

## Wotan Log for Distribution 25<sup>th</sup> August 2008

This log covers the period Friday 8<sup>th</sup>- Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> August. I must remind you, as usual, that your computers have delete buttons!

The phone rang at 0900, this was Carl Sjostedt announcing his arrival. My heart sank as the weather was vile, the prospect of all three crew arriving to pouring rain was more than I could bear. Carl, Sue Glover and Mark Atkinson arrived at the NJK Blekholmen, Helsinki in the early afternoon, by which time it had at least stopped raining. I said goodbye to Alison and then to Yves, who stayed to meet the new crew. We had dinner in the sailor's restaurant and a few drinks before turning in.

On Saturday morning, I sent Carl, Sue and Mark to visit Suomenlinna, while I busied myself on Wotan. After lunch in town and a dash through the supermarket, we set off very late in the afternoon for Långören. There was a wedding party in full swing on the north shore. Three small children were having a ball jumping stark naked off a nearby pontoon, followed by their granny hot from the sauna.

After a rainy start to Sunday morning, we headed down to Porkala marina, where we stopped for lunch, refuelled and re-watered. We headed on to Högholmen and tied up in the NJK harbour. Sue and I raised the NJK ensign, while Carl set about lighting the fire for the sauna. Carl, Sue and I went for a sauna, but I am ashamed to say that, unlike the others, I did not brave the sea. We all enjoyed sitting outside the NJK clubhouse having a pre-dinner drink, watching the changing light as the sun went down.

No sooner had we left NJK Högholmen than the heavens opened and the visibility dropped to less than 250m. We were fortunately in the open sea, though plumb in the main shipping lane. The radar confirmed that there was no traffic about, only buoys and rocks, which were mysteriously approaching us at our boat speed! Soon the rain and scud lifted and we were racing along close hauled in a SW F5-6. We followed the green route down the Barösund. After a lunch stop, we continued down the channel before turning north east along the mainland shore. The channel runs for some 11 miles. It is never more than ½ a mile wide, often much less. We turned north up to Ekenäs, our destination for the night. Ekenäs is one of Finland's oldest towns, built on the orders of King Gustav Vasa of Sweden in 1546 as a port to rival Tallinn. When some years later it failed to live up to expectations, the population was forcibly moved to Helsinki! Not much has changed sadly.

On Tuesday morning, Sue and Carl explored the old town and did some shopping. I went to the café, which doubled as the harbour master's office, to pick up weather forecasts for the next 5 days. I had identified what looked like a very sheltered anchorage just south of Ekenäs where we went for lunch. The only problem was that it was guarded by two rocks barely 25m apart. In the event both rocks were visible and there was 11m depth between the rocks. The bay was totally enclosed, with a small *hutte* at the entrance. We anchored in 3.7m out of sight of all habitation. A fallow deer came to have a look at us from the vantage point of a rocky knoll. We had hoped to see an elk as the island was called Älgö or Elk Island, but we were unlucky. This was a truly magical anchorage. After lunch we followed the green inshore passage to Hanko, where we moored at the Smultongrundet island marina. The marina boasts a gala loo and sauna, so Carl was in his element. We went ashore to revisit the Makasiini restaurant where the food was again excellent. After dinner Mark and I went into the yacht club for a drink, where I found a yachtsman, whom I had met in Korpoo a month previously. He remembered me and asked where I had been since we had last met. We spent an enjoyable half hour talking and swapping anchorages, before we had to catch the last ferry back to the marina.

Our aim was to spend Wednesday night at the NJK harbour at Långholmen, but I proposed that on the way we should go to Kaiserhamn, where I had allowed Wotan's anchor to drag so spectacularly last time. I was determined to anchor correctly first time! I also wanted to show Sue, Mark and Carl Granny's Café. We had a great sail almost all the way to Kaiserhamn, until the wind came on the nose and we had to start the engine. I should point out to those that would have it that I should buy a motor boat that beating up the narrow passages you find in the archipelago is something of a waste of time! We anchored successfully bows-to at the Kaiserhamn marina pontoon. Granny's Café was a great success and it was not until the early

evening that we slipped our moorings and headed off to NJK Långholmen. After the usual heart stopping entrance, we moored next to Martin Donner, who warned us of the rock guarding the approach to the dock, which we nearly hit on the way in! Martin sailed with his wife and three cats, all of whom he had entered in the NJK visitors' book! Carl and Sue repaired to the sauna before dinner.

