

NEW BOAT REVIEW

A family wide-beam

Saint George is a 65ft-by-10ft boat built to provide a permanent home for a family of four.

Mark Langley pays it a visit at Diglis Basin

Fast facts

LENGTH 65ft
BEAM 10ft
ENGINE Beta 90T
BERTHS 4+4
PRICE £181,000 when built
Woodworks Boat Fitting
 01623 860553, boat-fitting.co.uk

When Anita and Simon Davies decided they wanted a slower pace of life, they gravitated to the idea of living afloat, having enjoyed boating holidays in the past. However, they needed to have three separate bedrooms to allow them to accommodate their two adult children full-time, as well as plenty of space for a family and guests to live comfortably year-round. This led them towards a wide-beam but one that could also comfortably cruise the rivers and canals.

The Davies chose Andrew Hooke of Woodworks Boat Fitting to help finalise the design, with the construction of the shell going to XR&D, which is known for producing a wide variety of hulls. Initially, the plans called for a 65ft-by-12ft 6in craft but production schedules limited the width to 10ft, which, in

Saint George stands out with its very glossy single colour paint scheme.



The raised bow plate has fairleads for line handling.



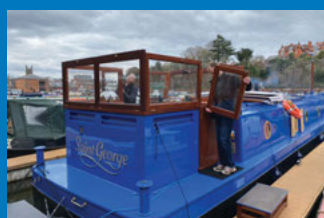
COLLAPSIBLE WHEELHOUSE



1 Removing the roof in three sections.



2 The securing top bars are taken off.



3 The top section of the door lifts off, and the windows drop down.



4 The wheelhouse is lowered or raised in less than five minutes.



Recessed handrails and stern light are superb bits of thoughtful engineering.

hindsight, has been a blessing – the extra space has not been missed and the completed boat is more manoeuvrable.

Shell & exterior

Saint George has been built to provide as much living accommodation as possible, while being able to cruise without major issues. Many 'fat narrowboats' are a challenge to navigate and have poor underwater profiles but *Saint George* is quite different. The hull has a semi-chine to it, with a deeper bilge towards the centre, which allows a good level of internal headroom without needing a high superstructure.

Up in the bow there are two large lockers set into the deck, which give a huge amount of general storage, and dedicated space for the anchor, chain and rode. Substantial mooring bollards are provided at both ends of the boat, with fairlead cut-outs in the raised bow plate for line handling. Along the cabin side are double-glazed portholes with thermal breaks – chosen for privacy but also to limit the glazed space within the boat to help reduce heating demands.

On the roof are brass roof vents, plus a pole-and-plank holder. The roof is finished in standard gloss as it is unlikely it will often be walked on.

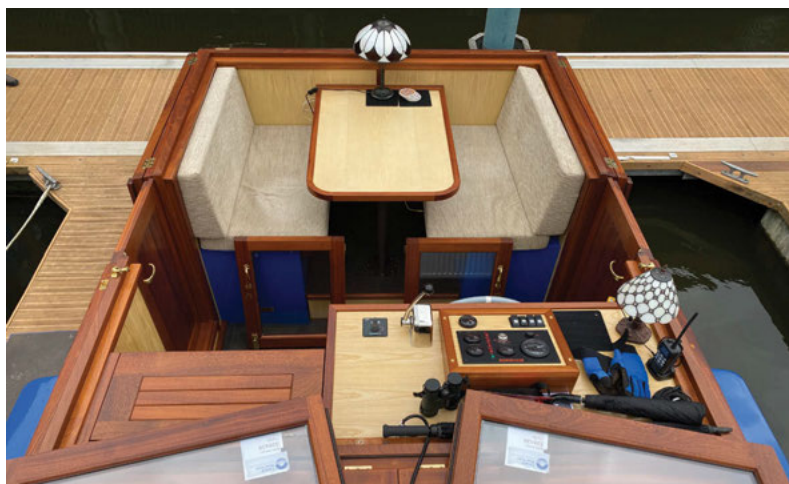
The 8in-wide gunwales provide an excellent route around the boat, with raised handrails being easy to reach and placed considerably inboard from the cabin roof edge. There is a tall folding mast, which has proper steaming and anchor lights, as well as providing a space for a Starlink internet aerial. The owners have gone for a simple hand-painted finish, which works well on the boat, set off by excellent signwriting.

Around the back of the boat is a collapsible wheelhouse, with a solid steel lower part and a double-glazed sapele wood upper section, finished with Sikkens, which will give many years of protection. Handrails are recessed around all three sides of the wheelhouse, which allow for easy movement on the outside and provide an additional place for side fenders to be attached. The stern light is also within a recess to avoid lines catching on it. There is also a proper reboarding point, with handhold, to allow someone to get out of the water on the stern. Set into the port gunwale is a gas locker, which takes two 13kg propane cylinders and has an Alde bubble tester fitted so the owner can regularly check the system for leaks.

