



# A Right Royal Yacht

If you are of the school of thought, who believes a yacht should be white hulled, graceful and cruise solely in tropical waters, then it is just possible that you have closed your eyes to one of the best kept secrets on the yacht vacation and charter market. However if you are happy to consider a vessel that carries just twelve passengers, frequently acts as a substitute Royal yacht to the British Queen and her family providing peace and tranquillity to all those who sail in her, then the motor vessel Patricia might well appeal to you. Despite her pleasing lines apparent to any sailor no one would ever correctly call Patricia a yacht. She is, after all, strictly speaking; a working ship. She is the flagship of the Corporation of Trinity House which is the general lighthouse authority for England Wales and the Channel Islands. Her normal duties involve the maintenance of navigation buoys, attendance and refuelling of off shore lighthouses and dealing with emergencies including wrecks. Since the withdrawal from service of Britannia, the Queens Royal yacht, Patricia is frequently used by the Royal Family who use her for ceremonial and private functions involved with yachting.

WRITTEN BY CAPTAIN MICHAEL  
HOWORTH WITH PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
FRANCES HOWORTH

Patricia follows in the wake of the great tradition of luxury yachts offering accommodation for up to twelve people in six double bedded luxury staterooms each with ensuite facilities. There is ample room on board to relax with a dedicated passenger lounge that opens up to a promenade and viewing deck below which is a separate passenger dining saloon that offers panoramic views from right astern to well forward of the beam. The ship's role as a working ship is what makes her special for passengers, and in that; she is unique. Passengers are able to view the day to day activities she undertakes whilst working around the coasts of England and Wales sailing in a wide variety of different environments along differing coastlines. She is fitted with special towing winches sufficient to pull a fairly large ship away from a dangerous situation as well as providing a routine capability for moving lightships to and from their stations. She has a twenty ton crane which she employs to lift the largest of navigational buoys onto her working deck for servicing and cleansing, whilst her after deck is equipped as a helicopter landing pad. The Corporation of Trinity House was constituted under a Royal charter granted by the famous Tudor King of England; Henry VIII he of the many wives. He did so in 1514 and subsequently the corporation has received fourteen such Royal Charters and grants from succeeding monarchs. Until recently it was the Corporation's policy; not to allow the ship to carry passengers, now, following a change of heart, it is possible to charter all, or just one of her cabins at certain times of the year.

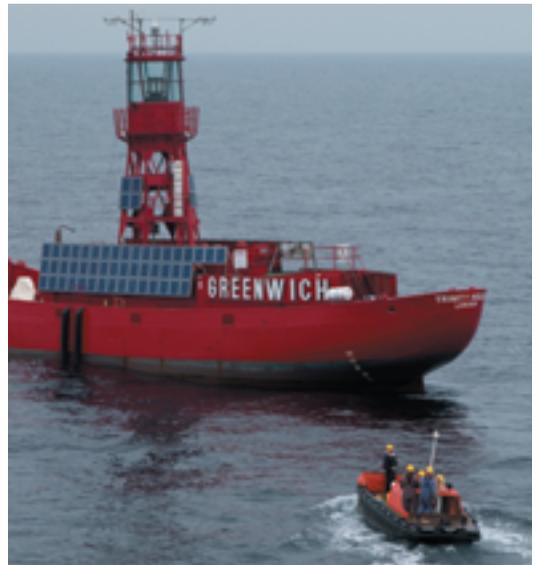
We joined the vessel to cruise an area famous the world over in yachting circles. In fact; it is possible to suggest that the Solent on the south coast of England is the birthplace of modern yachting. We were greeted aboard by our chief steward who introduced us to the commanding officer and it was not long after that, we steamed down Southampton water to drop anchor in the lee of the castle that is home to the Royal Yacht Squadron in Cowes on the Isle of Wight. Whilst the crew busied themselves dealing with the cleaning and replacement of a navigation buoy we, the passengers, were ferried ashore to explore the quaint town of Cowes that is as synonymous with yachting as Newport in Rhode Island is. There are many similarities; the town's narrow streets bustle with activity as yachties tack up and down from chandlery to marine wear shops, galleries display nautical nick-naks and fine artwork whilst the jewellery stores have all developed their own maritime theme. Overlooking the anchorage that has made the town so famous, is an imposing house, which is home to one of the most famous yacht clubs in the world. Needless to say we succumbed to the charms of the local shop proprietors who

seemed eager to part us from our hard earned money and having flexed our plastic cards we rejoined our splendid vessel at anchor clutching all manner of nauticalia. Our Captain suggested a quiet shop free anchorage over night and the men folk in our party quickly assented before the ladies could discharge their booty from carrier bag to cabin. Before too long, Patricia was trundling along in the shadow of the northern coast of the island where she dropped anchor off the pretty port of Yarmouth. The crew quickly prepared their fishing gear and we prepared for our sumptuous seafood feast created by Andy our on board guest chef and served by French husband and wife steward team who did so much to make us feel comfortable aboard and cater for our every need. In many ways, Patricia resembles a very small exclusive passenger liner but carrying only twelve passengers at a time she is very recognisable as a charter yacht. Her food and accommodation are definitely of the style and fashion found in the more exclusive country club.

