



Global brand, Cornish creek: Cockwells Modern & Classic Boatbuilding celebrates 20 years of building beautiful bespoke boats.

By Jilly Easterby

Nestling beside the tranquil banks of Mylor Creek in West Cornwall is the bustling hub of a Cornish boatbuilding business that is making waves across the globe.

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, Cockwells Modern & Classic Boatbuilding is flying high. Its custom-built superyacht tenders, Duchy Motor Launches and sailing yachts turn heads from Norway to New England. A £1m refurbishment of its Mylor Creek Boatyard reflects its burgeoning order book and reputation. Its recent win of a much-coveted Neptune at the prestigious international 2017 ShowBoats Design Awards has resulted in a recruitment drive for more artisan shipwrights and other skilled craftsmen to fulfil demand.

It is these artisan shipwrights and skilled craftsmen combined with innovative designers, ingenious engineers and the entrepreneurial tour de force that is Founder and Managing Director, Dave Cockwell that sets this company apart.

Stints as a deckhand and freelance shipwright fuelled his passion for boatbuilding, which led to his involvement in the restoration of the historic Underfall yard in Bristol and the founding of Cockwells boatyard there in 1996, but it is the importance of designing to the client's precise requirements and the company's exacting standards in uncompromising detail that underpins and sustains the upward trajectory of this pioneering Cornish brand.

"Twenty years ago, when the industry was all about building as many boats as possible for the cheapest possible price, I decided that building great boats that were loved by their owners would be my aim. My thinking hasn't changed in that respect. What propels me is to produce the best boats I can for the nicest people I can find in the most beautiful place in the world."

The best boat can mean everything from a replica of an historic pilot cutter with a luxury interior hewn from English oak to a sleek James Bond-esque tender crafted from carbon and titanium that is infused with innovation at every turn.

"We are equally comfortable utilising seasoned timber and the time-honoured skills of the shipwright as we are with touch screen glass, sophisticated navigation systems and challenging feats of 21st century engineering," adds Dave. "Our craftsmen are experts in traditional and contemporary techniques, and few boatyards can deliver that. Our automated CNC machine might execute one task with perfect precision but a carpenter with a chisel might be better for another – it's about knowing how to use both and what does the job best; about ingenuity and experience."

