



## Commodore's Report

In my new role as Commodore, I would firstly like to cover the main points from the recent AGM. This was well attended with active discussion on several topics, in particular the proposed changes to the club's rules. This meeting also saw a change to flag officers and committee members and it is worth noting the election of Evelyn Tate as the first female flag officer. A detailed presentation on the club's financial position and the proposed direction to be taken was well received. More details on this elsewhere in this issue.

I see communications within the club as an important issue to be addressed due to the declining membership numbers. As a result I have established a Communications working group, tasked to look at three areas, being; Club profile – who are we and what can we offer; Member communications – how do we best keep in touch with our members; Membership growth – how do we make it happen. I have set a target to have strategies for each area agreed within 3 months with a view to reporting the outcome to the next AGM. A new committee member, Annette Happy, has taken on the co-ordination of this task.

The Works committee has a full schedule of projects underway with the most obvious being the replacement of mooring piles. With the completion of the current batch of replacements we will have almost caught up on the backlog of replacing all the older hardwood piles and put us back into a cycle of replacing around 20 piles every 2 years.

The other priority project is the upgrade to the ramp and although there are no visible signs of progress as yet, a plan has been formulated and is being quoted for.

The main sailing activity over the winter has been the combined racing series with Gulf Harbour Yacht Club. This

arrangement has worked well with both club's sharing the race control duties and after events. The net result is larger fleets at a lower overhead cost. The final race for the series will be on September 29th with the after event being at the GH club.

Looking forward to the next season, there will be a season briefing on Sunday 6th October at 0800. Breakfast is provided so come along and mix with other club members and enter for one of the many sailing events on offer. The draft sailing programme for 2013/14 is on the notice board in the clubrooms and will be emailed to members before the briefing.

Regards,  
Colin Thrush  
Commodore.

### New Members

We'd like to welcome our new members to Weiti Boating Club.

A huge welcome to:

*Donald Wright – 'Southern Rebel'*

*Kevin Shallcross – 'Time Bandit'*

*Richard Goodall - 'Anger'*

We trust you'll enjoy the club as much as we all do and we hope to see you on the water (or down at the club)

## For Sale Mardi Gras

Farr 1104 GRP 1977, has a proven race record, sporting Doyle sails, new furlex furler.

New 30hp Yanmar all june 2012, 3 solar panels serving 4 batteries and fridge.

Bargain at \$55,000.00

Please contact Keith or Cathy Ph 09 420 3382, 021 288 8660 and 027 487 8640


Email [cathy@cosnet.co.nz](mailto:cathy@cosnet.co.nz)



## Smart Technology to Help You Go Sailing !

For those of you with smart phones, there are lots of helpful tools you can make use of to help you when you go sailing. The list below includes some that you may find useful and may even justify the move to a smart phone for those that are not there already !

Colin Thrush



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App name	Description	Cost
Nowcasting	Coastguard Northern Region now has an app that gives you the detail from their nowcasting service without having to listen to channel 21. This is updated in real time and is useful for getting up to date conditions from any location.	\$1.29
NZ Fishing Rules	To identify fish and the legal catch limits	Free
Tides NZ	Tide predictions for all NZ ports.	\$1.29
PredictWind forecasts	1 day forecasts for any port in the world. Longer forecasts by subscription.	Free
Navionics charts	Full NZ charts. Use as a backup to your chart plotter.	Under \$20 for iPhone
Windguru	7 day forecasts for any port in the world. You can customise to add your own destinations.	Free
Auckland Civil Defence	Auckland region alerts. Useful for Tsunami warnings if you are out on the water and not listening to the radio!	Free



# Club Direction

A presentation was made at the 2013 AGM outlining the strategic direction proposed for the club and to seek feedback from members on this. Background to this was a full analysis of the club's income and expenditure streams to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the club's financial profile. A five year future projection was also taken into account to ensure we are not met with surprises when it comes to major expenditure requirements. The results of the areas reviewed are as below together with the percentage income derived from each area compared to the expenditure consumed. The results show that the club is highly reliant on the income from moorings with most other areas being cross-subsidised from any excesses. Whilst this is okay from an overall club perspective, it means that when major projects are initiated there are less available funds to call upon.

