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. Twins

FACTS

- 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
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 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 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.
On Test: Oyster 675

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 unfurled 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 her for the first time.

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 cockpit forward of the twin 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 ‘seascape’ 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

Above: The translation is angled at 45 degrees with space for a rack of electronics
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, and the wet hanging locker is located beneath the companionway steps, warmed by the engine room directly behind. I did not feel the need to offer anything different before. Factor in the vertical hull windows offered in the aft cabin of the 675, which provide it with so much natural light, and it is hard to imagine anyone wanting to pack it with cabins, while others prefer the forward master option.

The wide variety of layout options range from two cabins to four. Tydeman explained. There is the option to have a compact crew cabin aft. The master cabin is astern while the forward en-suite guest cabin looks suitably plush with an island berth and generous storage.

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 still want to sail privately, will be whether to employ a crew member and to 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 few 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. Compared to the 625 and 575, the extra size of the 675 brings not only extra space and speed, but also a bit 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.

### Specifications

- **Sail Area:** 100% foretriangle 235.5m² 2,535ft²
- **Draught:** 2.95m 9ft 8in
- **Displacement (lightship):** 37,500kg 82,673lb
- **Ballast:** 11,300kg 24,912lb
- **Engine:** 1,900lt 418gal
- **Water Area:** 21.4
- **Sail Area Disp:** 23.4
- **Ship LWL:** 196
- **Price (ex VAT):** £2,480,000

### Oyster 675

- **LCL:** 21.03m 69ft 0in
- **WLG:** 17.92m 58ft 9in
- **Disp:** 21.4
- **Fuel:** 1,900lt 418gal
- **Water:** 1,550lt 341gal
- **Beam (max):** 5.65m 18ft 6in
- **LWL:** 18.16m 59ft 7in
- **LoA:** 21.03m 69ft 0in
- **Sail Area:** 235.5m² 2,535ft²
- **Draught:** 2.95m 9ft 8in
- **Displacement (lightship):** 37,500kg 82,673lb
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### Design

Humphreys Yacht Design

### Conclusion

There is a boom in the market for yachts in the 60-70ft range (see our full report on pages 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 world-built bluewater cruisers at this size. And few are able to compete with Oyster in terms of ability, engineering and quality.

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.