

# Dunkirk 'little ship' sets sail once again



➤ Fleury II, the Dunkirk Little Ship, which has been restored at Cockwells Boatyard

Andrew Wright



➤ Second World War Thames river craft arrive back after helping the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from the beaches at Dunkirk  
NCJ - Topix



**A** CORNISH boatyard has given a new lease of life to one of the Dunkirk Little Ships that played its part in the rescue of more than 336,000 troops, trapped on the beaches of France in 1940.

Mylor-based Cockwells Modern & Classic Boatbuilding has a reputation for creating award-winning custom builds, from luxury superyacht tenders to classic motor launches. But its craftsmen and women have shown they can also turn their hand to the challenge that restoration of an historic vessel presents.

Fleury II is a Dunkirk Little Ship with a glassed deck that was leaking and a rotting deck beneath. It was delivered to Cockwells' Mylor Creek Boatyard in autumn 2018 for much needed structural repairs.

Built in Christchurch, Dorset in 1936, the motor yacht was designed by Eric French of Poole. She was named by her original owners, the Fleurets.

The Little Ships of Dunkirk sailed from Ramsgate in Kent to Northern France between 26 May and 4 June 1940 as part of Operation Dynamo. These ships helped to rescue the British, French, and other Allied soldiers who were trapped on Dunkirk's beaches during the Second World War. Without the use of civilian vessels like Fleury II and hundreds of others, there was a grave danger many of the troops – vital to the

A Cornish boatyard has restored one of the Dunkirk little ships back to its former glory, reports **Philip Bower**

Allied war effort – would have been captured or killed by the advancing Germany Army.

Combining the artisan traditions of the shipwright with modern technology, Cockwells' craftsmen and technicians have now restored Fleury II to her former glory.

Shipwright Mark Curnow explained how a combination of old craft skills and modern materials and techniques made restoration a possibility. "Originally, solid strips of thicker wood would have been used in the deck's construction and steamed in," he said. "Today, we can laminate thinner strips, in situ, to repair hard-to-reach areas. We have also maintained the aesthetics of the deck but have gained durability by using marine ply and a layer of fibreglass/epoxy where, traditionally, wooden boards covered with painted canvas would have been used.

"One of the highlights of Fleury II is that her original keel is intact and her backbone can be seen in its original state. This is a tribute to the fine craftsmen who built her, who we are proud to follow today."

The deck fittings, stanchions and one of the aft-cabin sides have also been replaced; the wheelhouse and

skylight have been repaired and the windlass has been overhauled, whilst the interior has been painted to lighten the space and the exterior has been stripped and re-varnished.

Restoration Project Manager, Holly Latham said: "Another rewarding part of this project has been the new owner's eagerness to respect the history of this vessel whilst making sure that she can be fully enjoyed during the next chapter of her life.

"The traditional feel of the boat has been enhanced with modern engines and electrical systems, a new galley and period light fittings powered by low energy LED. These practical changes have been introduced sensitively and are hidden, where possible, so as to complement Fleury II's heritage and ensure her survival for decades to come."

Founder and managing director Dave Cockwell added: "At Cockwells Modern & Classic Boatbuilding we take great pride in delivering the highest levels of craftsmanship, whether we are designing an exquisite tender for a superyacht or restoring a classic yacht with copper nails and oak ribs. When renovating a much-loved craft, we stop at nothing in our quest for perfection."