


# Yachting World



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## AMERICA'S CUP

### Is this goodbye to monohulls?

## GEAR FOR CRUISING

### Atlantic Test reveals the BEST

Self-steering • AIS • Solar power

Watermakers • Wind generators

Diesel generators • Autopilots

e-mail providers • Batteries • Radar

## MORE for your money

### Big 45-footers for £125,000

Cowes  
a WINN  
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week in pict

Cruis  
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on a dead

## ATLANTIC GEAR TEST

# WHICH GEAR?

## YACHTING WORLD'S UNIQUE ATLANTIC TEST HAS THE ANSWERS

*There's a bewildering choice when you come to equip your yacht for long-distance voyaging. What to buy? Toby Hodges presents the results of the 2010 Yachting World Atlantic Gear Test, the largest independent survey of marine equipment in the world, to help you make the right decisions*

**W**hether a rite of passage, a social cruise in company, a delivery trip to the tropics for the Caribbean season, or the first big leg of a long-dreamt-of circumnavigation, crossing the Atlantic is a momentous event in any sailor's life. You can be sure that every one of the 200-plus entrants in the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers knows this and wants to make the best preparation to ensure they cross safely and comfortably to the warm embrace of the Caribbean.

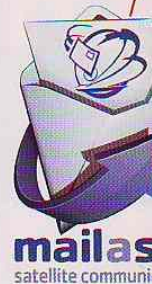
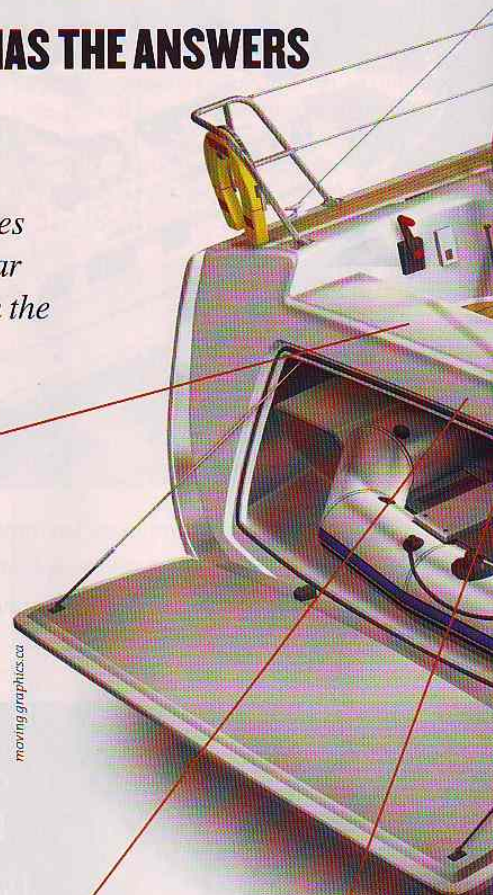
Equipping a boat for such an event can occupy skippers' minds for months and even years, and they will take advice from as many authoritative sources as possible. And none is more comprehensive than the *Yachting World* Atlantic Gear Test, a survey of nearly 200 skippers in the ARC, in conjunction with organisers World Cruising Club. Their report on how their equipment fared over nearly 3,000 miles of Atlantic sailing is the largest, and crucially the most independent, gear test available in the world.

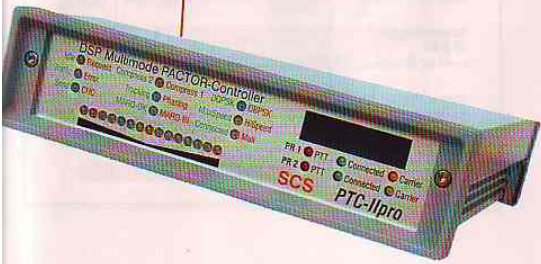
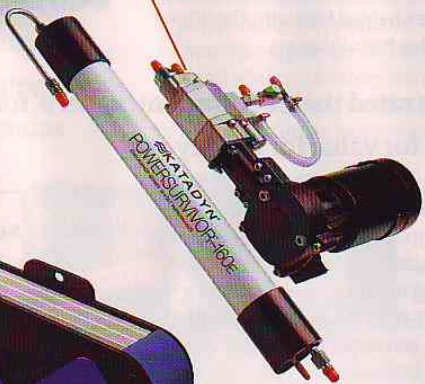
So if you're equipping your boat for the ARC, a long cruise or ocean sailing, here's the impartial advice from 196 skippers who did it last season.

### What makes the cut?

The survey deals with equipment currently on the market – in the last five years – carried by four boats or more. This is to ensure statistical accuracy. Our survey asks ARC crews and skippers to rate their equipment under three categories: 'reliability', 'ease of use' and 'value for money'. Each is rated 0 (useless) to 5 (superb), from which we can deduce mean scores according to the number of users. We encourage comments on the performance of each item and skippers' quotes are used in the following pages.

When considering the results, don't look only at the scores; it's also wise to note the numbers carried as a fair indication of what's favourable in the market – generators being a good example.





### THE SURVEY IN STATS

**196** the number of responses this year.

**62** the percentage of ARC participants with more than 20 years of sailing experience. 17.5 per cent had sailed for 10-20 years and a similar percentage less than ten years.

**7** the percentage of skippers who had been planning their ARC participation for more than two years. A quarter spent 1-2 years. One-third took less than 6 months.

**33** the number of entrants planning to continue on round the world. The majority planned to cruise in the Caribbean before returning to Europe

# ATLANTIC GEAR TEST

## STEERING

### Autopilots

Autopilots are by far the most commonly fitted item (almost 90 per cent of the fleet carry them) and also the most highly valued. Pleasing to note was that 35 per cent of autopilot users rated their equipment 'superb' for reliability and ease of use, and 'good' for value for money, which is telling for technically complex gear.

