A REPORT WORTH READING

The Superyacht Tenders Report

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BUSINESS

"We cannot afford to be testing new kit on our customers and so we make 100 per cent sure of the reliability of a product before bringing it to market."

Mathew Hornsby, co-founder, Williams Jet Tenders

BUYER

53.4%

custom and semi-custom

Secondhand superyacht tender sales 2013-2018

DESIGN

The perfect tender, and the perfect garage in which to store it. *TSR* devises both.

TECHNOLOGY

The must-have toys for the 2018 summer season, and an important regulatory update that all tender manufacturers must read.

OPERATIONS

"The inexperienced person usually appreciates guidance and assistance whereas the incompetent person usually bulldozes their way into a predicament that requires somebody else to bail them out of the mess they've created."

Captain Winston Joyce-Clarke, 59m M/Y *Sea Wolf*

FLEET

45%

Custom tender projects commissioned by owners' reps or project managers.

On the sesh* with Gresh

INTERVIEW BY GEORGIA BOSCAWEN

Steve Gresham joins The Superyacht Report *in the pub to talk about his career and the world of superyacht design.*

* English colloquial term for drinking in a pub.

Is there a better way to get to know the man behind the drawings than taking him to the pub for a few beers? Superyacht designer Steve Gresham has a truly fascinating approach to our market and a design philosophy that is based on a lifetime of being connected to the water. We head to one of London's most famous pubs to find out more about this philosophy and the journey Gresham has been on to be where he is today.

Nestled behind one of the busiest squares in London, Gresham Yachts Design HQ sits on quiet Farm Street in Mayfair, just a stone's throw from some of the fantastic pubs that this city has to offer. The Punchbowl, just at the end of the road, couldn't be a better venue for our meeting. Famed for formerly belonging to Madonna and Guy Ritchie, the pub has a gorgeous vintage feel to it and a pretty good draught beer selection, which is certainly a bonus. After propping up the bar and ordering two pints, we sit at a table at the front of the house and start from the very beginning of Gresham's story.

"I was born in the Bahamas and lived there for the first 10 years of my life – I absolutely adored it," he begins. "It was on an island; my mother was a nurse and my father worked for a navigation company, and they met in the Bahamas. We used to have this little red Mini and drive down to the beach with my mother and as many toys as I could carry in my arms, a parrot called Mr Schlitz, the dog called Tiggy and, of course, the cat." Gresham's early life was always marine-orientated; in the Bahamas and even when he moved in 1976 to Rutland, in the UK, where a huge reservoir had been built and windsurfing was particularly close to his heart.

"That sort of being in the water, next to the sea, came from an early age," says Gresham. "But I was also really good at drawing, primarily because of all the practice that I did – there is even a callus on my finger here from holding the pen. Originally, I wanted to be a fine artist and then I discovered that there were people called designers who did all sorts of really interesting things – they could build things and design cars, aircraft, boats and all sorts of stuff." Gresham then headed to Coventry University, an institution that has produced so many well-known names in the superyacht industry and one widely recognised for its outstanding design courses.

"When I got to university I thought all my Christmases had come at once because it was such great fun," says Gresham. "The first person I spoke to when I walked in the door was Jonny Horsfield. He was in the studio, [we] chatted for a few minutes and then he said, 'Do you fancy a pint?'. So we met and literally within a few moments we were on our way to the pub. We probably had about four or five pints and spent the next four years as best mates. We lived in the same houses, we shared the same cars. Mick Leach was a year ahead of us, but Marc Smith, Jonny Horsfield and myself lived together."

Both Gresham and Horsfield were on the industrial design course, a sandwich course that produces all kinds of automotive and transport designers due to its flexibility in design study. Gresham's original plan was to become a car designer but that quickly changed during his time at university due to the constraints of automotive design. It was then that he turned to yacht design.

"I decided that I didn't want to go into cars, and because our course was a sandwich course, I wanted to have a bit of excitement. Also, because it was 1985 – the Miami Vice era – we all went out wearing espadrilles. We all wanted to be Sonny Crockett, Wham was around and I looked a little bit like George Michael," says Gresham. "Then I decided that I wanted to get a job for my sandwich course in Florida. So I bought a ticket, packed a bag with my clothes, my sleeping bag and a tent. The plan was to fly out and, five weeks later, fly back. I didn't know where I was going, where I was going to stay."

Gresham knew he wanted to work for an American boatbuilder but had no contacts there and relied on a US directory to look up boat/yacht builders to try to arrange a placement. With no concrete plan, Gresham pitched his tent in various places outside shipyards and recalls spending nights in everglades and beaches before landing his job.