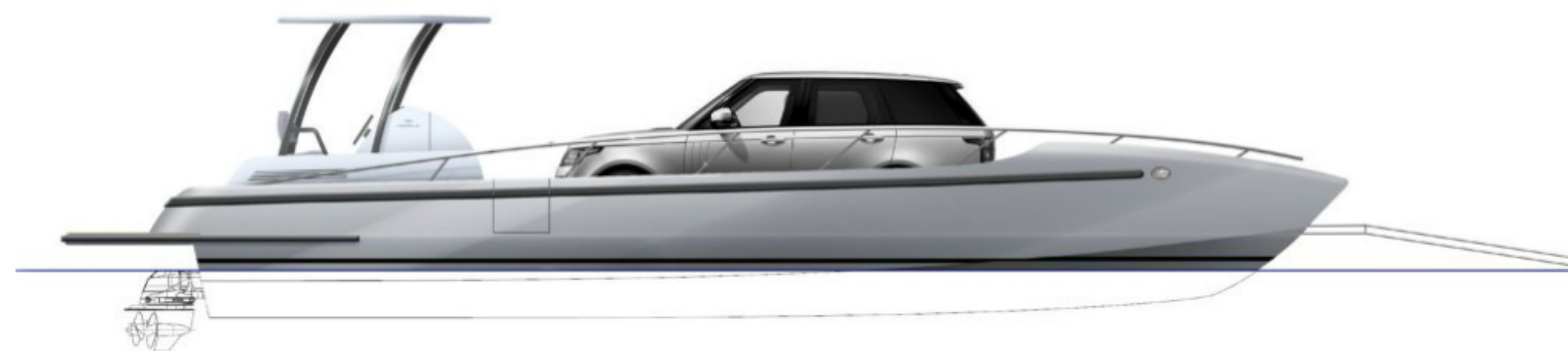
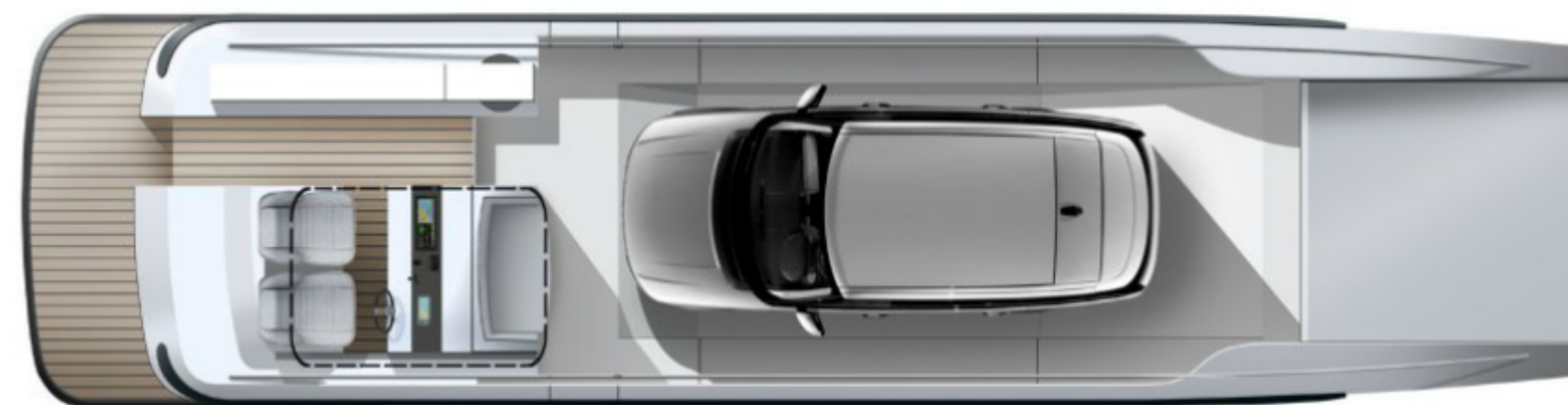


It is this ingenuity and experience that he is keen to share as his business develops.

"When I left school at 15, I began an apprenticeship as a carpenter-builder and relished the challenge of renovating old wrecks. One refurbishment led to another and as a shipwright for hire, I tackled everything from catamarans and steel hulls to aluminium powerboats and superyachts learning my craft as I went along. Today, my job satisfaction comes from doing the very best job I am capable of and sharing my knowledge, values and work ethic with my own apprentices to help them progress. Whether we are building a bespoke boat for a billionaire or refitting a much-loved craft for a Cornish yachtsman, it is the attention to detail and focus on delivering exactly what the client wants that motivates us all."

This can involve seemingly insurmountable design challenges. When Italian shipyard, Perini Navi commissioned two state-of-the-art tenders for its award-winning superyacht, Sybaris they had to complement the mothership exactly and be accommodated within a very shallow tender garage. The solution? A detachable roof built from ultra-lightweight materials that can be flipped over and stored with ease.

Designs on the drawing board include a 14.5m custom landing craft that is capable of transporting a Range Rover Sentinel from superyacht to shore.



The latest custom build in production is a 10m wooden day boat that combines durable composites with the sleekness of teak to create the ultimate in luxury for six guests.

But it is not just exquisite bespoke vessels that the company creates. Cockwells' semi-production Duchy Motor Launches offer polished styling and outstanding performance without the high-end price tag.

Echoing the classical designs of the gentleman's motor launch of generations past but incorporating modern luxury, processes and technology, they are ideal for first-time boat owners or families with waterside homes who enjoy cruising and relaxing.

"We provide the durable, low maintenance composite hull in a range of sizes and you customise the interior with optional extras to chime with your way of life, whether you enjoy day trips and picnics, or dining al fresco beneath the stars," explains Dave.

Whatever kind of boat you may buy from Cockwells, one thing is certain. It will be distinctly yours in every detail and that is what will sustain this global brand that operates from a Cornish creek for the next twenty years and beyond.

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