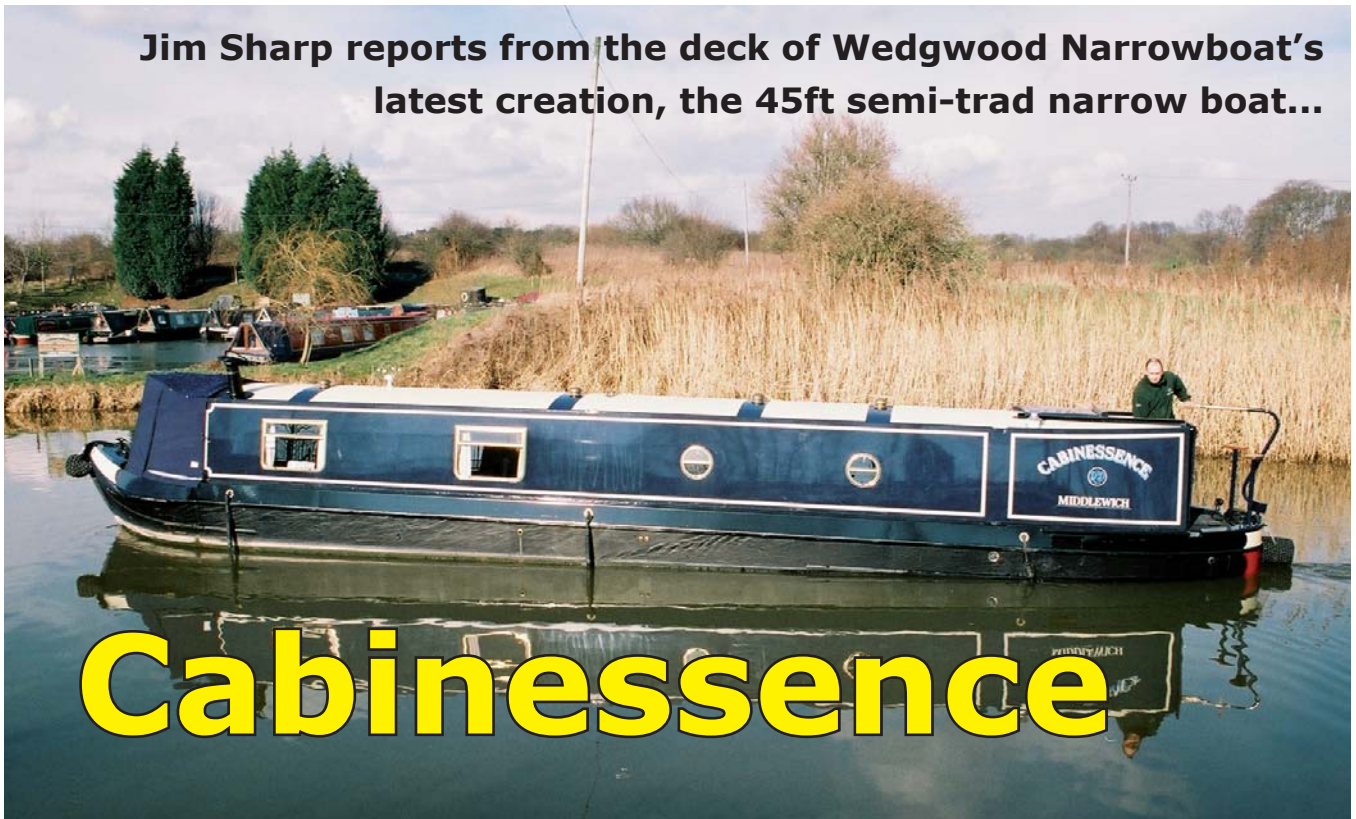


Jim Sharp reports from the deck of Wedgwood Narrowboat's latest creation, the 45ft semi-trad narrow boat...



Cabinessence

"We build individual boats for our customers", was the message Stephen Wedgwood, the owner of Wedgwood Narrowboats Limited, was anxious to get across when I met him at his Kings Lock Chandlery base in Middlewich, before going on to review the narrow boat *Cabinessence* at a marina not far from the recently restored Anderton Boat Lift.

