



**The British Inflatable Boat
Owners' Association**

1990 – 2010

The first twenty years

BIBOA

1990 – 2010

The first twenty years

President

Michael Alexander
1990 - 2004

Commander Patrick Bryans RN (Rtd)
2005 – 2010

Commodore

Patrick Bryans
1997 - 2004

John Harvey
2005 – 2007

Chris Strickland
2008 – 2009

Roger Lyas
2010 -

Chairman

Patrick Bryans
1990 – 1995

Kevin Goulding
1995 – 1996

John Harvey
1997 – 1998

Gary Tickner
1999 – 2000

Chris Strickland
2001 – 2006

John Puddifoot
2007 -

Foreword



BIBOA, The Rib Club, has grown from a nautical acorn into a maritime oak tree during the twenty years of its existence. The acorn was sown by the late Michael Alexander who organised the first Round Scotland RIB Race. From the wash-up of this event it became clear there was a need for an organisation to oversee the administration of future events to cover standardisation, fairness, safety and enjoyment - and to recruit members. And so BIBOA grew from small beginnings and over the years has grown into the first class Association that it now is. This success has been due not to any particular person but to a cohort of public spirited enthusiasts who have taken on the many and varied tasks that go to running what I know to be a “taught ship”.

I am very proud to have been associated with the early days of the Association and more recently as your Honorary President. So it gives me great pleasure to write this foreword and to wish the Officers, the Committee and members of BIBOA every success in the future.

Commander Patrick Bryans RN (Rtd)
BIBOA President



It is a very special privilege to write this as Chairman of BIBOA on its twentieth anniversary. Little did I know back in 1990 that when I signed up to join the Highlands and Islands RIB Race that this would lead to more than twenty years of RIB cruising and racing with BIBOA. There was then a very definite pioneering spirit of adventure and in many ways this spirit has continued to this day.

Members continue to challenge their own ability in a wide variety of cruises and races, appealing to both the novice and the more experienced member. This spirit of adventure is a key element to the success of our Association.

BIBOA was formed shortly after the first round Scotland race, as there was a need to create an organised structure to encourage the development of both the cruising and racing elements of the Association. This was no easy task, and a huge debt of gratitude is

owed to all of our founding members, and in particular to Commander Patrick Bryans without whose foresight, guidance and willingness to take on a multitude of tasks, the Association would not have survived.

BIBOA continues to grow from strength to strength: the Association has the best RIB club magazine in the country, we have a strong family base of membership and we now have a stunning new web site that is attracting more and more members every year. I am sure that BIBOA will continue to grow in the future and that the spirit of pioneering adventure established in those early days will be maintained for many years to come.

John Puddifoot
BIBOA Chairman

The Founding Fathers of BIBOA

“men of a not so common breed”

Michael Alexander

1920-2004

Michael was an ideas man, a one-time soldier, an inveterate traveller, a writer, an incurable romantic, a restaurateur and a serious adventurer. In 1942, whilst operating as a commando behind enemy lines at El Alamein, he was captured and held in Colditz until 1945. During the 1950s he was described in the press as “the leader of the Chelsea set”, a bohemian group known principally for its lively parties. After one such party, Michael travelled by an adventurous route to North Africa and succeeding in ‘rescuing’ a friend who had joined the French Foreign Legion, only to then change his mind. The friend, West de Wend-Fenton, became known as ‘Beau West’.

Michael then tried his hand at two London restaurants; his attractiveness to women was considerable and did not diminish with age, at 74 he became involved with a journalist 53 years his junior but neither of them found anything odd in the relationship. Michael wrote many excellent books and a screen adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov’s novel, *Invitation to a Beheading*. He founded BIBOA together with Richard Frere and invited myself to be the first secretary of the Association.

We look back on Michael with great affection as a forthright, charming and likeable character. BIBOA members will be pleased that the Association has its roots in such a splendid and delightful man.

Commander Patrick Bryans RN (Rtd)

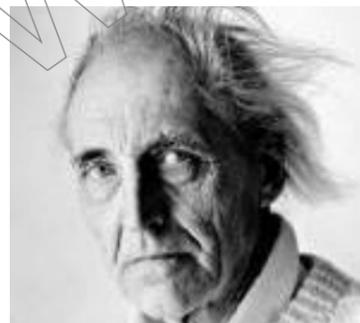
Richard Frere

1922-1999

Richard was modestly content to enjoy the outdoor life of the Scottish Highlands and wrote books on a number of subjects including *Rock Climbs* (at the age of 16) and *Thoughts of a Mountaineer*. He was tall, lean and physically very fit having founded a fitness club in the 1940s long before this became fashionable; he described his later failed attempts at mushroom farming and timber trading with considerable wit and a self effacing frankness.

