

RIGIFLEX

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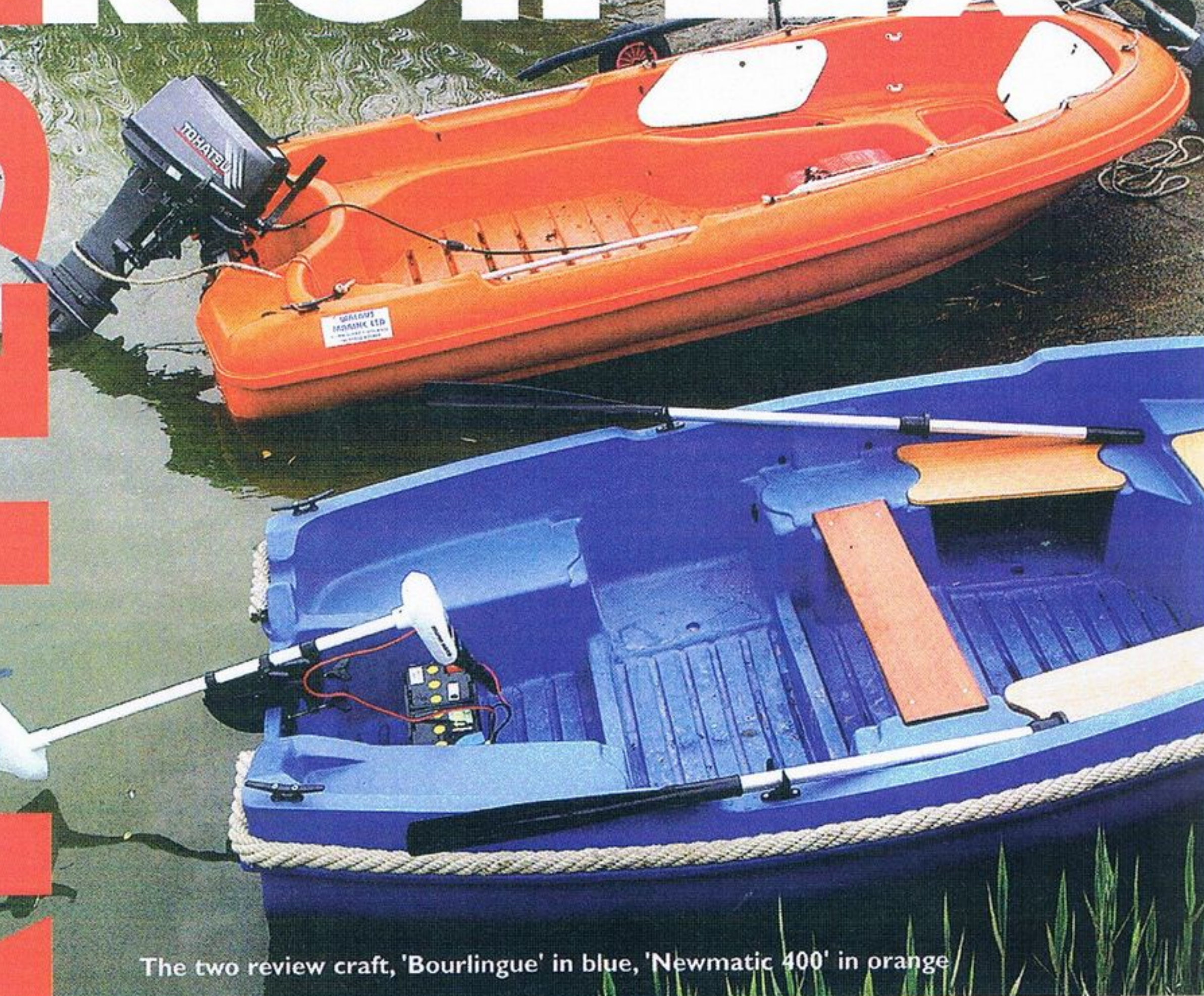
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The two review craft, 'Bourlingue' in blue, 'Newmatic 400' in orange

