



Wide fenders practical in wide locks, but could be easily removed.
PHOTO: S TOMANA

Going astern, the engine initially skewed slightly due to prop-walk, but then she steered well backwards. The engine stopped the boat promptly, and should have more than enough grunt for fast tidal work.

LIVING ABOARD

We stayed aboard for a few days and found *Isabel* to be practical and comfortable. With three people aboard, it never felt crowded, and the tug deck proved sociable. The exhaust and silencer warm both the cupboard and the steerer's nether regions!

During the cold nights, the Webasto diesel heating kept the boat warm via the three double-convector panel radiators and towel rail. The clicking of the fuel feed pump, against the aft bedroom bulkhead, could be heard easily: a little sound insulation would work well. The solid fuel stove (a Salamander 'Hobbit') was easy to light and highly controllable: hirers are provided with a stock of fuel.

We used the electrics extensively, but despite there being only two large domestic batteries on board, the battery level never went low. The engine managed to heat the hot water to a usable temperature: it didn't get as hot as a modern engine might manage, though when the central heating was on, there was almost limitless water on demand. The bathroom was easy to keep clean, and the berths pleasant to lie on. A blind for the pigeon box could help stop early morning light, and stop the odd condensation drip.

A private owner might consider a set of Perspex infills for the forward doors, to allow the crew inside to see forward – even if the weather is poor. Tom suggested that the same layout, but at 55ft long, would allow a good-sized wardrobe in the aft cabin and a couple of extra feet in the saloon. Nonetheless, as a holiday boat, *Isabel* attains a good balance of storage and practicality.

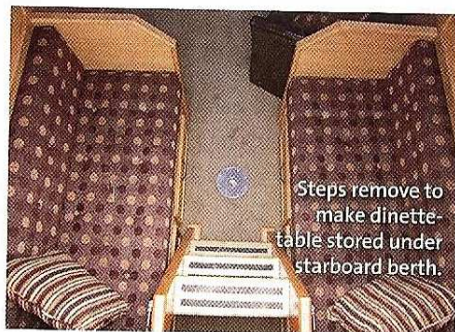
As built, *Isabel* would be priced at £72,000 – remarkably good value for a characterful, thoughtfully designed, and well engineered boat.

TWO ROSE TUGS

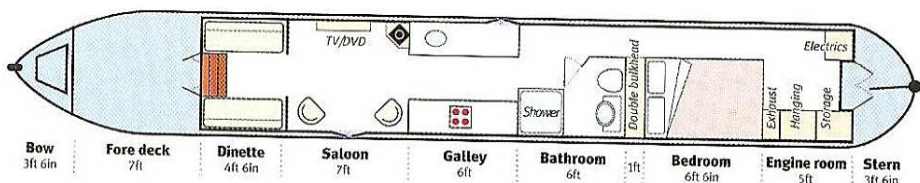
01282 813097, www.tworosestugs.co.uk



Spacious bathroom with easy-clean surfaces.



Steps remove to make dinette-table stored under starboard berth.



HIRING

CANAL BOAT ESCAPES 01282 813097, www.canalboatescapes.co.uk

CANAL BOAT ESCAPES is run from Lower Park Marina at Barnoldswick by husband and wife team, Richard and Karen Holt. The fleet is a mixture of boats of different ages and style, and includes a boat dedicated to one-way holidays to and from Hebden Bridge on the Rochdale Canal.

Isabel is hired out from £387 to £800 for a short break

and £595 to £1,230 for a full week, including fuel. We also liked *Strumble*, a 32ft, traditional Doug Moore boat for two people with a similar 'private boat' feel. This is very competitively priced, from £276 to £488 for a short break. There are no extras applied to the price: diesel, solid fuel, and gas are all included, and the security deposit is returnable.



Compact hire boat *Strumble*.