"I used to hitchhike everywhere when I was younger and all the time [when] I was in the States," he recalls. "Although I did carry a knife with me for protection, it was just like a scalpel in case someone tried to grab me. Those days of having a bit of freedom and doing whatever you like, actually I think that transcends into my philosophy with design. I love the freedom. My whole philosophy

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with design is trying to push the boundaries a little bit, try to do something different – and different is not always nice; it's tricky to be creative and to produce something which is attractive and new. It's very easy to do something that is different but it might be unattractive, so [attractive and new] is what I try to achieve, but I don't always achieve it."

For Gresham, this freedom and boundary-pushing approach to design is something that has manifested itself in fascinating ways across the fleet. He pulls out some plain paper to illustrate how the unique lines of 123m Lürssen superyacht *Al Lusail*, created while he was at H2 Yacht Design, were developed with this philosophy of freedom and the understanding of wave motions.

"I served my time in a naval architects' office and worked for ex-offshore powerboat world champion Donald Shead, who is a real influence on the work that I do today," says Gresham. "He did some fabulous boats, and I worked with him and a naval architect learning how to build a boat. He gave me my reign and let me go out and manage jobs on site and in the yards. You have to do that – be at the yards." It's this kind of experience that Gresham says is imperative to his career. That, and the drive to learn and understand the maritime world, is something that comes after a long time working across the entire spectrum – from sleeping in a tent outside a yacht builder to working with naval architects to fully understanding what goes into these incredible vessels.

"Every yard is the same; it's a nasty business, but to be able to say that to a guy who is bashing metal who knows that you know what you're talking about is worth everything," says Gresham. "This is the difference. When somebody comes out of university – I love the work that is being produced by the young guys at the moment but they need the experience – they need to know how a boat is built and what they can and can't do. But where do you start? Someone who has just graduated has got to start somewhere and I have to say that the talent is impressive when you see some of these guys. But because of all the CGI [computer-generated imagery] and the modelling now, you can hide a bad design within a very pretty CGI."

In today's market, with so many regulations and requirements, it's essential for young designers to have an understanding of how a yacht performs. Gresham's career in striving to understand this makes his designs that bit more comprehensive and this is something he encourages young designers to do – to gain the experience and learn all there is to know about superyacht construction. Once this grounded knowledge is there, that's when boundaries can be pushed and extraordinary things can be created.

"*Eco* [now *Zeus*] is probably one of my favourite yachts of all time. I have so much respect for Martin Francis. He's is such a star and he is also the loveliest person," says Gresham. "When *Eco* was for sale he said to me, 'We're not showing people the boat to buy, we're interviewing them to see if we are going to sell it to them'. Its spectacular creation was the vison of the owner, which is such an incredible aspect of superyacht design."

Currently, Gresham is working on a ground-breaking new conversion project called *Alucia2*, driven by superyacht owner and philanthropist Ray Dalio. It is based on a deep-sea-diving survey vessel built in 2010, but it will now be transformed into a staggeringly advanced ocean-conservation and scientific-research vessel.

"Again, [it] is the vision of the owner, Ray Dalio, who is driving this incredible project forward," says Gresham. "For him to be able to finance and fund something that is going to be transformational in the world and in the ocean, and the research it's going to do, is phenomenal; it's a real honour to be involved in that." The project is scheduled for delivery in 2019 and will pioneer some incredible research with the technology that is to be included on board.

"The responsibility is huge to make sure that we deliver the design that enables all the people to do their jobs properly on board," says Gresham. "We need this all wrapped up in a package that actually looks really good on screen as well. That's been a big factor because the BBC is going to have a big presence on the vessel. So there is even a media room on board where the crew can do all the editing and media syncing – they've got super-fast coms to be able to do real-time feeds. And it works 24/7; this is not a superyacht, this is a working vessel and I was very fortunate to be able to do the job."

Gresham's journey in design has been drawn out throughout the course of his life, from growing up in the Bahamas, studying in Coventry to where he is today on Farm Street. His unique approach and design philosophy have allowed him to push boundaries and create some truly captivating results. A few beers later, and after a fascinating discussion, some of which naturally deviates away from the world of superyacht design and some of which, primarily on my part, are off topic altogether, we decide to make our way back to the office. But I can certainly take away Gresham's truly interesting take on superyacht design – one that will keep on inspiring for years to come. GB

Steve Gresham and Georgia Boscawen at The Punchbowl pub in Mayfair.

Andrew Johannson