

# VALIANT

## V620

On a gorgeous, misty, muddy Essex morning, Alex Smith heads for the new waterfront premises at IBS International for a look at the Valiant 620 Cruiser.



It's a great pleasure visiting IBS International's new headquarters at North Fambridge in Essex. For a start, it ticks all the right boxes from a practical perspective. It has a slipway, a storage yard, a workshop and a pub virtually on site, plus a small, friendly marina just a hundred yards upstream and access to its own pontoons, accessible at the lowest of low water springs. But the real appeal consists not in practicalities like these but in the fact that this place is about as perfect a slice of estuary Essex as you are likely to see.

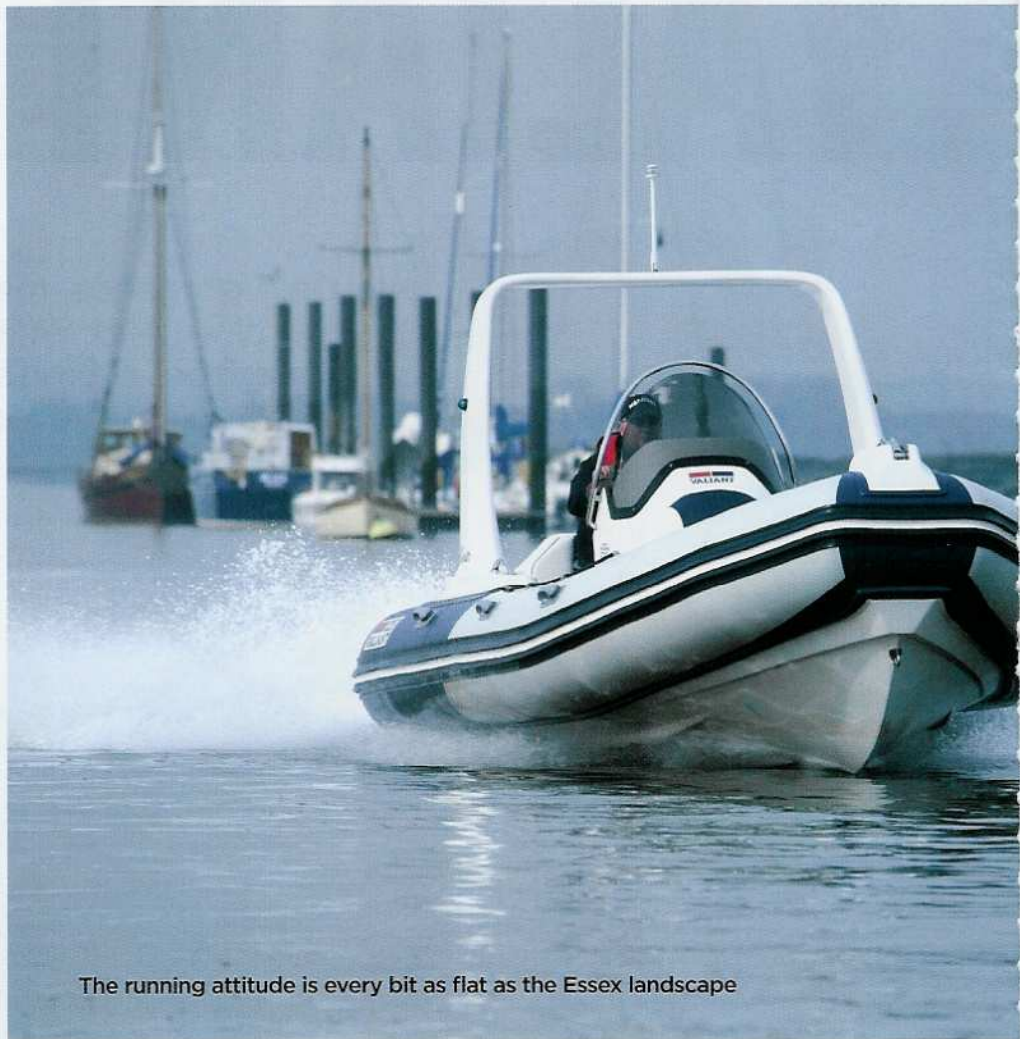
When I arrive at about 0730, the tide is out - extremely out, in a way that only Essex seems to manage, exposing huge, heavy beds of east coast mud. A mist hangs low and thick and a pale sun glows weakly through the haze. Gulls and wading birds are already wandering around quietly, as if nursing hangovers and the silence of the place is palpable, with not the slightest noise either from people or traffic. In fact the only sound is a gentle lick as the water begins to flood the Crouch and bury the mud once more. I'm about two hours early for my appointment with the Valiant V620 but nothing could suit me better than just sitting on the wall, wrapped up warm, watching the water rise and waiting for the arrival of the day...

