

# Fleurtyje



With only two owners over her near half a century lifetime, this three-masted schooner has been preserved as a unique example of mid-twentieth century naval architecture and design. Frances and Michael Howorth are invited on board this very private yacht for

an exclusive viewing

Photography by Alexis Andrews;

underway, Tim Wright



It seems almost inconceivable that a yacht so famous can sail the oceans for 47 years and yet remain one of the best kept secrets in yachting.

To do that, she had to have a very private owner with a loyal and dedicated crew. Such is the case with *Fleurtje*, the classic 56.99 metre three-masted staysail schooner, a veteran of 1960, which is only now, in 2007, being reviewed for the very first time.

There are not many three-masted classics sailing the world's oceans and that fact alone makes *Fleurtje* special and in a class whose other members include *Creole*, *Adix* and *Athena*. Designed by Robert Clark, she was built in 1960 at the NV Amsterdamsche Scheepswerf, the shipyard of De Vries Lentsch in The Netherlands, for Yiannis (John) Carras, the Greek shipping magnate who went on to develop Porto Carras in Thessalonika, now the largest private marina in northern Greece. He had named the yacht *Carita* after his then wife and later changed it to *Argonaftis*.

Leila Kennedy, a London-based interior designer, was the current owner's representative during the search, acquisition and initial refitting of the yacht. She has many good memories of those days and the following years, during which she sailed aboard on many occasions. She recalls that she was asked by the owner to look for and acquire a traditional-style sailing yacht about 60 metres long. The search was narrowed down to *Creole*, *Aquarius* and *Argonaftis*. The first two yachts were in need of repair so attention was focused on the latter, the youngest of them all, which was then berthed in Porto Carras. The yacht had seldom been used and even then, rarely under sail; at the time of purchase there was speculation that her original 24-year-old mainsail had hardly ever been raised. Once he had taken possession of his new yacht, the owner not only changed her name but also set about greatly altering her appearance and sailing characteristics.

The marine surveyor and naval architect employed by the purchaser was the Bosham-based John Winterbotham. He went on to become the project manager, becoming immersed in every aspect of the original refit in Italy in 1984 and has continued to have dealings with *Fleurtje* over the years. Once she had been bought and the specifications drawn up, Winterbotham commented to the owner that it would be much easier to work with the yacht layout if her main mast was



**Below right: fine brass detailing and classic fittings enhance the traditional feel of the yacht.**  
**Below: an awning covering the large aft deck creates a shady alfresco dining area**



**Above: traditional cross-beamed deckheads span the classical-style oak-panelled saloon**  
**Below: the wheelhouse may hark back to another era, but all the equipment is right up to date**

sited further aft. The owner asked whether it was possible to move it and when told that it was said 'Well, do it then.' With all the related work the change entailed, a further nine months was added to the project but the end result was a more balanced look with a much better sail plan.

Cantiere Navale dell'Argentario in Porto Santo Stefano, Italy, a family-operated business then owned by Italian aristocrat Pietro Gaspari, was eventually chosen as the yard that would undertake the refit. It was selected for a number of reasons, not least because *Raphaelo* a classic schooner had been refitted there and the new owner of *Fleurtje* had previously chartered her. The shipyard, it was felt, with its team of craftsmen, would undertake a sympathetic refit and give the new owner the traditional-looking classic yacht he wanted.

During the first refit the aging 597hp Paxman engines were replaced with two 12-cylinder Caterpillar engines. In addition to her repositioned main mast, she gained a graceful Norwegian spruce bowsprit and emerged from her extended cygnet phase with long overhangs at both bow and stern, which emphasised her extremely elegant lines, her faired, deep blue painted steel hull, white aluminium superstructure and three tall Douglas-fir masts with their staysail plan, all combined to enhance her handsome profile. Under sail she is an impressive sight, cutting a fine shape as she heels eight sails to the breeze. Fine brass detailing and classic fittings on deck lend an air of tradition, yet she remains nimble in the turn and holds herself up well when racing amongst her peers during Classic Week races held each spring in Antigua.

The long foredeck provides more than enough working space for the crew to handle her headsails and there is a spacious sail bin adjacent to the foremast. The captain's double cabin, complete with radio room/study, is inside the forward deckhouse with the wheelhouse and open bridge wing stations aft, both of which offer excellent visibility. The wheelhouse carries an impressive array of modern navigation equipment and the radio room boasts a good range of modern communication devices.

The after deckhouse contains the full-width galley with doors on each side opening onto the side decks. Just aft of the galley, an athwartships passageway provides access to the saloon, the owner's and guest

accommodation and port and starboard side decks. A dayhead is located to port.

