



Swanning Around

***a new office for
Northrop and Johnson***

Located in Palma Mallorca, the new Spanish office and most recent addition to the Northrop and Johnson group, is now open. It is owned and managed by well-established and long-standing brokers Simon Turner and Joost Goverts: a formidable team who have 45 years of combined selling experience.

We spoke to them about their exciting new partnership and the voyage that has taken them to where they are today.

The story of Northrop and Johnson goes back nearly 60 years. Shortly after the Second World War, Jim Northrop and George Johnson formed a partnership to provide a quality yacht brokerage service. The first office opened in 1949 in lower Manhattan. Northrop and Johnson went on to become one of the largest and most respected yacht brokerage firms in the world. In 1971 Kees Van Vliet opened the first US yacht brokerage office in Europe in Cannes, France. Over this course of 60 years, Northrop and Johnson has continued to grow and maintains its reputation for honesty, integrity and fairness. The Northrop and Johnson Group has independently owned offices in Florida and Southern California; Boston, MA; Newport, RI – and now Spain, with future plans for Moscow and Dubai.

Having completing business school, Joost Goverts spent his early years sailing and travelling. After returning to Holland he trained and worked as a social worker for seven years, but his passion for sailing and the Mediterranean never left him. In 1988 he settled in Mallorca and spent many years with De Valk before moving onto Dahm International as a senior broker. At Dahm he learnt the importance of continuity which he says is “a key ingredient in this business and a main ingredient for success”. During this time he was involved in sailing and selling Swans, which is when he first met Simon. ▶





Simon started as a broker rather by chance. In 1979 he took a holiday job at Lymington Marina in the dock masters office: "The then manager of the brokerage at Berthon, one Nick Edmiston, asked if I'd like to work there," he says, "so I moved next door – we had old "portacabins" in those days! – and started as tea boy and filing clerk, gradually training as a 'broker'.

"So by 1981 I guess I was 'a broker' and have been ever since! The business was rather different then – much more relaxed, less competitive – but still very professional (at least we were!). I remember we had some good Christmas lunches with all the brokers from Lymington – I can't imagine that happening today!"

Simon stayed with Berthon for over ten years gradually building up his experience and portfolio. The agencies that Berthon had at the time – Baltic Yachts and Trintella, meant that he was dealing with high quality sailing yachts combined with brokering several good Swan yachts and, as such, from an early stage he appreciated the quality and brand of Nautor's Swan.

"As well as the quality of yachts there were some great characters around, Dennis Lowe, Alastair Easton, Sheila MacDonald and of course Nick ... I learned brokerage from the 'old masters' and proper gentlemen" Simon reminisces.

Simon moved to Mallorca with his family in 1991 and took up a new job working with the Nautor's Swan agent in Palma, Trevor Holloway. Trevor was another industry "gentleman" and they worked together until Trevor died suddenly in November 2003.

During that time Simon sold many yachts internationally and early in 2003 he set up his own company Berthon Spain, which incorporated the previous Swan brokerage. When this contract expired earlier on this year he took the opportunity to join Northrop & Johnson.

In February 2005 Joost Goverts came to work with Simon at Berthon and soon the pair were appointed the Nautor Swan agent for Spain and Portugal. Under the new N&J agreement they will still continue with the agency selling new Swan yachts in Iberia and pre-owned Swans worldwide.

We asked Joost why they have chosen to work with N&J: "Because of transactions we had done with N&J

"In this global market, experience and a good international network are the key to success on a personal and a corporate level."



we knew several of their brokers and, realising how personal this business is, this stimulated us to find a common interest and start a N&J office on this side of the Atlantic. They are communicative, professional, motivated and outgoing people who are involved in local events and regattas, which all helps the business."

Simon added "There are other reasons we have come to work with Northrop and Johnson – just as in my early days I relish working with fellow professionals and I believe that Northrop and Johnson has historically been known as the 'Gentleman's broker'. They pride themselves on their sterling reputation founded on integrity. You can't overstate the benefit of being part of such a network of dedicated brokers".