In the 1950s he bought three railway carriages, north of Aviemore, which he converted into a home for his wife Joan and their young family. He climbed many Scottish mountains with a substantial weight of rocks in his rucksack to make the climb more arduous. He was accomplished both as a man of letters and an outdoorsman.

In 1989 he and his friend Michael Alexander, who were both in their sixties, completed a 500 mile circumnavigation of Scotland in a 4.5m RIB powered by two 15hp engines. They enjoyed the hazardous journey so much that they conceived the 1990 Highlands & Islands RIB Race which led directly to the formation of BIBOA.



John Frere Scott

BIBOA - The Early Days - How It All Started



In mid 1988, my wife rang from Golspie in Sutherland, where she and her cousin had spent the night with someone whom she described as ‘a strange but interesting man called Michael Alexander’. The reason for her call was that Michael had told them that he and a friend, Richard Frere, an artistic mountaineer then living by Loch Ness, planned to circumnavigate Scotland in a 4.5 metre RIB with some gumboots and the odd oilskin, two 15hp Suzukis and a road map; and did I think this was sensible?

As the skipper of a yacht in the first Whitbread Round the World Race I am quite used to being used as a sounding board for ‘salty projects’. My reply was pithy and unambiguous. “They must be nutty as fruit cakes, their average age must be about 70 and I would strongly advise against it”. To my chagrin the weather was superb. They succeeded in their venture with flying colours and it took me a year or two to live down a reputation for being a killjoy and an abject pessimist!

From this brave beginning, which was really a reconnaissance, Michael and Richard dreamed up the first Round Scotland Race in 1990. It attracted some 42 entries and took a whole week, ending up with a great party at Brodie Castle. Against all the odds it was a success but quite a few things were too cavalier by half and there was a certain element of disgruntlement about various ‘goings-on’ in the engine performance department! It was to overcome these difficulties and to foster an interest in ‘Ribbing’ that BIBOA was formed for Ribsters.

I sat down with a clean sheet of paper and drew up a constitution, wrote some rules, formed a committee, started Riblines, designed a logo, and canvassed for members. We had just over 100 in the first year and have never looked back. In those early days a great deal of work was put in by the ‘BIBOA Founding Fathers’, if they will forgive the euphemism. I had the most enormous amount of help from Kevin Goulding, Paul Lemmer, Roger Lyas, John Harvey, Alan Priddy, Charles Dyas, Tony Lee-Elliott, Hugo Montgomery-Swan, Paul Emms and Jan Falkowski, with tremendous assistance in Scotland from Mike Southward, Douglas Crockett and Gordon Turner, to mention but a few - and of course we had a few altercations!

My only problem was that I found myself as Chairman, General Secretary, Editor, Treasurer and general factotum. Fortunately Kevin Goulding and Roger Lyas took over the hard work a few years later and that is how I find myself as your Honorary Commodore. This is a position of which I am very proud and I’m delighted that the Association is in such good hands today and continues to go from strength to strength.

I know the Association will have a great future and may your electrics always remain dry!

*Patrick Bryans
BIBOA Honorary Commodore
(written in 2000)*

In the Beginning

The Round Scotland RIB RACE 1990 ...

A MESSAGE TO ENTRANTS

An article written by Michael Alexander and Richard Frere to encourage entrants in to the first Round Scotland RIB Race in 1990

RIB Race '90 has been conceived not so much as a race as an adventurous experience. Following a reconnaissance in June 1989, we found it so exhilarating to cover up to a hundred miles a day through exceptionally interesting waters safely, to investigate islands, inlets, harbours or whatever caught our fancy, that we decided to inaugurate an event for other owners of the versatile RIB. We added the adrenalin of competition - we have some heavy metal among our entrants - but feel that the SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS RUN, being the first of its kind in this country, should be regarded more as recreation than racing - the circumnavigation of the north is in itself an achievement of some significance. So while maximising your speed with security you can take note of the coastal topography, and not only to locate yourself: you will see its stacks and skerries, ruined castles and immaculate lighthouses, strange-shaped mountains, enchanted islands and unusual geology. From towering sea cliffs - some of the highest on the British mainland lie along the course - guillemots, razorbills, cormorants, puffins, kittiwakes and gannets fish the waters with total disregard for your waterbound passage. Salute the seal, the killer whale, the escorting dolphins. Greet the local fishermen and avoid their nets and creels. Respect the sea.

THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS INFLATABLE BOAT RACE (RIB RACE '90) will, we hope, become a permanent fixture in the boating calendar. In association with foreign friends we are setting our sights on other circuits: Copenhagen - Copenhagen; Marmoris - Bosphorus - Black Sea; Venice - Trieste - Dubrovnik; the circumnavigation of Corsica, etc. RIB owners of Britain will be invited to join EURO - RIB.



10th — 16th June 1990
OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

£1

The 1991 Highlands & Islands RIB Race

This event built upon the tremendous success of the 1990 Race and saw some 40 entrants complete a challenging expedition in which individuals and manufacturers gained considerable experience in designing, building, driving and navigating small craft at speed. The aims of the organisers and competitors were achieved with a great spirit of camaraderie and mutual assistance which led directly to these Round Scotland RIB Races continuing annually for many years.



The 1992 Highlands & Islands RIB Challenge

This event also marked the 50th Anniversary of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and the REME 50 Team won several trophies. The start signal was a Thunderflash timed at the precise arrival of the Lynx helicopter from the Northern Ireland Air Corps which supported the race. Most competitors were caught out watching the unexpected Lynx and the REME team, being trained in the art of surprise, were able to steal an early lead.



The International RIB Grand Prix events

A new team led by early BIBOA member Mike Southward took over for subsequent races which included a large cruising contingent and used the name ScotRIB. These cruise/races were highly successful and subsequent years the cruising element largely took over as families were encouraged to participate and RIBs and their engines became more reliable and family friendly.

The Round Scotland Challenge 2000

This was the 10th anniversary event and attracted some 25 entrants. It was run as one of a number of races in the BIBOA 2000 Endurance Series and generated considerable media attention at a time when RIBs had become the largest sector of the powerboat industry. We reproduce Event Organiser John Harvey's programme.



ITINERARY 27th MAY - 2nd JUNE

This year's event is the 10th anniversary of the first Scottish Highlands and Islands event. When Michael Alexander and Richard Frere first planned their adventure in 1989 I am sure they never expected such a huge response. The first event attracted 42 entries bringing together people from all walks of life and craft varying from 4.3 metres to huge Naval patrol boats and North Sea rescue craft. There were Naval Commanders, Military Police, High Court Judges, Doctors, Farmers, Mechanics, Builders, Tinkers, Tailors and even Jim Davidson the comedian whose impromptu briefings at the various hostellers around the route kept us all entertained and wanting more. The boats were all based on what the owner thought was right, this was the first time that such a number of like minded people had come together and everyone spent lots of time scrutinising all the other craft and pinching the best ideas. As the week went on everyone mucked in and helped one another to keep going, at the stopovers manufacturers worked with each other to repair their charges and most nights generators and power tools whirred through the night, the smell of gel coat and fibreglass helping to keep the midges away. I am sure that these early years of the competition pushed forward the development of the Rigid Inflatable Boat and is one of the main reasons why now we have some of the best RIB builders in the world in the UK.

This year's event follows almost the same route as the original, we will launch at North Kessock and enter the Caledonian Canal system at Muirtown Basin (Inverness). We will proceed down Loch Ness to Fort Augustus and through the various lochs to Corpach where after descending down the famous Neptune's Staircase flight of locks we will enter the first sea loch at Fort William on Monday morning 29th May.

MONDAY 29TH MAY

We will cruise down Loch Linnhe past Oban and have a look at the famous Gulf of Corryvreckan before heading back to spend the night at Dunstaffnage Marina. Here we will meet up with the racers who will have travelled up from a National Championship Race at Torquay in Devon to join us.

TUESDAY 30TH MAY

This will be the first competitive day of this year's event, racers and cruisers

will leave Dunstaffnage and make their way up the Sound of Mull past Ardnamurchan Point, past the Isles of Muck and Eigg to finish the day at the beautiful Kyle of Lochalsh. In 1990 one of the competitors was Keith Schellenberg the then owner of Eigg. He arranged that each boat would have to land on the island and one crew member would run up to the house and collect a boiled egg, this to be handed in at the finish, what he did not tell us was the house was about 1 mile up a track from the landing stage. The sight of the returning crew after running/walking 2miles on what was quite a hot day in dry suits and full survival gear was not for the faint hearted!

WEDNESDAY 31ST MAY

Today we head off under the new Skye road bridge and go North past Ullapool and through the Summer Isles to finish the run at Lochinver, here those in the know will head straight to the Fishermen's Mission for what must be the best fish and chips in the world!

THURSDAY 1ST JUNE

From now on the coast gets more and more rugged, we again head north and before rounding the awesome Cape Wrath, we will go close in land to look at the Island of Handa with its cliffs full of nesting sea birds, all diving into the waters below to feed. Then keeping an eye out for the Northern Lights we journey along the North Coast to finish the day at Scrabster.

