



Photo: The Quinquari Humber is a genuine all-rounder, a real workhorse. Alan Tarby at the helm.

## THE CAMEL & THE WORKHORSE

Hugo Montgomery-Swan visits the Camel Estuary in Cornwall to report on the activities of a true, multitasking, all-weather workhorse in the form of a Suzuki-powered, Humber Quinquari RIB. **Words: HMS Pictures: Ben Reynolds**

**A**lan Tarby is a man of the sea through and through. He's been a professional seaman all his working life, including being an offshore fisherman as well as serving as coxswain of the RNLI lifeboat based in his home port of Padstow.

What does he make, then, of the recently commissioned multitasking RIB that his harbour authority in Padstow is now employing to work the waters of the Camel Estuary? 'It's a pretty tall order for any vessel, I admit – because the boat has to perform so many functions. These include working as a patrol vessel, mooring buoy maintenance craft, pilot vessel, tow boat and rescue craft, and we even share the boat with our local volunteer on-water police unit. Therefore,

when it came to locating and deciding upon what boat might meet the criteria that we here in Padstow were requiring, it was a tough task.' Tarby continues: 'The Quinquari Humber is a genuine all-rounder, a real workhorse. Mind you, like any boat, she's not perfect ...'

More of that later. But first, let's focus for a moment on the environment in which this commercial coded vessel has to operate. The Camel is the largest tidal estuary on the North Cornwall coast. In fact, it is said that every tide approximately a million tonnes of sand are carried to and fro by its waters. Little wonder, then, that one of the estuary's most outstanding features is its golden sands – including, of course, the famous 'Doom Bar'. This treacherous sandbar lies at the north-facing mouth of the Camel and has

rightly earned the reputation of being a fearsome gateway to the estuary in strong wind-against-tide conditions. Therefore, any working vessel operating in these waters obviously has to be well found enough to tackle the bar in adverse sea states.

Though much of the work this multifunction craft performs is contained within the confines of the Camel itself, she is coded to operate beyond the bar – particularly if acting in the role of a pilot vessel or if going to give supportive aid to a vessel



Photo: The Humber Quinquari hull is a proven winner



Raymarine navigational technology including GPS plotter and radar; and Icom VHF comms.

in distress. If called upon to serve in the latter capacity, then her 40-knot-plus capability as delivered by the twin 200 DFI Suzuki 4-stroke outboards rigged on her transom virtually guarantees that she can be the first on the scene in an emergency if so required. Furthermore, the boat's Hypalon tubes and high manoeuvrability give the RIB distinct advantages over what might be considered to be her hardboat counterparts.

### Fit-out & internal components

The layout of the boat, being a fairly straightforward affair, offers a good amount of deck space fore and aft which allows a useful platform to work from, especially when handling



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**BOAT REVIEW**

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Pic: Supplied by Padstow Harbour Commis

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casualties or performing buoyage maintenance. Crew are accommodated on three Scot Seats suspension seats mounted on a raised plinth aft of the helm console, which is constructed in aluminium and also features a fabric-topped bimini-styled weather cover for the crew. Sadly, neither the bimini nor the console's high screen does much to protect the crew from the elements. On the day of PBR's visit to review the vessel, Alan Tarby confirmed that the problem of water pooling in the fabric overhead frequently resulted in the crew

getting a neckful of water down their shirts, and the height of the curved screen allowed the wind to come directly at one's face when underway. The Scot Seats, however, really transform the ride on a semi-high-speed craft such as this and they are a product which not only work well from a functional point of view but also look impressively well engineered. Commercial and professional operations are coming under increasing pressure these days to think in terms of crew health and safety, so suspension seats and shock mitigation decking,



Photo: The boat's performance is impressive.



Pic: Supplied by Padstow Harbour Commission

as well as good helm console ergonomics, are important factors to consider from the earliest design stages of a boat's construction.

The helm console features Raymarine navigational technology that includes GPS plotter and radar. VHF comms come courtesy of Icom. The ergonomics of the console in relation to the driving position are good, but the failing of the

console is the restricted access it has to its interior thanks to the location of the console hatch in relation to the two forward suspension seats. Tarby showed us the difficulty he had in being able to use this valuable dry stowage to the full because of this particular design flaw regarding access. 'No matter how hard one may try to get the perfect fit-out or design layout,' he explained, 'it's not until you

take delivery of a vessel and begin to use it in earnest that its flaws and little annoyances become evident.'

