

Log for distribution 28th February 2006

-----Original Message-----

From: Wotan [<mailto:mfuu8@sailmail.com>]

Sent: 28 February 2006 02:27

To: Bimbi Fawcett

Subject: Wotan's Wanderings for distribution

Bim and I went out to Grenada on about 17th January. We were joined by the Butlers who sailed up to Union Island and the Tobago Cays. It pissed with rain when we first arrived, but things got better. We went first to Carriacou a small undeveloped island, where we stopped in Tyrells Bay and went to a splendid pizzeria run by a voluble Italian lady. We then had to clear out of Grenada in Hillsborough, where we had lunch in a beach restaurant run by a formidable local lady, who had been a school teacher and who dressed in a long sleeveless dress with an immaculate lacquered straw hat! This, we were to find, was the trade mark of respectable ladies of a certain age all over the Caribbean. Just north of Carriacou is Union Island and the Tobago Cays. the Tobago Cays are quite the most beautiful places.

There are several islands protected by reefs with turquoise sea and turtles to swim with. The Gayners who were to join us after the Butlers had ensconced themselves in the resort on Petit Saint Vincent. We dropped into see their cottage, where if you did not want to be disturbed you raised a red flag and if you wanted something you raised an orange flag and left a note in a bamboo post box! It was started up by an Oz after the war. The Butlers went back to England via Antigua where they spent a week in the pouring rain!

With the Gayners we went back up to the Tobago Cays. Near the Tobago Cays is an island called Meyreau, in the north of which is a palm fringed bay called Saltwhistle Bay, with a rather smart beach restaurant with terrifying local waitresses, who all qualified as "Big Pantie Women"! We then went up to Mustique as everyone has to go to Bazil's Bar for a drink or dinner overlooking the Caribbean. Then we went to Bequia where Bim had been with Simon some 40 years ago. We had dinner in a restaurant called Whalebone, where the lady who owned the restaurant very modestly owned up that she had been awarded the MBE and that in June she was going to Buckingham Palace to receive her award. She was so proud of it it was wonderful. We all felt that if that was all the Commonwealth ever did it was probably worthwhile!

The next island north was St Vincent which has a reputation for ganja production and aggressive boat boys. As a result we were not keen to go there, but we had to. We decided to stop in Wallilabou Bay where the "Pirates of the Caribbean" was filmed. The film set is still there and I believe they are about to release a sequel. It poured with rain so we did not go ashore, though I did swim ashore and wander through the film set, which seemed to consist of coffins and barrels of rum! The girls, frightened of what the boat boys might do bought trinkets from all the boat boys in turn!

We had a fairly miserable motor up to Fort Vieux on the southern end of St Lucia, where we had to climb out of the fishing dock to get ashore past some pretty wild looking natives before finding a restaurant overlooking the sea for dinner. Robert treated us to dinner in

Soufriere Bay below the Pitons, the signature peaks of St Lucia and their eponymous beer. The advert goes "now you have seen the twin peaks, you can taste the beer" the picture being a rather gorgeous girl in a skimpy bikini! The restaurant was called the Hummingbird and indeed there was a hummingbird flying around. We dropped the Gayners off in Marigot Bay, which was very beautiful and the signature bay of the island, but it is now being over developed, sadly. Grant Phillips, who has just left Barclays, and Mark Atkinson, who sailed down the Portuguese Coast with me, joined us in St Lucia. With Bim we sailed up to Martinique, where we spent a few days before Bim had to fly home to look after Sin, who was on half term. We sailed past Diamond Rock, just off the coast of Martinique and which the Brits in 1804/5 held out against the French for 18 months, making life hell for them! The rock was tiny and almost vertical. How they sailors managed to survive there, let alone fight, I simply don't know. In the end the rock was christened HMS Diamond Rock!

The French finally dislodged the Brits by the simple expedient of allowing two vessels loaded with rum to be wrecked on the rock and storming the rock when the sailors were blind drunk!! It makes rather a good story! Bim left from Martinique. On the way to the airport we passed the village where Empress Josephine, of "not tonight Josephine" fame was born. We saw the church in which she was baptised.

We sailed North out of St Pierre up to Dominica where we anchored at Roseau, the main town, off the Fort Young Hotel, which was well known to Grant as he had lent them indecent amounts of money in the past. We had a fairly indifferent dinner in a local creole restaurant. Our waitress was very proud that she was going in for the lovely mummy competition, which they hold as part of carnival. It seems to be run along Miss World lines and the contestants all have to say they love the world and want to be brain surgeons!

Next day we hired a car and went all around the island. We saw the Trafalgar Falls and the something or other canyon. The island is mountainous in the extreme and very beautiful. We had lunch in a tiny beach fish restaurant at Scott's Head. The unfortunate Capt Scott had been attacked by the French who defeated his garrison and after the battle rather unsportingly lopped off his head, which put a new gloss on the geographical feature, Scott's Head!

