

# Twizzle

Sailing the spectacular Royal Huisman Twizzle in St Barths, a new yacht for owners who've moved from power to sail **David Glenn**



**W**e're suffering from mast envy," reported one of the owners of the 55-metre Feadship motor yacht *Twizzle* as they sat in an anchorage in the USA some years ago surrounded by sailing yachts. They had recently completed the build of their Feadship and were about to embark on a three-year circumnavigation. Some months later they were visiting the studios of Justin Redman of Redman Whiteley Dixon (who had been responsible for the interior of the Feadship, together with Emily Todhunter of Todhunter Earle Interiors). They mentioned the idea of a sailboat and started sketching some designs.

This 'coming out' in favour of sail marked the start of a process seldom seen in superyachting; namely, the successful conversion from owning a motor yacht to owning a sailing yacht.

"Sailing yachts are just so much more romantic than any motor yacht can ever hope to be," says *Twizzle*'s owner today. "It is the sleek, elegant and curved lines that so captivate one, from the bow all the way to the stern: the way a sailing yacht is in such harmony and balance with her towering masts, low-profile rigging and uncluttered decks. *Twizzle* glides through the sea, gently heeling from one side to the other under acres of billowing sails. It is mesmerising, and just so cool being at one with the ocean."

The owners of the new *Twizzle* certainly didn't leave much to chance. For the new sailing yacht they chose that same team of Justin Redman and RWD for exterior and interior styling and design, and Emily Todhunter and TEI for interiors and décor, with the addition of Ed Dubois and DNA for naval architecture and sailing systems and the Royal Huisman Shipyard in Holland. The owners describe them as "a dream team who understand the clients' taste and vision".

I first set eyes on the result of this collaboration in the Caribbean where *Twizzle* was about to take part in her first St Barths Bucket, the biggest and most exclusive of all the superyacht regattas. All eyes were on the newcomer, not least because her sheer size meant that in almost any conditions she should be fast.

At 188ft 7in she's longer than most Perinis although her vast rig is just short enough to allow her to pass beneath the Bridge of Americas, which spans the Panama Canal. By restricting her gross tonnage to something just shy of 500, she also avoids expensive and



*"It's so COOL being AT ONE with the ocean. Sailing yachts are just so much more ROMANTIC"*



**Above:** A key design feature is the ability to link the main deck saloon with the cockpit dining area by fully opening the sliding glass doors and creating an 'inside-outside' feeling.

Note the unusual athwartships soleboards with off-white caulking. **Left:** A private eating area can be set up on the flying bridge, equipped with its own barbecue.

**Top right:** Looking aft from the main cockpit to the owner's private seating area and beyond to the boarding platform bimini.

**Right:** *Twizzle* is a very powerful sailing machine.



*The MASSIVE yacht leans into each gust, converting that POWER into forward motion*

complex commercial classification, not that this yacht could be described as anything other than complex.

A notable feature is *Twizzle's* exceptionally shallow draught. With her centreboard raised she draws just 3.8 metres – negligible for a yacht of this size. This allows her to visit almost all the harbours the owners enjoyed aboard their motor yacht. But with the centreboard down – it takes just a minute to deploy using powerful hydraulics – the yacht's draught increases to a staggering 35ft and the carefully designed foil provides lift while sailing upwind and some resistance to leeway. Importantly, all *Twizzle's* ballast is internal, within the hull, so her stability remains virtually the same whether the keel is up, down or somewhere in between – a useful and unusual feature for this type of technology.

I am delivered to the yacht by RIB at 0930, well in time for *Twizzle's* Bucket start at sometime after noon. Due to her aforementioned size and the expectation of her speed we're close to the back of the 40-strong fleet in this pursuit race along with the Js *Hanuman* and *Ranger*. Ouch!

The gleaming dark blue hull reveals an unusual feature for a modern sailing yacht – tumblehome. It takes the edge off the bulk of the topsides and somehow blends into the flowing lines of the complex superstructure and flying bridge. For such a large sailing yacht the outboard appearance is surprisingly appealing and is markedly different to other big flying-bridge ketches, whose layer-cake looks sometimes fail to impress.

After changing into a very snazzy anti-UV race uniform I arrive on the half-raised bridge deck. It's full of people wearing headphones and throat mikes – the afterguard, who need this technology to talk to the crew, spread along the yacht's 188ft-long deck. Some I recognise – Robbie Haines who won a Soling Gold Medal at the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1984, and author and professional navigator Mark Chisnell. They are huddled round screens, checking wind information, examining the race instructions.