We asked Simon what are the biggest changes that he has seen since he has been in the industry: "Clearly over the years the marine industry has changed a great deal. Yacht brokerage has gone from being something of a 'cottage industry' to a major international business. Technology has brought in many changes – it does not seem so long ago that we were all amazed with our wonderful telex machines! Now with the internet and the easy worldwide communication everything works at a faster pace and you have to really work the hours to stay on top of





Joost Goverts (left) and Simon Turner have 45 years' experience of yacht brokerage between them.



everything. Clients have easy access to so much information

"But whilst technology and a global market have brought changes there is no real replacement for a good professional broker. This is still a people business and relies much on human contact and a personal touch."

Joost talked to us about some of his previous sales and particularly the fastest deal. "A client saw the 20-metre motor boat in a photograph, asked a few questions and sent the money. The day he and his friend took delivery of the boat, the handshake, the thanks and the goodbye to the old owners might have taken three and a half minutes. Thinking that they would be taking the boat from one side of the island to Portals, where they owned a mooring, I waited for them in my car, expecting them to come into port. It took them a week to find home! Half an hour out of port they decided to steer straight to Ibiza and played around there for a week. They had phoned their wives to say they would be home a little later, then bought a pair of swimming trousers and some food in Ibiza. It was a little bizarre! But that is the freedom that boats give."

Simon has similar stories: "Brokerage is always an interesting business – you never quite know who you'll meet or how an initial contact may pan out. I've worked with clients for up to three years finding them the right boat. Other times a sale may all be completed within three weeks! I have sold the same boat up to three times and sometimes you sell a boat without ever seeing it or meeting the buyer or the seller! In fact I have just sold a Swan 65 in Mexico with this situation."

Of boat sales within the current economic climate, Simon says: "The yacht brokerage market is continually changing – the last years have seen changes due to the low dollar and the US market conditions. It regularly runs in cycles. In the early 1990s we saw a downturn. The last years have certainly been good for most builders, salesman and brokers.

"But this year the boat market in Europe is seeing a more direct change. Now the curve is again probably

"We are delighted to be part of the Northrop and Johnson group. Northrop and Johnson is a familiar name worldwide – we look forward to carrying on the tradition of experience and integrity. Our presence gives Northrop and Johnson a European office in the most important yachting centre in the Mediterranean."

on the downward turn. We would expect new boat sales and the motor yacht market to be hardest hit by any recession. Traditionally the sailboat market has lower peaks and shallower troughs."

So what advice would he give to anyone thinking of buying a boat in Spain?

"Speak with a selection of brokers to get a feeling for who could do the best job of representing you as a buyer or seller. Commit to this relationship and tell the broker that you want to buy/sell a boat through them.

When you, as a buyer see a boat advertised that you like, you can ask the broker to explore this while you concentrate on your own business. Because both Simon and I have been mainly sailboat brokers, and this is known to be one side of brokerage that potentially takes a lot longer than selling power boats, we are used to having contact with the same families for many many years. Now, N & J is a good sailboat broker, but some of their offices have good motor yacht brokers and we here in Palma will actively seek to list motor boats as well.

"Any client considering the purchase of a yacht should take advantage of the information available on line but it is not always accurate and the quick and easy comparisons drawn on age and price may not be the full true reflection of the situation.

"I'd suggest any buyer works with one broker to use him to help his search, refine the list and to supply good accurate information. If you shop around too much you risk only seeing part of the overall picture.

"When it comes to buying a yacht you can't do better than to use a proper, experienced and professional broker. For the would-be seller the same advice applies – use one good broker to be your Central Agent and to take care of proper marketing,

"In either case the broker should be one from Northrop and Johnson – of course!"

info@NandJSpain.com

www.NandJSpain.com

T: +34 971 707898; F: +34 971 707775