

WORKING AROUND THE WORLD



LIBBY & PATRICK ALLAWAY

OYSTER 545 // PEGASUS

Sydney sailors Libby and Patrick Allaway found their ideal boat, but on the far side of the world and it had yet to be built. Problem? Not at all. Research and reputation gave the reassurance to go ahead, and without yard visit or trial sail, Oyster 545-08 Pegasus was commissioned and project managed long distance. Shipped to Australia in February, Pegasus now has pride of place on the Allaway family berth in front of the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club in New South Wales' spectacular Pittwater National Park. Patrick takes up the story...

WORDS BY PATRICK ALLAWAY & MIKE OWEN // PHOTOS BY PATRICK ALLAWAY

I'm ecstatic about *Pegasus*. It's been a long time coming, a two-year project, and Oyster has been absolutely fabulous to deal with, right from the planning stage through project management to delivery with a commissioning skipper from Oyster coming out to Australia for a week-long handover. It's been a great experience, a credit to Oyster. We visited only once, and that was late in the project when she came out of the shed.

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It was a big leap in confidence but we did our research, looked at lots of different options in different companies. Everything kept pointing to Oyster. I had a colleague in Australia who'd sailed an Oyster before, and the more I heard, the more I felt this was the right boat for us. Then I spoke also to a couple of Oyster customers, had very good feedback, and once we started dialogue with the Oyster team, we just felt more and more comfortable that this was the right choice. Then the real question was what size.

We were graduating from a Beneteau Oceanis 41 that we'd had for four years but mostly only day sailed with no extended cruising. It was a bit over two years ago that we decided we wanted to go bluewater with a boat that could safely, comfortably, cross oceans with us as a couple or variously with friends and our two grown children, 24 year old James and 22 year old Maddy. I was a bit concerned that anything much over 50ft would be too big for Libby and me alone but we got comfortable after talking to Oyster. We had a good think about the 575, seriously considered the 475 also, but after discussions decided the 545 was right for us.

Commissioning an Oyster, there is a significant number of choices and decisions to be made, so much more than with production builders. A little bit tough from far away but our project manager Luke Porter was fantastic, ran the process really well, always on hand and communicating, sending samples, photographs. Really helpful.

An early issue was whether to go with in-mast furling or fully battened main, and I went fully battened as I am racing her in the offshore series here off Sydney. Having the bigger sail and the battens does make a difference, so that helped the decision. I have gone with all the electronic winches and the electric furling headsail. Then, as well as the standard Dolphin sails, I bought an asymmetric spinnaker here in Australia from North Sails.

Otherwise on deck she's fairly standard, although I extended the pushpit benches more around the corners, similar to on the 575, and padded the back railing. I've also davits for the RIB, helpful for when we're sailing in the islands. From the communications perspective I have gone for sat phone, put on radar, two satnavs, one downstairs, the other upstairs on the pedestal. I've gone with bow thruster and I went for a pretty comprehensive set of spares given we're so far away. The guys were really helpful in recommending what I should have.

My biggest concern about buying the boat was in being stuck such a long way away without much in the way of handover or knowing what I was doing. But I needn't have worried. The handover was outstanding, so thorough. *Pegasus* was shipped to Newcastle, about 100nm north of Sydney. We were joined by local agent Michael Bell and commissioning skipper Duncan Bush who came out from England, helped us sail back down to our home berth and was here with us for a week going through the boat, and out on numerous sailing sessions. He knew the boat backwards and there was hardly a question he couldn't answer. A very helpful process and outstanding job. The after sales has been very good, too, any teething problems responded to and rectified very quickly.



We keep *Pegasus* just 40nm north of Sydney, at the Royal Price Alfred Yacht Club in Newport on a beautiful protected inland waterway called Pittwater, which has an outlet to the ocean about 10nm from the yacht club. We have a beach house about 10 minutes from the boat and our home in Sydney is just 30 minutes away. It's a great lifestyle. Currently we are just getting used to the boat, coastal cruising and the short offshore races the club runs. But in July I'm taking the boat up to the Whitsunday Islands on the Great Barrier Reef, about a 2,000nm trip from Sydney.

We'll leave *Pegasus* up there through the Australian winter, then have most of September on the boat sailing the islands before bringing her back to Sydney in early October. Then next year we plan to join the Oyster World Rally fleet in Fiji. I was hoping to spend more time on the Pacific Rally but unfortunately because of board commitments we'll have the boat delivered to Fiji in late August, then join the Rally in September and sail back from there to Sydney.

The future? More cruising, offshore racing, and maybe the Sydney Hobart when more experienced. That would be something to tick off the bucket list!

We love the boat, she's far better than we ever expected. I couldn't have hoped for a better result and we've been blown away by the service, the help and the support from Oyster. They have been absolutely fabulous. My biggest concern, being so far away, was whether this would work. It has, extremely well.