

Standing up to an Atlantic crossing

To ask 'what worked' on a long ocean passage is probably more valid than 'what broke'. Following his account of *Firefly's* passage from Las Palmas to St Lucia last month, the Editor Andrew Bray considers how well the boat's design and rig performed and assesses which equipment worked – and which did not

Firefly's ARC

Of other equipment fitted specially for the ARC, top of the list was the watermaker. This was very much a last-minute job and against all the advice I have been given it was fitted at the 11th hour and not really tested until we were at sea on the ARC.

The unit I chose was the Schenker as one of the main agents, Sunshine Maritime, is based in Gran Canaria. The Schenker operates on a similar principle to the Spectra, using a low-pressure 12V pump to power a Clark pump, which in turn creates the pressure to force the water through the membranes. The quality of the installation was not good but with just days to the start I had no option. Luckily it worked – at least for most of the time. Both power consumption and output were exactly as described; the unit, the smallest in the Schenker range, drew 9A and produced precisely 30lt of water per hour. It was fairly noisy in operation (many watermakers are) but the only fault it suffered was that it did not like working at speeds of over six knots, which for us was most of the time.

The reason, and this is true of all machines, not just the Schenker, is that when a boat is travelling fast, the water under the hull gets slightly aerated. One thing watermakers don't like is air and they effectively stall and lose pressure. So whenever it was running we had to check the unit frequently and bleed off air if necessary. I believe this problem is solved on



The Schenker watermaker was a last-minute addition – and a very valuable one, too

fast yachts by drawing water from a reservoir inside the boat rather than direct from the sea.

However, despite these misgivings, the luxury of plentiful fresh water was a joy.

I've left the two star products until last. The real star of the crossing, which worked more or less continuously from the UK to St Lucia, was the Autohelm ST 7000+ autopilot. This has a linear drive that connects directly to the rudder stock and performed quietly, accurately and economically, day in and day out, drawing no more than around 3A.

The second star product was not used at all on the crossing. In fact, it was not used at all until we arrived in St Lucia, since when it has