

AFTER 10 YEARS CRUISING WHAT EQUIPMENT REALLY WORKS



Sonrisa in the Sea of Cortez, Mexico.

| story **NICK BRETtingham-MOORE**

Melissa and I took delivery of our brand-new Lagoon 440 (#203) *Sonrisa* in La Rochelle, France in March 2007 and after some 15,000 miles it seems an appropriate time to look back at what equipment has really worked well and continues to do so.

Apart from sailing south from La Rochelle to Lisbon and onto the Caribbean all our cruising has been warm water based, in principal 0° to 23° N. If we were to contemplate any cold water cruising I suspect it would be in a very different type of yacht and equipment to cope with the contrasting conditions. We sail very conservatively, always maintain our equipment to a high standard and immediately fix any breakdowns. My philosophy, being that small problems lead to big ones, so we try to ensure, before any passage, all is in good working order.

The ability to fix some of the numerous breakdowns is critical to long term cruising pleasure, apart from being a possible life saver, it instils confidence to venture into remote cruising areas and significantly reduces the cruising bill. Over some 45 years sailing there is not much I won't look at and try to fix. Not surprisingly in this automated and electronic world most electronics is beyond me, however I have found them to be incredibly resilient particularly if the manufacturer has specifically built them for the marine environment. If they are installed correctly, with suitable access and maintained in a clean condition I have found most problems are

with the mechanical/electrical side of the equipment – loose contacts, corrosion, faulty switches poor wiring etc. An obvious essential is a comprehensive tool kit, which in our case runs to a few hundred kilos of spares (yes being a hoarder helps!) numerous obscure tools and fittings, apart from every conceivable type of connector and electrical terminal. One book which is a 'must' on every cruising yacht is the wonderful publication by Nigel Calder – *Boatowner's Mechanical and Electrical Manual; How to Maintain, Repair and Improve your Boat's Essential Systems Volume 3.*

While we enjoy passages, we are predominately at anchor therefore actual mileages are low for some 10 years living on board, so in regards to running gear, steering, winches, sails, navigation electronics etc, we have yet to see any serious problems. In fact, I have been pleasantly surprised at how well everything has stood the test of time. The modern production fibreglass catamaran, if well maintained and not pushed hard, compared to wood or steel alternatives is virtually maintenance free, so more time for actual cruising. Okay, we have had numerous minor niggles, as one would expect, but any yacht which is full of complicated electrical/electronic and mechanical equipment, that makes life more enjoyable, is bound to have some hiccups. The personal choice of what equipment one considers necessary can make a huge difference to the number of repairs required – keep it simple always a good start, which we have definitely not done!

Rather than looking at what equipment has failed I have focused on several items that we could not do without and that have made our cruising that much more enjoyable – some will be appropriate for all cruisers while a few are our pet likes, this is after 10 years of continuous use and all have given exceptional service. We had a wonderful five months in La Rochelle, where the hull was delivered, and enjoyed the typical French café culture. We, including Ben at six months, rented a small apartment just a short walk from the comfortable and clean boatyard, all the necessary chandleries and services close at hand. Part of the fun of taking delivery of a new yacht is the personalisation and installation of equipment. I installed all of the electronics, chargers, inverters, mast and rigging, antifouling, watermaker, davits, dinghy etc. While saving money it also



TOP: Starboard material hatch cover and ventilator.

CENTRE LEFT: Simple solar oven.

CENTRE RIGHT: Homemade covers for everything. 280°F from the cheapest fuel around

ABOVE: 780 watts of solar.

meant I knew how all worked, great knowledge when things go wrong, as they invariably will.

The first important decision we made was whether to 'turn the key' i.e. install a diesel generator. There are many pluses and minuses to consider – for us no

areas are so important and being able to maximise air flow through the salon and cabins is critical. Easy access from two aft boarding platforms with showers and the ability to safely unload provisions and crew in all conditions – which are done numerous times a



ABOVE LEFT: Trusty Yanmar 50hp diesel.

