

## LOG OF WOTAN

### Cruise from Long Island to Chesapeake September/October 2006

#### Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 197) Heathrow to Gateway Marina Long Island, NY

Malcolm and Caroline came to Old School House in their gi-normous BMW X4 to pick us up. We were soon at JFK where Bim made a big hit with the customs officer who admired her crucifix. Clearly such signs of religiosity go down well with the religious right neocons! We were swept up by the Airtrain to Federal Circle where we found our hire car waiting for us. Several near misses later, we were at Gateway Marina and aboard Wotan.

#### Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 198) Gateway Marina Long Island, NY

Today was to be the girls' big day in the Big Apple. Bim toured MOMA and Malcolm and Caroline visited Ground Zero while I was bought diesel and found a gas fitting shop in the back and beyond on Flatland Avenue.

We had planned to meet Nick and Marita Dunphy for dinner, who live on the Upper East Side. Caroline and Bim arrived at the Dunphy's flat in a cycle rickshaw, which caused great amusement. After drinks in their flat overlooking Roosevelt Island, we repaired for a very jolly dinner at a local Italian restaurant, where we worked our way down the wine list, before taking a taxi back to Gateway Marina and Wotan.

#### Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 199) Gateway Marina Long Island, NY to Manasquan Inlet

We eventually set sail from Gateway Marina, having said goodbye to the delightful Erica, at 1100. It was a 40 mile hike down to Manasquan and the weather was nothing if not unpromising, 8/8ths overcast, raining and poor visibility, not a great start for the long suffering Butlers. The wind was light so we had to motor all the way. Manasquan is an attractive little inlet from which you can access the Intracoastal Waterway. Unluckily for us, we draw too much so the ICW was not an option. We were met by Fred the owner of the marina, who told us his life story and was very hard to shift! One day in the early 1950s his father had been to the marina to look at a motor boat and ended up buying the marina instead!

Since it had been raining all day and well into the night we were all wet through. Water was coming in in all manner of unlikely places even above the skipper's bunk, what lèse majesté! We repaired for lobbies at the local restaurant.

#### Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 200) Manasquan Inlet, NJ

When we woke, the weather was truly foul, but brave sailors that we were, we set off out to sea. We went out of the harbour entrance and after a few

minutes' careful reflection, I decided that with 50 miles to go to Atlantic City, lousy viz. and no bolt hole if things got worse, we should turn round and go back to Brielle. Bim announced that in all her 30 years of marriage it was the first time I had ever turned back! I pointed out that it was merely me being flexible! Yeah right!

We did not stir all day. The day was spent sleeping, eating and reading, and above all dodging the drips! We returned to last night's restaurant where there was a man playing the guitar. He had lured a couple up on stage, whom he made perform mildly obscene gestures, which seemed to delight the local audience. No doubt they will all be in church tomorrow repenting of their misdeeds!

#### Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 201) Manasquan Inlet, NJ to Atlantic City

At last the weather looked half way decent, so for the second time we set out for the fleshpots of Atlantic City. We set the main but kept the engine running. This enabled us to do 7 knots plus down the coast. Nicole, our beloved French autopilot had a number of hissy fits and sent us around in circles. We found ourselves off Atlantic City at about 1720. The entrance looked to be nicely lined up until we realised that we were heading for two piers poking out from the board walk. We corrected this minor error and motored into the Captain Farley State Marina/Trump Marina, in the shadow of the Trump Marina Casino.

We took a taxi into town and wandered around the casino shopping precinct, under a beautiful fake evening sky. We went into the casino and found the place absolutely hopping. There were thousands of one armed bandits, (pokies for the Oz) being played by the blue rinse brigade. There were a load of blackjack and poker tables, with dodgy looking Chinese and Latino croupiers. We found a friendly restaurant on the boardwalk and settled down to burgers and chips. For me this was a trip down memory lane as I had been at the Atlantic City Rock Festival in 1969 and had skinny dipped in the surf at 4am!

#### Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 202) Atlantic City to Cape May

A late start followed by a quick refuelling saw us depart Absecon Inlet at 1130. The distance to Cape May was only 30 miles. We hammered down the coast at 7 knots. Cape May, as its name implies, is at the end of the Delmarva Peninsular. It is apparently a twitcher's delight, as migrating birds often stop off at Cape May for a breather and a half pint of bitter on the way south. During the Second World War, the US Government built the Cape May Canal to enable merchant vessels to round Cape May without having to go out into the Atlantic. The Atlantic was full of U Boats feasting on US merchant vessels, which did not see the need to run without lights.

