

Blue note

It's out with the 'nautical' theme and in with Indian animal god figures and a rug from Oaxaca on Jess Lloyd-Mostyn's boat

I'll never forget stepping on board our boat for the first time. Sure, I'd seen countless photos. It was I who found it online, added it to our list and urged my husband to visit it even though, at the time, it was out of our budget. The images of the main saloon had sold it to me as the fit-out had created a deceptively large space for what was only a 42ft boat. I ignored the price tag and persevered, as I felt, somehow, that this would be the boat for us.

However, standing in that great main space for the first time, I realised something quite comical that didn't feel right.

"Is it just me or does our boat have a nautical theme!?"

I looked around and began to mentally catalogue the culprits of this matter. There was the navy blue bench seating, the blue-and-white striped sofa backs and co-ordinating hatch curtains.

Both settees were covered with so large an assortment of scatter cushions that you couldn't actually sit down and all of them featured the same image of a yacht.

The port and starboard walls and the bulkhead of the saloon were hung with gilt framed prints showing a schooner, a cutter, a bermudan sloop and several more, although none of them was a painting of our boat. Then there were brass fittings galore, hanging lamps, wall-mounted lamps, an hourglass and a big brass ship's bell.

I loved the wood interior and the feeling that the room was both capacious and comforting but the style made it look more like a museum than a yacht that was about to sail anywhere.

Fast-forward five years and that same space looks rather different. There is no sign of blue-and-white upholstery anywhere and the brass is all gone. The gas lamps added a certain romance to the atmosphere of our evenings at anchor but, since replacing all our lights with LEDs, there was no practical need for them. The ship's bell was allowed to hang free and sound for our first few passages before we realised that every heel of the boat made it clang. At first we put a pad in to muffle it, making it utterly redundant, so it was soon sold at a swap meet, along with the hourglass.



ILLUSTRATION: AIMEE JEWITT-HARRIS

'THE GAS LAMP THAT ONCE SWUNG ABOVE OUR TABLE HAS BEEN REPLACED WITH A FLAPPING DRAGON'



JESS LLOYD-MOSTYN

Jess and boyfriend James decided to buy a boat in 2010; four months later, they were setting off on a trip that has so far taken them as far as New Zealand in their Crossbow 42

Now the walls are filled with the story of our adventures so far. There are Indian animal god figures and a Nepalese timber 'Om' from our previous travels; there is a beaten up old Spanish guitar, which neither of us can yet play; there is a painting of a skeletal mermaid; a woollen chimpanzee; a brightly coloured tray; three little monkey masks and a carved decorated jaguar's head from Mexico. The seating has been recovered in a plain grey to contrast with the vivid patterns of the large Guatemalan cushion and the bold banded Mexican throw that sit on them. Our portlights are fringed with a panoply of handmade courtesy flags, some hastily crafted only moments before making landfall. Even the striped teak bilge panels that make up the floor are now partly obscured by a rich woven rug from Oaxaca and a scattering of children's

books and toys as our little ones play.

The big hanging gas lamp that once swung above our table has been replaced with a wooden flapping dragon, a painted pink panther marionette and three antique ornate fish that spin in the breeze. Our fruit sits in a dark timber kava bowl, paired with a carved ceremonial axe that adorns one of our doors, found together in Fiji. There are other bizarre sundry items, both bought and found, that I've chosen to paint in a blinding rainbow of colours, and other images from my hands are pinned around the room.

And, I'll grant you, each time we prep the boat for passage, this collection of curios that festoons the space does get at least partly streamlined and stowed away.

But this is the stuff of sailing life. In place of the aspirational sailing-themed and yacht-emblazoned trimmings that used to prettify the inside of our boat when it sat unused in a marina for years this colourful and jumbled multitude of objects has crossed oceans, traversed both the equator and the international date line and witnessed many personal milestones along our journey from green and clueless sailing couple to salty, skilful parents of two boat babies. No more is it a yachting museum; she's a bluewater home, with stories under her keel and a lot more miles to go.