FRIDAY 2ND JUNE

The last day of our adventure, we will leave Scrabster harbour and head past Dunnet Head and on to Duncansby Head (the most northerly point in Britain) past John o Groats and then South back to finish at North Kessock.

Many thanks to Michael Alexander and his close friend the late Richard Frere for giving me the chance to become a member of this event, over the years I have made a lot of good friends from people I have met during what we now call the Round Scotland Challenge.

Good luck to all participants old and new.

John Harvey
Event Organiser 2000

The Round Scotland RIB RACE 2000

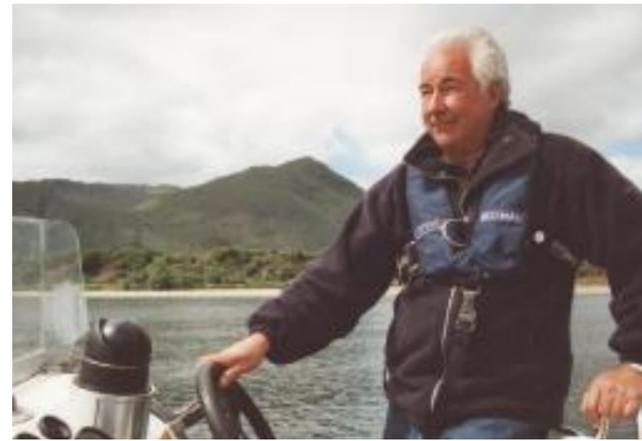
An article written by Michael Alexander before the Round Scotland RIB Race 2000.

The idea of staging the first event for RIBs around the north of Scotland in 1990 came to me after doing what Richard Frere and myself saw as a 500 mile 'circumnavigation' of Scotland: Inverness to Inverness via Loch Ness and the Great Glen. We went round in a 4.5m Avon Searider bouncing round the rougher bits - Ardnamurchan Point, Cape Wrath, the Pentland Firth - with carefree abandon along some of the most attractive coastline in Europe. Afterwards, we wanted to share our experience with others and so staged the first 'Highland and Islands' event in 1990. We were amazed by the variety of RIBs - from 4m to 7.5m - that turned up at North Kessock in Inverness - 50hp to 400hp (Mike Southward in a Carson). There were 42 entrants including three teams from the Royal Navy. We produced a video and it still looks the greatest fun. The comedian Jim Davidson came along, we remember his merry pranks, and Kemal, our sporting Turkish friend. Keith Schellenburg ran on to the only rock on the course and Miles Jennings in his deflatable catamaran. What with RYA rules and BIBOA regs, the following shows were somewhat less relaxed but you can't hold a good RIB back! For the Round Scotland RIB Race 2000 I'm coming in (Ed: aged 76) with my friend Loel Guinness in an Atlantic 21 with 300hp behind. As it's an ex-RNLI boat we should make it!

Congratulations to BIBOA and John Harvey for staging the Round Scotland 2000.

In the years before and after the Round Scotland Race 2000, BIBOA Members organised and took part in RIB races in many parts of the UK and beyond including Anglesey, the Isle of Man, Fowey & the Isles of Scilly, Northern Ireland, France, Belgium, Gibraltar, the Red Sea and, of course, Scotland. We reproduce here a small selection of the images which we hold and we hope you enjoy this snapshot of BIBOA's successful and enjoyable racing over many years.





Cruising - Adventures on the High Seas

The early Round Scotland Races included a good number of entrants who were there not only for the excitement of racing amongst friends but to take time to enjoy the scenery and environment for which Scotland is world famous. However, everything moves forward and in 1997 the Scottish event became the ScotRIB Cruise which attracted a large number of RIBsters from throughout the UK and from our colleagues in many of the European RIB clubs. Since then, our cruising members have travelled far and wide both in company with others and on solo voyages. They have relied upon the safety and versatility of their RIBs to take them and their families on voyages which only a few years previously would have been impossible.

Starting in our early years, BIBOA has organised cruises in numerous areas including France, Belgium, Corsica, the Channel Islands, Sweden, Lundy Island, the Inner & Outer Hebrides and Ireland. However, feedback from members is that it is the annual cruise(s) in our ancestral homeland of Bonny Scotland which are the most eagerly anticipated and which for many years have been organised by Dougie Crockett (Scotland) and Peter Zurrer (Switzerland), long may this continue.



In 2008 Hugo Montgomery-Swan of RIB International organised a re-enactment of the founding BIBOA cruise by staging a Round Scotland 4m RIB Challenge, the fleet experienced a wide variety of sea conditions but also had great fun and successfully completed their course.