*Twizzle's* captain, Gordon Percy, is also there and calmly asks if I'm okay and being looked after; in the distance I spot Scott Zebny, the North Sails superyacht supremo who will be trimming the vast press of 3DL sail cloth being hoisted on the yacht's two enormous Southern Spars carbon-fibre masts. This looks like serious stuff.

In fact, I feel lucky to be here at all because in a nasty accident the previous day, the owner had the toes of one foot severely cut when a hatch closed on them. The tip of the second toe was severed (some time later,

after the regatta, it was ceremonially buried at sea!), but he's back from hospital with his foot in a blue surgical bag and ready to race. His wife urges him to "keep your foot up!", while the two of them address all crew and guests in a pre-race instructional pep talk. It's fighting stuff.

In terms of looks and function the key area of this enormous sailing yacht while under way is the flying bridge. It is large enough to accommodate not only the afterguard, 'brains trust' element of the race crew, who crowd around an array of joystick controls, monitors and screens, but also the entire guest contingent, which accounts for a fraction of the yacht's complement – today, that amounts to over 40 people. At least that's when I lost count.

The pre-start period seems interminable as foredeck crew prepare downwind sails, aft-deck crew arrange sheets in immaculate coils to prevent foul-ups and the unseen 'hotel' staff prepare race-friendly lunches. They have already stowed every movable item, leaving the oak-finished interior looking strangely stark. ("You were seeing her without her make-up," said Justin Redman later.) I can just discern the 950kW Caterpillar main engine turning over as *Twizzle* slides through the anchorage and heads towards the race course in preparation for the start. The owner's son takes this opportunity to give me a quick run through the yacht, although in an hour we barely scratch the surface.

The deck saloon and main deck cockpit are designed as one – large sliding glass doors separating them when required but in après race mode this entire area is designed to dovetail. It is indeed a fabulous area in which to relax but one would have to wait until after the racing to see it in all its glory, dressed for entertaining.

Strangely, the soleboards in this area run athwartships rather than fore and aft and try as I might I cannot get used to it. Old habits die hard.

Further forward on the same deck I am shown into the observation saloon, a large lounge occupying what the owner refers to as the "best piece of real estate on a yacht", an area very often given over to the bridge. And one can see why. The 180° view is quite stunning and RWD has ensured that wherever you sit, you don't have to strain your neck to see the view or watch the action on the foredeck.

Extraordinarily for a yacht of this calibre, there are no wall hangings, no pictures, no fabulous works of art adorning the bulkheads – apart from in the day head, where a glass sculpture is mounted on the bulkhead above the lavatory. It is so heavy the bulkhead had to be

reinforced, according to my guide. It depicts jellyfish and other sea-going creatures suspended in glass.

The simplicity of the décor is pointed out to me by Sophie James of Todhunter Earle, who demonstrates how the understated design is brought to life by bedspreads, throws and cushions. It really seems to work. Some of the furniture, beautiful as it is, has so many sharp edges and corners that I can't help feeling you'll need to take care in a seaway, but there's a calm simplicity to the interior, which will be easy to live with during long periods at sea.

The guest cabins and the spectacular owner's suite are all equipped with iPod Touch technology, so the screens, blinds and curtains covering the hull ports – you have a choice – can be controlled remotely, as can the lighting, the extensive audio-visual menu and other items. We are interrupted by action on deck. We're approaching ten minutes to our start and action-stations have been assumed. I climb three stairways to reach the flying bridge where *Twizzle* is being manoeuvred through the spectator fleet seeking that angle of attack for the start line.

"The most surprising difference is the intimacy that one feels on board a flybridge sailing yacht," her owner says. "The crew sail *Twizzle* from the flybridge and so guests feel part of the process and not distanced from the bridge as one does on a motor yacht. Whilst *Twizzle* is actually two metres longer than our previous motor yacht, every deck, exterior and interior seating area and cabin just feels so much cozier and more comfortable, and the views are incomparable. It really is a much more exhilarating experience."

Our course is simple – circumnavigate St Barths eastabout. We make a cracking start and under full sail glide upwind at 11, sometimes 12 knots close-hauled. We're on the edge of the wind limit for the big headsail made on the North 3DL mould specially built for America's Cup headsails. When it was 'built', it was the biggest 3DL sail in the world. "What we had not realised until after we took delivery was just how well she sails, far exceeding our already demanding requirements," says her owner. "Unlike most other large sailing yachts, she sails really well under a wide range of conditions, from five knots of wind to 35."

