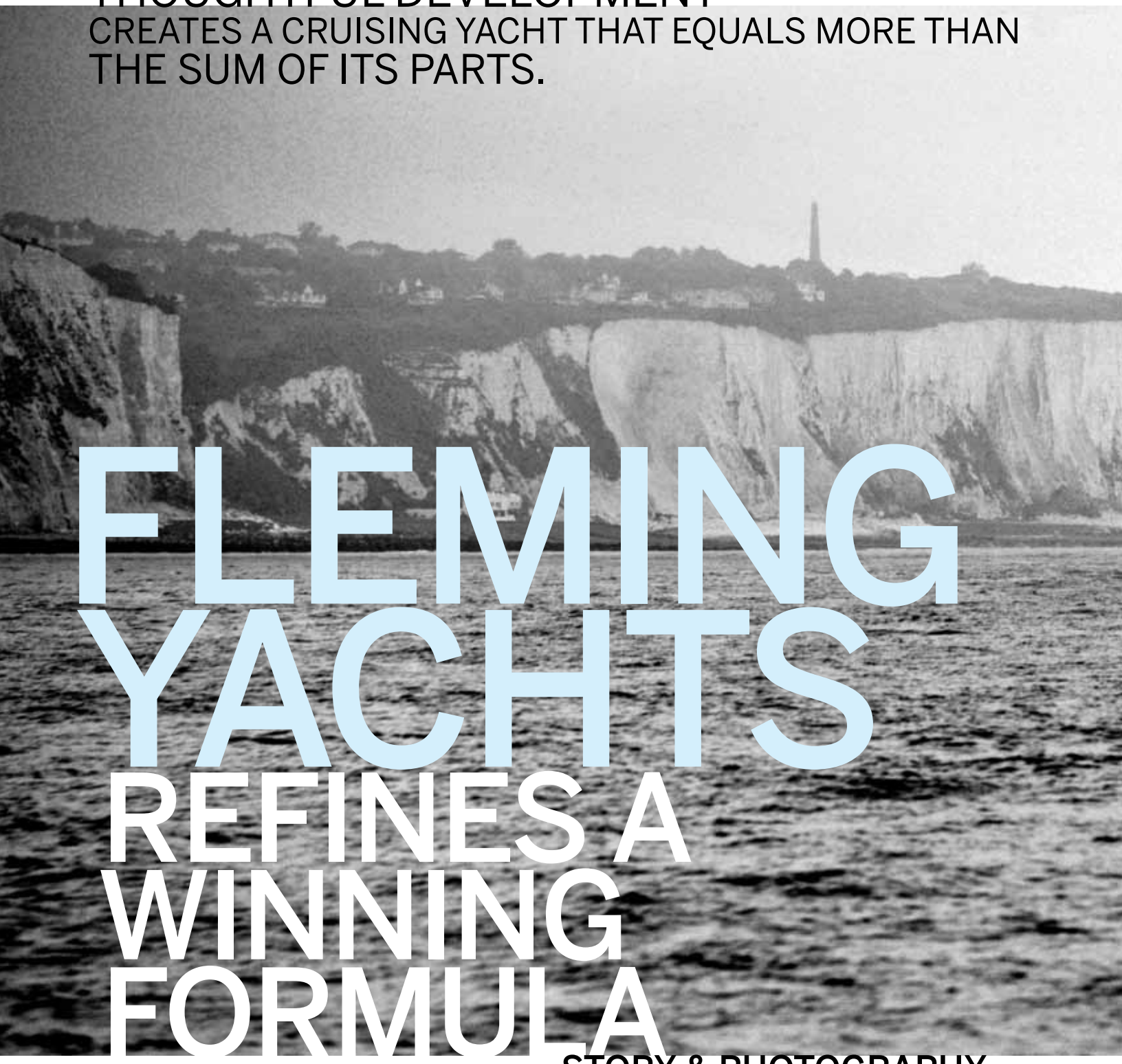
THOUGHTFUL DEVELOPMENT CREATES A CRUISING YACHT THAT EQUALS MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS.



FLEMING YACHTS REFINES A WINNING FORMULA

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE D'ANTONIO

While the F58's freeboard is only slightly taller than the F55's, retaining her good seakeeping characteristics, she displaces ten tons more than her predecessor. Here she maneuvers in preparation for her departure from Heligoland's artificial harbor.

FLEMING YACHTS OF EVERY SIZE AND VINTAGE HAVE EARNED A REPUTATION AMONG THE COMPANY'S LOYAL OWNERS OF BEING SEAWORTHY, COMFORTABLE AND SAFE. STILL, MANY OF THESE SAME OWNERS AGREE THAT CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE DESIGNS COULD DO WITH UPDATING. THIS HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY TRUE OF THE FLEMING 55, THE COMPANY'S BEST-SELLING MODEL.

Duncan Cowie and Adi Shard, who oversee construction and operations at the yard in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, recognized this several years ago and polled owners of the 55 for their thoughts. They learned that many of them wanted a vessel larger than the 55 but not as big as the 65. The new 58 would be aimed at splitting the difference and be the first boat designed and built entirely by Cowie and Shard following Tony Fleming's retirement from the company in 2008.

