



# DREAM

*Ex - Excellence III*

**BUILT TO LURE HIGH-END CHARTER BUSINESS,** *Excellence III* ticked a lot of boxes in 2001. Her tremendous volume translated into range, self-sufficiency, good crew accommodation and toy-carrying capability, plus an elaborate eight-cabin interior with copious amounts of gloss and more than a modicum of bling, in keeping with the expectations of the ultra-high-net-worth individuals who would be her guests. She was among the first yachts to be fully MCA certified and she could retrieve her tender while under way.

Abeking & Rasmussen started the 57-metre yacht on spec so that it could have a boat to show to the media and thus the

world. In the preceding 15 years nearly all its yachts had been built for publicity-shy owners. A&R was going to pull out all the stops, and hired Donald Starkey, then based in the UK, to create a contemporary decor. Yard boss Hans Schaedla said to him: 'Use lots of wood – Americans love wood.' He was sure his customer was going to come from America.

There is a famous industry-insider anecdote that shows just how prescient Schaedla was. He waited until after the hull was up, the piping, engine beds and wiring chases installed and the first bulkheads roughed in, and then he released the yacht's plans and specifications to brokers. One of the first



*before*

**THESE PAGES:** THE YACHT'S HUGE VOLUME AND EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY PERSUADED HER NEW OWNER THAT REFURBISHING AND UPDATING A BOAT FROM A LEADING YARD WAS BETTER THAN BUILDING NEW. HE SAVED BOTH TIME AND MONEY, AND HAS A VESSEL THAT WILL GIVE MANY YEARS OF SERVICE



to react was Jim Wallace at Camper and Nicholsons in Palm Beach. His client, New England car dealer Herb Chambers, was only two years into ownership of a 47-metre Feadship but he pitched the project nevertheless. Chambers replied – as Schaedla could have predicted – that he had never seen an A&R boat. He sent his captain to have a look. Shore examined the boat and then called his boss with the advice: ‘You’d better get over here and see this.’ Chambers did, and was so impressed that he signed the contract. He kept the yacht for a decade, during which time *Excellence III* set high standards for comfort, luxury and quality. In 2012, he took delivery of a new 60-metre A&R.

That same year, Schaedla’s visionary boat found another owner who, although not American by birth, has lived in the country a long time and, through 15 years of chartering, has honed his ideas about the perfect yacht. For two years he and his broker, Wes Sanford of Northrop and Johnson, had scoured the globe looking for just the right vessel on the brokerage market. An adventurous traveller, he wanted a boat with long legs that could take him and his family to the ends of the earth or, in the near term, be a successful charter yacht on the Caribbean-Mediterranean circuit. And then *Excellence III* came on the market.

Originally they were looking for a ‘first’ boat of about 42 metres under 500 gross tonnes, says Sanford. ‘Then he saw *Excellence*, appreciated her space and value, and decided to skip the interim boat.’

Explaining his purchase, the owner says: ‘New builds are three or four years in the making and they are very expensive. Here you have a boat from a top yard that will last a very long time. By fixing what I saw as the problems, redoing the interior and updating the systems, as a user I have a new boat in only one year.’

Yes, it was a one-year, eight-figure refit. But it would take a crafty surveyor and a sheaf of documents to convince anyone that *Dream*, as she is now called, is not a brand-new boat.

‘As you charter, you get a feel for what’s important – vibration, noise, comfort. She was like a rock. No, she was really amazing, and I am very finicky about quiet,’ says the owner. Indeed, the pre-purchase survey noted that in-harbour generator noise was well isolated and when the yacht was operating at 1,420rpm, noise levels in all inspected



**ABOVE:** PROVIDING BETTER ACCESS TO THE WATER AND TENDERS WAS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE REFIT AND ADDED THREE METRES TO THE YACHT’S LENGTH. THE SIDES OF THE AFT HULL WERE EXTENDED AND WRAPPED AROUND THE BATHING PLATFORM AND GARAGE OPENING TO GIVE GUESTS AN EASIER ROUTE TO THE STERN FROM THE AFT DECK

