

words: Nick Jeffery



Sailing yachts are MCM's forte. Current projects include Project 151, sister hull to Adèle and in build at Vitters shipyard in The Netherlands

RODNEY WATERS



RICHARD LANGDON

MCM

RECOGNISED BY THE INDUSTRY AS A LEADING FORCE IN SUPERYACHT NEW-BUILD MANAGEMENT, MCM CELEBRATES ITS 21ST BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR. FOUNDING PARTNERS INGRAM AND WILSON KNOW THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS, WITH MORE THAN 60 LARGE BOATS LAUNCHED

Two decades ago, personal chemistry alone might have won the job, but today reputation and trust are number one on owners' lists of criteria when they are looking for a yacht specialist to advise on and oversee a possible €50 million investment.

MCM founders Nigel Ingram and Peter Wilson were perhaps the first to recognise the growing need for people with experience to look after owners' interests as the value of boats increased. Both have an extensive background in yachting, including involvement in the build process as well as global racing and cruising, and had known each other for 12 years when they set up the management company in 1988.

One of the important factors that keeps MCM at the top of its game is maintaining its personal, hands-on approach to relationships,

with one partner singularly focused on each project, avoiding diluting the service by over expanding. Ingram covers new builds in Europe, and Wilson looks after the USA and New Zealand, although he is also about to embark on a project in China. The size of yachts has grown from the days when a 20 metre was thought large to today, where a 50 metre boat might launch without fanfare, should the owner wish to keep it that way.

A few projects were snapped up by new names in yacht management during the 'gold rush' of the past decade, but now, as the flood of new orders subsides, the less-experienced managers may find it harder to justify their fees as owners demand a depth of knowledge. MCM decided from the outset that fees would be either a fixed amount or 'time and

expenses', with no commissions, mark-ups or allegiances. 'We do not work on percentages as that could be construed as a conflict of interest – we represent the owners' interests, pure and simple,' says Wilson.

MCM is divided into construction management and operations management. A construction manager's list of tasks includes helping to select naval architects, designers and stylists; putting a specification together and getting quotes from builders; using experience to recommend and negotiate; identifying potential issues and offering solutions; monitoring suppliers and sub-contractors; and checking costs and extras, particularly 'change orders'. Introducing experts at the appropriate time, whether a captain, surveyor, insurer, lawyer or charter agent, and controlling media access are also part of the

job, and knowing who is reliable gives the edge for a seamless handover to the owner.

However, it doesn't end with handover, and yacht operations management is one area where MCM's nine-strong team has seen growth. The ideal might be that the boat sails away and nothing is wrong. The reality is that during the usual twelve-month warranty period there may well be teething problems. As yachts are diversifying and increasingly feature unique technologies or designs – such as the yet-to-launch *Kokomo*, for a repeat MCM client, which has a hydraulic lifting keel of 130 tonnes – it is more likely they will need tweaks. Wilson says, 'There is a natural genesis to operations management after launch and sea trials – projects never go away for us, as we know the boat better than anyone: what decisions were made, why, when and by whom. Our yacht management division offers support throughout the life of the boat.'

MCM's Palma office was set up three years ago to provide a Mediterranean base, with Ginny Standbridge moving over to offer clients a concierge service. Andy McNab gives ongoing support from the head office in Newport.

With the complexity of today's on board systems making servicing crucial, MCM's Palma team offers a broad range of services. These include budget monitoring, weather and route advice, transport of people, parts and even the yacht, and dealing with local provisioning agents and port authorities. Eighty percent of the yachts under management were built under MCM supervision.

The group has recently won three awards and more could be in the offing with several MCM-managed launches scheduled for the next two years. These include the 58 metre Dubois and Redman Whiteley Dixon-designed *Kokomo*, the 34 metre Reichel Pugh-designed *Nauta 112*, the 45 metre *Paraiso* from Fontaine Design, the 27 metre *Atalante*



Along with Dubois and Redman Whiteley Dixon, the team thought outside the box for the new *Kokomo*'s 130 tonne hydraulic lifting keel box: an artwork drops down to reveal a 55 inch television



The founders launched MCM in 1988 from Ingram's front room. Early projects include *Sagamore* and *Boomerang*, shown being loaded on to Antonov, one of the world's largest planes. Their wealth of experience includes an America's Cup build and win for Wilson in 1992

'Every one of my boats is an expression of my passion for yachts. I have enjoyed the journey and the challenge that each project brings. Continuing my relationship with MCM ensures continuity and a superior outcome'

Lang Walker, owner of *Kokomo*

from Hoek Design, the 30 metre Warwick and Redman Whiteley Dixon-designed *Q5*, the 44 metre Dubois and Rhoades Young project *Lady B* and the 42 metre Langan and Rhoades Young yacht *CII*. There is also MCM 'Project 151' – a Hoek and David Easton-designed 55 metre ketch and hull sister to *Adèle*.

The MCM partners have seen enough boats to have design and construction ideas of their own and can contribute best-practice build techniques to yards around the globe. This year, Wilson joins Boat International Media's World Superyacht Awards panel to judge other projects.

As new builds become increasingly complex, MCM's role in orchestrating the teams involved is growing more challenging. Ingram, who cruised the South Pacific for three years after a three-year stint as an officer in the Royal Navy,

has seen new technology change the way boats are designed but also says developments are driven by owners' changing lifestyles. He believes boats are sometimes overcomplicated and thus too reliant on crew.

Wilson, a veteran of the Grand Prix circuit and seven America's Cup campaigns, says that in addition to repeat yachtsmen clients working their way up to bigger boats as their net worth increases, 'some new owners are not constrained by convention and the priority might be to look beautiful and contemporary', with the owner maybe never 'going to sea'.

Whatever details the client may change during a new build, for Wilson, one thing remains constant. 'Even after 20 years, the thrill at launch and sailing for the first time is as real today as it was when we started MCM. Whether 50 or 200 foot, as the sails are hoisted and you heel over for the first time, the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. There's a real sense of achievement: after a long and complex project and dealing with so many people, now it belongs to the owner,' he says.

Happy 21st birthday, MCM.