

## WOTAN'S LOG FOR DISTRIBUTION

Stavanger to Lerwick 26<sup>th</sup> June 2010 to 9<sup>th</sup> July 2010

Having said my fond farewells to Bim, I caught the bus back to Stavanger to await the arrival of Robert Gayner and Alison Miller at 0030. Before retiring to bed at 0330, we wrought serious damage to a bottle of scotch.

On Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June, we eventually set sail just after 1700 and motored to the anchorage at Adnøyvågen. Robert, Alison and I sat in the cockpit enjoying a nightcap in the late evening light. In the morning, we weighed anchor and motored down to Lysefjord to see the famous Pulpit Rock. Honour satisfied, we sailed up to Fognfjord surrounded by mountains, on the top of the highest of which was snow. We anchored off the hamlet of Hattavåg, which was served by a fast ferry from Stavanger. There was barely a light to be seen in the place as all the summer houses were shut up.

Monday morning dawned cloudy but fine. We weighed anchor and motored out into Erfjorden and into the delightfully named Bonkafjorden. As we rounded the southern point of Hillervågan we unrolled the genoa and stormed up under the Bokn Bridge before anchoring for lunch in Kongshavn, just around the corner. After lunch we set off towards Haugesund, where we were due to meet Carl Sjostedt. On the way we passed the industrialised island of Karmøy. We eventually moored in a tight berth just behind to a large Coastguard vessel, whose crew were leaning over the rail waiting for the impending disaster! Haugesund boasts a very sexy statue of Marylyn Monroe for the sole reason that her father was brought up in the town. Marylyn apart, the waterfront is rather attractive with a number of old wooden buildings which have been converted into bars and restaurants.

Next afternoon, we motored off north into the pouring rain. We anchored off the island of Bømle. In Wotan's saloon it was warm and dry, while the rain beat on the coach roof and the clouds clung to the trees. The rain finally decided to stop early the next morning. We sailed to the eastern end of Moste and beat up the Spysøysundet, passing under the Føyno – Spysøya Bridge. This time we did not need to hold our breath as the clearance was 36 metres! We squiggled our way up the Stokksundet before turning to starboard and into Langøysund. Once we were out into the Selbjørsfjorden we set sail and raced up towards Huftarøy and our overnight anchorage at Gilsvågan. I made an unwise attempt to pass into the inner pool, through one of those irresistible narrow passages, but we did not make it and we ran aground.

Thursday dawned quite the most beautiful day. The sun was shining out of a clear blue sky. We anchored for lunch in Ølanvagan, an attractive little fjord, with a few boats moored at its head. Tom Hasler's mother lives in Tavyallich where Mike Gibb has a house. Some months ago, on the strength of Mike's introduction, I had contacted Tom to say I would be sailing in Norway. We had arranged to meet up with Tom and Dot at their house in Hjeljestad. I called Dot as we neared their house to be told that Tom and his friend Robert were out in their motor boat waving at us. We towed them back home and were soon secured alongside Tom's jetty, beside his Hanse 40. Within moments, we were invited to a barbecue. Robert and his wife Lynn

had sailed around the world a few years ago in a Nicholson 38, during which time she had her first child. We decided that the time had come to keep very quiet about our modest sailing exploits! Tom and Dot, whom I had never met, were unbelievably kind and entertained us royally. We had a wonderful evening, a fitting end to a perfect day.

We slipped from the Hasler's jetty at 1100. By the time we reached the Fleslandsskjetet light, the wind had picked up and we were able to roll out the genoa and sail the last 10 miles into Bergen. The Statsraad Lemkuhl, a beautiful Norwegian three-masted sail training vessel, was docked on our port-hand side as we came in. We moored in the Bryggen, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The dock was packed as everyone was seeking shelter from the forecast bad weather. Bergen is the rain capital of Norway with an average of 270 days of rain per year! The funicular railway was lost in the cloud. I went to an internet café, to research the weather for the next few days, it did not look encouraging. Strong gales were forecast for Viking on Sunday.

Bunny Borthwick, Robert's mother-in law, was due to arrive in Bergen on a cruise ship, on Saturday morning. We all met up on the Fløibanen funicular railway and treated ourselves to a most enjoyable lunch at the top. The view over the harbour was spectacular. On the way back to Wotan, we stopped off at the Theta Museum in the Bryggen. This small room had been the base for a small group of resistance fighters, who transmitted information on German troop and ship movements to MI6 in London. In 1942, the Germans raided the Bryggen and found the Theta group HQ. MI6 recalled the group to London. The room had been restored to its condition when it was discovered by the Germans.

On Sunday, afternoon we set off for Strusshamn on Askøy a few miles away. The harbour was lovely with small wooden houses along the shore and a very welcoming sailing club. The village had burnt down quite regularly. Therefore, it was no surprise when next morning Carl set off the fire alarm outside the shower that the fire brigade arrived in a flash! It proceeded to rain all evening and to blow hard from the south. We decided that we would not leave until Monday afternoon to avoid the gales that were blowing.

