

ON - LINE ARTICLES

Ribcraft 4.8

We sometimes get accused of concentrating too much editorial attention on the big and beautiful end of the RIB market. Of course small can also be beautiful and as they say in the trade "size isn't everything." If we are guilty I apologise and accept the criticism with a view to striking a better balance where possible in the future. Now we've cleared the air so to speak, let's consider the subject matter pictured here. A 4.80 metre boat complete with 60hp OBM and trailer marketed all in and ready to go at a remarkable figure of under £7.5K. It sounds good, do you not agree?

Ribcraft's range of RIBs stem from the early roots they developed within the commercial sector, when nearly a decade ago now, they began to successfully market a medium sized vessel which began to prove popular with the likes of HM Coastguard for use in their inshore SAR work. To a great extent, Ribcraft's designs continue to reflect those early influences both in their distinctive 'raised bow' range as well as the more recent George Marvin designed boats that the company now offer.

The Ribcraft name not only continues to remain popular with professional operators but is also proving increasingly desirable amongst a growing number of leisure Ribsters who appreciate the heritage this make of boat affords them. Such includes a proper understanding of offshore requirements on behalf of the builder, strength of overall build coupled to the boat's true deep vee hull, plus it must be said, customer incentive for placing an order with a bonafide and established company who's product range meets the necessary modern requirements. The 4.80 for instance like other craft in the range has full CE approval and is also MCA type approved for commercial use.

Despite the current trend for larger and larger RIBs, the smaller end of the market is also as healthy as ever with many new people looking for their first boat or perhaps a RIB that's small enough to store within the garage but substantial enough to enjoy a variety of watersports from. The Ribcraft 4.80, as seen at this year's Southampton International Boat Show, is a craft capable of fulfilling both roles very adequately and offers a great opportunity for many different people to get on the water and experience the benefits of ribbing. This might even include the likes of the local sailing club who would quickly discover that this little boat makes for an ideal inshore safety vessel. In fact this particular model is used by the B.M.I.F. as a safety/patrol vessel at their on water international shows.

If there is one truly outstanding feature about this RIB it is the extraordinary ride it gives. Firstly it has a very deep vee for its waterline length and coupled to its warped hull and lateral spray rails, it not only generates a very soft ride but a dry one too. (A warped hull does not possess a constant deep vee from stem to stern but rather its design flattens out to effect a greater planing area.)

George Marvin was a great believer in keeping parallel spray rails running straight along the length of the hull with no upturn in the bow. I have to say, his theory works exceptionally well on this RIB for the hull design generates a very noticeable degree of lift which again assists in giving a dry and sea kindly ride. This latter factor also helps to give the impression that the boat is bigger than she actually is, in fact, this 4.80 feels equal to more than a few 5.5 metre boats I've trialed in the past.

Her fine bow cuts through the chop beautifully, in other words, you can really keep the power on without the need for sacrificing your spine to Neptune. Turn her tight into a spin and she'll hold to the water with no side stepping or tendency to steer from the bow. (Ribcraft informed me that the boat would be capable of holding



to the water even better if the engine was set a little lower but a few notches higher on the transom were favoured in this instance for the benefit of overall performance.) In construction terms, the hull lay up is 1oz, doubled in the keel and features 4 full width transverse bulkheads whilst the transom is a sound 30mm of marine ply encapsulated in GRP.

For those who might wish to use the 4.80 to water ski from, this hull design suits well in that it's quick to get up on the plane, is well balanced -which means it doesn't suffer from being stern heavy and the Mariner 60hp offered in the package represents more than enough power for a whole cross section of water sports activities. Speaking of the engine, it's of the straightforward carburettor variety, nothing elaborate but strong nonetheless and being only 60hp whilst it may not represent the latest in engine technology, it remains reasonably efficient burning something in the region of 5 gallons an hour. Mariner outboards have a well respected name when it comes to reliability and strength, plus the reputation of E. P.Barrus Ltd. the company responsible for UK Mariner and Yanmar distribution, is pretty much second to none when it comes to after sales support and customer care.

Internally, the fit-out is basic but of quality. Ribcraft finish all their boats to a high standard and the 4.80 is no exception. A simple single helm console and 2 man in line jockey seat are set just ahead of amidships thus positioning the weight of helmsman and crew in the most advantageous section of the boat. The seat is of a good height, a fair bit higher perhaps than its Avon equivalent, but it affords one good all round visibility and a sense of being very much in control.

A single 5 gallon tank mounted on a neat fixing plate to the stern deck is about the only thing that clutters the deck - other than that this area remains free. Hence, even though the boat might be small, she has the potential of suiting the purposes of a 2 man diving team. As regards the sponsons, these are constructed in a high grade yellow Du Pont 1200gsm hypalon which is sectioned into either 3 or 5 compartments and protected by means of black heavy duty D fendering. The visual combination of black and canary yellow is a striking one and represents a definite positive when it comes to a small RIB being seen at sea. Utilising the traditional RIB concept of combining an offshore hull with the benefits an air collar provides, the tubes to this craft sit just above the waterline thus affording good lateral stability at rest but also not hindering performance when underway. This combination is the correct one when it comes to RIB design, an obvious matter you would have thought but one that still continues to elude many manufacturers of blue water craft even today, some thirty years after the RIB was first invented.

Well, that's about it. All in all, the Ribcraft 4.80 is a very seaworthy and adaptable little RIB, in fact, I would go as far as saying that it is one of the best I have driven in this size range. At the all in price of £7495.00 including trailer, engine and the dreaded VAT if you happen to be living in the UK, it would almost certainly be put at the top of my shortlist if I were looking for a boat of this type.

HMS

Specifications	
LOA	4.8m
BOA	2.1 m
Internal Length	3.9m
Internal Beam	1.2m
Weight	200kg
Min HP	25hp
Price:	Packaged ready to go with trailer and 60hp Mariner ELPTO £7,495 inc. VAT

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