

Log for distribution 22nd July 2007

My last log on 15th July, left us in a somewhat dodgy state with both Christian and I having suffered from violent gastroenteritis. By the morning I had recovered sufficiently to do the usual ship's business and by the afternoon I was able to stand a watch. When Digger was on watch a very large dorsal fin, aka Jaws, came and spent a long time eyeing up Yasmin, the towed generator's rotor, before deciding that it was not worth a bite! Rotors are regularly snapped off by sharks, so we were quite lucky. We sailed at never less than 7 knots all day. By noon, we were 700 miles from Crosshaven and by 1800, the trip log showed that we had covered 500 miles from Punta Delgada. The sick parade was now back on form, if in my case a little sore. During the day as the wind freed we able to head further north to ensure that we had enough weather gauge in hand to make Crosshaven, even if we were headed.

Tuesday proved to be very productive day with Wotan romping along at 7 knots. During the day Douglas learnt how to take a sextant sight. He took a noon sight that was within 1.5 miles of our position, which was good in anybody's books. Digger, who had manfully kept watch throughout the morning, slept for Britain as did Christian who was hardly seen all day, except to produce some much appreciated wicked ham, cheese and egg butties. We had a celebration to mark the passing of the half way mark, indeed during the celebration we also passed the 500 miles to go mark. The fake champagne I had chosen in the supermarket was so foul that we decided a second party tomorrow would be in order to try another bottle! By nightfall the wind had dropped off to under 10 knots so the shaking out of the second reef, was clearly insufficient to keep us going on our way at a reasonable speed.

Wednesday was a day of very gentle sailing with a pretty constant F3 all day. It was a gastronomic day. Christian obtained his Master Baking endorsement to his Yachtmaster's Certificate despite Douglas throwing the packet with the instructions on over the side! Lunch was freshly baked rolls, with a tomato salad and mashed new potatoes. The celebration tinta bruta was not as bad as last night's, as that would have been difficult, but it was more red than rosé. Christian made us lasagne avec chilli con carne, while Douglas came up with pancakes, which he tossed with some aplomb, not dropping a single one!

Douglas took another meridional altitude, or noon sight. This time he was within 1 mile of our position. I completed the act with two sun sights one before noon and one after, to do a sun, run, sun noon fix that was again very close to our position at local noon. I hope my RYA Ocean Yachtmaster examiner will be suitably impressed when the time comes! During the night, the wind had dropped off and we were doing a measly 4 knots.

During early Thursday morning the wind decreased and veered heading us so we could no longer make Cork. I came up towards the end of Christian's watch at 0530 and we shook out both reefs. This seemed to have the desired

effect of both speeding up the boat and whistling up a tad more wind. Digger won his Baking endorsement to his Yachtmaster's Certificate, with some admirable bread rolls. I spent a second day taking sextant sights and doing another sun run sun to fix our position at local noon. Thanks to Christian's first but nonetheless excellent meridional altitude sight our celestial fix was very close to our position by Uncle Sam, aka GPS. It is good to know that George Dubbya has not done anything else stupid today!

Great excitement towards evening, Christian spotted two whales blowing about a mile from the boat. He also saw a very large, jaws like, dorsal fin so he thought that there could be a mighty battle being played out below us between leviathans of the deep. We were able to pick up Test Match Special on Radio 2. This was the first time I had heard English radio on Wotan since early July 2005.

I came on watch at midnight on Friday morning, to find Christian in the middle of a rain squall, not an uncommon experience for any of us. We were royally headed, which for the non sailors means that we could not sail the course we wanted to. I spent the watch playing with sheets and rolling the genoa in and out in an attempt to get the boat sailing. During the day the wind piped up and the temperature became colder and more Ireland like, with overcast skies. Douglas won his Baking Endorsement to his yet to be won Yachtmaster's certificate, but I am sure they will back date it! There was much preparation going on in the galley as our remaining potatoes were cooked and Christian, made his first cheese roux to go with the potatoes. By this time the wind had really got up and we were taking green seas over the foredeck. Douglas had told me that we were taking water in through the forehatch. As I sat down to dinner I was horrified to see a bucketful of sea water landing in the forepeak on his bag. We had not had this problem across the Atlantic, otherwise we would have had a loo paper and elephant's bog roll crisis. (ed. Elephants bog roll, aka EBR, is kitchen roll.) This is something I must sort in Crosshaven before we go any further.

I decided that dinner on one's ear was not a good idea, so Digger and I went up and put two more reefs in as the wind was up to 25 knots across the deck. That sorted, dinner was a lot more comfortable and we were shipping less water across the deck. The wind kept up at F6 until late into the night.

I came on watch early on Saturday morning to find Christian being comprehensively rained upon, as usual. The squall, as they often do, caused the wind to veer so that instead of being able to lay Cork we were forced south of our course. During the early morning we were forced to steer East. We concluded that it would be much more fun to sail up to the Fastnet rock and then spend the day sailing along the south coast of Ireland, rather than spend the day out at sea away from the land. At 1000 the wind finally died so we started the engine and motored for the Fastnet, clearing the Traffic Separation Scheme off the Fastnet. As it happened there was no traffic in the Separation Scheme.

At the Fastnet Rock we had a photo opportunity. Christian sent a text message to his skipper for the upcoming Fastnet Race, on whose yacht he is bowman, to say that the foredeck was at the Fastnet, and to ask what had happened to the rest of the crew?! We had a lovely motor along the coast. Christian and Douglas set the main and spinnaker, while the oldies put in some serious deckhead rivet inspection. Douglas was appointed navigator for the trip from the Fastnet to Crosshaven. I hope he enjoyed the experience. We certainly found Crosshaven, so that was result! We berthed at the Royal Cork Yacht Club in Crosshaven at 2130. We headed straight for the bar where several celebratory Guinneses were drunk.

With this log I am going to hang up my boots as the writer of Logs for Distribution for the time being. The crew will be heading back home on Monday and I expect to be following them on Tuesday.

With best wishes from all on Wotan

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