The Great British RIB Rally was run by BIBOA in 2010 and organised by member Patrick Byrne; it was a resounding success and the 1850nm course included flat calm and gale force winds, wonderful scenery and new friendships aplenty. It was a classic example of adventurous cruising which Patrick says he might be tempted to repeat, in warmer seas!



We include here a selection of images from various cruises. The Association holds thousands of RIB cruise photographs and steps are in hand to make most of these easily available to members.



Achievements and Records

There are many members who are justly proud of their achievement in launching from a difficult slipway and executing a well planned voyage of a few miles across open waters in challenging conditions; these people are the backbone of BIBOA, and will always remain so. We remind the reader of the Round Scotland voyage by two elderly men in a 4.5m RIB which led to the formation of BIBOA.

Some members are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to attempt challenges which could be viewed as either adventurous (if they succeed) or foolish (if they do not!). Their attempts encourage other members to explore the outstanding abilities of their RIBs which assists development of seamanship, navigation, planning and safety skills.

At the request of members, we list a few of these attempts (alphabetical by name) and we apologise to those whom we've inadvertently omitted. For brevity we list only the BIBOA members, not complete crews.



Paul & Bryn Beaurain:
many long distance cruises including two Round Britain cruises plus a Round Scotland in their 8.5m RIB



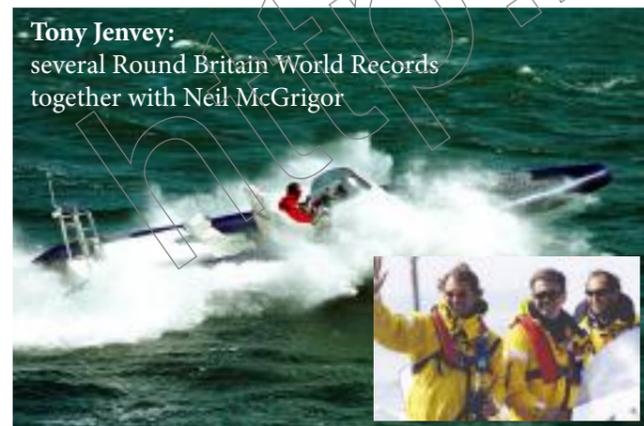
Sir Charles Blois:
several long distance expeditions in his 10m RIB including a 4000km cruise from Bavaria to Venice



Mike & Dave Deacon:
several Round Britain World Records



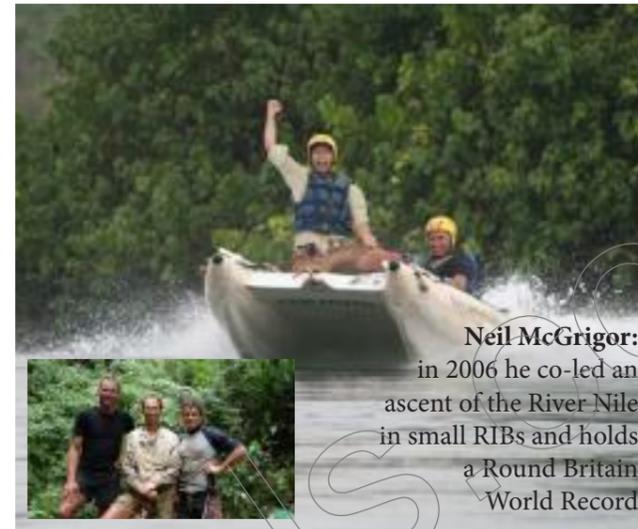
Kevin Goulding:
in 1998 he completed a 2500nm voyage from Vancouver to Alaska in his 8m open RIB



Tony Jenvey:
several Round Britain World Records together with Neil McGrigor



Chris Kaye:
over several years cruised to St Kilda, the Faeroes, Shetlands, Holland and Iceland all in a 7.5m open RIB



Neil McGrigor:
in 2006 he co-led an ascent of the River Nile in small RIBs and holds a Round Britain World Record



Jim & Yvonne Mackintosh:
numerous long distance cruises in their 10m open RIB and three times awarded the prestigious Puffin Trophy for adventurous cruising



Alan Priddy:
Transatlantic (twice) and London to Monte Carlo in a 7.5m open RIB; Round Britain & Ireland World Record in a 10m RIB; Round the World in 2001/3 in a 10m RIB including numerous port to port World Records. Alan has plans for a 2011 Round the World attempt in a 25m RIB



Richard & Mary Reddyhoff:
extensive expeditions in their 7.5m open RIB including 3320nm to Africa and back (sleeping in their console) plus a Round Britain/Ireland

