

## Building high-tech dreams

Pendennis Shipyard has weathered choppy waters to become one of the world's leading builders of superyachts



### Overview

The boom years of the late 1980s saw growing demand for large, top-of-the-range yachts, and Pendennis Shipyard was founded in 1988 to cater to this market. Drawing on Falmouth's wealth of marine expertise, the yard thrived in its first three years. But profits were hard hit by the global economic downturn of the early 1990s. A boat's true qualities don't emerge until they're tested in heavy weather - and the same proved true of Pendennis. After buying out the shipyard in 1993, its seasoned management team set about upgrading the company's facilities and improving its marketing. They succeeded in winning a string of valuable orders which have helped turn the yard into the largest privately owned yacht-builder in the UK.

Pendennis works closely with leading naval architects and designers to build some of the world's most technologically advanced and luxuriously appointed superyachts. It also refits vintage vessels, from Edwardian motor-cruisers to three-masted schooners. Successful completion of these complex projects demands not only stringent project management and close liaison with the most demanding of clients, but also highly developed teamworking abilities. "There's a huge range of technical skills going into the boats we work on," says Jill Carr at Pendennis, "and Cornwall's maritime heritage means that we can take advantage of the know-how and experience of some really superb craftsmen."

### Workforce

A boat manager and selected personnel are dedicated to specific projects for their duration. Around 200 craftsmen are employed at the yard, including highly-skilled steel and aluminium construction workers, joiners, boat builders, electricians, mechanical and electrical engineers, and paint technicians. The company also operates an award winning apprenticeship scheme for young engineers, fabricators and boat builders, in collaboration with Cornwall College.

### Clients

Pendennis caters to a truly international clientele in the marine sector, and its expertise in using aluminium for superyacht hulls has also led to commissions on innovative building projects that traditional construction firms are unable to undertake. These include the futuristic NatWest Media Centre at Lords Cricket Ground, whose aluminium skin provides support as well as defining its shape.

### Technology

To help it keep right at the cutting edge of marine design and engineering, Pendennis has worked closely on 3D CAD systems with the Department of Mechanical & Marine

Engineering at the University of Plymouth. It has also collaborated with British Aerospace and other partners on the LINK Photonics programme. This involved embedding optical fibres in the advanced composite mast of the superyacht *Jacquelina*, allowing a continuous stream of information to be transmitted down the thin strands of glass so as to give an exact measure of stresses and strains throughout the rig. In 2003 Pendennis began a £7 million upgrade of its site, installing state-of-the-art facilities that will allow the company to build and refit much bigger yachts than in the past.

### Support

The recent investment programme has been assisted by a £2.9 million grant from the Department of Trade and Industry. In bidding for this, Pendennis received advice and support from the South West Regional Development Agency and from Cornwall Finance.