Wheelhouse

Many collapsible wheelhouses take a long time to drop, or require complex engineering to achieve. Andrew has built this wheelhouse so that two people can drop it in under five minutes, without having to lift heavy components. The roof splits into three sections, with an aluminium gutter directing any water overboard. The top sections of the doors lift off, while the other surrounds fold down in a logical sequence, with space on the cabin roof to store the removeable sections. The wheelhouse can be reassembled just as quickly, with thumbscrews and bolts ensuring security and integrity once completed.

The wheelhouse is 6ft 6in by 8ft 6in and has a raised Pullman dinette, which easily seats four and can drop to make a



WHEELHOUSE

Left: There is plenty of space around the helm position.

Below left: The dinette in the heated, double-glazed wheelhouse can make an additional double-bed, bringing total berths to eight, if required.

Below: The wheelhouse is very well constructed in sapele, with great all-round visibility.





The joinery is very light with exposed ply end grain, which works very well in an Ikea-style galley but without any MDF at all.

GALLEY

Above: A raised cupboard over the galley peninsular houses a large microwave and more wine bottles.

Right: The deep Belfast sink in the galley with lots of cupboard storage. The window shutters and porthole liners are all made in-house.

Far right: An integrated 24V fridge with separate 24V freezer below.

Below: When raised, the breakfast bar gives an additional dining area and is very convenient.



"WOODWORKS HAS PRODUCED A WIDE RANGE OF DIFFERENT BOATS TO A VERY HIGH STANDARD"

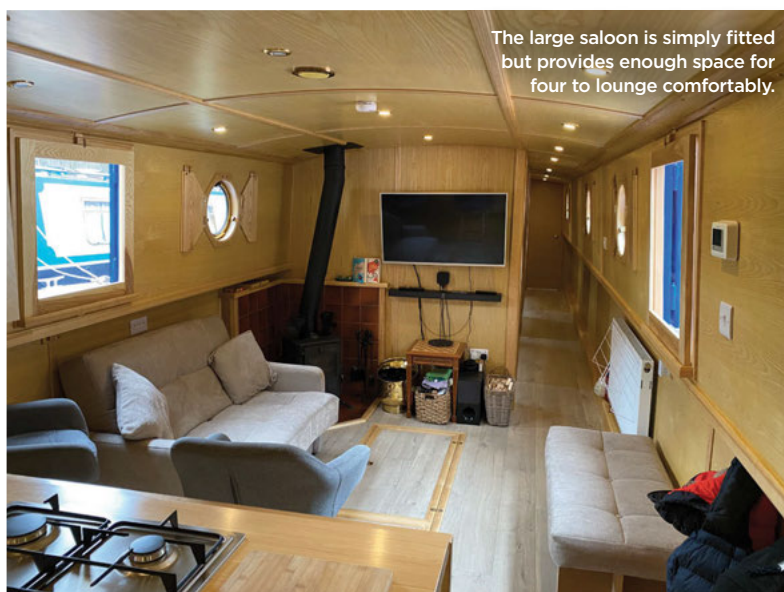
double bed – though temporary curtains might be needed for a touch of privacy. More storage is under the dinette, while the comfortable seating should be able to cope with the odd splash of rain if the wheelhouse is down when cruising more restricted canals. When the wheelhouse is lowered, the steel sides keep the wind away, while for cold weather use there is a decent-sized radiator on the forward bulkhead, under the steering wheel. The cockpit can become a year-round, draught-free extension to the cabin, and is much more practical than a canvas pram hood canopy.

Galley

Steps to starboard head down into the cabin, with a small wooden hatch

above. To starboard of the steps is a large electrics cupboard, through which the low-level ventilation is ducted to avoid draughts and keep the combi charger cool. The interior fit-out is quite traditional, with solid ash and birch plywood, finished with a matt polyurethane varnish. The cabin has a very light feel, aided by the portholes and a set of side doors with a crystal-clear acrylic insert. The flooring is a hard-wearing laminate, with large underfloor lockers throughout to make use of the deep ventilated bilge space, and to provide the opportunity to move trimming ballast, if required.

The galley is a large U-shape to port, with a full-height cupboard containing a 24V fridge and 24V freezer behind the



The large saloon is simply fitted but provides enough space for four to lounge comfortably.



The long corridor to the master cabin could have additional storage fitted under the deep gunwale, but so far it is left free.

SALOON

Top: Multiple hatches in the laminate flooring allow access to the bilge, for both inspection and additional storage in the deep bilge.

Above: The Morso stove in a well-insulated hearth heats the whole boat. The central heating is only needed for an hour or two a day, even in the chilliest weather.

