

Mal has composed his own songs of canal life.



Hidden away in a cupboard by day, Mal's bed simply folds down at night.

Mal keeps his home shipshape

Mal Edwards has lived and worked on the canals for most of his life. "When I was a kid I would go down to the canal in Shrewsbury. It fascinated me," he says.

Mal, who grew up in Shrewsbury, began working on the canals after leaving school at 14.

He learned to make rope fenders from the old canal boatmen who worked on the commercial carrying boats. Now Mal, 55, is the only fender maker still working on the canal.

Life on the canal is tranquil and runs at a leisurely pace. Mal does not have the stresses of a nine to five job and he can travel when and where he pleases taking his home with him through beautiful countryside and cities.

For 12 years he ran holidays on the Llangollen Canal for disabled children. For this work he received an MBE in 1995.

Five years ago he bought his current boat, Becky, which is about 30 years old. Then she had a cabin running her entire length. But Mal needed a workshop. So he set about converting her into a narrowboat akin to the working canal boats of old with a workshop and cabin.

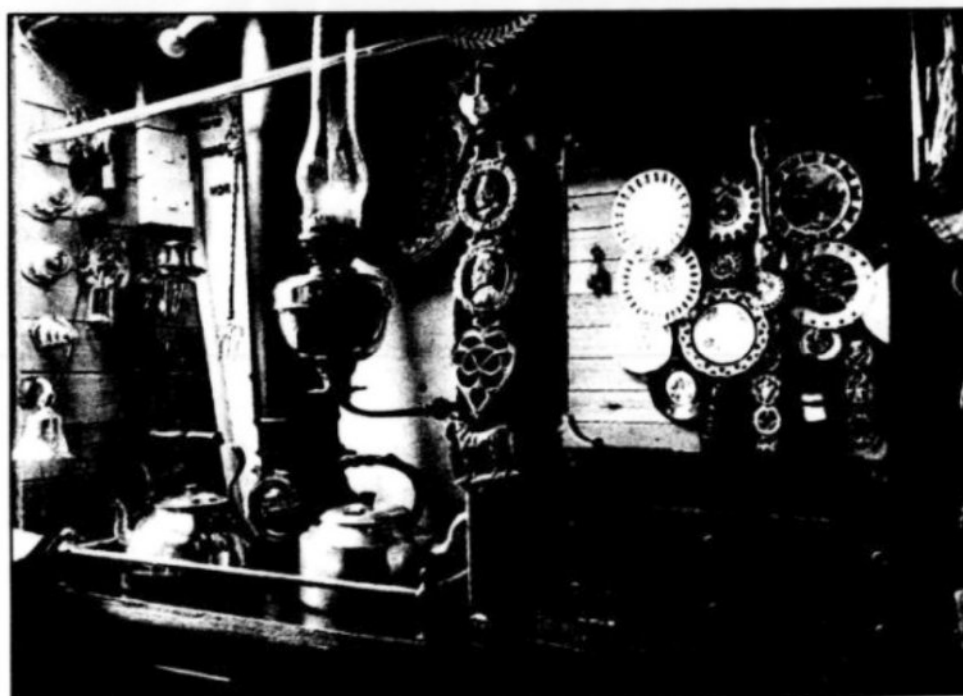
The tiny cabin is based on the traditional canal boat cabins. In one snug space Mal has all he needs including a fold down bed and table which are neatly stored away in built-in cupboards.

His kitchen comprises a small, cast iron, solid fuel boat range which he says "cooks beautifully". He has battery-powered electricity but to save on power he uses an oil lamp for lighting.

When the canals opened more than 200 years ago European gypsies were attracted to living and working on the waterways which is why, Mal explains, the narrowboat cabin was designed similar to that of a traditional Romany caravan.

Mal can regularly be seen performing his own ballads at canalside pubs. In the next two weeks his first album, *Songs from the Cut*, will be released. Titles include "Crusin'" and "Tub-boaty Man".

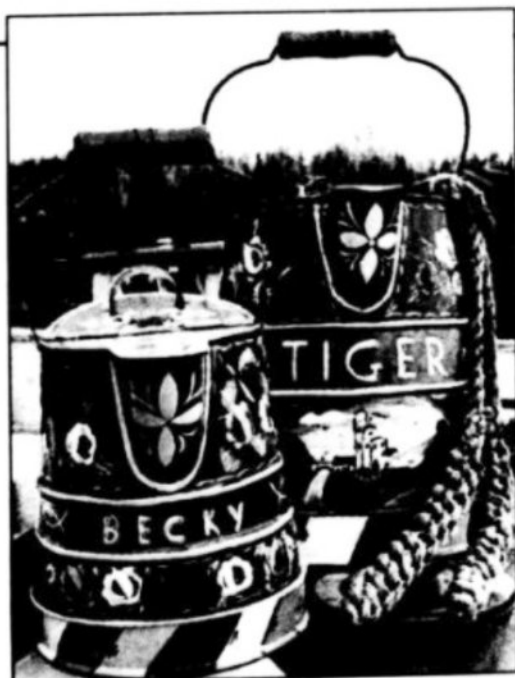
Mal can be contacted on 07855 894580.



The kitchen is compact, complete with a small, cast iron, solid fuel range.



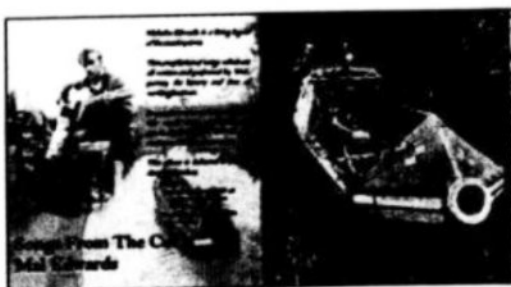
Mal's boat is similar to how the working canal boats of old would have been.



Decorated water cans are part of the traditional narrowboat look.

PERSONAL FAVOURITES

Mal's first album is due out shortly. A music lover heard him singing in a pub and was so impressed he whisked him off to a recording session at Larden Green Studios in March. "Songs from the Cut" will be available from canalside pubs.



Fenders are attached to the bow and stern to act as buffers. Mal weaves them from sisal rope.