

Perfect Palma

THE CEO OF PURE SUPERYACHT REFIT ARGUES THAT INDEPENDENT PROJECT MANAGERS HAVE A CLEAR ADVANTAGE WHEN IT COMES TO COMPLEX OVERHAULS

JAKE KAVANAGH REPORTS



Pure Superyacht Refit was founded in September 2008, and although a comparative newcomer to this highly competitive market, it has already built up a strong reputation in a very short time. Two factors have contributed to this — the experience and tenacity of its CEO, Nic Clarke (described by one satisfied customer as ‘brutally efficient’) and the location of the infrastructure Clarke uses for his refits — the impressive STP yard in Palma, Mallorca.

A qualified electro-mechanical engineer by profession, Clarke spent many years at the cutting edge of the America’s Cup before founding Pure as a totally independent project management company.

In 2005-06 he project managed an Open 60 challenge and skippered a TP 52 campaign for

Palma-based Russell Coutts. It was at this time that he became aware of the ambitious plans being drawn up by a group of local businessmen who were preparing to pitch for the concession to use the former Boatyard Palma facility. On winning the bid, they renamed the site STP (Servicios Tecnicos Portuarios) and invested €16m in a technical makeover during the next 12 months which would allow the facility to handle craft up to 120m (394ft) afloat, and 700t ashore.

One of Pure’s first refits involved cutting holes into the side of a 52m Amels motoryacht to remove and replace her generators

Having gained a lot of boatyard experience around the globe as a skipper with high profile racing teams, Clarke could see the potential STP had to offer in terms of infrastructure. He also knew Palma would make an excellent stop-over for captains, and crew alike, with its pool of highly skilled

“Clarke gained extensive experience of boatyards around the globe as a boat captain with high profile racing teams, and could see what STP had to offer in terms of infrastructure”

workers, all located on-site, or within a five mile radius of the yard.

With few language barriers, a nearby international airport, vast areas of hard standing, and a network of specialist contractors right on the doorstep, Clarke realised its excellent business potential.

He founded his refit business in a modern office in the centre of the yard, rubbing shoulders with other contractors and international superyacht service providers who had flocked to the state-of-the-art facility.

With a staff of four administrators, including a former tax advisor to local businesses, plus one project manager, Clarke set about securing a customer base.



Pure operates out of a modern office in the heart of the STP facility in Palma, Mallorca

As he was already a well known figure in the industry, the power of networking almost immediately brought in his first project.

"She was a 52m (171ft) Amels motoryacht," he recalls. "It was a complex refit, involving an extension of the swim platform and some major engineering work.

"We arranged for two 1.5m square holes to be cut into the hull for the removal of the old generators, plus all ancillaries, and the installation of new units. We also organized some fine cabinetry, a topsides repaint, the fitting of a new water treatment plant and the installation of a sophisticated AV/IT system.

"The whole job went very smoothly, and led to our second refit project, a 55m (180ft) motoryacht, again needing major engineering and interior styling works.

"But the projects that really put us on the map were two new, award-winning 60m (197ft) CMN sister ships — *Cloud 9* and *Slipstream*. *Cloud 9* originally came in to finish some pre-delivery works before being picked up by the owner for her maiden cruise.

"We were initially given 12 days, but that unexpectedly dropped to four-and-a-half, which meant we had to deploy up to 39

TOP VIEW **NIC CLARKE** CEO

It was while bobsleigh racing in 1988, that Nic Clarke got his break into the marine sector. He was spotted and selected as a crew member for the Blue Arrow America's Cup team and in his subsequent yachting career he would spend the next 20 years competing at the highest levels of international yacht racing — the majority of the time as skipper.

"That's what's made me so fastidious," he explains. "At that level, you simply can't afford a failure — the stakes are too high."

Then, after several years of project management, he set up Pure in response to personal requests for an independent company that could effectively handle the technological challenges of modern superyacht refits.

