

Tuesday August 17 contd....

In the afternoon we went for a walk down the "main" road and found a restaurant "1606" attached to the Santo Village apartments(called 1606 as that was the year that de Quiros "discovered" Espiritu Santo)...looks OK..we book for dinner..... it's after this that we discover the issue with the dinghy being tampered with.....

Off to dinner...I had fillet steak and it was superb, Judith's fish and chips were undercooked – Kiwi woman running the joint overly friendly...lots of "mmm!...mmm! well..yes" rather like someone we knew in another life that we used to call "jolly hockeysticks". She even attempted to accompany the guitar / singer entertainment by hitting two sticks together....but not quite "on the one" Another experience !

Sleeping in the resort was strange...the bed was moving !

Wednesday August 18

Breakfast and checkout...chat with Stuart from Nomad...he's thinking about heading for PNG and then north over the equator to Asia, but he has to go now if he's doing it...he's not sure.

Off to the airport, Judith off on a very small plane..but apparently there were 17 passengers.....stood at the window and waved...watched the plane take off... I hate goodbyes.....

I'm on my own again...this time really...no-one organised for crew at all Chrissy come back !...I need you !

Had dinner at the resort but internet not working- again. Judith arrived safely at Clif and Angela's, talked on the phone ... C&A quite keen to sail from Vila to Noumea...need to send them all the info...and try to convey what its really like..ie...not plain sailing.

Thursday August 19

Showery morning, talked to local Namba Net on 4003 Mhz, they have weather at 0800VST.

Looked at the charts to go south – looks like to deal with the SE conditions its ENE across to Ambae Is, then Maewo, down to Pentecote, across to Ambryn, down to Epi and then wait for favourable wind to go south to Efate Is (Vila).

Checked the engine, all OK, pumped the water out of the engine sump tray – there's a salt water leak somewhere on the engine, after the impeller pump – when the weathers good I should get everything out and try to find it. In the past its been the impeller pump gasket, but I replaced that before we left, maybe it's a hose ?

Into town to do internet, shopping – back on the boat it's very humid.

Friday August 20

Can't leave today, forgot I have to clear customs (its bad luck to leave on Fridays anyway) – not feeling wonderful this morning....Bay is very lumpy...dinghy in and walk to town and onto the Customs..fill in the form and get the envelope to present to Vila customs on arrival.

Back through town, bought some cans of lemonade at the supermarket and a cabbage and bananas at the market – slow walk back to the Beachfront in the heat. Wet dinghy ride back to the boat, picked up the dink, tied down on the foredeck ready to head to Ambae in the morning.

Ambae Is is reputed to be the Bali Hi in James Michener's Tales of the South Pacific (as is Moorea...)

Scrambled eggs for dinner...can't stomach any more than that..early night

Saturday August 21

Up early 0600 listening to Rag of the Air...general consensus is light SE all over. 0700 up anchor and we're off.....last night a steel sailing ship Viela from Vila anchored next door...seemed that the woman in the straw hat was the master....they're going this morning too.



Motoring out the Segond Channel, have hanked on the staysail as the Nthn Vanuatu f'cast is for 25kots in the pm.

1200 sailing towards Ambae close reaching in 10 knots SE with main and staysail



Decide to have a go with the genoa as well...double headed rig....speed goes up a knot to 6...but the slightest shift in the wind direction requires sheet adjustment on both sails...and Mr Fleming doesn't like it !



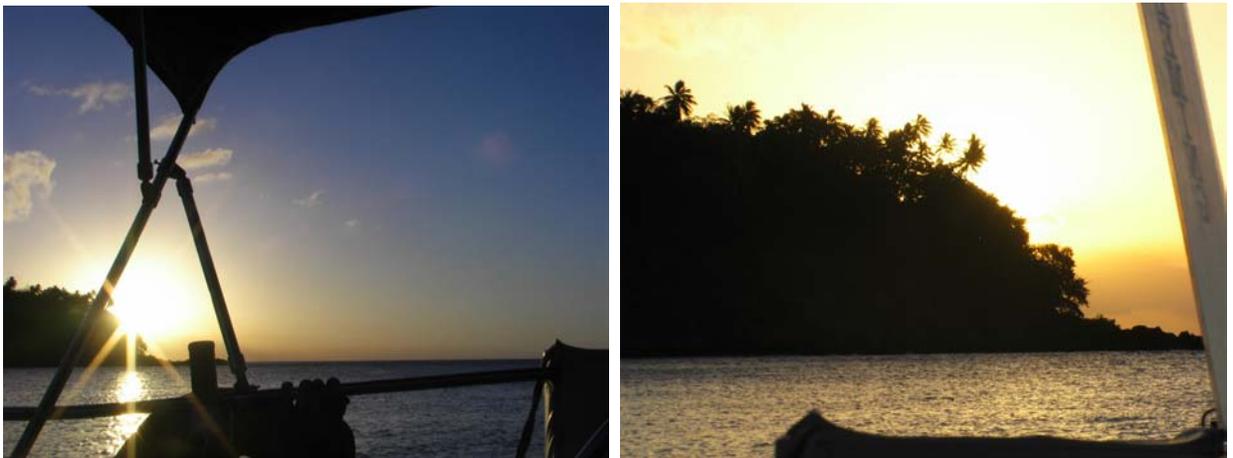
1300 passing the north side of Ambae the wind dies completely and the motor is on