The gale continued to blow during the night but began to moderate on Monday morning. We did not set sail until 1345, by which time the wind had reduced to a more manageable F5/6. We had a good sail up the inner lead to the Rongesundet entrance, where we passed under the bridge and motored out into the Norwegian Sea. Once clear of the entrance we were soon sailing west into a west south-westerly F3. By 0400 the next morning, we were in the middle of the Oseberg oilfield. The main platform was huge and two satellite platforms almost as big. At 0900 we were able to stop the engine and sail our course for Lerwick. The Shetland CG forecast at 1900 warned of south easterly gales in Fair Isle. Fortunately by this time everybody had recovered their sea legs, so we were able to take the pasting to come in our stride. At 2200 we took a third reef in the main and rolled up about half the genoa, yet were still storming along at 7.5 knots. Alison was on the wheel and revelling in the conditions. By midnight we were 11 miles off Rova Head light at the northern entrance to Bressay Sound. The wind was picking up as forecast and it was raining cats and dogs. As we entered Bressay Sound, the visibility was so poor that

we could not make out the lights of the channel buoys until we were almost on top of them. We felt our way into the Small Boat Harbour, where we docked at 0230.

Next morning the wind had dropped, the rain has stopped and the sun was out. Bressay, with its smooth and treeless outline, looked beautiful. We booked ourselves an evening cruise on the replica Viking ship moored nearby. Carl was a Jarl of the Order of Beserks and Vikings, so this trip was a must. The skipper of the ship was a senior member of the related Shetland Order of the Vikings! We shot up Bressay Sound under the square sail and then reached across to Gremista, where Wotan was now moored. Robert suggested that we should try rowing. So under Alison's direction, we rowed mightily. When we had had enough rowing, we found that the engine would not start, so we had to row the rest of the way back to Lerwick!

We spent Thursday exploring the Shetland Bus sites of Scalloway and Lunna Voe by car before taking the evening ferry to Aberdeen

### Lerwick to Stornoway 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2010 to 6<sup>th</sup> August 2010

On Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> July I flew up to Edinburgh where I met Digger Harris, who had flown in from Paris, whence we flew up to Sumburgh together. We were met by Clare, Digger's wife and Alison Garrett, who had been exploring Shetland and using Wotan as her base.

On Saturday, as Alison had a car, we decided to go for a drive around Shetland. Digger introduced us to peat cutting and drying. Then we went to Skeld where there was a festival and regatta. The theme was circus performers. We subsequently discovered that fancy dress was a feature of Shetland life. We visited the ingenious miniature water mills at Huxter, opposite Papa Stour and the Sullom Voe Terminal. On Sunday afternoon, we set off for West Lunna Voe, the headquarters of the Shetland Bus operation in World War II, which had been commanded by Digger's father-in-law, David Howarth. Digger conned us into West Lunna Voe, as was only appropriate. We anchored in the north corner of the Voe, where his father-in-law's ashes had been scattered.

We took the dinghy ashore to the pier where the Shetland Bus operation was initially based. Above the pier was the building, which had been used as a workshop. Digger and I walked up to Lunna House, down across the field towards the entrance to Lunna Kirk. There is a memorial to David in the churchyard. Lunna Kirk is a beautiful church with a gallery on three sides. There is no altar, but the focal point of the church is the pulpit. At the eastern end of the church were photographs of all the children, who had been christened in the church since 1945. We returned to Wotan and set sail for Baltasound. On the way up Colgrave Sound, we spotted a minke whale. It loped around the bay showing us its small dorsal fin. We anchored in Baltasound off the pier.

After a late breakfast we motored around to Haroldswick, to visit the Unst Boat Museum. We puttered ashore to the slip which was just below the Unst Viking ship. Alison persuaded the curator, who looked like a Viking himself, to open up the ship and show us around. This ship had been sailed across the North Sea by a group of Swedes, who had planned to go on to the Faroes, Iceland, Greenland and finally

America. They gave up and eventually sold the Viking ship to the Shetland Island Council, who presented it to Unst as tourist attraction. In the ship were all manner of Viking artefacts, including board games played on board ship, a weighted loom and a bow drill. Alison was in seventh heaven discussing textiles, while Digger and I marvelled at the construction of the ship. We walked around to the Unst Boat Heritage Centre. It was full of boats including Sixareens, Fourareens and Youls, which had been used to fish off the Shetlands. After lunch at the Northern Lights Café, we set off round the famous Muckle Flugga Lighthouse, the most northerly lighthouse in the British Isles and down to Whale Firth. South of Muckle Flugga were a series of gannet and fulmar colonies, which appeared to be a white chalk cliff to the naked eye.

We set off early knowing that we had a 55 mile slog down the west coast of Shetland to Scalloway. We anchored in Housa Voe on Papa Stour for a late lunch. We did not arrive in Scalloway until 2100, as the tide was against us. Digger conned Wotan into Scalloway, where his father-in-law had lead the Shetland Bus Operation, after they moved from West Lunna Voe. Scalloway had much better facilities and communications than Lunna Voe, which was why they moved their base.