"The purpose of project management is to juggle a complex balance of costs and schedules to achieve a perfect result," he says. "From the very start of a project, it's important to invest in the services of a proven project manager. This will help determine the project's objectives, and provide all of the planning, quote tendering and assistance needed in selecting the right yard.

"Each yacht is case specific, so an owner needs to know that their project manager is totally independent of any contractor or shipyard. This is vitally important, as only by being totally free from any constraints can the project manager get the best quality of work — and the best deal — for the owner.

"Many projects fail to deliver because the contractor is also working as the project manager and accountant. This means you get a dilution of overall responsibility and an undesirable bias towards their preferred goods and services — to the exclusion of other good products and contractors.

"Good project management provides a service of overall vision, accountability and responsibility, and it is a buffer



Nic Clarke has more than 20 years experience as a professional skipper and yacht manager

between the client and the contractor, or boatyard. There should be constant communication, reporting, and extensive logging — especially photographically — for later reference. Items such as change orders, and work orders, need to be used to protect the client and the contractor.

"At Pure, we can quickly resolve any disputes and, by providing a full accounting service, we can maintain an overall understanding and complete financial control over the project.

"This means payments are released only when works have been accepted. Likewise, we can withhold payments on instruction until works have been satisfactorily completed, or alternative terms have been negotiated.

"We carry the highest level of corporate insurance and have a long track record of top projects — something every owner should look for in a project manager. We only employ contractors we know and trust, or those requested by the client.

"Project managers must be proactive, conscientious, fastidious. They must also be good communicators and have a clear understanding of the nature of work being undertaken. If you have this combination — along with total independence — the project will be enjoyable and rewarding for everyone involved." **SB**

"Good project management provides a service of overall vision, accountability and responsibility, and is a buffer between the client and the contractor"



Formerly an engineer aboard a Spanish supertanker, multi-lingual Sergio Pinole is now production manager of the STP facility

contractors for 22 hours a day. But we got the works completed and she sailed away just twenty minutes behind schedule.”

With further warranty jobs required, discussions between the French-based builders, the two skippers and Clarke, concluded that Pure’s set-up in Palma was the best option to carry out the ongoing work.

“As with many other clients, both of these yachts have returned many times to use Pure’s services for their annual refit, maintenance and survey requirements,” says Clarke. “The Pure team adheres to the highest standards and maintains good relationships with all class and flag societies for approval and acceptance of works carried out. We are also authorized to administer temporary import tax exemptions to vessels that qualify.”

STP facilities

Pure Superyacht Refit (so named because the company specializes ‘purely and simply’ in specialist refit management) currently works primarily on motoryachts, not out of preference, but because they generally require more complex attention.

Even so, as *SB* toured STP with Clarke, it was obvious that the facility is also a popular destination for sailing superyachts looking for refits and pre-delivery commissioning.

Deep keels can be easily accommodated because Palma is a busy commercial port, offering excellent shelter from all points of the compass. Its harbour is dredged to at least a 6m (20ft) depth, meaning that even the deepest drafted sailing yachts can be berthed or hauled.

The first impression you get of STP is of its vast areas of flat plaster-smooth concrete, with a scattering of two-storey offices and workshops dwarfed by the shrink-wrapped yacht enclosures that surround them.

“The Spanish are very good at pouring concrete,” Clarke explains, as a young

SECURITY AND PRIVACY

The yard has a full-time team of round-the-clock security guards, and a perimeter that is almost impossible to breach — even on foot. The privacy of owners is paramount, even though the yard operates as an ‘open’ facility, where any contractor can have access as long as they have the correct insurance, credentials and permissions. The guards operate constant patrols, especially at night, to prevent thieves arriving by boat



DEEP KEEL PITS

Scattered around the yard are a number of keel pits, allowing up to six yachts at a time to have their keels dropped and refurbished. The pits are available in two sizes, and are stepped. Yachts of up to 60m (197ft) can be positioned over the pits for the duration of their refit

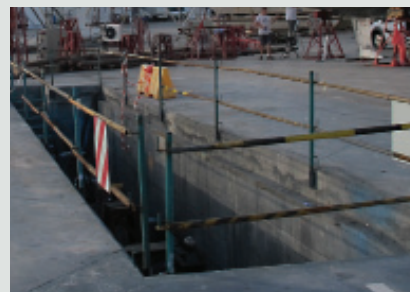
crewmember sweeps past on a large skateboard — the preferred way (along with bicycles) to get around the site.