It was then on to Guadeloupe another of the French islands. We had a wonderful sail up to the Saintes, the scene of a great naval victory over the French. We entered through a very narrow channel, which satisfied my urge to destroy Wotan! Les Saintes was a rather nice little island full of the BCBG (bon chic bon gens) at play. The next morning we sailed over to Guadeloupe proper and were well and truly caught out. The wind rose to F8 off the SW corner of the island and our dinghy, which we were towing, flipped. This would not have mattered normally as we would simply have flipped it back, but we were busy trying to get the boat under control and doing 7-8 knots at the time. Anyhow by the time I had sorted things out I found that all they remained of the dinghy was the painter! The pressure of the water on the transom had caused the rings holding the painter to pull out and bye bye dinghy. It is now well on its way to Yucatan! To make matters worse the marina, into which we had intended to go, had been damaged in a hurricane (a usual excuse around here) and the bottom has silted up so we could not get in. Fortunately there was a beautiful British yacht

anchored next to us and they were able to take me ashore, where I rented a car and went off in search of a new dinghy. I found one in Pointe a Pitre the capital of Guadeloupe.

We headed off up to the North end of Guadeloupe and anchored in a bay called Deshaies, where we found a restaurant, which was probably the best we had been into in all the Caribbean. The added bonus was that the Madame running it was gorgeous! It was onto Antigua where I was to make a crew change. We fortunately chose English Harbour and Nelson's Dockyard as our base for the changeover. Grant had some friends who lived on the island. Steve had been CE of the ICC and was now Chairman of the 2007 World Cup. He had played for the Windies and knew everybody in the game. Sadly I cannot remember his surname. His wife, Alison, is a teacher. We had lunch with them in a rather smart restaurant run by a soigne French lady who insisted on kissing all her customers on both cheeks! We met up with Bill and Mindy Franklin, who had also sailed across the Atlantic this winter and who had been in La Gomera with us in the Canaries. They had a local friend who was called Keith Outram who was was kind enough to come to meet us and take our lines.

While we were in Antigua Peter and Jane Bentley and Chris Creak arrived and Grant Phillips and Mark Atkinson left.

After Antigua, which apart from the rich foreigners and tourist developments is pretty poor, the main town, St Johns, is a complete dump, we sailed to Nevis, which is joined politically to St Kitts. It was a good day's sail down wind to Nevis. After a night at anchor off a palm fringed beach and an unsuccessful attempt to land in the surf, we went down to Charlestown, the main town, to clear in. The town was destroyed by fire in 1873 and rebuilt in wood, with the main buildings, such as the rather smart Police Station in stone. We Sailed up the west coast of Nevis to St Kitts where we spent the day at anchor in a rather attractive bay where we snorkelled and slept. Both St Kitts and Nevis have a large number of rich foreigners who own houses on the islands. There were clearly some very smart properties and tourist developments. We spent the night in the marina at Basse Terre, the main town on St Kitts. It is a lovely town and in good order, with very colonial looking houses with balconies and verandas. The main square is called Piccadilly Circus and had a splendid cast iron clock tower commemorating the life of a nineteenth century local worthy.

The next morning I had to go over to the commercial dock to clear out. It took an age because the Customs Officer was giving a local wide boy a good shaking down as he ran a regular trip to St Barts and St Martin to buy duty free goods, which he sold at a profit in St Kitts! The idea was to put him off trafficking ganja or anything worse. This, I was reliably informed by my taxi driver. From St Kitts it was something of a hike up to St Barts, so we missed out St Eustatius (Statia) and Saba. There is a railway line all round St Kitts which was built in the nineteenth century to transport sugar to the port at Basse Terre. This is now used, at least in part, as a tourist attraction. On the West coast of St Kitts there is a World Heritage site fort called appropriately Fort Brimstone. I hope it struck fear into the hearts of the French. I cannot see that it had much strategic significance as it was way North of the harbour at Basse Terre. It was probably built to keep the rich plantation owners happy!

St Barts is one huge shopping opportunity. The main harbour Gustavia is full of super yachts and chicks who clearly run on high octane fuel! I was lucky Bim was not around as I would not have seen her for dust! There is huge Hotel de Ville on the quayside proclaiming in large letters Egalite, Fraternite et Liberte. Something of a statement when allied to the fort flying the tricolore and the Prefet's residence alongside! We spent the day at anchor in a sheltered bay just north of Gustavia and snorkelled and slept. In the mid afternoon we headed the 7 miles over to St Martin/Sint Marten and went into an marina called L'Etang aux Huitres or more prosaically Oyster Pond Marina. The entrance to the marina was a bit hard to pick out against the sun and fringed with reefs, so it was all good fun. After dinner the boys repaired to the bar, where there was a band playing and two ladies of the night were trying rather unsuccessfully to ply their trade. The marina is the base for both Moorings and Sunsail, they obviously have decided that additional services are required to keep their bookings up!

The next day we sailed round to Marigot, the French capital, which turned out to be a very smart little town. St Martin is jointly run by the Dutch and the French and has been since 1648. It seems to work very well and since the building of an big airport by the US during the war, the tourist trade has grown like topsy and the population increased from 2000 in 1945 to 70,000 now.

We sailed from St Martin to the BVI's over night and we are now anchored in Grand Harbour in Jost van Dyke after a good dinner at the renown Foxy's Bar.

Cheers form all aboard Wotan