

# TENDER TO A CLASSIC

What new-build tender would suit a celebrated 1930s motor launch?  
GL Watson and Cockwells came up with the stunning answer

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In the 1930s, WL Stephenson, the chairman of Woolworths in Britain, commissioned Charles E Nicholson to design, and Camper and Nicholsons to build, two yachts. As the first of them, the 1933 J-Class *Velsheda*, was famously named by using the first letters of Stephenson's daughters' names – Velma, Sheila and Daphne – it clearly made sense to use their last letters to christen the 165-foot (50m) motor yacht *Malahne* four years later.

During the 1980s her elegant outward appearance was significantly altered to create a more modern look and she subsequently fell into a state of disrepair. Following the restorations of the motor yachts *Bluebird* and *Nablin*, GL Watson and Co was looking for a new project which might benefit from its design and management skills. The company's MD William Collier was aware that *Malahne* was in Tarragona in Spain and in poor condition, and he and broker Nick Edmiston were able to find a client to buy her and commission her restoration. Pendennis Shipyard in Falmouth was selected to do the work, and earlier this year, 30 months after she arrived there, she was relaunched with her original outward appearance restored.

In addition to representing *Malahne's* owner at Pendennis, GL Watson was contracted to design a new tender for her, and this work fell to the company's in-house naval architect Jack Gifford. The initial brief





High quality  
workmanship,  
detailing and  
finish, with  
period-style fittings  
where possible

*Above: a fine entry translates into a comfortable and dry ride.*  
*Below: handsome blue leather seats*





was for a “little displacement picnic boat which would do a maximum of 8 knots, essentially a mini-*Malahne* with a bustley stern and a cruiser bow”.

In the spring of 2014, though, when GL Watson had almost completed the design and was negotiating with potential builders (three in the UK and one in Holland), *Malahne*'s owner decided he would prefer something much faster, after spending some time on a friend's yacht which had a 30kt tender. Not a problem – having learned a lot about the owner in terms of the details he wanted, GL Watson was able to progress with not much more than a change of the hull shape.

Whereas many people seem to have Rivas as their “stock reference varnished mahogany powerboat”, GL Watson saw American boats such as Hackers, Chris Craft, Dodges and Aristos as a better source of inspiration. “They are very much of *Malahne*'s era with brave bows and tumblehome sweeping aft,” said Jack Gifford, who set out to design a hull which was not only fast – the owner wanted to use the boat for water skiing – but would have a comfortable motion at any speed.

After the same four yards had the opportunity to quote for the faster boat, the contract was awarded to Cockwells Modern and Classic Boatbuilding, who have established a great reputation for building a variety of high-quality motor boats including superyacht tenders. The location of Cockwells – just five miles from Pendennis, where GL Watson's project manager was based throughout the restoration – didn't influence the initial decision, but it became of value during the course of the project as it allowed him to call in to discuss emerging issues easily and frequently.

The tender's hull was built with 3/4in (18mm) thick yellow cedar strip planking laid over CNC-cut plywood bulkheads and frames, with a 1/10in (2.5mm) thick Brazilian mahogany veneer laid fore-and-aft on the outside. The deck consists of a 3/8in (9mm) plywood subdeck, a teak king plank and covering boards, and straight-laid Brazilian mahogany planks with koto seams. Dave Cockwell was able to obtain the hard-to-source Brazilian mahogany through Stones Marine Timber – along with most of the wood for the tender – but he didn't expect to be able to get any more. Much of the cockpit – including the seat fronts,

**Above left:** the plumb stern is set for waterskiing.

**Right:** quilted maple dash

tongue-and-groove panelling, engine box and horizontal slats on the cockpit sides – is western red cedar with isolated pieces of yellow cedar framework. Around the inside of the coaming there is a handsome blue leather padded bolster and just below that – above the slats in the cockpit sides and forming the dashboard forward – a timber which really sets the boat apart: quilted maple. There is quite a bit of this on the mother ship and GL Watson has maintained the theme, creating a similarly luxurious feel on the smaller boat.

Jack Gifford recalls the moment that the wood arrived at the yard, book-matched from Dutch timber suppliers Touchwood BV: “It was lovely to see the reaction of the boatbuilders, who understandably were excited at the prospect of working with quality woods. We have had a few moments like that, which have been really special to the project.”