Sunk into the 70,000m² of reinforced hard standing are six deep keel pits, all set in strategic locations and stepped to make access easier for the contractors to work. They can accommodate any type or size of keel, while the height above can cope with yachts of up to 60m (197ft), complete with enclosure.

STP has five travel hoists, the largest being capable of moving 700t. The others are 200t, 150t, 100t and 30t. The yard has a full-time staff of 47 workers, distinctive in their black and yellow livery, who are highly skilled at moving and propping craft of any size.

Nine yacht movements can be completed each day — one 700t yacht along with several smaller ones — and a duet of cranes can handle the tallest of masts with precision.

PURE SUPERYACHT REFIT



On average, around 1,000 boats cycle through the yard every year.

In addition to the hard standing, the yard also has 53 stern-to and alongside moorings that can take yachts up to 120m (394ft), with deep-set offshore mooring lines.

All the necessary services are readily available, including fresh water, mains sewerage, and three-phase AC power. There is also a large fuelling facility beside the main launching dock, along with a pressurized salt-water main and a high capacity firefighting system. The yard prides itself on an ecologically sensitive waste disposal policy.

The 24-hour security is also rigidly enforced with a tight perimeter that prevents even casual walk-ins, and with constant foot patrols, as thieves often prefer a stealthy approach by water. The yard is bathed in light at night, with a network of CCTV cameras.



TEMPORARY WORKSHOPS

STP has no permanent sheds. It relies instead on four on-site firms that offer polywrapping. Extensive scaffolding is erected over each project to create private covered workshops that are connected to all mains services



A ban on unauthorized photography is also strictly enforced.

Recently, a further 10,000m² of hard standing was completed to meet increased demand, and this new space has quickly filled up. Some of the hard standing is also used for the storage of masts and, as with the yachts themselves, these are enclosed within temporary workshops made from shaped scaffolding with shrink-wrapped polythene skins. These workshops are quick to install,

can be custom-built around each yacht or component, and are comparatively cheap as four competing contractors are based on-site.

STP is run as an open public yard. This means that all bona fide subcontractors and companies are allowed free access to the site as long as they possess the required liability cover and paperwork.

“The open yard policy works well, as it means clients can bring in their own specialists. The fact that they can come and go at all hours is a great benefit to time-sensitive refit projects”

“The open yard policy works well,” says Clarke. “It means clients can bring in their own specialists if required — and the fact that they can come and go at all hours is a great benefit to time-sensitive refit projects.”

Anatomy of a refit

Clarke is a hands-on project manager, with a friendly but business-like approach to his job that comes from his years at the receiving end of refit relationships. It’s an approach that has helped his company gain a great deal of repeat custom, exemplified by the largest project in the yard during SB’s visit which was won



FLEET OF TRAVEL HOISTS

A giant 700t Ascom travel hoist is the largest of a fleet of six hoists, the others being 200t, 150t, 100t, and 30t. They are supplemented by a number of forklift trucks, but a local crane company is brought in for delicate mast removal or stepping. The hard standing has been specially reinforced and recently extended to cope with the demand for extra space

despite tenders from five rival refit yards.

“Spread sheets and timelines are important, but as a project manager you really need to be out on the yacht itself,” says Clarke. “Communication is the key, so I like to deal personally with everyone involved in a job. A superyacht refit deserves a superyacht standard of service. It has to be perfect.”