A long leg out east brings us to the lay line, which will enable us to clear the end of St Barths. We still seem a bit lonely out in the wide-open ocean and the rest of the fleet, which started before us, seems worryingly distant. But then on the next leg as we bear away and select the A4 asymmetric – at a third of an acre the biggest sail in



*"The most SURPRISING difference is the INTIMACY that one feels"*



**Top:** Interior design specialist Todhunter Earle is responsible for the décor, which relies on simplicity, understated colours and a limited number of ornaments and soft furnishings to bring the inside of the yacht to life.  
**Far left:** Another dining location, set up in the forward saloon, which enjoys some of the finest views – "The best piece of real estate on a yacht," says the owner.  
**Left:** Granite tops adorn a well-equipped galley.  
**Right:** The entertainment systems, screens and remote operation of blinds in every cabin are controlled by iPod Touch technology.





*There's a CALM simplicity one could EASILY live with during long periods at sea*

**Above:** Subtle lighting helps create a cool, serene atmosphere below.  
**Above right:** The owner's suite. The patterned fabric on the bulkhead behind the double berth adds contrast and texture to the minimalist look.  
**Right:** Muted tones in the guest accommodation encourage relaxation. Note the iPod Touch controls for the automated blinds.  
**Facing page, below right:** The owner's suite has separate bathroom and heads compartments, as well as a companionway to a private cockpit.



*Twizzle's* dazzling armoury – we really start to motor. Lunch is served as we start picking off our competitors; watching from our vantage point way up atop the flying bridge, it is a fabulous sight. The owner, his foot still 'up', urges on the crew.

"We did have ridiculously high expectations when we designed and built *Twizzle*, especially given the sheer amount of design and yard meetings that went into creating this yacht. We incorporated everything we had learnt from previous builds. We had a pretty good idea how she was going to come out, as we modelled in full scale much of the boat in plywood, which we would recommend to anyone building a complex sailboat. But for us, a defining moment came when our son announced: 'Having sat in on design meetings three years ago, it's fantastic how we are now using the boat exactly as envisaged, and just how comfortable it turned out to be!'" her owner says.

All the while Scott Zebny is standing quietly in the middle of the guest area touching buttons on his big remote control box, slung round his neck like a bus conductor's ticket machine. From here he can see the enormous mainsail, the mizzen and the quiet crewman close to the instrument panel who is indicating rudder angle using one, two or more fingers. Balancing this yacht is critical.

We rumble down the run and as we turn for home there is an increased sense of excitement. *Twizzle's* might has brought us into contention and as the 40-strong fleet starts to converge there's a chance of a decent result.

We are once again hard on the wind and the massive yacht leans into each warm gust, slowly heeling and then converting that immense power into forward motion. One can sense that the owner wants to stand up and get behind the effort, but of course he can't. Very frustrating on your Bucket debut.

Then the wind gods do their worst as we approach the line, a big header pushes us down to leeward, yachts above us that we have spent the day overtaking get the better of us and, despite finishing first on elapsed time, on handicap corrected time we slip to 27th in fleet and 7th in the Grand Dames class – a name, incidentally, which I thought doesn't quite do *Twizzle* justice.

We have a very close finish with *Maltese Falcon*, which comes diving in from weather. *Ethereal* is in there too, and the classic schooner *Elena* is also close to hand. It's the sort of finish the St Barths Bucket is famous for and being in the mix on the line is utterly compelling and extremely exciting.

And it encapsulates why *Twizzle* the motor yacht became *Twizzle* the sailing yacht. **SYW**

