

ON TEST: OYSTER 675

THERE MAY BE NEW STYLING AND OPTIONS GALORE BUT THE 675 IS STILL ASSUREDLY AN OYSTER. TOBY HODGES REPORTS

When it comes to series-building large cruisers, Oyster Yachts is the undisputed world leader. The yard's evergreen popularity lies with its bluewater cruisers up to 60ft and, more recently, its unrivalled success with 80-footers. But two new launches, the 675 and the 745, herald a new modern look and era for Oyster: the hull shapes, drawn by Humphreys Yacht Design, are more powerful than their predecessors, beamier with greater form stability; they both sport

twin rudders, flush foredecks and blade jibs and have more power in their rigs and keels. These two yachts (69ft and 75ft LOA respectively) are still bluewater cruisers but they have been given a very purposeful new image: the stretched coachroof window line marks the style of this new range; the signature wraparound window remains, but with a lower profile than we have seen on past models.

However, what really sets the 675 and 745 apart is the range of options available. ➤

FACTS

Test Editor **TOBY HODGES**

- ▶ **Where we tested:** The Solent
- ▶ **Wind:** 5-13 knots over calm sea.
- ▶ **Model:** hull no 1, *Babiana*, with conventional transom and owner's cabin aft



Photos by **PAUL WYETH**





Above: The twin rudders provided good feedback in anything above 7 knots



Above: The uncluttered cockpit forward of the binnacles, beneath the optional bimini



This 675 is the first Oyster to offer a forward master cabin as a standard option and there is a wide variety of internal layouts available. Below the waterline, twin rudders reduce draught sufficiently to enable Oyster to offer a 'super shoal' centreboard version, while on deck a cutter rig can be specified in place of the single blade jib.

All models bigger than the 675 are now offered with conventional sloping transoms or extended vertical transoms as standard, while smaller models have been fitted with the extension on request. Other than create a very different look, the extended version doubles the size

of the lazarette stowage and creates the option for a tender garage – another first for Oyster.

It is rare for an owner to know exactly what they want in a yacht of this size, so having all these options designed in is a way of helping the owner and the yard to create a personalised yacht. "We can't change the main structural bulkheads but there is enough latitude within the design by Rob [Humphreys] to offer a variety of layouts," Oyster's CEO David Tydeman explained. "We can't take it to extremes but we're a hell of a lot more flexible than we used to be."

Other than her sportier shape and

Above: The Oyster 675 showing her power. An extended counter stern can be specified for even more stowage and deck space

style, first impressions of the 675 might not be that dissimilar to the 625. Indeed it has a very similar four-cabin layout, albeit without needing the walk-through galley of the 625. But the 675 is £500,000 more expensive than the 625, which sounds like a lot for an extra 3ft of length. But you only need small gains in length to create significant extra volume.

In comparison to the 625 and the 655, the 675 has more volume in all three dimensions, with higher topsides, more beam and more volume in the bow. This creates sufficient space for a forward master cabin with en-suite heads, or a large guest cabin in the bow. Depending

on the choices made forward, the aft cabin space can remain intact or be divided into two.

We look more broadly at the recent surge in 60-plus foot production yachts on page 24, in particular to explore the size threshold where professional crew becomes necessary. Oyster considers this new 675 to be about the limit in size an owner can still operate a yacht without crew, yet concedes that a temporary paid hand may still be advisable to keep the yacht suitably maintained. But the simultaneous launch of another new design, the 745, is for those who will sail with crew.

"Most of our big boat success has been through loyalty," says Tydeman, referring to the 72ft-88ft bracket. It is interesting therefore that two thirds of Oyster owners in the 62ft-72ft bracket are new to the brand. The owners of the test boat *Babiana* are very capable ex-Swan 45 sailors, for example, who want to sail themselves and use an occasional paid hand – exactly the sort of use for which the boat is designed.

Smooth running

Something happens when you leave port on a quality-built superyacht: you don't really hear anything. If you are below



Above: The seats are luxurious and the view over the coachroof is good but the steering position is quite far inboard

decks you may not even notice you are moving. I had a similar experience on the 675. There was no big fanfare and no propulsion vibration.

