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Sent: 06 August 2006 01:29
To: Bimbi Fawcett
Subject: Wotan's log for distribution

Hi all!,

This may be a bit too long as usual as this star log covers a period of 10 days and not my usual 5-6 days, but here goes!

Bim kindly took me to LHR for my Air India flight to JFF, curry, jappaties and all. I had to take three stabs at getting through customs! However my finger prints and photograph which they insisted upon taking clearly met with the examiner's approval. I had booked a Budget hire car, which I reached by the splendid new, or at least new to me Airtrain, which circulates the airport and goes on to Jamaica the NY Mass Transit.

Tuesday 25th July 2006 Gateway Marina

I have to say, that despite a "to do" list as long as your arm, I did not achieve a whole heap of work before I had to head off to pick up Richard Hill, a friend from Mech Eng at Nottingham, at JFK. After a few beers, we headed off to Sheepshead Bay for dinner at Il Fornetto, where I copped a parking ticket outside the restaurant, silly boy.

It is odd how all the local villages are called after dead animals. Gateway marina is in Dead Horse Bay, where the superannuated horses of New York were disposed of. No doubt the same thing happened to sheep in Sheepshead Bay!

Wednesday 26th July 2006 Gateway Marina

Things on the the to do list improved rapidly as Richard fitted two lights, one above the cooker and one outside the heads had a lens which fell out at the first opportunity. Richard also replaced the fan in the heads, which had never worked in recorded memory. I discovered that the locker, in which I had put all the engine spares, had got wet during the sail up from Bermuda and we had to clean it out and refile all the spares in plastic boxes.

When we returned to the marina from returning the car, the famous Polish Sailing Club looked as if it might be open so we popped in for a drink. After a little bit of umming and aarghing, or the Polish equivalent (Simon to provide a translation, please) they recognised we were indeed visiting yachtsmen not just lowlife fishermen, things improved rapidly. The Comandor Janusz Kaedierski insisted on buying us drinks and refused all our attempts to pay. By the time we came to the third round I thrust a \$20 bill into his hand and was given a \$20 voucher for drinks at the club next time I was passing!

Thursday 27th July 2006 Gateway Marina to Cold Spring Harbour, NY

The calculations I had done the previous day indicated that we needed to leave the marina at about 6am to catch the tide though Hell's Gate. We passed under the Verazzano Narrows Bridge at 0840. We dodged the

commercial traffic in New York Harbour and Richard was able to take a load of pictures of the Statue of Liberty while we were being buzzed by the Coast Guard Helicopter. Eventually he lost interest in us and went searching for other miscreants. We shot up the East River doing 11 knots at times past Roosevelt Island. We were only 1 hour before slack water at Hell's Gate, but we were spat out into Long Island Sound by about 1115. After a tour of Oyster Bay, we headed off to Cold Spring Harbour, nearby. Cold Spring Harbour had been a big whaling port and during the 19th Century and boasted three brothels, which were no longer in evidence! We anchored off the Cold Spring Beach Club.

Friday 28th July 2006 Cold Spring Harbour to Milford, CT

We headed out to into the Sound where there was no wind to speak of. In mid sound we motored past a Greek registered panamax off loading into a handysized geared bulker. The geared bulker had three cranes which as soon as lunch was over were working at full tilt!

As it was so hot we anchored off Charles Island at the entrance to Milford Harbour for a quick swim. Milford turned out to be a delightful town. We moored at the Milford Boat Works opposite the town slip which was busy with locals launching and recovering their motor boats and others quietly paddling up and down the river. Just as we docked the heavens opened and thunder and lightening crashed all around us, Richard was on the dock doing the lines and was soaked.

Saturday 29th July 2006 Milford to Thimble Islands, CT

This morning we planned to check out how many butane/camping gas bottles. We soon found that we had no more gas left. In Europe everyone uses butane and indeed we found butane readily available in the Cape Verdes and in the Caribbean, where butane gas is the household cooking fuel. In the US however, butane gas is almost impossible to come by and we certainly could not find any. We eventually managed to buy a propane cylinder and a regulator after a very long taxi ride and to fit it.

We did not leave our berth until 1420. Our destination was the Thimble Islands a group of privately owned rocks with summer houses on them. The Thimble Islands are absolutely beautiful, somewhat how I expect the Stockholm Archipelago to be, with small low rocky islands which have been worn away by glaciation. On East Crib, near where we were anchored, was a very noise "frat" party in full swing. They had speed boats, ringoes and worst of all a loud hailer. Not satisfied with this they climbed on the roof and mooned at the passing tripper boats, which sailed over for a better view! These islands are in Michelin terms "vaut le voyage".

Sunday 30th July 2006 Thimble Islands to Hamburg Creek, Connecticut River, CT

We left at 0915 to avoid any more trouble with the natives and followed a yacht out of the anchorage and out past Davis Island. Once we were out into the open sea we espied a group of islands, the Faulkener Islands, which looked good for a swim. A quick look over the side showed that there were a load of jelly fish swimming around the boat, so we gave swimming a miss.

We headed off to the Saybrook Outer Channel entrance to the Connecticut River. The Connecticut River at the entrance boasts two bridges, the first a railroad bascule bridge that opened after a while, but as soon as we approached it was slammed shut! The next fixed bridge was rather more interesting as I reckoned we had an air draft of about 70 feet and the bridge a clearance of 80 feet. You never think you have enough clearance under a bridge, but once you are under the bridge, if you have done your sums right, there is rarely a problem, despite the heart stopping moments before you are truly under it! We pootled up the river, past Essex, to Hamburg Creek which turned out to be beautiful. The colonialists hid their fleet there from the British!

