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Reversing the trend

How a trad liveboard can work well with a neat reverse layout

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The Ribble run
A must-do trip, then
enjoy the Lancaster



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What is going
in your tank?



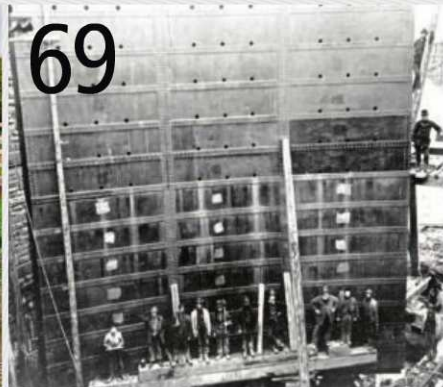
THIS MONTH



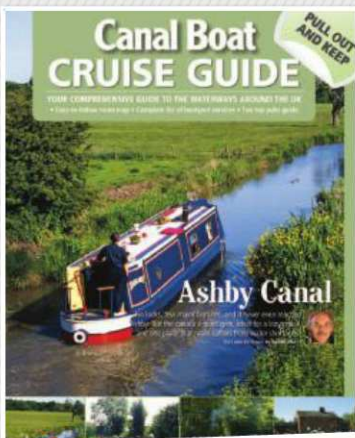
62
COVER STORY



53



69



75

FEATURES

32 Boat Test: Bucking the trend
A 60ft trad stern with a reverse layout gives more inside space for a liveaboard couple

COVER STORY

41 Fitting a wind generator
It's easy to do and helps your energy needs

45 Crick catch-up
Latest exhibitor news, plus we've got a page of fabulous show offers and deals just for you

53 A 'must-do' trip – the Ribble Link
Running against both the tide and the clock before cruising the peaceful Lancaster Canal

62 Boats for the Olympics
We look at the new fleet of boats specially commissioned to take 200,000 people to the Games

75 Cruise Guide: Ashby Canal
A quiet gem, ideal for a lazy cruise and a place that never suffers from water shortages

Location Guide

These are the places we're visiting in this issue





COVER STORY
32



82



121



103

69 History: Locks
How Leonardo da Vinci had a hand in the design of early locks, and how they developed later

121 Win a barbecue set worth £400
Get in the mood for summer!

RESTORATION

82 Hereford & Gloucestershire Canal
Over Basin was re-created in 2000, not a lot seemed to happen after that... until earlier this year

REGULARS

03 Editorial
Licence evaders need to have a good think

06 News
C&RT moves forward; not enough rain; weed watch; Scotland goes it alone; boat licence evasion

19 Letters
Volunteer for the C&RT; election ideas; missing words; an Aussie goes cruising in the UK

22 Me & my boats
If you want a longer boat – have it stretched!

27 Canal columns
Steve warns that careless talk costs canals, while Bones decides that single-handing is easy

90 Boaters' break
Growing vegetables on a boat; brainteasers

93 Waterside Wildlife
Swifts are a symbol of high summer

154 Twenty Questions
Ann Farrell, who has just been voted on to the C&RT Council, answers our questions

BACK CABIN

96 Contaminated fuel
Do you know what's in your tank?

103 Ask The Experts
Adapting to LEDs; which genny to get; PRM loses its drive; how to get diamonds

111 Food – Lancashire potato pie
Vicky's version of a traditional supper

112 Six trad sterns
Boats with some very classic looks

119 Diary and stoppages
Don't miss all the fun festivals coming up

THIS MONTH'S COVER **Canal Boat**
Out and about at Hatton Locks on the Grand Union Canal in Warwickshire
Picture by Martin Ludgate

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ADDRESS: Canal Boat Magazine, Archant Specialist, 3 The Courtyard, Denmark Street, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2AZ



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BRAIDBAR
BOATS
NO.
133

ELEVENTY
LORD VE



Bucking the trend



You don't have to follow received wisdom to get the boat you want, all it takes is a bit of imagination and the desire to get things right

WORDS ADAM PORTER PICTURES ANDY R ANNABLE

When it comes to planning a narrowboat, it's all too easy to get bogged down by fixed ideas. For example, the received wisdom is that a reverse layout is well suited to cruiser or semi-trad sterns, so you step from the rear deck into the galley or saloon; on the other hand, boats with a trad stern nearly always have a traditional layout.

But here's a boat that bucks the trend,

with the combination of a trad stern and a reverse layout.

"We're going to be living on board", explains Chris Herriott, who commissioned *Eleventh Heaven* with his wife, Lesley. "So inside space was important – and that meant a trad stern was essential. But we didn't want to have to troop through the bedroom with wet coats and muddy boots, so we thought a reverse layout also made more sense." ▶



We like the ducks....