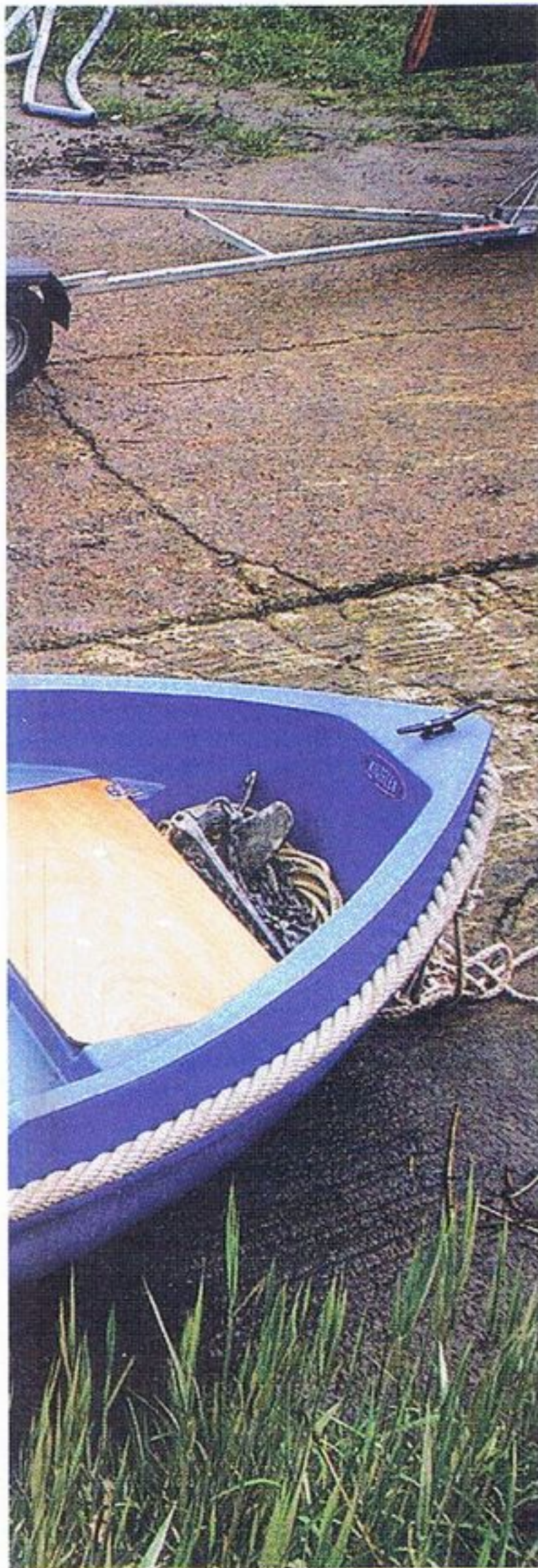
Cliff Stone tries out two plastic dinghies. The Rigiflex 'Bourlingue 360' and the 'Newmatic 400' are made by the French manufacturer Jeanneau

