

From: Anthony Fawcett [mailto:anton.fawcett@virgin.net]
Sent: 03 July 2006 15:01
To: bimbi.fawcett@virgin.net
Subject: Wotan's log for distribution - Newport to New York

Hi all,

I have been admonished by her indoors for making the last log for distribution far too long, and looking again at it I can but agree, my apologies, I will try and do better this time. Here goes:

Wednesday 21st June 2006 (Day 167) Newport RI

Drew from Euro Marine, the US agents for NKE, came aboard to have a look at Nicole and to see if he could breathe life back into her. Within a few minutes Drew pronounced that the very heart of Nicole, the computer had died. Fortunately Nicole was still within warranty, with only 6 weeks to go, so Drew took out the computer and a load of wiring to send back to NKE in France.

Chris had the inspired idea of heading off to the Ida Lewis YC for dinner. The club is based in an old lighthouse about 150 metres off the shore, which was manned by Ida's father. Grace Darling like, Ida went out in a rowing boat to rescue some ship wrecked sailors. The club was having Wednesday evening for the Shields Class a 29 foot wooden half decker, rather like a big Sunbeam. We sat down with our burgers overlooking the bay and were joined by a charming expat. Brit called Robin Wallace. He had come out to Newport as crew of a British 12 metre in 1969. He immigrated to the US and was drafted to Vietnam, where as a doctor he was posted to a MASH unit. He returned to Newport where he worked as a doctor and is now semi retired. He is heavily into sailing and race management. He was also a member of the New York YC, which has its club house on the hill just behind Ida Lewis YC. Robin invited us all up to the hallowed portals of the NYYC and showed us around the building and explained its history.

Thursday 22rd June 2006 (Day 168) Newport RI to Mystic, Conn

After Creaky left for Providence and Boston, we had a rather cold motor down to Judith Point, and on to Watch Hill Point Passage. Once we were through the passage the weather improved and we were able to cut the motor and storm in to the Mystic River entrance. The Mystic River was very beautiful, with New England clapboard houses and moorings lining the shore. The Amtrack line ran along the shore and we were greeted by the distinctive hoot of a US loco. The railroad bridge barred our way into Mystic, but once the next train had passed, the bridgmaster opened the bridge for us.

We tied up on the Eastern shore just below the bascule bridge. The big attraction of Mystic, the Mystic Seaport Museum, was visible in the distance past the bascule bridge. We watched the bascule bridge open, with its two 230 ton counterweights, during a wander round town while we waited for a table at S&P Oyster Restaurant.

Friday 23th June 2006 (Day 169) Mystic, Conn to Shelter Island, NY

The Seaport Museum was very interesting. Bim and I both decided that we did not want to be either a whaler or a Grand Banks long liner. Life looked decidedly grim! We witnessed the throwing the horse overboard ceremony. This was a symbolic ceremony when the crew of a merchant ship, which had had to borrow money to purchase their seagoing clothes they had sold to pay for another night on the town, recognised that after a month at sea they had paid off their debts to the ship and now whatever they earned was theirs.

We motored off past the railroad bridge and out into Long Island Sound, past the aptly named Mouse Island, which was tiny! We skirted the Race and entered the Fork at the North East end of Long Island via the Plum Gut Channel and on to Shelter Island. We went into a delightful little harbour on the South side of Shelter Island called West Neck Harbour, with a very shallow and narrow entrance where we needlessly to relate ran aground following the pilot instructions to the letter! We dropped our hook beside the moorings, only to be told by the man laying the moorings that we were breaking a town law and would have to anchor in the designated anchorage! The people on the shore apparently do not like yachts mooring opposite their houses, spoiling the view! (Sounds like Itchenor!) So under pain of being woken up by Officer Crabtree swinging his night stick at midnight, we moved off to the anchorage!

Saturday 24th June 2006 (Day 170) Shelter Island, to Port Jefferson, NY

Saturday dawned about as horrid as it could, no wind, black clouds and driving rain. We had 50 plus miles to cover partly due to the fact that we had to retrace our track back to Plum Gut entrance, before we could start heading South West to Port Jefferson. At times the viz. was down to 50 metres and we had the radar running, but on the South side of the sound there was not a lot of traffic. Nine very wet hours later we arrived at Port Jefferson, with its picturesque power station and found a berth in Dunford's marina, which doubles as a hotel and conference centre. It was running a series of Graduation Parties, shades of Mrs Robinson and the Graduate!

Sunday 25th June 2006 (Day 171) Port Jefferson to Oyster Bay, NY

Yet another wet day, there is a depression hovering around over the Tristate area and there are more flood warnings out for the area. The adventure for today was being boarded by the Coastguard. We were told to heave to and motor slow ahead while two officers boarded us with their clipboard and 45 magnums. They wanted to see our passports, the yacht's registration papers, three lifejackets, three in date flares, a fog horn and our garbage disposal plan. They did not have much luck in that front so I quoted MARPOL Regulations at them, which seemed to satisfy them. We were then given a Gold Schedule, which we could brandish at any coastguard that stopped us in future.

