



Greg Elliott: Doing it his Way

By Ivor Wilkins

Greg Elliott has always been an ocean passagemaker at heart. Although his yacht design career has spanned a succession of rating rules, more often than not these have been a cause of frustration – bureaucratic formulae he frequently regarded as impediments to real performance and efficient offshore capability.

Although he found success within the

rating rules, his best work probably lies in fast offshore yachts that were designed to reel off big daily runs in all conditions as reliably and efficiently as possible.

Whether these were intended to set records, win ocean races or simply to provide the enjoyment of getting from A to B fast and shipshape, it was their seakeeping and passagemaking characteristics that occupied most of his attention.

In more recent years, this preoccupation

has translated into a line of Elliott Tourer designs, which has grown in popularity. Owners were drawn to their large volume, bright interiors with single-level flow from cockpit to saloon, combined with ease of handling and an impressive ability to clock big daily mileages in considerable comfort and style.

Offered in 12.50, 13.50, 14.50, 15.50 and 16.50 sizes (relating to length in metres), 23 of these pilothouse sloops

Wrap-around windows provide plenty of light and panoramic views

have been built across the range, with the latest 13.50 for Greg and his wife Jo with a view to heading across some distant and as yet fairly vaguely defined horizon.

"We launched the boat in Tauranga late last year," says Greg, "motored it up to Auckland where we rigged it and then spent the summer up in the Bay of Islands with the family.

"The immediate plan is to sail to Sydney, but after that it is pretty much open-ended. We could come out of Sydney and turn left and spend time up around the Great Barrier Reef. Or, if that doesn't happen, we will do a Pacific tour."

The Sydney connection is double-ended. In the first instance,

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On board *Fortuna*, Greg Elliott studies his charts in preparation for going offshore

the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club has ordered a new fleet of eight 7m Elliott trainers, the same as the ones used by the Squadron's Lion Foundation Youth Training Programme.

Part of Greg's contract is to be on hand during the assembly and commissioning of the new fleet. In that sense, it is business as usual and he makes it clear that from a yacht design point of view, all that is changing is his address. Elliott Marine remains in business and he will continue servicing clients and taking new commissions while afloat.

The second Sydney connection is that both Elliott kids, Sam and Rose, are based there – Sam now working in marketing after graduating from Sydney University and Rose currently doing an education degree at the same university. "This will be our Sydney apartment," Greg says of *Fortuna*.

And a pretty comfortable apartment it will be. Built and finished to a high standard by Hutcheson Boatbuilders in Tauranga, the design comprises a generous owners' suite in the forepeak, with a centerline bed and a semi-ensuite shower, which can be accessed from the forecabin, or the main companionway.

Just aft of the main suite on the port side is an open area with a passage berth or a spare berth for additional guests. Opposite is the shower and separate head.

Two further double cabins are situated aft, on either side of the entry from the cockpit to the main saloon. The generous saloon is the heart of the boat, where most

time will be spent, with a fully equipped stainless steel galley to port and fixed table and settee to starboard.

Sitting, or standing, the large curved wraparound window provides plenty of light and panoramic views. It is a bright, inviting place to lounge with a book at anchor, or to watch the world go by on



The massive internal volume is fully utilised with copious storage

passage. A small but completely functional navigation station faces forward.

The key feature is the direct connection from the pilothouse saloon to the cockpit, which extends the entire space. Indoor-outdoor flow is a real estate agent's cliché, but it fully describes this aspect of the design.

Two large seats either side of the cockpit and protected by the overhang of the pilothouse extension provide comfortable perches for watch keeping, or just taking in the view from the back veranda.

Further aft are the twin steering positions, with an instrument/control/chartplotter pod on the port side and a bank of jammers on the starboard side, providing total helm control of all navigation, engine and sailing functions. Sailing electronics and autopilot are by Nexus with a Raymarine chartplotter.

The cockpit terminates aft with a walk-through transom and boarding platform.

It sounds and is perfectly simple and logical. Yet, getting all these features to assemble themselves in a stylish and functional package demands a huge amount of thought, experience and design – which is born out by the number of production yachts that have tried and often failed to achieve a similar result.

When that is combined with a good all-round performance hull and rig, the result is exceptional.

So, what has Elliott done to his own personal cruising yacht that makes it different from all the others? The answer lies not in what he has added to a fundamentally sound package, but in what he has left out.

"When you are doing a boat for yourself, you go through a close examination of what you really need and what you don't," he says. "You can always add things later, but we are starting with a kind of less-is-more approach."

Of the seven 13.50 designs built to date, most have utilized a lifting keel, but Elliott's *Fortuna* is one of only two so far with a fixed keel. The fin and bulb has a draft of 2.3m, which provides good offshore performance, but still offers decent access to most marinas and anchorages without the complexity of a lifting arrangement.