1500 a funny short sea has developed...about 0.5m and 1 m apart from directly E. Then 5 minutes later wham...we have 25 knots on the stbd bow....seems the wind died because of the high land mass in the middle of Ambae and as we passed it, the wind is now sweeping over the low eastern part of the island. Motorsailing now with just the main and the wind 15degrees of the stbd bow – take this all the way to Vanihe bay on the NE corner of Ambae.



There are 5 ICA yachts in here – playing follow the leader as usual !

Quiet anchorage 15deg16.58'S, 167deg58.30'E



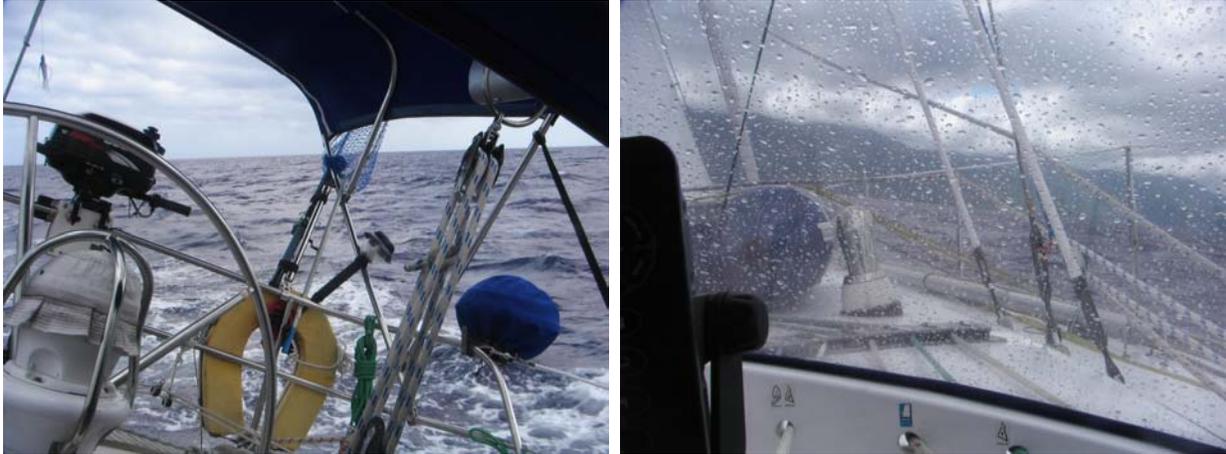
Feels good to be back at sea sailing my ship again. I was sick –literally – of staying in port.

Sunday, August 22

Calm water but blustery wind from the SE. Boats are preparing to leave – no doubt they're all going where I want to go...Asinvari Bay, Sth Maewo Is.

0800 Windflower has gone, Pau Hanu is hanking on his staysail.

Leave the bay and round the point, 25 knots SE..only way to go is dead E to Maewo Is then tack....I opt to go for one long tack...the others stay close to Maewo Is and do short tacks..they were right. Its only 12 miles but tacking makes it 20 and not in Asinvari Bay 'til 1230...all the ICA yachts are here.



Its not always easy sailing in the Pacific !

John the ICA organiser, motors over in his dinghy and says “ We’ve got a number of events on over the next few days, starting with happy hour tonight and dinner ashore..its 1500 Vatu per head and the beer is 450 vatu each, then tomorrow we’re..... “..Thanks but no thanks, I’m going in the am.... Actually I don’t have any money !

Received a txt message on my ‘phone from Cliff confirming their arrival in Vila September 9...so its all on...will be a steep learning experience for them !

Ungainly cat “Cool Change” from the Bay of Islands arrives. Weather is dull, showery. Maewo has the highest rainfall in Vanuatu . see the waterfall ... there are lots on this island and the next one south, Pentecote, where we’ll be tomorrow...Doing the solo sailor thing surrounded by couples on their boats is not much fun...I’d rather be in a bay by myself particularly when I’m on my own. I start reading Bernard Moitessier’s “The Long Way” for the thousandth time.....



