

IN BUILD: THE OYSTER 118

This summer sees the passing of a major milestone in the building of the new, 36m Oyster 118. With moulding completed at Oyster's ancillary construction facility in Lee on Solent, the 118 is now returning to Oyster HQ in Southampton's Saxon Wharf for fitting out. With a massive 700m³ volume below the sheerline, this biggest of current new builds will take until winter 2017 to complete, ready for sea trials through the spring of 2018.

WORDS BY MIKE OWEN

Observers will know, though, unusually she's already been to sea. For a craft this size, the only way in and out of the mould shop in the former Royal Naval Air Station HMS Daedalus is by sea. With military precision, first in went the moulds transported by barge with a beach landing, then craning and low-loading into the hall for the hull to be hand laminated inside its long sectional female mould before being sprung and in reverse order shipped, with deck moulding also, back to Southampton. So after eight months in the mould shop, it's now time for the machinery, utilities and furnishings to take centre stage.

And what a stage, as Oyster CEO David Tydeman explains, "We have such space to work with, and with the way we designed the structure with Humphreys Yacht Design much more scope than might be expected. In the aft end there is enormous volume which we can use in three, four and even five guest cabin arrangements, with yet another guest cabin option forward. For a sense of scale, just the social areas on the main deck are bigger than the entire interior of an Oyster 72. The main deck's guest cockpit and split level saloon alone measure more than 13m/43ft long."

Then consider the option of second saloon cum snug/cinema room forward on the lower deck, and on the foredeck a tender pit that converts to seated picnic arrangement. The picture then builds of a cleverly conceived, modern performance ocean cruising yacht, constructed to DNV classification and MCA LY3, and coded for high latitude sailing. A truly go anywhere yacht customisable for up to 12 guests served by a crew of six plus nanny or tutor if heading off for that long family cruise. >>



Computer generated images

And for the commissioning owner of this first Oyster 118 it was this family wish, keeping teenage children and their friends involved, that drove the instruction for five cabins aft and a cinema room forward that with sliding panels converts to a bunked sixth cabin. So counting in the three crew cabins, one double, two bunked and all to MLC standards, this is an eight/nine cabin yacht with, pleasingly, each aft cabin still bigger than its equivalent on the 885, and even equal to the guest cabins of the Oyster 100.

An alternative layout focuses on more personal space, particularly for the owner with a very large, 90m³ forward-extending Master Suite, incorporating a private drawing room and library. This plan also then allows for a VIP guest suite with island bed and enhanced featuring and enlarged shower room.

Access from the lower to main deck varies according to cabin arrangement. For the 118-01, the stairwell emerges on the saloon centreline, while in the three and four aft cabin versions, the stairs are offset to one side adding to the sense of space again and allowing more options in saloon plan. For this first 118, the forward area of the two-step, split level saloon features a chaise longue under the sloping, opening forward screens, with occasional tables and additional deep armchair seating. Another option would have been for a free standing dining arrangement, but the owner chose to forego this having decided to take meals always on deck in the protection of the sleek, rigid bimini around a fine table set for ten to 12.

Serving or working the deck, crew access directly from galley to foredeck precludes the need to pass through guest areas, so reducing intrusion and maintaining better privacy for all onboard, that's guests and crew.

Sailing systems on this first launch include four captive winches for the single-headed, Hall carbon and North 3Di rig's main halyard, mainsheet and headsail sheets, and the code sails fly from a powerfully engineered prodder in-built with the anchoring system. There's a removable inner forestay also. Electronics include a full Furuno system and the bespoke Skyships ship's management system that monitors virtually all engineering functions aboard. The engine room is almost standing height and, as always with Oyster, excellently laid out with quick access to strainers, electrics and routine service points across engines, generators, chillers, watermaker and more, and has a good bench working area.

Aft the lazarette houses compressor and toys and the transom hydraulically lowers to provide a landing platform for bathers and tender. And if you fancy all this but wish she was bigger again, then you can opt for a squared stern that balances well with the plumb bow and adds another full metre to deck length. There's even a flybridge version under discussion.

As David Tydeman says, "We've had a great canvas to play with and have a wide variety of options for owners wanting a very high specification yacht with the benefits of series building. It's a serious business but it has been fun and we're very much looking forward to these next stages in delivering our new flagship."