Thursday dawned without a cloud in the sky, but Långholmen is deceptive as it is so well sheltered. The forecast for the Gulf of Finland and the Sea of Archipelago was for S-SW winds of 14m/s, 28 knots or F7. Fortunately the wind would be behind us so we prepared to head back to Hanko. We slipped our moorings, edged out close to the first mooring buoy, as instructed, and negotiated the rocks at the entrance. We set the main and screamed up the channel towards Hanko. Carl won the day's highest speed award of 8.3 knots! We came progressively harder and harder on the wind and had to take in a second reef. About 4 miles out of Hanko, we dropped the sails and rolled up the genoa as we had to go to windward down a narrow channel. We were soon tied up in Hanko marina, while the wind howled all around us. All thoughts of heading onto the anchorage outside Ekenäs soon evaporated, as we downed rather more wine than was good for us for lunch. The wind kept on increasing all afternoon, so we were glad to be snuggled up in the marina. Carl made us a beautiful sauce, which we had as a gravadlax starter for dinner.

The wind was still strong first thing on Friday morning, but by midday it had moderated considerably. We set off East for NJK Munkshamn, with the wind dying we shook out the two reefs we had put in yesterday. As this process took rather longer than expected, Sue had to call for a tack in order to avoid a fast approaching whale like reef! Last time I had been in NJK Munkshamn it had been the Nylands Nation weekend. We had had to leave as the "yoof" were playing head banging music at full volume. I had therefore not really appreciated the beauty of the harbour. Now that we were there in perfect peace, it was a different matter. There was only one tiny *hutte* to be seen and that was out of sight of the moorings. In Hanko, Carl had bought a box of crayfish a Scandinavian delicacy, which comes into season in August. He produced a delicious crayfish dinner and demonstrated to us novices the intricacies of eating them. Carl and Sue repaired to the sauna, whilst Mark and I opened another bottle of wine!

The night was wet and Saturday morning was not much better. Our neighbours left at 0900 as they had to go to a party near Helsinki that night. We decided that we could wait a bit as we only had 30 odd miles to go to Hogholmen. Around midday it became apparent that things were not going to improve on the weather front in the near future, so it was put up or shut up time. We set off into what looked like improving weather but within minutes, it was raining hard and the visibility was deteriorating. This was not a great birthday treat for Sue. She wisely remained down below while the boys got wet. We persuaded ourselves that rather than scampering back to Munkshamn, we should continue, but that we should stick to the sheltered route we knew through Barösund, rather than venturing along a narrow squiggly route offshore. Once we were out of the Barösund channel and into the shipping channel leading up to the coal port at Joddböle, the wind freed so that we could sail all the way to the entrance of Skansfjärden. We were doing over six knots closehauled under No. 3 genoa. Mark navigated us into Högholmen, while Sue and I got wet, but enjoyed some great sailing. No sooner had we tied up at Högholmen than Carl was off to light up the sauna. This had the dual benefit of allowing those of us who wished to have a sauna, but more importantly gave us all the opportunity to dry out our wet oilies and clothes!

We slipped our moorings on Sunday at the relatively early hour of 1030 for Tallinn. The weather was not brilliant and the forecast was for E 5-10m/s, which equated with winds of up to 20 knots, with the prospect of fog in the evening. By 1300, we were sailing closehauled under double reefed main and partly furled genoa, we had the radar running as the visibility had closed in. It was like this almost all the way to Tallin. There are a plethora of ferries plying between Helsinki and Tallinn, not to mention a busy shipping lane running up the Gulf of Finland. We did not spot any large vessels on the radar, but we did see a number of small echoes, which materialised into yachts. As we closed Pirita the visibility began to improve. There was a group of windsurfers screaming up and down the coast to the north east of Pirita, enjoying the lively conditions! Soon after we berthed Sue and Carl headed off into town. Mark and I met up with Sue and Carl later. We had a drink in a bar in the main square until the rain began and then scurried off to a restaurant, which Sue and Carl had found. The restaurant was all but full and we got the last table. We soon understood why it was so popular!

