

Wotan log for distribution 15th July 2007

When I last wrote on 3rd July, we were comfortably ensconced in Ponta Delgada, meeting a number of fellow yachties. For a number of reasons we did not leave Ponta Delgada until 13th July, so I have delayed sending this log until there was some sailing to talk about, rather than providing a tourist guide to Sao Miguel.

On Wednesday we set off around the island, with Alison at the wheel and Bruce navigating, under the strict and unforgiving supervision of Alison, who cannot navigate herself out of a paper bag! We first went to Vila Franco do Campo, where there was a small marina, I wanted to check out. We then went onto Furnas, which had been a spa town, and where there was an exquisite world class garden. There were ferns dating back to the Tertiary Period, upon which herbivorous dinosaurs would have grazed, and an avenue of Ginkos, which predate the Tertiary. We found a small restaurant down on the coast, where we had grilled sardines, which were delicious. After lunch we drove along the north coast of the island to Ribiera Grande, an old town with a church with supposedly the best Baroque façade in the Azores. We then went on to have a look at the lakes at Sete Cidades. These lakes are on two levels and in three calderas. The view from the miradouro over the lakes is quite spectacular.

On the principle that harbours rot ships and crews, on Thursday, we sailed down to Vila Franco do Campo and anchored off the volcanic island. There is a shallow lagoon in the caldera, which was full of children swimming and windsurfing. By the time it came to return to Ponta Delgada the wind had died so we had to motor all the way back.

Friday was a quiet day spent catching up on boaty things, while Bruce and Alison went garden hunting, as it turned out most were closed. We met for a delightfully unsatisfactory lunch at a restaurant on the front. Bruce and Alison had beer thrown all over them and a bird shat all over me! Bruce went fishing in the afternoon and early evening and caught a load of barracuda. Bruce and Alison left on the 2pm flight on Saturday.

The first weekend in July is the festival of Spirito Santo, a very important festival in the Azorean calendar. In each village you will find an imperio in which resides a crown that represents the Holy Ghost. The imperio is administered by a group of people called the imperators, who are responsible for organising the Spirito Sancto celebrations for the village. On this Saturday all the villages on the island gather in Ponta Delgada, with an ox cart or other float and parade through the streets. On the ox cart or float is wine, water, bread and in one case a bar serving four different types of beer! This is given to the onlookers as a charitable offering by the imperators. Many of the ox carts or floats were accompanied by dancers and musicians in costume.

I met Digger off the 2245 flight. We spent rest of the evening catching up and reducing the wine cellar.

On Sunday, Digger and I set off by car for trip around the island. I showed him Lagoa da Furnas and Furnas itself before heading down to Ribiera Quente for lunch. The road to Ribiera Quente was lined with tents and people camping. We soon discovered that Ribiera Quente was staging a three day pop concert à la Glastonbury. This explained the tent city that lead down to the town. We toured the north of the island finding a number of delightful fishing villages, finishing up in Ribiera Grande, which was itself en fete.

Monday began badly when Digger put his back out turning around to get some food out of one of the lockers in the saloon. He was in agony and could barely move. The marina office soon put me in touch with the local physiotherapy practice and we had Digger booked in for a 3pm appointment. I delivered him to the physio, who went to work on him. Digger was well enough to go out to dinner by the evening.

On Tuesday, I delivered a somewhat less pained Digger to the physio. I recovered a somewhat more mobile Digger and we headed off rather gingerly for the Club Naval for lunch and some interneting. After lunch I drove up to the airport to collect Christian Jeffery and Douglas Byatt. Christian, Douglas and I wet off to the super market and did a big hit of all the dry stores, leaving Digger to nurse his now improving back. After a drink in the cockpit, Digger decided that he was feeling rather sick and that he would sit out dinner. The rest of us went to a seafood restaurant above the marina, which Digger and I had eschewed a few days before, which turned out to be excellent,

Soon after breakfast on Wednesday, Digger announced that he was a new man and to prove this waltzed down the pontoon to show how mobile he had suddenly become. We spent the morning working on the boat, stowing and restowing the forepeak. Douglas put up the vegetable and fruit net, which was a work of art. Christian removed the wire which we had used to hold the kicker together after the squall off Norfolk, so that we could have a proper strop made up by Thomas at Boat& Sail Service.

To celebrate Digger's freedom from pain, we set off on a tour of the western end of the island. We went to look at the lakes outside Sete Cidades. We drove down through Sete Cidades and onto Mostieros a holiday village with 70 inhabitants, most of whom appeared to 70 plus! On the way down to Mostieros, Digger, who was navigating, thought that we should follow a milk cart down a dusty secondary road. When we reached the end, the car was covered in a fine dust from the road, which would not come off!

We decided that Digger's back needed an extra day to recover, so rather than leaving on Thursday, as planned, we would leave on Friday. The morning was spent sorting out boaty things, but I failed to work out why the compass light would not work, so I had to break down and call in Thomas, who had made the strop for the kicker. Within a flash Thomas had spotted that the cable

going to the compass light had lost its plastic cover and had corroded. It was therefore not surprising that it was only working intermittently. Happily it was simple matter to repair it.

The afternoon was spent in the local supermarket buying the fresh food and the wine. Christian turned out to be an excellent cook. He bought prawns and squid and cooked up a brilliant last night dinner for us, which we had in the cockpit under the stars until it started to rain!

It was with some trepidation that I went to hand back the hire car on Friday morning, but fortunately most of the dust had blown off and my deposit went unmolested. As we left it started pouring with rain, which was some what inauspicious. The wind was dead on our nose so we motored down to the western end of the island, in a rather unpleasant sea until we discovered that outside the 100 metre line the sea was a great deal calmer. Off the now famous Mostieros, we set sail and just managed to weather the point. I rather rashly set up the towed generator and threw the rotor into the sea, this time it worked! Later that evening, we were called by Portuguese warship Antonio Enes. A young Sub-Lieutenant had been detailed to call us to ask for allo manner of detail about the boat. I have only once been asked for this information before and that was entering Bermuda.

Christian cooked us a wonderful dinner of fish in puff pastry, quite the best ever! Something went wrong because by the early morning he had a violent stomach upset which put him out of action for 36 hours. All the rest of us were fine. Friday night and Saturday morning were pretty quiet. The wind picked up during Saturday so that we were able to achieve a 160 mile daily run between noon Saturday and noon Sunday leaving us 865 miles away from Crosshaven, near Cork. The wind has piped up this morning, Sunday and we have taken in a second reef and Wotan is going like train.

With best wishes from all on Wotan.

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