tonnes
Persons Capacity:	25
Engine Capacity:	Volvo D6 - 350hp
Transom Angle:	15 degrees
Tube Diameter:	55cm
Number Of Chambers:	11
Max. Load Capacity:	4500 kg
Tube Material:	Hypalon
CE Category:	B
Warranty:	12 months

### STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Not Available

### PRICES (inc VAT)

POA





engines can barely be heard at low revs and are completely inaudible once up to speed when the wind noise takes over. Unlike on a small, powerful RIB where everything seems to happen quickly and the engine is ever present over one's shoulder, there is a calm, powerful surge that just keeps building, the craft barely lifting its nose as the speed rises and maximum revs appear on the tachometers in a matter of seconds. Well, that's it then; we are at maximum revs and travelling at what I estimate to be around 45 knots, but a glance at the GPS tells another story, with the 60mph barrier passed and creeping up towards 65mph. Not bad for a 40', five-ton boat that probably has the aerodynamics of a Routemaster bus and too finely pitched propellers to do it justice. There is no question

about the hull's efficiency and, with the right props, this is easily a 70mph projectile from the 700hp on tap. But perhaps the most impressive feature of the efficient hull is the way the craft just seems to slip along at 40mph with the revs pulled back to a gentle and economical canter. We were not able to check the fuel consumption but the Gillespies reckon that they are burning, in total, around 65 litres an hour at 35 knots. With the twin, huge underdeck, GRP-encapsulated, aluminium, 455-litre fuel tanks filled to capacity, that's a healthy cruising range of almost 500 miles.

Despite its size, the craft feels light and nimble to handle and it can be chucked about like a sports boat, so good are the steering and handling. Within a minute or two of taking the helm, it is evident that the package is right,

with everything naturally falling to hand and proving better than expected; not something we can report on most of the craft we test. Obviously it would have been preferable to have had some challenging seas to test the sea-keeping; after all, it is not every day that one gets the chance to test a deep 'V' 12m RIB from a renowned designer with such a pedigree background, but we did find some waves.

The wind had picked up a little and the tide was running against it, creating a useful chop on top of a reasonable swell. These seas would have had an 8m RIB's props out of the water but, at 12m and 5 tons, the waves were barely discernible as we clove our way across the tops of the crests at 60mph plus.

For anyone looking for a craft this large, we would certainly recommend the Ring 1200 or, if this is too big, the smaller versions based on the same hull. It is carefully hand built by people who know how to build in strength without excessive weight and make a big boat feel and handle like a much smaller one. There is now a new cuddy cabin version available, and in the pipeline are both a full-cabin and flybridge version plus, of course, the various professional and commercial examples that steadily leave the factory on their way to far off destinations.

Now what we need is a 12m model with a comfortably appointed forward cabin, a spacious flybridge with a fold-away spray-cum-sun hood, a couple of 450hp diesels on trimmable surface drives, swinging big surface-piercing props and two 600-litre fuel tanks so we can cruise a sensible distance at around 70 knots and all for under £50,000 - if only! Mike, Mike - Mike Ring, where are you? Paul Lemmer