## THE SPECS *Twizzle*

### SPECIFICATIONS

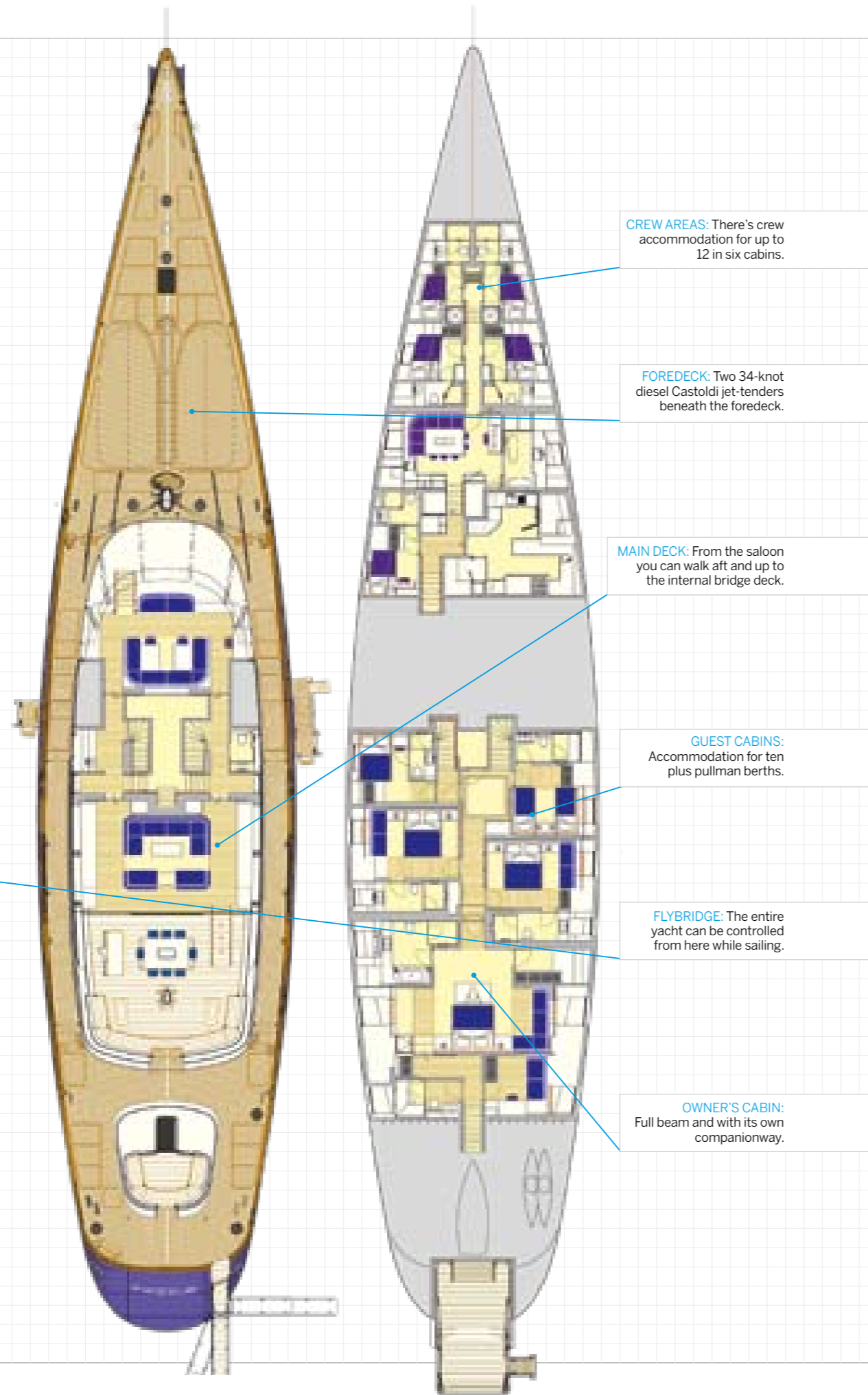
Length overall 57.49m (188ft 7in)  
 Beam 11.59m (37ft 11in)  
 Draught (board down) 10.80m (35ft 5in)  
 Draught (board up) 3.80m (12ft 5in)  
 Displacement 550 tonnes  
 Range 4,000nm @ 12 knots  
 Naval architect  
 Dubois Naval Architects  
 Exterior and interior  
 Redman Whiteley Dixon (RWD)  
 Interior décor  
 Todhunter Earle Interiors  
 Project management  
 Steve Jacover,  
 Yacht Project Management

### BUILDER/CHARTER

Builder Royal Huisman Shipyard  
[www.royalhuisman.com](http://www.royalhuisman.com)  
 Charter Burgess Yachts  
[www.burgessyachts.com](http://www.burgessyachts.com)  
 Summer: Mediterranean  
 €196,000-€210,000pw.  
 Winter: Caribbean  
 Rate to be confirmed.



*“It really is an EXHILARATING experience”*



**CREW AREAS:** There's crew accommodation for up to 12 in six cabins.

**FOREDECK:** Two 34-knot diesel Castoldi jet-tenders beneath the foredeck.

**MAIN DECK:** From the saloon you can walk aft and up to the internal bridge deck.

**GUEST CABINS:** Accommodation for ten plus pullman berths.

**FLYBRIDGE:** The entire yacht can be controlled from here while sailing.

**OWNER'S CABIN:** Full beam and with its own companionway.

**BATTENS:** Fully battened main and mizzen for a stable sail shape. Both furl into the carbon fibre Southern Spars booms.

**STAYSAIL:** Seen here in its furled state is the Cuben Fiber mizzen staysail – effective when sailing off the wind.

**AFT DECK:** The aft deck is the domain of the A-sail trimmers, who use vast drum winches to control the sail.

**JIB:** The usual choice for cruising duties but in lighter conditions, a larger headsail unfurls on the forestay.

**SAILS:** Made by North, where fabric, carbon fibre and film are laid over vast moulds to create the perfect shape and strength.

**FLYING BRIDGE:** The focal point of the yacht under way with guests positioned abaft the steering and control area.