Our cruise continued, days blurring into days as we sailed the British seaside visiting the towns of Weymouth and Swanage. We anchored off the Casquets Lighthouse that guards the treacherous approaches to the British Channel islands so close to the French mainland. Strong tides and prevailing conditions dictate operations at this station and our little ship anchored less than a quarter of a mile off this rocky islet. The best landing for access to the lighthouse is in a deep gut on the west side of the island and can only be used to land persons and equipment at high tide in fine weather. On another day, we anchored in the middle of the English Channel in order to service a deep water sea buoy, this huge navigation mark was hauled clear of the clear blue water and was swung towards the working deck where it was secured. Suddenly there was a flash of white as our chef shot across the deck, bucket in hand, where he began to gather monstrous sized molluscs from the ropes and chains that secured the buoy to the seabed. It was not until lunch later that day that we realised just how freshly caught was our splendid soup of Moules Marinères. On another occasion; the return, to a local fisherman, of lobster pots he thought he had lost but had, in fact ended up surfacing with the sinker of a port hand mark, was rewarded by a selection of superb crabs and lobsters all of which later graced our already over laden dining table. Deep in the English Channel twixt France and the United Kingdom and straddling the Greenwich meridian is a lightship anchored in 175 feet of water acting as one of the principle lights used by ships sailing north or south through the busy twenty two mile stretch of water known as the Dover Strait that separates Britain from mainland Europe. Here the crew of Patricia had the job of repairing and replacing cables that secure this ship to the bot-

“ She is the flagship of the Corporation of Trinity House which is the general lighthouse authority for England Wales and the Channel Islands. ”





**Accommodations**

THV Patricia has accommodation for up to 12 people with cabins costing from \$2,800 per person per week through Trinity House. For more details contact [contractual.services@thls.org](mailto:contractual.services@thls.org) or visit the website: [www.trinityhouse.biz](http://www.trinityhouse.biz)



**British Officers** ▲  
British officers who crew her, is a joy for anyone who wants to watch shipping and gain an insight into the intricate workings of a very special ship.

tom of the ocean and time spent here allowed guests to visit the little red light ship that not surprisingly bears the name Greenwich emblazoned in large white letters along each side of her hull. There are eleven light ships in the service of Trinity House that guard Britain's coastline each of the red painted ships is just under 140 feet overall with a tonnage of under 500 tons. In years gone by, each carried a crew of up to five men on two month long stays. These crewmen tended the generators that ran to supply electricity to power the huge light shining over the ocean that can be seen some 20 miles away. Modernisation and reliable solar power panels have put an end to human crew and have ensured that these sturdy vessels are able to be left to the remote control of on board computers centrally monitored by shore based stations.

This is not a vacation or charter voyage for everybody. The ship by the nature of her work is more structured than a charter yacht. It attracts those who have a preference to watch rather than to partake in activities and because of this it tends to attract a somewhat older clientele. However, having the freedom of the ship and the undivided attention of the British officers who crew her, is a joy for anyone who wants to watch shipping and gain an insight into the intricate workings of a very special ship. True Britain's weather seldom rivals that of Caribbean islands but in summer, the skies are blue and the sea both blue and clam. There is plenty of room to sunbathe on deck, an abundance of time to read and devour all those books you have been meaning to catch up on and time to complete long outstanding correspondences. The ship is well equipped with computers, desk space and quiet corners in which to study or write. She is seldom out of telephone or television range yet on those occasions when she strays, both systems are backed

up by satellites.

At 270 feet and 3000 tons carrying a crew of 25, Patricia is not dissimilar to a luxury yacht, her spacious teak decks offer similar enjoyment and her officers are justifiably proud of the British Red Ensign that flies at her stern. She might not be everyone's idea of a charter yacht but if all yachts offered the same a vacation there would be no adventures and we would all be the poorer for that. **Y&C**

**About the Writer/Photographer**

Frances and Michael Howorth are a freelance photo-journalist team who specialize in travel features on the ultra large yacht and boutique cruise ship market. They are regular contributors to Yacht Vacations and Charters and have been traveling together for the last twenty five years initially working aboard cruise liners then as crew aboard luxury private and charter yachts. Their voyages of discovery have taken them to Africa North and South America, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, India and plenty of islands in between with such variety as to include Tristan de Cunha, St Helena and the Maldive Islands.

Michael is a member of the British Guild of Travel Writers and is a qualified Captain certificated to command large luxury yachts up to 3000 tons. Photographs taken by Frances have featured on the covers of travel magazines and in the pages of the yachting press as well as other quality periodicals. The couple have written several books mostly about yachts, yachting and survival at sea.

[michael@thehoworths.com](mailto:michael@thehoworths.com)

**Information**

*To charter this trip or any yacht you see in this issue of YV&C, please contact any of the recommended charter brokers listed on page 8.*