Insulation, together with the peace it can bring, is especially important for a centre-cockpit boat, on which owners tend to live aboard for long periods. Observing the yachts in build helps you appreciate how Oyster achieves this effect. The plywood for example includes an insulation sandwich within the layers of ply, and every joint is sealed with glassfibre to make it airtight and boost sound insulation. The result is remarkably relaxing.



Above: The superbly spacious galley features a domestic-size fridge-freezer



Above: The navstation is angled at 45 degrees with space for a rack of electronics

It's perhaps customary to see modern large Oysters sporting carbon rigs and fully battened sails, so it was slightly surprising to find a more cruising-friendly Spectra mainsail unfurl from *Babiana's* alloy mast. But I was told that 90 per cent of 655s were fitted with an in-mast solution – a choice that is indicative of a hands-on owner who wants to cruise short-handed.

The test boat was only three-quarters commissioned, the rig stepped just in time for the yacht to make its world debut at Southampton Boat Show in September. Our trial was more of a snapshot on the day after the show closed. The boat

then left directly for Ipswich, where the rig was due to be removed before she is transported this winter to the Düsseldorf Boat Show.

So she wasn't exactly 'tuned', but during our initial fetch that turned into a beat down Southampton Water in 10 knots of breeze, I quickly learnt that she is more than capable of creating a good first impression. In 7 to 9 knots true we matched the breeze with sails slightly freed, and when the wind speed hit double figures I could feel more power as the boat heeled. "We've gone wider aft with more form stability than before," Rob Humphreys commented, while also sailing

Above left: The owner of this first 675 requested steps in the transom so he could easily board the dinghy, which will be stowed on davits. The transom includes a large swim platform that lowers on struts

her for the first time.

We tacked out through the main channel around the Brambles Bank, the blade jib making the 38-tonne yacht nimble enough to be thrown quickly through the tacks. The use of a blade rather than Oyster's conventional overlapping headsail helps her point and also keeps the clew forward and well away from the guest cockpit. The jib is tacked to an electric Reckmann furler and there is a hydraulically tensioned removable inner stormstay fitted as standard.

The 675 felt nicely balanced. The twin spade rudders, bonded to composite rudder stocks, ensure a light feel on the

wheel without losing that telltale nudge when they load up. However, once the breeze dropped back below 7 knots, or when we were sailing at a deeper angle, the helm became neutral.

When the wind does disappear, the 180hp Volvo engine driving a Bruntons four-blade folding prop proved efficient (7 knots at 1,500rpm) and there are vast fuel tanks (1,900lt) for long-distance cruising.

The helm position is a little high and inboard for my liking. To leeward, for instance, I found myself straining out to see the telltales and there is no comfortable position to perch out or stand over the high coaming. But there is

a good, clear view forward over that lower-profile coachroof and the double helm seats each side provide a luxurious place from which to command a watch.

The jib sheet lead is cleverly designed to run aft along the base of the long coachroof windows and up through a moulded scoop in the coamings directly to the primaries each side. The boom ends relatively far aft with a single point mainsheet led straight to an aft winch, negating the need for a traveller. The primary and runner/spinnaker winches are mounted aft of the helms, to keep the cockpit clear for guest use.

The cockpit forward of the twin

Above: The sumptuous main saloon featuring three vertical forward-facing portlights. This image also shows the rather large gap between the table and the port bunk

binnacles is suitably resplendent – ideal for guests wishing to remain clear of the sailing systems. The beamy aft deck extends even further if a counter stern is chosen and the excellent quarter benches are large enough to seat three each side.

Where to sleep?

Oyster's modern raised saloon format is impressive. The triple vertical 'seascaper' hull portlights, together with the generous coachroof windows, create a fabulously light and well-connected saloon.

Two of the large, forward-looking coachroof windows open out for ventilation. The test boat also had



The optional vertical portlights in the aft master suite offer a fine view out



traditional dorades (in slight contrast to the flush foredeck design).

I was consistently drawn to the practical features of the 675. Fuel separators, hydraulics, plumbing and the watermaker are all housed centrally in plentiful space below the saloon sole, for example. The navstation is offset at 45 degrees, which makes it easy to monitor the large bank of electronics mounted on the adjacent bulkhead. And the wet hanging locker is located beneath the companionway steps, warmed by the engine room directly behind. I did however find the space between saloon table and port berth a little too large when

trying to venture forward while the boat was heeled.