◀ EXTERIOR

Eleventh Heaven's reverse layout is immediately obvious from the outside: there are portholes for the forward bedroom and shower room, and windows towards the rear for the saloon, dinette and galley.

The colour scheme is quite striking, a combination of blue panels with a cream surround, plus red coachlines and handrails. The roof is also cream, to help keep the boat cool in summer. The Herriotts have a particular liking for ducks, and sign-writer Andy Russell has excelled himself with a collection of ducks and ducklings (11 each side, if you're counting) which can't fail to raise a smile.

This 60-footer is on a Tyler Wilson shell, and has the elegant lines you'd expect from such an experienced builder. There's a

boatman's beam across the roof and the handrails have attractive scrolls at the ends, and a finger grip on the inside.

At the stern, there's an extra-large sliding hatch, so there's plenty of room for people to stand when underway and access to the boat is easy. There are also a couple of taff seats which, to my mind, spoil the lines but they can be removed.

At the bow, a gas locker in the nose also contains the gas test point as part of the regulator so it's easily accessible. The well deck has plenty of seating thanks to storage lockers on three sides; one also provides access to the bow thruster hidden under a false floor. A stainless steel water tank of almost 700 litres is underneath. The cratch cover can be rolled up in sections and has windows to let in the light even when closed.

All the trim is chrome, giving a bright modern look -- and cutting down on cleaning.

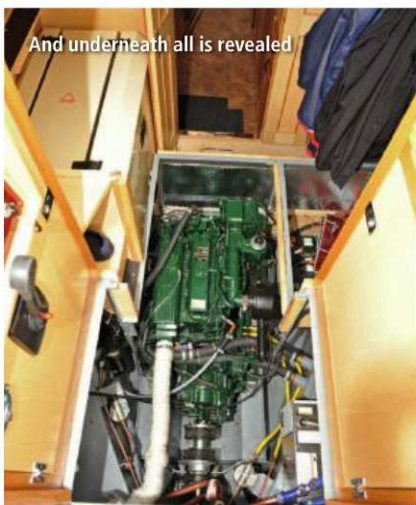
LAYOUT AND FIT-OUT

This is a reverse layout boat, so at the stern there's the engine room which also contains a large generator and provides somewhere to hang wet coats and remove muddy boots. Next comes a well-appointed galley, followed by a dinette. The saloon is in the centre of the boat. Further forward there's a through shower room, with the cabin at the bow.

The fit-out uses a combination of oak and ash. Below the gunwales there's oak-faced ply with solid ash tongue and groove above, which provides the interior with some pleasing texture. The furniture and doors are made from solid oak, with lovely mouldings and panels. As you'd expect,



Good steps so getting in is easy



And underneath all is revealed



Sink and drainer recessed into the worktop

everything is well made and beautifully finished; there's a reason why Braidbar is known for some of the best built boats on the cut, and that is on show right here.

ENGINE ROOM

The main entry point to this boat is at the stern, so we'll start our tour in the engine room -- even though, at first glance, there's not much to see. This is a modern trad, so the engine is under the floor, which in this case is made from a hardwearing, non-slip board. The floor forms steps down into the boat, so going inside doesn't require you to fold yourself in half. The large hatch also means there's plenty of room for the crew to stand to keep the steerer company.

There are the usual electrical cupboards, together with a VHF radio. On one side,

there's a shallow box with a lifting lid for storing mooring pins and such like; on the other, there's a large generator, fully cocooned and boxed in. This piece of kit was one of Chris Herriott's essentials, but it wasn't easy to fit into the space. The batteries are under the lowest part of the floor.

The clever part of the engine room happens when you need to access the batteries, the engine or the generator. All the boxing dismantles easily, and none of the sections are too big to handle. What's more, you can remove as much or as little as you need and, if necessary, the framework will come out too. The whole thing was a design challenge, and Braidbar's Peter Mason has come up with an excellent, workable solution to the problem.

GALLEY

A pair of slim doors lead into the galley. On one side, there's a run of units (one of which contains a washer-dryer) topped with a smart granite worktop. There's a stainless steel sink with a drainer recessed into the granite. The arched tap provides filtered water as well as hot and cold. At the end of the run, there's a full-size slot-in Cannon cooker in a stainless steel finish. There's also a microwave mounted high up.

On the opposite side, there's a trademark Braidbar dresser. But this one is a bit different. The lower half contains an integrated 240v fridge and freezer. Extra ventilation has been added to keep them cool. The top half of the dresser is more traditional, with a small shelf and a range of cupboards. But there's a modern twist: LED down-lighters ▶

◀ which can be switched to give either white or blue light.

Beyond the dresser is a side hatch with nicely painted panels and a wine rack and a tin cupboard below. There's plenty of light thanks to a Houdini hatch, and the floor is hard wearing Amtico.

