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IN response to a 'Meet me in Ardlui' invite to what was literally the Scottish launch of the Walker Bay RID 310, I arrived at the very top end of the Bonnie Banks in the company of Scottish dealer Allan Stirling who, as a dedicated power sailor, was also keen to see the wind driven version in action. And what better place than Ardlui Marina.

On reflection, the weather was spot on for a firm appraisal of the Walker Bay 3-in-1 rigid inflatable dinghy (RID).

We used the basic 10 version which starts life as a maintenance free high-pressure injection moulded 9ft 8in simulated clinker dinghy, complete with oars.

It was tempting to take it out on Loch Lomond for a spin, but everyone was desperate to see the famous **ADD-a** tube slide through its runner and in seconds, we had a veritable RIB, quickly corrected to 'RID' by area sales managers Christian Roberts and Paul Mellotte.

This looked much more supportive of the 3hp Mercury outboard now placed on the transom and off she went with three adult males onboard and still plenty room for any stores etc required to be ferried out

For what is arguably the lowest cost to get afloat, Walker Bay Boats offer a basic 8ft dinghy tender for £495. Add an inflatable all round tube and you have a RIB-style RID, complete with outboard, or hoist a sail for fun around the anchorage or on inland waters. Alistair Vallance reports on this unique triple option sailing concept from Ardlui Marina, Loch Lomond.



to a 'mother ship'.

The RID is highly manoeuvrable and maintains the RIB characteristic of coming alongside anything at water level without causing the slightest damage.

The next 'ADD-a' was the mast and sail – the third part of the famous Walker Bay three way kit. The 50sq.ft sail hangs from a 14ft 8in mast height and boasts one single batten in a pseudo gaff position. When the composite kick up rudder and drop keel are applied, the sailing dinghy is ready for action – and action you get, particularly in sudden puffs, but the famous RID tube actively arrests a heel and makes the 10 footer a forgiving tender/fun sailer, proving it ideal for inland waters or quiet anchorage use.

However, the drop keel,



Three men in a boat, with plenty of space for stores etc.



One man in a yacht; as Christian Roberts takes off under sail power.

rid

even when fully dropped, still allows a little more 'cross way' than you might expect, so heading to a given point in one tack takes practice.

But the sailing aspect of the Walker Bay RID is surely its fun bonus. I don't see fleets ever competing for a racing trophy. No, the real strength of the WB genre is the 8 or 10 footer complete with tube and engine, in RID format. That's level norm: You go down to a hand powered rowing dinghy, or up to sail power.

Christian Roberts is upbeat about the ongoing success of the American Walker Bay trinity which only launched in Britain at ExCel in January on its own stand, but under the banner of the mighty Barrus empire which brings us Mercury and Mariner outboards, plus Mercruiser and Yanmar sterndrives and inboards respectively.

Says Christian, 'we are really promoting Walker Bay boats to a new range of



Final adjustment to the 'down-haul' before setting sail from Ardlui.
Inset: Considerable space differential between an inflatable dinghy and a RID.

potential leisure sailors. The idea is taking off in the south and the gospel is spreading north.'

Certainly Allan Stirling sees the advantage in selling engine packages and he's offering free delivery on the Scottish mainland.

Thirty dealers have now signed up in the UK including Stirling's Marine

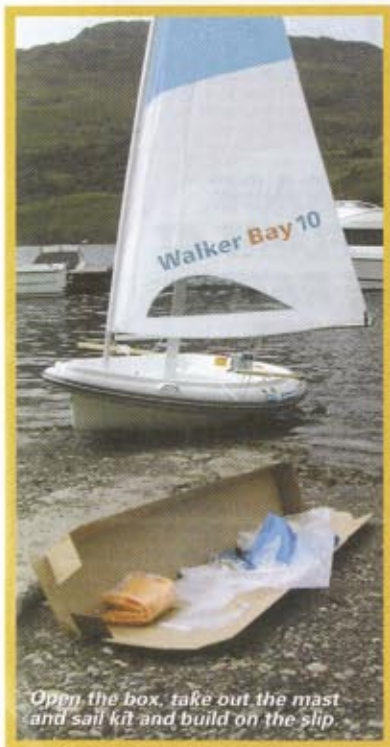
based at Linwood, Lakeland at Penrith and Storrar Marine on the east side of the Pennines.

It's difficult to relate the 'ADD-a' concept to price, because it's so easy to move to the next, and the next, option on the list.

Cheapest starter pack is the Walker Bay 8 (8ft 3in loa) at £495.00 inc VAT. That's dinghy only. We tested the '10' at £795.00. Add the 'performance' sailing kit and you're at £1,390, or take the

RID road, applying the basic all round tube (RID 305) at £1,290 or the large capacity tubes (RD 310) which cost out at £1,444.

The choice as they say is yours, but one fundamental plus point for the system in any of its guises is the undeniable fact that the RID offers so much more crew room onboard than an equivalent sized inflatable dinghy which won't ever seriously accommodate a sail!



Open the box, take out the mast and sail kit and build on the slip



Paul Mellotte and Christian Roberts with Barrus' sales support van.