We pootled into Cape May harbour and cautiously navigated our way up Schellenger Creek to the South Jersey Marina. Before we reached the marina we were deafened by two cigarette boats, very fast speed boats, revving their

unsilenced engines for effect. Cape May is a lovely place and has the air of a real fishing port, which it is.

#### Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 203) Cape May to Cohansey River

Since we could not whip through the Cape May Canal, we had to take a 10 mile detour round the shoals off the Cape. I asked the marina manager if I could take a route along the Cape May shore. He warned me that they haul half a dozen yachts off the beach every year that had tried that route. I decided to take the easy or longer option!

We eventually regained the main channel. There was a fair amount of commercial traffic and we were pursued by several Richard Scary type tugs, hauling barges up Delaware Bay. So wide is the Bay that from the main channel you cannot see the land on either side. The lighthouses have splendid names such as Ship John Channel. The Americans refer to transits as ranges, which name they apply to the sections of a channel marked by transits, in this case the Ship John Channel Range. It became obvious that we were not going to make the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal before lights out.

We decided to spend the night up the Cohansey River on the Eastern shore. The entrance is well sign posted if not well marked. The Cohansey is wild and beautiful. There are a couple of run down boat yards at Greenwich Pier and there was no sign of a restaurant and nary a bar. We anchored in a bend in the river in the shelter of a stand of trees and settled down for an early night. The tide in the canal turned in our favour at 0900 so we would have to leave at sparrow fart to get up the 12 or so miles to the canal entrance in time.

#### Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 204) Cohansey River to Georgetown

We weighed anchor at 0710, a personal best, and motored down the river. With the help of Malcolm's GPS, we were able to follow the same route out that we had followed into the river. An hour later we had regained the main channel and were speeding towards the canal under genoa and motor. Nicole was doing her bit and indeed worked splendidly all day. The transit of the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal was something I had been studying and looking forward to since I had begun planning this trip. The canal is some 200 yards wide, with street lights along its length. It was originally opened in 1820 as a locked canal for barges. However as vessels grew in size it became necessary to widen it, until during the First World War President Roosevelt decided that it was strategically necessary to both widen and deepen the canal to take ocean going vessels and to eliminate the locks. The Federal Government bought the canal and set the Corps of Engineers to "supersize" the canal. It is now in effect a ship canal, with all the bridges having a vertical clearance of 145 feet.

Once out into the upper reaches of the Chesapeake the channel is very well marked, which was just as well as it came on to rain hard. By 1440 we had left the channel and were heading up the Sassafras River to Georgetown and Fredierickstown. These two towns, on opposite sides of the river, were built

and named by the Brits and then sacked by the Colonists, before being burned by the Brits during the Napoleonic Wars. We stayed in Georgetown, in a marina below a hotel named for a redoubtable lady called Kitty Knight, who kept on beating out the fire in her house, while the British soldiers were unsportingly trying to burn it down. Eventually, the officer in charge of the arson party was so impressed by Kitty's courage that he ordered his men to desist and concentrate on burning the other houses, whose owners were more accommodating!

#### Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 205) Georgetown to Annapolis

Today was to be a short sail down to Annapolis and its famous Naval Academy. It was pretty windy and as usual the wind followed us around. While leaving the Sassafra River I managed to recalibrate the Doppler log so that boat speed reported by the instruments bore something resembling our actual boat speed. I had been trying to do this since we left Tortola, where the log had gone on the blink. Boat Speed is a very important parameter for Nicole, so she should work rather better now I hope.

After an hour or so we were able to unfurl the genoa and race down the channel at 8 knots. We noticed a car carrier chasing us down the channel. I assumed that it was planning to head straight out to sea. We were on the West side of the channel to keep out of the way of any commercial traffic. The car carrier announced that he was about to turn right at the "roundabout" and head into Baltimore. I offered to cross the Chesapeake Channel in front of her to give her room to turn for Baltimore. The Officer of the Watch accepted my generous offer and we parted best of friends!

We passed under the WP Lane Memorial Bridge connecting Annapolis with Kent Island and the eastern shore at 1415. We then had to negotiate the shoal south of Annapolis on which George Washington had found himself stuck for the night during the War of Independence. It is said that he had kept his boots on all night as the weather was so foul that he thought he might be forced to abandon ship!

#### Thursday 21<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 206) Annapolis to Front Wye River

Malcolm and Caroline left us to go travelling around Maryland and to meet up with us at the end of our cruise near Norfolk, Va. Before they left we went into town for breakfast at the Hard Bean Coffee and Bookshop. Quite by chance we found ourselves sitting next to a retired US Air Force officer who was training US soldiers about to be deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan or Bosnia in cultural awareness. He was very interesting about the work he was doing and how the US Military had learned from the British Army's approach in Bosnia.

