

## ONE FOR THE STOCKING

*Fed up with nautical nicknacks this Christmas? Indulge your extravagance with our fantasies*

BUYING a Christmas gift for the totally committed yachting fanatic can be almost impossible.

What real use is yet another pair of sailing gloves or the latest combined shackle key and corkscrew — though on the other hand...

We decided therefore, that this Christmas *Yachting World* would look for something completely different, not only gifts extravagant and opulent, but also gifts guaranteed not to be found in anyone else's stocking.

Our quest started in St Katharine Dock, in the heart of London, just a stone's throw from Tower Bridge. (Come to think of it, a gift voucher for your own personal opening of Tower Bridge might be a unusual gift. Try 01-407 0922 to make a booking.)

We went to Ivory House initially to stand with our noses pressed against the glass of **Seabourne Interiors**, before entering their sumptuous showroom to examine fascinating furniture

and a surprising collection of nautical bits and pieces for the home rather than for the average yacht.

Seabourne Interiors opened at St Katharine Dock in November 1984, founded by Freddy Braun, a Swiss who turned a lifetime in shipping to good advantage tracking down fine furnishings from soon to be broken-up passenger vessels. He has shops in Stockholm and Basle as well as in London, all concentrating on restored mahogany, teak and rosewood furniture, brass fittings, ship models, lighting and many other items, reflecting the past glories of shipping.

The main part of the London showroom is taken up by a selection of fine pieces from two passenger ships, the Italian *Giuseppe Verdi* and the German *Hansa Bremen*. There are single bunks atop tiers of drawers for £2,600, complete with brass corner pieces and restored to a patina that only comes from the best materials in skilled hands.

Double beds with side tables are there but we were particularly taken by the tables and their associated chairs.

One table was from the *Giuseppe Verdi*, a fine example of 1950s Italian design, with its polished timber set off by brass detailing and the brass base of the swivelling chairs. The other table was smaller, round, and again was accompanied by swivelling chairs. All the details of ship's furniture were there, the ingenious arrangements for erecting the fiddles in rough weather, the attachments to bolt the chairs down in bad weather, and above all the craftsmanship which was the hallmark of the passenger liner.

Smaller pieces were clever cutlery boards (£720) made from the heat covers of the *Hansa Bremen*, crockery stowages to keep the china in place in rough weather (£580), reception desks and bookshelves.

More items, too big to get in the showroom, are in store in warehouses along the banks of the Thames, including a special set of bunks that convert from a leather settee in daytime to a huge double bed at night.

If you want a little decoration, there are genuine brass bathroom fittings like towel rails and soap dishes alongside a range of reproduction lighting made in the same moulds as by the same makers who crafted the original items for ships.

A diver's suit, £2,800, stands in a window, looking over a haphazard collection of engine room telegraphs — £1,300 with a pedestal, £1,100 without — and ships wheels — £350 for a wheel complete with standards. Ship models are also on show, from the 10ft (3m) *SS Caledonia* in a glass case at £12,000 to one carved in fine detail from bone by a French Prisoner of war in the days of Napoleon.

A few miles up river are the premises of Model Shipwrights of London, **The Nautical Gift Centre**. Here, among the novelties like nautical knickers with their slogans, David McFall holds court surrounded by ship and boat models of all types.

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Above, in a corner at Seabourne Interiors, a diver's suit stands guard over lanterns, telegraphs and some superb ship models. Left, this beautiful table, from the *Giuseppe Verdi*, £2,600, with its companion chairs, £390 each, is typical of the quality of the furniture Seabourne rescue from scrapped passenger vessels



Couch and conversation piece by day, cosy bunk by night