Raymarine represented over 60 per cent of the fleet, divided between their ST6000 and ST7000 ranges. Raymarine's ST6000 series continues to be the most popular by a large margin and considering there were 86 using them, the average scores are very positive and make for a clear and deserved winner in this category.

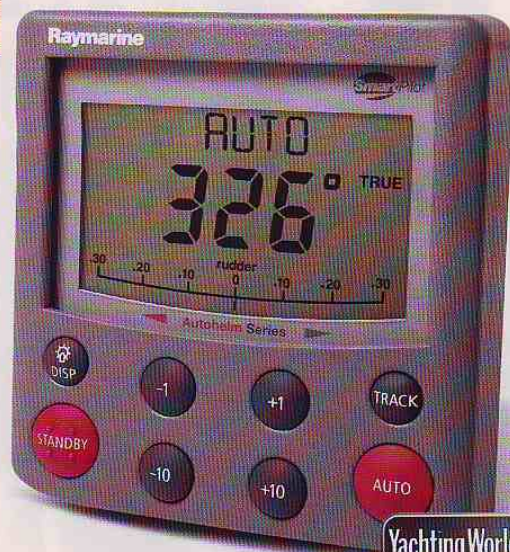
The majority of comments ranged from "good" to "excellent". Aussie John Dransfield, sailing a Bavaria 46, said they simply "couldn't imagine crossing without it" and aboard *Giggles*, the Kooimans' Hallberg-Rassy 42E, the seven-year old pilot was "still functioning well".

“ 35 per cent of autopilot users rated their equipment 'superb' for reliability and ease of use and 'good' for value for money

Six skippers reported installation problems, including Paul Marriage of *Peejay*, a Sun Odyssey 42.5, who hasn't had much luck in this department, as they're now on their fourth control unit in four years. The current one was described by the skipper as "faultless", other than in squalls when there was too much pressure.

By far the most common cause for complaint – and a bug that has long haunted this range – is that the pilots randomly switch to standby. This caused a broach for a Hylas 49 and Raymarine were reportedly unable to find the cause for this quirk on a Bénéteau 50 in Las Palmas. Another Jeanneau Sun Odyssey's Raymarine autopilot and instruments failed three days before the finish.

Meanwhile, 35 yachts carried Raymarine's ST7000 series, of which five had installation problems, resulting in some "disappointed" comments, plus three notes about slow reactions and again the



switching to standby bug. There were two failures, including one aboard a US Hallberg-Rassy 37, when the drive unit died in calm conditions on passage. However, fellow US sailor Alan Spence was quick to praise Raymarine's engineers in Las Palmas after they helped him with the pilot aboard his Broadblue 415.



Granada 32 broke their tiller pilot two days before St Lucia.

While their average scores were reasonably high, Simrad pilots remained relatively low in user numbers. Only four boats carried the AP16–27 range, but they had a glowing report from Laurent Chapdelaine on the 35ft *Minimaxi*: "compulsory on a such a crossing" and "equivalent to another crew member or two!" However, a Hanse 470 owner felt it "didn't handle heavy downwind conditions well".

Comments on the AP20, 21 and 22 range were also rather negative by the five users, which is surprising given that they were overall winners in our survey two years ago. A skipper of a 58ft German one-off said his started to malfunction after ten days before failing completely.

There weren't enough carriers of last year's winner, the B&G H3000, or B&G's *Hercules* to make them statistically viable.

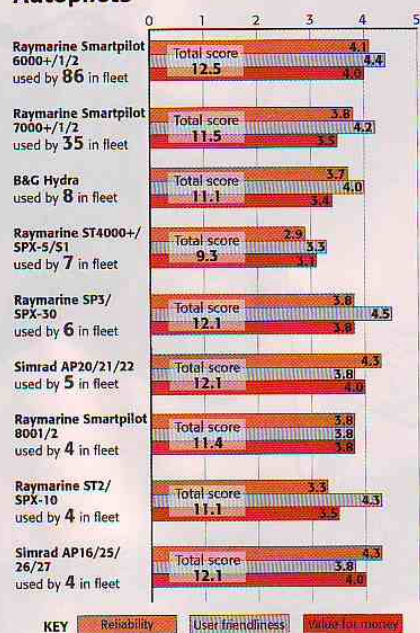
Autopilots will continue to be well-used on the ARC, but from the comments we receive it's clear you must know your autopilot inside out and have plenty of spares. It's no coincidence that a back-up pilot comes high on the list of equipment skippers most regret not buying.

The ST4000+SPX-5 and S1 models didn't fare well. Two drive unit installation problems were reported, resulting in a four-week delay for a Finn Gulf 38. Perhaps most alarming, though, was when an old Northstar unit packed up before the start on a Hanse 350. The replacement Raymarine constantly showed a flat battery warning despite a full charge, before giving up the ghost, leaving the double-handed crew to hand steer for the majority of the crossing.

The larger Raymarine S3/SPX-30 types rated second equal with the Simrad pilots in user satisfaction. A 49ft Sun Odyssey reported a problem with the course computer, while the JAF drive unit failed aboard a Discovery 67 on the final day.

Of the four using the Raymarine S2/SPX-10 range, the crew aboard a Contessa 32 went through two hydraulic models during the crossing, one after 36 hours and the second after eight days, while a German

### Autopilots



## Wind self-steering

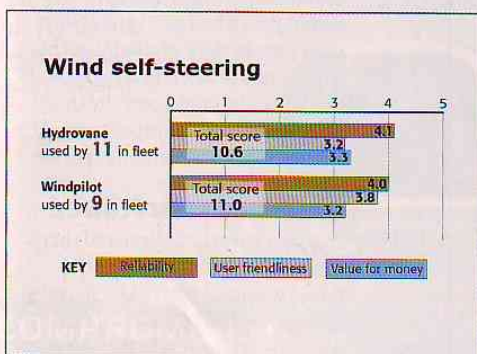
Only 15 per cent of ARC participants carried windvanes and many of those were primarily used as autopilot back-up. This is a principal difference between electrical and wind-based self-steering systems, as the problems that occur on windvanes can normally be fixed aboard, whereas autopilot problems more often involve a technical complexity that can render them defunct for the remainder of a crossing.