Bim and I set off in the early afternoon, under a blue sky to go to Wye East River on the Eastern shore, south of Kent Island. The river was written up in our pilot book as being exceptionally beautiful, with large mansions lining the banks. It certainly lived up to its expectations. We anchored in Straw Bay,

where the Cruising Club of America often hold their Chesapeake Bay meets, surrounded by woods on one side and fields on the other.

#### Friday 22<sup>th</sup> September 2006 (Day 207) Front Wye River to Oxford

We had a long slog out into the Chesapeake with the wind against us as usual. We made our way up the Choptank River to Oxford and tied up next to a red 80 foot sailing yacht, the skipper of which was an antipodean. A charming American couple walked up to Wotan while I was busying myself on deck. John was an architect while his wife Linda ran the National Investor Relations Institute, supporting those who are obliged to dissemble for their companies.

That evening we headed into town to the Robert Morris Jr Inn. Robert's father had come out to America in the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century to run a shipping company in Oxford. His son had been apprenticed to a merchant in Philadelphia, who in due course took him into partnership. At the outbreak of the War of Independence he financed not only the manufacture of the first US flag, but also the Army of Independence. After Independence he became the first Treasurer of the US. He was one of only two people to sign all three of the testaments of the American Revolution the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation. John and Linda were staying in the Inn and joined us for drinks over and came back to Wotan for a night cap.

#### Saturday 23rd September 2006 (Day 208) Oxford to Oxford

While wandering around the marina I happened upon a beautiful wooden double ender built in 1903, with absolutely gleaming bright work. I spoke to the owner, who had been a charter skipper and had left England 35 years ago. He had bought the yacht in Shoreham in 1958 in a derelict condition. It had been one of many yachts mud berthed for the war and then never re-commissioned.

After refuelling we set out for what promised to be a very unexciting motor 30 odd miles dead to windward and so it proved to be. We were out under an hour, when, with winds in excess of 30 knots, we decided enough was enough and returned to Oxford and a quiet day at anchor.

The Chesapeake in the Pentaquod language means *the great river in which fish with hard shell coverings abound*. The Choptank River is named after the tribe that in Elizabethan times inhabited it. They were less war like than the Potomac Indians, living on the western shore, who delighted in murdering and flaying alive any of the early settlers that fell into their hands!

#### Sunday 24rd September 2006 (Day 209) Oxford to Coan River

After a quiet night during which yesterday's wind dropped right off, it was back again by dawn. We had 25 knots across the deck as we motored out of the Choptank, as usual dead to windward. However the sun was shining and

nothing is ever so bad when the sun is shining! It was a long haul out to the Chesapeake proper, but we were there by 0900. The wind had begun to moderate and soon we had the No.3 Genoa unfurled and we were able to cut the motor. There was precious little sign of activity, the occasional sailing or motor yacht and the odd hardy fisherman.

We were chased by a large sailing yacht, also under genoa, down to the entrance to the Potomac. It showed us a clean pair of heels as it sped off up the Potomac towards Washington. We opted for the more mundane pleasures of the Coan River on the Virginia shore. We squiggled our way in, going what turned out to be the wrong side of a red danger sign, which I assumed should be a starboard hand marker. I was however proved wrong, by the depth, which plummeted, and by my wife who announced that my analysis was entirely erroneous!

“Weatherman Willy”, with the disembodied voice, came on to announce that a thunderstorm was tracking through Virginia towards Norfolk and that the citizenry were advised to take shelter. We checked our anchor cable and hoped for the best. We did have a brief squall, after which all was sweetness and light.

#### Monday 25th September 2006 (Day 210) Coan River to Fishing Bay, Pianktank River

We set the No.3 at the entrance and ran down the Potomac towards Smith’s Point light. At Smith’s Point light we set the main and did some real sailing for an hour or two before the wind petered out yet again. By noon the wind had filled in again and we had stopped the engine and got to sailing for an hour. The Chesapeake is well buoyed and has some impressive light houses and structures. Some of these have been abandoned when lighted beacons had been built to seaward to mark more accurately the edges of shoals.

This evening’s goal was the Pianktank River. To get into it, you have to avoid a sand spit extending over a mile south of Fishing Bay. Once we were in the Pianktank it certainly lived up to its billing. Fishing Bay Harbour Yacht Haven was surrounded by woods and lawns extending down to the bay. The houses almost without exception had their own jetties.

