

Making the most of the space

Phil Pickin visits a highly adaptable, stylish narrowboat, intelligently built to accommodate small or larger numbers



Well deck. PHOTOS: PHIL PICKIN

BOAT builders, owners and designers have always tried to get a quart into a pint pot and this has been the objective of the builders of narrowboats. From the days of the boatman's cabin, in which families would live, the need to make the most of what little space is on offer has always been a necessity.

But it's not just a need to provide more living and storage space that has been the driver for good design; it's creating these living spaces in such a way as to make the areas adaptable. It's with these thoughts in mind that Ortomarine's Caroline Badger came up with the idea of making the seating in the living area of *Happy Wanderer* flexible and highly adaptable to accommodate large or small numbers of people.

This 57ft semi-trad boat, finished in cool greys and lighter colours, looks modern and stylish, but it didn't just need to look good (though in my opinion it does) it also had to be highly functional, and I'm not just talking about the intelligent seating in the dinette.

A considerable amount of time and thought has gone into the use of space – something that is noticeable almost as soon as you enter the boat via the walkthrough galley.

There are small but useful features, like an inset bin in the worktop to be used for kitchen waste. This may not seem that unusual, but it utilises the otherwise wasted space behind the wine rack. Not far away is a slide-out compartmentalised bin for use when recycling. Again – handy use of space by

using a clever bin that saves you having to have more than one bin in the galley.

The kick-boards at floor level have also been used as the location for some additional drawers to store items that are not often used. All of these drawer and cupboard fronts are smooth and sleek and finished in Howdens Clerkenwell gloss dove grey. Integral handles save you catching yourself on them as you walk through the galley.

The worktops are 22mm square edged and inset into one is a Howdens Lamona granite composite single bowl, not the usual stainless steel or white ceramic you often see. This matches in well with the grey tile-effect wall-covering which, in turn, contrasts well with the American white oak trim.

Moving forward you come to this innovative dinette, which is better demonstrated than described. The area looks conventional enough, with the seating and the tables divided in half enabling you to walk between them. And again this area is finished in pale grey with very thick upholstery on the seats. The innovation begins when you start to move these units, all of which are on runners to make this easy. By utilising the table tops and additional cushions, this area can become a very large dining area, two single berths, a double or a kingsize. There is an option to convert one side to a chaise longue-style seat right next to the side hatch, so you can relax and look out at the world drifting by.

As with the rest of the boat, maximum use has been made of the



Loads of storage.



Shower cubicle in walk-through washroom.



Dinette bed configurations.



Happy Wanderer.

space on offer, with a large amount of storage available below these dinette seats, with one being used as the location for the freezer. In one configuration, the seating moves away from the living space, thus increasing this area still further. Another instance of the boat's design making the most of the space available. Undoubtedly this dining area will be left in the most useful configuration for the users, but it's good to have the flexibility to adapt the space to suit your needs should they change.

The living area is equipped with a TV on a swivel bracket; Hamlet Hardy multi-fuel stove and space for free-standing chairs.

The bathroom is a walk-through style with staggered doors. The flooring, as with most of the boat, is Lifestyle Colosseum in pale oak. It's fitted with a Jabsco macerator toilet with a quiet flush cycle, with the tank fitted under the double berth. There is a white gloss vanity unit on top of which is a large, white, ceramic washbasin with a round mirror mounted above. Opposite this is a large quadrant shower cubicle with towel storage, making use of the below gunnel space.

The front bedroom has a 4ft x 6ft double bed with a six-inch side extension. Two large drawers are fitted within the bed base and a locker/shelf unit is installed above the bed. The headboard is upholstered and two reading lights have been provided above.

At the foot of the bed is a wardrobe and a light oak dressing table. An additional TV has also been added, all of which are fed from a roof aerial that can be adjusted from within the above-bed locker. This also houses the boat Wi-Fi and TV signal booster.

As with all of Ortomarine's boats, *Happy Wanderer* is fitted with a bespoke touchscreen boat monitoring system, accessed from a seven-inch screen fitted close to the electrical controls near the galley as you enter the boat. It's from this that many of the boat's systems can be monitored and controlled.

Happy Wanderer is very obviously an Ortomarine boat, given its quality, the attention to detail, and the innovations used to squeeze every last inch of space out of the area on offer.

The modern styling may not be to everyone's taste, especially if you err towards the more traditional, but if you like a clean and uncluttered look, then *Happy Wanderer* is for you.



Galley and dinette.



Cosy bedroom.



A bin inset into the worktop for food waste is one of the small but useful features.

SPEC SHEET

Length: 57ft
Style: Semi-trad
Berths: 2+2
Engine: Beta 43hp Greenline, Morse single lever control
Transmission: PRM 150 hydraulic, 3 blade RH bronze 18" prop. Aquadrive Moduline anti-vibration system
TV system: Vision Plus Status 570 digital antenna
Electrical system: 4 x roof-mounted solar panels @160W, 4 x Multicell 6v 220Ah traction cell batteries, 1 x Multicell Marine Sealed 110Ah 12v starter, Victron Multiplus 12/3000/70 inverter/charger
Hot water: 54-litre vertical twin coil calorifier – Eberspacher D4W Hydronic diesel central heating system
Galley: Swan retro microwave, Zanussi ZWC301 washing machine, Thetford Caprice LGP cooker, Swan fridge
Price: around £115,000

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