

## Round the world by Autoprop

Taswell 49      Yanmar 4LH-TE      100hp      H6-566

When fitting out our Taswell 49 All Seasons for a circumnavigation it was important to ensure that as far as possible we replaced or refurbished all the components likely to be subject to heavy wear. The original folding prop still worked, albeit with a few dings in the blades and some wear in the teeth, but we were on a sailing yacht, so why change the prop? Looking at the routes ahead it was clear that some motoring would be unavoidable, anything up to 20% of the total mileage and fuel consumption would be a factor, as would sailing performance, so a new Bruntons Autoprop was fitted. As it happened we enjoyed good sailing from the Canaries to the Caribbean and again almost all the way across the Pacific. Closing with the Australian coast the wind died and the motor came on. Little did we know that it would be almost a year before we would find reliable winds again. We motored round Cape York and into the Arafura Sea, where a short burst of wind fooled us into thinking we would be sailing through Indonesian waters. Leaving Darwin in October the rainy season was approaching and as the rains arrived, the winds departed and our cruise through Indonesia was almost entirely under power, essential to dodge the thousands of tiny fishing vessels and to counter the strong currents between the islands. Up through Bali, Borneo into the Java Sea where we found that the rope-cutter on the Autoprop made short work of the huge amounts of rope and fishing net floating just below the surface. The engine was also low on power and the ability of the autoprop to “change down” as we hit squalls under the numerous Doldrum thunderstorms was proving useful, whichever direction the storm approached from the wind almost always seemed to be on the nose.

An engine overhaul in Singapore, involving replacing a 20 year old turbocharger, solved the power problems and we headed north to Langkawi in Malaysia, then Thailand. The powerful engine and Autoprop combination got us out of the soft mud choking the channel to Phuket Yacht Lagoon – other yachts aiming to leave at the same time were forced wait until the highest tide due nearly a week later.

Leaving Thailand for the crossing to Sri Lanka the “guaranteed easterly winds” were again light and fickle eventually becoming light westerlies, so on went the engine, pushing us round the southern tip of Sri Lanka into what was now a strengthening wind. This was a very good move since an unforecast tropical storm developed immediately behind us with hurricane strength winds. Yachts only 100 miles astern of us were caught by the storm and had a terrifying few days; one British yacht broke up and sank in the huge seas, fortunately the crew were all saved. It’s possible that the thrust from the Autoprop allowing us to leave Phuket on time saved us from a similar fate.

Pirates were our next problem, coupled with a total absence of the North East monsoon winds. The calm conditions in early 2011 encouraged Somali pirates to extend their attacks up to India in the east, meaning a direct solo crossing of the north Indian Ocean was ill advised, so yachts formed into groups and made a shorter crossing hugging the Indian coast as far as Mumbai, then across to Oman. Here range under power was critical as the crossing was likely to be all under power in pirate infested waters, so running out was not a pleasant prospect and that was a real prospect as the distance was right on the nominal range limit for all yachts concerned. We motored in company with both larger and smaller yachts, but by adjusting speed for optimum fuel consumption, all made the Indian Ocean crossing safely to Salalah in Oman, we did so with fuel to spare. While on this leg two yachts relatively close to us in the Indian Ocean were pirated and the crew of one were all

killed, so continuing into even higher risk areas seemed unwise, accordingly our group of boats shipped back from Oman to the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean lived up to its reputation of either too much wind or none at all, with gale force Meltemi winds and a near gale Mistral as well as long periods of calm. With a deadline for getting back to the UK looming, we were under power for three quarters of the Med and light winds followed us across Biscay, where motor sailing proved necessary much of the way to our landfall in England at Falmouth.

Of the total distance to England from leaving Darwin , Australia, we motored or motor sailed over 80% of the time, far more than we had expected and fully justifying the decision to buy a new Autoprop .

Steve Everett