DINETTE

A bulkhead with a C-shaped cut-out divides the galley from the dinette – another Braidbar trademark. The raised dinette itself has an extra-wide table to give more space for eating; it has an attractive marquetry line, done in-house. Converting the area into a bed is straightforward and the table drops down easily.

There's plenty of storage in the bench seats. Lift-out panels at the ends are designed to look like drawers and, at the far side, the slats under the cushions lift for longer term storage. Lesley was also keen to have somewhere to display some ornaments from home, so there's a high-level shelf which helps divide the dinette from the saloon.

SALOON

Seating here is provided by a built-in bench sofa. Chris Herriott acknowledges that it wouldn't be everyone's choice. "I know that a couple of armchairs would probably be more comfortable," he says. "But for us, storage was vital, and the base of this sofa gives us a huge amount of space." To increase comfort, the back cushions are made from softer foam than usual which is possible because this seat is not intended to convert into a bed. In addition, there's a small footstool which can be positioned to make the seat into an L-shape.

Opposite, there's a run of shelves (which are all adjustable) and a central cupboard that contains Chris's audio equipment and has a TV on top.

The Herriott's didn't want to have to carry logs or bags of coal around, so the stove is a diesel Lockgate Refleks 2000. It's one that always looks good and certainly draws the eye. The hearth is attractively tiled; Lesley chose all the fabrics and colours throughout the boat. Stylish touches include Tiffany wall lights, which take LED bulbs. Alongside the stove a full height display unit has a cupboard below and shelves above.

SHOWER ROOM

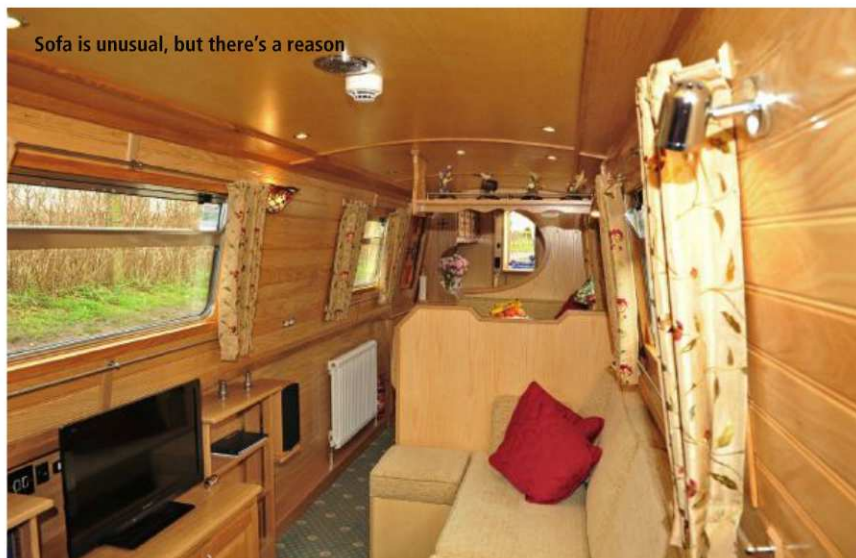
The quadrant shower, which is lined with Mermaid laminated boarding, is plenty big



Dinette table is extra-wide



Stove is neat and attractive



Sofa is unusual, but there's a reason

enough at 900x760 mm. But it still leaves room for a couple of cupboards alongside. The lower one contains the calorifier and a finrad, turning the upper one into an airing cupboard. Both have lift-off panels rather than doors.

A basin, large enough to be practical, is set across the opposite corner on top of a cupboard, and there's another cupboard above which has a 240v shaver socket. There are 'his 'n' hers' towel rails.

The loo is a macerating unit and the holding tank is on the centre line under the bed in the adjacent cabin; the pipe between the two is a mere six inches long, something that will gladden the heart of anyone who's had to try to clear blockages of loo pipes which can sometimes run for yards, twisting and turning on the way.

CABIN

The Herriott's love of storage space is evident in the cabin – there's plenty of it. The most significant is a large wardrobe with a combination of cupboards and drawers, all with nicely-made doors. There's

also a corner cupboard and high level units above the side and head of the bed. In addition, the steps up to the front deck have lift-off treads, with more space inside. The steps also move aside, and a panel provides access to the water tank.

Half the space under the bed is given over to the loo tank, but there's long term storage under the rest, reached by lifting out panels of slats. The bed itself extends easily to 5ft, with a pull-out section.

There's plenty of light in the room thanks to a Houdini hatch. The lights here (and in much of the rest of the boat) are double switched, so they can be turned on from either end of the room.

TECHNICAL

This boat is powered by a Beta 43, teamed with a PRM150 gearbox. The bow thruster is an 8hp, 6kW 12-volt Lewmar, with its own batteries at the bow.

