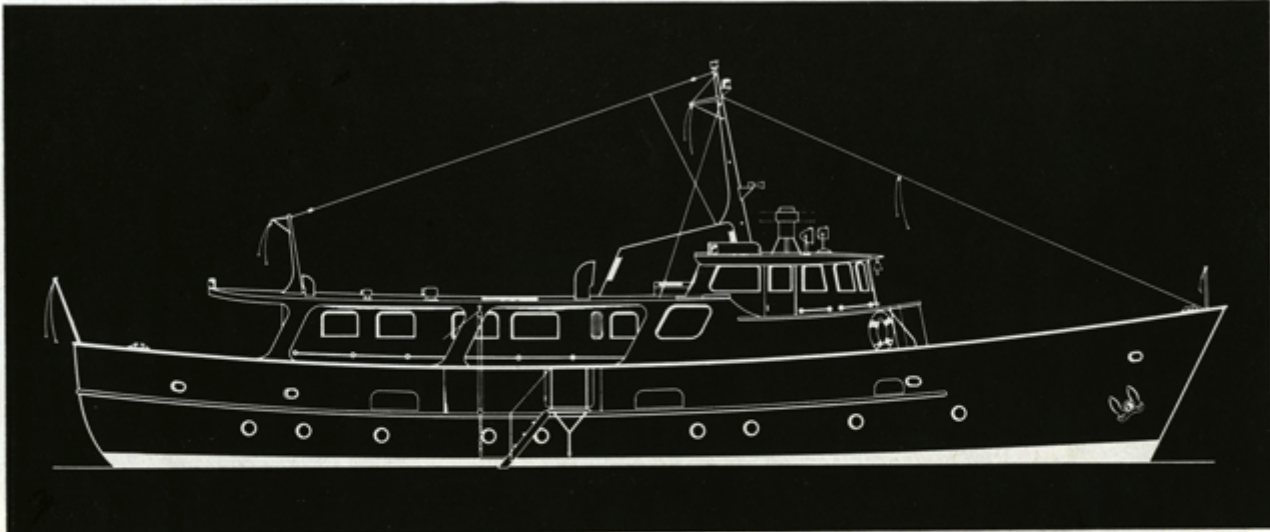


Yachts

The construction of luxury motor yachts in the 1960's would further enhance the Berwick yard's reputation.

FAIRMILE STEEL YACHTS



FAIRMILE
CONSTRUCTION COMPANY LTD
COBHAM · SURREY · ENGLAND
TELEPHONE COBHAM 400 GRAMS, FAIRCRAFT

Based on the highly successful "Fair Isle" Trawler hull, this attractive vessel is designed to appeal to the deep-sea cruising owner. The proved sea-keeping ability of the hull and the comfortable accommodation it affords makes this ship eminently suitable for World cruising.

Principal dimensions

<i>Length overall</i>	.. 73 ft. 7 in.	<i>Breadth moulded</i>	.. 19 ft. 6 in.
<i>Length B.P.</i>	.. 64 ft. 5 in.	<i>Depth moulded</i>	.. 10 ft. 9 in.
		<i>Approximate range</i>	3,000 miles

Built at Berwick - designed in Surrey. A 1961 advert for Fairmile ocean-going yachts for which the Berwick yard would later receive accolades from discerning owners in the UK, Europe and the United States.

In the early 1960's demand for fishing vessels that had been the main source of employment since the late 1950's tailed off. The yard was forced to look to other markets for orders. It was during this period that Fairmile would establish a world-wide reputation for the production of steel displacement luxury motor yachts.

Between 1962 and 1966 Fairmile constructed a total of eight yachts for UK and overseas buyers. The



Tavit, built by Fairmile Construction at Berwick in 1966 (see below).

Photo: Courtesy Anne Elson.

first of the Berwick luxury yachts was the 73' *Tia* built for a Mr. T. Dunk of the charter firm Kilbrannon Marine Ltd., Barrhead. Powered by two Gardner Marine Engines, *Tia* left the Tweed in March 1962.

