

HISTORY AND FIRST STEPS OF EILEAN RESTORATION

I have been extremely pleased to be choosed to manage the savage and restoration of this important yacht , but even more, like every yachtsmen and sailors I am specially thankfull to Officine Panerai who is investing to save Eilean that was very near to be lost for ever.

Let me briefly introduce myself. I am an yachtsman and a navigator. After my studies of Naval engineering and Marine architecture since 1979 I have been sailing for many years on my family English classic yacht Alzavola a 62' on deck Claude Worth design . Since than I got deeply personally involved in maintenance and problems of classic and vintage yachts . It was during my navigations in the Caribbean in the '80ies that I I knew Eilean and her owner John Shearer . There was like a club or a clan of wooden boat owners and captain sailing up and down islands in the Caribbean at that time and beutifull yachts like Escapade, Ticonderoga, Kentra, Harbinger, Cariad, Eilean, my Alzavola where among that group. Eilean was one of the nicest and more elegant. of them all .

I had the chance to sail several times up and down the Caribbean islands and every time I passed trough Antigua I stopped by Eilean.. Infact after many miles of navigation, John decided in 1987 to start a deep restoration on the yacht. But the work was far greater than he could afford alone and with only his great skill. As many brokers and carefull yachtsmen, I tried to find a buyer for Eilean, but John has always refused to sell her.

At the end of June 2006 Mr. Bonati asked me and Guido Del Carlo, owner of the renewn Italian shipyard , to join him and survey the yacht in Antigua.

On November 2006, my company was entrusted with the savage operation. I spent few weeks organizing the departure of Eilean from Antigua . The yacht had to come to Italy and end up in the shipyard choosed for the restoration: Cantiere Francesco Del Carlo. The yacht had to reach Martinique to be loaded on board of the Dockwise float-on-float-off ship.

I was really worried about towing Eilean as the structural situation was very poor. A great part of the steel frames where completely eaten up by the corrosion , the planking was mainly sound, but the fastening was not to be trusted. The deck was in very poor conditions and leaking badly . It was a great risk as great part of the steel structures was really too corroded. And the Caribbean sea is never a flat sea . The boat towed with no masts and no sails on, risks to roll in a violent way and stress the structure I calculated I had to fill up the yacht with about 25 tons of floating capability of strong floaters tighten to the more reliable steel floors. I fitted on board 3 powerfull motor pumps, 2 electric driven by a powerfull generator ,

But we had no problems as the delivery was organized at the end of november, at the end of the hurricane season and before the winter tradewinds come back in force.

On 15 november 2006 after 19 years and 7 months in the mangroves of English Harbour, Eilean leaved Antigua towed by a small tugboat heading for Martinique . The weather was fine and she had no problems arriving there

She entered the Dockwise Float on Float off yacht carrier on January 3th 2007 and arrived in Genova on the 2nd of February . she has been towed to Viareggio immediately taking the opportunity of a nice cold calm weather.

Eilean enters Del Carlo's shed on the 9th of February 2007

RESTORATION:

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

The historic research in a restoration project is a very important part of the work . As a yacht could have had many changes in her life to the moment when a philological restoration is planned. More will be the informations of her past , drawings, details specifications, pictures, articles on magazines, contacts with the past owners and captains , the easier and more reliable the restoration will be. And in this direction I drove my first efforts. I have been really pleased by the results of the research which is still producing fantastic documents .

Contacts with Fairlie restoration Duncan Walker

May Fife the direct heir of the dynasty of the yacht builders, responsible of Fife's archives stored in Irvine's mNaval Museum, and author of the book "Fast and Bonnie" on Fife's dynasty , design and construction.

Scottish Maritime Museum at Irvine

Mark Ratsey of Ratsey and Laphorn sail makers

And least but not last I had a great surprise: trough a friend I had a contact with James Gilmour Fulton .the great grand son of Louis Fulton Vandalle the great yachtsman who ordered Eilean for his two sons: James and Robert in 1936.

James Fulton mother's name is Eilean , just to tell how important was the link of this powerfull Scottish family with this yacht.

In 1936 Louis Fulton was still owner of

Eileen , than called Belle Aventure a very famous ketch of 85' on deck built in 1929

The family had still

Eileen built in 1935, cutter of 60': both yachts were of Fife

Two of the yachts built by Fife which are closely related to Eilean are

Mariella (Mylne design) built for mr. Teacher

Latifa mr.Mason historic Commodore of the RORC .

