



TAKING THE ROUGH WITH THE SMOOTH



Mercurio Shipyard is a Spanish boat builder specialising in glass-reinforced plastic (GRP) vessels. Launched 16 years ago it began by constructing small fish farm and multipurpose boats. Since then serial diversification – notably into the wind farm sector – has seen Mercurio achieving global recognition and success with its high quality designs and innovative strategies. Managing Director Juan Moreno spoke with Colin Chinery.

When Mercurio Shipyard set sail in 1997, its focus was the market in small multipurpose vessels. Then in a series of astute navigational changes, the Cartagena-based company moved into more creative and profitable waters, first with fish farm vessels and later a global portfolio of passenger, rescue and cargo designs.

And in a further diversification three years ago, Mercurio extended into wind farm support vessels, with its innovative and high quality designs quickly powering it into pole position in this niche sector. "It was an important moment in the development of the company," said Mercurio's Managing Director Juan Moreno.

Design Pace Setter

"We began developing new designs with the aim of being at the forefront of a market where there are many more possibilities," continued Mr Moreno. "As a result, we are widely recognised for commercial vessels that are well designed, very strongly built, are aesthetically pleasing and create real, long lasting value for our customers."

Building catamarans and monohull vessels, Mercurio developed a special design

with three bows. Thanks to this and to a special composite structure, its boats can sail rough seas and carry big loads operating with a large crane.

Ginny Louise and Edén Rose, two personnel transfer vessels constructed in col-



laboration with UK North Sea access provider Tidal Transit, are an impressive example of Mercurio quality design and build as the Norfolk-based specialist

recently celebrated the completion of 10,000 safe passenger transfers from these vessels to North Sea wind turbines. Even in calm waters, this is one of the most potentially hazardous processes faced by those working in the offshore wind energy industry.

But the Ginny Louise and Edén Rose - at £1.5 million apiece - are operating in the typically turbulent North Sea sailing on an almost daily basis from Wells-next-the-Sea and Great Yarmouth to service the Greater Gabbard and the Sheringham Shoal Offshore Wind Farm.

Dramatic Performance

"We chose Mercurio because of the proven and patented GRP hull design that dramatically improved the sea keeping of a typical catamaran workboat," said Tidal Transit's Commercial Director Leo Hambro.

"Tidal Transit says our vessels are greatly superior to the current fleet being used for the same purpose around the UK, out-performing competitors and representing excellent value for money," said Juan Moreno. ▀

MERCURIO SHIPYARD | PROFILE



A third Mercurio vessel, Tia Elizabeth, will be joining the Tidal Transit fleet shortly, with these same specifications that far exceed those of other fleets operating for the same purpose in UK waters. And with a cruising speed of 25 knots, when fully laden, the vessels can work safely in seas of up to 2.5m.

The vessels' MCA Cat 1 coding and 10,000l fuel tanks allow them to work up to 150 miles offshore, well within the range of the UK's forthcoming Round 3 offshore wind farms. Each vessel provides four crew members and 12 passengers with comfortable beds, bathrooms, galley, internet access and entertainment facilities, allowing wind farm engineers and support technicians to live and work offshore days at a time. Twin V12 MAN engines facilitate speeds of up to 27 knots

when carrying twelve passengers, the crew, and their on-board cargo.

Massive cargo decks fore and aft can accommodate up to 10,000kg of tools, equipment and spares, and the Guerra crane on the fore deck has a lifting capacity of 1,025kg at 6.9m for long reach loading and unloading.

Exciting Sector

"Wind farms are a very exciting sector and one that allows us to offer different solutions. We have many ideas and design concepts," said Mr Moreno.

As an innovative GRP boat builder aiming to achieve even greater energy efficiency through advances in composite material production, research and development is at the core of Mercurio's expansion strategy.

"Everything is done in house with a very low level of sub-contracting," said Mr Moreno. "Our designs are based on customers' specifications and we integrate into our designs new methods of production, and the latest proven concepts and components that offer better performance. All this gives our customers a very valuable asset and one that long maintains its value. In short, we offer customised solutions."

The joint venture with Spanish desalination specialists Desalia - a 20m catamaran able to produce and supply 10,000m³ of consumable water a day - is an example of Mercurio's conceptual thinking. At a width of 7m and 2.76m in depth, the two 150 horsepower electric motors make it environmentally friendly.

"Inexpensive, easy to operate and capable of serving small groups of islands and communities; it's an exciting project that will bring great benefits for many people," declared Mr Moreno.

New Markets

A fisheries patrol boat operating in very shallow waters is also a current project and one which Mr Moreno sees as a significant step forward in a new market. Another sector creating a lot of interest is ferries, with Mercurio creating many options and a range of designs.

"Flexibility and innovation puts us at the forefront of the market," he said, "and we are extremely adaptable to a customer's needs. We use only top quality materials, with 70 per cent of our suppliers based in the UK,

Denmark and Germany. All our builds are light, very strong, of a high quality, very competitively priced, and give excellent value.

"We maintain a very close contact with our customers in terms of support, advice, and also two way feedback. 70 per cent of our customers come back to buy again."

Growth to Double

While the market was slow in 2012, Juan Moreno expects business to grow through 2013 and 2014, with the company doubling in size supported by site expansion and an increased work force.

And while Britain continues to be its biggest market, Mercurio is seeing significant growth in Germany and Denmark. North Africa and the Middle East are other markets, and since 2012 Mercurio has been

growing in Chile, Brazil and elsewhere in South America.

"We are doing well," smiled Juan Moreno. "The future looks very promising and exciting."



Managing Director Juan Moreno