*It would take a crafty surveyor and a sheaf of documents to convince anyone that this is not a brand-new boat*



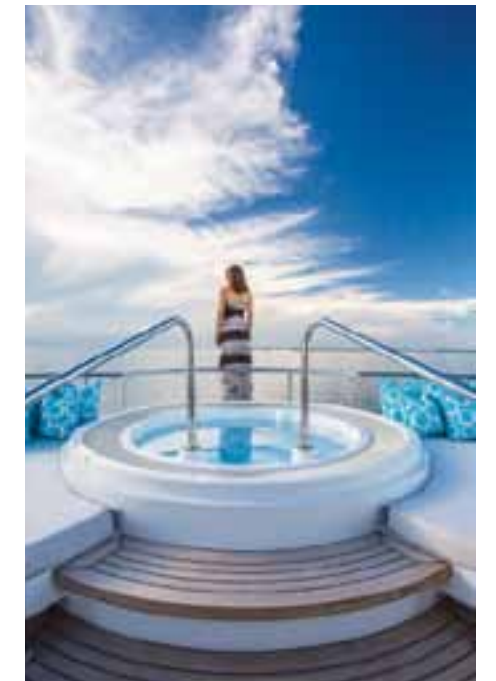
locations were well below Lloyd's recommendations. Where the surveyor did detect noise, it was caused by the air conditioning and could be remedied, the owner was assured.

To keep up with the progress of the refit the owner had the work done close to home at Jones Boat Yard in Miami, Florida, whose desirable features include a lift capability to 1,600 tonnes with a dry-dock, a Syncrolift and covered in-water sheds. The South Florida location was also convenient for the owner's project manager, Gurmeet Ahluwalia of Dynamic Yacht Management, who joined the project three months before purchase. Jones allowed Dynamic Yacht Management and *Dream's* captain, Will Kaye, to take their own subcontractors into the yard.

From the outset, the owners knew the systems would be

replaced with state-of-the-art equipment and that both the décor and exterior paint scheme would be thoroughly refreshed with a lighter, brighter style. These were relatively simple things to request and accomplish. The problem was a deficiency in guest access to the water or tenders, which was going to require some serious engineering and structural changes. In fact, it added three metres to *Dream's* length.

When A&R built the yacht one of the key elements was a large aft tender and toy garage with a mechanism to launch and retrieve the boat without an overhead crane. Large tender retrieval can be a problem in bad weather, and the engineers decided that a foolproof method would be to drive the tender into the back of the yacht when under way, thus taking advantage of a relatively smooth seaway. A cradle with rollers



**THESE PAGES:** TENDERS ARE MANAGED AT THE STERN WITH A CRADLE ON ROLLERS ATTACHED TO A WINCH, WHICH HAS PARTICULAR ADVANTAGES IN BAD WEATHER AND REMOVES THE NEED FOR AN OVERHEAD CRANE. ELSEWHERE, EXTERIOR AREAS HAVE BEEN GIVEN DELIGHTFUL NEW SEATING AND DINING AREAS

slides aft across a short platform and tips down to meet the tender, which is then winched aboard along with the cradle. It's a slick system that allows the yacht to carry a 10-metre tender that doesn't need an 11-metre hole for a side launch-and-retrieve system (and all the attendant steel for stiffening the hull and transferring load that comes with it). Nor does it impact on the overhead space with a sliding crane. However, A&R didn't create a convenient way to get to the platform. The original access point was through a small door on main deck port side that gave access to a straight run of stairs into the garage. Because the door was on the side of the weather deck it required a sill 18 inches high, and stepping over it to negotiate a 90-degree turn to go down the stairs to the garage was awkward and industrial. To use the bathing platform the entire garage door had to be lifted.