OPEN BOATS

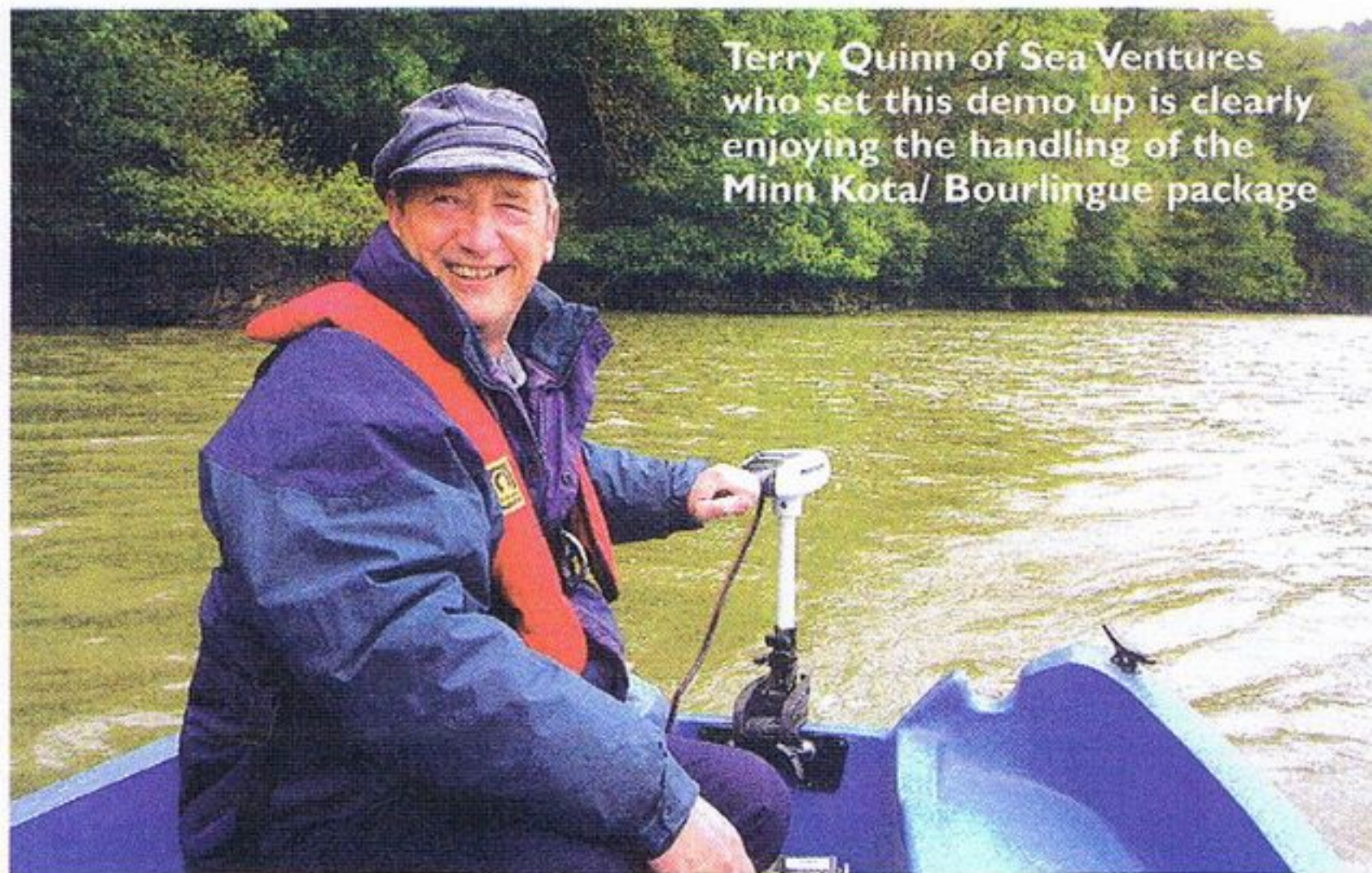
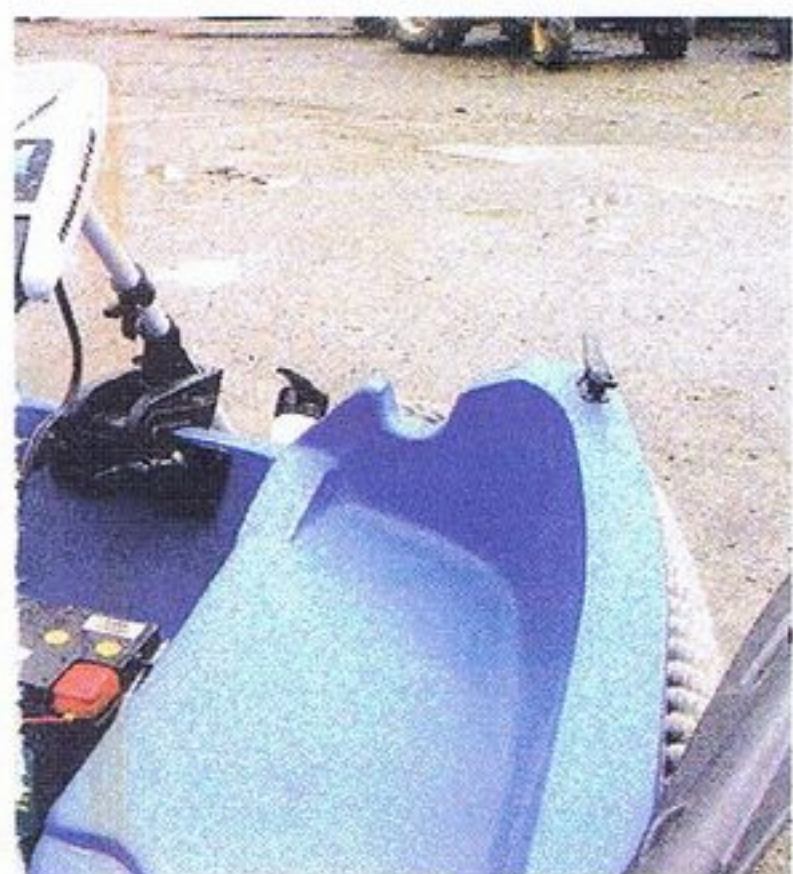
In my area there seems to be a good number of dingy anglers. I'm not referring to the modern concept of a fishing dinghy, at five or six metres long, high tech, high speed, high priced skim dish. These are the hardy souls venturing into the Orwell and Stour estuary and a mile or so off the Felixstowe beach in 14ft open boats, often with an old seagull engine for power and three anglers on board. Obviously they choose their weather, but the low-tech approach brings cod and whiting in winter, and some cracking bass, sole, eel, and dab fishing in the summer.