Business momentum

Pure has enjoyed a busy 2011, with major engineering and survey refits completed in April and June on a brace of 47m (154ft) *Feadships* along with a brand new 77m (253ft) *Feadship* in July, and the arrival and setting up of an 80m (262ft) motoryacht project for complete refinishing. Pure’s attention is now devoted to the latter project, the 43m (141ft) CMN-built motoryacht *Paramour*.

As with many previous projects, the work is to Lloyds class standards, and includes a mix of 10-year Lloyds survey and essential engineering. The appearance of the

PLATE THICKNESS

During a refit, hidden problems are often revealed, such as reduced thickness of plates or degradation of the integral tanks. This project required further remedial work for both — but the flexibility of the project manager and the yard allows for a good deal of mission creep



yacht is also changing, with a hull extension, modified lazarette to beach club, a new sundeck layout, the repainting of the superstructure and transom, plus re-decking and refurbishing. She is also getting a new and completely redesigned galley.

Pure can either draw the plans, liaise and arrange with well-known naval architects and interior designers, or work with the client's preferred companies.

The yard prides itself in being able to offer every conceivable service during a refit, with just one point of contact for the owner, skipper or agent. It's a 'virtual shipyard' concept, without the limitations associated with a closed shipyard that has to justify its own workforce. STP provides the entire infrastructure — from cranes to container hire — but subcontractors managed by companies such as Pure, or by the yacht's representative, do all the refit work.

Pure also undertakes a full photographic step-by-step record of each project. Upon conclusion, the skipper is presented with a fully documented record of the entire job, costed right down to the last nut and bolt, as well as a library of high quality images, and

STABILISER REFURBISHMENT

Pure is able to use its network of trusted subcontractors to undertake all kinds of advanced engineering work, such as stripping and renovating stabiliser assemblies on either side of a yacht. Anything from propeller balancing to a complete engine removal can be undertaken at STP



even some HD video footage, to go with it.

As the skipper of a recent 47m refit remarked: "It was presented in such a way that it was easy to interpret." Another owner is receiving a souvenir album of his refit including a time-lapse movie, as a record of his input into the re-design.

"We have every skill required right here in Palma," Clarke says. "We have the experience to know which contractors are the best ones to use. All of the many international

companies based in STP and Palma are keen to get the jobs completed as quickly and efficiently as possible. It means, on average, that the time for a large refit with Pure is between four to six months."

Paramour is enjoying a full makeover, and inevitably — because the yacht is so accessible — there is a bit of mission creep.

Clarke believes it is important to remain fully flexible, not only with subcontractors, but also with the yard itself. Hidden problems are often revealed during routine work, especially when carrying out class surveys, and the owner may decide to improve or change a plan that has been previously agreed. Pure takes all this in its stride.

"A good project manager simply makes things happen," says Clarke. "Anything the owner wants, gets done — and to the standard I would expect if it was my own

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The harbour has 53 moorings and is dredged to 6m — allowing deep-keeled yachts to manoeuvre right up to the quayside at STP.

yacht. With a yard like STP — which has some of the best facilities anywhere in the Med — that is much easier to achieve.”

The pull of Palma

Mallorca is the largest of Spain’s Balearic Islands, and has been a major international tourist destination since the 1950s. For refits, the island is ideally placed at the western end of the Mediterranean — a short sea journey to mainland Spain, the South of France, or Italy.

Mallorca’s Son Sant Joan airport is the third largest in Spain, and comfortably handles 22m passengers per year — mostly holiday traffic in the summer. The airport caters for private



NEW SUN DECK

Major restyling being undertaken on *Paramour’s* sundeck. The work includes relocating the deck crane, heightening the bulwarks, fitting a Jacuzzi, laying a teak deck, and manufacturing and fitting two bars and entertainment areas. Relocating the crane will enable the reinforced deck area to take the weight of a larger Jacuzzi, without modifications

BATHING PLATFORM EXTENSION

The bathing platform is being extended by one metre to make it more user friendly. Pure is using experienced architects, welders, and metal fabricators for the work, which has to meet strict Lloyd’s classification standards



jets and can provide private VIP lounges.