1. Moorings (47%, 27%) – as this is the major income earner, the strategy is to ensure we are fully utilising all available moorings. The on-going pile replacement programme is a key initiative to achieve this.
2. Membership (31%, 28%) – although this looks to be balanced, a decrease in membership will affect this balance. The strategy is to increase membership to make this more of a financial contributor. In the interim a small increase in the membership fee was approved at the AGM.
3. Hardstand (12%, 6%)- this is currently an underutilised resource at around 50% and has been affected by the recent economic climate. The strategy is to improve utilisation but this is also dependent in part on the haul out capability
4. Clubhouse (4.2%, 26%) – as a club resource this consumes a large part of the available income due to the limited options available to generate income from it. Several strategies are being considered to increase its utilisation.
5. Haul outs (2.6%, 4.8%) – this area is underutilised due to the limited times available to do haul outs. The employment of a paid operator should overcome this constraint but at the same time will increase the cost. To offset this, an increase in haul out rate is proposed. The new rate is still \$50 less than the rate available from Gulf Harbour.
6. Shed (2.4%, 4.3%) – current utilisation is only 37%. This needs to be more like 69% to break even on costs. This target should be achievable through wider advertising of availability.
7. Sailing (1.3%, 3%) – The costs related to sailing are small but the benefits to the club are in the spin-off activities of haul outs and yard usage. The strategy is to look at other options to increase participation with current initiative of working with Gulf Harbour now producing positive results.

The need to plan for major expenditure items is critical to the financial stability of the club. A plan has been in place for some years to put funds aside to cover the costs of pile replacements

and a similar strategy should be in place for other major items. Known projects at this time include: hardstand filtration – to meet needs of Auckland Council; ramp upgrade; yard concrete repairs; dinghy pontoons; wharf pontoons; car park; Clubhouse improvement.

Most of the above relates to financial planning but there is also the “club as a community” aspect to be considered. We need to look at what sort of a club we want to have and what do we need to change to make that happen. The Communications working group will hopefully provide some of these answers and the results will show in increased membership and more member participation in club events.

Colin Thrush

Commodore.

September 2013

## Snippets

### Let's keep it clean & safe...

Please don't forget to tidy up after working in the yard. There have been disposable gloves and old sanding disks finding their way into the gutters on the other side of the road.

Also - remember to lock away your ladders at the end of the day. Let's not make it too easy for them.

### Moorings Available

We have a few shallow moorings ranging from 0.25 to 1M deep, and ranging from 8.4 to 13.5 metres long available, may be suitable for launches.

We also have three spaces available on the Trailer.

Please contact Louise if you are interested.

### Summer Series Briefing

Please join us for breakfast on Sunday October 6th.

Come and see what is planned for the summer series and the Cruising series - we'll be taking registrations too.

# Winter Sailing Series



It has been all go in this year's very successful Placemakers Winter Series which is the first of this series to be combined with Gulf Harbour Yacht Club, and follows on from the success of last summers' combined Barfoot and Thompson Two Handed Series. The two clubs have taken turn about in the running of the races and holding of the after race prize giving.

There have been very good turnouts of up to 26 boats on each race day, and with the weather providing some good breezy conditions, and relatively flat water, there has been plenty of challenging sailing for the participating crews. As in past years the entrants have been split into two divisions, being White and Gold, both of which have certainly enjoyed some great competition. The Marauder and Raven 31 classes especially well represented, having fleets of up to 5 boats in each of these classes.

I have to say that there is a great sense of excitement and anticipation when sailing amongst a good sized fleet like this before the race start, as well as great racing once we get started. Enthusiasm at the race after functions as well as in the

local sailing community definitely suggests that there is a very good amount of interest in future combined events, the next being the Barfoot and Thompson Two Handed Series starting on 3rd November, a date to put on your calendar.

Kerry Davies  
Sailing Committee



# From the Archives

# SHIPWRECK DANCE

SATURDAY, 13 OCTOBER 1979 8.00PM

S.U.R.F.C. Tickets \$6.00

This social function will open our summer boating season.

Those castaways not dressed for the occasion will be penalised.

Tickets are limited to 100 and available from Judith Rutter 64-561, Vilma Hopper 64-111, Lester Logan 7323.

A fine photo has been presented to the Club by Mr Anson Shakespear. This photo is of the 54 foot Gaff Keeler "Ariki" winning the Auckland Regatta 1903 - the year she was built by Logan Bros. She was sailed in the race by the famous Arch Logan. For'd hand was Robert Shakespear who worked for Logans. "Ariki" is a fine example of the traditional boat of that era (she was reported to have reached 17 knots coming back from Kawau). A more powerful boat than most of that period, she should be around for many more years.

This gift will be most appreciated by young and old members alike.

Built for Horton, owned later by Wilsons, then until recently, by Angel & Littler.

## June 1978

Mr Vin Beadle is moving from the district to Rothesay Bay. As a committee man and publicity agent for the club, all members will appreciate what an asset he has been, but what many may not know is how much time and labour he has contributed to the club's development over the last five years.

Vin sold his launch three or four years ago so his efforts were not motivated by a desire to gain a mooring in the river or in anticipation of making use of the facilities available, but rather as a dedicated, public-spirited effort to further the development of the club. His efforts to encourage the juniors and newcomers of the small boat fleet at Arkles Bay is widely recognised.