ABOVE RIGHT: One of two 300 Watt Ampair wind generators.



air conditioning was fine (well nearly all the time!) and we were happy to go with renewables and a small backup Honda petrol generator. While a fixed diesel generator can make life more comfortable and give a greater option of equipment the added cost, weight, complexity, fuel requirements, noise are a big negative. With twin diesels, four alternators, almost 1kw of solar, 2 x 300 watt wind generators, a towed generator, a 2Kw inverter and 900 Ah of batteries we do not miss the diesel generator. The positive 'green feeling' and keeping our emissions to a minimum also comes to mind.

Firstly, the Lagoon 440 was an excellent choice for us – we like her boxy looks, which maximise interior space. We would not change anything about her layout, the flybridge works a treat leaving the aft covered cockpit for socialising – when cruising in the tropics covered

day with children – makes for comfortable cruising. *Sonrisa* has the charter version – four cabins, the owner version has half a hull dedicated to a shower/head which seemed of little use to us. The four heads, which are virtually never used (we bypass the middleman), except in port, means lots of stowage, one permanently dedicated to a vegetable locker. The boys still sleep in one double cabin so we only basically use one hull, the other forward cabin used as a small gym, freezer storage and the aft one for junk until friends visit. Separate watertight engine rooms are perfect, along with watertight forward 'crew cabins' – for *Sonrisa* one of these is a workshop/watermaker cabin and the other ropes, paints etc. In a huge locker in the aft cockpit, where the generator would normally go, we keep our dive compressor, sewing machine and vast quantity of tools. Some crazing of the saloon perspex windows, minor gel coat stress cracks, and worn top derlin rudder bearings have been our only important issues.

Our electronics package was by Raymarine, I tend to stick to the major brand names, not because they are better rather than they have good worldwide service and spare parts. In principal, we have two of everything for the flybridge and salon navigation station. Our E120 Multi-Function Display has had backlighting issues being repaired once and failing again – otherwise all has worked well. As the autopilot is on our critically important list we have been very happy with our Raymarine Autopilot ST8000 – this one had the highest

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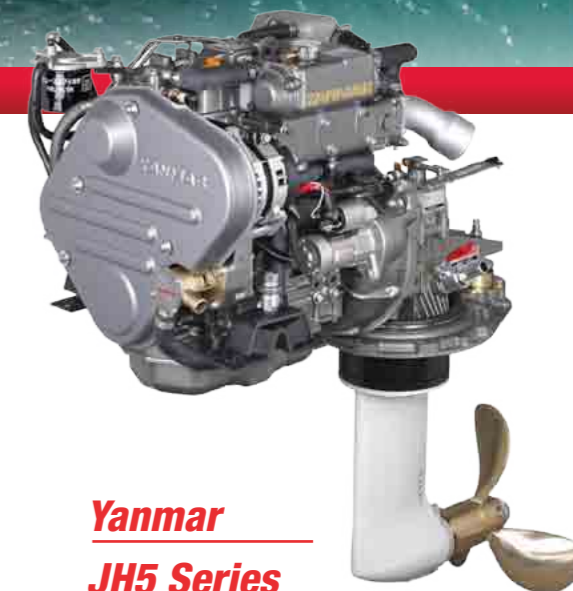


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specifications in 2007. Interestingly the actual electro/hydraulic ram, (which is well oversized), attached to the rudders is made by Combet and Smit who are specialist in this field, their unit working perfectly in all seas.