Electrical power is plentiful. There's an 800Ah bank of batteries, made up of six two-volt deep cycle cells. They are vented to the outside and have a semi-automatic filling

system to make topping up easy: a manually pressurised pump is connected to a network of pipes, which cleverly gives each cell only as much water as it needs.

The 240v supply comes from a 3kW Victron Quattro inverter/charger which can be connected to two 240v sources and will automatically switch to the active one. This could be a shoreline, or in the case of this boat, a generator.

Chris Herriott has a background in electronics, having spent his working life masterminding large computer rooms. "I did a complete power audit of what we're likely to be using," he says, "and I wasn't sure that even the large battery bank would be enough." So he specified a generator, in this case a BetaGen 7. It is, in effect, like having a whole additional engine on board. It's quiet, cocooned in an acoustic housing and fitted with a hospital silencer.

To guard against galvanic corrosion, there's a Victron isolation transformer. Heating (in addition to the Refleks stove) comes from a Hurricane diesel-fired boiler, and there's also a heat exchanger on the



Shower room is neatly fitted



Storage? How much more could you want?



Trad-sterned boat engines can be hard to get at, but this 'boxing-in' makes it easy



◀ engine which means free heat to the radiators while the engine is running.

There are two alarm systems. One has sensors for smoke, heat, and intruders. The other monitors the level of carbon monoxide and LP Gas, with discreet sensors set into the walls.

It's clearly wise to take precautions against such dangers as CO and LPG, and this system is far less obvious than the monitors you can buy from any DIY shop, and because it's linked to the boat's electrics,

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS



Braidbar 60ft

£150,000

THE OWNERS

CHRIS AND LESLEY Herriott have many hire boat holidays behind them and, with retirement approaching, decided to sell up, have a boat built, and live aboard. Chris had managed the building of large computer systems, while Lesley was in special needs education, both stressful jobs. "I used to think nothing of getting in the car, driving hundreds of miles to Glasgow for a two-hour meeting, and then driving back again," says Chris. "Now I'm just looking forward to a much slower pace of life".

And that's partly where the name of the boat came from. Eleven has always been an important



number to them (both their birthdays are on the 11th) "and it's just going to be heaven living on board", says Chris.

it will always be on. The downside, of course, is that this is a more expensive way of doing it.

ON THE WATER

A Tyler Wilson shell and a Beta 43 engine provide few surprises out on the cut. The boat handles extremely well, responds to the tiller, and turns with ease. Chris, who's steered a few narrowboats in his time, says he's surprised by how easy this boat is to steer – a tribute to the underwater shape of the shell.

The engine is quiet, thanks to sound insulation on the underside of the engine boards, and a hospital silencer.

There's just one criticism, and that's that the Morse control is set rather low down. However, in every other respect, steering this boat is an absolute pleasure.

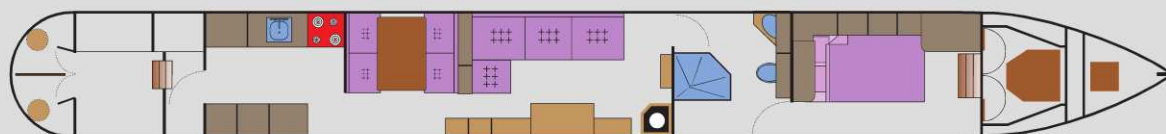
CONCLUSION

This is a quality boat from a quality builder. Inside and out, the boat is elegant, calm, and grown up. It's the sort of fit-out that's happy to let you gradually appreciate how well it's put together; it doesn't need to shout about how good it is.

You might assume that a boat from a builder like Braidbar is bound to be expensive, but it's not necessarily so. A standard boat (in as much as there is such a thing) starts at just a touch over £100,000; this one comes in at £150,000, largely to the additional equipment specified by the owners. For example, the generator bumps up the price significantly on its own.

And what this boat proves, too, is that trad sterns and reverse layouts can go together. All you need is an ability and desire to question received wisdom.

CB



LENGTH:	60ft	STYLE:	Trad	BATTERIES:	Pb Batteries	BRAIDBAR BOATS
BEAM:	6ft 10in	FIT-OUT:	Ash and oak		0843 289 3682	Braidbar Boats
SHELL:	Tyler Wilson	ENGINE:	Beta Marine 43		pbbatteries.com	Lord Vernon's Wharf, Lyme Road
	01142 781234		01452 723492	GENERATOR:	BetaGen 7	Higher Poynton, Cheshire
	wilsontylerboatbuilders.com		betamarine.co.uk		01452 723492	SK12 1TH
CO/LPG ALARM:	Nereus Alarms	ELECTRICS:	Victron		betamarine.co.uk	01625 873471
	nereusalarms.co.uk		victronenergy.com			braidbarboats.co.uk

Verdict: 'A well thought through liveaboard that shows you can defy the norm'