Two brands made it past our minimum-of-four threshold and the **Hydrovane** pipped the **Windpilot** in terms of numbers, 11 compared with nine, but the latter fared best in the satisfaction stakes.

Only two crews encountered installation problems and both were with Hydrovanes. One Hallberg-Rassy 40 had three attempts at installation and the owner agreed with a fellow Rassy skipper that it was difficult to get the vane to steer an accurate course downwind. Others found the set-up difficult, especially in big seas.

Of the **Windpilot** types, Dutch owner Robert Visser aboard another Hallberg-Rassy, *Robinson*, exclaimed: "100 per cent good", sentiments echoed by Westerly Corsair *Fair Encounter* after John Easteal used it for the whole crossing. And, despite needing practice with theirs, the crew of the SunFizz 40 *Jan Wellem* reckoned it "changed sailing".

There weren't enough users of other types, including **Aries** and **Monitor**, to provide a fair score or instructive comment. Although the number of windvane users continues to fall, for a certain cruising sailor their power-free dependability will hopefully continue to speak for itself.



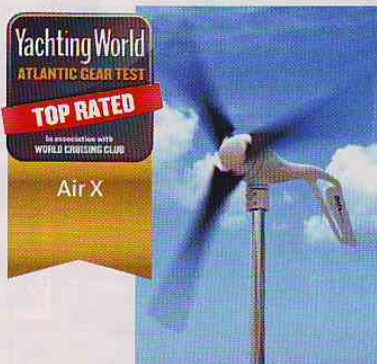
“Finding a mix of renewable generating systems should be higher on future skippers’ agendas”

## POWER Batteries

This year we wanted to find more out about batteries, battery charging and renewable energy, so included questions about solar panels and batteries, as well as the normal diesel, wind and towed generator sections.

The greatest majority of batteries carried were, unsurprisingly, wet lead acid types (81 boats), while 54 boats carried gel types and 29 AGM. 110 crews reported that they used 12V and 48 boats 24V systems. While the majority of the fleet had capacities ranging from 300–500ah, almost 30 per cent of the fleet carried a hefty bank of over 600ah batteries, indicating the proliferation of power-hungry systems on many modern yachts.

Average engine use for battery charging was between one and five hours a day, and while generators remain the most common method of charging the batteries, it was clear that finding a suitable mix of renewable systems should be higher on future participants’ agendas.



## Wind-powered generators

As usual for this category, the majority of users were disappointed with performance in the downwind conditions (reflected in the scores), but things picked up once they arrived at a balmy anchorage and the apparent wind started to generate more amperage.

"Disappointed with output", "very little contribution downwind", "not much help in tradewinds, but good at anchor" summed up the comments and perhaps explains the low scoring.

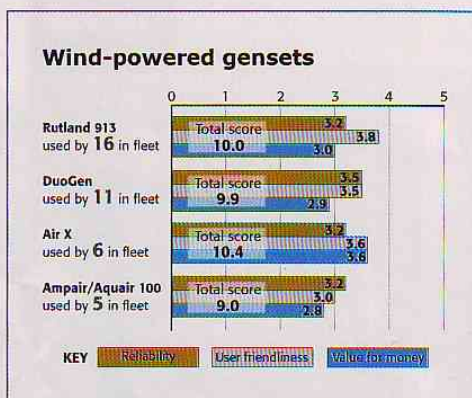
The **Rutland 916** wind-powered generator was the most commonly carried, followed by the **DuoGen** combined wind/water generators. But in

terms of user-satisfaction, **Air X** (pictured left) scored top marks.

A Hallberg-Rassy 37 owner thought the DuoGen's installation manual could be improved and felt the performance wasn't good enough given that it was also a towed generator, while *Dances with Waves* and *Nightsong* chose not to use theirs in the ARC (probably wise owing to the lack of apparent wind).

The **Rutland 916** was described as too noisy by another Hallberg-Rassy owner, who felt it transmitted too much vibration into the aft cabin, and a First 477 skipper thought the supplied bracket and pole mount "were useless and had to be modified", remarking that it took over 20 knots of wind from behind to start power generation.

Not the ideal Atlantic crossing solution, but wind-powered generators are handy once the Caribbean anchorages are reached.



# ATLANTIC GEAR TEST



## Diesel generators

Almost half the fleet carried generators and on average ran them for five to six hours a day. **Northern Lights**, last year's overall survey winner, again had four users and a smattering of 'superb' marks. But all were professional installations, three were among the largest boats in the fleet, and as none listed problems or made any comments it's hard to provide much further feedback.

Although their average scores are higher (at 14.3 compared to 12.3), for this reason we have decided to make the **Onan e-QD** range joint winners with Northern Lights for this category. There were 23 users of the QD (Quiet Diesel) range, which has proved consistent. The majority rated their performance as 'superb', sparking comments such as "very efficient" and "perfect", among them the Craigs who "wouldn't be without theirs" aboard Lagoon 440 *Tucanon*.

But a Bénéteau 50 owner felt differently, reporting that the installation made accessibility difficult. This hit home after continuous fuel flow problems caused sporadic operation and "many hours spent grovelling in the bowels of boat".