*Fleurtje's* ample aft deck and helmstation can be spanned by an awning to create an elegant terrace under the shadow of her mighty mizzen mast, and this area can be used for alfresco dining. Her main deck saloon is positioned between this aft deck and the internal dining area, while her well-equipped galley is advantageously positioned to give direct access to both the dining saloon and the aft deck dining table.

The high-standing superstructure provides the interior with good headroom. Traditional cross-beamed deckheads and oak-panelled bulkheads create an atmosphere of polished classic elegance, but this does not preclude the addition of modern creature comforts, such as a large flat plasma television screen that is raised by remote control from an oak-panelled cabinet in the saloon. Guest accommodation occupies the amidships section of the yacht below the main mast with six cabins on the lower deck including the master, two guest doubles, a twin and two singles with a Pullman above each berth. Each cabin has an en suite bathroom with a bath, marble-clad walls and countertops and teak decking. Gold-plated taps are from Orient Express, supplier of bathroom hardware to the Georges V Hotel in Paris. Below the guest corridor is the gyro compass compartment and a substantial wine store.

As built, the yacht offered basic crew berths for about 20 crew. With the original sail plan and lack of modern sail handling devices she would have probably have needed all hands on deck to sail her efficiently, yet in an article published at the time of her launch, the yacht is described as needing fewer crew than older yachts of similar size. Today, crew quarters with accommodation for a total complement of 16 are forward on the lower deck and come complete with a crew galley and mess. Below the crew area is the laundry room, which is well-equipped with washers and dryers. The refrigerators and freezers are also kept down here and there is access to both the bow thrusters and air conditioning plant.

The engine room offers standing headroom and is both spacious and practically laid out. Two 12-cylinder Caterpillar 3412 engines, each developing 624hp, drive variable pitch propellers at a top speed of 15 knots and a cruising speed of 12 knots when under power. She consumes 242 litres per hour at 15 knots and 1,267 litres per hour at 12 knots



**Above: forward of the saloon, the dining area is a sophisticated setting for more formal dining**  
**Below: raised-and-fielded oak panelling gives the capacious master cabin a traditional feel**



**The owner's (below far left) and guest en suites (below) all have baths, marble-clad walls and traditional-style gold-plated fittings. Below: one of the five guest cabins on board**



but at 8 knots her 32,000 litre fuel capacity gives her a range of 3,000 nautical miles. The layout offers engineers easy access to major equipment and so makes for easy servicing. New sound shields fitted to the generators ensure it is quiet to work inside and, with added insulation, ensure that sound does not travel to guest areas of the yacht. Leading aft from the engine room is the lazarette and steering compartment that comes complete with a carpenter's store and small workshop and offers storage for spare parts and separate access up to the aft deck.

Since re-launching as *Fleurtje*, the yacht has undergone a further four refits and maintains her Lloyd's classification status. Work carried out at Astilleros de Mallorca, Pendennis Shipyards, UK, and Savannah and Norfolk, Virginia in the USA replaced or upgraded much of the machinery and nearly all of the sailing elements. In 1991, all three masts were replaced with new Douglas-fir spars.

The design team, guided by Leila Kennedy put in much time and effort into the redesign of the dated interior of the then 24-year-old boat, which at the time of purchase was still 1960s style. The interior of the yacht was refitted out using raised-and-fielded oak panelling with plenty of solid brass fittings. In order to expedite the process, the entire interior, including cabinetry and panelling, was assembled off site in its entirety, and then broken down and reinstalled as soon as the rest of the refit had taken place. Whenever possible, local Italian craftsmen and workrooms were used and proved to be a delight to work with. Despite language barriers and at a time when communication with the owner depended on telexes and operator-controlled international telephone calls, the project went amazingly smoothly and everyone was extremely pleased with the final result.

During an extensive refit in Falmouth, UK, between 1994 and 1995, *Fleurtje's* pig-iron ballast was renewed, and naval architect Gerald Dijkstra was brought in to optimise sailing performance, which he did by redistributing much of the 100 tonnes of ballast. His attention resulted in considerable improvements in speed and handling. The yacht was also given a new deck using 30 millimetre-thick teak, increasing to a staggering 45 millimetres in her margins. Given care, the deck should last 30 years. More work, this time in Savannah, USA, during 2003, saw her hull re-faired and painted with Awlgrip, her rig removed and

new stainless steel standing rigging fitted to each of her spars. The UK-based Ratsey & Laphorn loft renewed her sail inventory so she now carries two jibs, three staysails, two fisherman mainsails and a mizzen. Her accommodation also benefited from the installation of a new reverse-cycle heating and air-conditioning system.

