

## Lorne Byatt

were solo for three hours on, six hours off, with the Raymarine Autohelm directing the tiller (Mr T being 'excused boots'). I had thought the autohelm power draw might overwhelm the batteries, but overall power consumption at night was reduced by turning the fridge off, and the solar panels restored battery condition in the daytime. High pressure and thus little wind for the first 23 hours meant a lot of engine use: but the wind filled in N3 on the morning of the second day, so Mr Volvo was off-duty. We then had a reach most of the way to Baiona, with dolphins in company at least twice. The crosses on the Imray passage chart marched onwards. Chris and Jenny, both having done Transatlantics, and highly proficient in the galley as well as on deck, created great meals: although when the skipper produced a tuna and rice special, there was unanimous crew approval! It also should be noted that one evening (Jenny in charge) we enjoyed Fray Bentos steak pies, which had lurked in a stores locker for a year.

One morning I was on watch and thinking again about the possibility of encountering one or more orca (or is that orcae?) as we neared Galicia, when two pilot whales surfaced very close together almost under *Freya's* bow, giving me a considerable surprise. I momentarily thought 'orca' but there was no big dorsal fin. Phew – no sand needed! Nor did we hit the pilot whales.

At 0730 on 26 July, eight days out from Santa Maria, Land Ho! Galicia in sight. Alongside a Baiona pontoon that afternoon, we had logged 927nm from Santa Maria: maybe I was too conservative in staying north of the rhumb line. We had an excellent meal ashore at one of Baiona's many openair restaurants to celebrate achieving 1,462nm from Madeira in a happy ship.

Alberto Lagos phoned – the previously agreed space in his well-regarded Astilleros Lagos yard (run with his brother Alfredo RCC HFR, Vigo) would not now be available. He recommended *Freya* being ashore for the winter at Marina Punta Lagoa, just east of Vigo. We took *Freya* there, then Jenny had to get home. Chris was able to stay on to help me get sails off etc. then he also headed for home. It felt strange packing up *Freya* at the height of summer, but I had been on board for two and a half months and it was time for me to go home too. Lift-out on 31 July was straightforward, *Freya's* bottom was very clean (not having stopped much since launch), and packing-up continued. Alberto Lagos visited for an initial discussion on the jobs list. After two busy days ashore, I travelled by bus to Santander for the ferry to Plymouth.

Bravo *Freya* and all her crew (although the burgee needs replacing). Roll on 2024 and the RCC's Azores Meet: there should be some Madeira onboard still.