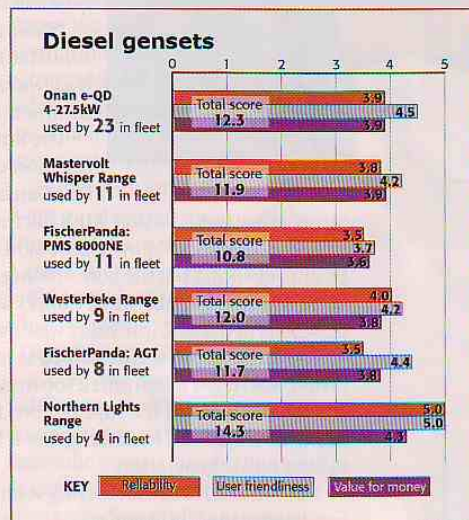
Most had their generators professionally installed (only five didn't) and only four had installation problems. A French-flagged Lagoon 421 was one that didn't and their generator failed to work at all during the crossing. Conversely, John Macrae, owner of a similar-sized catamaran, found Mastervolt's

support service excellent aboard *Amazing Grace*.

With three users each of their 6.0, 7.5 and 8.0 BTDA range, **Westerbeke** fared well, scoring highly on ease of use and reliability, just behind the Onans. The Hydes were very happy with their 12-month-old 7.5 on the Oyster 56 *A Lady*, saying that it hadn't given them any trouble, and Swan 65 *Vahine* found their 6.0 easy to use. But a Northern Wind 40's failed on the third day, a problem they claimed to be the head gasket.

Of the **Fischer Panda** types, 11 boats carried the PMS 8000NE models and, despite minor problems aboard *Liberty*, *Jasmina* and *Nauta D*, these received favourable comments (eg "faultless" from *Gilly of London*), even if they weren't reflected in the average scores. A Hallberg-Rassy, however, revealed they'd had nothing

“ Diesel gensets show no sign of being replaced as the most popular means of charging



but trouble with their AGT since 2005, and it broke down again during the ARC crossing.

Average scores for reliability, user-friendliness and value for money were consistently high for generators, which is optimistic for a product that shows no sign of being replaced as the most popular means of battery charging aboard.

## Solar power / towed generator

Comments for towed and solar power generation were on the whole positive, although only 20 per cent of boats used solar panels for any form of charging, a pretty paltry figure in this day and age, and their power output in watts ranged from the low double digits into four figures.

The variety of different manufacturers used was too great to make any quantitative judgments, but reports were enthusiastic, with most finding them ideal for daytime charging. Towed methods, meanwhile, continue to provide efficient power and were carried by 15 per cent of the fleet, but being at the unprotected mercy of the elements makes them prone to failure.

**Solar** Peter Tuner described his juicy 480W BP panels aboard the Amel 54 *Asolare* as "superb", providing all their power requirements during the day. This was echoed by *BattCatt*, a Lagoon 380 owned by (you guessed it) Mr Batt, with 260W **Solarplex** panels.

The Marriages on *Peejay* found the 240W from their **Solara SMS 005** "brilliant and maintenance-free, but not enough for the fridge and watermaker". And although *Himinglaeva* had good yield from 155W panels, they advised that the large genoa on their Hanse blocked their full potential. Logically those disappointed with output tended to be those with smaller cell capacity.

## Combined solar/towed

*Escape*, a Bavaria 42, declared that a combination of towed and solar power was ideal for trickle charging, unless they had to use their radar, while the Harrisons on the *Southerly* ▶▶

# ATLANTIC GEAR TEST

35 *Sylvia of Blakeney* found their towed generator brilliant, but solar power only "OK".

Paul Wade said both methods were fine for his *Rassy 40 Blonde Moment*, but the diving plane on their **DuoGen** broke when they hit a submerged object. *Circus of Southampton*, a *Grand Soleil 45*, agreed that solar panels provided just a trickle charge and towed power was more effective – until they lost their prop.

**Towed** A total of 31 boats carried towed generators, with DuoGen, a long-term ARC darling, most popular with 12 showings. Most seemed to find the method highly efficient, but many also suffered mechanical failure. *Fandango* agreed their DuoGen was productive, but the linkages broke twice and weren't easy to replace in 4m swells. A fellow Sun Odyssey echoed the performance sentiments, but their problem was a bolt popping off.

However, the final summary belongs to Andrew Beveridge on a Southerly 46RS who found his "produced 150–200ah per day (with only 1 drive pin failure) – far cheaper than a diesel generator and better than wind and solar".

“As a tool for dodging squalls, radar proves highly effective on an ocean passage

## NAVIGATION

### Radar

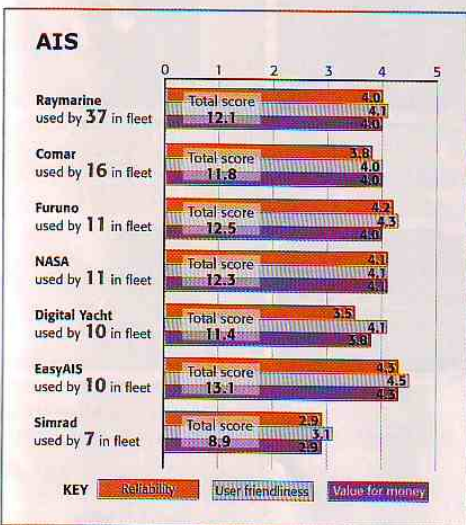
For those who used them on the crossing, radar performances rated well. A large proportion reported that their primary purpose was as an efficient tool for spotting and tracking squalls. Usage time was generally limited by power consumption, typically averaging 1-2 hours a day. A telling comparison was that by far the majority of users of AIS had their equipment on for 24 hrs a day.

Once again, **Raymarine** radars and radomes were the most popular, used by over half the fleet (115), while 32 yachts carried **Furuno** sets, and the average results were almost identical. Of those who used theirs on the crossing, comments from Raymarine clients were generally 'good' and 'excellent'.