Stephen explained how his company don't build 'standard' specification boats, only bespoke vessels. The design of *Cabinessence*, the subject of this feature, was specified by the owner. It is a fully fitted narrow boat complete with soft furnishings. "The only things the owner had to bring on board was the pots and pans," said Stephen. He went on: "If someone came along to order a copy of *Cabinessence*, I wouldn't actually build an identical copy, I would make some changes

- minor ones - to preserve the vessels individuality."

GENERAL INFORMATION

Kevin and Pam Divine of Middlewich, the owners of *Cabinessence*, chose a traditional style hull for their dream boat, the 45ft (13.71metre) by 6ft 10ins (2.05metre) shell of which, was fabricated by Liverpool Narrowboats in marine grade 43A steel with sole, sides and top specifications of 10:6:5 and 4, before being transported to Middlewich for fitting out.

Externally, the vessel is superbly hand painted with customer specified International Coatings paint. The main colour chosen is dark blue and two cream box panels have then been added to each of the cabin sides, the rear panels containing fine artwork depicting the boat name, home location and



TOP:

Cabinessence is superbly painted and is quite striking in its dark blue and cream livery.

CENTRE RIGHT:

The bow deck is covered by this cratch.

RIGHT:

The boat's 45 foot semi-trad hull was fabricated by Liverpool Narrowboats before being fitted out at Wedgwood Narrowboats.



owners initial logo. The cabin roof is cream and it is divided into five individual panels by transverse dark blue strips. A row of brass mushroom vents runs down the centre line offering a further contrast. The cabin sides are punctuated by brass-framed drop-back hopper windows and portholes. An extra aperture on the starboard side is fitted with a set of doors which serve the dual role of additional galley ventilation and provisions loading point, they are painted blue to match the cabin side.

At the forward end, the well deck is furnished with integral seat/lockers, it is also fitted with a cratch, the board raised to offer additional headroom. A large glazed A-frame made from sapele hard wood supports

the forward end of the cratch its window offering a superb view forward over the bow. Access to the cabin at this end of the boat is via a set of half glazed sapele doors in the forward bulkhead.

Astern, the usual small traditional style deck is fitted with two perching stools and despite the obvious lack of space on the deck itself, a large cabin hatch allows room for an additional adult to stand in the hatchway.

CABIN AND FIT OUT MATERIALS

The *Cabinessence* interior consists of four sections, the layout of which is relatively standard, with a combined saloon, dinette and galley laid out in an open plan design at the forward end thereby enhancing the perception of space. The port side bathroom on the other hand, is a fully self-contained unit housing all the vessels bathing facilities. Aft the main bedroom is also open plan and includes storage facilities, the electrical control centre, the engine control, instrumentation and access point to the stern deck.

The cabin is lined with oak veneered ply, maple being used for trims and cappings, fixed furniture, internal bulkheads and doors are solid oak, even the cabin floor is $\frac{3}{4}$ in solid oak. The forward cabin access doors are sapele and the stern access doors are steel, lined internally with solid oak. The environmental insulation in the side and ceiling spaces is Sprayfoam.

SALOON/DINETTE

The combined saloon and dinette constitutes one of the largest areas of the *Cabinessence* internal accommodation. It is furnished with a Stovax Stockton 3 solid fuel stove with a shaped flu pipe and stands on a raised tiled hearth with a matching tile surround. In the starboard forward corner is a cupboard unit which also houses a radio/CD system for which speakers set into the saloon and bedroom ceilings. A flat screen television set - supplied by the owner - stands on the cabinet top completing the vessels entertainment centre.



Further furnishing in this area is provided by a fitted L-shaped settee on the aft starboard side. This versatile unit serves several different applications. In addition to providing saloon seating accommodation, when used in conjunction with the two pedestal tables, it serves as a comfortable dinette. Additional sleeping accommodation for visitors can often raise problems on a narrow boat, but not for the owners of *Cabinessence*. Any such problems are resolved by the table tops which also serve as base boards which can easily be slotted into the open section of the L-shaped settee base unit to form a platform for the re-arrangement of the cushions into a double mattress configuration. The two single pedestal tables, themselves multi-purpose appliances, can be used either singly, where only a small table is needed, or together as a single family dining table, using the floor mountings are in front of the settee.