Most flights to Mallorca from within Europe are less than two hours long, and the airport itself is an easy 10min drive from the STP facility via a new motorway.

“Mallorca is a great place to live in and work,” says Clarke. “In fact, newcomers often find it difficult to settle in to a working week, as the island has such a holiday atmosphere.”

Palma is also a regular regatta host, which helps to explain the unusually high number of large yachts moored in the vicinity.

The STP facility is a 10min walk from the centre of town, which is awash with bars and restaurants to suit all budgets, making it very popular with superyacht crew.

“Normally, crew hate being in port, but Palma — and Mallorca especially — has so

Left: An 80m superyacht is polywrapped prior to a full respray by paint specialist Pinmar. The weight of the cladding makes very little difference to the vessel’s trim in the water

much to offer that refits here are welcomed by everyone concerned,” Clarke says.

During *SB’s* visit in mid-December, the temperature was a pleasant 16°C (60°F), and many people were in shirtsleeves. Rarely does the island suffer from any weather extremes, and the yachts themselves are usually in climate-controlled enclosures anyway.

Pure puts visiting surveyors and contractors up in the nearby four-star Saratoga Hotel, a short walk from the yard, whereas owners prefer to use one of the many top quality country clubs nearby. The island has several world-class golf courses, and miles of white sandy beaches and hidden coves.

The official language is Spanish, but with such a large ex-pat community of British, Dutch and Germans, English is also widely spoken, especially by the young. And English is the common language of business used at STP, although many skippers drop effortlessly into Spanish when talking to staff.

“Another great advantage of Palma is that the teams of quality sub-contractors are mostly ex-pats,” Clarke explains. “They have a long track record in yacht refit at all levels, with many specializations.

“We and our clients never suffer from the frustrations of language barriers, trade union activity strikes — or the weekly working hour constraints found everywhere else in the rest of the Mediterranean.

“So whatever happens in mainland Europe, it’s always business as usual at Pure.” **SB**

TO SEE SB’S interview with Nic Clarke and experience a first hand insight into the yard, simply use your smartphone to scan this QR code. A good QR reader app will automatically redirect you to *SB’s* informative links and exclusive videos.





PURE PROJECTS

COMPLETED PROJECTS

Type	Model	Work	Date
► Motoryacht	52m Amels	New generators, joinery and repaint, class survey	2008-09
► Motoryacht	55m CRN	Major engineering/refurbishment, class survey	2009/10/11
► Motoryacht	53m Vitters	Paint, steel and composite work	2009
► Motoryacht	60m CMN	Commissioning/warranty, class survey	2009/10/11
► Motoryacht	60m CMN	Commissioning/warranty, class survey	2009/10/12
► Sailing Yacht	22m Racing yacht	Specialist & technical repairs	2009/11
► Motoryacht	41m Heesen	Various, class survey	2009
► Motoryacht	28m Explorer	Double deck extension/heli pad engines and engine room, stabilisers	2009
► Motoryacht	58m Lurssen	Repaint, new hull plates, engineering, class survey	2009-10
► Motoryacht	47m Feadship	Major engineering/repaint, new generators & zero speed stabilisers	2010-11
► Motoryacht	60m Lurssen	Various works, class survey	2010-11
► Motoryacht	47m Feadship	Major engineering/cosmetics, class survey 25 year	2010-11
► Motoryacht	46m Hakvoot	Various works	2011
► Motoryacht	77m Feadship	Various works	2011
► Motoryacht	40m Heesen	Ten-year class survey/paint	2011

CURRENT PROJECTS

Name	Type	Work	Completion
► Motoryacht	80m Oceanco	Complete paint refinishing, various works, five-year class survey	2011-12
► Paramour	43m CMN	New bathing platform, sundeck, beach club/paint/engineering decking throughout/galley, 10-year class survey	2011-12