With these thoughts in mind, I contacted Terry Quinn of Sea Ventures Ltd. At the NEC's Boat and Caravan show held in February I had spotted a four metre 'plastic boat'. Since then I have seen the brochures and been for a day out to have a play in these dinghies with a difference.





Below :The tiller and battery showing the five position twist switch on the tiller arm



Terry Quinn of Sea Ventures who set this demo up is clearly enjoying the handling of the Minn Kota/ Bourlingue package

JEANNEAU

Rigiflex craft are made by Jeanneau, one of the top French boat builders. Sea Venture Ltd are the UK importers for the entire Jeanneau range. The so-called plastic the boats are made with, turns out to be UV protected Polyethylene, a super tough material that has 'bouncability' and natural buoyancy. The craft are extensively used by an impressive list of companies, agencies, clubs, Army, Navy, and HM Customs. Terry Quinn of Sea Ventures, suggested I visit Walrus Marine, in Calstock near Plymouth for a test day. Arrangements were duly made with Craig Shaw of Walrus

Marine, as part of Walrus he runs a boat handling school on the upper tidal section of the river Tamar and obviously uses Rigiflex craft. We tested the 'Newmatic 400' (the boat spied at NEC) and the 'Bourlingue'. All Rigiflex boats are made from UV protected Polyethylene, a material that bounces, not cracks, when dropped. Polyethylene is maintenance free, and self-coloured and Rigiflex offer blue, white or orange options. The rotary moulding process used in manufacture means that there are no weakening joints or seams.

