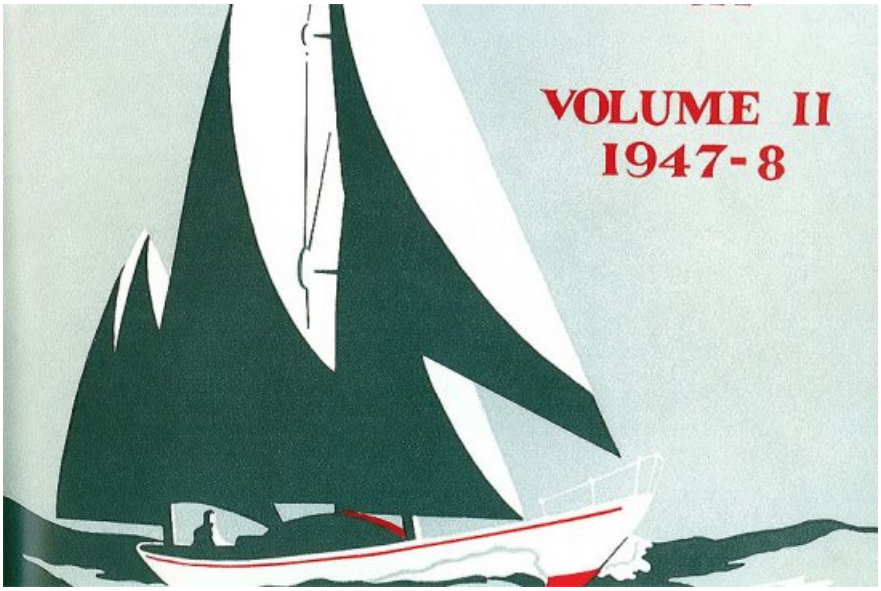
Book Review: ‘Eilean – A Classic Yacht’

This is a book about the ‘rebirth’ of a 1936 yacht, the marine equivalent of a barn-find, restored and relaunched thanks to Italian luxury watch company Officine Panerai.

The yacht in question is a Bermudan ketch by the name of ‘Eilean’, one of the last designs of William Fife III of the Fife shipyards in Fairlie, Scotland – a man credited with some of the most beautiful sailboats ever created. The book contains period pictures and technical details, archive information and first-hand accounts, all helping to bring the story alive, from Eilean’s birth and early years in European waters, to her Atlantic crossings and time in the Caribbean seas.

When Officine Panerai discovered Eilean in Antigua in 2006, she was in extremely poor condition and her restoration – which was undertaken in Italy – took more than three years; all faithfully illustrated in the book, of course. Today, Eilean is back in her natural element, the sea, and is seen at the regattas of the Panerai Classic Yachts Challenge, the international circuit of regattas for classic and vintage yachts (and the subject of a chapter in the book).



The authors of the book are François Chevalier, himself a naval architect as well as a writer, and May Fife Kohn, a descendant of the Fife dynasty of Fairlie. She is also the author of ‘Fast and Bonnie, A History of William Fife & Son Yachtbuilders’, a book based on many years’ research into the history of the Fife shipyards.

‘Eilean – A Classic Yacht’, is published by Flammarion and costs €95/US$125/£80 from selected international bookshops. Measuring 32cm x 32cm, the book has 192 pages and comes in a presentation box.

For more details, see www.groupe-flammarion.com.

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