MESAURING,TAKING THE LINES,MODELING

Back to our boat , on which the boatyard started immediately to operate.

First ,burn out all the old paint and check the hull . But before removing all the fittings parts and starting removing the parts in bad conditions it was decided to take the lines

from the yacht. and the position of every fitting . We did it with a Laser Tracker technology as we planned to rely upon a tridimensional modelling of the yacht. The refitting boatyard has the skills , the capability and the possibility to use “old” technologies but in our day we could be helped by modern supports and this helps to go faster and with great documentation of plans and tracks of the work.

So, before taking off all the parts to be changed or restored by the shipwrights and blacksmiths , the yacht was carefully exhaminated, measurued .by our team of technicians designer architechts and engineers .

When carefully taken, The 3D model represents very exactly the actual situation of a yacht. It was a great surprise to realize that even in very poor conditions, Eilean was exceptionally symmetric .Often old boats left without care for many years after many miles of sailing , are twisted, the sheer line shows a deformation, the stern end fells down and give a sad impression. The mast generally pushed so much on the keel for so many years that the boat bends...The right part of the hull can be several centimetres different from the left in many sections....Nothing like this happened to Eilean. Thanks to the incredibly strong structural construction, Eilean was perfect. . This was a very good base from which the reconstruction and restoration started.

BOATYARD OPERATIONS

Since then, we are working hard and I am extremely pleased with the Francesco Del Carlo Boatyard. All the furnitures, bulkeahds, and bits and pieces were catalogued, removed and stored. Great part of the Steel structures unfortunately were in extremely oxydated and corroded situation. The yacht had suffered a lot. The deck has been leaking for many years .and also from the hull there were important infiltrations Few strong Hurricanes passed over Antigua or in the vicinity in these past 20 years and waterfalls of rain penetrated the boat . For fault of a seacock the yacht sunk in the harbour few years ago, and the steel structures continued to rust faster. Steel has a short life and it was decided to change all the damaged parts, but to use the same technology as in the days of Eilean construction. It was choosed the same quality of steel, It was ordered in plates and in bars of the same thickness and it was galvanized . On board , on turns, every two frames , beam and floor ,one was removed. Someone it was in such poor conditions to disappear under the tools .The carpenters took the models with plywood strips and provided them to the blacksmiths who with great care and skill bend the steel bars on the shape and bevel of the old one . A great complication was that the wooden planks were generally in good shape and we wanted to save as much as possible of that rare teak wood . So the new steel frames and structures had to be done so perfect to fit perfectly in the same position where all the holes of the old bolts on the wooden planks had not to be change not even one millimetre.! This has been a real great task and this is one of that careful operations that really makes a difference between a restoration and a reconstruction. The other unusual technology to be faced by the boatyard was that any structural steel ring is composed by a beam, 2 frames, a floor and these parts ,once created bending the steel bars have to be connected together before fastening to the wooden hull . In our days they are welded, but this was not the case in a restoration of a classic yacht of the 30ies .The steel parts had to be riveted. And we heard hammering on half an inch diameter steel rivets ,made red by the heath for

months and months ,until all the structure of the yacht was in place. And ready to be deeply protected by several coats of protective paint, even if the parts were already galvanized , but locally could have suffered.

The fastening between teak planking and steel structures are all new silicon bronze bolts;over 5000 bolts have been tightened and keep together wooden hull to the structures to create an incredibly strong boat ,lighter than if it was built all in wood, but with such an elegant shape that is difficult to declare Eilean a strong boat, but more likely a gracious light hull , or “Fast and Bonnie yacht“ as the Fife yachts were called....about a 30% of planking was changed. A plywood underdeck was layd on the beams and it is ready to be finished with 20mm teak planking glued on top. We are starting to rebuilt the inside parts and furnitures.Unfortunately a part of the old original ones are destroyed by the termites that entered the boat during the last part of her life in Antigua. Even the Masts have been eaten up in a dangerous way . So we have to build them new .

Next task is restoration of the accommodations replacing carefully only what will be needed . And this will be another very interesting step of the restoration of Eilean.

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Viareggio- February 15 th 2008