Among the changes suggested was to give the new model a full-beam master stateroom amidships. Although Cowie and Shard could not ignore this important selling point, they continue to believe that the center companionway of the 55 and 65 is still more practical and offers the best use of space. Starting with a clean slate, though, allowed the company to offer the full-beam master stateroom as an option on the 58.

The other major revision involved the engine-room overhead clearance. Many prospective buyers simply couldn't wrap their head around purchasing a 55-foot vessel with an engine room they could not stand up in. The limiting factor aboard the 55 is its intentionally low freeboard, which reduces windage and keeps the center of gravity low enough to reduce rolling. It's a quintessential element of the Fleming design philosophy. However, raising it just a few inches, while raising the saloon sole a few inches as well, made it possible for the 58 to incorporate this long-desired feature without sacrificing stability.

Still more wishes were added to the list, emanating from both existing Fleming owners and the design team. These include room for twin helm seats in the pilothouse, electrical panels that don't require one to kneel or squat and a day-head. While the 58 was completely new from the keel up, rather than simply a rework of the 55, it still had to retain the classic styling and seakeeping abilities of previous Flemings.

Cowie and Shard created a detailed design brief and then hired Norman Wright & Sons naval architects of Brisbane, Australia, a design house with more than 100 years of experience designing semi-displacement passagemakers. This team drew a beamier hull, approximately 18 inches more than that of the 55, with slightly more freeboard and a greater waterline length, which was then tank tested at the Australian Maritime College in Tasmania. The aim was to achieve fuel-consumption figures that were as close as possible to those of the 55, even though the 58 would displace 10 tons more.

Once the research was complete, Cowie and Shard showed the initial drawings and the 1/12 scale tank test model of the hull

to the dealers and listened closely to their feedback. The tests estimated fuel consumption to be the same as the 55's, in spite of the additional weight (which includes 50 percent greater fuel capacity). The dealers were pleased so construction of the tooling commenced.

DIGITAL SWITCHING

The design team, taking a leap of faith, embraced the growing trend toward the use of digital switching, which enables most of a vessel's electrical gear–lights, pumps, inverters, shore power, etc.–to be controlled from central command screens, tablets, or phones, rather than via traditional circuit breakers. This concept reduces the number of large copper cables that must be strung throughout a vessel, particularly one as systems-rich as the 58. Instead, very small-gauge control cables take their place, saving weight and reducing the size of wire bundles. In addition, a host of systems can be easily and routinely monitored from aboard the boat and remotely. An SMS text feature also allows the system to send important alerts, such as high water in the bilge, low voltage and smoke, to multiple users.

Fleming chose a system manufactured by the German firm Böning. The 65 I reviewed in 2011 used an earlier version of the Böning system that Fleming was evaluating. It was primarily for monitoring, but the version used on the 58 is a full-blown digital switching system with extensive monitoring capabilities, which proved its worth during our sea-trial passage. The 58 was working its way through heavy seas, and I was alone on watch. Suddenly, the Böning alarm sounded, a large red bar flashed across the screen, and I was horrified to see the words FIRE emblazoned across the screen. Within seconds, the acrid odor of burning electrical components stung my nostrils.

In addition to the alarm signal, the Böning display noted the fire's location under the pilothouse helm, which is why I smelled it so quickly. After rousing my crewmates I crawled under the helm, but I couldn't see smoke, fire or water. Eventually, I was able to identify the source inside a navigation display enclosure. We shut it down and the odor quickly dissipated. The Böning's central-station smoke alarm enabled the crew to respond rapidly to the problem, stemming it before it escalated.

My time at the helm revealed that, like all Flemings, the view from the pilothouse is exceptional. The mullions are no wider than needed, and the lower station's three large electrically heated windshield panes provide the helmsman with unrestricted sight lines. The flying bridge is larger than that of the 55, evidenced by what it accommodates–a top-load freezer/refrigerator, a double Stidd seat, BBQ, and 13-foot tender with 1,000 lb. Steelhead crane.

The cockpit is 25 square feet larger than that of the 55. Cap rails are available in Fleming's signature synthetic

Left: The 58's interior is open, bright and expertly finished. Above: The pilothouse design affords the helmsman an excellent view of the surrounding sea, as well as critical instrumentation. Here Fleming skipper Simon Culling pilots the 58 past Calshot.

Burrwood, which looks identical to varnished teak yet never needs maintenance. A large electrically operated hatch allows access to the lazarette from the cockpit, and large twin hatches provide access directly to the engine room, which is not accessible from the saloon. You can gain access to the cockpit and wide side decks via four inward opening gates in the bulwarks.

Night vision in the pilothouse is a frequent issue aboard modern vessels, as the volume of illuminated equipment has grown exponentially. During night watches I noticed that the glare from instruments as well as the steaming light were distracting. I understand this has now been improved, with greater ability to dim the former, and the company has sent a notice to its dealers regarding the latter. Also, I found the footrest at the helm to be slippery in stocking feet, a complaint

SPECIFICATIONS

LOA: 62'9"
BEAM: 17'6"
DRAFT: 5'0"
DISPL.: 105,600 lb. (full load)
FUEL: 1,450 gal.
WATER: 320 gal.