Our twin Yanmar 4JH4 E naturally aspirated 50hp engines have, after some 1600 hours, performed flawlessly – oil and fuel filter changes being their only maintenance. Once again, we treat them with utmost respect, run them at around 1600rpm and give them plenty of time to warm up and cool down. Normally we only run one engine unless into a strong head wind and

or waves. The Mastervolt Charger (Mass 12/150) and Mastervolt Inverter (Mass SINE 12/2000 – 2kW) are another example of equipment that has stood the test of time. These coupled with the Mastervolt Masterlink MICC remote control panel have met all our electrical requirements. The charger, while rated at 150 amps can, through the MICC, be adjusted to a percentage of its maximum output – we can therefore match it perfectly to our Honda EU 10i petrol generator's maximum output. Over the years, we have increased our Solar Panel capacity from the original 3 x 130 watt

panels to six of these and 2 x 60 watt flexible panels. The only hassle is that we have twice had to increase the capacity of the solar regulator, finally settling on a Outback 60 amp unit – at peak times I happily see some 45 amps pumping into our batteries.

Probably our best purchase has been our injection moulded 'sit on' kayaks around 2.5m long and weighing some 15kg, they can still carry one of us and one of the boys. Over the years, they have been in almost constant use (and come adrift twice). Whether using them just to get us and the boys to a beach with swell, take the groceries back to *Sonrisa*, into town for the boy's school lessons, for exploring a shallow anchorage, to carry my free diving spearfishing equipment (and fish) or just for plain exercise they have been invaluable. Our tender is a Caribe 3m RIB with a Yamaha 15hp 4 stroke outboard which once more have given exceptional service and reliability. The tender has always had a fitted cover ('chaps' in the USA) so tubes are in great condition after 10 years, with only a few scratches in the hull. The tender is too big to drag up the beach so we usually



Kayaks can still carry an adult and 10 year old.

anchor off, in many areas, with a big tidal range we just use the kayaks.

After a few years of paying for insurance we have, for the past several, done without, a bit hard to mentally adjust to however we do get peace of mind from 100m of 12mm chain and a 65 lb CQR. The Quick Argo all stainless steel 12 volt 1700W anchor windlass never



TOP LEFT: After 10 years, Carib RIB and Yamaha 15hp four stroke in great condition.

TOP RIGHT: The perfect tender and outboard for us.

ABOVE: Espiritu Santo Island North of La Paz, Mexico

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failing to bring this heavy lot up. We recently happily survived Cyclone 'Odile' at anchor which at some 70kts gave some interesting atmospheric conditions – the boys continued their schooling, Mel was cooking, most importantly there were no other yachts around! Mentioning cooking, one of the bug bears of living in hot climates is the heat generated by the stove/oven. We have solved this problem by using extensively our solar oven which, while a bit bulky for a monohull, works exceptionally well. Mel can bake muffins in the morning and slow cook an evening meal later in the afternoon, it stays warm and cannot be over cooked – the only hassle is when *Sonrisa* swings at anchor, which can slow things down!

As I have mentioned having plenty of shade is critical, we actively try to keep out of the sun so over the years (and many mistakes) using our trusty Sailrite sewing machine I have made numerous covers for hatches, cockpit shades and even a complete awning for at

anchor. The forward seating area is covered by a horizontal awning attached to two supports, this also doubles as rain catching awning which really works well taking rain from the coach house and mast. Our Schenker 12 volt 60L per hour water maker has worked well. This is like the Spectra type with an energy recovery system. There have been troubles with the 16 odd seals that the main plunger runs through, though with excellent service from Schenker and a very simple setup the problems are easily fixed. One electrical over pressure switch is the only electrical complication, the two Surflo high pressure pumps are very easy to source and cheap enough to have several backups. Locating it out of an accommodation area, and with plenty of access means the inevitable servicing is easily accomplished.

Finally, one of our pet likes is our (non patented!) captive clothes pegs – while only something that really bugs long term cruisers, finding pegs readily available



LEFT: Awnings and covers for protection.
ABOVE: Rainbow pegs at the ready.



TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: 100m of 12mm chain.

ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: The perfect, protected outdoor dining area.

on the lifelines for the several daily hang ups is always a hassle. Rainbow pegs made in Australia have been with us for many years, they are the simple plastic push on type without any moving parts. We drilled holes in

the closed end, ran a small line through several and tied them between the stanchions. While perhaps not very 'yachty' with pegs hanging off the lifelines we would never travel without them.