Oyster Bay boasts a very prestigious yacht club called the Seawanhaka Corinthian YC, formed by members of the NYYC before the turn of the last century, who wanted to sail themselves, rather than be sailed around by a professional crew! They gave us a mooring with no trouble, but when Bim and Simon tried to get a drink, the problems began! Itchenor SC did not have a reciprocal arrangement with SCYC, surprise, surprise. However the Royal Thames YC did, so Bim said I was a member of the RTYC, which was strictly correct, but seriously misleading! The club house was built at the turn of the century. From the picture of the opening, the club does not seem to have changed since the day it was built. I have to say I am impressed with a club that can build itself a club house within such a short time of being formed, which is still fit for purpose over 100 years later.

Monday 26th June 2006 (Day 172) Oyster Bay to City Island, NY

In the morning we went ashore for showers, which could only be described as gala. It was the start of school holidays and the club was running a camp for their junior members, which looked very like Bim's training week before Junior Fortnight.

At last some good sailing, we sailed close hauled in F4-5 all the way to City Island. We went into South Minneford Marina, a cooperative venture on the East side of the island. We had dinner in The Seafood Box which was full of families celebrating their children's high school graduation. The helpings were absolutely huge. Simon had two red snappers and could barely eat one, I had shrimp and scallops and could only eat half. We took the surplus home in a doggy box for lunch on Tuesday! The restaurant was popping and the whole experience, theatre!

A local came up to speak to Simon and asked him where we had come from. Simon reasonably replied from England. "You mean New England", was the reply. "No" said Simon, "England, England", for want of any better explanation. "Say welcome to the Bronx", came the reply, followed by incredulity that anyone could be quite so stupid as to sail all this way in a boat the size of Wotan.

Tuesday 27th June 2006 (Day 173) City Island to Dead Horse Bay, NY

We left at 0940 and headed off under power, down City Island and through Throgs Neck. We passed north of La Guardia and past Rikers Island, the State Penitentiary and down to the famous Hell's Gate, just North of Roosevelt Island. I had been lead to believe that Hell's Gate was a fearsome place, but compared with the Alderney race it was a doddle. We followed the eastern shore of Manhattan Island past the UN Building and under the Chrysler Building, which is still as spectacular as the day it was built. We were chased down the East River, by a tug towing an enormous petroleum barge, which forced us to read the road signs on the FDR Expressway on Lower East Side, very carefully. We were soon at The Battery and looking up at the Skyscrapers on Wall Street. The Stature of Liberty hove into view, Kate

Winslet eat your heart out, so we headed over there and saw the big square red brick building at Ellis Island standing out proudly.

As soon as I headed off towards the Verazzano Narrows Bridge, dead into the wind and with the tide, the spray began to fly. The route to the narrows was blocked by any number of vessels at anchor or being pushed or towed around by busy looking Richard Scary tugs. We eventually made it through the Verazzano Narrows Bridge and into the Coney Island Channel. We reached Plumb Beach Channel, which led to the Gateway marina, our destination. The channel was well marked, but at "G7" Buoy we ran aground on three attempts. I decided that the answer was to anchor and wait for the tide to do the work for us. We ate the remains of last night's supper, garnished with couscous then retired to bed. Sure enough the tide rose and we were able to motor into the marina and, after a false start, find the berth we had been allocated.

Gateway Marina is in the Gateway Recreation Park, or in old parlance Dead Horse Bay. No doubt the name had been changed as Dead Horse Bay Recreation Park would not have quite the right ring about it!

Wednesday 28th June 2006 (Day 174) Dead Horse Bay, NY

This was shopping time. I was whisked into Manhattan by Bim and Simon set on shopping. Simon had Abercrombie & Fitch in his sights and Bim thought she could get some gear for Sin. The shop was full of beautiful people of all hues, genders and persuasions. The music was so loud I thought my ears would burst. The walls were decorated with homoerotic art. After a successful dash into Gap, Bim and I went off to an internet café to try and find me a flight home. We had little luck but Air India looked the most hopeful. We met Simon and caught a cab to Boom an Italian restaurant in Soho. Very rudely, I spent most of the time on the phone trying to get through to Air India. Eventually, I was able to book a flight for 8pm that evening to Heathrow and back on 24th July for \$800.

After lunch we dashed back to Wotan, cleared up and put the boat to bed as quickly as we could, before grabbing a taxi to JFK. Bim was on a BA flight at 10pm and Simon stayed on board as he had a flight out of JFK on Thursday evening.

With best wishes from
Ant Fawcett and all aboard Wotan