

Because life is too short



Bad news about a boating friend made up a couple's minds to say 'let's get on with it' and buy their own boat

TEXT AND PICTURES BY DAVID AND KAY LARGE

In 1991, my wife and I, after about a year of marriage, spent a great holiday afloat with some friends on *Sir Lanceor* from Countrywide Cruisers, based at Brewood. We covered the Four Counties Ring and made all the errors you would expect; wrong paddles up in locks, inability to steer to where we needed to be etc, but we did really enjoy the time we had. The fun continued the next year on *Sir Fergus*, with a return trip to Chester. Fine weather followed, it seemed, on all occasions. The scary thing now is looking at the pictures – we were so young!

The seed was set to slowly nag and grow in us both, but starting a family and all that

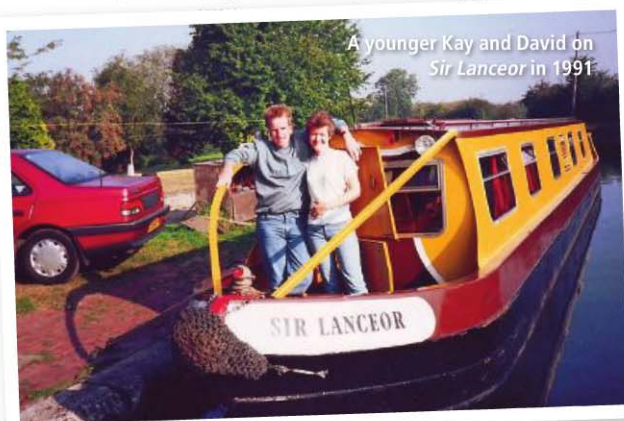
entails resulted in a break of several years from the waterways. A stint working in Newbury had me cycling the Kennet & Avon every night, seeing boats of all sorts, which reignited thoughts of narrow boating.

So we were now in a new century, with a daughter who was rapidly heading to double figures. At this point, a very good friend of

ours, Peter, had purchased a number of shares in the boat *Shugborough* and we spent many an evening hearing his tales of being afloat, and were slowly being drawn back. After a while, a share came up in *Shugborough*. So, after deliberation, we took the plunge and bought in. A half share, meaning two weeks afloat during the year, so we could still have a 'normal' holiday in the sun. But little did we know what was to happen in our future.

At Easter in 2004 we took our two weeks. *Shugborough* was based at Norbury Junction on the Shroppie, so off we set with Llangollen as our target. The Chirk Aqueduct was great and we marvelled at the engineering, the view etc; little did we really know what was to come ahead. Then we got to the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct – 'wow' is about all you could say. The girls were amazed, and I was on the tiller wondering how we stayed afloat 120ft in the air! All too soon, the holiday was over and we were facing another 12 months on dry land.

At this stage, we both sat down and decided on a five- to ten-year plan. Save up, buy a boat and chug off whenever we wanted. We would have to satisfy our 'craving' for now and wait for when our



A younger Kay and David on *Sir Lanceor* in 1991



David enjoys the Chirk Aqueduct on a shared boat



The Large's boat *Molly II* begins to take shape



Arrival for launch, the fastest *Molly II* will ever have travelled



share next came up. But life at times throws you a curved ball and your whole outlook changes. Peter called and told us some shattering news that made us revise our outlook on life; he had been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease.

This changed our plan. Friends kindly lent us their boat, *Glengarry*, and we had a long weekend away. The immediate need to be afloat was sated, but our minds were still thinking of Peter and the future. We decided at the end of the three days away that since you never knew what was around the corner, we would start to look at boats. Life is too short, after all.

Our investigations showed us that we could just stretch to a new boat, if we were careful and set our minds short(ish). It would be a 45 footer in a two-plus-two style, but it had to have a traditional stern, which would accommodate all three of us.

In July 2004, we visited several builders and, after assessing each, we finally placed

our order with the then Liverpool Boat Co. We now waited, and waited, for what seemed like an eternity. Meetings came and went regarding build, fit-out and colours etc. But *Molly II* started slowly to take shape.

We spent our final holiday in the sun, relaxing and writing a list of what we needed. Then, in May 2005, *Molly II* finally got wet. We took delivery at Braunston and, after unloading lots of boxes, we filled up with diesel and chugged off to our mooring.

Since that time we have enjoyed many weekends and holidays afloat. One was rather sad, but poignant as we received a

call to say that Peter had passed away to a better place. This was the call that we were dreading. We always felt he must have known where we were and was smiling down: we hold him responsible for our years afloat and often lift a silent glass to him as we cruise along.

Finally, some may ask why *Molly II*; well *Molly I* is sat at home in the garage, a 1961 Morris Minor 1000, christened Molly by my long-suffering wife, so it seemed natural to carry on the tradition. Will there ever be a *Molly III*? We don't know, but life is still too short to say never. Cheers Peter!



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