SINGLE BEDROOMS

Right: Both single cabins feel bright and spacious, as well as private, with a decent wardrobe, chest of drawers and coat hooks – and insulated bulkheads mean noise is limited.

wooden doors. The deep Belfast sink works well with the solid worktop, which has the drainer grooved into it. Having a wooden work surface means that in the future it can be refinished easily, compared to other materials. There is plenty of storage, all made in house, with brass handles to match the traditional feel of the interior. The galley itself has deliberately exposed ply end grain, heavily finished to make attractive patterns – very much emulating a kitchen design from a certain Swedish furniture company.

There is a large peninsular worktop, which has a four-burner gas hob with plenty of space around it for pan handles. Underneath is a combined oven/grill, while a very attractive overhead cabinet, housing more wine storage and a large microwave, projects from the cabin side with a single supporting pillar. On the starboard side there is a low unit designed to house the boat's printer, plus space for a decently large bin and row of under-gunwale coat hooks – more practical than squashing them into a cupboard.

Saloon

On the other side of the peninsular there is a large, lift-up flap that creates both a really useable breakfast bar and an extension to the work surface. The hinges are very sturdy and give good support, while a pair of high chairs make it comfortable

for dining, without the issues of a free-standing table. There is also access to the galley cupboards from the saloon side, which helps with reaching items in the corner unit.

The saloon has two large floor lockers and a large sofa-bed that makes another double, plus a large, practical stool against the other side. On the forward bulkhead is a large TV plus associated sound bar. There is a Morso stove with a double flue in a large insulated hearth – the owners have added a couple of stove fans to move the air around.

Bedroom one

From the saloon forward, there is a corridor running along the starboard side. The bulkheads into the various spaces have insulated cavities, which add to the level of sound insulation of the boat – vital when you have a family living aboard. All the doors recess into the bulkheads, where appropriate, which leaves everything flush and smooth.

A benefit of a wide-beam is the ability for decent-sized private cabins. A large, raised single-berth is opposite a wardrobe and desk unit. Above the bed are five cupboards,





Cabin two is identical to cabin one, with a single bed, open storage underneath and lots of cupboard space.



ELECTRICS

Right: The main electrics cupboard is well engineered and provides one of the draught-free ventilation routes into the cabin.

BATHROOM

Left: The family bathroom has a big shower and a lot of floor space for drying off.
Below: The bathroom also contains a full-sized washer and separate dryer, plus more storage.

MASTER BEDROOM

Right: A huge amount of storage under the lifting mattress in the master cabin.
Right centre: The small en suite toilet in the master cabin has a bench cassette loo and washbasin, plus a large wardrobe towards the hull side.



plus open space underneath. Though the cabin packs in a lot of storage, it does not feel claustrophobic, with good lighting both from the large porthole (with magnetic catches holding the wooden shutters open or closed) and well-placed LED lighting. There are plenty of 230V sockets and a radiator against the hull side.

Bathroom

The family bathroom has a large shower with a washbasin over a cupboard next to it. The owners have gone for a Compoost loo, which has a separate bottle for liquid waste to dispose of urine ashore. Above the washbasin and loo is a mirrored double cupboard, with a shaver socket inside and additional lighting above. An extractor fan and heated towel rail keep it snug.

Opposite the loo is a worktop, which has a full-sized washer and separate tumble-dryer below. There is another set of cupboards above, plus space for laundry baskets and cleaning materials.

Bedroom two

The second bedroom is identical to the first, providing lots of useful storage. The coat hooks behind the door are practical,

as are the three drawers in the desk unit. The open-fronted bed is designed to take large plastic storage boxes, with eight under each single. Overall, within the boat is space for 32 of these big boxes to be stored. Having moved from a large house, the owners found they had surplus stowage space aboard!

Master bedroom

The forward cabin has a massive peninsular berth against the forward bulkhead. A set of doors above the bed make for an emergency exit but the solid steel doors also have a glazed inner set, so that additional natural lighting can flood in. Nevertheless, the bow is secure should the boat ever be taken on rougher waters, like the Severn Estuary.

The king-sized bed sits on a sprung metal frame, which lifts up with the assistance of gas struts, making access very easy to the void underneath (which is packed with more plastic boxes). The heavily built wooden bed base is, like all the spaces on the boat, well ventilated to allow air circulation and to prevent dampness and mildew occurring – essential on a year-round residential boat but often neglected. Ventilation from the forward bulkhead is ducted



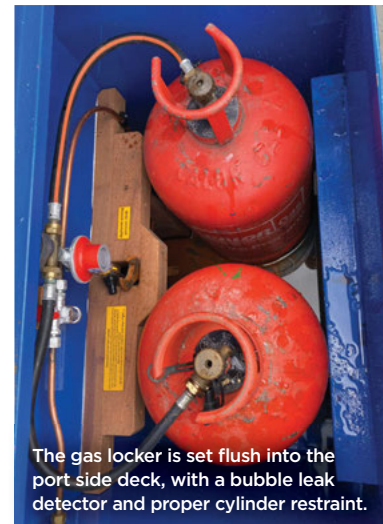
Above: The Compoost loo has a separate liquid waste unit, and a spare bottle is next to the toilet.

down to floor level, to encourage air movement without draughts. The cabin bilge is deep enough to contain the stainless steel water tank under the floor, with a hatch to port to enable the tank fittings to be easily inspected.