Vin has been involved in all the major development projects in the last few years, from the erection of the clubhouse, dinghy lockers, supplying power, water and drainage to the buildings, building of the jetty, pontoon, dinghy launching ramp and working on the barge driving the new mooring piles and cleaning grids.

The club could never afford to pay for all the labour that has been done by quite a number of members. After all the talk and expression of ideas is done there still remains the need for someone to start the work or join the workforce. Vince has always been in the vanguard of this group.

Our sincere thanks Vin for all the help which is most appreciated and we hope you will be able to continue to take an active part in the club's activities.

The club and the district could not afford to lose you.

Dec 1978

## "A GREAT DAY"

On Saturday, 11 November, the Keeler Division were hosts to the skippers and parents of the centreboard fleet. These young sailors had been looking forward to this day for many weeks and obviously they were not disappointed. Unfortunately the rain and cold sent many of them home before the B.B.Q., but those who stayed on enjoyed the hot sausages, drinks and fun we had all packed into the dinghy locker.

From the Sailing Committee's point of view the day was a great success. The afternoon was made complete when during the B.B.Q. three young lady P Class skippers approached the Commodore and thanked him for a "great day".

At the conclusion of the evening a group of boys, all in unison, expressed their thanks to the "older" skippers who were present for a lovely sail.

It is disappointing that more members do not take the opportunity to join in the social activities and B.B.Q.'s held at the clubhouse after races.

Please note: for B.B.Q.'s advertised in the year book

at conclusion of races, or other occasions, you are required to bring your own meat and provisions, unless it is otherwise stated that these may be purchased at the club.

### REPORT - HAULING COMMITTEE

You will notice in the 1978-79 year book that there is an error on Page 17, in that the old haulage charges have not been deleted. We apologise for this error and ask you to cross out the portion concerned, (ie charges headed "boats up to 30 ft \$15.00).

Haulage trolley - Members will be pleased to note that a new trolley has been ordered. This will be in operation very soon.

Past Commodores' Pennants - It has been decided that as in some other clubs Past Commodores shall be entitled to fly a special pennant from their masthead. The flag is square with our normal "W" but is defaced with a white "X". Three of our past Commodores have been presented with this pennant and are very honoured to be able to display it this season.

## Have You Got a Great Photo?

We are looking for a photo for the cover of this Year book. Your photo could be it.

Submit your photo to Louise at [weiti@xtra.co.nz](mailto:weiti@xtra.co.nz)

# Bula Vinaka Everyone...

Our visit at Savusavu was good, catching up with NZers, and Gavin & Bindy (Wellington). A few days spent at the local Yacht Club and provisioning - all very good. Don't buy the J Hunter pearls as they're ridiculously priced, just my mere opinion. Met up with *Just in time* Gulf Harbour.

Although our next passage planned is to Viani Bay, we decided only to go to Fawn Harbour as the ol' weather isn't playing the game again grrrrr! Nothing much there, but a safe anchorage for the night. Then we moved on to Viani Bay and had a lovely snorkel by the mouth entrance after negotiating around the large protective reef to get in.

We then relocated further in the bay, to join four other yachts there for the night. Then the weather decided to get more controversial and blew straight in at a gusty 25-30, just to wind me up!

From there we made passage across to Taveuni, which was easier said than done. A lot of reefs and submerged rocks, which would be fine if your friggin' plotter was working at the crucial time!

Some quick charting lessons, with a little bit of attitude sorted all that out, and we anchored in 18 metres at Somosomo, phew... Jev rigged a leadline? So all good ?

After getting over all that drama, we head ashore to grab an iceblock...Yeah right...closed for stocktake!

Next morning after my tandy, we headed off to Koro again with our path going to Vuda.

We meet up with *Distracted* at Koro after a so-so sail and a few beers at the "Resort" where some American scientists are studying the island. And Lisa & Jeremy are there having hitched a lift from a local...how fabulous.



Next day we have a lovely snorkel around the reef and have an awesome night with Bindy & Gavin, on *Distracted*.

Next morning and we're off towards Makogai on our passage to Vuda point. No cell or internet coverage which is somewhat frustrating. Hairy night arriving as our chartplotter decides to give up the ghost again. Particularly the friggin' depth sounder... After A LOT of circling, we take the long route and eventually anchor with no dramas, with chartplotter eventually playing the game.

3 boats here, (2 GH), with another joining the next day from Koro.

Had a great snorkel around, walk about the island and tour of the former leprosy colony of 1900 (circa) -1969. Amazing history and abit uneasy. Visited graveyard. 5000 people lived on the island. Giant clam hatchery & turtle programme going on, albeit very slowly.

