



What happens when an experienced live-aboard boater specifies a new narrowboat?

**GRAHAM BOOTH**

finds out

# floating home

**The decision to sell your house and move on to a boat is not one to be taken lightly. Nevertheless, with the children off their hands and the offer of early retirement, many couples happily embark on this total change of lifestyle, even though they may never have owned a boat before.**

Ivor and Joan Caplan fit into this pattern quite well but with one vital difference – their present home is not their first but their seventh boat.

The Caplans began their life afloat about nine years ago on their previous boat, *Bilbo Baggins*. It was originally designed as a holiday boat but was extended from 45ft to 60ft and refitted by Ivor when the couple decided to move on board. *Bilbo Baggins* suited them very well – so well that their new 57ft boat, called *Brandywine*, is closely modelled on it.

Before he retired, Ivor was a senior architect with Sandwell Borough Council; so he has not only the practical experience to know what a residential boat should contain, he also has the ability to turn his thoughts into a workable design and then convey this to the builder. The first layout Ivor produced looked so much like the previous boat that they decided to mirror the plan to make it seem more 'new'.

With their thoughts committed to paper, the Caplans started to look for a builder. They did the rounds at the Crick Boat Show and found that MGM Boats – run by Mark Fenton and Martin Parsons – gave them an attentive and sympathetic hearing. After the show, they visited

the yard, discussed the project in greater detail and placed their order.

As the construction date approached, Ivor and Joan moved *Bilbo Baggins* to MGM's Thurmaston base so that they could monitor progress and answer any queries that occurred. Martin recalls that they would discuss a point in the afternoon and Ivor would have a detailed sketch ready for them by the following morning.

above  
Plain, pale finishes  
make the saloon seem  
more spacious.

*Brandywine.*