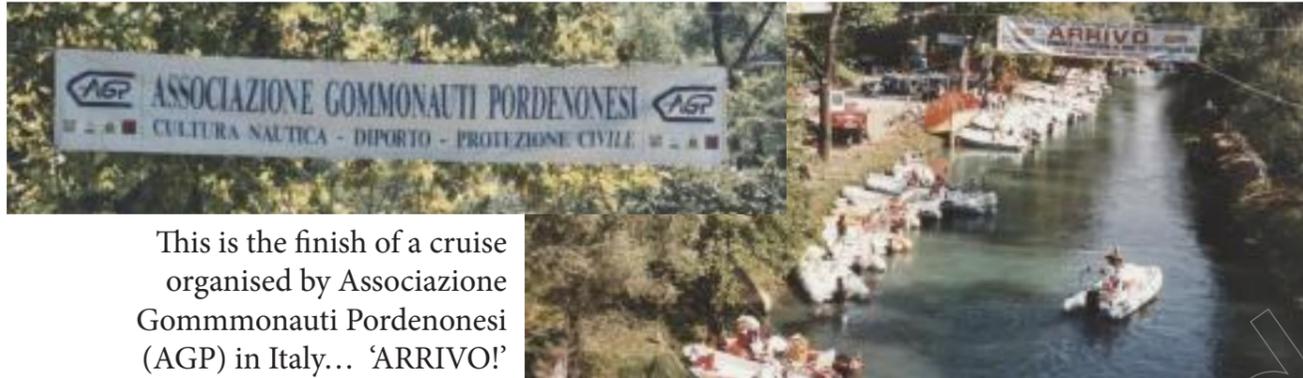


Chris Strickland, Jan Falkowski, John Puddifoot & Gordon Compton:
several World Records including Round Britain & Ireland plus London to Monte Carlo

RIBs Sans Frontières

The Association is most fortunate to enjoy excellent relationships with many RIB clubs and individual RIBsters throughout the world and we can find our members helpful contacts in many worldwide locations. In Europe we have particularly strong connections which have long been fostered by our Founder Member Kevin Goulding.

For a list of some clubs, look at www.hotribs.com/09clubs/clubs.asp. There are 54 RIB clubs in Italy! UK members will be familiar with the expression 'BIBOA Time' which relates to our 'relaxed' approach to timekeeping. This expression was coined by Conny Goldberg, the President (Chairman) of the German club ASC, who are renowned for the exceptional precision and order they bring to their club activities.



This is the finish of a cruise organised by Associazione Gommonauti Pordenonesi (AGP) in Italy... 'ARRIVO!'

The History of RIBLINES The magazine of BIBOA

1990: RIBLINES was started by Patrick Bryans who identified the need for a newsletter to inform members of developments in the Association, to report upon activities and to give members a 'masthead' around which to gather. The concept worked extremely well thanks to Patrick's enthusiasm and ability and was vital in promoting the early growth of the Association.

1994: Founder Member Alan Priddy took over as editor in 1994 and focussed RIBLINES upon giving reports of past events, entry forms for future events and introduced 'Bits 'n' Bobs for sale', very helpful to members.

1995: Sue Callow from the Isle of Man took over and soon introduced the concept of 'Chairman's Chatter' together with a formal calendar of RIB events and 'RIB Bits' for members to sell and purchase items; separate Race and Cruise reports were introduced.

1996: Mike Deacon took over and started our first tentative uses of colour: the whole newsletter was in blue rather than black as this was the only colour available on his photocopier. He hoped the Association didn't mind publishing blue photographs! Mike changed his copier in 1997 reverting to an all black format. For some reason, the new Chairman John Harvey wrote a 'Chairman's Chortle' rather than a 'Chatter' but members seemed to enjoy the message and articles flowed in for all our activities.

1998: Steve and Debbie Ellis, with their RIB and matching number plate R1BIT, introduced many new features and reports; advertisements by members and the RIB trade grew, with RIBLINES achieving 32 pages for the first time. Steve and Debbie encouraged contributions in the 'confessional' where launching with the RIB secured to the trailer seemed to frequently figure, as did calling out an engineer to a failed engine only for him to point out that you'd pulled the kill cord!

2000: The Millennium year saw our longstanding member Yvonne St.B Mackintosh take the hot seat, full of ideas including nitro-powered engines and helium filled tubes; now there's an idea to really help members 'take off'. Yvonne majored on including reports from BIBOA members in Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Greece, South Africa, the Outer Hebrides and the Channel Islands. Together with her husband Jim (who was the BIBOA Secretary) she also found time to cruise their 10m Delta far and wide: a 3000nm cruise around Finland was not unusual for them. July 2002 saw four pages of colour in RIBLINES for the first time, another milestone.