A recurring issue when building, or restoring, a classic boat is to keep relatively unsightly modern equipment hidden from view, while at the same time maximising the opportunities to benefit from it. While the tender's dashboard has four traditional-looking analogue instruments on permanent display, the data panel which was supplied with the engine has been discreetly hidden away, along with a plotter, behind the central dashboard panel. When this panel is hinged down to reveal these instruments, it can be used as a drinks shelf or it can be pushed back into the console and out of the way.

The panel is curved (to follow the shape of the fixed panels each side of it) and so the maple fascia has a carbon fibre backing to ensure it retains its shape at all times. Lead boatbuilder, Billy Lambert put great effort into developing the geometry to make this work.

While a few of the tender's proprietary deck fittings came from British companies such as Davey and Co, most of them were supplied by California Classic Boats, which Jack found after extensive internet research. The man behind the company is Al Schinnerer who has accumulated a collection of traditional boat fittings over a period of many years, often by borrowing items from friends' boats to use as patterns. GL Watson took the trouble to fly out to California to be sure that the fittings were of sufficient quality and that they could be supplied on time. In doing so the company also



benefitted from Schinnerer's experience with regard to fitting selection. California Classic Boats subsequently supplied the cleats, fairleads, engine box handrail, fuel filler cap, steering wheel, horn, bow light and ensign staff with integral all-round white light, all of which are cast, hand-fettled and chrome plated.

Some of the details of the new boat were specifically determined by her role as *Malahne's* tender. She will be lifted on and off the mother ship by traditional steel davits, so she has two lifting points, one accessible through a large chrome deck ring on the foredeck and the other under the bench seat aft, and connected by two longitudinal plywood girders to take the loads. Her boarding steps are to port, to provide access to *Malahne's* starboard side main companionway ladder. Her fuel filler is to starboard, so that she can refuel from *Malahne's* port side, where the crew board the mother ship.

The tender is powered by a Steyer 286hp inboard diesel which drives a Mercruiser Bravo 1 outdrive, a set-up chosen for its excellent power to weight ratio, its great track record for reliability and because, in Jack Gifford's words, it "looks like a superyacht engine – that is something that shouldn't be overlooked". The position, in a dedicated case in the middle of the cockpit rather than right aft where many fast tenders' engines are fitted, provides two main benefits. Firstly, it means guests don't have to climb over an engine hatch aft to get aboard. Secondly, it means performance. This was immediately apparent when sea-trialling the boat. Whereas a similar craft with the engine right aft would have to rev relatively high in order to get onto the plane, the tender did so with ease and smoothness, crucial when you're giving guests their first taste of life afloat. Additionally, a superyacht tender must be ready to carry

**From left to right:**  
top speed is almost  
40 knots;  
instrument cover  
slides away;  
Brazilian  
mahogany veneer.

**Below: the mother  
ship *Malahne***

anything between one and 10 people on board. With the engine amidships, the passengers will always be around the engine with the weight well dispersed.

Although the tender was designed to do a maximum of 35 knots – or 30 when fully loaded – GL Watson has managed to get her up to 38 knots in sea trials. Heading into a moderate chop at 30 knots with three sitting at the dashboard, she gave an impressively smooth ride. Seated aft, the motion was more comfortable still.

The comfort has much to do with a sharp V forward in the hull, which develops into a completely flat run aft. Meanwhile the chine develops from a small crease forward into a widening inverse V aft. Along with the spray rail on each side, it deflects the spray downwards, away from the hull, and also offers full control in a high speed turn.

GL Watson has designed space for eight guests: three on the bench seat across the stern, one on the seat which backs on to the helm position forward, while the other four use seats which cleverly fold out from behind the slats at the sides of the cockpit. These are supported by brackets, which fit the outboard faces of the engine box. The idea came from the seats found in the back of a Landrover Defender but required some ingenuity from Cockwells to make it work on a boat. "Whenever someone comes up with an idea," said Dave, "our challenge is to make that idea come to life."

Wherever she goes, the classic lines and gleaming varnish of this tender will turn heads at first glance. Those who get the chance for a closer look will be further impressed by the exemplary standard of workmanship and superb detailing throughout. And a lucky few passengers will get to experience her smooth ride and turn of pace. She will, no doubt, serve her mother ship with distinction.

## TENDER TO MALAHNE

LOA  
**25ft (7.6m)**

BEAM  
**7ft 9in  
(2.35m)**

DISPLACEMENT  
**2,155kg  
(4,750lb)**

DRAUGHT  
**2ft 9in  
(0.84m)**

SPEED  
**38 knots**