TEST POWER: 2/800 hp MAN R6 diesel inboards
POWER: 2,500 hp Cummins QSC 8.3 diesel inboards
BASE PRICE: $2,672,000
Contact: 949-645-1024, *www.flemingyachts.com*

I have for most vessels with varnished soles. I'd leave it as untreated teak, or at the very least finished in nonskid.

The full-beam master stateroom aboard the test boat is very large and has an en-suite head. The queen bed's centerline is the same as the vessel's, minimizing motion when rolling, and this also is true of the queen-size V-berth in the guest cabin. It has private access to another head, which can also be accessed from the passageway. This passageway feels tight, because too many doors open into the same space, and doors can't be left open. On the other hand, it's expertly crafted, everything fits and there's really no way to avoid it in this configuration. Another twin-bunk cabin is located on the port side.

Joinerwork and cabin fit and finish are what we've come to expect from Fleming; finely crafted, with no gaps, and the finish is flawless. Everything you can or might grab feels solid. Galley counter tops, saloon and other furniture are finished with modest fiddles, which are bull-nosed on the outside edge,

HULL LAMINATE SCHEDULE

Hull laminate varies from area to area, depending on panel size, location and other factors.

However, an example of the quality would be the base lamination below the waterline. It contains 18 layers of glass, with average total thickness of .375 inches. The areas above the centerline, top of keel, along the chines, and the stem have significant additional reinforcement.

The hull is solid hand-laid glass with vinylester resin used in the outer laminations throughout.

Core material is a Gurit Corecell M Foam in the house sides, and decks. Nidacore honeycomb is used in the FRP molded saloon sole.

Fleming complies with certification programs by NMMA/ABYC, RCD/CE, Canadian Small Vessel Regulations, National Standard for Australian Boulders. This ensures the vessel is suited for any market across the globe.

A full 12-month warranty, including a five-year structural hull warranty, and a five-year warranty covering osmotic blistering below the waterline is offered to owners straight from the Fleming factory.

making them comfortable to lean on, while retaining objects placed here.

SEATRIAL

The Fleming 58 is the culmination of nearly five years of research and development, and I was delighted to join skipper Simon Culling and crew for a 450 nm run from Southampton, England, to the small windswept North Sea German islet of Heligoland via Dover and Scheveningen in the Netherlands.

After applying a few final finishing touches to the commissioning, we departed Southampton in the early evening, heading toward the Solent. We passed Calshot Castle on the eponymous spit, and then left the Isle of Wight to starboard. Our destination was Dover, where the watermaker dealer would meet us to complete his installation. The conditions were calm, giving me an ideal opportunity to get to know the boat. After spending a day and a half in Dover, we got under way again in the early evening, passing the white cliffs and the Chunnel's massive spoil pile in the misty fading light. While conditions were good, we made a comfortable 11 knots while burning 14 gph, but this was to be the proverbial calm before the storm.

The English Channel soon lived up to its reputation for dishing out dirty weather. By midnight conditions deteriorated, 35 knots of wind on the bow and seven-foot breaking seas forced us to seek refuge in the well-protected Dutch port of Scheveningen. We surfed into the harbor on four-foot waves, past granite pillars flanking the harbor's gates. We licked our wounds, slept, had a meal, and provisioned. The crew may have been bedraggled after this run, but the boat held up magnificently. Her seakeeping abilities were rock solid, as good or better than the 65's, in which I've experienced similar conditions, with no pounding, rattles or leaks. The Hypro electro-hydraulic steering and SeaTorque shaft systems never missed a beat.

We departed Scheveningen at 0500 the following day, and while the conditions were only marginally better, we soon made a right turn along the Frisian coast, putting the seas and wind on our port beam and making life for the crew much more comfortable. With the exception of a routine boarding by the Dutch Coast Guard, whose crew handled their craft expertly as it came alongside to transfer two of its members, the remainder of the passage was uneventful. We threaded our way through what seemed like countless wind farms, making landfall at Heligoland's harbor early on Sunday morning.

Left: Retaining the classic Fleming look was a key element in the creation of the 58. Center: A feature many current and would-be Fleming 55 owners longed for, a stand-up engine room. Right: The conditions during the 450 nm passage ranged from flat calm to bow-on breaking seas. The 58 shook off the latter without incident.

At the time this was written the next 58 available is number 16; impressive for a fledgling design. The first eight hulls have been delivered to their owners, and of the first ten, eight went to existing owners of the 55. The first three had the full-beam master stateroom (including the vessel I tested), vindicating this option, and the fourth hull retains the traditional centerline companionway.

The 58 represents the culmination of Fleming's collective experience, over the course of 25 years, hundreds of hulls and hundreds of thousands of nautical miles. With this design, they've succeeded in melding the traditional tried and true characteristics with the modern and innovative, while sacrificing very little if anything in the process.