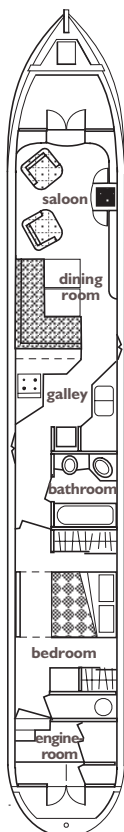
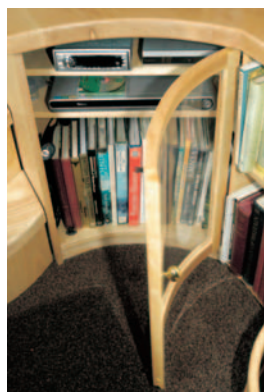




Left to right  
Curved door to the  
saloon bookcase.

Neatly detailed  
radiator covers.

Two quadrant shaped  
log boxes form an  
attractive hearth  
feature.



## The shell

Since Mark and Martin's skills lie in woodworking and engineering rather than steel fabrication, their shells are bought in from a small company run by Ken Martin. Ken's output of four shells a year goes solely to MGM Boats so that, although the whole boat is not built under one roof, customers still get a unique product.

The shells are described as being 'modern interpretations of original Josher lines' – a commonly stated aim but one which only occasionally produces a harmonious result. In this case, the bow manages to capture much of the elegance of a Josher without resorting to crude caricature. Shorn of false rivets and imitation wooden cants, it relies on its overall shape and proportions which are very pleasing to the eye.

Above the gently curved deck beam, there is a cratch board that is unashamedly modern. The traditional vertical post is omitted completely and the whole central area is glazed in two halves with a horizontal division. This incorporates hinges which allow you to fold the glazing in two and remove it to get to the gas locker or gain some extra ventilation. Under the front deck is a Vetus 55 bow thruster.

In addition to the usual plank, pole and cabin hook, the roof is home to two 32W solar panels that help to charge the batteries. Arranged end to end, these blend in with the other deck gear making them barely noticeable. The rear deck is traditional in layout and semi-circular in plan to continue the Josher theme.

However, the grade used here is moisture resistant which should overcome this. My other concern – that the additional top weight might raise the centre of gravity, making the boat prone to rolling – was not borne out on our trial run.

## Finishes

It is a well accepted rule that dark, patterned surfaces seem to leap out at you whereas plain, pale surfaces recede away from you. Therefore, if you want to make the interior of a narrowboat look more spacious than it really is, pick a light colour and apply it to everything in sight.

*Brandywine* follows this tenet with ash linings and furniture, cream leather chairs and plain, beige curtains. To avoid all these similar colours making the interior look too bland, it is 'anchored down' by a dark brown carpet. The ash-veneered plywood cabin sides are divided into panels by strips of similar wood edged with solid ash mouldings to give a panelled appearance.

## Saloon

Where a less confident woodworker might restrict himself to straight lines, the practised professional is not afraid to tackle some curves. Having bowed the front of the entrance steps and the drawer under the solid fuel stove, MGM excelled themselves by producing a fully glazed cupboard door which curves on plan. Working to Ivor's design, they also produced two quadrant shaped log boxes which, when placed either side of the solid fuel stove, form an attractive, curved hearth feature. The rest of the cabinet work is nicely executed in a style that is neither too plain nor too fussy.

A Villager solid fuel stove provides a focal point for the saloon. Ivor and Joan have discovered that a well insulated boat that is continuously occupied retains warmth so it needs less heating than one that is used intermittently. They therefore dispensed with a back boiler and gravity fed radiator system and use a Ecofan to waft the heat →

below left to right  
Elegant Josher  
inspired bow and  
modern cratch board.

The semi-circular  
rear deck.

Solar panels blend in  
with the deck gear.

## Insulation and linings

When the shells are delivered to Thurmaston, they are spray-foamed for insulation and, if the customer agrees, then lined completely in moisture resistant MDF. This forms what is, effectively, a continuous batten that allows linings and furniture to be fixed in place without having to worry if there is anything behind it to receive the pin or screw.

MDF is a stable, easily worked material but it is often avoided by boat fitters as it expands if exposed to moisture.

