PENDENNS SHIPYARD WAS FOUNDED IN 1988 IN A CORNER of Falmouth Docks in south-west England by British entrepreneur and sailor Peter de Savary, and the business has gone from strength to strength until it now has some of the finest facilities in the industry. In 1993, Henk Wiekens and naval architect Mike Carr, who joined the company in its early days, led a management buyout and became joint managing directors—and they are still at the helm. The new company cut its teeth on large yachts – or certainly large for the time: the first new build was the 38-metre ketch Torumber, designed by Ed Dubois for de Savary himself. One of the first refits was on the 65-metre three-masted schooner Adix.

Originally covering one of Falmouth’s four 150-metre dry docks – and coping with a restricted air draught of around 14 metres at the inner end and 18 metres at the outer – the yard developed over the years and then, in early 2013, started a major expansion with the almost total demolition of the two main construction halls. These were just 70 and 55 metres long, were too low for the 400-tonne travel hoist to access, and were oriented at right angles to the hoist’s dock, necessitating some tricky manoeuvring to get vessels in and out. They were replaced by three new halls: two at 90 x 20 metres and one of 45 x 28 metres, which are high enough for the new 640-tonne hoist that travels sideways with a 65-metre vessel in its slings while facing its dock. The five-metre-wide central core between the two long halls contains an 80-metre-long spray booth for spars and, above that, three floors of workshops, offices and stores. A feature of the new halls is the sophisticated ventilation, extraction and heating system that has ducts neatly and centrally coming up from below floor level.

To keep disruption to a minimum, the development was mostly done between refit seasons. Only one boat – a long-term 56-metre restoration project – had to be moved from an old hall to a new one. 'It was difficult to juggle construction projects within a construction site,' says Toby Allies, director of sales and marketing, 'but the building contractors and our workforce worked together so well that in October the buildings were ready for three winter refit boats.'

One end of an old building was retained and now butts up against the side of the new halls. It has been modified to provide two floors of offices and a large workshop on the ground floor. The remaining floor houses a well-appointed staff canteen with great sea views and amenities such as showers, toilets and lockers.

The workforce is split into six different departments – fabrication and welding, joinery, exterior outfitting, electrical, engineering and painting – to provide a comprehensive service for both new builds and refits. 'Having all those trades here on site gives us a lot of control over our projects and allows us to deliver a timely result,' says Allies. 'It also means we can absorb growth in a project. If owners want to increase their scope of work, we are well placed to deal with it. The only areas we don’t cover ourselves are rig building and composite work, but we have a number of trusted partners. Subcontractors are employed when there are peaks in the workload.'

The yard has handled a number of outstanding refits over the years, including a dozen ‘significant structural modifications’. Several were motor yachts requiring stern extensions, typically on three decks, the most notable being the Feadship A2, ex-Masquerade of Sole, which featured in Reif 2014. Sailing boats have been given similar treatment. M5’s stern extension is the most recent, but Adix was lengthened in 1991 and Adella, the schooner built at the yard in 1995, returned five years later to have a five-metre section inserted midships.

In addition to major refits, the yard provides opportunities for short-term maintenance. The Herreshoff schooner Mariette, for instance, has adopted Falmouth as her home port, not least because of the facilities offered by Pendennis, and spent a month ashore undergoing small engineering modifications. Allies is also keen to point out that the yard has worked on four Class yachts: Shamrock V, which had a major restoration in 1999, Velsheda, Lionheart and Ranger. The first large motor yacht to be built at Pendennis was the 65-metre Ilios in 1999, while the 55-metre expedition
Dubois sailing yacht, Adix, returned for her fourth major refit and a 50-metre restoration project was ongoing.

In recent years Pendennis has expanded beyond Falmouth. In 2010 the company acquired Devonport Yachts in Plymouth, renaming it Pendennis Plus, and in 2011 a refit facility was opened in Palma, Mallorca, ‘which allows us to provide support for boats that we have refitted or built over the years, and also bring in new clients looking for the strength and knowledge of a yard such as Pendennis,’ says Allies. A core workforce of around half a dozen Pendennis people is based there and can be augmented with others from Falmouth and with local subcontractors.

More recently a repair base has been established in Auckland, New Zealand, and this has already provided support to Christopher and Hemisphere, the 44-metre catamaran completed at the yard in 2011, during their Pacific voyages. This service is coordinated by Keith Parlin, whose role includes familiarising himself with vessels expected to visit the Pacific rim.

The next phase of development in Falmouth is the construction of a 6,500-square-metre wet dock with a maintained depth of six metres, due to be completed in the summer of 2015. It will include a 100-metre jetty reinforced to take cranes such as those that stopped MS’s mast. This dock will be of particular benefit in allowing yachts to be commissioned considerably closer to the yard’s main facilities. The new travel hoist dock will be within the wet dock as well,’ says Charlie Ross, production director, ‘so no more early mornings and dark evenings fitting in with tides.’

Pendennis Shipyard is a privately owned company and some of its shareholders, including Carr and Wiekens, are involved in the day-to-day running of the business. While most of the cost of the new developments has come from shareholders and company funds, a third of it has been met by a grant from the European Regional Development Fund.

‘We see ourselves as the prime destination for yachts in Europe – attracted by Falmouth as a harbour in its own right, with its protective waters, and by the facilities we have here,’ says Allies. ‘We have a very can-do attitude. There are only a couple of yards like us in the world really.’

YARD FACILITIES

UK
- Located in Falmouth, Cornwall
- 2 x 75m fully enclosed dry docks for one
  150m x 24m
- 2 x 90m construction halls
- 1 x 45m construction hall
- 640-tonne travel hoist
- 12m wide slipway
- 400m² refit complex (paint, joinery and engineering, project management)
- 80m mast hall
- 200m² finishing workshop
- 1,200m² stores and crew storage
- Crew training centre, gym
- 420m² hospitality suite

PALEMA
- 70,000m² ground surface
- 35,000m² surface mooring
- 6 pits for deep draught sailing boats
- High flow fuel station
- 5 Travel Lifts: 700, 200, 150, 100 and 30 tonnes

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