The Craigs described their Raymarine radar as "an essential piece of equipment", and *Gilly of London's* Brian Capewell wrote "faultless". *Phoebe B's* was "great for tracking squalls" – "especially when using the VRM and EBL functions," added Andrew Beveridge aboard *Nightsong*. Where Andrew Haining found the MARPA function useful, a Hallberg-Rassy owner described his as useless because the "targets jumped around all over the screen, despite the fact that it was meant to be gyro-stabilised".

Patryk Dyjecinski mounted his **Furuno** radar in the cockpit on *Circus of Southampton*, "which makes it ideal for spotting squalls," he said. And although there were four users of **Simrad** types, only three rated them (pretty averagely), with one remarking that their MARPA failed to work.

Fixed chartplotters were the primary navigation tool, with 148 users (plus 70 PC users over and above that), while only half the fleet used paper charts too.



### AIS

If there were a prize for the number of similar comments it would be for AIS, along the lines of "should be made mandatory equipment on board". The Dutch owner of the *Oyster 56 Windflower* described their **Digital Yacht** set as "absolute must-have vital safety equipment" and *Skyelark of London* recommended that all cruising yachts carry at least a receiver set.

Interestingly, the majority of AIS carriers (63) were using Class A or B active types, which both transmit

and receive positional information, as opposed to the 55 shipping the less expensive listen-only sets.

**Raymarine** was once again the most common, followed by **Comar**. Other than for the Simrad sets, the results were generally positive, especially for EasyAIS, NASA and Raymarine.

**EasyAIS** was ranked very highly by its ten users, with Mike Blackledge commenting "the best value for money item on board" his *Oceanis 46 Knightime*. Charles Manby on



Gwylan had similar sentiments about his **Digital Yacht** set, but other Digital Yacht users were less impressed. A Bavaria 32 owner felt they had poor service when their AIS 250 jammed the GPS signals to their chartplotter and they needed a replacement GPS. Another set failed to work, an Ovni owner had an unreliable connection to computer and chartplotter (Raymarine E80) and a Westerly skipper suspected a poor internal antenna connection.

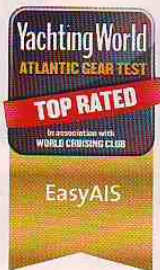
Aboard the Oyster 655 *Sotto Vento* they had had some water ingress problems with their antenna in the past, but their **Comar** set proved "faultless" during the crossing. And apart from a Hallberg-Rassy owner unable to transmit, sets from this Cowes-based company fared well.

Practically all those carrying **Furuno** AIS units ran them 24 hours a day, which perhaps indicates the larger boat/commercial adoption of this brand. The Bavaria 46 *Phoebe B* rated the performance of their Furuno as "great for avoidance/awareness of commercial shipping".

The scores reflect the trust yachtsmen put in these identification tools. Elan 434 owner Brian Capewell logged time used for radar as 100 hours and AIS as 700 hours, rating his **NASA AIS** as "excellent". *Trippwire* also rated their NASA highly, although noted that it was very late revealing ships' details.

The Hensons on *Walkabout II* only turned on their set when they saw a ship (eight times), but reported that only 40 per cent had their AIS activated. Andrew Haining was doubtful whether they were receiving data on as many targets as they should have been on *Satori* with their Raymarine receiver, and another user reported false data alarms.

With AIS sets starting from as little as £150, this aid seems destined to become commonplace, and can certainly provide peace of mind.



“ Satphones rate as the third highest 'most useful kit' on the ARC



## DATA COMMS

Predominantly data communication is used for weather information and e-mail, but cost and speed still cause issues.

Almost 70 per cent of the fleet carrying satellite communications (134) used **Iridium**, while there were 35 **SSB Modem** users (although 15 were using it as well as Iridium).

Of the 36 installation problems, 27 were with **Iridium**. Many of these were antenna/aerial connections, while their relative mounting location also proved crucial. Problems varied from blaming the user manual, to a couple of issues with Vista-driven PCs, to an honest comment from *Lancelot* saying it was their "lack of computer skills".

In performance, Iridium scored relatively high (11.6 mean score to SSB's 11.9), with many satisfied comments. But most skippers also had something else to say about the service, whether about cost, speed, connection problems or dislike of the handset. "The phone is bad quality," remarked a Swedish skipper, "the antenna on the Motorola 9555 broke and it isn't waterproof at all."

A Lagoon owner found the system was temperamental, after their first phone broke two days before departure, and aboard a Bowman, they found Sat C very good, but Iridium a lot more difficult to set up than they had been led to believe. "Superb!" exclaimed *Himinglaeva*, but their caveat was "it relies on an excellent interface with the computer, which is not always easy to configure".

A Canadian crew were "very dissatisfied with the signal reception", one found it too slow for the internet, while a Jeanneau crew were "unable to connect to satellites after ten days, therefore it was useless".

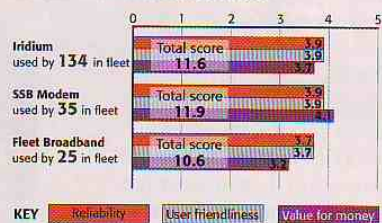
Those using **SSB Modem** with Iridium found the combination good for comms in general, but a frequent whinge was the speed of connection (with *Robinson* blaming the number of other users) and file size limits.

*Skyhawk* found they needed to choose a time when the frequencies weren't crowded. But *Circus of Southampton* were "very satisfied and used SSB for voice and e-mail every day". As well as e-mail, the ability to hold conversations with multiple boats/parties remains a selling point of SSB modems.

Elsewhere, feedback was scarce for data comms: although there were eight users of **Inmarsat's F33-77** none gave a rating and only ten of the 25 **Fleet Broadband** users scored theirs. The only negative comments were on cost, "a period of no reception" and a Jorgert crew who said their "main course receiver was hidden behind the mast".

