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INTERNATIONAL



Axantha 1





This first exploration vessel built at JFA, in collaboration with Vripack, is a real success. Report by David Pelly. Photography by M&N Claris

Dutch naval architect firm, Vripack, is an expert at creating exploration yachts. Many others have followed this line of thinking but not always with the same sure touch. The new 37.2 metre *Axantha* is the first of this vessel type to be built by JFA shipyard in Concarneau, France, and it is the biggest project so far completed by the family-owned shipyard.

Some owners of exploration yachts feel it is appropriate to use a commercial standard for the hull paintwork, but *Axantha* has been finished to a very high standard with a fully



faired hull and flag blue paint from Awlgrip. The interior design was carried out by Vripack, closely following the wishes of the client, and it is extremely sympathetic to the general style of the yacht with lightly stained American cherry for all the joinery.

Dick Boon, founder of Vripack, has long been an enthusiast of aluminium construction, even for a yacht that operates strictly in the displacement speed zone, so *Axantha* is built of aluminium throughout. The big advantage of moderate speed and displacement is that the power required to push the yacht at a cruising speed of about 13 knots is correspondingly small. *Axantha's* twin Caterpillar 3406 diesels are rated at just 475hp at 1,800 rpm and, as a



result, the fuel capacity of 44,850 litres is easily enough for transatlantic range. In fact, all of *Axantha's* engineering is conservative, creating a yacht that is reliable and economical and therefore particularly suitable for long cruises in faraway places.

As an example of this conservative approach, while many motor yachts now fit only two electrical generators, *Axantha* has three – the third being a night generator of reduced power when full output is not needed. At the same time, special attention has been given to sound and vibration reduction throughout the yacht, particularly in the owner's stateroom on the lower deck just forward of the engine room. Thanks to a special study by Van Cappellen of



Above left: the upper saloon is the perfect spot to relax and listen to music
Above and left: the main deck saloon is split into several attractive areas: a bar, informal dining and comfortable lounging

Holland, there is no vibration in this cabin. With the yacht running at 12 knots, the loudest sound is a slight whine from the hydraulic system which was due to be resolved by two dampers before the yacht was delivered. Even more impressive are the extremely low noise levels at anchor with the main generator running – these are well below target.

It is not enough for a yacht like this to look tough and practical, it should have such qualities in reality. The most noticeable feature of the design is the short superstructure and forward 'cargo'/well deck where the two Castoldi tenders are stowed. These have diesel-powered water-jet propulsion which makes them particularly suitable for use as dive



tenders and eliminates the need to carry gasoline aboard. The well deck is so vast that it would be equally possible to carry a sailing boat or even a car.

The main crew access emerges via a companionway at the break of the foredeck which is flanked by large storage lockers so the crew can carry out maintenance work virtually unseen by guests. Previous yachts of this class were fitted with a kind of cargo derrick for lifting tenders but *Axantha* has an extremely smart hydraulic crane that folds away invisibly inside the foremast.

The owner of *Axantha* is a keen scuba diver and the crew anticipate being able to load air-bottles and dive gear onto a tender before launching it and collecting guests from the stern. Access to the sea is particularly good as, in addition to the fold-down stern platform there are hydraulic ladders on each side. Another sport catered for is sailing, with two

dinghies stowed on the bridge deck and launched by their own small crane. In spite of these there is still plenty of room for loungers or sunpads here without needing to use the small 'crow's nest' deck on top of the wheelhouse. For alfresco dining, the sun deck down one level is favoured with a teak table set into the aft rail, outside the curved glass doors into the upper saloon. Thanks to the fact that the superstructure is full beam here, this is a deceptively large deck.

The upper saloon is especially attractive thanks to the large amount of glazing on three sides. It has been arranged in a library style with a teak planked floor and a set of bookshelves occupying the forward bulkhead. A built-in desk near the door creates an office but the comfortable blue and white striped settees invite one to sink down and relax. Below the bookcase are lockers with controls for the extensive video and audio outfit which can be accessed from all the main compartments. In addition to multi-channel satellite television, a library of some 2,000 hours of music is held on hard disc so that it is instantly available without needing to load CDs. In addition, there is a base station for wireless internet connection so that guests can use their own laptop computers throughout the yacht without having to plug in.

