

EXPLORING THE GREAT BARRIER REEF



- A Perspective From Yorkeys Knob, Part 3 of 3

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Navigational Fit Out

Now lets deal in more detail with some of the equipment your boat should have in order to be able to deal with the geography and distances.

The electronics that are essential are:

VHF

Cairns Met Office do regular weather bulletins. Announcing on VHF 16 then shifting to the area repeater channel 81. After the bulletin they will usually stand by on 81 for a few minutes and you can get a radio check and if you mention where you are they will probably log it. The local volunteers are VMR 409 and they use 16, 73 and 81. The last couple of times we were out there VMR seemed more active than Cairns Met Office.

Sounder.

This is essential. The water can be very clear and eyeballing it can be very tricky. If you are fishing you will want to get an idea of the underwater topography and if anchoring you should prowl about looking for moorings, bommies and other boats and an idea of what depth you will be dropping in once you have picked your general area. We have 2 transducers: one in-hull wet-box installation which is the main one we use as it gives us a more reliable sounding at speed and in rough conditions. The other is a stern mount

that we can plug in if needs be.

Plotters.

I say plural because we always have 2. The main one for the helmsman and another, usually showing depth, which the observer can quickly change over to plotter function if they can't quite make sense of their perspective.

Navigation has always been a joint enterprise between me and Robyn. I am a bit more cavalier but we both have to be in our comfort zone to enjoy ourselves.

So we talk about it a lot as we progress, passing observations between us constantly to make sure that we are both on the same page. I do the helming for the long high speed bits and Robyn does all the close quarters stuff when fishing or anchoring.

B4 electronics was a bit of a mixture so we had an old B&W plotter for the observer, a separate sounder and a new colour plotter for the helmsman. B5 came fully fitted and it worked very well. When an upgrade came around we decided on Lowrance again: all the wiring was easy because the plugs are all the same, also the menu protocols are fairly consistent from one model to the next.

Training and Commonsense.

I mention this because there is no electronic substitute for either. The sea is an uncharitable



Great fishing . . and then laying to safe anchor at Michelmas Cay in your Bertie 25, does it get any better than this? It's hard to believe sometimes, but there are hundreds of miles of the GBR to explore, fish, dive, rest . . . a resource that is the envy of boatowners all over the world and one that most Australian boatowners have never even seen, much less experienced first hand.

