



EAU ROUGE

What's in a name?

Modern features and attention to detail are a winning formula, Phil Pickin reports.

NAMING a boat can be something of a challenge as we'd all like to come up with something different, so finding a boat named after a small red river that has given its name to a famous section of a race circuit certainly ticks the box.

As any self-respecting F1 fan will tell you, Eau Rouge is a bend on the Spa race circuit in Belgium and is named after the small river that the circuit crosses. The river Eau Rouge is coloured red due to the geology of the area and the result of all this is that F1 fan Rob Mears and his wife Karen felt it was an apt name for their latest (and supposedly last) boat.

Rob and Karen have owned a number of boats over the years and decided not to replace their last boat, a decision that didn't last too long as after talking to a number of builders they commissioned Ortomarine to build this modern 57ft semi-trad boat.

The result is a very smart, modern and light narrowboat that Rob and Karen will use for holidays and weekends.

Their builders, Ortomarine, are

relatively new to the industry but their background has a good mix. Their team includes Rob Howdle, who has 30 years of experience in industrial automation, and his brother Dave, who brings 20 years' experience of building boats for Black Prince Holidays.

The team includes management accountant Caroline Badger (Rob's other half) and Rob and Dave's sister Patty Denning, who is involved with the creative aspects of the boats. They have built both hire boats and privately owned craft and it would seem that these have sparked significant interest.

Contrasts

As mentioned earlier, *Eau Rouge* looks smart, finished in pale and dark grey with red details, including the unique graphic used on the bow and the side of the boat. These colours work well with the chrome used on window frames etc.

Inside the use of white and pale colours has resulted in what has to be one of the brightest interiors you will find in a narrowboat. Natural wood has been used as well as painted but even that has been kept light with nice contrasts coming from the dark grey used on the radiators.

The galley is located at the stern and, most importantly for Karen, it includes a Belfast sink! The walk-through layout

is formed by two Howden's Greenwich Gloss ivory units fitted with polished chrome handles. The base units are curved on one end, which is not only attractive but also adds space to the area beyond.

A solid oak worktop, grooved to provide a drainer, sits opposite a full-sized cooker inset into the other worktop. A 700W microwave has been fitted into the starboard side cupboard, part of which also provides the location for the calorifier above which an airing cupboard has been created.

This cupboard is adjacent to the steps into the boat on the other side of which is the main control panel and a wet locker. Two wine racks, glass and mug racks, and a good selection of cupboards and drawers provide everything you might need in a well fitted and attractive galley.

Open plan

Moving forward, you enter the open plan living area which, like the galley, is fitted with wood effect LVT (luxury vinyl tile) and has been fitted with three large hopper style, single-glazed window units with oak liners. This, as with the rest of the boat, has worked in combination with the light colour scheme to provide a very bright and light interior.

A folding table is on hand for meals and the room has been furnished with two free-standing armchairs that were arranged towards the oak TV unit. This unit provides all of the usual shelves and storage you would expect in addition to a very cunningly hidden touch screen used to access the Ortomarine boat monitoring system.

This system provides information on tank levels, battery voltages, timed central heating information, fridge control and many other functions. The other main feature of this room is the Hamlet Hardy multi-fuel stove which complements the three large anthracite oval column central heating radiators. These feature throughout the boat and look good in such modern interior design.

The bathroom comes next and has been designed with opposing doors. A large quadrant shower cubicle has been fitted with an Aqualisa thermostatic shower mixer and Grant Westfield shower panels. Close to the cubicle, good use has been made of some spare space to provide towel storage, a nice touch and well finished too. The room is heated by two chrome towel rail radiators and is also equipped with a



The unique graphic on the bow.



The sizeable deck area. PHOTOS: PHIL PICKIN

Thetford cassette toilet and an oak vanity unit on which a ceramic bowl and mixer tap has been fitted.

The boat's lighting is provided by 12v LED downlighters and, in the case of the majority of rooms, under-gunnell lighting controlled by some very stylish switches. With the interior of the boat being naturally so light it's easy to forget that additional lighting is needed as darkness falls.

Secrets

The final room on *Eau Rouge* is the forward bedroom. Unlike the rest of the boat this room has been fitted with some dark grey twist carpet, which is ideal in a room that you want to feel a bit cosier. The room is fitted with a fixed, 4ft x 6ft 3in double bed with an electrically activated 6in side extension. Three large drawers are fitted into the bed base and even more storage can be accessed behind these via removable panels on top of the bed base.

An attractively rounded light oak locker is fitted above the bed which, very usefully, incorporates a USB phone charging point. This unit hides a number of secrets including the handle to adjust the roof antenna. A Teltonika 3G/4G dual SIM router is also housed in this unit and provides wi-fi throughout the boat. A small, light oak dresser with a mirror over it sits next to a wide step leading out on to the equally large forward deck. This step is hinged to provide shoe storage beneath and to finish off, the room is heated with another of the feature radiators.

The formed deck area is sizeable and it's nice to see that details like the hinges on the hatches have been picked out in a contrasting red to help break up the darker grey elements of the boat's colour scheme. It's this attention to detail, mixed with the quality of the build and finish, that makes *Eau Rouge* stand apart from many other new boats.

If your preference is towards a more modern design then you'll love it. But even if you prefer a more traditional look you can still appreciate the quality and nice design touches you'll find on *Eau Rouge*.



The galley's curved end base units add space.



The double bed has an electrically activated 6in side extension.



The open plan living area.



The Hamlet Hardy multi-fuel stove.



The large quadrant shower cubicle.



The cunningly hidden touch screen used to access the boat monitoring system.

SPEC SHEET

Length: 57ft
Style: Semi-trad
Hull: Tyle Wilson (Mike Christian)
Steel: 10/6/5/4.
Draught: 26in
Berths: 2
Insulation: Spray foam
Fuel tank: 217 litres
Fresh water: 495 litres
Engine: Beta 43hp Greenline
Gearbox: PRM 150
Transmission: 3-blade RH bronze 17in prop linked to an Aquadrive Moduline anti-vibration system.
Bow thruster: Vetus 12v with separate battery.
Batteries: 5 x multicell 110Ahp.
Electrical power: Victron Multiplus 12/2000/80 Combi Inverter/Charger
Hot water: 54-litre vertical twin coil calorifier (BP54 VT3) heated by an Eberspacher D4W
Price: Starting price for a 58ft semi trad is £86,450 including VAT

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