



XS RIB 850

Hugo Montgomery-Swan tests one of the larger models in the commercially orientated XS range as marketed by Barnet Marine of London. If you are seeking a true offshore RIB with big load-carrying capabilities and rough-water attributes, be it for work or serious offshore adventuring, then this 850 could be a serious contender.

ARIB's length and other vital stats as detailed on a company brochure or spec sheet can be misleading. For example, is the measurement taken from the bow to the end of the sponson cone, or is it the hull's actual length that is being used to calculate the figure? If it is the latter then it will make a big difference and likely prove the boat to be quite a different beast to the former – in terms of both capability and comfort.

The XS 850 is without question a 'big' boat for its LOA and, when compared to other craft within the same size category, it's clearly more substantial in terms of its proportions than most 8.5m boats. Mind you, having a 2.9m beam helps, affording its owner/operator a huge amount of deck space for a multitude of seating pods, storage

facilities, or even a large working area for rescue or diving purposes.

One look at this vessel will confirm that its prime market is commercial or, at the very least, the serious adventurer seeking a robust all-weather vessel. There is no mistaking the XS RIB's styling either. Allegedly built in Hull by a yard that Barnet Marine are unwilling to disclose, the XS RIB appears to take its influences unashamedly from the range that Barnet Marine sold previously as its premier offshore RIB range! A range, by the way, that was also built on the banks of the Humber.

Mind you, the hull of the XS is different to the Tornado; featuring pronounced chines, the hull's deep 'V' is perhaps more sports-performance orientated than the latter, and hence is quick to get up on the



plane and runs level once over the hump. It is also likely to be a little more efficient in some respects, but at the cost of being slightly harder riding than the Tornado. Its high bow affords excellent recovery in a following sea state, and the wheel position also increases the feeling that one is helming a very substantial vessel. At the aft end, the high transom and the RIB's big scuppers once again give evidence that this boat has been designed by people who genuinely understand the offshore environment. Functionality coupled to strength of build structure is evident wherever you look aboard this craft.

When the very first XS was presented to RIB International for evaluation several years ago upon its launch, I seem to recall describing it as being rather 'agricultural'

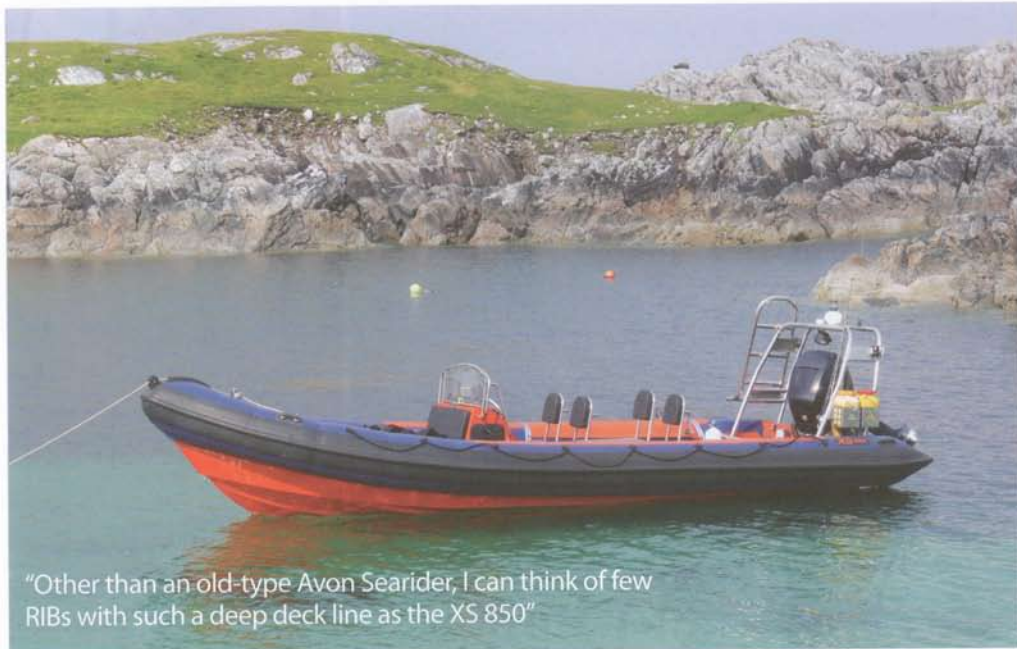
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in terms of its finish. This latest example, however, gives clear evidence of the product having benefited from the obvious attention it's received in terms of its overall finish and build quality. In short, the XS 850 has a high-quality custom-shop appearance and would therefore likely appeal to those who seek a seamanlike workhorse – one that is both well appointed and which can be customised according to the client's own specific requirements.