While in Virginia, USA, in 2005 she completed her ninth five-year survey for her Lloyd's classification, with work undertaken on her rudder, steering system, propellers and teak deck. In 2006, the winches on deck were internally renewed and the motor on the anchor

windlass was rebuilt. A new sun awning was installed and many of the canvas covers on deck were replaced.

Throughout the last 22 years, *Fleurtje* has been consistently overhauled, modernised, rebuilt, redecorated, refitted and renewed so effectively that she is now in the best condition of her life. She is certainly one of the finest three-masted schooners currently afloat. Now, after just two owners, this truly tremendous transatlantic schooner is for sale and seeking a third special owner, who will be happy to shower this majestic lady with affection and attention as she approaches her half-century.

Brokers Edmiston & Company have her on the market at \$14.75 million.

In the 1960s *Yachting World Annual* they comment: 'A yacht such as this would, in any period be remarkable, in the present day of small yachts, she seems frankly magnificent. Her place in the history of yacht architecture is assured, for technical developments have moved rapidly and far since the last sailing yacht of her size was built and there is *Carita* alone to reveal what the mid-twentieth century architect and builder can make of such a ship.' Those words still ring true today, some 47 years after she was originally launched. □

FLEURTJE

**LOA**  
56.99m

**LWL**  
37.03m

**Beam**  
8.56m

**Draught**  
4.88m

**Displacement**  
295 tonnes

**Rig**  
3-masted staysail schooner

**Mast and boom**  
3 x Douglas-fir masts  
Norwegian spruce booms

**Sail areas**  
Outer jib 102.7m<sup>2</sup>  
Inner jib 112.4m<sup>2</sup>  
Fore staysail 88.1m<sup>2</sup>  
Fore fisherman 158.3m<sup>2</sup>  
Main fisherman 176.4m<sup>2</sup>  
Main staysail 113.4m<sup>2</sup>  
Mizzen staysail 104.7m<sup>2</sup>  
Mizzen 102.7m<sup>2</sup>

**Sailmaker**  
Ratsey & Laphorn, UK

**Furling systems**  
Harken

**Winches**  
7 x Seaway Group 12,000 electric two speed  
3 x Lewmar 65 manual  
3 x Harken 74 two-speed manual

**Engines**  
2 x 624hp 12-cylinder Caterpillar 3412 TA

**Propellers**  
Korsor, controllable pitch

**Speed (max/cruise)**  
15/12 knots approximately

**Fuel capacity**  
32,000 litres

**Range**  
3,000nm at 12 knots

**Bow thruster**  
Quantum QT100hp electro hydra

**Stabilisers**  
n/a

**Generators**  
3 x 80kW Caterpillar 3304s

**Watermakers**  
2 x HEM 10,886 litres per day each

**Freshwater capacity**  
21,830 litres

**Grey/black water capacity**  
3,000 litres

**Sewage system**  
n/a

**Fire-control system(s)**  
Halon

**Security systems**  
n/a

**Monitoring system**  
n/a

**Air-conditioning**  
Cruise Air

**Communication/navigation electronics**  
Nera, Sailor, Fleet 77, ICOM, Furuno, Panasonic, Ritchie, Anshutz, Robertson, Brooks & Gatehouse, C Map, Nobeltec

**Entertainment systems**  
JVC, Sony, Pioneer

**Owner and guests**  
10

**Crew**  
16

**Tenders**  
2 x 5.49m Boston Whaler

Outrage, 1 x 4.8m and 1 x 4.3m Novamarine

**Tender-launching system**  
Traditional poles and halyards

**Passerelle**  
Custom, manually operated

**Paint**  
Awlgrip

**Construction**  
Steel hull and frames, aluminium superstructure, teak-laid decks

**Classification**  
Lloyds #100A1 #LMC 2

**Project management**  
n/a

**Naval architect**  
Robert Clark

**Exterior styling**  
Robert Clark

**Interior designer**  
Leila Kennedy

**Broker**  
Edmiston & Company Ltd Monaco  
(Nick Edmiston)  
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**Charter**  
n/a

**Charter rates**  
n/a

**Builder/year**  
NV Amsterdamsche Scheepswerf (G. De Vries Lentsch Jr)/1960  
Amsterdam  
The Netherlands

**Refits**  
Cantiere Navale dell'Argentario, Italy/1984-85  
Astilleros de Mallorca, Palma, Spain/1993  
Pendennis, UK/1994-95  
Savannah, USA/2003  
Norfolk (Virginia), USA/2005

**Price guide**  
\$14.75 million