Then off to Nanau i Rake having had a very good night on catamaran *Just In time*. Our destination changes with the weather...literally - haha, and we go a bit further to anchor at Volivoli, a brisk sail with wind from behind. There is a new resort there where we pop in to have a few beers. Very nice and chat with the owners, who were originally from Twizel!

Anyway better go as the captain is pacing for us to get a move along. One more overnight stop before getting to Vuda point tomorrow,

Cheers

Tracey & Jevon

Domino 2

*Editors note: The more observant of you will know that Jevon & Tracey are back from their travels...*



# DIFFERENT DRUMMER IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC 2013

Phil Plimmer has been cruising in the Pacific Islands and sending us regular updates.

Here are three as a catch up:-)

## Newsletter No 1 Opuia to Tonga

Getting ready to get away is always an insane rush, but I thought I was better organised this year than in the past. It soon became evident that I had spent too much time taking advantage of the summer weather sailing on the Gulf, and so it was rush, rush everywhere once again.

But I was fortunate to have many offers of help, and had to call a lot of it up. I am reluctant to mention names in case I may miss and offend someone, but I am going to anyway as it will give a great idea of what was going on. Anne did eight of the one-pack prepared frozen passage meals, and Pat did some more. Rosemary took on the bulk of the food supply purchasing, about \$1000 of food, and then she and Fran looked after the labelling and stowage. Craig gave me three days sorting out a range of electrical improvements, and then Terry and Peter took over and gave several more days each doing numerous jobs including fitting the wind generator, the SSB aerial, and the comms mast. Carl was very usefully to hand when the new leisure-furl main arrived and supervised the fitting in the rain while I was below and before I even realised it was job complete. By the time loading, fuelling and water were finished at Opuia the waterline had gone down by about 80 mm which I have calculated as well over a tonne of weight!

The saga of the clearance is a great story, even if difficult to tell succinctly. I will try. Before obtaining clearance to leave NZ, yachts require what is known as a 'Cat 1' certificate. Obtaining it requires meeting high standards for the construction, rig, safety equipment etc of the yacht, and also crew experience. The standards are ultimately set by Maritime NZ on behalf of the Government, and the

principal objective is to limit the possibility that the Air Force and commercial shipping will be called to mount an expensive rescue mission somewhere in the South Pacific. There is an alternative to Cat 1 known as 'Non-solas' that applies to boats in survey. Different Drummer is in survey and I had received direction from Maritime NZ to depart this year under Non-solas certification, or alternatively take the yacht out of survey. I had previously cleared under Cat 1 and ignored this small detail. Troubles started when I learned that Maritime NZ required 2 weeks (after inspection all ready to go) to process the paper work. This is a highly impractical requirement but with assistance from my safe ship management company a way around was found and the documentation was submitted to Maritime NZ 3 weeks prior to departure date. I was advised to start following up with MNZ after 2 weeks as typically nothing ever comes out until the last minute before it is needed. Each day I rang with my voice getting shriller in an effort to impart urgency and a mild degree of panic. Nobody in MNZ answers their phone (except the receptionist on the help line phone who was by far and away the most helpful person) and few bother to call back when a message is left. On the day we were supposed to clear with others in the Island Cruising Association rally I rang many times, and left several messages with different people, all to no avail. After work hours my good friend John Martin of ICA dropped by to 'chew the fat'. The outcome was an instant Cat 1 inspection and certificate from an available Opuia based inspector. We cleared first thing the following morning and left as planned with the ICA rally. The Non-solas certificate of course was in the mail the same day.

Another drama was the offshore insurance. All was in order until a few days before departure, (and a couple of weeks after the yacht was out of the water for jobs and antifouling), when I was notified that an out of water inspection would be required. I have been insured with the same company, NZ and offshore, for 6 years and generally found them good, so I made my feelings known. After a good deal of 'no' we finally got there with some cost and what I would call a 'wet out of water' inspection.

The crew for the passage to Tonga were long time



sailing mate Carl, on his fourth trip north in Different Drummer; Ian, a fellow member of the former Waitemata Yacht Squadron, away blue water for the second time; and Terry, one of the Waikato Yacht Squadron 'Flight of the Noelexes' skippers.

It was a good passage with relatively few problems. Conditions were light for a couple of days after leaving NZ, but enough wind to sail. We then had a day with the spinnaker, one motoring, and then more spinnaker before motoring into South Minerva reef.