Key aspects of the vessel that I feel are outstanding include the stainless-steel work, especially to the double arch mast. The

supplier of this framing, I was informed, was the same company that was subcontracted to Tornado previously. This part of the boat's specification is very strong, superbly fashioned, and incorporates a boarding ladder, the necessary mounting for the flying gear and the vessel's navigation lights. It is perfectly strong enough to carry radar as well as a self-righting system if so required.

The high-screen-topped helm console is of the traditional 'expeditionary' style, and is constructed not only to afford ample room for a variety of instrumentation, but also storage within and ahead of its main



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section by means of a forward deck locker which doubles as a 'suicide seat'. The latter, I believe, is optional. Coupled with the Verado engine system, the helm controls are fly-by-wire which, after one adjusts to their sensitivity, are an absolute joy to use and certainly go a very long way to greatly enhancing the overall handling experience of the RIB. Ergonomically, I felt the helm console worked very well indeed. In addition, good grab points, not only here to the console but right through the boat, ensure on-board security is high.

In connection with the latter point, one key feature of the 850 is the deep deck-high sponson combination, which means falling out of this RIB is virtually impossible. For use as a commercial passenger-carrying craft, this element of the boat's design is an important factor in its favour and would assist, too, in giving the craft's occupants a heightened sense of security. Other than an old-type Avon Searider, I can think of few RIBs with such a deep deck line as the XS 850.

Through the substantial transom section of the 850 are the vessel's large elephant-trunk type scuppers. These are just the type required on an offshore RIB of this kind, their simple but effective design allowing for the free flow of large amounts of deck water without the need for manual or electric pumps.

Negative points include: lack of true dry stowage, which is limited to the seat lockers and just one deck locker. The additional

anchor locker and transom sections are really only suitable for hardware and essential safety equipment.

The deep 'V' hull design is the work of an in-house team, and no external naval architects have been used in its development. Furthermore, no CAD technology has been used in the design stage. Nonetheless, one can't argue with the fact that this hull works well and is well suited to the job in hand. Stable both at rest and underway, showing no tendency to 'slip out' when put through a high-speed turn, and also very dry when underway, the XS 850 shows every sign that she would make a very sound boat in a difficult seaway. Thanks largely to the quietly powerful, super smooth acceleration of the single Verado 275hp supercharged 4-stroke, this mighty 8.5m leaps up onto the plane within three lengths of its own LOA. That's impressive, and with two persons up and 200 litres in her tanks she holds a good 40 knots as a very attainable top speed.

I have to say that this craft really appealed to me. I like this form of RIB anyway but was genuinely impressed by the degree of thought given to its overall design, as well as the execution of build. Its handling promoted confidence, and when put through her paces I found nothing lacking in terms of her seagoing capabilities.

HMS

XS 850

TECHNICAL DATA	METRIC
Length Overall:	8.5 m
Width:	2.9 m
Weight:	800 Kgs
Persons Capacity:	12 +
Max HP:	12 +
Recommended Engine:	From Single 225 to Twin 250's
Deadrise 'V' @ transom:	26°
Tube Diameter:	50 cm
Number Of Chambers:	7
Max. Load Capacity:	2175 Kgs
Tube Material:	Polyurethane
CE Category:	RCD Cat B
Warranty:	3 Year back to base

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Side by side console
 2 x single jockey seats
 Hydraulic stp
 400 L tank with gauge
 Non slip floor
 In deck bow locker
 Tube top patches
 Bow open guide
 4 cleat handles
 ext L/Lines
 Tube top patches
 Reat wall
 Under deck boom

PRICES (incl VAT)

Prices start from £ 30,000 Boat / Motor / Trailer (225 hp Single)
AS TESTED: £ 56,000

MANUFACTURER

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