2005: Yvonne seized the opportunity to hand over her Editor's pencil to Louise Hayward. Louise has taken RIBLINES to a whole new level, colour content grew to 50% by mid 2008 and to 44 pages of 100% colour by late 2008. The magazine is packed full of interesting articles, photographs and RIB snippets, thanks to our contributing members. (Members ... please keep sending cruise/race notes to Louise!).

The Development of the RIB

Paul Lemmer takes us on a short RIB cruise through 'days of yore'



Hull design:

With the pace of today's way of life and the extraordinary speed with which new innovations keep hitting the headlines, it seems curious that RIB hull development seems to have moved forward with all the speed of a striking slug! However, whilst many RIB hull designs may date back to the 80s, it is obvious that quality and finish have moved along at quite a pace. On a recent visit to Genoa boat show, I was astonished by the sheer number of top quality RIBs from 11 to 15m, many of which now feature comfortable accommodation, some with double berth cabins/en-suite facilities and in some instances, fully protected cockpits with sliding roofs! To some Brits, Italian/continental RIBs are still labelled 'for Mediterranean use only', but looking at the latest deep V hulls and abundance of quality products on show, it is clear they have upped their game considerably.

So whilst build quality, fittings, seating and attention to detail have all improved, why has actual hull design lagged behind?! Some believe that the introduction of steps is a new innovation but there is evidence of steps in hulls at least as far back as 1910, when they were being used in racing/record breaking hulls; furthermore, the use of steps in early seaplanes to help them 'unstick' from the surface-tension of flat water is also well documented, so steps are 'old news'. The hydrofoil-supported 'Hysucat' catamaran and 'Bladerunner' trimaran RIBs are certainly innovative, but these are exceptions to the rule and many of today's 'modern' RIBs have hull designs that date back over 30 years. The old adage 'If it ain't broke, why try to fix it?' probably has something to do with it!

Whilst the majority of designs may be 'old hat', construction techniques and material development have definitely moved into the 21st century; composites and high-tech 'monocoque' construction are increasingly utilised to combine lighter weight with increased strength and there is little doubt that these innovations have enhanced the RIB's well-established reputation for strength and performance offshore. Years ago, when talking to famous sailing legend/boat designer Uffa Fox, I told him I was

interested in hull design and he imparted these words of wisdom: 'Hull design eh! Well remember one thing young man; weight is only useful in steamrollers'. An interesting and controversial point of view but as many can testify, correctly positioned 'ballast' can prove very beneficial.

Engines:



Whilst construction and design are obviously crucial in a RIB's armoury, these are only part of the equation and if there has been one significant advance in a RIB's ability to perform safely offshore, it must be in the vastly improved engines now available, particularly outboard motors. Not only have they become much more economical, thanks to a combination of computer management systems and recent developments in injection/combustion technology, but they have also

become considerably more reliable. For outboard users, it is not that long ago that one went to sea hoping that something would not go wrong; today, providing fuel filters are clean and regular maintenance is observed, modern outboards are as reliable as modern car engines and RIBsters can confidently take on serious offshore challenges knowing that their outboard/s will get them safely to their destination.

Diesels have also significantly improved and, although certain sterndrives are somewhat dated and still come in for criticism, the majority are now extremely dependable. Next year will see a whole new range of modern diesels and drives available for RIBs and just when many RIBsters were thinking that diesels were no longer a realistic option, Volvo, Cummins/Mercruiser, Yanmar, Volkswagen and Caudwell are about to unleash exciting, economical, light weight, state of the art new engine packages at competitive prices in an attempt to lure the boating public and commercial users back to inboard diesels: watch this space! Finally, if you cruise in remote areas such as Scotland, diesel is the only realistic option, unless of course you're a sadist who has a certain penchant for lugging heavy petrol cans from garage to boat.

Seating:



RIB seating has come in for plenty of criticism, not least by BIBOA members and thanks to theirs and military/commercial 'ribsters' observations (and injuries!), advances in comfort and safety in seat design have been extensive. Whilst improvements in seat shape and foam technology have helped, the greatest innovation has to be the suspension or shock mitigation seat. Much of the 'sudden' popularity of

these seats is down to innovator, Swedish doctor, Johan Ullman MD, who has doggedly spearheaded/promoted the benefits of his bum/back savers to the point that they are now accepted worldwide as 'the name' in this type of seating.

However, in a recent issue of RIB Magazine, there was a six page article comparing five different makes but not wanting to favour one make over another, I nevertheless have to confess to admiring the simplicity of the Coastal Pro range of suspension seats and when comparing prices, it is clear to see why this particular product is attracting so much attention, particularly in the RIB market. Scot Seats are another suspension seat manufacturer and theirs really are a work of art, but none of the current seat producers can claim to be the original innovators. In the late 1960's, Tony Lee-Elliott of Flatacraft fame built his first RIB and this sported an upholstered wooden plank for a jockey seat, hinged at one end, with a motorcycle shock absorber on the other, by all accounts it was very comfortable!