#### THE BOAT BUILDER

Valiant is a relatively young company. It was founded in 1994 and yet its range of boats already shows it to be a prolific builder, with around 40 models currently in production, distributed by dealer networks in 25 countries around the world.

Although it began as a small independent, Valiant is owned by the Brunswick Corporation and has been since 2005. These are the same people who own Arvor, Bayliner, Bella, Boston Whaler, Maxum, Sealine, Quicksilver and Trophy. They also own Aquador, Hatteras, Flipper, Kayot and plenty of other big names besides...

Now you might think that this kind of corporate ownership would diminish the romance a touch because, though we may pretend otherwise, we all relish the idea of a lovingly hand-crafted one-off. But with access to Brunswick's unmatched global marketing expertise and its huge economies of scale, a product like this actually stands a greater chance of giving you a problem free ownership experience. Given the benefits of Brunswick muscle, we have a right to expect the Valiant to be a very sound boat - one that appeals as a realistic leisure package with good looks, sound construction and well sorted dynamics, plus the kind of price that puts it at the forefront of its class. It's time to take a look...



The running attitude is every bit as flat as the Essex landscape



Trailing tubes add buoyancy even further aft than the prop

#### WHERE DOES IT FIT INTO THE RANGE?

*Valiant is seriously prolific. There are five 'Dynamic' tenders running from 2.4 to 3.8 metres, a Diving and Rescue range, a 'Professional' range for commercial use and a 'Special' range for military purposes. But it's the mid-sized leisure range that concerns us. It consists of seven basic boats of between 4.0 and 7.5 metres in length. The top two models, the 620 and 750 are available either in standard or Cruiser configurations. The V620 Cruiser we have on test is therefore the second largest of Valiant's seven strong leisure range.*

# TESTED

## Valiant V620



Down on the pontoon, the V620 sits quite low in the water, with fat tubes (57cm in diameter) extending a significant distance aft of the transom and sitting squarely on the water's surface, even at rest. I step on board and the benefits of this prodigious lateral stability are immediately borne out with almost no movement as I place the weight of my foot on the port tube.

Factor in a ten per cent safety margin and the most efficient planing speed of 29mph will see you motoring for around 170 miles at a cost of 55p per mile

It's a very attractive boat to look at in a plain grey-white-blue colour scheme with teak and metal trim. It's a simplistic shape too, with the collar remaining relatively flat until about two thirds of the way forward at which point it sweeps up, creating a very brazen and aggressive bow. The bow lift is accentuated by the moulded anchor roller with stainless runner on the tube top and it not only looks good - it also creates an unusually deep and secure foredeck space for your passengers to enjoy.

There are, however, two problems with this. Firstly, the creation of the enormous

foredeck space is at the direct expense of seating elsewhere on the boat. All you get is the full-beam twin helm seat aft and a single seat moulded into the front of the console.

There is a slight lack of useful storage space too. There are just three places to put your gear - in the anchor locker, the console and the twin bench. But the anchor locker doubles as the fuel filling point (as well as the place to keep your anchor and line) so its capacity for other stuff is limited. So too, the console space is used for the battery and cabling and, because there is no compartmentalisation, any stuff you put in here sits on the deck and is free to move around. The biggest issue with the storage spaces, though, is that none of them has a gas ram, or in fact any other form of brace, to hold the lid open while you delve inside. That means that, in the case of the aft bench, you have to lever it open with your shoulder. Either have a word with IBS or execute a simple retro-fit job and the problem can be easily remedied.

