



The natural curvature of wood, its organic, timeless lines, is at the beating heart of one of Cornwall's finest boat builders.

There is no mistaking a Cockwells boat, the signature, sleek lines and sensuous curves, the beautifully hand-crafted fit and finish. They exude a sense of style and presence, with film star good looks that hark back to the heyday of Hollywood and Cote D'Azur glamour of the '50s and '60s. Nobody else makes a boat quite like Cockwells.

When I arrive in Mylor, at the Creekside boatyard where Cockwells have been based since 2002, I am given a tour. One of the boats that is in for refurbishment has just arrived from Antibes. It is, without a doubt, the most beautiful boat I have ever seen. Its jaw dropping, eye popping, elegant lines and smooth, sweeping contours are stunning. Even by Cockwells' standards this is a 'supermodel' of boats. It belongs to an artist who worked with Cockwells to create what can only be described as a sea-going work of art. The attention to detail is staggering, even down to the head lining of the cabin which is made from hand painted silk, created by the artist. It is quite simply a masterpiece.

The driving force behind the company is Founder and Managing Director Dave Cockwell. He has just arrived back at the yard from handing over a new boat to yet another delighted client. When I meet him, he is disarmingly down-to-earth and self-effacing

for someone who has created a multi-million-pound empire building world-renowned luxury motor yachts and tenders.

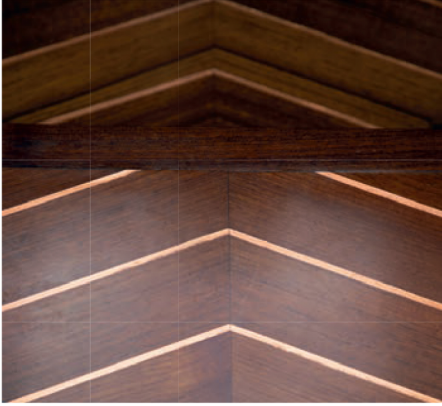
I ask Dave to sum up the unique appeal of a Cockwells boat. He smiles, pauses briefly and then simply says "I think it's that my boats look like a boat, or what a boat should look like and our clients like what I like and see what I see. Some people can't see it but they're not our clients and that's okay." And that is exactly it, the appeal of a Cockwells boat, is that it is the epitome of everything a luxury boat should be: chic, sophisticated and refined, a combination of breathtaking design and styling with performance to match.



ABOVE
Dave Cockwell







Chris Tuff



NAUTICAL

Everything shouts and screams quality, only quietly, with a genteel whisper and it is that understated, timeless elegance that appeals to the more discerning boat buyer who likes the finer things in life and appreciates quality.

Although Cockwells are adept at using composites, carbon fibre and fibreglass and embrace the qualities they bring, they are best known for working in wood and Dave Cockwell is a man with a wooden heart. He explains that this inevitably influences the look of his boats. "I'm always thinking in wood and being a natural material, it gives you a natural curve. I always look at a boat design and think how would I build it in wood? It's the constraints of working with wood that gives you the natural beauty and organic lines of our boats."

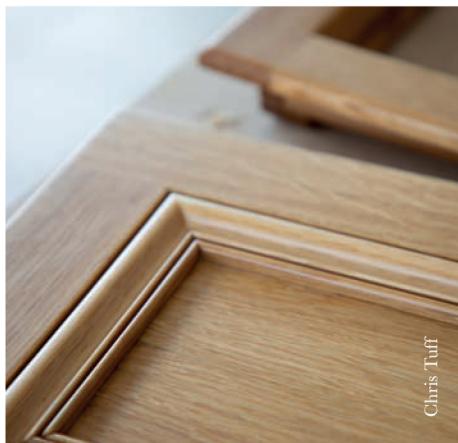
While classical contours with a crisp, clean, modern twist give the boats their sense of purpose, poise and performance in the water, it is the highest levels of artisan craftsmanship and creative use of traditional materials such as oak, teak and walnut that defines their character and quality. Every boat is a masterful, bespoke blend of cutting-edge design and an all but lost art of traditional boat-building skills from a bygone age.



Cockwells' passion for boats started at an early age. Growing up in Bristol he helped his father build a small cabin cruiser and after years of gaining boat building experience in his teens and twenties, as a freelance boat builder and running a successful boat building business in Bristol, he relocated to Cornwall in 2002 where the legend of Cockwells was born.

A year later he took two boats, a wooden motor launch and a pilot cutter he was building, to the Southampton Boat Show. They were the only wooden boats at the show and he sold both. Since then Cockwells has pretty much maintained a full order book.

The company's success depends on the skill and expertise of its craftsmen. Dave Cockwell may not be as hands-on with building boats these days, but sees his role as a mentor to a new generation of boat builders, passing on his knowledge, expertise and experience to create a tight knit 'family' of highly skilled artisans.





NAUTICAL



He explains that he is not just selling a product but a service. The company works closely with its clients to understand their individual wants and needs and create boats that precisely meet them and always aim to exceed them. He points out that unlike buying a luxury car, because even luxury cars are built on a mass-production basis, almost everything Cockwells produce is a one-off and Dave has a firm hand in every boat they make. Nothing leaves the boatyard without his personal stamp of approval.

Cockwells' customers may be discerning but they also have to be patient, the current delivery time for a new boat is around two years but for those willing to wait there are few who would say it was not worth it. Dave Cockwell says that he wants clients to feel the same pride he does in his boats. "You've got to feel safe, proud and look really gorgeous. When you come into a marina you want to know that you're going to turn heads." Owning a Cockwells boat means that you become part of a select family and community of owners who, more often than not, have an ongoing relationship with the company and return the boats for periodic routine maintenance and refurbishment.

While Cockwells' design queues and build quality pay more than a passing nod to the past, they are very much a forward-looking company and have embraced the latest technology. Stepping aboard a thirty five foot Duchy motor launch I am immediately struck by the high

tech touch screens on the dashboard which initially seem slightly incongruous among the chrome-rimmed analogue dials and gauges, but as Design Manager, Will Davidson explains, great care has been taken to keep the user interface and displays simple, cleanly designed and easy to use and that is the point. The automated systems and software have been developed to unburden the boat owner from manual monitoring and routine checks on bilge pumps, batteries and other systems, leaving them free to simply enjoy the boat. The system can even be controlled by an app on your phone so that when you arrive you are ready to go and even if you are hundreds of miles away you can still be connected to your boat.

On the water the boats really come alive. A wooden boat feels different and even sounds different, it is quieter, softer, with a real feeling of solidity. For Cockwells it is not just about gorgeous good looks. It is about creating boats whose seakeeping qualities are second to none with confident, predictable handling and high performance for those with a need for speed.

As for the future, Dave Cockwell says it will be more of the same. Cockwells have no grand plans for expansion or mass production. They will simply keep on doing what they have always done and what they do best and that is to build beautiful boats, beautifully.

 cockwells.co.uk