In terms of ensuring that the RIB met all her coding requirements, the vessel was assessed in the usual manner, including for such things as her overall stability, payload limit, and then a full inventory of mandatory kit which was served upon her before she was passed for commissioning/active service. Tarby's view, from the perspective of a professional seaman, is one where 'the boat now has enough equipment to virtually sink her!' (My own view is that I suspect that many of the maritime coding requirements here in the UK often have as much to do with the musings of office-bound legislators as they do with the actual requirements of a well-found vessel at sea – especially one which spends most of its time within the confines of the Camel Estuary. Further evidence of this legislative, regulatory-

type thinking can be found aboard the Padstow-to-Rock foot ferry which kindly diverted on the morning of our visit to take us out to the RIB's swinging mooring. The mandatory safety briefing which comes courtesy of a recorded message each time the vessel casts off only just finishes before the passengers alight at the very end of their short journey! Ah, the wonders of our bureaucratic, health and safety-obsessed age! HMS)

The Humber Quinquari hull is fashioned in GRP, and her underdeck construction possesses great rigidity and longitudinal strength. The standard of build is high and the robustness of the craft and its components, including such items as its double-arch mast and bimini frame, are all commensurate with the tasks she is expected to perform as a workboat. Being largely a custom build, the vessel's internal design and choice of power are the result of the



Photo: The police squad.

Pic: Supplied by Padstow Harbour Commission

brief given by its operators, the Padstow Harbour Authority. The materials used in her construction, along with her overall design, ensure that she is well suited to life on her mooring as well as many years' service working the waters of the Camel and its neighbouring coastline.

## Performance & handling

The boat's performance is impressive. The Suzuki outboards really deliver and afford the helmsman a very high degree of control in all sea states. This is a substantial boat at 2.8 tonnes but she handles like a performance car, possessing the reassuring stability and sure-footedness of an all-terrain vehicle. The hull is a proven winner and, coupled to her inflatable sponsons, not only delivers ultimate stability at rest, but is also soft-riding and very efficient underway. The Humber's high bow sheer, coupled to the boat's multi-chine hull design, provides both excellent lift and forward buoyancy, which means that when running in a following sea she is very unlikely to bury her nose. Likewise, in a beam sea, the hull is effective at deflecting spray firmly down and away from the craft. In the head seas we encountered on our test day it was noticeable how well the deep-vee hull responded to the trim. This latter quality meant the boat could be driven hard into the oncoming swell without the craft become flighty or unpredictable in its actions.

The morning we spent on the boat with Alan Tarby was very enjoyable and took in a run out toward Pentire Point, north of the Doom Bar, before heading



Photo: Scot Seats suspension seats mounted on a raised plinth aft of the helm console, which is constructed in aluminium and also features a fabric-topped bimini-styled weather cover for the crew.

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over to Gulland Rock, a couple of miles west of Stepper Point – a course which gave a good opportunity to get a true feel of the craft and how she handles.

In conclusion, Tarby's own words summarise the abilities of this Humber Quinquari RIB well, I feel: 'She's a sound craft that serves all that use her to a very able degree. Of course, there are things that we would change about her fit-out

with the benefit of hindsight, but all in all, I can't think of another type of boat that could multitask so convincingly.' Then, with a wry smile, Tarby adds: 'Furthermore, there's never any shortage of personnel, whether they're police, pilots or harbour authority, wanting to get behind her wheel. I guess that tells you something, doesn't it?'

**HMS**



Photo: The Humber's high bow sheer, coupled to the boat's multi-chine hull design, provides both excellent lift and forward buoyancy.

## ABOUT THE BOAT



**OPERATORS:** Padstow Harbour Authority  
**PURCHASE PROCEDURE:** Selective tender

**USE:** General harbour master patrol, Dedicated pilot boat. Patrol duties by Devon and Cornwall Police (by agreement of owners)

**BUILD & DELIVERY:** 2011, on budget and on time

**2013 PRICE AS PER BUILD:** £95,000 (ex VAT)

**WARRANTY:** Minimum one year (varies on component), 24/7 technical support and backup from Quinquari for life of vessel

**CODED:** Pilot code (first ever petrol RHIB in UK to attain pilot code) Police code (for use by Devon and Cornwall Police) Workboat code

**SURVEYING AUTHORITY:** Build audit - YBDSA (Nigel Ling)

**CERTIFYING AUTHORITY:** MECAL

**HULL:** Humber Offshore Quinquari Commercial - 9m LOA 2.8m Beam. Heavy-duty longitudinal seam tubes and fendering

**SPEED AND FUEL:** Cruise 25 knots (40 litres an hour) Circa 50 knots (85 litres an hour) – cannot be disclosed for operational reasons