On Monday, after a foray to the nearby supermarket we were off back to Finland. There was a gaggle of young sailing every sort of dinghy from Optimists to 470s just outside the entrance to the marina. While the day was cloudy, at least we could see to opposition in the shape the many Helsinki-Tallinn ferries. The wind was a good F5 from the west southwest, so we fairly raced north with two reefs in the main. Carl very nobly kept watch over Nicole despite the rain. We were glad to get back to NJK Högholmen as the weather was deteriorating fast. There was another NJK yacht moored up. I got talking to the skipper, who had just brought his boat *Shangri-la* round from Barösund, where he kept it for the summer at his island. He said that he owned another 39 islands apparently, his grandfather had bought a job lot of islands! When he was not looking after his island domains, he was a theatre impresario. The owner of *Shangri-la* had set up the sauna. After dinner he came and told us that the sauna was free so Sue and Carl set off through the rain to have a sauna, while, true to form, Mark and I settled down to polish off another bottle of wine!

We had a duvet Tuesday morning waiting for the rain to stop. The forecast was for S-SW 11m/s (22 knots), with showers. We set off for Helsinki at midday. We were soon running dead down wind at 7 knots with two reefs and a boomed out genoa. Whichever way the route turned, on whichever gybe we were sailing, we were always on a dead run! Sue begged to be allowed a trick on the wheel, as she felt she had not had enough real helming without the help of Nicole! She had to sail with the wind dead behind her for about three hours, without gybing accidentally. We came into Helsinki via the Suomenlinna entrance, this gave us a wonderful view of the castle as we sped though with the wind on our port quarter. We came into Helsinki harbour to see a coastguard vessel with a small helicopter hovering over it. Instead of someone being lifted off the vessel as we expected, two black clad figures abseiled down from the helicopter. We tied up in NJK Blekholmen in our usual spot to be met by the ever helpful Sami, the Harbourmaster. We had dinner in the sailors' restaurant.

I was determined to get into the NJK library. Sami had said that he would let me in, but he had gone off shift, so I asked his colleague to let me in. He found that the library key was one of those he carried around with him all the time! We were in the library at last. The search began for *Down Channel* by RT McMullen. I soon found it in the English language section, surrounded by books by Adlard Coles, Illingworth and Mary Blewitt. Here was the very same 1893 edition copy, which Arthur Ransome read when he visited the NJK in 1922 and described in his *Racundra's First Cruise*. I read the final chapter of *Down Channel*, McMullen's last cruise The "Perseus" 1891 aloud over dinner to my crew. The initial section was a verbatim copy of the log of *Perseus* as written by McMullen himself. The second section described how he was found, dead at the helm of his yacht, by a French fisherman off the coast of France, and then buried in France. Carl found bound copies of the NJK magazine *Frisk Bris* for the period 1939-45. It contained moving letters from members, serving at the front. The editor wrote, "Best wishes to sailors at the front, this winter will not last for ever". It also described how the Swedish KSSS, of which Carl is a member, took 86 Finnish children into their care during the war. I was pleased to see a number of copies of *Roving Commissions* in the library. I made a note in visitors' book describing my delight at finding the famous copy of *Down Channel*.

After lunch on Wednesday, we said goodbye to Sue who left to catch her plane home. We got a text to say that she had been upgraded by BA, unlike Boris Johnson. Ten days' sailing on Wotan has that effect! Mark and Carl very kindly took me to Capelli for a slap up dinner. My back, which had been playing up for the last 2-3 days, seemed to appreciate the walk along the harbour to the centre of town.

On Thursday there was little to do so we took the 3T tram and took the tourist ride around town, returning to the boat for lunch. We had lunch back on Wotan, with the *sill* that Carl had bought in the food market, accompanied by the obligatory *Line* schnapps! Mark and I busied ourselves with reading and sleeping while Carl completed his packing. We went back up to the Sailor's Restaurant for dinner and then bid Carl a fond farewell as he took a tram and bus out to the airport.

Mark left on the 0930 ferry next morning to catch the 1030 high speed ferry to Tallinn, which covered the 45 miles in 1hr 40mins. Wotan, would be pushed to equal that time! I spent the morning generally tidying up as I was due to take the evening flight back to London. I had planned to sail Wotan down to her winter quarters at Lovisa, but as I had done something to

my back, I was in no position to try to lug around sails and do all the other tasks associated with laying up a yacht. This would have to wait. Furthermore, Bimbi had just had an operation to ease her carpal tunnel, so I wanted to be back home to look after her. I caught the 1815 flight to Heathrow and I was back in Itchenor by 10pm, just in time to catch up with all the family, who were down at the sailing club having dinner. The good news was that Bimbi's hand was very much on the mend. She had regained movement in the hand and the pain and numbness had gone away. She had also kindly arranged for her orthopaedic surgeon to come and have a look at my back in the morning. What more could I ask?

Anthony Fawcett  
25<sup>th</sup> August 2008