

Grand Craft splashes first fibreglass hull

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Wooden boat builder turns to GRP for latest launch

For the first time in its 44-year history, US wooden boat builder Grand Craft has laid-up a fibreglass hull for one of its classic designs, intended for commercial use by resorts and marinas.

The company, [purchased by Patrick and Rose Gallagher in 2021](#), offers five models of hand-crafted mahogany boats, but is focusing production of two, the Burnham – a classic wooden run about – and the Winchester, described as a “water limousine... that easily adapts to ferrying passengers, entertaining guests, providing overnight or living accommodations, a floating office, or as a personal luxurious yacht.”



Grand Craft's new Winchester

The Winchester, renamed with the rest of the fleet with more contemporary monikers, has been a popular model with upscale resorts which use them for cocktail and sightseeing tours, and a Florida resort prompted the move to fiberglass.

“A fibreglass hull is more conducive to the constant sun and saltwater. It’s a practical evolution for that model and I’m glad that we have the opportunity to do it,” Patrick Gallagher told *IBI* recently.

The Little Palm Island Resort located in the Florida Keys has been running two 36-foot Winchester for more than 20 years and was looking for a less expensive, more easily maintained replacement that still offered the elegance and styling of the hand-crafted wooden boats.

The traditional mahogany and teak pilot house, decking and trim are wedded to a fiberglass version of the Winchester hull, though the client in this case went for a high-grade synthetic Dutch composite in lieu of teak.

Available in two-foot increments from 32- to 40-feet, the Winchester’s 9-foot beam offers lots of interior room and a smooth, stable ride and can be custom configured to the end-user’s needs.

Grand Craft, Gallagher explained, has outsourced the fiberglass work, as it does with many of its operations.

“The leaner we can stay and wherever we can outsource or subcontract, in these beginning chapters, I’m all for it. For example, when we do our final clear coat on a Burnham, we take it to our neighbor right here who has a big-boy industrial paint booth, and we pay a daily rate. We wheel the boat in there, they suit up and spray it.

“To clear coat one Burnham is one day, so if we’re making 20 in the grand scheme, that’s 20-days a year, so the utilization is kind of low.”

At this stage, Grand Craft is only offering fiberglass hulls for commercial application on the single Winchester model, but Gallagher remains open to the idea of perhaps offering a fiberglass option on more models in the future.



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