



Photograph by Frances Howarth

“Only complete devotion to the job will keep you a step ahead of the rest”

The Captain

Glynn Smith

Age: 37 Place of birth: Southampton, UK Previous yachts: *Katharine, CV-9, Alcor, Milanto, Bugia Bianca* Current yacht: *Solemates* Number of crew: 15



What was your first taste of the sea?

When I was 11 we had a 14ft open fishing boat. After a night's fishing we headed back to the slipway on the Hamble, but the spring tide meant we couldn't get there. So my stepfather asked me to take the boat to another slipway on the Itchen – seven miles up Southampton Water at 4am on a winter's morning. Thinking about it, he should have done time for letting an 11-year-old boy go to sea in busy waters armed only with whitebait and ragworm, though it was my first job as captain!

Which ports do you most look forward to visiting?

New York and Sydney Harbour. Of the more secluded locations, I love Port Resolution on the island of Tanna in Vanuatu. In the Caribbean, anchored stern-to the palm trees in St Lucia is equally as special.

What are your favourite onshore hangouts?

Anywhere with my family, but I especially like golf courses.

What are the biggest changes you've seen in the industry?

How big superyachts have become. I just hope that governing bodies understand why these yachts are built in the first place and do not over-regulate the industry to the point where they deter owners.

What would your ideal yacht be?

A brand-new 60-metre Lürssen called *Solemates* with a great owner and the greatest ever crew. You never know, it could happen! But remember, a yacht is just a yacht – it is the people, from the owner to the deckhand, that make the experience wonderful.

Which is your favourite on-board toy?

Not really a toy, but I love the on-board disco. *Solemates* has so many features and the crew really know how to get the guests involved.

What would you change about the motor yachting industry?

I would like to see more camaraderie among motor yacht crews. Whenever I used to dock with a sailing yacht, other sailing crews would be stood ready to catch your lines. I wish motor yachts had that.

What's the most curious request you have had from a guest?

During the initial tour of a yacht, one guest wanted to see the propeller room, where we kept the propellers.

What's the worst weather you have encountered on board?

In the North Atlantic, crossing to the UK during 1997 on a Swan 46. Waves like mountains, and at one point we were knocked down. And during a mistral in the Mediterranean, when the wind topped out at 60 knots and my boat was knocked down twice. I was the only one able to

take the wheel and did so with a broken hand. My only sustenance for 18 hours was two cups of tea made by my then girlfriend (now wife), who had to muster all her strength to brew them. I never told her that when I took the cup from her it was so windy that the contents were simply vacuumed overboard!

Who is the most eccentric/strangest/funniest member of your crew?

My entire crew are jokers! It's constantly like *Saturday Night Live* here.

What's the most stressful part of your job?

As the years go by, I have realised that some things are out of my control and it's pointless stressing about them. My job is not stress free, but it's just a matter of how you manage the different situations.

Any advice for an aspiring captain?

A huge percentage of a captain's job centres on people skills. Aspiring captains need to become psychologist, father, babysitter, diplomat, politician, businessman, napkin-folder – and, yes, a yacht captain! Before sending replies to troublesome emails, leave them in the draught box overnight and look at them again in the morning. Only complete devotion to the job will keep you a step ahead of the rest. Don't ever think you know it all and always be honest.

Who would be your top-five fantasy charter guests?

Eddie Izzard, the cross-dressing comedian; Bono, the musician; Ernest Shackleton, the explorer; Will Ferrell, the actor; and Billy Connolly, the hairy Scottish wit. This would be a hysterical charter!

What's the biggest cock-up you've ever seen another captain make?

In Bonifacio, a husband and wife team on a 50ft sailboat were backing onto the dock. They had their dinghy alongside, and as they reversed the tender moved forward. He called for his wife to go the anchor. She did – paying out 50 metres of chain into the tender. As it was piling up, he continued towards the dock, then instructed the wife to tension the anchor. As she did so, the bottom of the tender fell out, sending the chain, anchor and entire interior contents of the dinghy to the bottom of the harbour. Guess who he blamed? Yes, you got it: the wife!

And yours?

Not using my draught email box before sending thorny emails!

Captain Glynn Smith was talking to Frances and Michael Howorth on board Solemates. The yacht is available for charter through the Luxury Yacht Group for €400,000pw. www.luxuryachts.com