



Special delivery

Halcyon Yachts has grown from being the dream of **Pete Green** to a business delivering more than 150 yachts a year



If you've ever considered using a third party to move your yacht from a to b you may have come across Halcyon Yachts, a delivery company which has steadily grown in size and reputation over the past 15 years. Based in Cornwall and the Solent, its founder and managing director Pete Green is passionate about yachting, and about what he believes are the critical factors for successful deliveries.

Pete was racing dinghies when he was just seven years old. He regularly went out cruising the Cornish coastline from Mylor with his parents on their 23ft Seamaster and as he grew up, he was captivated by the tales his father, a naval aircraft engineer, told of seeing the world on aircraft carriers with the Royal Navy.

Inspired by that lifestyle, he followed in his father's footsteps and joined up as a Midshipman Seaman Officer when he was just 20. "I loved the scale and complexity of working on a warship," says Pete, "but it was all a bit too orderly. I missed the raw experience of the ocean that I got from yachting." So he took the decision to leave, and set his sights on becoming a professional yacht skipper. He hasn't looked back.

Initially Pete went into the classic yacht industry, but was offered a skipper's position with Neilson running flotillas and teaching RYA courses in Greece. "After delivering some of their yachts, I got a

taste for it, so I moved on to working as a freelance delivery skipper," he says.

"That direct contact with private boat owners highlighted how important trust and care are in the business. Many yachts are a lifetime's ambition and most owners have extremely strong emotional attachments with their yachts."

Pete also heard some disappointing reports of failed deliveries and found that some boat owners appeared to view the yacht delivery business with a hefty dose of suspicion. He decided to set up Halcyon Yachts, with a very strong emphasis on customer care and providing high levels of sailing expertise as standard.

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The early years were spent building up a solid network of professional sailors who could carry out the deliveries. Halcyon was wary of being overstretched, so grew slowly but steadily, by word of mouth.

Fifteen years on, now with an effective website and a small team of employees, Halcyon Yachts is delivering around 150 boats a year, mainly privately owned rather than commercial contracts. "Our customers' satisfaction with their delivery experience is by far the most important thing for us," says Pete.

But, having worked as a delivery skipper himself, it wasn't just the customer satisfaction Pete wanted to improve; it was that of the delivery crews too. Halcyon Yachts aims to offer the best terms it can for its crews, while staying competitive on price, and believes that this will not only attract high-quality sailors but that their service to the client will be better.

"All our skippers have commercially endorsed RYA Yachtmaster Ocean or above and are highly experienced. First mates are all also qualified skippers with relevant experience, and deck crew must be capable of competently standing a solo watch at night," says Pete. Deliveries usually operate with three people on board, or four for ocean deliveries, which allows for a comfortable and sustainable watch system.

Pete still takes every opportunity he can to get out and skipper deliveries himself or teach some RYA courses. As the company has grown, and now with two children in tow, it's hard for him to take on the long-range deliveries, but he firmly believes that getting out on the water whenever possible is essential.

"People often assume that as the MD I'll be nabbing all the most exotic deliveries for myself. Oh, I wish it were true! I skipper a dozen or so deliveries a year but because 24/7 logistical support is vital to our business, with only a small team at

Header photo, Pete Green (far left) and crew on a yacht delivery. Left, pre-delivery checks are taken very seriously.

Right, Pete has a passion for filming on board and a couple of years ago videoed a humpback whale surfacing off Dartmouth – a rare sighting



Halcyon, I simply can't plan any long stints away from the office."

Of course, sailing anywhere in the world can be exhilarating and unique, even if it is just in your home waters, and Halcyon Yachts made the news in 2015 when Pete spotted a humpback whale while passing Dartmouth on a short delivery. A keen sailing film-maker, he had his camera with him and managed to catch a couple of frames of the whale before it dived. The encounter generated widespread excitement in the whale watching fraternity, so rare was the footage.

A large proportion of Halcyon's business comes from newly bought yachts, often changing hands and requiring relocation. The unique quirks and nuances of each boat mean that delivery crews have to be prepared for any and all scenarios.

