



to this rule. Its engine starts easily and runs quietly and smoothly. I found that the length and positioning of the tiller bar encouraged safe steering from just inside the rear doors in the traditional manner. The wide below Thurmaston Lock gave me the ideal opportunity for some manoeuvrability trials and I managed a 360° spin very easily, without the aid of the bow-thruster.

On its maiden voyage to winter moorings in Birmingham, the boat performed well and Ivor and Joan are very pleased with their new home.

## Conclusion

*Brandywine* is the product of an increasingly rare combination – an experienced client and an accommodating builder. After many years of boating, Ivor and Joan knew exactly what they wanted and MGM Boats was happy to provide it. The result is a quality boat that has quickly acquired a peaceful, homely atmosphere and should provide an ideal backdrop for living in the years to come.

Bespoke boats with a similar specification but without the bow thruster cost around £1,400 a foot, pricing a 60ft boat like *Brandywine* at £84,000. 



hull side – with storage for books built in. It takes only a few minutes to re-arrange the bedding each evening to make a comfortable bed.

Either side of the bed there are bedside cupboards and large wardrobes with sliding doors. These have mirrored fronts which is another effective technique for giving the illusion of extra space. But one of the wardrobes has a further trick up its sleeve: it is designed so that part of

it can be transformed into a computer workstation. By sliding the door sideways and dropping a section of the side panel onto two supports on the hull side, a desk, a printer shelf and some useful file storage appear as if by magic. Ivor produced a three-dimensional sketch of this complicated detail at a fairly early stage in the design process so it had to be built the other way round.

## Engine room

Behind the wardrobe is a cupboard containing the calorifier, a space for outside coats and – in anticipation of the end of the red diesel derogation – a separate diesel tank for the Mikuni boiler.

Finally, there is a small engine room housing the Barrus 45 engine, 2.5kW Victron Multi inverter/charger and a 550Ahr battery bank. These are all neatly concealed beneath the steps to the rear deck. The joinery in the engine room is to the same high standard as the rest of the boat so that you don't feel you are using the tradesman's entrance.



Above

**The end of the wardrobe quickly becomes...**

**...an office-cum-study.**

Left

**Ash pelmet board over the porthole.**

## MGM Boats

MGM Boats takes its name from the initials of its three founder members: Mark Fenton, George Bodrill and Martin Parsons. Mark started his career working for boatbuilder Malcolm Braine, and then moved into shop fitting where he met Martin. While they were working on pub refurbishments, the pair continued to fit out one narrowboat a year to keep their hand in. In 2002, they decided to concentrate on boatbuilding and set up MGM Boats with George (sadly, now the late George) as financial controller.

Their first workshop was in Burton-on-Trent but they have recently moved to Mill Lane Boatyard at Thurmaston on the River Soar, which was previously occupied by Nimbus Narrowboats. The new base has a large brick-built workshop, a covered wet dock, a slipway and moorings. Working with one joiner and a general assistant, Martin and Mark currently fit out four bespoke narrowboats a year. They also provide the normal boatyard services to passing boaters and have plans to operate a day boat.

### MGM BOATS

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Mark Fenton and Martin Parsons at their new base.

MGM's brick built workshop.



## On the move

The design and installation of a modern diesel engine has been refined to such an extent in recent years that it is rare to find a poor example – and *Brandywine* is no exception