There are not many people that have had the experience of the Minerva reefs, and those that have seem to agree that it is a magical experience that is difficult to describe to others. There is something quite surreal about sitting inside a coral lagoon, the top of the reef nowhere higher than the high tide, as the sea crashes into the windward side and sends ripples across the lagoon. It is the nautical equivalent of an oasis in the desert. Conditions were perfect for entry and staying, and we, as did many of the ICA fleet of about 30 boats, stopped at both Minervas – they are about 25 nautical miles apart. At South Minerva the snorkelling was great and Carl went fishing with the spear gun. He picked a crayfish and shot a good Coral Trout. It was then that he noticed the shark! At North Minerva we took part in 'the first international cricket competition'. I kid you not! Two teams were formed from the many nationalities present and then a 'game' of cricket ensued with bat and ball in the ankle deep water rolling across the exposed reef at low tide.

Which kites to bring for the trip had been a topic of discussion with Carl over the two years or so this trip had been in gestation. Different Drummer is 7/8ths fractional and Carl succeeded in convincing me it would handle a masthead spinnaker. In anticipation I had a masthead halyard fitted, and Carl borrowed a Stewart 34 spinnaker to add to the modestly sized socked gennaker I have. My smaller spinnaker missed the cut for the locker. The Stewart spinnaker proved perfect in the lighter conditions and although we did not break any speed records our top speeds with the smaller spinnaker had been in much stronger wind.

For the last 2 days through to Tongatapu, Tonga's most southern island of significance and the location of the capital, Nukualofa, we were in the trade wind zone. It was serious windward work in the 15 – 20 knot ESE wind. We used the staysail on the inner forestay and reefed the main at times as well. Different Drummer goes well to windward, but managing the bashing, the heel, the at times violent movement, and water washing over the decks sorts out the sailors. All crew were up to the conditions, although not without support from seasickness medication in some cases. Terry earned my admiration by remaining in residence in the forward cabin.

For the fishos: we caught three mahimahi on the trip up. And lost three, certainly not all mahimahi as one ate through steel trace.

We entered the reef through the Egeria passage, and dropped the anchor at the Pangaimotu resort, a couple of miles off Nukualofa after 7 days sailing. ICA had a special clearance arranged and shortly later we were visited by officials from customs, health, immigration, agriculture and others. It was too hot for them in the

saloon and they sat outside passing down the necessary forms with requests for money. They took no interest in the food or liquor aboard and departed as soon as the forms were complete and requisite money collected. It was the most cursory clearance I had ever experienced.

An issue we had on the windward part of the passage was water getting into the boat 'somewhere forward'. It was apparent at the back of the anchor locker, but finding where it was getting in proved difficult. In fact we did not find out on passage. After we arrived we used the experience of our resident expert. Ian led us through a tried procedure with the anchor washdown pump nozzle while I observed from below. I copped a lot of water when he found the hole missing a screw on the anchor lid support. We also found smaller leaks from an innocuous crack in the corner of the locker and the pump switch.

Nukualofa is a modest sized town still showing evidence of the civil riots and fires which occurred some years back, although some new buildings have now been built. Another thing we noticed was the rubbish in the streets. Tongans have a different culture about rubbish as it is only a generation or two when all rubbish was biodegradable and could be discarded on the spot when finished with. Old habits die hard and so Nukualofa is it is not a particularly clean town, but that goes for most of Tonga. I understand they are teaching better habits in the schools but not much evidence of that was seen. It doesn't help that there are almost no bins where rubbish can be put. Tongans have other strengths and we found it didn't matter who we asked for assistance or directions we would get a courteous and helpful response to the limit of their ability to speak English - always better than our Tongan!

There was a real mix-up this year with putting in positions. ICA had their site running, but it was not apparent until after we left that they were not putting up the daily positions called to the 'mother ship' except where boats had preregistered at an external website. I did not take a lot of notice as I normally put in positions to crew relatives through sailmail and post more generally on the ham Winlink site. However due to 3 separate issues I did not get access to the Winlink site until after we arrived in Tonga, and had to conserve my very limited time allocation on sailmail to receive weather information. Position reports can now be found at <http://www.winlink.org/userpositions> call sign ZL1PIP.

After a day ashore in Nukualofa sightseeing and provisioning Terry left us for home and we left for the Haapais, Tonga's middle island group.

Phil, Carl, Ian, & Terry





# DIFFERENT DRUMMER IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC 2013

Newsletter No 2 Nukualofa to Neiafu

Our first destination after leaving Nukualofa was Uoleva Island in the Ha'apai group. The Ha'apais are Tonga's middle group of islands. And Uoleva was where the ICA yachts doing the 'Pacific Circuit Rally' were clearing in with a special clearance. We had already cleared at Nukualofa so our interest was simply to provide a stop on the passage to the Vava'us and catch up with friends and acquaintances on the other boats. The distance was a little more than could be sailed in a day and we did an overnight bash into a 15 knot nor-easterly up the eastern side.