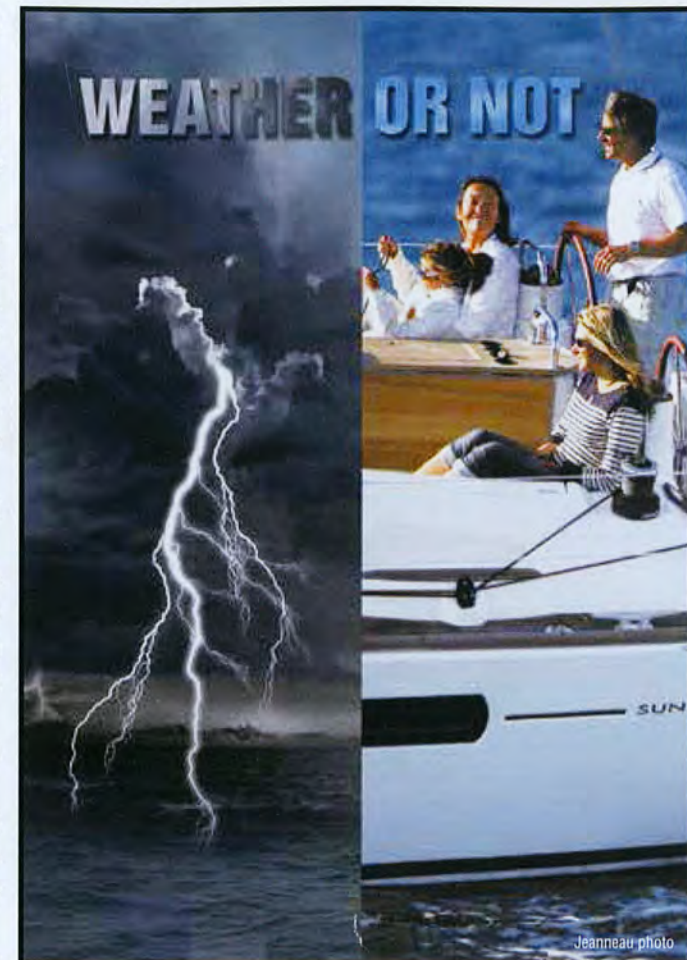
Simplicity is a theme, which reflects a healthy back to basics approach. No watermaker, no generator, no TV, no microwave, no air-conditioning.

Water tankage of 800 litres is plenty for cooking and showering, while drinking water is bottled. "Most of the time, you tend to drink no more than a litre a day, perhaps a couple of litres in the tropics," says Greg. "It is easy to carry as much bottled water as you need for passages."

A solar panel on the pilothouse roof provides sufficient power to run the fridge and separate freezer most of the time. The main power consumers at sea are refrigeration and autopilot and the solar panel plus a standard alternator and 12-volt bank of AGM deep cycle closed cell batteries have proved well capable of keeping on top of demand.

The batteries, fuel and water tanks and 55hp Yanmar engine are all located amidships below the saloon sole, keeping the weight concentrated in the middle to maximize seakeeping.

Given Elliott's performance pedigree, it is no surprise that a great deal of thought and effort has gone into producing an easily driven



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The large volume hull is designed for performance and is capable of big daily runs – even in light air.



hull that will eat up the miles even in light air. "You want to cut down fuel requirements as much as possible, so light air performance is very important. With this boat, in 10 knots of true wind speed, we can keep up 7.5 knots of boatspeed on a reach, so it is very efficient.

"In most conditions, we will average just over 8 knots. We reckon this is a 200-mile a day boat. Under power, we do 8.3 knots at 2100RPM, so we are using very little fuel."

Again, the sailing approach has favoured simplicity. An aluminium double spreader mast from NZ Rigging is supported by stainless steel wire standing rigging. The North Sails wardrobe comprises a fully-battened main on a Leisure-furl boom, a

genoa on a Harken furler and a staysail. The only extra is an A3 on a loose-luff furler, which stows in a foredeck sail locker aft of the anchor locker.

The Harken deck hardware is all manual. "The cost and weight of going to electric winches is about double and then you get caught up in the need for more power, which means more fuel and so on. There are no massive loads involved. Cranking a winch now and then is about all the exercise we will get, so I reckon if I can't manage that, I shouldn't be out there."

Offshore communications including email and weather will be via Iridium satphone, while most inshore communications will be by cellphone and VHF.

As Greg and Jo Elliott make the final preparations for a new life afloat, they have brought considerable experience and discipline to bear in producing a cruising yacht that sacrifices nothing in terms of comfort and style, yet reduces everything on board down to functional minimums.

This is a taut, well considered approach that recognizes the value of reducing weight, complexity and cost in favour of performance and minimizing the risk of becoming slaves to the maintenance, care and feeding of superfluous equipment. As a recipe for offshore cruising success, it has a great deal to recommend it.

Interior Photos by Bryce Taylor