THE GALLEY

The galley, a continuation of the forward cabin, is a well equipped full beam unit



with facilities and appliances on both sides. A stainless steel sink/drainer unit with a chromium H&C mixer tap is set into a worktop on the port side over a large double storage cupboard base. Next to the sink base unit and facing forward from the bulkhead is a stainless Stoves DIT500 oven, grill and four burner hob. A stainless microwave oven - supplied by the owner - stands in the corner of the worktop above which is a small eye-level shelf, the only eye-level fixture in this part of the cabin.

Over on the starboard side, a second worktop is mounted over the ranger 403 refrigerator compartment, the same unit also contains three beautifully crafted drawers.

TOP: Semi-trad stern and helm position.

ABOVE: Part of the boat's heating comes from this solid fuel stove.

LEFT: A pleasing blend of contrasting woods and fabrics give a feeling of warmth to the saloon.





TOP:
Looking aft
towards the galley
over the dinette.

ABOVE:
The galley
features a stainless
steel Stoves
DIT500 - stylish!

RIGHT:
The self-contained
bathroom with
heated towel rail
and vanity unit.

The windows in here and in the saloon are large drop-back hopper units which admit copious quantities of ambient light. There is also a set of timber lined doors on the starboard side of the galley which are ideal for additional ventilation and provisions loading.

THE BATHROOM

The *Cabinessence* bathroom is the only self-contained part of the cabin. In this case the term bathroom is something of misnomer, because like many modern canal craft, this vessel is only fitted with a shower facility. Having said that however, this shower is a reasonably spacious unit equipped with

square tray, chrome fittings and curtain rail. It is lined with a tile design Canadian manufactured laminate called Barkertile and Stephen Wedgwood believes his company is the only English firm using the material. "We believe it copes better with the natural expansion and contraction of the boat which can result in ceramic tiles eventually parting with movement," he explained. He also claims it is quick and easy to wipe down and keep clean.

A Vetus macerating pump out toilet fits neatly in beside the shower unit and two small shelves are provided behind the toilet for various toiletry and cleaning items. An open-fronted vanity unit in the forward corner holds a white circular vanity basin and a chrome single lever mixer tap. An oval vanity mirror is mounted on the bulkhead above the basin and to the side, is a chrome towel ring. A heated towel rail under the porthole is powered by the vessels Aldi central heating system. Hot water for domestic hygiene purposes is supplied by the engine or the Aldi boiler via a calorifier - located in the engine compartment. Although an immersion heater element was

not specified by the owner, the unit has a port for one, which can be installed as an optional extra.

BEDROOM/CONTROL ROOM

Unlike many modern narrow boats, where the bedroom dimensions usually come a poor second to those of other cabin areas, largely due to the frequency of usage - the saloon and galley obviously taking first place in the most frequently used accommodation stakes - the *Cabinessence* bedroom is in fact quite spacious. Here however, that spaciousness is created by the absence of an internal bulkhead between the bedroom and the vessels control room, it is designed and constructed as a single unit.

The forward bulkhead is formed by the aft bathroom bulkhead and the walk-through aisle runs along the starboard side uninterrupted to the foot of the cabin access steps. A double bed with a storage base is fitted on the port side below a pair of bulkhead-mounted eye-level cupboards with multi-direction light fittings on the underside. On the starboard side one of the central heating radiators is mounted below the porthole windows.

Further storage facilities are provided by a shelf unit at the foot of the bed. Currently these shelves are open as originally requested by the owner. However, following a change of mind on the part of the owner, the unit will shortly be fitted with a door. A narrow space to the aft of the shelf unit was specifically designed for the Aldi central heating boiler.

Although this part of the cabin is open plan, the central heating boiler location marks the end of the bedroom and the beginning of the control room which is immediately beneath the cabin access hatch cover. A double cupboard with a single shelf below next to the boiler, provides additional storage space and the vessels engine instrumentation panel and Morse control lever are installed a little aft of that, just inside the hatch.