BOURLINGUE

The Bourlingue is 3.60m long with a 1.60m beam (5ft 3ins), a good width for its length with traditional round displacement hull and rope fender. She was remarkably stable for this type of hull, making an excellent camera platform for the boat to boat shots of the fast Newmatic 400. A large forward locker, rowing bench, two side seats placed forward

or aft as you require, and two transom seats, plus generous freeboard impressed me no end. Power is with oars or up to a 10hp outboard. Terry Quinn brought along the new salt water version of Minn Kota's RT40/s electric motor, this too, was very impressive with 40lb of thrust, sealed for use in salt water and a 3 year warranty.

FIRST CLASS STABILITY

We spent quite a lot of time in the 'Bourlingue'. Not designed for speed, we made five or six knots with the electric motor and three passengers. Jeanneau specify up to five persons, but for fishing two or three seemed right. I can see the electric motor option as a strong consideration for the bass angler exploring shallow estuary and river marks, it is so quiet, moving from point to point requires the simple twist of the tiller, no noisy pull starts. However, for more exposed estuary and inshore conditions, the extra

'oomph' of a bigger petrol outboard would be desirable. Handling was predictable, stability first class, CE Certificate category D. I simply loved it and at 120kg she is easily handled by two.

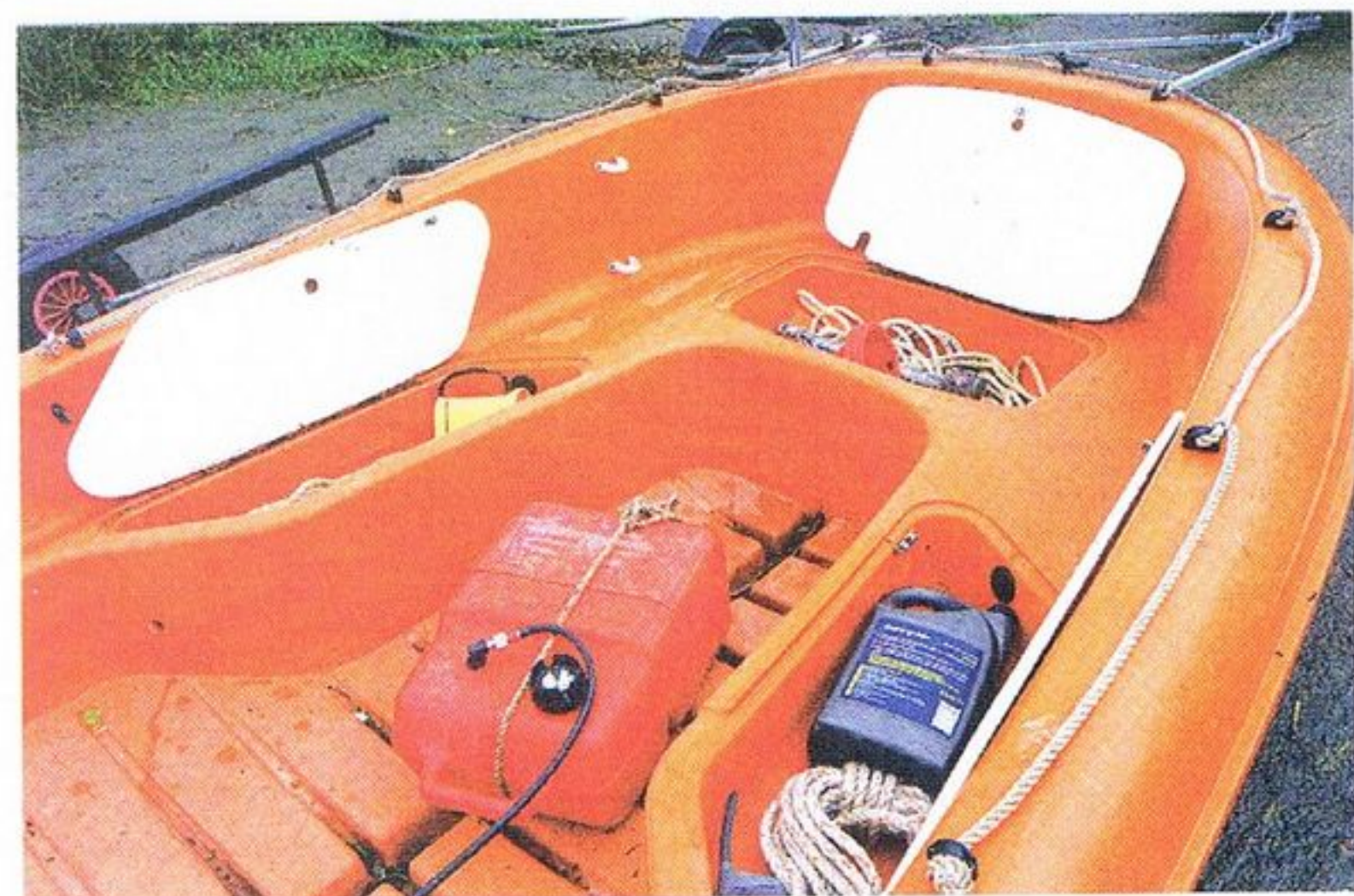


No bow wave, Craig Shaw tries the boat in 'stealth mode'. Watch out you bass!

BOAT TEST RIGIFLEX



The cheapest form of propulsion

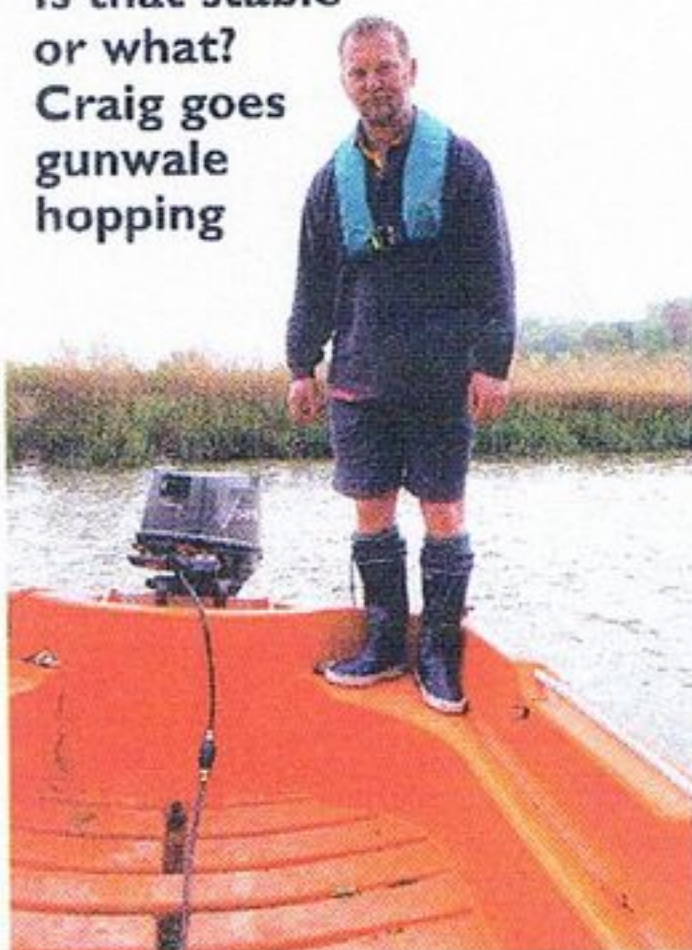


Newmatic 400 has three sizable covered locker forward

FUN MACHINE

Self draining covered lockers, of which there are three forward, plus a self draining anchor locker. Plenty of seating, masses of space and grab handles. This is an inshore, twist the throttle and go boat, ideal for a family fun machine, taking loads of punishment, but demanding little attention in return. Fishing boat, small personal ferry, large fun tender it has got the lot. If the 400 is a little large there is a 3.70 and a 3.60 meter version. With the 400 weighing in at 180kg, the 360 saves a massive 60kg making it a real fun-fish-tender.