An ingenious feature of the yacht's design is that the bridge is raised by half a deck-level which gives it a better view, including aft, something that is practically unknown in motor



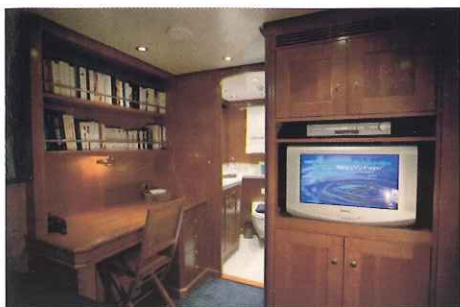
yachts. It is a large compartment which, in addition to the technical area, provides far more than the usual small settee for guests who would like to spend time there. The large and comfortable dinette is on a raised plinth, making it easy to see over the instrument console while seated. Occupying the remainder of

this plinth is an extra-large chart table with an office chair from which all the communications equipment can be operated. The watch officer has a central raised seat with an unobstructed view nearly all the way around through the outward-sloping windows. These are fitted alternately with windscreen wipers and spinning clear-view screens.

Another practical feature is that from a hatch in the captain's cabin abaft the bridge, one can enter a roomy crawl-space where a large amount of technical equipment such as the twin gyro compasses are installed. The captain,



Above and left: thanks to noise reduction specialist Van Cappellen, the full beam owner's stateroom is a quiet retreat, with a lounging area, walk-in wardrobe and en suite shower room, all enhanced by attractive cherry panelling
Right: sliding doors from the upper deck saloon lead out onto a teak sun terrace



meanwhile, has a very pleasant en suite double cabin with good overboard views. After all, this will be his home for much of the time.

Down a level, the main deck saloon combines the function of lounge, dining area and bar in one large compartment divided by a low partition. Although there is an attractive extendable dining table on the port side, formal dining is not over-emphasised as it is apparent that the owner and his family will probably prefer to dine outdoors when the weather permits. Instead, a cosy club atmosphere is reinforced by the bar on the opposite side with its row of stools with brass foot-rests. Aft is a square of comfortable settees and armchairs to port with a games table and tub chairs opposite. The warm glow of cherry panelling is complemented by the cornflower blue upholstery and curtains edged with white piping. The all-electric galley is immediately forward of the dining area, leaving just enough room to starboard for a small entrance hall with stairs leading up to the bridge and down to the guest accommodation and dayheads.

Descending carpeted stairs, the guest accommodation for up to ten is accessed from a short central corridor. The owner's stateroom uses the full hull width and is very spacious,



with plenty of room for a settee and table on one side of the double bed and a dressing table on the other. The amount of natural lighting via circular ports is limited, but this is an inevitable feature of a design that has the principal stateroom below deck. The en suite shower room and a walk-in wardrobe form a further barrier to any noise from the adjacent engine room.



From the corridor, doors open into four equal-sized double staterooms with en suite facilities. Like the owner's, they all have flat cherry panelling, television screens and audio controls connected to the main system. This layout, with all the accommodation forward, has the big advantage that the drive shafts, with their nearly unavoidable rumbling sound, do not pass underneath the accommodation.

A door through the watertight bulkhead allows access from the crew area which includes a good-sized mess and galley in

addition to a laundry and cabins on two levels. The engineer has a cabin right aft off the lazarette so that he does not need to keep moving from one end of the ship to the other.

JFA is particularly proud of the high standard of its engineering and the clean and functional engine room which is, indeed, immaculate. In fact the whole yacht is exceptionally well-finished, both

inside and out, giving the yard a strong claim to be considered among the top European builders. JFA is something of a surprise because it is a relatively small firm that can handle big yachts, thanks to its access to a very large Synchronlift which it shares with an adjacent commercial shipyard. French yards often have too high a cost-base to be competitive but by hard work and good management, JFA is earning its way into superyacht building as well as refit. Judging from the success of *Axantha*, the future looks bright. □

AXANTHA

LOA
37.2m
LWL
33.2m
Beam
8.2m
Draught
2.44m
Displacement
220 tonnes
Construction
Aluminium hull & superstructure
Main engines
2 x Caterpillar 3406, 475hp
Gearboxes
Twin Disc MG516

Propellers
HSP Aquaprop, 5-blade
Generators
2 Onan 60kW, 1 Onan 35kW
Fuel capacity
44,850 litres
Fresh water capacity
12,516 litres
Water makers
2 x HEM 500 litres/hour
Waste water treatment
Hamann
Air conditioning
Heinen Et Hopman 300,000 BTU
Stabilisers
Koopnautic

Sound & vibration study
Van Cappellen Consultancy
Cruising speed
13.8 knots
Classification
Lloyd's #100A1
Naval architecture
Vripack Yachting
International
Interior design
Vripack
Builder/year
JFA/2003
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