Over on the starboard side, a well padded





LEFT:
The main bedroom with its double bed is situated at the stern.

CENTRE LEFT:
A spacious shower is lined with Barkertile.

CENTRE RIGHT:
Storage unit at the end of the double berth.

BELOW:
The boat's Vetus M309, 3-cylinder diesel engine.

seat is situated beside the cabin access steps, it is ideally situated to facilitate easy communication between the helmsman and those inside the cabin. Above the seat, in the upper aft corner, a small cupboard is where the vessel's electrical system is located, switches for the various circuits are on a panel outside the cupboard.

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

In keeping with the owners' specification a 12volt electrical system is provided, but a 240volt shoreline facility with a galvanic isolator - fitted as standard - does enable a hook up where appropriate moorings allow.

Three 120Amp domestic services batteries are installed together with one 90Amp engine start-up battery. Battery charging is achieved through a split charging relay system fed by the engine-driven alternator. The owner did not require an inverter, but inverters are available as optional extras.

THE ENGINE

Cabinessence is powered by a Vetus M309, 25hp 3-cylinder diesel engine which is located beneath the stern deck, where the location provides easy access for routine maintenance. A Technodrive TMC60 gearbox transmits power to the 14 x 10 RH propeller through a Vetus water lubricated dual lip seal stern gear. Stephen Wedgwood explained that the choice of stern gear does reflect interest in environmental issues, as this unit does not allow grease to enter the waterway.

PERFORMANCE

A tightly packed marina with a thin layer of ice covering the water posed no problems for *Cabinessence* which proved to be very agile, responding quickly to commands from the

Morse control and the tiller instantly as it was manoeuvred away from its mooring and reversed about 75 yards to open water where it began cruising effortlessly.

When I commented that the bow was riding rather high, Stephen Wedgwood explained that the 180 gallon (818.1 Litre) integral fresh water tank was virtually empty. A response I was happy to accept as the water weight, when full, would undoubtedly have lowered the bow.

The 25hp three cylinder diesel engine is quiet and proved it is powerful enough to deal with most inland waterway situations. Indeed, this vessel gave an excellent account of itself.

MY OPINION

I think *Cabinessence* is a well designed, fabricated and, I must add, beautifully hand painted shell. The interior lay out - which I understand was owner specified - is well thought out in terms of standard and multiple use applications with regard to fixtures, fittings and appliances. The MDF free solid timber interior is well crafted and finished with varnish to enhance the wood grain and create a warm welcoming atmosphere.

My only minor criticism is with regard to the position of the Morse engine control lever, which I believe is a little too low down. When reaching down to it, the helmsman's view forward over the cabin roof is somewhat restricted. A minor detail which could be rectified by raising the Morse lever to the same level as the instrument panel. I know the water tank was virtually empty at the time of the test run, but even with a full tank to lower the bow, the position of the lever is, I believe a little low down. Apart from that minor detail, this boat leaves nothing to be desired and I am sure the owners will enjoy many happy hours cruising the waterways.



CABINESSENCE MAIN SPECS

Cabinessence Details at a Glance

Hull Design & Spec.: Traditional style steel narrow boat.

Specification: 10:6:5:4.

Length: 45ft (13.71metres).

Beam: 6ft 10ins (2.05metres).

Engine: Vetus M309, 25hp 3 cylinder diesel engine.

Gearbox: Technodrive TMC60 transmitting through a greaseless dual lip seal stern gear.

Propeller: 14 x 10 RH.

Fitout Materials: Lining: Oak-faced ply panels. Fixtures, fittings and internal bulkheads:

Solid oak with maple trims and cappings. Forward external doors: Sapele. Environmental insulation: Spray foam.

Electrical System: 12volt supplied by three 120Amp batteries plus a 90Amp engine start battery all charged by alternator through a split charging relay. The 240volt circuit is served by a shoreline facility with a galvanic isolator installed as standard. There is no inverter fitted but inverters can be installed as optional extras.

Fresh Water: 180gallon (818.1litre) tank.

Diesel Tank Capacity: 45gallons (205litres).

Approximate Price: £54,000 including VAT without the cratch, that is an optional extra and comes in at around £950 extra.

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