### THE 'CRUISER' BIT

As the 'Cruiser' version of the 620, you get a more generous standard kit list than the 620 Sport. You get the retractable bow roller, deck shower, diving ladder, the radar arch and, most importantly, the sundeck with lockers. But given that this is the dedicated cruiser version, I would like to see the fuel tank upgraded from the standard 106-litre unit. As it stands, if you factor in a fuel safety margin of ten percent to avoid mishaps, the most efficient planing speed (around 29mph at 3400rpm) will see you motoring for about 170 miles before you need to refill. That's fine for general use, but with difficult conditions or aggressive driving that range could be reduced to as little as 80 miles, so an additional 50 per cent fuel tank capacity would open up a whole new level of practical cruising versatility. You could also do with specifying a whole raft of cushions for seating and sunbathing on that enormous foredeck. Otherwise, the versatility of the cruising configuration >

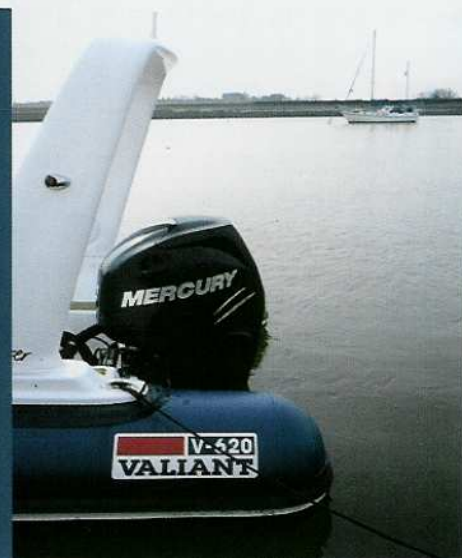


Give that throttle a tweak  
and witness the results . . .



## WHAT ABOUT THAT VERADO?

*Ah, Verado - the big, heavy, expensive, thirsty, supercharged thing with the futuristic cowling and the feather-light controls? Well actually no. The Verado does mean some decent weight aft but you also get enormously vigorous pick-up and, on this test boat, an impressively frugal cruise of just over half a litre (around 55p) per mile at just under 30mph - in other words, very handy performance for the weekend cruiser. And because there's a good base against which to rest the heel of your hand, the lightness of the throttle control means very accurate helming, even when the sea gets lumpy. The 150 is at the top end of the Valiant's range but, with a rather lovely mix of aggression and refinement, it's a fine engine and a great match for a cruising RIB like the 620.*

