

PRESTIGE

The Very Best In Life

THAILAND

**ALL THINGS
BRITISH
THE BEATLES
TO BENTLEY**

*Ride The
Royal
Scotsman*

REFLECTING
WITH EVA
HERZIGOVA

**SIKANYA SAKTIDEJ
BHANUBANDH
SWITCHED ON**



A NAUTICAL *twist*

Gareth Twist doesn't look old enough to be heading up one of Phuket's, and now Thailand's, most exciting companies, but he is. Robin Neale reports

PHOTO : SANSITH KORAVIYOTIN



To find out that Gareth Twist has been at the helm of Yacht Solutions for seven years is encouraging for all young entrepreneurs. UK-born Gareth originally graced the southern Thailand shores as a diver some fifteen years ago, enjoying what must have then been Phuket's prime sub-aqua flora and fauna days.

"In those days the words Phuket and development weren't synonymous as they are now," he explains. "The island was quite primitive in many ways with mud roads leading to many of the jetties. And when you finally got your equipment to the end of the pier you were worried it might fall through

the gaps in the rotting planks. But I wouldn't have missed those days for anything, as it makes you appreciate a lot what has happened since."

After a few years of enjoying the carefree existence of an itinerant diver, Gareth was made an offer that he knew he couldn't refuse. An owner of a large yacht offered Gareth the job of looking after his prized possession, albeit with one condition: he had to have a captain's license. So he returned to his native UK and burnt the midnight oil, studying astral navigation and all the other requirements to get his exams over and done with. Success usually comes with hard work and Gareth passed with flying colours.

Something else happened on this trip

home too that would change his life in another way too – he bumped into his childhood sweetheart. After explaining the joys of living on a tropical island at the edge of the Indian Ocean, she decided to join him and the rest, as they say, is history. Today they're married with a three-year-old daughter and live on Phuket's Surin coast. Sorry ladies.

Looking after other people's boats became second nature for hard working Gareth and with an ever increasing demand he started Yacht Solutions Marine Consultancy. The company has two main areas of expertise: the agency side that takes care of your yacht's every need, and the project side that rebuilds and refurbishes yachts of all sizes and descriptions. For instance, imagine



that beautiful old fishing boat with the classic lines that you've had your eye on comes up for sale. Yacht Solutions takes the boat to their yard at The Boat Lagoon in Phuket, or if it's a really big one, to their new yard in Bangkok, run by Gareth's brother. There they take the tired old wood or steel hull and transform it into your dream state-of-the-art sailing boat. Interestingly, to build a yacht this way is a lot less expensive than buying a new one, while also maintaining the ship's old character where possible.

Relaxing over a latte at The Boat Lagoon's Watermark restaurant, I couldn't resist asking about all the million dollar yachts that are moored just below our table. Were they all

corporate play toys that only hit the waves on high days and holidays?

"Surprisingly, a lot of the yachts are owned by individuals and are treated as the family getaway for weekends throughout the season," Gareth replied.

"Why would you stay in a hotel when these boats offer every modern convenience, with all the benefits of sailing away from the crowds to the open waters and deserted beaches?"

Of course there are company owned yachts too. Some are shelf companies just for the boat's ownership and some are owned by corporations – they usually maintain a full crew so that there's always some activity going on. There are also six other marinas currently on the drawing board for Phuket alone, so your

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choice of mooring in the future will be as good here as anywhere in the world."

No doubt with all these new ports coming soon, Gareth's company is going to be very busy indeed. I also get the distinct impression that Gareth, with his combination of youth, experience, and most important of all, boundless energy, is keenly anticipating the future's arrival. **12**