The weight penalty of suspension seats is easily outweighed by the occupants' ability to 'press on'

mile after mile in rough seas in relative comfort and crew with suspension seats usually arrive in port looking comparatively fresh and unstressed; those relying solely on their knees/backs for support often appear somewhat 'vexed'. So, unless you like pain, they are worth investigating.

Electronics:



'Enough on seats,' I hear you cry and, if you are still awake, let's explore the amazing advances in electronics. When BIBOA was first formed, most RIB users relied upon a compass, a chart and dead reckoning for navigation and I recall RIB racer Mark Haswell winning a Round Scotland RIB race in a Flatacraft Force 6 without any electronic navigation equipment or a chart! Mark used an AA road atlas, stating that the terrain was easier to follow with a road book than a marine

chart and because he had been sailing dinghies for years, he could 'read the water' without referring to a chart! Today, even Mark would have to agree that GPS has transformed navigation to the point where even a complete novice at navigating could pick up the fundamentals in a matter of hours and quickly become an accomplished electronic navigator.

On a recent trip to Scotland from Northern Ireland in the Great British RIB Rally, I was able to play with the latest chart plotters and depth sounders and was particularly impressed with the 3D colour forward-looking underwater cartography which allowed us to safely creep into rock strewn areas that only a few years ago would have been deemed reckless.

Thanks in no small part to the enormous number of RIBs in use, VHF, GPS and radar manufacturers have had to make their equipment tougher and better protected from the elements and it is impressive to see how these electronics stand up to the incredible shocks and soaking they get on a daily basis. The recent advent of the automatic identification system (AIS) provides another great advance in safety, as it automatically tracks and identifies all craft that are fitted with it; on a recent RIB cruise, AIS proved invaluable in identifying the whereabouts of fellow RIBsters, instilling a feeling of security.

Whilst having the latest navigational gadgets is a tremendous help, the GPS is only part of a RIBster's armoury and sound preparation, accurate weather forecasting, competent boat handling and safety equipment are all equally important to anyone venturing out to sea.

There is little doubt that the latest chart plotters, sonar and other electronic aids have made ribbing a lot safer and easier but I worry for those who have only this knowledge and lack the ability to find their way if the electronics fail. Despite being deemed old-fashioned, there is still good reason to know how to use a paper chart and how to make a safe sea passage without any electronic navigation; after all, water and electrics still have a habit of not mixing -- funny that!

Health and Safety is gradually finding its way into leisure boating and with it come good and bad elements. The bad is that before long it seems we may not be allowed to carry flares and possibly sharp knives or boat hooks or anything else that could be used as a weapon! The upside is that portable EPIRBs, robust water-resistant mobile phones, better radios and generally more reliable equipment are constantly being developed to provide emergency back-up for those venturing out beyond the harbour wall. Also, better clothing, helmets, lifejackets, waterproof bags, etc. are allowing us to experience more adventurous outings in comfort and safety and that has to be a good thing.

Ultimately, the RIB is still the most competent small craft in which one can go to sea and despite some hull designs dating back over 30 years, they still manage to provide the crew with the safest, most secure waterborne transport of any vessel --- long live the RIB and long live BIBOA.

The Future for BIBOA

Families, friendship, fun and adventure; that is what our members tell us they want from their BIBOA. This message is planted firmly with our committee and you can be sure they will make every effort to realise this objective.

To assist in driving the Association forward, our quarterly magazine Riblines will continue in full colour with a target of at least 40 pages packed with articles and information. The club's website www.biboa.com already holds almost 1000 images dating from 1994 and many more are being regularly loaded; members will soon be invited to load their own photographs.

The Association's objectives, as set out in the original 1990 Constitution by Commander Patrick Bryans, will continue to guide BIBOA in the interests of its members and the wider RIB community.

The Objectives of the Association are:

- a) To encourage expeditions, cruising and racing in RIBs throughout the UK and Europe.
- b) To organise opportunities for members to take part in RIB events and to furnish them with advice and information.
- c) To encourage and promote liaison between members of the Association and other RIB owners at home and abroad.
- d) To stimulate the design and construction of craft and equipment suitable for members of the Association.
- e) To promote and co-ordinate National and International RIB events.



Photography Acknowledgements

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This BIBOA History has been compiled by Louise Hayward and Mike Deacon, greatly assisted by information from BIBOA members.

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