Early next morning we went ashore to visit the Shetland Bus sites. We identified the Headquarters building and the Norwegian House and paid our respects at the Shetland Bus Memorial. After refuelling, we followed the coast to St Ninian's Bay, where Digger's grandfather-in-law used to live and where he had been fishing with him as a young man. St Ninian's Island is attached to the Mainland by a tombolo, which is a sand spit deposited by wave action. Soon after we left St Ninian's Bay, the wind piped up and we had a wonderful sail down to Fair Isle. We moored in the tiny North Haven, next to the berth for *The Good Shepherd*, the Fair Isle Ferry. The 29' yacht behind us was owned by a New Zealander called Edward Anker, who was in the middle of a single handed circumnavigation. Edward had completed his boat himself and had lived on his boat for the last 14 years.

We had a miserable sail on Friday to the Orkneys. We made our way into the delightfully named Kettletoft Harbour on Sanday, it was not an exciting place. We set off for Kirkwall very early in the morning. Alison soon established that there were no cars for hire, so we hired a taxi to take us on a tour of the Mainland. We first went south to see Scapa Flow and the Italian Chapel on Lamb Holm, built out of a Nissen hut by prisoners of war working on the Churchill Barriers. These were designed to close off the small eastern entrances to Scapa Flow after a German submarine sneaked in and sank the battleship Royal Oak. We then headed north to look at the prehistoric sites. First, we visited the standing stones at Brodgar, which form a huge circle. The stones are about 20 foot high, made from the local sandstone, and overlook the Loch of Harray. We then went on up to Skara Brae, a prehistoric village, which had been well restored.

On Sunday morning, we had to catch the last of the ebb through the Rost of Burgar, between the Mainland and the island of Rousay. The pilot book builds the rost, pronounced roost, into something quite fearsome, but in the benign conditions we were sailing under, we simply had a bumpy few minutes. Once past the rost, we had a 45 mile hike over to the Kyle of Tongue on the north coast of Scotland. In the event we had a good sail and were able to reach Loch Eribol about 5 miles further west.

Loch Eribol has a spectacular eastern entrance with a waterfall that plunges several hundred feet into the sea and a number of large stacks, caves galore and even a natural bridge. We anchored on Rispond Bay, which provided a good, if slightly roly anchorage.

We were off by 0630 to catch the tide around Cape Wrath. We rounded Cape Wrath and sailed down to Loch Laxford and into Loch Achadh-fi, where we anchored for lunch. This is where John Ridgeway has his Adventure Training Centre at Ardmore. His yacht *English Rose VI* was hauled up on a cradle. After a very long postprandial zizz, we set off for Badcall Bay, which Digger had identified as a beautifully sheltered anchorage. The choice we had to make was whether, or not, to go inside Handa Island, with its narrow wreck and rock strewn channel. There was no choice! As usual, these challenges are never as difficult as you expect; with a chart plotter they are really quite easy. We anchored up in the corner of Badcall Bay, where I suspect you could ride out a hurricane. Tuesday morning dawned vile, so we stayed in bed until 0900. The forecast for Wednesday was not good so we decided that as the weather had improved somewhat, we would head direct to Stornoway rather than south to Loch Ewe. Nevertheless, we had a fairly unexciting motor sail to windward across the Minch to Stornoway. We berthed in the marina opposite Lewis Castle, which had been restored and extended by Sir James Matheson, the founder of Jardine Matheson, on the proceeds of selling opium to the Chinese. Sadly, the building is now derelict, but the surrounding gardens are very well tended.

Next morning Alison went on a textile tour of Stornoway, while Digger and I went in search of the Harbour Office. There was a foreign food festival in full swing in the main street. Alison was invited to the Stornoway Quilters Guild quilting evening, which Digger and I did not attend! On Thursday we hired a car to explore Lewis and Harris. It is the largest island in the British Isles. Harris is joined to Lewis by a narrow isthmus at Tarbert. We visited the Black House at Arnol. The people of Lewis lived in primitive stone huts with peat and straw roofs. When they could afford to replace these houses with modern bungalows, which were usually pebble dashed and white, the old houses were called black houses, to distinguish them from the modern, or white houses. Ian Taylor, a friend of Alison, had bought the tweed mill at Shawbost in order to put the Harris Tweed industry onto a firmer financial footing. We found the mill and poked our heads inside. We met the Chief Engineer, who kindly took us around the mill starting with the dyeing of the cleaned wool right through to the finishing process. At the end of the tour, Alison was given a huge sack of off cuts. I don't think I have ever seen Alison looking quite so happy, except perhaps when her son Robert announced, during the cruise, that he had become engaged! We drove on south to Tarbert from where we followed the Golden Route along the east coast of Harris, which is spectacularly beautiful. We stopped off in Tarbert for dinner and arrived back home at 2020.

Digger left us late in Friday afternoon to catch his flight to Glasgow. Alison left on the next morning's flight to Inverness. Thus ended a delightful cruise of the Northern Islands and Outer Hebrides.

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18<sup>th</sup> September 2010