

## Wotan log for distribution 26<sup>th</sup> June 2007

When I left you on Tuesday 19th June we were 426 miles from Flores, heading directly for Flores at 7 knots. We achieved our best day's run of 164 miles by noon. Kevin, who had been enduring some ribbing because he was in danger of not winning his Ocean Baking endorsement to his Yachtmaster's Certificate, finally came up with the goods, to much relief all round!

We had a Chandon celebration with nibbles to celebrate breaking through 500 and 400 miles to go. We had a very convivial evening in the cockpit, followed by dinner of noodles and cooked ham.

On Wednesday we were hard on the wind all day, so much so that we had to bear away to have a quiet dinner. During the day we transferred the last two cans of diesel into the tank, leaving only the emergency 20 litres in the lazarette.

We spent Thursday sailing with three reefs in the main and a partially rolled genoa. We all decided that Nicole was steering far better than we could, so we left her on almost all the time, despite the current drain. The quartering seas make it quite hard to hand steer. She will earn a special thank you when we get in. We decide finally that we would go straight to Horta rather than stop in at Flores. This would give Jim would a chance to get home for Graine's birthday on Sunday. This meant that we had an additional 130 miles to go. We spent all afternoon looking for Flores, which should be visible at 60 miles, but we saw nothing. Both Kevin and I thought we saw a flash of the light on the southern tip of Flores, but we could not identify the light by its characteristics.

On Friday the forecast warned that the wind would go into the South East, which would head us as we sailed for Horta. We therefore spent the night sailing 30° above our course as none of us could bear to cede any weather gauge. The night's sail was exciting as the wind went up to 26 knots and saw us powering along at over 7 knots. It was a bit like sleeping in a washing machine for those down below, but Horta beckoned.

By 0900, with the barometer as steady as a rock and the wind veering, ie going around with the sun, rather than backing as we feared, we decided to risk ceding 20° of weather gauge. With our first waypoint outside Horta only 55 miles away it was a risky decision we were prepared to take. Gradually we conceded weather gauge throughout the day, until we were finally pointing at Monte da Guia on the SE end of Faial.

The Iridium phone came in very handy when Jim used it to book a flight out of Horta to Punta Delgada and thence on to Gatwick to get home in time for Graine's birthday on Sunday. We were chased rather in effectually by a yacht flying a spinnaker, which we left for dead. About 5 miles west of Monte da Guia

we gave up the unequal struggle and turned on the motor. We had to clear immigration by 2000, when the office shut, so that Jim could leave on the 0910 flight to Ponta Delgada. The Immigration Officer, though charming, took an age looking at our passports. Customs on the other hand took a matter of minutes. We were the 781st yacht to arrive in Horta this year!

We moved to a berth alongside the mole in the northern marina and then set off in pouring rain to Café Sport. Café Sport is an institution. It is full of yachties, tiny and heaving. We downed our drinks and headed for the rather smart looking Poussada restaurant in the old fort overlooking the harbour. We walked in some trepidation, as we were rather scruffily dressed. As it turned out they were delighted to let us in and we had a really excellent dinner. Back at the boat, we were welcomed by the owner of the Dutch motor yacht inside us. We invited him aboard to share our now traditional celebration Chandon.

Early on Saturday morning we said our fond farewells to Jim. Alison, who had woken to say goodbye to Jim, decided that she could not go back to sleep. So she went on a tour of the town, sussing out the supermarkets and Chinese stores. After lunch Alison and Kevin went for a swim in Porto Pim, south of the main harbour in Horta, while I caught up on a few Zeds. In the evening we wandered down to Porto Pim in search of a drink overlooking the harbour and the old whale processing factory. We found a modern and clearly popular restaurant near the quay. We all ordered the seafood, fish and meat espesciale. When it arrived, it turned out to be a cook your own food on a hot slab of basalt, known in French as a Pierrade. It was delicious, but we could barely eat what we had been given!

Bruce duly arrived soon after midday on Sunday. We found a taxi driver, who spoke good English, to take us on a tour of the island. We first went up to the Caldiera, but it was covered in cloud, so we saw very little of the crater. As this weekend was a festival in Faial, every picnic site was full of families having barbecues and picnics.

We drove on down to Ponta dos Capelinhos where there had been a volcanic eruption in 1958, which had covered the local farming village and all but covered the lighthouse. An island emerged offshore, which, though it has been somewhat eroded, is very much in evidence. Half a dozen small whalers operated from the bay below the lighthouse. When the cry went up from the man on the lookout in the vigia, the whalers would be launched crewed by about 8 men each. They would be towed out to where the whale had been sighted by a motor tug boat and then they would row or sail the short distance to the whale. Once the whale had been harpooned it would dive and the rope attached to the harpoon would streak out so fast that they had to pour water on the bow fairlead to stop the rope catching fire. They would then attach the rope to a loggerhead in the stern and go for a "sleigh ride". This could as well end in a capsized and disaster as in the killing a whale. The hunt could take from several hours to a day. In the end the

hunters had to get close enough to the whale to cut open a vital organ such its heart or lung. Once dead, the whale would be towed by the motor tug boat to Porto Pim for processing.

On Monday we took the ferry across to Pico. We found a willing taxi driver who spoke almost no English. The island has different vegetation to Faial, because the eruptions were later in its history and more extensive. The north western part of the island was very barren, but as we moved further east the flora became more extensive and similar to Faial's.

There is a lava tunnel called the Grutas das Torres on Pico, which sounded interesting, for which a new visitor's centre had been built in 2006. For the descent, we were all made to put on caving helmets and given torches. A lava tunnel is formed when a lava stream flows down a mountain side. The outside of the lava flow eventually cools and forms a hollow tube, through which lava continues to flow. As the severity of the eruption subsides, the volume of lava flowing in the tube reduces, leaving a gap between the ceiling and the top of the stream of lava. Pressure can build up and bubbles of super heated gas can explode blowing a hole in the lava tube, or at least leaving a large bubble above the main lava tube. As time goes on the lava cools leaving indications to the initiated as to how the lava tube was formed. We walked about a mile under ground, though the total extent of this lava tube system was some 5kms. There are some 150 lava tubes on Pico.

The next instalment will tell of our voyages to Sao Jorge, Graciosa and Terceira.

With best wishes from all on board Wotan

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