

Dawn Adventure

Some History & Comments

The Dawncraft line of boats was built at Kinver, Staffs, primarily in the 1970s and early 1980s. The same basic hull shape was used for several lengths ranging from 22 feet to 38 feet. Several deck-cabintop molds were used to produce both aft and centre cockpit versions. Surviving Dawns are now seen as “entry-level weekend boats,” but during the 1970s many were used in hire fleets. Engines used on the boats included many marques and sizes of outboard motors plus inboard engines up to 1600 cc with Enfield Z-drives. Virtually all were petrol engines.

I learned from Graham Skitt that about twenty of the 38 foot boats were built, with most going to early hire fleets in France. Only six remained in Britain. The majority were laid out to “sleep six.”

Dawn Adventure was built by Ralph Wilson, head of Dawncraft, for his personal use. According to Graham, it originally had twin engines and was used on the River Avon. Accordingly I have been asked “isn’t that Wilson’s boat?” by long-term observers of the canal scene. I think the boat originally had a canvas top. Originally the boat had a gas central heating system and a gas refrigerator.

Morris Greenfield was the next owner. I met “Old Morris” at Venetian Marina when we purchased our 25 foot centre cockpit Dawncraft *Blue Heron* there, and he did some of the initial work for us. Morris and his wife lived aboard for several years. I think he converted the boat to a single petrol engine. He also fitted the hardtop to the cockpit. The top was molded for the Highlander marque, and is fitted with a Highlander windscreen. He fitted the top as a rigid structure with doors. He died about 1999.

Graham Skitt purchased the boat about 1999. Graham also lived aboard *Dawn Adventure* for several years. He fitted a pot-bellied stove for heating. About 2001 Graham bought a steel boat and began preparing our boat for sale.

Prior to our purchase of the boat Graham made two major changes. First he replaced the worn out petrol engine with a new Lombardini diesel. Second, he fitted a new gas system with new Paloma water heater and disconnected the gas fridge.

Immediately after purchasing the boat I removed the gas fridge and installed a new LEC electric refrigerator. This has proven to be an excellent choice, as the fridge requires only about three to four hours of engine operation every other day.

Since the fixed top was too high for some routes I adapted it to fold, and removed the fixed doors. With the top and stovepipe down the boat has passed through Harecastle Tunnel, and should be capable of transversing any BW canal. I also fitted the set of metal handrails.

I have refreshed the soft furnishings and upgraded the storage.

In 2004 I replaced the pot-bellied stove with a new Carabo solid fuel stove. We have found Excel to be an excellent fuel for this stove. I had planned to install a water circulation system to warm the back cabin. I made the required parts, but did not complete the installation. I left the heat exchangers behind the stove and the tubing and hose needed to hook it up are under the bed.

We have enjoyed three years of cruising on *Dawn Adventure*, having taken her to Birmingham, Llangollen, Chester, and the head of the Weaver Navigation. This followed five years of cruising on *Blue Heron* from Venetian Marina, having visited Gloucester, Wigan, and Shardlow on her. We live in the United States, and we have decided it is time to “sell up” in Britain and move to new cruising waters.