The scores and comments reveal a technology that is not yet as reliable as we expected it would be by 2010, but still satphones rate as the third highest 'most useful kit' on the ARC.

### Data communications





# ATLANTIC GEAR TEST

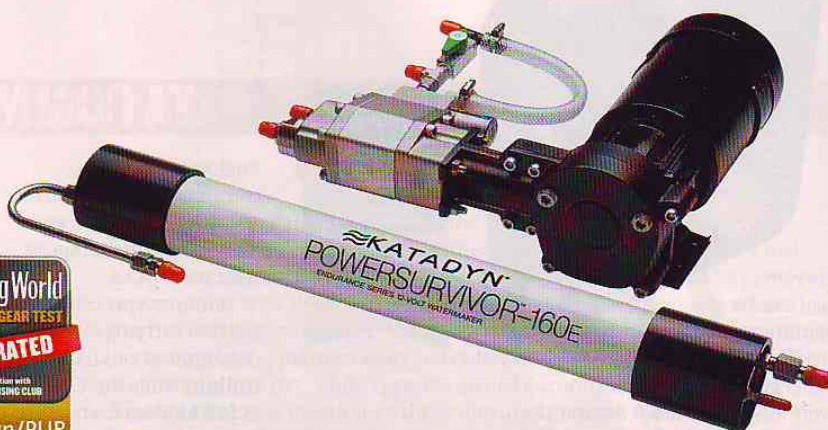
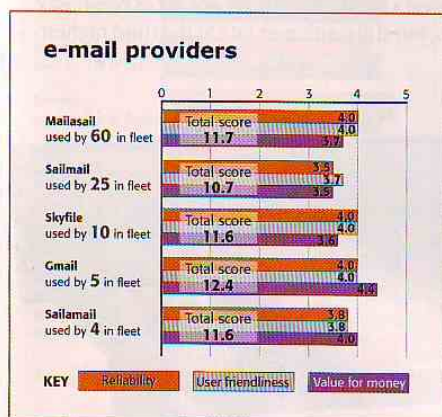
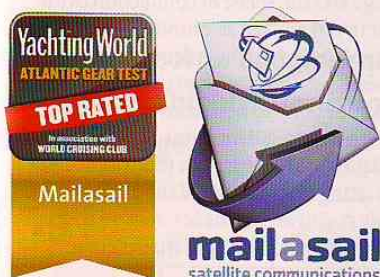
## e-mail providers

MailaSail was easily the most popular type of e-mail provider, followed by Sailmail. And of all the comments for any equipment in the survey, Mailasail's Ed Wildgoose and his team received by far the most praise for customer support.

The 25 users of Sailmail had a similar view of their product, but without the customer support praise. "It's a long connection time so you only get a short availability of station time," remarked an Italian skipper, but *Fandango* blamed the problems on Windows Mail. However, Lorenzo Camillo on *Mabi Two* found it very efficient.

Harald Wendelbo from France praised *Skyfile's* value for money: "It's free and highly recommended because it compresses files so efficiently that you hardly use your precious Iridium minutes." And the Oyster *Sotto Vento* agreed as "each person can have a separate e-mail address and individual texting too".

Those using *G-mail* scored it exceptionally highly, no doubt for its ease of use and mainstream set up, but as it's not a marine product, we decided we couldn't bestow it with the winner's honour.



## WATERMAKERS

Average use of watermakers in the fleet was just over two hours a day. These machines can be a source of trouble, but remain an ARC favourite, bringing the home comforts of regular showers and plentiful drinking water.

The *Katadyn/PUR* types came out clear winners and this was despite four out of the nine users experiencing installation problems. A *First 40.7* got air in their water inlet system, so had to change the unit's

“ Watermakers are an ARC favourite, bringing the home comforts of regular showers and plentiful drinking water

location; a *Hanse* owner found mounting space an issue (but liked its compact size); and another *First* had a leaking pump. But nearly all still rated them as very good, reliable and up to spec, with *Maria Ingerup* on *Cantare* stating that efficiency of six litres per hour was perfect for three people and noting that they ran it every second day.

Good scores and positive comments such as "better than tap water" and "huge quantity produced" from users of the *Seafresh H2O* range reflected its 2nd place in mean scores, but a *Westerly* owner reported theirs needed constant monitoring because the pump would lose its prime, so there was "a need to vent the air trap continuously". And while theirs behaved perfectly on the crossing, an Oyster crew reported they'd had many random air locks in the past.

There were three different ranges of *Spectra* models, yet all three gained exactly the same average

feedback marks, coming in 3rd overall. Two skippers had problems with installing their *Spectra Ventura* models, one with the feed pump and the other with a membrane leak two days before the start. But while the *Southerly* owner sorted his out and it produced 50lt an hour during the crossing, the *Hallberg-Rassy* crew were disappointed at only getting six or seven gallons per hour when 25 were advertised.

Problems with *Schenker's* systems included air bubbles causing loss of function, inaccessible filters, and one Scandinavian family who said theirs didn't come with the correct fittings. A *Lagoon* owner declared his "useless" after it stopped working during the crossing "after just two days and a subsequent six days working on it with no results", while one failed to work at all aboard a 47-footer.

This was blamed on the watermaker constantly taking in air, and a *Bénéteau* owner agreed, saying that "perhaps due to the position of the water intake, air was entering system, making it virtually unusable." (It is certainly true that if you mount the unit above the waterline, or the intake does not stay underwater at all times, air ingress can cause problems on watermakers.)

More positive comments came from *Paul Marriage* on *Peejay*, who praised *Matra Marine's* practical advice, saying he'd "had first class performance to date", and *John Dransfield* on *Nika* who said his crew loved theirs – especially the ability to shower every day.