The owner had a better concept and hired Murray & Associates Naval Architects of Fort Lauderdale to translate it into a solution that could tie into the existing structure. The answer lay in creating a new guest pathway from the aft deck down to the bathing platform by extending the sides of the hull aft to wrap around the platform and garage opening. The crew now use the original stairs to access the garage for maintenance or to prepare the tender for launch without opening the stern door or having to enter aft deck guest areas. The improvement blends beautifully with the aft deck, and the extra length on the lower deck enhances *Dream's* profile.

At the same time, the garage itself got a major makeover to make space for a nitrox diving station and storage for a large amount of diving gear. This owner's choice for a tender was larger than the original and powered by petrol rather than

*Rather than update the yacht in stages, the owner took her to 'as new' condition all at once*



before



diesel. This required a new ventilation system to meet Lloyd's and flag approval. 'Here the owner called the builder and said: "What are you installing for this on your new builds?" Then he ordered the exact same for *Dream*,' says Ahluwalia.

The owners chose Bannenberg & Rowell of London to refit the interior after seeing the firm's design for *Elandess* and finding it soothing. As a starting point they asked the studio to reconfigure the main saloon and remove the massive bar that had bifurcated the space.

"Taking out the bar opened the spaces visually and allowed us to create a gallery out of the transition space between the main and dining saloons. We faced it with a pale shagreen and created art niches that also create an ambient light source," says Dickie Bannenberg. The niche approach was exactly in keeping with the owner's taste.

**THESE PAGES:** THE INTERIOR, WHICH IS FURNISHED WITH MANY BESPOKE PIECES, HAS THE ATMOSPHERE OF AN ART GALLERY, WITH ARTWORK SET IN BACKLIT NICHES. THE OWNER'S FAVOURITE SPOT IS THE SKYLounge, LEFT, WITH ITS 103-INCH PLASMA SCREEN

'A lot of yachts are impersonal, as if the details are chosen at random by a decorator,' says the owner. 'We wanted to give it a sense of art gallery.' As for personal, many of the large framed photos aboard were taken by him on his travels, and a series of 75 images rotate *à la* screensavers on the pair of 55-inch television screens in the saloon.

'It's slightly unusual for us to work with someone else's architecture,' says Bannenberg of the original high-gloss joinery. 'But the owner asked us to work with it.' In fact, the elaborate joinery has been pushed into the background and

*The original high-gloss joinery is now in the background, supporting the new decor rather taking centre stage*



forms a supporting role rather than taking centre stage. In some areas fabric and leather panels cover sections so that the joinery appears as frames. Window treatments are much lighter in the current style and let much more light into the rooms. The planked floors were refinished and topped with conversation areas on pale-coloured rugs.

Many pieces of furniture were designed by Bannenberg & Rowell and made in France, including a large coffee table in the saloon and a dining table laid with a jigsaw pattern of scalloped veneers. These and fabrics chosen by the owner

and his wife impart a sense of vitality as well as the feeling of exclusivity that bespoke pieces bring to an interior.

Passing the foyer, which showcases unique Asian sculptures, the master suite has been reconfigured by turning an eighth cabin into a yoga, massage or aerobics studio where its full-height windows can be shown to full effect. Opposite this is the owner's office, where a glass-topped desk supported by sections from a 1940s Grumman aircraft wing lend industrial chic. This is carried through to the stateroom, where a ziggurat screen headboard and integrated bedside



tables are upholstered in textured leather with polished metal fittings. Throughout the yacht, rope lighting has been eliminated and LEDs placed in all down and task lights.

The upper saloon also saw major changes. It is now part family room, part cinema and will likely be a favourite with charter guests. A small bar was removed to make way for a custom table where games can be played on interchangeable tops. The rest of the room is dominated by chunks and squares of soft-leather sectional seating facing

a 103-inch plasma television. It is here that the new AV system by Criteria Systems is most noticeable as the sound and picture are of true theatre quality. The yacht functions with Apple controllers, and here taps and swipes close the curtains and control the screen and surround sound.