#### Tuesday 26th September 2006 (Day 211) Fishing Bay, Pianktank River to York River Yacht Haven, Sarah’s Creek

Willy promised us North West winds at 5 knots and a sunny day. What more could we ask, except some more wind? We had a magical motor out of the river, which got our vote big time. We skirted the south shore and headed towards Wolf Trap light. At the last moment I decided we could go inside the light through a 12 foot channel. I was pleased to see a local yacht altering course to follow us through the channel. We headed south towards New Point Comfort. As it turned out the mark we were sailing towards was the old New

Point Comfort lighthouse, which had been abandoned and we should have been heading for its replacement beacon further out to sea.

Once around the New Point Comfort beacon we were almost in the York River. The York River is very well buoyed, indeed it has a pair of lighted range beacons marking the centre of the channel. It was not long before I discovered why this was. Just past the York River Bridge is a large US naval ordinance depot.

The next problem was the entrance channel to Sarah Creek, which boasted a mere 8 feet, not a lot of room for error! Lisa from the marina told us to ignore the beacons and head for a farm house with a red beacon in front of it. This we did and the depth never dropped below 9 feet, though we did bump on a sandbank once we were inside the marina. Malcolm and Caroline came to the marina and kindly entertained us to dinner at the restaurant.

I was pleased to have reached YRYH, a destination that had been in my mind ever since I had begun to plan the trip and after meeting Larry Cohen. I had thought very seriously about buying Larry's Swan 411 Dawn Treader and whose eponymous Swan 48 was now lying just ahead of Wotan. This made a fitting end to another leg of Wotan's Wanderings.

#### Wednesday 26th September 2006 (Day 212) York River Yacht Haven, Sarah's Creek

After some tidying up and packing, Malcolm and Caroline came to pick us up to go to Richmond from where they were to fly home with Bim, via JFK. On the way to Richmond we dropped into Williamsburg to have a look at the historic town, which at one time was the capital of the US. It is full of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century houses and is run as a tourist attraction. William and Mary College, founded in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, is based in the town.

We then headed onto Richmond where I saw Malcolm, Caroline and Bim onto their plane and picked up a hire car for myself. On the way back to YRYH I stopped off in the Aircraft museum alongside Richmond airport. It had a Blackhawk as its main exhibit, standing outside, so I was rather attracted to the place. It proved to be worth the visit and was run by a group of dedicated retiree docents.

#### Thursday 28th September 2006 (Day 213) York River Yacht Haven, Sarah's Creek

Larry Cohen and his wife Kathie came for drinks with Mag and Wendy, some Norwegian-Americans I had met the night before. After drinks, I took Larry and Kathie to dinner at the YRYH restaurant. Larry had been Exxon's general counsel and had lived in Japan and Singapore for many years.

### Sunday 1st October 2006 (Day 216) York River Yacht Haven, Sarah's Creek

Larry Cohen had invited me sailing on his Swan 48 in the afternoon. On board was Larry, Paul, who looked after Larry's boat, Tom, who had flown in from Newport that morning. It transpired that he was a pro-skipper being interviewed for the job of skipper on Dawn Treader. We had a gentle sail down the York River, interspersed with violent changes in course as Paul tried to determine whether there was really a problem with the rudder bearings.

Larry had kindly invited me to stay at his house, Airville, which overlooked Mobjack Bay, so I followed him home. Airville is a beautiful old plantation house, part of which was built in 1762, very old by American standards. In the grounds there was the overseer's house and a circular icehouse amongst other outbuildings. The slaves' quarters had been purchased by a neighbour, who was a descendant of a slave on the plantation. She had moved the building lock stock and barrel across the road and now lived in it.

### Friday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2006 (Day 221) York River Yacht Haven, Sarah's Creek

As the day wore on the wind got stronger and stronger and the water level rose so much so that I had to step down from the dock onto the walkway around the Ship's Store and restaurant.

### Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2006 (Day 222) York River Yacht Haven, Sarah's Creek

I woke up to find the walkway around the Ship's Store well under water and the Ship's Store and the Restaurant flooded. Wotan's ensign and staff had blown away in the night. The weather was atrocious, the wind blowing from the north east at 25-30 knots and the rain was bucketing down. I could barely hear the car radio for the noise of the rain hammering on the roof of the car! I caught my JetBlue flight with no bother and connected with my Air India flight from JFK to LHR, where I was met by Bim, who had kindly driven up to fetch me.

Anthony Fawcett  
15<sup>th</sup> October 2006