

Wotan log for distribution 19th June 2007

Last Tuesday we were 1288 miles from Flores and now, as of noon today, we have 426 miles to go. For the more mathematical of you, that represents 123 miles per day, or just over 5 knots. It is only in the last day that we have really achieved a decent distance run of 164 miles.

I left you with the saga of the vanishing towed generator rotor, which now seems a long time ago. Well we have found a replacement rotor called Yasmin, aka the Sahara Queen, which has apparently been on a TNT inspired tour of the N African desert. Let us hope Noel and Yasmin will be a good match and remain wed!

On Wednesday and Thursday we set the spinnaker during the day as the wind had gone light and was just abaft the beam. We a party on Wednesday to celebrate reaching the half way point cracking a bottle of Chandon champagne, thoughtfully acquired by Kevin our sommelier. Cate, Alison's step Ma, sent Alison off with a batch of presents for the occasion. These included a toy mouse, which has become our mascot and lives rather precariously on top of the light over the oil painting in the saloon! We received a rather depressing email from Metworks, our weather router, telling us that the winds up front weren't much cop and there was not much we could do about it. It is not exactly like crossing the Solent to catch a favorable wind shift!

On Thursday we passed the 1000 mile to go mark, but, as the wind was piping up at drinks time, we decided to forego our 1000 mile party until Friday. We found that by using Nicole, whom I must say is working impeccably, to keep the apparent wind angle constant, one person could manage the spinnaker quite happily. We tried to mend the starbord secondary winch, which was only working in high gear, but Jim and I found that the pawl in the secondary sprocket was jammed fast, probably a manufacturing error.

The starboard secondary cockpit two speed winch would only rotate in high gear. Jim and I disassembled the winch to find that the low gear sprocket and its internal pawl were jammed. It seems that this was a manufacturing fault because the pawl should run freely inside the sprocket. There was nothing more we could do about it except reassemble the winch and use it only in high gear.

Early on Friday morning, Jim spotted a large ship and took avoiding action, only to find that the ship changed course and bore down on us with its masthead lights dead in line and pointing at us! Jim concluded that they only wanted to check we were alright.

We sailed closehauled comfortably all day with two reefs in. We were able to make our course until late evening when we were headed. This was to be the beginning of our travails beating into easterly winds. We had a very enjoyable combined 1000 and 900 miles to go party in the cockpit and swapped stories. Alison cooked up a wicked curry, which almost blew out my teeth. I was declared a wimp by the rest of the crew, who clearly like their curries vindaloo strength!

Kevin, who is an inveterate racing sailor always working to get the maximum speed out of a boat, came on watch at 0200 on Saturday morning. He set the wheel and locked it. So successful was this setting that it was not touched until we started the motor to charge the batteries at 0930.

During the morning we were overhauled by the ARC car carrier Liberty. I called them up on the VHF and asked if they had any information on the weather ahead. They simply quoted the latest NOAA report, so I figured there was not likely to be much of a change. Alison made us Spanish omelettes for lunch, which were delicious.

We had the usual happy hour and dinner in the cockpit during which two bottles of wine were drunk. The temperature had started to drop so I was forced to put on my long johns under my shorts, much to Kevin's amusement. I had mocked him for doing the same very early in the voyage. When he feigned surprise at my rig, I explained that imitation was the highest form of flattery!

I came up on watch at 0400 on Sunday morning to find Alison struggling to maintain any sort of a course. After some deliberation we decided to tack. For once we were now actually heading for the Azores! I sighted a ship approaching. I called up the bridge to pass the time of day and to discuss the weather as any Englishman does. The response, in broken English was "high, high, high". As we suspected this meant more light winds.

This morning the crew got it into their heads to clean the ship. Kevin armed with Crud Kutter and EBR attacked the saloon floor, while I attacked the heads. Soon Wotan was shining Whitehall Avenue! During the afternoon I am ashamed to say I was very lazy, apart from baking some bread, I slept.

We have had head winds all day, yet again and we are making very slow progress to the Azores. The southeasterly winds promised by Metworks for the period never materialised, unless you call east by south southeasterly! Jim cooked a very enjoyable dinner of Fray Bentos steak and mushroom pie, an introduction for Kevin to the delights of English home cooking. We washed dinner down with three bottles of wine.

I came on deck at 0400 on Monday to find Alison powering along at 8 knots as usual in the wrong direction, not her fault but the wind's. We took in a reef and we seem to be going just as fast. Once again we sailed with the wheel locked for

most of the night. During the night we passed close to waypoint Sindbad, which is on the great circle course from 40N60W to the Azores. It is only now, because we are being forced north by the wind that we have climbed north of 40N.

It was a pretty miserable day sailing hard on the wind. For most of the day we were not able to make our course to Flores. However, we were making 7 knots over the ground, which translated, as we were able to sail closer to our course, into 6.6 knots in the right direction. This was better than we had been doing for some time.

Alison came up with noodle soup for lunch, which was very welcome. We are all getting a bit tired of living on our ears. Periodically a spurt of water comes down the mast and drenches Kevin and, or his bunk in the saloon. We decided that, since washing up was such a struggle, we should have the remains of yesterday's bread and cheese for supper. This proved a great success. There is clearly a moral here, do not waste time beating your head against a brick wall if you are already beating into a F6!

The barometer began to fall during the night and the cloud base began coming down. Could this be the portent of a depression to the west of us, which should bring us the promised southerly winds?

I handed over to Kevin at midnight after a roaring sail at 7 knots closehauled. Kevin and I decided that we should roll in more of the genoa to ease the strain on the boat and make it more comfortable for those below. By the time I came to take over from Alison on Tuesday morning the wind had veered and I was able ease sheets and speed up to 8 knots over the ground, straight for Flores. The wind had veered around to the South, hurray!

With best wishes from all aboard Wotan

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