The new, light decor and shiny exteriors with new seating areas are nice, but it is what guests won't see that is profound. Rather than take a 2001 boat to 2013 in stages, addressing the decor and paint first and updating systems as necessary,



before

*Dream's* owner converted her to 'as new' condition all at once. 'We originally estimated 10 to 11 months for the refits,' says Ahluwalia. 'It took 13. It was remarkable the time commitment he made to choose the right boat and then to put the team together and then to study everything, invest the money and do everything the right way the first time. This way his use or charter schedules are not likely to be impacted by additional yard periods.'

By 'everything' he means a list including new generators and engine exhausts, new Quantum extendable fin stabilisers, a new laundry, new refrigeration and totally revamped air conditioning. As to the latter, repainting the hull a light metallic grey (from the very dark blue) saves massively on the air conditioning load. Ducts were soundproofed and every change or addition checked for sound and vibration attenuation. When the work was completed a post-refit survey found the noise levels lower in almost all locations. The final surveyor's report noted *Dream* 'among the quietest and smoothest motor yachts in its class'.

The bridge also received a total refit: new radars, new



before

**THESE PAGES:** A FEATURE OF THE EXTENDED MASTER SUITE (OPPOSITE AND TOP) IS AN OFFICE WITH A GLASS-TOPPED TABLE SUPPORTED BY SECTIONS OF AIRCRAFT WING, ADDING A MODERN TOUCH OF INDUSTRIAL CHIC

control and navigation monitors, new sounders, new VSAT, and new CCTV, Wi-Fi and Internet systems. The crew quarters were refreshed and every berth has its own Apple TV.

'The owner was always available and often came to the yard – that's how we were able to accomplish so much,' said Ahluwalia. 'If he saw a worn bolt he would say: "Replace it". We had the Lloyd's surveyors check each step. The equipment manufacturers performed all major equipment service. Why? Because I want this boat to be safe and because eventually this owner will upgrade to a bigger boat and I want him to be able to present complete documentation of everything.'

It is rare that a refit project team not only brings a boat up to the present but looks to ensure its future as well. It may be that more than one owner will see this vessel as his perfect 'dream'.

## SPECIFICATIONS

**LOA**

60m (196' 10")

**LWL**

52.5m (172' 3")

**BEAM**

10.7m (35' 1")

**DRAUGHT**

3.4m (11' 2")

**DISPLACEMENT**

975 tonnes

**GROSS TONNAGE**

1,099

**ENGINES**

Caterpillar 3516B

**SPEED (MAX/CRUISE)**

16/14 knots

**RANGE**

5,326nm @ 14 knots

**BOWTHRUSTER**

125kW Schöttel STT 60 LK

**STABILISERS**

Quantum XT zero speed

**GENERATORS**

2 x Caterpillar 3406C

**FUEL CAPACITY**

166,380 litres (43,953 US gals)

**FRESH WATER CAPACITY**

35,400 litres (9,352 US gals)

**OWNER AND GUESTS**

12

**CREW**

15

**TENDERS**

1 x Intrepid 327 open, 1 x 7m Novurania Chase,

1 x 4.2m Zodiac rescue boat

**CONSTRUCTION**

Steel hull, aluminium superstructure

**CLASSIFICATION**

Lloyd's Register

**ORIGINAL BUILDER/YEAR**

Abeking & Rasmussen/2001

**REFIT NAVAL ARCHITECTURE**

Jamie Benoit, Murray & Associates

**EXTERIOR STYLING**

Donald Starkey

**REFIT INTERIOR DESIGN**

Bannenberg & Rowell

**OWNER'S PROJECT MANAGER**

Gurmeet Ahluwalia, Dynamic Yacht Management

**REFIT YARD/YEAR**

Jones Boat Yard, Miami, Florida/2013

