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# New Steam Boat

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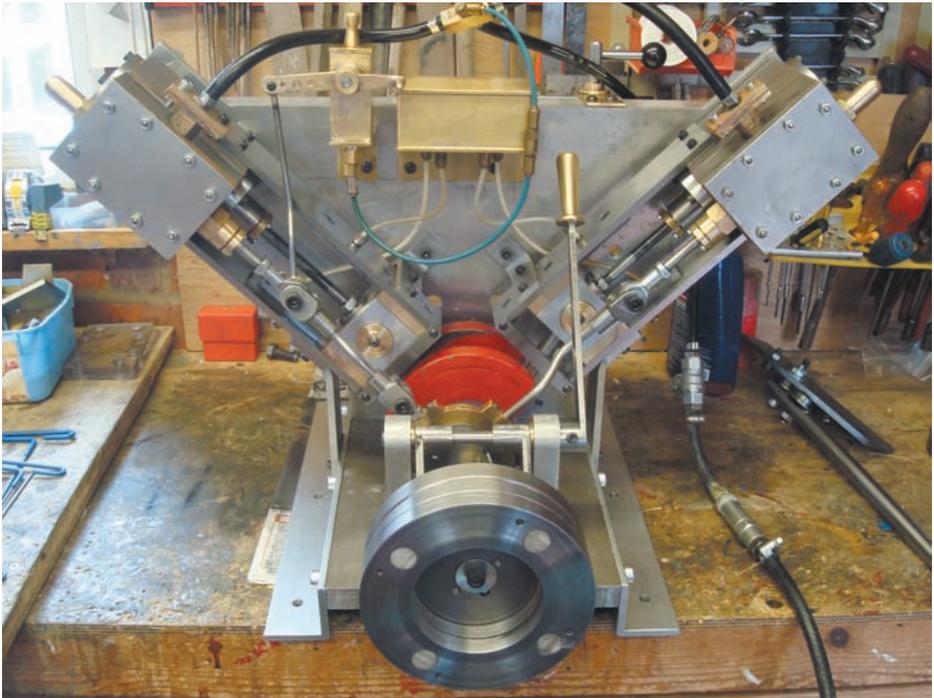
*Andy Hopper*

My entry into Steam boating is perhaps unusual. With retirement I have been busy with several projects, new large model aeroplanes (a lifelong passion ) and a small pipe organ, a steam boat was not top of my list, although I have often thought a boat would be good, but put off by noisy outboard motors.

I have been visiting Model Engineering exhibitions for many years, and a chance encounter with the enthusiastic John Winn at the Midlands show, and my comment that “I would really like to make something like one of his twin engines”, sowed the seeds. A couple of months later I phoned John and asked to buy a set of his engine plans,

now at this stage I had never even been in a steam boat, the engineering of building an engine was my primary thought. To my surprise at this time there were no plans available, but not deterred John suggested I take the engine out of his boat and over the winter period do a reverse engineering job on it. ( basically copy it) That’s the measure of the man.

So that’s what I did, with the occasional advice from John Winn and help from a very good friend John Marriage ( a train man with a bigger lathe than mine, and certainly more engineering knowledge than me ) the engine started to take shape. The great thing about Johns design is that it is all



made from stock materials, so if you make a mistake or feel you could make a better component, there are no costly castings involved. There were bits I had to make two or even three times before I was satisfied and achieved a good fit. I kept telling myself that I would not even consider the possibility of a boat unless the engine ran well on compressed air forward and reverse. After about 14 months the engine was pretty well finished and after some tweaking running well.

I guess that took me to stage two, after a few rides in steam boats belonging to John Winn, Dick Bradford and John Schofield, I and luckily my wife Lorna were hooked, and the hunt for a hull started. Living in Bourne End near Marlow, Thames moorings are almost in line with the Gold rate grams per inch. So that we could visit other rivers and hopefully attend some of the SBA rallies a trailer boat was the answer, my spec. said 16 - 18 feet long, GRP for low maintenance, and able to hold the family for picnics, at least 6. To my surprise it was very difficult to find what I was looking for, and at the right price, they were either too big or too small, wrong shape or just did not appeal.

Then as it seems often happens in the SBA a few phone calls later I was put on to a stock hull designed by a consortium of SBA members called the Affordable Steam Boat. After some discussions with Mike Bell, and a pack of drawings later, I visited him near Clevedon and the deal was done. Like many things once you get home you start to worry,



have I done the right thing, let's face it, would you buy a car that you have never seen before let alone driven! My fears were a little calmed by the fact that it was based on a sailing boat, of a good pedigree, and even with the few mods needed, it still kept the nice lines that I was looking for. These design mods to be a steam boat, came from the SBA consortium which includes John King the Naval Architect, all SBA boat owners, so they should know what's what. I managed to hire a large trailer from our local marina and brought the hull home and sitting on my drive it looked enormous. In fact it is 18ft 6inches long with a beam of 5 ft. and a draught of about 18 inches. I made a temporary wheeled frame and got to work, this was in the February of 2012.

During the early part of 2012 my thoughts kept returning to boilers, I read anything that seemed relevant to boiler selection and sizing. I totally underestimated the cost of this element of the boat, and it soon became



February 2013, I have an Engine, a Boiler and a Hull, and the woodwork is near to completion. I have managed to get a couple of coats of varnish on to seal everything where possible, and I am now planning the installation. I still find it difficult to look at the project overall, it is easy to become totally overwhelmed by the size of the undertaking. I tend to concentrate on just the job in hand, sometimes I despair, and there have been times when I wished I had never started, but with the support of family and other SBA members she will be finished this year.

apparent it was way beyond my skills to make one. I was delighted to get a call about a boat being converted from steam to electric and a VFT boiler being available, a visit to Lancaster and Barrie Abram, secured a boiler. Even at this stage I am not totally committed to what fuel to burn, I think coal would be a good starting point, but after seeing John Winn's and Dick Bradford's Paraffin burners, I was impressed by the cleanliness and ease of control, so therefore in my layout I have made sure that I can adapt to whatever fuel I choose as experience is gained.

By the time you read this, I hope that I will have whetted my baby's bottom, and given her a name. I found it easier to name our children than the boat! I get the feeling that she will be an on-going project for many years, with adaptations and upgrades along the way. Already I have some ideas to improve both the performance and appearance of the boat, but I am going to put these off to the future, or it will never get launched.

I had hoped that the summer would be enough to take an empty GRP hull and turn it into a boat of beauty, a bit like the cygnet into a Swan, but the fact that I could only get half the boat into the garage at a time, and the wet summer has put me behind schedule. The answer came when my son had an extension on his house, and offered me some sheets of plywood from the old garage roof, this was converted into an 8 foot cube extension to my garage. With the boat pushed in and the end screwed on, I can now work all around the boat in any weather.

For those like me who start with little knowledge of Steam boating, it has been a fascinating journey, all consuming, in money

So here I am writing this at the end of





and time. I imagine when she sits on the water the investment will be close to £10,000, and that is doing most of the work myself. I cannot imagine what it would cost to commission a boat from a boat builder.

My thanks must go to the main man, John Winn, I am sure he will be glad when she is in the water and I stop asking questions, and also to the others around me who have helped along the way. ■

