

Three ships passage from Bonaire to Cartagena

So finally after 11 months of chatting to barmen and avoiding iguanas it finally became time to unshackle Three Ships from Bonaire and move down the way to Cartagena. After a false start three days previously due to some minor issues (with the dudes from immigration) we finally left on Saturday afternoon at around 16.30 nursing a not insignificant hangover and looking forward to the "next stage". We did a quick fly by through the moorings to say final farewells to the "Quarantine Crew", all of whom had become good friends after being together for this period. We raised the canvas and set Monica up (Monitor) for a lovely broad reach in 14 knots of wind and off we toddled. Ainur made coffee while I sat and pondered the way ahead. Beautiful sailing and these next 10 hours were to be the last of the "easy sail" the weather was not perfect down track but manageable. At first Ainur kept watch whilst I took asnoozky after which I would start at midnight and wamble on until dawn. At about 03.00 things started to go a wry, the tang on Monica, which I had forgotten to weld before departure, decided to let go. This was a real pain and decision time, whether to turn round and go



back in order to weld the tang up, or to carry on using Raymarines finest and continue the journey. So the latter was chosen, and it worked very well. When I was on watch I, for the most part, hand steered and when Ainur was on we just let the Raymarine do its job. On Monday we caught a reasonably impressive Mahi mahi, which was great, as it was the first fish caught using Ainurs new rod. The weather was freshening and we were just tripping along on the Genny. I felt this would be safer if any thing else went wrong, especially when I



was off watch since I could reef it faster and more safely than trying to do the same with the mainsail up. The weather continued to build to around 28/30 knots and the sea was lumpy to say the least. As we passed the top of Santa Marta, the fun really started - the sea state became very confused and the gusts were frequent and getting stronger (the best we saw on the windex was 47 knots). It was like being in a very large washing machine. The journey across the "bay" between " Santa Marta and Cartagena was incredibly uncomfortable with waves irregular and coming from two different directions and then occasionally falling over each other giving a third pattern. After what seemed like forever the point of Cartagena was in sight and it was time to turn to port and get some respite from the maelstrom that we had

been bouncing around in for 48 hours. It took another 10 hours, but it did indeed become beautifully flat and time for coffee and we expected to be parked in the mooring by about 05.00. So with the fairway lights in sight I came on watch, switched off Raymarine and continued on our way. Suddenly the boat started to fall of the wind very quickly so I turned the wheel to correct our course and to my surprise nothing happened. So I switched the autopilot back on and had a look down into the port cockpit locker. To my surprise the drive sprocket from the wheel steering chain had decided to part company with its mate the drive

shaft. So all we had to steer the boat was the Raymarine. We did a quick search of the engine room to try and find the woodruff key but this proved to be fruitless, so our only option was to rig the smallest emergency tiller ever built and work our way very slowly into the mooring. Surprisingly this worked and happily by about 11.00 we had successfully hooked Three Ships to the bottom and decided it was time for a REAL sleep, thankful that the problem had not occurred 48 hours earlier – maybe there is a God. And that, as they say, was that – a 511 mile passage in 84 hours and not one to be repeated any time soon.

