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The new *Bystander* takes centre-stage

Conceived and built as a new support vessel for the J Class *Velsheda*, the 42.18m motor yacht was styled on 1920s workboats with a meticulously finished Edwardian 'campaign' interior

The original concept for the new 42.18m support vessel, *Bystander*, was conceived somewhere in the middle of the Pacific Ocean as the J Class yacht, *Velsheda*, and her shadow, the 1963 Van Lent Feadship *Bystander*, cruised east in convoy after attending the 31st America's Cup in Auckland, New Zealand, early in 2003. The racing yacht's ex-skipper and captain of the new build, Lars Loftus, explains what the thinking was behind the new yacht: 'At 33m, the original *Bystander* was no bigger than *Velsheda* and as the programme evolved, it became evident that a larger, purpose-built, support vessel was what was needed to keep up'. Four years later, the J Class yacht and her new support vessel are in Valencia, Spain, for the current edition of the America's Cup. 'During regattas there will often be 12 to 18 guests on board,' continues Loftus. 'The old *Bystander* just didn't have enough space, so the new *Bystander* had to be bigger and also provide a family atmosphere for growing children.' However, the yacht is far more than a

hospitality ship or a comfortable pied-à-mer, and a formidable, practical capability was essential requiring that the mothership transfer fuel, waste and supplies while under way and when the sailing yacht is stationary, moored portside to *Bystander*, linked via a 1.8m passerelle.

Both requirements demanded extremes of skill, ingenuity and continuous tank testing by the yacht's Dutch naval architects, Vripack International, to overcome the problem of differing roll patterns between *Velsheda* and the old *Bystander*. Vripack designed 90 per cent of the yacht's engineering systems and a viable anti-roll solution was found in hull shape and the installation of Quantum Zero Speed stabilisers to dampen this awkward motion. Having won the entire build contract from seven rival yards, JFA Chantier Naval began building work on the yacht's empty steel hull and aluminium superstructure at their yard in Concarneau on the coast of Brittany during the Autumn of 2004. The yard's head, Frederic



Jaouen described the task facing his team: 'To manage such a big project, a huge amount of co-ordination is needed to deliver the yacht to her owner,' he explains. Jaouen's greatest ally during the build process was another Concarneau-based company, Barillec, who have worked in partnership with JFA for 14 years, designing and installing the complex monitoring systems that are essential on board superyachts. JFA's workforce managed almost every aspect of the *Bystander* project and her departure from Concarneau in April this year was a milestone for the yard: 'I am very proud of what we have produced,' admits Jaouen. 'This type of boat is unique, the depth of detail and the integration of all the various systems is a masterpiece.'

For Rhoades Young, formerly Dick Young Designs, *Bystander* represents a break into new territory: 'We designed all the exterior detail at Vripack: the profile, deckplans, davits, fittings and even the aft door,' explains Jonathan Rhoades. The yacht's overall exterior lines were based on early 20th century workboats with the team submitting 10 profile designs, gradually moving the superstructure forward and experimenting with the bow rake until they eventually produced a silhouette that Rhoades believes reflects coastguard vessels from the 1930s.

On more familiar ground for Rhoades Young, the yacht's interior is a testament

to a close working relationship between the design team, the craftsmen and the shipyard. 'The theme is Edwardian and "campaign", suggesting a refitted 1920s workboat,' says Rhoades. The process to achieve this atmosphere and visual impression began with watercolours and finished with computer images from German superyacht experts Oldenburger, specifying precise plans and listing every component including the exact amount of screws required for each cabin or room.

'The yacht is highly detailed and was heavily managed,' confirms Dick Young, 'delivering a very deep level of design.' This depth becomes evident when admiring the interior paint work: a technique applied by hand, producing deliberate brushstrokes. With an additional patina and waxing, the pale panels on board are already ageing gracefully, glowing with the flavour of an immaculately preserved heirloom. Closer inspection of the new woodwork reveals that burrowing parasites appear to have been busy, courtesy of the skilled specialists from Oldenburger.

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