Either side of the bed are sturdy chests of drawers, with plenty of space to use as bedside tables. Under the starboard gunwale is a large radiator – like the rest of the boat, a pragmatic basic panel radiator. The idea is that the boat is solid and well built, and any extras or enhancements can be added in the future, should they be needed.



The stainless steel water tank in the deep bilge, with access to the level sensor and all fittings



The gas locker is set flush into the port side deck, with a bubble leak detector and proper cylinder restraint.



SERVICES

Top: The large, accessible diesel tank, plus hydraulic steering gear and weedhatch. The cooling tank is in the chined swim plate.

Above: Very neat electric cabling and master fuses, and even the battery box is beautifully made.



Above: The Beta 90T engine is powerful and economical. A large 120-litre calorifier and pressure jet boiler fit easily into the spacious engine room.

Under the port gunwale is a set of shelves, plus a handy lift-up desk. Both owners work from home (the boat) and so need several places to have meetings without disturbing others. Against the aft bulkhead is a large double wardrobe, with a good mix of shelves and hanging spaces, plus the water and shower pumps set in a tray in the base. Between the wardrobe and the door is an en suite toilet, complete with a small overhead cupboard and washbasin. Here, they have chosen a Thetford bench cassette loo, which adds redundancy in case there is an issue with the other toilet.

Engine and services

A Beta 90T is in the engine room under the wheelhouse. The room is fully insulated and lined, apart from the baseplate. The 90T engine is a turbocharged version – while many people might shy away from this, it is proven in displacement seagoing craft, running at low speed for many hours. It is also very clean and more economical than many similar naturally aspirated engines. Also, it does not require the complex electronics of some turbo units, so is easy to maintain.

The engine is skin tank cooled with plenty of well-placed vents. This drives the large propeller through a conventional grease-lubricated stern tube. It is within the engine room you see the complex hull shape that XR&D has managed to incorporate into *Saint George* to maximise smooth water flow around the stern. The engine room is well illuminated and painted white, which makes maintenance very easy. There is also a good amount of additional storage space that could be used in the future.

There is a dedicated fire port above the cabin steps, allowing an extinguisher to be discharged into the engine bay in case of fire without opening the main hatch – a requirement that is frequently ignored by builders. Woodworks has also fitted more extinguishers than required, and a mix of 1kg and 2kg dry powders – plus multiple smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

The engine has a 65-amp, 12V alternator, which powers the starter battery bank, and an 80-amp, 24V alternator to charge the domestic battery bank. The batteries are 6V AGM, with eight 200Ah units giving 400Ah at 24V. Up on the roof are two

215W solar panels, connected in series to charge the domestic bank, while a single 55W solar panel keeps the engine starter battery topped up, negating the need for a mains charger for that bank.

When connected to shorepower, the Victron Multiplus can give 70-amp charging. As well as supplying 3kW of power from the batteries it can act as an AC transfer unit, potentially topping up the shore power, giving over 6kW useable supply, if required. Although most shorepower connections are still only 16-amp, Woodworks has fitted a 32-amp supply, with a stepdown connector to allow a conventional 16-amp to be used currently, with a view to adding higher power supplies in the future.

A Kabola HR400 pressure jet diesel boiler gives true domestic central heating on demand, and, along with the engine, heats a very large 120-litre calorifier – enough for all the family (and guests) to have showers. Up in the bow, the Vetus 95kgf thruster is powered at 24V by charging cables from the stern, as well as its own 230V charger. All the electrics are exceptionally well installed and have clear labelling on them.

WW'S VERDICT

During our visit, high river levels on the Severn precluded a trip out from Diglis Basin. However, the weighting of the steering and visibility from the wheelhouse was excellent. The Davies' future plans include heading down the Severn Estuary and up the Avon to explore the K&A to the Thames. *Saint George's* 10ft width, plus its chined hull, mean that navigating such waterways should be fairly straightforward. The well-insulated engine room will also keep the noise down when underway.

Saint George is an exceptionally well-built vessel with longevity designed in. The standard of joinery is superb and meets the owners' requirements for an easy-to-maintain, hard-wearing home for the family. It is also well thought out, as Woodworks applies best practice not just to its joinery but electrics, plumbing and safety. Although a small company, based in New Ollerton, near Newark, Woodworks has produced a wide range of different boats to a very high standard.