

# Big softy!

right Our Humber 8.0m Offshore RIB has shown it can perform impressively as a workboat and as a sportsboat. below A key feature is that it offers easy access past the helm to the foredeck.



On every MBM Cruising Club event we have two control boats to look after the fleet. Our Broom 39KL acts as the main control centre, but our second boat needed to be versatile, fast and, above all, soft.

## What type of boat were we looking for?

Our second control boat needs to fulfil many needs on a Cruising Club event.

It must have speed, should we

## this series

Owners' Reports follows the fortunes of boatowners not just through the initial purchasing process but as they use their craft through the ensuing seasons.

We'll be asking them how they use their boat, whether it meets their expectations and how much it costs to run.

## this month

### THE BOAT

Humber Offshore 8.0m, *Time Flies*

- built in 2004
- no permanent berth

### THE OWNER

Motor Boats Monthly

need to dart among the fleet to provide assistance. Versatility is also essential, as the vessel can be used as a ferry, a tug, a dive boat or a mobile workshop giving breakdown assistance.

It needs to be seaworthy enough to cross the English Channel in the sort of conditions we would be happy sending larger motorboats out into. Equally importantly, we have to be able to put it alongside another vessel without worrying about causing damage.

All things considered, we can't think of anything better than a rigid inflatable.

## Why did we choose this boat?

Over the past few years we have had four previous Humber RIBs — all 6.3m Ocean Pro models, two powered by inboard diesels and two by outboards. Our experience of the brand has been very positive, so we were happy to look to the same family-run business

from Yorkshire for a replacement.

Although we appreciated the performance of the outboard versions, the lack of availability of petrol in some of our cruising destinations meant that we decided diesel was the way to go.

We also felt it was worth upgrading to a bigger boat, feeling that the extra length, and particularly the extra beam, of the 8.0m Offshore model was worth the extra cost.

Not only would it deliver even better sea-keeping on long sea passages, with a wider variety of seating and storage options, but it would solve one difficulty we had with the 6.3, that of squeezing around the wide centre console to get to the foredeck.

## How did we specify the boat?

Preferring a diesel engine would give us an ideal opportunity to try out the latest 160hp five-cylinder D3 engine from Volvo Penta,

whose compact size, low weight and refinement made it look ideal for a sportsboat.

We did have reservations about whether it would be powerful enough for a boat of this size, but we knew that some readers had fitted this engine to even larger boats and been satisfied with their performance, so we decided to give it a go.

To make the most of the RIB's ability, we also specified a huge 350lt underfloor fuel tank.

The extra size of the boat opened up a wide variety of possible seating layouts, and we chose a pair of jockey seats for the helm plus a double bench behind. This gave us proper seating for four, but with the cushions in front of the helm and on the enginebox we would be able to accommodate many more should the need arise.

As this was the first time we have had a RIB built specifically

for us, we were also able to specify the colour scheme. We opted for smart grey and blue tubes with blue and white in the cockpit. We also had the MBM logo added to the tubes.

As usual we went for a relatively bare console, on which we later installed a Navman 7100 VHF and an Eagle fish-finder/depth-sounder, to be supplemented by a variety of portable and handheld chartplotters during the season.

Since we wrote about our last 6.3m Ocean Pro, we were pleased to see that Humber have erased some of the little niggles we raised, to the benefit of the 8.0m Offshore as well.

For example the small forward cleats, mounted low down on the deck, have been replaced with a much more user-friendly central Samson post. The throttle lever is also much better positioned for precise adjustments.

## What was the deal?

The boat as specified by us costs £35,000 inc VAT; the same boat

with a 200hp Suzuki outboard on the transom would set you back £29,500.

If you need a trailer, you will be looking at another £3,500.

## Did we get good service?

Placing our order in late February, in the hope that the boat would be ready in time for our first cruise at the beginning of May, was asking for trouble. Because the D3 engine was still such a new product, its delivery was delayed and our deadline was missed.

Keen to help us out, Humber lent us one of their own boats for our first two events, in the shape of a rather menacing-looking jet-black 6.3m Ocean Pro powered by a 130hp D3.

below A 6.3m Ocean Pro model was pressed into Cruising Club service too.



We finally took delivery of our own 8.0m Offshore in time for our third cruise of the season, to Paris in July.

## Where do we keep the boat?

*Time Flies* has been something of a nomad during her first six months, with no fixed abode.

She spent almost all of the second half of the season cruising around Europe. And to save on berthing costs, we kept her on her trailer in various boatyards around the Solent for some intervening weeks.

She also spent a few weeks holed up in the Netherlands after technical difficulties forced us to leave her behind while the rest of our Cruising Club fleet headed back to Britain.

## What do we use her for?

Her main duty is to act as a support boat on Club cruises, where she can be used to ferry people ashore, tow a broken-down boat or transfer staff from one boat to another. This year she visited France, Belgium and Holland.

*Time Flies* does not sit idle between cruises, and could also be seen serving as our photographer's boat when we were testing other vessels, or negotiating the chaos that is the Solent during Cowes Week on behalf of mbmclub.com's parent website, ybw.com.

So she's already logged 200 hours of activity in just six months.

## Has she lived up to our expectations?

Humber's Offshore hull has been excellent. It rides exceptionally well through the full range of sea conditions, feeling that much more reassuring than our previous smaller models.

In common with most RIBs,