Taswell 49

An established part of the Ta Shing range, the ***Taswell 49*** *comes in a variety of configurations to suit any owner's requirements.* ***Robin Gates*** *reports on this luxury centre cockpit cruising yacht. Photography by Bugsy Gedlek*

Fifty years of Taiwanese craftsmanship and a seakindly design are the hallmarks of this pacy bluewater cruiser from Ta Shing Yacht Building. Forty knots of wind were gusting when we pulled the lines aboard through large recessed fairleads and nosed the Taswell 49 from her berth at Moody's Swanwick marina. Her lines were coiled and fenders stowed in her twin lazarette lockers. Easing the throttle forward sent 110hp of Yanmar thrust across the part-balanced rudder as we surged into the main channel of the Hamble river and readied ourselves for dark rain-bearing clouds hastening out of the South-West. In this situation of a crowded wind-blown waterway, the position of the 49's centre cockpit allowed a reassuring all-round view. Leaving the Hamble against the flood, the yacht sliced effortlessly through breaking seas.

Who sets sail under these conditions is sometimes decided by a short straw for the perilous journey on deck. Not so aboard the Taswell. The spars on this particular

Left: under reduced sail and challenging weather conditions, the 49 offers a confident stability – her 18-tonne displacement, longish fin keel and well-situated helm position keeping her on a set course
Above: the spacious saloon has a generous seating arrangement. To port, an oval-shaped dining table is surrounded by semi-circular and two-seater island settees with further recessed seating situated to starboard

boat are a high-spec package from Selden's factory, with Furlex forestay unfurling the genoa and ultra-smooth in-mast Furlin furling for the mainsail. The Awlgrip finish achieved on this anodised mast is spotless, complemented by tubular spreaders and shrouds with recessed tangs and large Haselfors alloy covers for rigging screws. The bevel gear for the furling mainsail is driven by an Andersen Line Tender fed by a deck organiser from a Lewmar 43 winch to starboard of the companionway hatch. The port side Lewmar 48 controls the clew outhaul. In boisterous weather, exactly when the advantages of good furling gear are felt, the system acquitted itself with honours and there was no need to venture from the security of the cockpit. This is a worthwhile upgrade from the slab-reefing mainsail supplied as standard.

Under reduced sail with wind and tide on her beam, the Taswell 49 yomped resolutely into Osborne Bay like a marine. This is a yacht which wants to keep going, and she has the wherewithal to do it. Eighteen tonnes of displacement, a longish fin keel and an easy command on the helm kept her tuned to the intended course with barely a yaw or a pitch. Stability under sail is enhanced by the majority of tankage and the engine being situated over the keel. Only the fuel tank is aft to make best use of space beneath the large island of the master berth.

The Ta Shing yard has now notched up its half century in boatbuilding and, with its Taswell range running from 13.06m-21.95m (43ft-72ft), has found a skilled collaborator in Bill Dixon. He has developed a winning formula for a pacy long-distance cruiser which he can modify to suit a diversity of sizes and crew requirements. On the 49 an incisive bow develops aft to broad beam which spreads fore and aft and finishes in a raking transom with neat swimming platform. In profile, the deck moulding for the 49 hugs the sheer but it offers good protection to the crew cockpit and allows long side windows for a standing view from the saloon. In gusting sea spray the teak decks quickly acquired a glistening tan. In more tranquil weather a rectangular teak deck immediately before the mast will be the sun lounger, surrounded by a quartet of shining dorade cowls standing ears-to-the-breeze. Most of the non-teak-decked coachroof has been given a secure non-skid surface moulded into beige gelcoat which will not glare under the relentless sun of lower latitudes.

Arrangements on deck are based on sound seafaring knowledge and are designed to bring cruising joy to newcomer and old hand alike. The 'welcome aboard' speaks of quality from the first step. Midship gates in the guard rails have brass Ta Shing thresholds screwed to the varnished cap rail which also has a half-round brass strip around its outer edge to take knocks. Chunky granny bars flank the mast, should it be necessary to go there and, should steering desert her, there is a plate in the aft deck for the attachment of an emergency tiller. Running rigging hardware is largely by Lewmar and thoughtfully installed. The hard edges of the side deck genoa tracks are guarded by parallel teak strips designed to protect bare feet from damage. At the helm, there is the right amount of room in the keyhole-shaped cockpit to stand with feet wedged when required. The wheel, teak-rimmed and pedestal-mounted, is large and firm. On the mechanics of the Edson steering gear, it turns as sweetly as a spoon through freshly filtered coffee. The cockpit geometry allows precise steering from standing or sitting to one side where foresail tell tales can be watched for clues, and the fore side of the wheel pedestal sports a folding table where drinks might rest on a downwind leg. In the prow, a walk-through pulpit has a small teak step where crew might watch for the anchor breaking out. Dedicated underway-loungers might wish to add teak quarter seats to the aft pulpits which are divided by access to the swimming platform.