Approaching the pass through the reef south of the island in rain in the morning we had a fishing bonanza on the lure we always trail, with a huge mahimahi and 3 tuna of mixed varieties. Mahimahi are a subtropical deep sea fish with white flesh. They are prized eating.

On Different Drummer's previous trip to Uoleva in 2006 Anne and I came across an abandoned orange grove about 500 metres inland. There were half a dozen trees bearing very tart oranges, in fact more like lemons. While not particularly suitable for eating they are perfect for my on-board manufactured ginger beer. I was anxious to try and find the grove again this year. The concerns that I had that others in the fleet who had arrived earlier may have stumbled on the grove as we did in 2006 were unfounded. The track to the grove had completely overgrown and without gps coordinates we would have never found it. It was a bushwhack through the dense bush, like geocaching, and eventually rewarded with success. There was plenty of fruit and we harvested what we could carry and returned to the yacht jubilant.

Uoleva is a 'drop dead' beautiful Pacific island. Just visualise a golden sandy fringing beach inside the shelter of the reef and palm trees swaying above the lush green bush of the hinterland. The water is turquoise blue and the bottom can be seen 10 metres below the boat. We joined in the ICA activities, caught up with some boat maintenance, and swam and snorkelled our way



through a couple of days before moving on to the Vava'us.

One of the jobs we did at Uoleva was trying to permanently tighten the lower joint on the SSB aerial. The aerial was new, and when we put it up at Auckland I had not bothered to put 'locktight' on the screw threads as advised in the instructions. Everything not greased at sea quickly seizes up and it seemed unnecessary. However the 8 metre long aerial is unsupported for all of its length above the pushpit rail and the continual swaying slowly unwound the joint. Fortunately it was noticed, and again fortunately the lower joint could be reached by standing on the rail so it could be tightened at sea. It is a problem that has continued even though 'locktight' was subsequently applied to the joint.

The overnight passage from Uoleva to the Vava'us, Tonga's most northern significant island group, was a motor in almost no wind, and we dropped the anchor mid morning off Neiafu, the principal town, behind the Moorings and Sunsail yachts on their moorings. As it was Ian's last day I suggested that he and Carl take the dinghy ashore for a look around while I tidied up. There was no demurring. They returned early evening having prioritised the local watering holes and full of 'absolutely certain' ways to catch fish. I would add that these have been subsequently tried and all failed. At least so far. However there are some sports fishing charter boats working out of Neiafu and they catch fish. Carl cooked a fabulous meal, Ian found rum, and a very pleasant evening ensued.

Ian had, I thought rather sensibly, had packed before going ashore, and we ran him back first thing the following morning. Carl and I then converted Different Drummer from an offshore yacht to a local cruising yacht. The staysail was stored at the bottom of the sail locker. The parachute anchor and warp were moved from first out of the cockpit locker to the bottom, and the snorkelling gear moved to the top. The weather cloths around the cockpit (used to provide a degree of protection in the cockpit and help keep gear on-board) and lee cloths (to keep sleeping sailors in their berths) were moved to storage. The 'high' table was raised in the cockpit.

The work was done by lunchtime. Carl's family were not due for a couple of days and we set off for a night out in the Hunga lagoon, about 6 miles away. We had bought some bait at the local fish market and on the way drift fished a short distance off the shore in 30 metres of water. This was one of the 'dead cert' ways to catch big fish that Carl had been instructed in the day before. But no interest whatsoever. There was also a nil score with the spear gun in the lagoon the following day, and again when we anchored in 30 metres of water to try the deep fishing again outside the lagoon on the way back to Neiafu. I wasn't sure what the seabed was, and getting the anchor stuck in a coral head in that depth creates a problem so we buoyed the anchor. It came up without catching.

Before leaving Hunga lagoon we recalibrated 'Robert' the autopilot.

Robert is usually a very faithful friend, able to steer the boat better than most helmsman, in most conditions including serious weather. But his performance on the passages up had been less than perfect due to a new hydraulic pump which was fitted before we left Auckland. It seems the new pump was more efficient than the old one (condemned when it went in for service) resulting in the rudder moving faster, or further, or something, than it had previously. On occasions Robert would steer an increasingly unstable course until it all got too difficult for him and he would give up. I had made several adjustments to the steering parameters after each failure but it was mostly guess work and I wanted to go through the pilot's own tuning programme. This involves turning over control to the pilot which then steers an apparently erratic course until it advises 'done' after a couple of minutes. A large sheltered lagoon without obstacles is perfect. I recorded the new parameters; they were a bit different from both the previous ones and the ones I had entered on passages.

Carl went to the airport to meet Sarah and Summer. We did a quick provisioning and then the 'see the Vavaus in 2 weeks' tour started.