Motor Yachts built by the Fairmile Construction Company Ltd. Berwick upon Tweed



Name	Year Built	Official Number	Gross Tonnage	Yard No.	Dimensions length/beam/draft	Propulsion
TIA	1962	301464	94.66	557	73.5x19.6x7.5	2 x 4SA 6cyl Gardner diesels
GOLDEN HART	1963	305027	63.68	568	65x16.5x7	2x6cyl Ajax diesels
ISLAND WATERS	1963	304628	117.43	570	82x20.3x9.8	2x6cyl Caterpillar diesels
TANIT	1962	304298	94.97	571	73.6x19.6x9.25	2x4SA 6cyl Gardner diesels
ALBACORA	1963	304545	99.08	575	73.5x19.5x9.3	2x6cyl Gardner diesels
BABETTE II	1965	307937	98.94	581	80.1x19.5x8.5	2x8cyl Glennifer diesels
TAVIT	1966	308861	98.72	585	80x19.5x8.6	2x8cyl Glennifer diesels
LANESRA	1968	334272	153.26	635	98.5x22x7.7	2x6cyl Daimler-Benz diesels
THELMA M. III	1972	334278	97.78	666	76.1x19.5x5.7	2x6cyl Gardner diesels

Source: Lloyds Register of Yachts (Thanks to Philip Simons)

The success of this vessel saw more orders quickly follow. Between 1962 and 1965 a further five yachts were constructed in succession. These were *Golden Hart*, *Island Waters*, *Tanit*, *Albacora* and *Babette II*. Of these vessels *Golden Hart* was the odd one out in that she was a twin-masted steel-hulled sailing ketch described in her general arrangement plan as a 'motor sailer'.

Buyers of Fairmile yachts came from Britain, the United States and Europe. *Island Waters* was built for an American owner, Gurnee Munn and *Albacora* for a Frenchman a M. de Cheris. *Tanit* was the first of three Berwick-built yachts that were to be ordered by a UK customer, Mr. John Bett the other two being *Tavit* and *Lanesra*.



Island Waters built in 1962 for American businessman Gurnee Munn. Photo: D. Redfearn Collection.



Babette II - built for a Spanish nobleman the Maques de Paul.
Photo: D. Redfearn Collection.

For reasons unknown the owner of *Golden Hart* requested that the building of the vessel should not be publicised. *Golden Hart* was built to a design by Leslie Bewes and carried 1400 square feet of sail. The hull and superstructure was built at Berwick but fitting out was completed by A.H. Moody and Sons of Southampton. There is a fine picture of the vessel underway in full sail in Frank and Keith Beken's 1964 edition *Beauty of Sail*, (George G. Harrap and Co, 1964). *Babette II*, was constructed for a Spanish nobleman, the Maques de Paul and was launched at Berwick in October 1964 by his fiancée Barbara Kalachnikoff, the future Maquesa.



Lanesra, the biggest of the Fairmile yachts alongside at the Tweed Dock in 1968. Photo: D. Redfearn Collection.

In August 1967 the biggest yacht to be built at Berwick took to the Tweed. *Lanesra*, measuring 98' 6 and powered by twin 240 horse power Mercedes-Benz engines was built for a Maltese-registered company, Bahhar Marine (Malta) Ltd.. *Lanesra* had the distinction of being the first yacht to be built at Berwick with twin rudders. The observant reader will note that *Lanesra* is 'Arsenal', spelt backwards. The vessel's name was attributed to one of her owners being a fan of the club. *Lanesra* was to be the penultimate yacht to be built at Berwick, the final vessel being *Thelma M. III* in 1971.



A rare photo of the steel displacement yacht **Lanesra**. Originally registered in Berwick upon Tweed, the vessel is seen here at Tower Pier on the Thames in 1971. Photo: Richard Cox Collection

So what happened to the Berwick-built yachts? The first of the Fairmile yachts, *Tia* was to have a sad end. Only eighteen months after leaving the Tweed *Tia* caught fire and sank after an engine room explosion 100 miles off Lisbon while returning to the UK from the Mediterranean..



Built in Berwick in 1966 as **Tavit**, the fine lines of **Virginia G**, since re-named **Atrevida**.
Photo: Courtesy of Rigo Yachts International.

In 2006 the yacht *Virginia G* was listed on the Rigo Yachts International website as having been built at Berwick in 1966. From the build list this vessel can be identified as *Tavit* which was launched in 1965 but not completed until 1966. The vessel can be positively identified as the former *Tavit* by comparing features of the hull (including the position of the portholes, hawsepipe on the bows and rubbing strake) with those shown in the 1966 colour photo below. *Tavit* was also to feature in the 1971 film adaptation of the Alistair Maclean novel *When Eight Bells Toll* that starred Anthony Hopkins, Nathalie Delon, Robert Morely, Jack Hawkins and Corin Regrave. For the movie *Tavit* was renamed *Firecrest*, and acted as the base for secret agent Philip Calvert (played by Anthony Hopkins).