**FIT-OUT:** Quinquari on Humber design

**ENGINES:** Twin Suzuki DF 200

**CONSOLE:** Bespoke design by client and Quinquari. Fabricated by QQ in marine aluminium

**A-FRAME:** Bespoke fabricated by QQ

**TOWING POST:** Bespoke fabricated by QQ along with all other deck fixtures

**STEERING:** Hydraulic twin ram and helm by Hydrive

**FUEL:** Twin 250-litre s/s tanks by Marine Fabrications

**ELECTRONICS:** Raymarine radar/plotter/sounder, VHF Icom, Switchgear Blue Sea All harnesses and distribution by QQ

**SEATING:** Scot Seats suspension type

**LIFESAIVING:** Ocean safety and premium life rafts. Full offshore pyro pack etc.



# PADSTOW, THE CAMEL AND ITS COAST

The roots of the town of Padstow date back to the sixth century when St Petroc founded a monastery here which was later sacked by the Vikings in 981. However, the history of Padstow is really forged upon its sea trade, and in fact, down through the centuries, its cargoes of salt fish, wine, mined ores and slate ensured its prosperity and sustained its viability as a port well into the industrial age when, in 1899, the railway system was at last extended to Padstow. The latter obviously changed the balance of trade for the entire region, but for Padstow, with the herring fishing industry now at its height, the coming of the railway brought even more opportunities for the town and its sailing fishing fleet right through the early 1900s.

These waters, though, have seen their fair share of trouble too down through the ages, with wrecks aplenty, including the sinking of a small fleet of Padstow fishing boats which, during the First World War, were subject to an attack by a German U-boat just off Pentire Point. The gentlemanly commander of the German submarine in question, however, gave the fishermen advance warning and recommended they abandon their vessels and make for shore aboard their dinghies in order to escape his torpedo and machine gun attack. Once one and all had duly obliged, the U-boat commander gave the order to open fire and set about sinking the lot! During such times of hardship, and with probably no insurance benefits to be claimed, this loss proved very significant for the men of Padstow and the trade the town so depended on.

Despite the Camel's ever-changing silt and sand formations, unlike the ancient port of Hayle further west, the Camel Estuary has remained largely navigable right up to Wadebridge, and in these modern times the estuary's protected waters serve as a wonderful playground for those who enjoy water sports, as well as a haven for the many moored pleasure craft which lie afloat here during the summer months. Padstow's outer drying harbour and, in more recent years, the addition of its lock-gated inner harbour provide a rare sanctuary along this rugged and often inhospitable stretch of western coast. Lying against the leeside outer wall of the harbour you will see colourful reminders of Padstow's heritage, thanks to the brightly coloured hulls of the offshore fishing vessels that continue to operate out of this port.

Padstow is now famous for being the home of Rick Stein's culinary empire, and indeed, his two eating establishments, which include his famous fish restaurant, are not only among the town's most famous attractions but the Stein business machine also serves the local community in providing a valuable source of employment. It seems that the locals of Padstow are genuinely pleased that Mr Stein has helped to ensure Padstow's ongoing popularity, which sees thousands visit the little town every year. As a UK holiday destination, Padstow is hard to beat, especially with the delights of Rock being just a short ferry ride away across the water.

The local beaches of Daymer Bay and Polzeath/Hayle Bay, as well as Lundy Bay to the east and Constantine to the west, are among the many golden sandy beaches to be found within a 10-mile radius of the town. Care needs to be taken, however, especially at Daymer Bay, as the tides run strong along this stretch of Atlantic coast, which means undertows and tide rips can make swimming hazardous. So it always makes good sense to adhere to the safe zones as designated by the lifeguard flag system before plunging into the water to surf or swim.

Padstow is at the very heart of these coastal wonders, so for families wishing to holiday in Cornwall, the town and the neighbouring boating facilities across the water in Rock make for a wonderful base to enjoy the region by sea as well as on foot. Speaking of the latter, the 'Camel Trail' is a footpath and bicycle track that offers an outstanding opportunity to see the true beauty of this remarkable estuary and surrounding countryside. Even if your prime reason for visiting the area is for the purpose of boating, it really is worth 'doing' the Camel Trail – it makes for a great family experience. Following the disused railway line once used by the London and South West Railway, the trail hugs the Camel Estuary from Padstow to Wadebridge before joining the route through the deeply incised and beautifully wooded Camel Valley to Bodmin.

At Bodmin, yet another line, one of the most historic in the country, winds its way inland to the foot of Bodmin Moor, where it comes to an end near Blisland, an extraordinarily pretty moorland village. Depending on your constitution and the time you have available, you can choose just how much of this route you undertake, but for the Camel Estuary section alone, allow about half a day in which to complete it on foot at a leisurely stroll.

As a cruising ground, the north Cornish coast's appeal is that it is so different to the south coast. The potential for rough water over Padstow's Doom Bar, the big Atlantic ground swells common to these parts and the shortage of bolt holes if the weather turns foul all mean that those who wish to cruise this coast need to have their wits about them. You also need a well-found craft and to be a little more self-sufficient than if you were simply boating in and around the Solent. But the rewards to be had are great, in my view – not least the spectacular scenery of the coast itself and the fact that the lack of other pleasure craft only serves to enhance that feeling of boating 'off the beaten track'. In addition to cruising to such wonderful little places as Boscastle, Tintagel and Port Isaac, there are opportunities for some superb sea fishing and diving in these waters too.

**Visit Cornwall** is the tourist board for Cornwall and the official inspiration and information gateway for everything you need to know to make your visit memorable.

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