

RIGIFLEX PNEUMATIC 360

Simon Everett tries out this little boat, which could offer your family a multitude of uses at a really great price.



Simon Everett testing this affordable boat

Polythene rotomoulded boats are not a new concept; they have been around since the 1970s that I know of. They have a loyal following because of their indestructible nature and because they are so easy to use. The Rigiflex is made by the Jeanneau yacht group as a tender for their big yachts, but it has also found favour with local authorities because it lends itself to rough handling. For anyone looking for a small, easy to use, maintenance free, little boat to mess about in estuaries, to use as a tender or for the children to be able to play with and not damage, it offers an alternative.

I took one out, powered by a Yamaha 8hp outboard, and spent a pleasant time fly fishing for bass in the Solent. Unfortunately the bass

did not oblige, but then it was a little early in the year and still cold. The boat, though, surprised me with her nippy nature and the stability she displayed. I could move about freely and the boat, whilst not rock solid, you wouldn't expect a little boat like this to be, was very tolerant of the shift in weight. Standing up to cast on the sheltered water, whilst not to be recommended in any small boat (my father always used to tell me "never stand up in the boat" when we were in a small boat), she felt secure and sure-footed. The wide rounded chines providing ample buoyancy to withstand the movement.

Under way the little boat behaved herself. Whilst she was very light on the helm and even shifting my seating position had her swinging away from my course, the lightest touch on the tiller had her back again. Putting her into a turn

showed the benefit of those rounded chines, the buoyancy provided reduced the heel and she was as secure in a tight turn as she was going ahead. I only had the ferry wash to try her in any kind of wave and she bobbed over the small waves with a degree of splashing coming from the bow as she pushed the wave away riding over it.

One cannot pretend that this is a boat for rough water, but her unsinkable nature means that even with a fully flooded cockpit she will remain afloat. When I first jumped in there was a fair bit of rain water in the bottom from overnight. Once I got her going fast enough to have the bung outlet above the waterline I removed the expandable bung and she drained herself dry. A fully flooded boat should be bailed first, but you can get the boat virtually bone dry by draining her out underway.

She fairly nipped along too. That 8hp motor saw her get up to 16 knots, admittedly with only me aboard but that brings me neatly to another remarkable facet to this rather ugly duckling. Believe it or not this boat has a CE rating of Category C for three adults, or category D for no fewer than six. It would be a bit of a tight squeeze for six, but to ferry a crew out to the boat on a mooring that is ideal.

This is only a quick look, but for a complete package at this price, there is a lot going for it, provided you don't worry about looks too much. ■