## Newsletter No 3 Cruising the Vavaus 1

Sarah, and Summer arrived 20 May for a couple of weeks cruising the Vavaus with us. We left Neiafu and went out to Port Maurelle the same day. Port Maurelle sounds as though it could be a busy place with wharves and shipping. But in fact it is just one of the nicest and best protected bays in the Vavaus. The guests wasted no time getting into snorkelling and a walk on the pretty coconut fringed beach. The water shelves very quickly from about 25 - 30 meters to crunch, typical of many of the anchorages with beach reefs, so anchoring needs some care. Since I was last here an environmental group has put in 3 moorings to help protect the coral. They looked solid, but next time we came to this bay one of the buoys had floated away! There is no village at this bay but also new was a very modern European house snuggled into the bush on the hillside.

Just around the corner is Nuku, a small island with a spit of lovely white sand covering the coral. Superb snorkelling! This island is known as the picnic island as visiting dignitaries are often brought here to enjoy. The most notable was Prince Edward who visited the island on a visit to Tonga now many years ago. A squall went through the anchorage overnight. The last time Different Drummer was here, 7 years ago, it was the departure point for an

overnight passage back down to the Ha'apais. We got beaten up with unforecasted 55 knots winds.

Over on Kapa Island the next day we visited Falevai village. It was something of an eyeopener. The track up the hill through the village was a rubbish dump; you had to pick your way through. Some of the houses were quite tidy, with neat gardens, others were falling down shacks, and some deserted. There were very few people around, none young except children. The village had a dying feel about it. But there was a good Massey Ferguson tractor parked under a shelter, and most of the houses had brand new solar power panels with two 230 amp-hour 6 volt batteries and a serious cable into a distribution box in the house. We were shown some old panels and told they were German ones; the new ones have been provided by the Japanese in return for Tonga's vote at the international whaling forum. I found it ironic that Tonga with a good tourist income from whale watching could sell itself like this.

Down the hill on the other side of the village the muddy track continued on a couple of miles through the bush until it eventually came out at Pt Maurelle. We found some tasty mandarins growing wild and picked up some coconuts to take back to the yacht.



Back at Falevai we spent a lot of time cleaning the very sticky staining volcanic mud from our footwear. The mud was on top of the uplifted coral and as well as I could work it out would have come from subsequent ash showers.

The Vavaus are one of the world's great cruising destinations and you do not have to move far to find the next attractive anchorage. Around the corner there were several off the bottom of Pangaimotu, an island joined to the main island by a causeway. At Hinakauea we found a large and very tidy restaurant on the foreshore, but no visible village. According to our cruising guide they do an evening meal once a week.

From Hinakauea you can see across to a small un-named island literally joining Pangaimotu with Tapanā. There is a floating 'ark' moored there that sells art and crafts, and an interesting view of the 'east side' of the Vavaus from the little island. The waves rolling onto the fringing reef several miles away were clearly visible, and reminded us just how protected the Vavaus are. The ark was not yet open for the season but we watched two men erecting some kind of radio aerial that I have not seen before. Most of the tourist resorts in Vavau are on vhf and I assume it was some kind of a directional vhf aerial as it seemed to be aimed at Neiafu. We dinghied over to Tapanā for a snorkel on the reef and checked out the La Paela restaurant. It also was not yet open for the season, but they were setting up for, I think, 80 guests (or was it \$T80 for the dinner?) from the Oyster Rally fleet that were also in the Vavaus. In the water where we had landed the dinghy we saw a sea snake, almost a metre long. They have black and white stripes like a football jersey, and we were told the Tongan variety is harmless.

As is common with many cruising destinations there is a 'cruisers information net' on the vhf radio each morning. Typically it will have a rotating net controller and include weather information, information on upcoming local events, and a 'buy-sell-exchange'. The Mango, one of the local restaurants in Neiafu had been promoting a fun harbour race all week, and we were listening with interest. It was time to return for provisions in any case - that's our version of the story anyway. While having lunch in a café after shopping we got talking to Shane, the local Sunsail/Moorings operator who told us six yachts were currently entered, including 3 Moorings boats which he had entered to give the race some support and his delivery crews some action. We told him it would be seven! It was a short course to the top of the harbour, back to the bottom end with dog leg, and to the finish outside the Mango. Carl and Sarah are both experienced keen racers, and Summer is old enough to help so we had a great crew. But I was still very surprised how Different Drummer pulled away from the fleet in all legs particularly when 3 of the other yachts were bigger. In the end we won by the complete finishing leg. As there was no entry fee there was no rum prize.