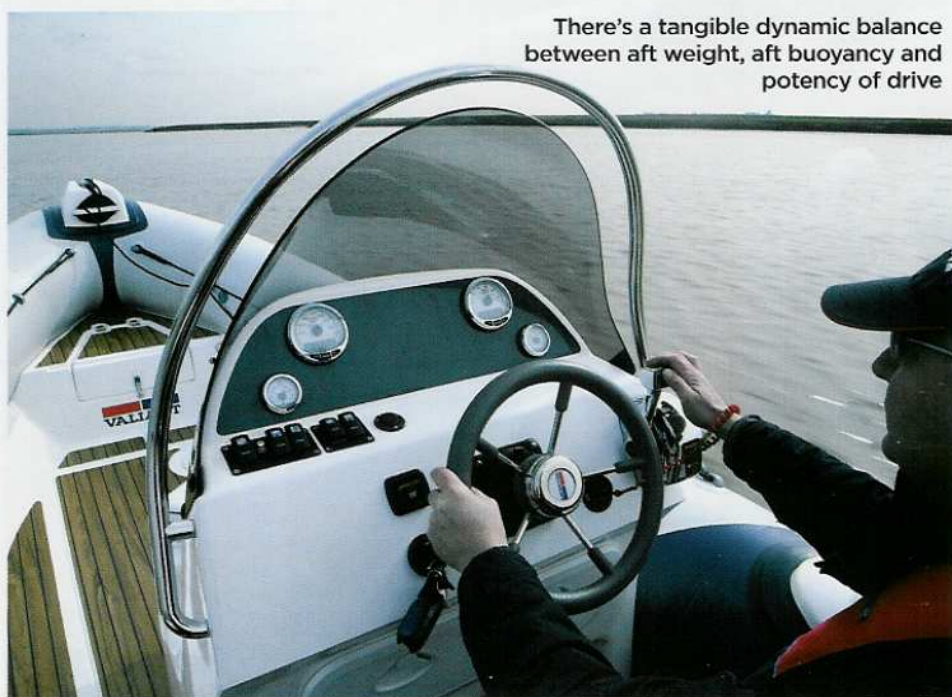


and the relative generosity of the additional features make the test boat pretty good value for money.

## UNDERWAY

The hull uses a 19-degree deadrise, narrowing to a 24-degree forefoot, with three spray rails, the top-most of which is fairly pronounced. Underway that produces several features that stand out. The first of those is a very rapid plane of around 1.5 seconds. A combination of the aft weight and the additional stern buoyancy of the low trailing tubes aft of the transom sees the aggression of the Verado's pick up translating into forward movement rather than skyward lurches. Certainly, there's a flicker of nose lift as you put the hammer down but the 620 finds its equilibrium quickly, settling into a high running, fast accelerating attitude as the back end hunkers down against the bottom of the collar.

Another prominent feature of the 620 is its wake. There's barely a nodding mast ▶