Left: situated to starboard of the companionway and beautifully finished in teak, the galley comprises a Force 10 cooker, freezer and refrigerator, and ample work surfaces

The way below is reassuring. Large, curved, stainless steel grab rails are ready to hand on deck, and vertical rails are waiting beside the sole-gripping concaved steps to the saloon. Bill Dixon is an acknowledged master in making the most comfortable use of interior volume while maximising airiness, a skill which he has applied generously to the Taswell 49. Side stripes harmonise with rows of opening ports at shoulder height for the saloon, three sleeping cabins and two heads, with deep fiddled shelves beneath each port. Tinted acrylic hatches overhead treble for light, ventilation and escape. Gratings are already in place for air-conditioning which can be fitted, like watermaker, generator and power sockets, to be appropriate for the new owner's

Above: taking up the aft section, the owner's cabin features a centrally-positioned berth with a small seating area to starboard. A selection of lockers and cavernous wardrobes provide generous stowage space for long-distance voyages. A central dressing table (below) has a compact pivoting seat while the en-suite facilities are off to starboard

intended cruising grounds. Lightning protection and grounding plate for high frequency single sideband radio are likewise already installed.

Lifting hatches at random in the sole revealed boldly marked valves for the water system, access to water tanks and exhaust, and a deep main sump ideally placed directly beneath the companionway ladder. The sole itself is finished with solid 3mm teak faired smoothly into the curved sides of the hull to maximize area. With heads, galley and cabins showing a degree of mobility on the 49's accommodation plans, the layout is flexible enough to allow customisation for the particular needs of a couple, a family or a party of friends. This boat is designed with an amidships saloon. A port dining table is surrounded by a large semi-circular settee and a two-seater island settee on the centre line. A further quadrant settee snugs into the starboard corner ideally situated for anyone wishing to watch television housed in the dedicated cabinet opposite. The upholstery is a kind of synthetic brushed suede Alcantara, cool in summer, warm in winter and eminently cleanable. Squarely situated to starboard of the companionway is the galley with a capable Force 10 cooker set among precisely-jointed teak work and Corian work surfaces which

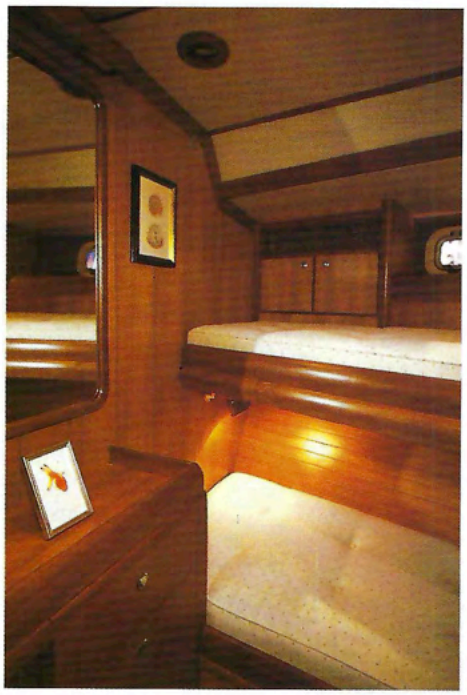
roll high into the fiddles for easy cleaning. Freezer and refrigerator are alongside. They are fitted with hold-over plates which maintain the cold after a short run of the engine-driven compressor each morning and evening. A heavy latch on the refrigerator door clunks closed with a fit that puts lesser magnetic seal doors in the shade. Pressurised hot water is delivered to a pair of deep cruising sinks, thanks to a calorifier, together with seawater and foot-pumped freshwater as required.

On the opposite side of the yacht is the passageway aft. Here, a secure navigation desk slots beneath the side deck. Deep instrument consoles partly conceal the full depth and width of the chart table which receives the pleasing natural spectrum of daylight from a deck prism overhead. Here also is the main system's switch panel and the largest doors to the engine space which has access from all sides and ample room inside to admire the machinery at a spanner's distance. A 75hp Yanmar is standard.