Monday 31st July 2006 Hamburg Creek to Mystic CT

We awoke early, had a swim in the deliciously warm water and were off by 0755. There was precious little wind so we motored over to Fisher's Island which the pilot book informed us was privately owned with fences guard dogs and keep out notices abounding! We picked an anchorage on the edge of the fair way and settled down for a swim and lunch. There was a fleet of Optimists and 420s out from the local club or sailing school racing around the sheltered bay. We tooted around the Sound for an hour or more before sailing into Mystic.

There was blues concert in full swing on the East bank of the Mystic River when we docked. We listened for while on the way to dinner at S&P Oyster Company, where we had dinner last time. There were small kids dancing and groovy grannies grooving!

Tuesday 1st August 2006 Mystic to Newport RI

Richard and I went to the Seaport Museum, for me it was the second time and I enjoyed it just as much as there is always something new to see or someone new to talk to. I found the enthusiasm of the staff quite lifting. They clearly love what they do, be they retired volunteers or young working there for what I am sure must be a pittance. This time I met the curator of the nautical instruments and chronometer shop/exhibit, who showed me an illustrated version of Diva Sobell's Longitude. This had pictures of H1 to H4, ranging from an Emmett like machine to the modern pocket watch chronometer we know today.

We ran down river past the Richard scary railroad bridge, which seems to be permanently open, to refuel in Noank. I had not spotted that the ebb had begun, so I made a horlicks of coming alongside as I was too idle to change all the warps over!

We were able to sail as far as the Watch Hill Passage against the flood. Once through the passage we turned on the engine and motored into Newport RI. On the way down Block Island Sound we heard a UN Navy submarine on the VHF announcing that it was transiting the sound outbound and was requiring that all vessels obeyed the mandatory 500 yards exclusion zone around all UN Navy vessels. No doubt there was a rating on the conning tower with a heavy calibre machine gun ready to ensure that everyone did!

We motored into Newport surrounded by kids racing 420s from the Newport Sailing at Fort Hill, which was founded by Robin Wallace whom we met last time we were in Newport. Gary Naigle, the Ocean Cruising Club Port

Officer for Norfolk VA, had spotted our OCC burgee and had come over from his yacht on a mooring off Goat Island. We invited him aboard for drink. He gave me a load of useful advice and invited me to call on him in Norfolk.

After Gary left, Richard and I repaired to Vincent's for boiled lobsters. Once again they were excellent, but this time I managed to remember to pick up the lobster bibs!

Wednesday 2nd August 2006 Newport RI

We had come to Newport to get the autopilot Nicole up and running. Drew, from Euro Marine duly arrived at 1pm, but initially could get no joy out of Nicole. He suspected a poor connection on the bus. He took Nicole back to his workshop and returned with a new bus wire. He fitted it and it worked! Hurray. We gave Drew a bottle of wine for his help and we slipped our moorings to check that Nicole was in fact working. We found that she was responding very slowly and meandering, however much gain I applied, which was a huge disappointment. Richard and I soon decided that a trip to Block Island, our planned destination was not on, so we anchored in Potter's Cove on Conanicut Island.

Thursday 3rd August 2006) Potter's Cove to Great Salt Pond, Block Island

We found that Nicole was still suffering from the wrong boat's speed reading and that our somewhat pathetic attempts at removing the antifouling the night before had not worked. However there was a good wind 15-25 knots dead on the nose for Block Island. We motored until we were clear of a fleet of fishing boats just north of Beavertail Point and then set full main and No3 genoa. After a short time we had to take in a reef to keep Wotan on an even keel. We tacked our way down towards Block Island. Wotan was so well balanced that we were able to lock the wheel for long periods at a time. We made land fall at the buoy off northern end of the island marking the Block Island North Reef. The tide was pushing us off the reef, but you could clearly see the tide ripping over the reef about half a cable away. I decided that enough was enough and tacked away from the reef and one more tack brought us to the entrance buoy to the Great Salt Pond. The GSP is a large lake 1 1/2 miles by _ completely surrounded by land but for a narrow dredged channel. It was absolutely chokka with yachts at anchor and with moorings nearer the town to the south. We found a spot near an ex-naval tug and settled down for the night. At about 7pm the father and mother of a thunderstorm broke out. The rain was so heavy and the wind so strong, that you could not look into it. There was shout from the next door yacht, which was swinging into us. Since we had anchored after them it was down to us to sort it, which we did by letting out a further 20 metres of cable. Within 20 minutes, the wind had moderated and we returned to cooking dinner.

Friday 4th August 2006 Great Salt Pond to Sag Harbour Long Island

We pootled out of the anchorage using Nicole, who seemed to have mended her ways. In fact she took us all the way to Sag Harbour with only a minor hissy fit on the way. This was very fortunate as we were soon in thick fog, with visibility down to no more than 50 metres. Keeping a straight course enabled me to keep a good radar watch as our ship's

head was constant, thus making checking on the relative bearings of approaching vessels much easier. We were shocked to see motor yachts speeding through the fog at 30 knots and missing us by a whisker.

We met Steve Nobbs an ex-Barclays friend of mine and his wife Carol Nobbs for dinner. John and Judy Manktelow arrived safely if a little late as we were finishing dinner. Richard was due to leave for Vienna in the morning.

The next installment will come in about 10 days time!

Cheers and good sailing,

Ant