The galley is superb: super-spacious yet practically laid out with deep fiddled work surfaces and athwartships domestic-size fridge-freezer. The double sink is located inboard beneath cupboards that will neatly swallow all the crockery and glassware behind their sliding doors. Despite a washing machine and dishwasher housed in the galley, there is still ample stowage. Additional refrigeration space is built in to the saloon table and the cockpit table, plus there is a drinks cooler beneath the forward berth – this owner has named his yacht

Left and centre: The test boat was fitted with a forward guest en-suite cabin. This can be enlarged and specified as the master cabin

Above right: The two-berth Pullman cabin

after a particular South African white wine after all.

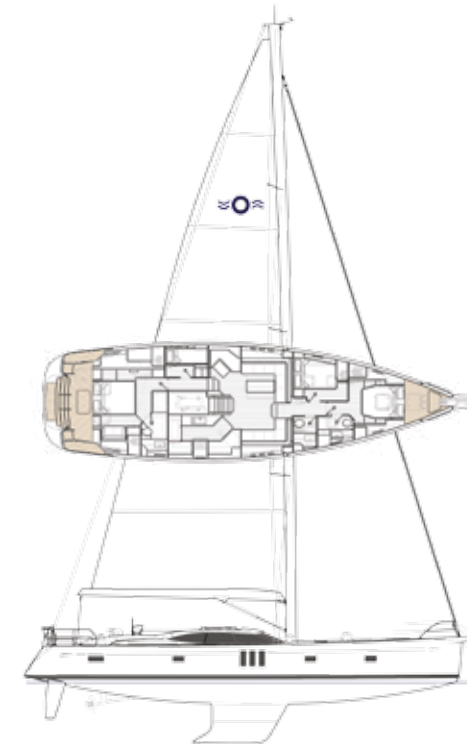
Forward of the saloon, our test boat was fitted with a day heads and shower to port for the use of both the compact double cabin opposite and the Pullman aft. The master cabin is astern while the forward en-suite guest cabin looks suitably plush with an island berth and generous stowage.

The option to locate the master suite ahead of the mast offers greater privacy for owners who spend a lot of time moored stern-to. However, anyone who has spent time in the aft cabin of an Oyster will understand why the yard

DATA OYSTER 675

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	21.03m	69ft 0in
LWL	18.16m	59ft 7in
Beam (max)	5.65m	18ft 6in
Draught	2.95m	9ft 8in
Displacement (lightship)	37,500kg	82,673lb
Ballast	11,300kg	24,912lb
Sail Area (100% foretriangle)	235.5m ²	2,535ft ²
Engine	180hp Volvo Penta saildrive	
Water	1,550lt	341gal
Fuel	1,900lt	418gal
Sail Area:Disp	21.4	
Disp:LWL	174	
Price (ex VAT)	£2,480,000	
Design:	Humphreys Yacht Design	



Conclusion

There is a boom in the market for yachts in the 60-70ft range (see our full report on page 24), but Oyster is already well ahead of the curve here. It is a company that has long been comfortable building in the 60-90ft sector. At this end of the scale, its competition, and thus the choice for potential owners, is narrow. Few, if any, yards are capable of producing genuine series-built bluewater cruisers at this size. And few are able to compete with Oyster in terms of ability, engineering and quality.

Compared to the 625 and 575, the extra size of the 675 brings not only extra space and speed, but also a lot more boat to maintain. So the key decision, especially for those who still want to sail privately, will be whether to employ a crew member and for how long. But that would certainly be a nice decision to have to make.



Oyster Yachts: made in England

A visit to Oyster Yachts' Southampton facility confirms this company's dominance in the 80ft sector: the five bays were full of 825s and 885s – and the sixth 825, *Enso*, was being commissioned afloat. Apart from vacuum infused bulkheads and carbon-capped frames, construction techniques remain relatively conventional with a reassuringly belt-and-braces approach.

The 675 and 745 can be built either in Southampton, or in Norfolk where the 475 to 625 models are built. Oyster employs about 400 people in total with 320 on the shop floor, capable of producing 18-20 boats a year. Construction time varies from around nine months for a 475 to 16 months for a 885.



Watch the video
yachtingworld.com/oyster675