Although performance comments were generally positive, the *Dessalator D30-100* ranges were given run of the mill scores. The *Boughtons* on their

# ATLANTIC GEAR TEST

Impression 434 reported very good performance, saying their model provided all their drinking water and showers when required. The Moody 422 *Thor VI* found theirs efficient using 220V, but too power-hungry on 12V, and another Impression 434, *Gilly of London's* PLB failed two weeks in, but they were able to fix it using rewiring instructions e-mailed by Advanced Yacht Services.

Scores were similar for the larger Dessalators. Peter Turner of *Asolare* said his was perfect, "but we have two on board, a 24V and 220V model, so it's very secure – we made 4.6 tonnes of water, exactly, to the drop. Bosh!"

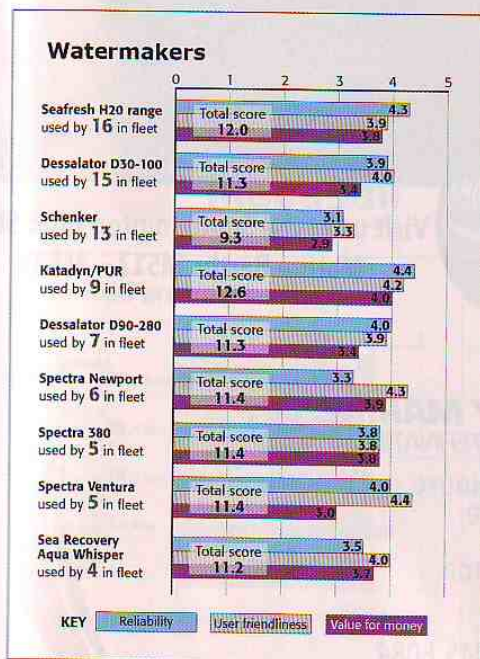
For the *Sea Recovery Aqua*

*Whisper* models, the Craigs recommended choosing the semi-automatic types, having originally had the automatic model, while a Danish crew didn't rate their newly installed model at all after a host of teething problems.

The advice to take from this would seem to be: make sure you fit your watermaker early, in a position you know it will work without air locks, and test it at heel. Once you are happy that it is functioning properly and you can wash out the pre-filters and service it easily, then the benefits of fresh water will show why it rates as the second most useful gear item on the ARC.



**"We have two water makers on board, a 24V and a 220V model, so it's very secure"**



## DOWNWIND SAILS

This was a section we introduced last year, to instant success in terms of interest and performance comments. This year the fleet's use of downwind sails divided up as follows:

Sail type	No carried	Percentage of fleet
Poled-out genoa	110	57%
Spinnaker gear	63	32%
Cruising chute	47	24%
Twin headsails	27	14%
Parasailor	30	15%
Headsail only	19	10%
Twistle rig	3	1.5%

The figures in the table above (out of 194 responses) were consistent with last year's results for the use of downwind sails. It's important to note that many yachts used a combination of techniques – for instance, as well as their poled-out genoa, *Blonde Moment*, a Hallberg-Rassy 40, also used a cruising chute, spinnaker gear and a parasailor, while *Amel 54 Asolare* tried all these and twin headsails to boot.

The German 48ft *Seeadler* also dabbled with four configurations, as did Westerly Corsair *Fair Encounter* and Najad 361 *Silver Bear*. As most boats ticked boxes for at least two or three downwind sail types, it's very clear how important it is not to rely on just one system and to have some flexibility in your wardrobe.

**Poling-out** Sun Odyssey 45.2 *Liberty* were one who chose only to use a poled-out genoa, but "would reconsider this, as swept-back spreaders limited the effectiveness of our main, but it was a nice steady ride". The similar-sized Bénéteau *Knighttime* found a poled-out genoa quicker than a cruising chute, safer and more efficient in the conditions, while the Teeds on *Hylas 49 Moonstruck* made hull speed most of the time with their poled-out genoa.

*Sotto Vento's* "bullet-proof" combination was a cruising chute during daylight and poled-out genoa at night. Having broken their spinnaker halyard on the second day and damaged the sail, Tim Luker's Westerly Ocean 49 *Kittiwake* sailed 90 per cent of the time with poled-

out genoa, while goose-winging the main with a preventer – a foolproof and comfortable method adopted also by *Phoebe B* and *Skylark*.

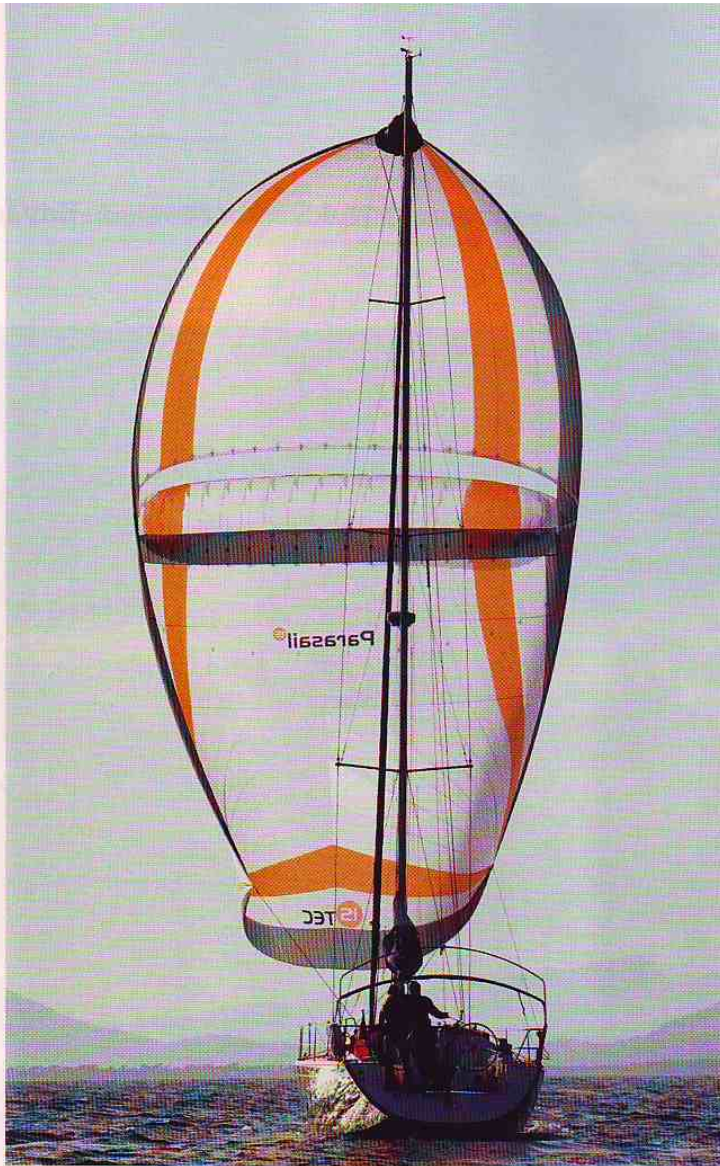
A poled-out genoa and spinnaker is still a popular combination, thought Richard Merrick on his *Ovni Elixir*, but Andy Middleton on a *First 47.7* found the former rocks and rolls too much and they had chafe problems with their kite.

