

ONE YEAR ON



Celebrating her new purchase with Andrew from Brayzel Narrowboats.

The Crick Boat Show offers an ideal shop window for prospective boat-owners. *Amelia Hamson* caught up with one buyer from last year's event

Lisa Clevely visited the Crick Boat Show for the first time last year. Having begun searching for a replacement narrowboat just a few months earlier, she was ready to soak up a weekend's worth of boat-buying knowhow. "I thought Crick offered the best opportunity to see lots of boats and boat-builders in one place and to get a lead on a good replacement. I'd been looking in the local area but wasn't sure whether I wanted a new or secondhand craft," she explained.

Lisa had purchased her first boat, *Freyja*, 16 years ago while she was a student living in Bath. "It was a 45ft narrowboat, built in the 1970s, that I mainly used as a holiday and weekend boat. My dad saw it listed under flats to buy in the newspaper and, as I had acquired some equity, it seemed like the perfect alternative to student accommodation. I lived on it full-time while studying – the bohemian lifestyle suited me."

With no previous boating experience,

she spent the next few years learning about living onboard a floating home – and all the maintenance it requires – the hard way. Despite all the love and attention Lisa gave to *Freyja*, she couldn't halt "the inevitable rusting that munched away at the hull". The boat was taken out of the water in February 2016 for a survey but it was not good news – the work required on the hull was estimated at £6,000. "I was heartbroken but decided it wasn't worth the investment required. I had to sell it as a project boat."

'SHOWSTOPPER'

However, within just a few hours of browsing the craft on display at Crick, Lisa was to become a boat-owner once more. She spotted Brayzel Narrowboats' *Wysivng*. "It was a showstopper – I knew I had to have it." But she had to get in quick because the boat was drawing a lot of interest.

A meeting with Zebra Finance confirmed that the funds and paperwork were in place and Lisa secured the boat with a deposit. It fitted out with oak furnishings and the



Lisa thanks Brenda from Zebra Finance for her assistance.

bathroom was decorated with a good quality sparkling shower wall and huge mirror. I also liked the mix of portholes, larger windows and a hatch for extra light."

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Taking delivery of *Freyja II* at Bristol Harbour.



Freyja II was transported by lorry and craned into the water.

Marina only six weeks later, so Lisa didn't have long to wait. Brayzel Narrowboats had already fitted the galley, bathroom and utilities for the show, but agreed a few extras for Lisa, including a wood burning stove and built-in wardrobes, for an additional fee. She renamed the boat *Freyja II* and designed her own logo for the sign-writing.

"It's a tree of life, which reflects eternal life. In sentimental terms, it means the spirit of my former boat lives on."

LIFE-CHANGING

At 45ft *Freyja II* slotted into the same berth that Lisa previously held in Bristol Marina, which was, luckily, still available. "I live about 20 minutes away from Bristol, so



Lisa designed her own sign writing.

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Lisa and her partner Matt.

onto the Kennet & Avon Canal and cruised alongside each other.

"I'd travel a bit in the old boat, especially up to Bath, but it was increasingly unreliable and often broke down. To date, *Freyja II* has gone as far as Hilperton, just past Bradford-on-Avon, on the K&A – further than I'd ever taken *Freyja*. It's lovely to be able to do more cruising now I've got a new boat with a much better engine."

It's now been eight months since Lisa took delivery of *Freyja II*. A summer of cruising and a winter of weekending has given her plenty of opportunity to put the boat through its paces and thoroughly test out all the onboard systems. There's not one thing she would change. "It's definitely improved my life. This boat has a much better design, extra storage and more efficient heating onboard."

LEARNING CURVE

The only challenge, bar finding a new sofa to fit the saloon, was learning how to use all its modern equipment. "The diesel heating system settings have taken some getting used to and I now have an inverter so that I can watch TV and keep the fridge going at

Lisa enjoyed a summer of cruising aboard *Freyja II*.



the same time. It's very different from my '70s boat and has been a bit of a learning curve."

Brayzel Narrowboats have continued to support Lisa, providing technical assistance via telephone and email from their Preston office. "I've been in contact with the boat-builders a few times and they've been really helpful. I've even sent videos showing the equipment so they can give me specific advice on what buttons to press or what the different lights mean."

Having gone through the whole process herself, what's the best advice Lisa can offer to people attending Crick with an eye to buy this year? "Shop around. Go and see as many



Stopping for supplies on the River Avon. Photo: Laurence Dayton



Working the locks on the sunny K&A. Photo: Laurence Dayton



At Pultney Weir on the River Avon.



The boat's oak interior was a top selling point for Lisa.

boats and boat-builders as you can – it's so much better being able to see the craftsmanship for yourself rather than relying on brochures and only seeing the specs on paper.

"Finance companies also offer mini consultations, which are worth doing. I went with Zebra Finance and everything has been really straightforward and secure. They ensured that all the relevant paperwork was in place too."

Lisa, her partner Matt and her parents plan to visit Crick again this year. "We really enjoyed the experience last year and made some good friends there. We thought, as well, there might be some new gadgets and services on show that could be useful."



Lisa and Matt cruised the K&A together last summer.