

WOTAN LOG FOR DISTRIBUTION 3RD JULY 2007

When I signed off on Tuesday 27th June 2007, we had just been over to Pico, where we had been down the lava tube on the west of the island.

On Tuesday, at 0800 we moved outside the French yacht moored à couple beside us. After a burst of buying of Azorean courtesy flags, one of which Kevin kindly presented to Wotan, we headed off to Velas on Sao Jorge. I called up the Club Navale do Velas, who warned me that all the mooring buoys had been removed and advised me to anchor. After anchoring we "dived" for the dinghy in the forepeak, which was under absolutely everything and inflated it, to find that the engine, which had been sitting unused on the stern for over a month, started first pull.

We headed to the Club Navale for a bottle of wine and two of the largest beers you have seen. Alison, who had been protesting all day about how little she had drunk on the crossing, with a bit of help from Kevin, polished off the bottle of wine in even time. The Club Navale seemed to be the most popular place in town so we decided to have dinner there.

After a peaceful night at anchor we took the dinghy ashore for breakfast at the Club Navale. There was a stunning view of Pico across the Canal Sao Jorge, which we all photographed. The church in Velas had a mosaic of St George and the Dragon outside. The wind was almost non-existent so once we had weighed anchor, we headed up the Canal Sao Jorge towards Ponta dos Rosais at the NW end of the island under power. At 1130 we stopped the engine, lowered the ensign and had a minute's silence for Granny Ollie, who was being buried today in the church at Duncton, next to Grandpa.

We anchored off Vila de Praia, Graciosa, as the marina was clearly too small and too shallow for us.

At about 6am on Thursday, we were awoken by the local pilot asking us to move outside the entrance channel to the town quay. The little tramp steamer coming into the quay had to swing round where we were anchored to get in, so we felt the pilot's request was more than justified. We went ashore in the dinghy and found a taxi driver to take us to the caldera. We went down the 149 steps to the lake at the bottom of the caldera, following in the footsteps of Prince Albert of Monaco, who went down on a rope ladder in 1892. After this exploit we went to Santa Cruz, the capital of Graciosa, where we found a delightful restaurant up a side street for lunch. Back on Wotan the wind began to increase. Wotan ground around on her anchor but we did not move. However, the forecast for the morrow was not very attractive.

By Friday morning, the forecast was for south west F8, so a return to Horta, which was due SW, was not an option. Kevin had a flight out of Horta on

Saturday so we had to get him there, come what may. My default position was to stay in Graciosa, as it was safe, but there were no ferries out of Graciosa that day and the flights out of Graciosa were all full. The only hope was a flight out of Terciera to Horta to allow Kevin to catch his flight to Lisbon and on to Munich. So Terciera it was, 45 mile down wind, flat out. We rolled out a small amount of genoa and we were off! We were doing 5 knots under bare poles, so the genoa was almost superfluous! The weather was pretty foul. We kept on being buzzed by a US military helicopter, whose crew could not understand why anyone, other than an Al Queda terrorist, should want to be at sea near their precious airbase in such weather. We entered Praia da Victoria after an exciting and enjoyable sail. The marina was only 5 minutes away from Lajes airport, so a much relieved Kevin was able to catch his flight to Horta.

After a lazy start on Saturday morning, we hired a car for a whirl around the island. We headed first for Angra do Heroismo, which is the old Portuguese port used during the 17th and 18th Centuries as a haven for ships plying the gold trade from South America to Europe. It has many old and beautiful houses and a magnificent Jesuit seminary, now used by the Azores Regional Council.

Angra was en fête, with folk singing and dancing in the Duke of Terciera's garden and bull fighting in the city's bullring. We felt that since there was bull fighting tonight we really could not miss it. Portuguese bull fighting does not involve killing the bull, though it is wounded by the bandeleros and the matador. At the end of the fight the bull is pretty exhausted so to get him out of the ring they send in a herd of cows, which he dutifully follows out of the ring, no doubt in the hope of some reward! If the bulls are brave and not too badly injured, they go onto become breeding bulls.

We spent Sunday touring Terciera by car. We found a fish restaurant in a fishing village called Sao Mateus, just west of Angra, which was absolutely packed. We got the last table and sat down to a delicious lunch. We went onto Angra to explore Monte Brazil, a volcanic outcrop just south of Angra, with stunning views of Angra. On the way back to Praia da Victoria we visited two rather dull lakes, which could only be described as tarns and the golf course. The EU, in the form of FEDER, were pumping in 40% of the Euro 2.5m required to up grade the facilities at the golf course. This was perhaps not the best use of EU funds, as only the wealthiest Tercierans and some USAAF personnel were likely to avail themselves of the facilities!

On Monday, as it was not possible to buy diesel in Praia da Victoria marina, we decided to go down to Angra to refuel as we were planning to sail the 95 miles to Ponta Delgada over night. We had a delightful sail down to Angra, which included sailing through two islands, no more than 100 metres apart, that had formed a extinct caldera. The views were spectacular. We refuelled at Angra and headed to the anchorage under Monte Brazil off the ubiquitous Club Navale, as there was an unpleasant surge in the marina that made the reception pontoon

untenable. We had a quiet dinner at anchor before upping anchor and motoring off towards Ponta Delgada.

There was practically no wind so we had to motor all the way! We saw very little by way of other boats on the passage, except a ferry and some fishing boats off Sao Miguel in the late morning. We saw the fin of what we decided was a whale, though we could not pretend to have made a positive identification. We thought that it might be have been a false killer whale. We arrived in Ponta Delgada at 1115.

I spent the afternoon catching up on missed sleep, while Bruce and Alison walked around town. I had espied two OCC burgees, so I decided it was time for an OCC drinks party, after all we had not had a drinks party on Wotan for several days. I dropped off invitations on the two boats and awaited results. While I was asleep, David Perkins ex MD of Travis Perkins, arrived to say that he could not come to drinks as he had a prior engagement, but he stayed for tea. He had sailed all over the Atlantic singlehanded. His last trip across the Atlantic was two handed to Labrador, when he had scalded his wrist rather badly. On this trip he was in the galley and looked up to see a growler passing the portlight above the galley! I hope I never have to have a close encounter of the third kind with a growler! Chris Bates, another OCC member, and his partner Penny came round for drinks later that evening.

With best wishes from all aboard Wotan.

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