"We face all sorts of challenges when we're moving yachts but I'm always mindful that people are entrusting us with something of very high value, often their most prized possession," says Pete. "It's a huge responsibility, and first and foremost we want to reassure owners that we will care for their yacht as if it were our own.

"We have an extensive pre-delivery check procedure that the skipper runs through. This process ensures that the inventory is sufficient for the proposed passage, the safety equipment is all present and correct and all the systems are working as they should. We have a 24 hour engineer support service, so if there are any issues we can resolve them quickly and cost effectively. We also protect the vulnerable areas of a yacht when on delivery. We insist that the crew have soft clothing and only use dedicated deck shoes onboard, and every effort is made to minimise wear and tear.

"Safety is extremely important to us. Our skippers have a cautious approach with regard to weather conditions and we always make sure that everyone onboard

is fully briefed for various emergency situations. We work closely with the owners to make sure both the yacht and her equipment is up to scratch for the planned journey."

Even when a yacht comes straight out of production, things won't necessarily be straightforward. "One of my first contracts as a freelance skipper was of a brand new yacht to her new owner, a delivery of

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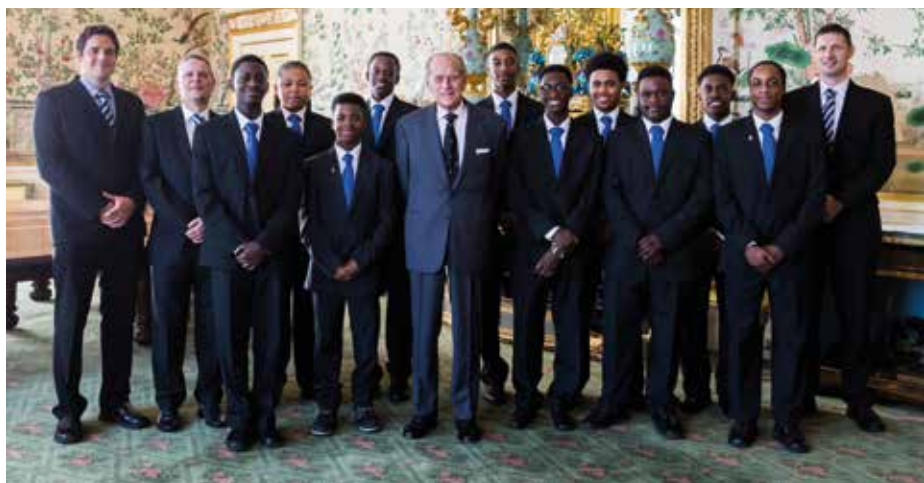
just a few hundred miles. It was a great surprise to me when I found several inches of water sloshing around the bilges after only three hours of sailing. After lots of head scratching, and then pumping to get us safely into a marina, a visit by the manufacturers' engineer revealed that the anchor locker drains had been incorrectly drilled, and there were two neat holes going straight through the hull instead."

True to its founder's passion for sailing, Halcyon Yachts is not just a delivery company. Most of the skippers are RYA Yachtmaster Instructors, so there is natural

scope for own-boat tuition or stand-alone instructional courses, and this is often something yacht owners are keen to take advantage of.

Two years ago Halcyon was approached by a north London secondary school for consultation on an ambitious project to buy a 1980s Admirals Cup yacht called *Scaramouche*. The school hoped to integrate high-level sailing opportunity into its curriculum and now, under the guidance of Halcyon Yachts skippers, it has developed a broad programme for its students on *Scaramouche*. With a couple of Round the Island Races under their belts, Fastnet beckoned and having successfully qualified for 2017, *Scaramouche* crossed the start line on August 6 with eight students and three Halcyon Yachts skippers. This project is one that has attracted a lot of interest, even within Buckingham Palace, and Pete Green is extremely proud to be involved. He actively pursues similar work, keen to inspire and enable young people to take to the water, who may not have the access or support that he enjoyed as a child.

■ Halcyon Yachts offers a 10% discount on its services to all members of the Cruising Association. See www.halcyonyachts.com



A visit to the Palace with the crew of *Scaramouche* from Greig City Academy, Haringey