



Seamlessly merging the old and the new: that was the priority in the top-to-toe restoration of 1931 Camper & Nicholson's motor yacht *Marala*. "The objective has been to be true to the spirit of the vessel," says the new American owner, "to preserve elements of her past – from both her original era and successive eras – but also to bring in new design elements so as not to be captive to it. We wanted a comfortable boat and we wanted a pretty boat." That is quite some balancing act.

Life afloat for the owners began on the Thames when they lived in London with their three small children in the 1990s. Having initially rented a house overlooking the river, they bought a 1909-launched houseboat where they lived for seven years, during which time they "pretty much rebuilt everything". They then moved to Hong Kong where they owned not one, but two locally built 1930s boats: *Wayfoong*, which had been built for the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, and *Java*, which had been commissioned by the British government.

The owners "had this little game" that they played with their long-time captain, Chris Lawrence, whereby they regularly kept an eye out for other yachts for sale and exchanged emails about them. When Lawrence shared the sales details of *Marala*, it prompted the response: "Well, that one really is special." After flying to Greece to look at her, the owner "just fell in love with the boat. I was captivated. So we had a survey which basically said that she's an old

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vessel and you're going to be in trouble if you buy her. And I said, 'Yeah, I understand that,' and we bought her."

*Marala* was commissioned in 1930 by Montague S Napier, an aircraft engine and car manufacturer, but he never saw her completed – he died in January 1931, just a few weeks before the yacht launched.

She was temporarily registered with the name 388 – her C&N build number – and while the yard sought a new owner, she filled the yachting press. *Yachting World* reported with understated approval that, "She is a typical Nicholson motor yacht, from her destroyer bow to her cruiser stern, with her upper works so proportioned that there is no suggestion of top heaviness, in spite of the wonderful extent of her accommodation."

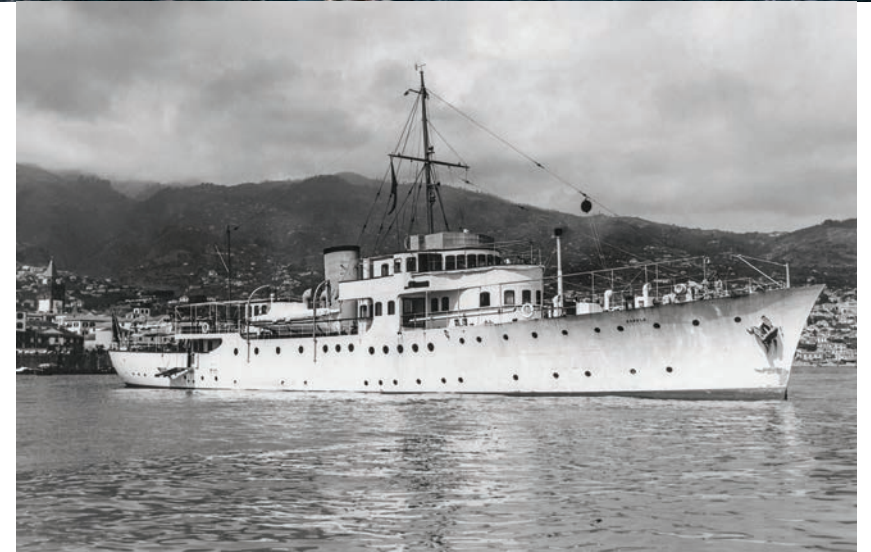
Towards the end of 1931, aircraft manufacturer Richard Fairey purchased her and named her *Evadne*. During the 1930s, Fairey used her as a mothership for his three C&N sailing yachts: the 1930 J Class *Shamrock V* and the 12 Metre yachts *Flica* and *Evaine*. In 1939 she was requisitioned by the British Navy for service in the Second World War and returned to Fairey in 1945. *Evadne* was then sold to Richard Reynolds, the son of the founder of the R J Reynolds Tobacco Company. He renamed her *Zapala* but he only ever intended to keep her for a year while he was waiting for his own C&N yacht, the 35-metre ketch *Aries*, to be completed.

With *Zapala* on the market again, potential purchaser Arturo Lopez-Willshaw – a Chilean whose family had made their fortune in the guano trade – was given a tour of the yacht by Charles A Nicholson (whose uncle Charles E Nicholson had designed her), at the end of which he said that he liked her very much.

A few weeks later, Nicholson phoned him to see if he was interested in taking the matter further. "Oh," replied Lopez-Willshaw, "I told you I liked her so I presumed I had bought her." He then did so, renamed her *Gaviota IV* and kept her until his death in 1962.

The next owner was Robert de Balkany, who changed the name to *Marala* – derived from the names of his daughters Marina and Alexandra – and whose second wife was Princess Maria Gabriella of Savoy, the daughter of the last King of Italy, Umberto II. After de Balkany died in 2015, *Marala* was held up in probate for two years before she was bought by her current owners.

The owners' initial plan was to refit *Marala* gradually, while keeping her in commission. But after a family cruise in the Greek Islands in the summer of 2017, Captain Lawrence suggested it would be significantly more efficient to take her out of commission and do all the work in one go. So *Marala* spent two years at Melita Marine in Malta, where the shipyard replaced a great deal of the steelwork in the forward part of the hull, reconditioned the original 750-horsepower eight-cylinder MAN diesel engines and installed



*Marala in the 1950s: above, when she was named Zapala, and, right, posing on a postcard as Gaviota IV. Left, bottom: her Cockwells' Duchy 21 tender with her International 12 in the background, which was originally designed by George Cockshott in 1913*