**Customising for ARC** Having a sail made especially for the ARC is becoming increasingly popular. Harald Wendelbo had a 43m<sup>2</sup> genoa made for his *Hanse 350* instead of the standard 29m<sup>2</sup> jib, and found it did "an excellent job, with no main or spinnaker needed to cruise at six knots". *Minimaxi*, a Maxi 1050, also had a smaller kite made specifically for tradewind conditions, which they used together with poled-out genoa, and reported: "The new storm spinnaker (70m<sup>2</sup> instead of 90m<sup>2</sup>) was a must."

**Parasailors** The spinnakers with air vents continue to find favour with ARC participants. "I am especially happy about the parasailor," remarked Rui Soares from Portugal on *Thor VI*. The Craigs on *Tucanon* agreed, while fellow Lagoon sailors, the Waldbrenners, thought it "was the best sail in the world, but too small!" *Walkabout* praised theirs, but found it hard work to raise and recover, while *Oyster 56 Gwylan's* Charles Manby agreed it was excellent, albeit "best flown from the pole", favouring a poled-out yankee in anything over 20 knots.

In wind strengths over 20 knots it became hard work, thought a *Discovery* sailor, and it "starts to eat ropes, guys and halyards," added an *Oyster* crew. A Dutch skipper thought the construction of the clew should be better, but otherwise commended the parasailor. One *Najad* owner, however, disputed the slogan "set it and forget it" as his parasailor "required constant attention".

*Blonde Moment* agreed on its merits, until their crew had a blonde moment: "they flew it in 36 knots and bang!" Hence they rated a poled-out



The spinnaker with an air vent, the parasailor, is gaining in popularity among sailors on the ARC

## Key questions

### Q What's the one piece of equipment you most regret not buying?

A parasailor (see left) headed the reply to this question, with 10 responses, followed by a spinnaker or spare spinnaker and spinnaker pole/spare pole or genoa pole and a back-up autopilot.

Other notable mentions were SSB radio, proper fishing equipment, solar panels and saltwater shampoo.

- 1 Parasailor
- 2 Spinnaker or spare spinnaker
- 3 Spinnaker or genoa pole and back-up autopilot

### Q What was the most useful kit aboard?

In 1st place, by a country mile (around five times more valued than its nearest competitor), is an autopilot, but a watermaker holds a very distinguished 2nd place. Although autopilots and watermakers are technical items that regularly require the most after-sales service, they're also regularly the most popular ARC gear items, as they can fundamentally transform a hard crossing into a comfortable one.

A satphone comes in 3rd and a generator 4th. Other than the equipment listed in this survey, notable mentions included preventers, spreader lights, fishing gear, breadmaker, cockpit speakers, fuel, anti-chafe products such as soft shackles or even hose-piping, dog bowls, beer, friends, Nespresso machine (must have been Italian), "support on arrival" and, my favourite, "more vodka to kill fish"!

- 1 Autopilot
- 2 Watermaker
- 3 Satphone

genoa as the most reliable configuration. *Peejay*, meanwhile, never got their parasailor out of the bag because they found their poled-out genoa "so simple and effective".

**Twin headsails** 3 *Drifters* found that twin headsails best suited their Bénéteau 50 – "they're very easy to use and forgiving of helming inattention," said David Chesson. Uwe Moser concurred for his 40 footer: "The twins worked perfectly – we never took them down." Maria Ingerup from Sweden found this method easy to control in squalls on *Cantare*. "Safe, easy to use once set up, then easy to reef down in a squall, providing the poles have uphaul, downhaul and guy," was a useful summary from Alan Atkinson.

As the Bavaria 44 *True Blue* had only one uphaul, they needed to find an easier method to douse their headsails quickly in a squall, and *Only*

## “ It's very clear how important it is not to rely on just one system and to have some flexibility in your wardrobe

*You* reckoned their poled-out twins damaged too easily in squalls. *Zahara's* solution to this was unstayed whisker poles. "Twin headsails were brilliant and very safe because they can furl easily, but a spinnaker would have been a good addition," admitted *Battcatt*.

A Sun Odyssey owner reported: "The Selden pole was useless and snapped three times (repaired twice); the Selden prodder then cut through the tackline regularly so was also useless!" A headsail pole also snapped aboard *Ghost*, a Hanse 470, while other breakages reported were aboard *Pentanamos*, who went through six guy ropes, *Trippwire* who ripped two kites, plus the usual sail tears and halyard breakages.



Tor Johnson