

CECIL WRIGHT

FANATICAL ABOUT YACHTS

THESUPERYACHTOWNER.COM: JANUARY 2014

23 Jan 2014

Why Cecil Wright loves Feadship



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I've been corresponding with Claire Van der Vorm at Cecil Wright, the eponymous brokerage set up by Chris Cecil-Wright last year after years spent at Edmiston. I received Cecil Wright's first bit of promotional marketing material this week, and read with pleasure some of Chris's insights into how they approach charter and sales. Specifically, Gerhard Berger, the former Formula One driver who has owned a series of Feadships, mentions in his interview with Chris that he admired Cecil Wright's focus on the Dutch yard.

It's a conversation that's percolating in our offices: What services ate on offer from the smaller brokerages like Cecil Wright and others, like Toby Walker's (former CNI and Dubois Yachts) new Stockbridge Yachts, or the handful of smaller brokerage operations that delivered some of 2013's more notable sales (Seaminds and Penumbra to name two)? Smaller teams, a more focused, specific approach, and in Cecil Wright's example, a very close connection with a specific yard. With Chris being occupied with a deal, I asked his right-hand, Claire, about Cecil Wright's decision to focus on Feadship.

"Looking at Chris Cecil-Wright's sales, purchase and new build history over recent years it becomes obvious that he's passionate about Feadship," she says. "Having been responsible for the construction of some of the largest Feadships in recent years, including the 77.7m *Tango*, the 78.5m *Hampshire II* and the 99m *Madame Gu* and also representing the buyers and sellers of 15 second hand Feadships, by default he is an authority on the brand. Having clocked up endless hours around the table with client, designers, architects, joiners, interior designers, Chris knows the level of work that goes into the negotiation of a new build project, in some cases years before hull construction starts. His role is to bring together a 'dream team' who will create a yacht which is as unique and high-spec as budget will allow."



Claire explains that in Chris' experience, Feadship have the ability to produce the two things which most interest today's yacht owners: The wow factor and mechanical wizardry. "*Madame Gu* exudes a wow factor: Her Andrew Winch interior, which remains very private, is unlike anything seen before, and draws gasps from the lucky few who've seen it," she says. "On deck, exterior and underwater lighting can be changed to any colour of the rainbow just by swiping an iPad; it's the sort of simple, clever detail that never ceases to delight." During a brainstorming session, the build team was pondering what could possibly be done to make use of the space left when the helicopter vacated its hangar; Chris didn't expect his suggestion of a squash court to be taken seriously, but *Madame Gu* is still (for now) the only yacht with its very own squash court.

Claire explains that ironically, it's the underlying technical brilliance they respect even more in a Feadship build; the practical solutions which often go unnoticed. "Charter guests aboard 72m *Utopia* for example (which Chris sold twice) may not be able to put their finger on what is making their holiday so great. Fantastic crew aside, they are experiencing the result of a build project originally conceived as 58m but which, in the pursuit of perfection, emerged finally from Aalsmeer as a 1,500 ton combination of Dutch brains and beauty. With *Utopia*, Feadship were the first to incorporate high-pressure freshwater sprinklers, and the result is huge, self-cleaning windows. In a swell, a special device attaches the helicopter safely to the deck within a fraction of a second if landing (again, the guests might not even notice). And in ports where the quayside is unusually high, at the flick of a switch, a powered ladder slides out of the bulwark and locks perfectly into place (no leg-up required!). On all Feadships the teak decking comes from the heart of the finest, largest trees, handpicked ten years before they are laid. Expensive, yes, but so thick and dense that it's life is more likely to be around 10-15 years, and in need of only an occasional sanding. Chris and his team recognize the brilliance of Feadship and work hard to secure this for their clients, whichever shipyard is commissioned."

Although by nature, as purveyors of a lifestyle, all brokers work with their clients to place their hard-earned money with the best possible team for their project, knowing your broker's allegiances is important too. It's rare to see a brokerage so firmly state their feelings towards one yard, but in Cecil Wright's case, the experience and the quality of the build makes it an easy call to make.