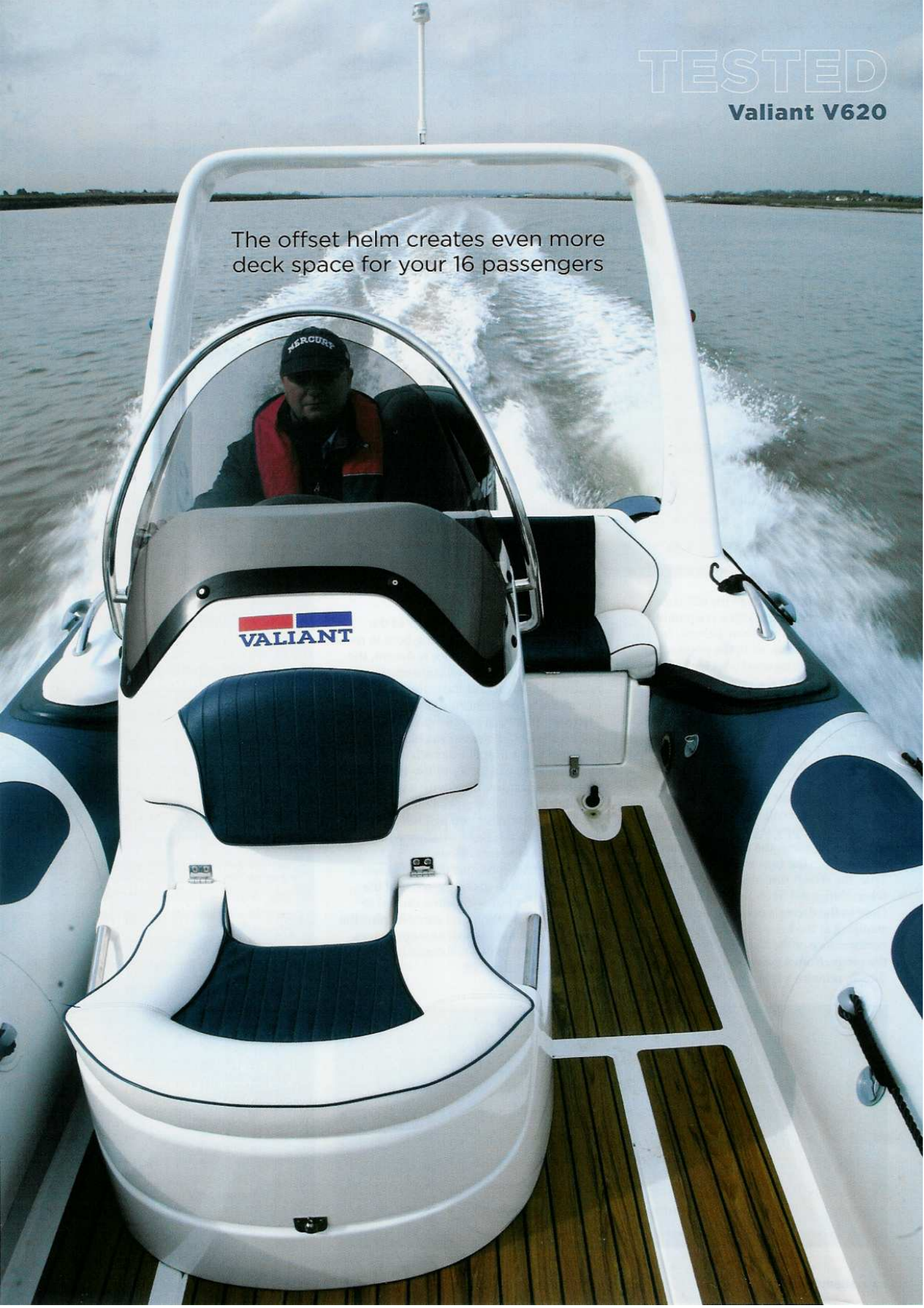


There's a tangible dynamic balance  
between aft weight, aft buoyancy and  
potency of drive

TESTED

Valiant V620

The offset helm creates even more deck space for your 16 passengers



# TESTED

## Valiant V620



from the moored boats as the 620 runs through the channel, with a crisp milky fold of water trailing away behind. In fact the wake is flat almost to the point of non-existence so it's an ideal boat for skiing, particularly given the provision of a ski pole as standard.

This dynamic opposition between the weighty, powerful engine and the aft buoyancy is also seen in the way the boat turns. Crank the wheel over and the heel is minimal. The boat alters course very flat, pinned almost upright by the lateral buoyancy of the collar. But it's quick and adequately grippy regardless and as the wheel straightens, the power delivery on the exit from the turn is genuinely excellent. True, the screen rim could become an issue when things get lively, as it's just a little too close to the driver's nodding head when standing at the helm. But that aside, the performance of the Valiant RIB throughout the range, from a gentle amble to a 47mph thrash, remains very sound indeed.

### THE UPSHOT

The relatively shallow angles of the V620 make it a useful cruising boat in most respects. The internal space is decent, the plane is efficient, the fuel consumption is relatively modest and the stability at rest (for mooring or anchoring) is excellent. There are plenty of people who insist that your hull should cleave seas like a knife and grip like a limpet but such dynamic characteristics are rarely of use to the family weekender. True, with a shallower hull, the ride tends to feel a bit stiffer in the lumpy stuff, but you just have to make sure you pick the right weather window and drive to the conditions.

The internal configuration of the test boat might fail to make the most of the space on offer but with some careful re-jigging of the seating and console, plus the addition of some useable storage spaces, the very competent V620 could become a serious contender. ■

### WHY YOU WOULD

Huge pick-up  
Decent efficiency  
Lively handling

### WHY YOU WOULDN'T

No gas rams  
Untidy finish in places

### SPECIFICATIONS

Length	6.15m
Internal length	4.5m
Beam	2.5m
Internal beam	1.35m
Tube diameter	0.57m
Weight	700kg
Deadrise	19 degrees
Max people	17
Power	100-150 hp
Suggested engine	115 hp
Engine as tested	Mercury Verado 150
Fuel capacity	106 litres
Basic price	£32,400
Price as tested	£35,990

### PERFORMANCE

RPM	Speed	Flow	Economy	Range
1000	2.9 (mph)	2.6 (lph)	0.90 (lpm)	106.0 (miles)
2000	5.8	7.6	1.31	72.8
2600 (plane)	17.0	9.6	0.56	170.4
3000	21.0	13.2	0.63	151.4
3400 (cruise)	28.9	16.5	0.57	167.4
4000	32.0	24.3	0.76	125.5
5000	40.1	35.0	0.87	109.7
5600	47.0	55.2	1.17	81.5

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