It was back to cruising the next day. We chose to run out to the Nuapapu anchorage off the island of the same name, stopping on the way to look inside Swallows Cave at the northern tip of Kapa island. The water outside the cave is too deep to anchor, and we hunted for somewhere shallow enough in the vicinity. Although we did anchor about a mile away we were uncomfortable about

leaving the yacht and in the end elected to dinghy in pairs from the yacht on station off the cave. The cave opens out from a narrow entrance and is big enough for motor boats to enter and manoeuvre, and in fact a local boat went into the cave at the same time Carl and Sarah were inside. There was afternoon sun streaming into the cave illuminating the coral formations far below the surface and the deep blue water is said to rival Italy's Blue Grotto.

We had the spinnaker ready, but unused for the race the previous day and we shook it out for the run down to Nuapapu.

On arrival I noticed for the first time the batteries were not charging, and when looking at the problem the next day decided, incorrectly, it was a bad connection in the alternator excitation circuit at the indicator light bulb. It was a problem that continued for a couple of weeks when I finally isolated it to an intermittent temperature induced fault in the house bank regulator. While annoying it was not serious as we have a number of alternative power generation available from wind, solar, a small generator and the engine start alternator.

Summer had requested a 'fire on the beach' and we settled for a bbq ashore that evening with our friends from 'Boundless', another of the ICA fleet yachts. 'Sundowners' on the boat and bbqs ashore are just as much a part of the cruising lifestyle in the islands as they are at home. Some locals came down to the beach and looked us over, but kept their distance and did not appear to want to talk, perhaps due to their natural reticence.

On the way to Tapanā the following day we saw a couple of boats stopped at a very small sand fringed island called Sisia. We joined them for excellent snorkelling in extraordinarily clear water over the reef off the beach.

Our 'perpetual fishing' with the lure trailed off the back of the yacht was rewarded when we moved on later in the day. Sarah landed a large fat yellowfin Tuna off the reefs at the southern end of Kapa island. Eighteen portions from the fillets made their way to the freezer. It is fairly unusual to catch large fish inside the outer fringing reef and this fish was caught well inside. It is the only yellowfin I have ever seen caught in subtropical waters.

Conditions were unsuitable to continue on to the eastern basin and we ran back under gennaker the following day to Vakaeitu. The tide was suitable to snorkel the Coral Gardens, a reef running from Vakaeitu to Nuapapu island. The coral on this reef was badly damaged in a cyclone about 10 years ago but has now regrown to something even better than previously. Coral and small fish variety were excellent in the clear water. About half way along the reef we came across a 1.5m shark basking in the sunshine in a hole about 6 meters below the surface. We did nothing to provoke it and it took no interest in us. The next day we snorkelled another reef at the other end of the island recently named the Coral Wonder by long term Canadian yachties Paul and Mary who have returned, barely left in fact other than to go home to ski, for 8 years.

Most of the small restaurants and accommodation places sprinkled through the island group are operated by 'Palangi' - formerly meaning white pigs but now simply foreigners. Failures



are frequent as the custom is insufficient to support even the simple lifestyle the founders will accept to continue living in paradise. We visited the remains of one such restaurant at Vakaeitu which in its glory days even had its own wharf across the coral reef at the beach entrance.

A couple of days of enhanced trade winds (generally about 25 knots) were forecast so we moved back to the shelter of Hunga lagoon. Shortly after leaving Vakaeitu under motor Sarah enquired about the burning smell. I responded that it was probably smoke from a rubbish fire on one of the nearby islands. But it very soon became apparent that the smoke was coming from somewhere very close – like the engine room! We stopped the engine and stood by with the fire extinguisher. There were no flames, and I eventually worked out no fire either. The freezer compressor had seized and the smoke was coming from the drive belts as they protested rotating around the pulleys

on the end of the frozen compressor. This failure was much more serious than the regulator as I do not carry a spare compressor and it was back to the back ups, in this case a very small electric plate in the freezer box. This system is only designed to maintain a pulled down freezer, but it did save me for nearly two weeks on my previous compressor failure in New Caledonia when the unit lost gas. It has struggled in the warm temperatures here. These reduce freezer efficiency just when you need it most. The ice cream was an early casualty. There are no replacement units available in Vavau and I am getting a new unit from New Zealand when it can be got here in several weeks. In the meantime we



have a very disciplined approach to opening the freezer – once only per day – in the hope we will save some of the frozen food at the bottom.

Carl, Sarah, and Summer checked out the village at Hunga while I replaced the compressor belts. It was blowing strongly even in the protected anchorage and we were amused by a charter yacht that took 5 attempts to anchor, and another that picked up a mooring of very doubtful reputation – we understood it had not been checked for a number of years.

And then very suddenly it was time for my friends to leave. We headed back to Neiafu for a crew change.