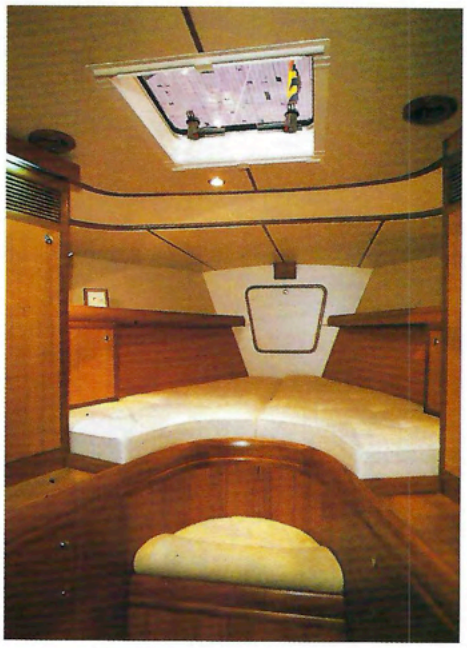
Cavernous wardrobes and a central dressing table are features of the master cabin for a yacht which offers her owners every facility to arrive ashore in style from a long salty passage. The dressing table has a compact pivoting seat and flaps which are supported on tight coil springs, a tidy and clever arrangement also used on the chart table. The aft cabin's en-suite heads and shower compartment is to starboard. There is, however, a deep wet locker behind the navigator's seat. The master berth backs onto the transom where twin ports offer a fine view of the wake or a down tide sunset in harbour.

Moving forward from the saloon through arched solid teak-framed doors and past the housing of the keel-stepped mast we reach a twin-bunked cabin to port and then the forward 'first' guest's cabin in the bow. This cabin has a vee double berth with a half-moon seat bisecting the head end and access to the chain locker at the foot. Top drawers here, as elsewhere, have their fronts precisely chamfered to match the curve of adjacent fiddles.

Dual access is a feature of this cabin's heads and shower compartment which has doors from the cabin and the passageway outside – useful when there are visitors aboard and when the yacht is underway.



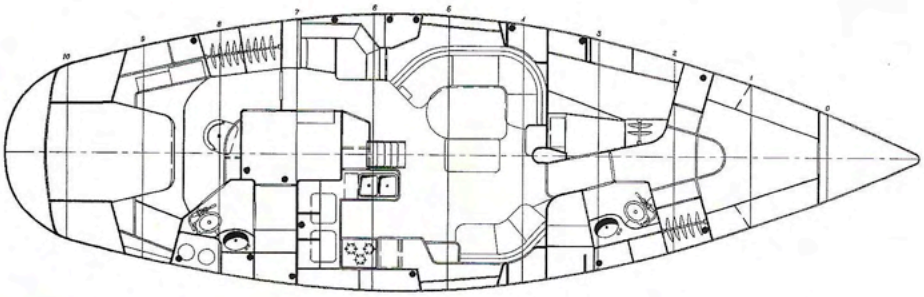
Left: forward of the saloon, a twin-bunked cabin is situated off to port
Below: one of the guest cabins takes up the bow section. The vee double berth is fronted by a half-moon seat and the cabin's teak finish is enhanced by an overhead skylight



The quality of the joinery on show reflects the choosiness of a yard with its own sawmill and drying kilns, where grain and colour can be matched to a rare perfection. Distributor Moody claim that 'this is a yacht you could buy with your eyes closed, just feeling the quality'. A mixed workforce of men and women who are meticulous in their attention to detail have achieved a faultless interior finish almost exclusively in the warm hues of teak. Very little of the glassfibre hull has been left exposed above the sole. As a result, fittings, which are there for purely practical reasons, add a beauty of their own. Cedar locker linings bring woody freshness to clothes, smooth chamfers on every edge of a grating are toe-friendly and concave teak mouldings deflect drips from glass shower doors. Lights turn on automatically when locker doors are opened, and red night lights glow below seats and settees.

Carving back towards the western Solent with genoa sheeted in on its Lewmar 58 and boom pulled over the quarter, the Taswell unleashed broadsides of spray to leeward. When optimum performance is needed, mainsail shape can be tuned by rod kicker and a wide mainsheet track, again fitted with one of those neat Andersen Line Tenders. This boat has the potential to set cutter rig with a staysail and a high-cut yankee in place of the genoa, a more flexible arrangement which could provide a more efficient sail plan in the conditions which we experienced.

This was a day on which May had blown the sea in our faces, sun-dried the salt and then power-showered it away with rain. But, like a firework display, the afternoon had saved its most impressive weather till last with a needling blast of hailstones from a black sky followed by startling sun. As we turned north towards Southampton waters, we unfurled sail held so far in reserve and the Taswell ran for home with a wake of pure bubbling joy. There is a shoal keel option drawing 0.28m (1ft 1in) less than the fin, and the yacht is also available in all-season deck saloon guise to suit a changeable climate. Whatever the final specification, in her stoical ways and skilful blend of ruggedness and comfort, the Taswell 49 is a yacht deserving of an appreciative owner. ❑



TASWELL 49

LOA	14.88m (48ft 10in)
LWL	12.41m (40ft 9in)
Beam	4.57m (15ft)
Draught	2.14m (7ft 2in)
Sail area	Main 99m² 125% genoa
Displacement	18 tonnes
Builder	Ta Shing Yacht Building 4 Shing Yih Road Taiwan ROC Tel: +886 6 261 5176 Fax:+886 6 264 4672
Price	Standard boat $568,000 Boat as featured $615,000 (ex-VAT)

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