

Houseboat Verda, 20 Riverbank, Shoreham Beach, BN43 5YH

Overview

Owner: Hamish McKenzie

Type: Houseboat

Age: hull built 1929, Verda created 1979-2000

Beds: 4

Residents: 2 on Verda, 2 on Hamish's houseboat

Key Features

Re-purposing, re-using, recycling

Creative and practical use of waste materials

Community & performance space

Air B&B space on "Dodge"

Introduction and approach

You can't have an event like this in Shoreham without including a houseboat, and Verda is an exceptional example. Hamish's passion is rescuing old boats and living a sustainable, low environmental-impact lifestyle, and he certainly walks his talk!

Verda is not just a quirky home, it's a place of work - and an extraordinary art form, that has inspired others for many years and, like the materials it has been constructed from, it's seen some action!

If you've ever wandered along the towpath on the west bank of the river at Shoreham and wondered what it might be like inside the houseboats, do come and chat to Hamish about how he has not only used his ingenuity, creativity and a wide range of practical skills to create a unique dwelling, he has helped his neighbours to create unusual homes and also provided a community space for local residents. Verda hosts an annual art trail each summer and is used for yoga classes and other activities.



Construction

Verda and its neighbouring houseboats, where Hamish and his wife Sarah live and also run an Air B & B, are virtually completely constructed from recycled and repurposed materials. Just stand still and try to take it all in as you walk around - everywhere you look you will spot something that has been re-used in the construction - a coach, fire engine, ambulance and Reliant Robin, and countless old boats form the walls.

The hull started life as a Gosport/Portsmouth ferry and it ended up in Shoreham at the Surry Hard around 1993 where it lay abandoned until 2000. A millennium project, it took 8 months to remove up to 4' of silt, weld countless patches and finally float her over to the Riverbank moorings. Now it's a never-ending task trying to keep Verda water-tight and adding more interesting features.

The roof panels are made from wings off a Hawk plane and the tail of a Jump Jet. Reflective tiles from an old caravan form part of the lining of the roof. Sainsburys' car park stainless steel lamp posts form beams to support the roof.

Ask Hamish about 3D design "squircles" - the entire design of Verda is based on them.

The very efficient wood-burner is made from a ventilation funnel from a boat, and the door is made from a wheel and a hatch cover. The walls are lined with objets d'art gleaned from Hamish's local walks.

There are countless fascinating aspects of this boat that Hamish can recount the history of during your tour.

Energy Efficiency Measures

Heating, Hot Water and Drainage

Heating is electric and via a wood-burner that is also an art form!



Verda is on mains water and electricity. A bank of solar panels on the riverbank provides hot water. Not on mains drainage, using compost loos (compost used to grow food in riverbank garden).

Walls, Windows and Roof

You'll never see a structure like this anywhere - see if you can spot the number of boats and other vehicles used to create walls, roofs and windows!

Renewables and low carbon technology

Good Energy provides energy for Verda and Ecotricity for their home next door.

Solar panels provide hot water.

Other sustainable measures/ lifestyle decisions

Hamish and Sarah try to live their lives according to their values of sustainability and

community. They make informed choices about what they consume and purchase, what they can reuse and how they travel.

Having a very low carbon lifestyle drastically reduces day to day running costs but you still need a regular income, in order to feed yourself and pay the bills. Hamish is an accomplished welder and carpenter and works for other folk along the riverbank.

He has created a second houseboat "Dodge", accessed via the deck of "Clive" (his workshop boat), a former WW2 motor torpedo boat with a flying fish on the top deck!

"Dodge" is built from an upturned lifeboat hull, mounted on a Dodge fire engine (thus the name) and includes remnants of four redundant boats. It's a quirky yet comfortable Air B & B which brings in more income. Eco, refillable products are used in the Air B&B as part of their commitment to sustainability.

If it's not being used over the Eco Open Houses weekend, you might even get a quick peep at it! Dodge has been voted "one of the most loved homes" on Air B&B and was featured in CBBC's All Over The Place.

Hamish has a young apprentice working for him, who lives on Verda, as does his housekeeper who caretakes the houseboats and deals with lettings.



Please ask Hamish about the stained glass window

Lessons learned/further improvements

Boats actually change shape, so things go out of alignment, and also it's a constant battle with water ingress - both from above and below. There are many things Hamish would have done differently with hindsight; it's been a very steep learning curve!

Further Information



Air B & B – Houseboat Dodge:

<https://www.airbnb.co.uk/rooms/9868727>

To book Verda for performance/community events please email Hamish at:

hamishmckenzie@rocketmail.com