Is that stable or what? Craig goes gunwale hopping



NEWMATIC 400

Moving on to the Rigiflex Newmatic 400, a totally different beastie. Made of the same UV protected Polyethylene, in orange, white or blue, no joins and bouncability, that's where the similarity stops.

The Newmatic 400 has a planning hull, will take outboards up to 40hp, giving a potential speed of near 30 knots. A 25hp is ideal in the speed/economy stakes, a clocked figure of 24 knots should satisfy most.

First impressions, despite its 4m x 1.90m (a tad over 6ft beam), she looks and feels bigger, this feeling of size, was also my impression at the NEC. Craig informed me this was one of their well used sea school boats, over two years old and kept outside in a field! I looked around imagining the type of treatment a sea school pupil would meet out, nothing more than a few scuffs and scratches to evidence the hard life, very impressive.

SO STABLE

In the water Newmatic 400 came to life, manoeuvrability, stability, speed, total security was my feeling. Throw her around, potter at walking speed, the best waves we could find were our own wake, no problem, she took her wake with ease and stayed dry!

She was so stable that as we moved around changing seating positions, it produced virtually no change in trim. To prove the point, Craig proceeded to walk around the gunnels, as though it were a Sunday afternoon stroll, and I am sitting in the bow, again no trim change of note, very, very impressive. Pay load is recommended as four persons, but again three to fish is ideal.

The CE Certificate No. 0607 issued to Jeanneau gives a 'C' rating to the Newmatic 400 with four passengers, this equates too, a two metre sea and force 6 on the Beaufort scale.



Three up and the Newmatic 400 exhibits impeccable handling

SO TOUGH

When you actually look at these boats, there is a lot of air between the double seamless skins, the skins themselves are about 6mm thick. The Polyethylene material is lighter than water so in the unlikely event of a holing, they will still float. It's a bit like

having a rigid inflatable, the Newmatic in my book is akin to a small rib. Polyethylene is simply repaired by hot galvanising if, somehow, a hole is contrived. This material is so tough, the only way I can see any serious damage being sustained is by hitting a

sharp object at full speed! The concept is tough, simple, sea worthy, and maintenance free. There it is then, a range of tough, twin skinned, small fishing dinghies and fun machines. A very practical option over the GRP equivalents and small ribs.

ACCOMODATION

Finally, I stayed at a B&B over Thursday night, so as to be fresh on the Friday. Talking to Penny, my landlady, we got to discussing the whys and wherefores of her business and anglers requirements. She informed me that she would be happy to accommodate anglers with packed lunches, early breakfast, and a catch and bait freezer. I can personally give thumbs up to the full English breakfast, toast and jam plus a pot of tea. Such accommodation is rare and worth serious consideration for those looking to go to the Plymouth area fishing. I should have been on a charter boat myself fishing for conger on the Saturday, but wind and rain blew us out. I will arrange that one for another day and Penny will be on my list for accommodation.



Penny O'Neil, Tamar Views B&B, a homely welcome and happy to accommodate anglers with packed lunches, early breakfast and a freezer

FACT FILE

Price guide

Bourlingue - £1,263 (inc VAT),

Newmatic 400 - £1,874 (inc VAT),

For more details, a brochure and your nearest dealer speak to Terry Quinn at Sea Ventures Ltd.

(Jeanneau UK Importers) Lymington Yacht Haven, Hampshire, SO41 3QD. Tel 01590 672472

Walrus Marine Ltd (Rigiflex dealership) Craig Shaw, Hillcrest, Fore Street, Gunnislake, Cornwall. PL18 9JG. Tel 01822 832425

Tamar Views B&B, Tom & Penny O'Neil. 2 Newbridge Hill, Gunnislake, Cornwall. Tel 01822 832441