The vessel was extensively overhauled and refitted in winter 2001. External modifications to the yacht have included the construction of a cowl behind the bridge and a remodelled upper deck and superstructure. The vessel appears to have been re-engined at some point with Gardner engines. In 2006 *Virginia G* was based in Viareggio, Tuscany and was available for charter. The former



Tavit as she was in 1966
Photo: D. Redfearn Collection

Tavit has since underwent a further name change. In 2008 the yacht was listed on the M-Yachts charter and brokerage website under a former name *Atrevida*.



The former Berwick-built yacht **Albacora** seen here as **Taora**.

Photo: Courtesy of Camper and Nicholson's. Orange Nautical Services (see below).

Another Berwick-built yacht still in service is the former 73' *Albacora*. Originally built for a French owner, a M. de Cheris, *Albacora* was launched on 14th November 1962 and completed the following May. Since then the vessel underwent several changes of ownership and was later known as *Taora* (left) and then *Dersou*.

In 2006 the vessel sustained serious fire damage and has since undergone repairs and modifications including the fitting of a new wheel house at a shipyard in the Netherlands. In May 2009 the vessel was offered for sale via

The final yacht to be built at Berwick was *Thelma M. III* that was constructed for an American businessman Mr. L.G.F Di Varmo who planned to use the vessel as a floating home for him and his wife. Although launched in May 1971 a contractual dispute that was eventually resolved through an out of court settlement meant that the yacht did not leave Berwick for the United States until the following July. In 2006 the former *Thelma M III* was still based in the United States and registered as *Steel Magnolia* having undergone a seven-year complete restoration and overhaul (see photos below).



Yard No. 575, the 73' Fairmile yacht **originally built as Albacora**. The vessel, pictured here with a new wheelhouse was offered for sale in 2009.

Photo: Orange Nautical Services

In 2008 another United States-based yacht, the classic 82' 1963 build *Island Waters*, was listed for sale under its original name. The vessel was originally based in Florida before transferring to the West Coast. During the vessel's lifetime it has had only four owners. The current owners acquired the vessel in 1988 during which time it has been based in California.



The classic 1963 build **Island Waters** (Yard No. 570) was listed for sale in 2008 having been operated by the same owners since 1988. Photo:© islandwatersyacht.com

The biggest of the Fairmile yachts, *Lanesra*, was at one point owned by an American businessman and based on the West Coast of the United States. Since leaving Berwick the vessel has undergone three major refits and at one time was used for oceanographic research. In 2008 *Tiffara* was based in Chile, South America and employed as a luxury cruise vessel providing bespoke cruises combining the natural beauty of Patagonia with fine food and wines. For more details [click here](#). In January 2010 the vessel was listed for sale on the internet.



The Motor Yacht **Tiffara** (ex **Lanesra**). In 2008 the vessel was employed as a cruise ship and based in Chile. As can be seen by comparing these pictures with the 1968 and 1971 pictures above,, the vessel has undergone significant modification during her lifetime. Photos: © Max Morales, Courtesy Andes Wines.

The 1965 build, *Babette II* remains in service having undergone an extensive refit in 1999. In 2007 the vessel was based in Majorca and advertised for sale .

The yachts built for American owners were fitted with what were known as 'flopper stoppers'. These were a type of stabilising device comprising of a metal plate suspended and lowered into the water on the port and starboard sides by davits or poles. They were effective in reducing the amount of roll in a swell when underway or at anchor. Other vessels notably *Lanesra* were fitted with fixed stabilisers or were engineered in a way that would allow them to be fitted later.

Witness testimony from former yard workers who sailed on the yachts during trials and delivery trips (including down the North Sea, through the English Channel and Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean) confirms that the Fairmile yachts had excellent sea-keeping qualities. This is no surprise as their hulls were derived from the successful 'Fair Isle' trawler design.

It is known that at least one yacht built to a Fairmile design was constructed at the Gideon Shipyards, Groningen, Netherlands.



Thelma M. IV (left) underway on trials in 1971. In 2006 the vessel was still based in the United States having been re-named ***Steel Magnolia*** (right).

Photo: (left) © Ward-Philipson, Photo: (right), Courtesy of Carol Dayton.