Making bread ...and the oven isn't working properly again; have to keep the knob pressed in with a screwdriver in the oven door handle...must be a dud thermocouple. Anyway the bread turned out fine!

Calamari with stirfried cabbage, mushrooms, garlic, oyster sauce and rice for dinner.

Monday August 23

Hear on the SW radio that Australia's election was a no-result. Gillard believes she can form a government, so does Abbott. Whilst there is no doubt Labor have screwed up big time in the last year, I wouldn't like to see a return to the totally selfish, racist and bigoted ways of the Howard government years, which will no doubt happen if Abbott wins....still if its what they, the people, want...the majority that is.....who was it that said "Democracy is too good to be wasted on everyone"? And with the mean intelligence and education level moving south year by year, the political appeal of self interest, racism and bigotry stands to win the race...oh dear...I'm glad I'm out here and not having to wrestle with all that entails. (BM you're speaking to me again !)

Bacon & eggs for breakfast – fortified for the day ahead !

Sudden outburst of activity in the bay...and its raining... 4 dinghies heading for the waterfall and they're all carrying buckets...what is it?...collective water gathering ??...no, its laundry !



Its funny, in all cultures, the world over, the same....the women are left at the base of the waterfall to do the washing and all the men are off up the hill....now they're back..into the dinghies and off to the other side of the bay – the women are still washing. ... in the rain. What I find hard to understand is how they go through so many clothes ! A pair of shorts and a T-shirt does me for a week, 'cos I hardly wear 'em. Some of these people are hanging up SOCKS for heavens sake !!!

1000 Off heading south. Breeze is 20 knots SE, hard on the wind with staysail and main traveller down. Its hard going, there's a short sea of about 1 – 1.5m that slows the boat down occasionally.

1130 breeze has dropped to 9 but gone more E, decide to roll out the genoa, get it sheeted in and we're going well when Bang, Flap, flap...the genoa is flying free...the bowline in the sheet at the tack has come undone !...Now that's not very good skipper...how did that happen ? Roll it in and go forward with the sheet to tie it back in through the genoa tack and a gust of wind blows my Pete Goss cap away into the sea !! what a shame...I liked that cap!

Back in the cockpit, the breeze has picked up again, so I leave the genoa furled and carry on with the staysail...need to tack soon so would have had to roll it up anyway. Tack over and head for our waypoint off Lolting Bay. The closer we get the more the breeze gets up. By the time we get to the waypoint and its time to hand the sails, its blowing 28-30 knots ! Dropping the main, the topping lift gets caught on the turning block on the mainsail headboard that the leech cord runs through – takes about 5 minutes to free it...that's not very good skipper – you've known about that issue for years and never done anything about it – needs a smooth cover over the block.



Motor in and anchor in 12m Lolting Bay 15deg32.8'S, 186deg08.6'E ... its still blowing 25 knots in here!

Made a cover for the leech cord block from an old sauce bottle cap !

Thinking about where to go next – maybe another bay halfway down Pentecote. Its 26 miles to the bay at the bottom, which would be more like 40 with tacking. Its hard work beating against 20/25 knots out here - I'd rather do shorter hops.

There's lots to see; lots of bays ...every bay and village different, but its not so much fun when there's no-one to share it with...oh well ...c'est la vie !

Got out of the freezer what I thought was Bolognese sauce, turned out to be just sugo..oh well, cook up some spaghetti and heat up the sugo with some anchovies, parmigiano reggiano et une petite bouteille de Bordeaux

Tuesday August 24

Pamplemousse for breakfast. Should go to Melsisi Bay today or if the wind and sea are kind might try for Homo Bay at the southern end of Pentecote.

0900 Out of the bay sailing – breeze has more East in it today. Great sailing in ESE 15-20 knots close reach down the coast all the way to Homo Bay...anchored by 1400.



A man paddles over in a pirogue – asks friendly questions and tries to sell me some fresh water prawns – 1000 vatu a kilo ...OK, I'll take a kilo – I'll get them tonight and bring them in the morning – OK – any more boats coming he asks....not today but in 2 to 3 days time there should be a lot (the ICA guys will all be here by then) ...OK see you in the am !

This place is the home of the famous Vanuatu high jumpers..they build towers and then jump off them with long ropes tied around their ankles.....the inspiration for bungee jumping...

A young lad paddles over and introduces himself..he's 12 and proudly announces that he has jumped already ... must be some sort of initiation rite....weren't you scared I ask him...No he says...not at all ? ...yes I was scared he replies....I would be too...not for me !

There's no mobile phone signal here at all...unusual !

Decide to have a go at this water issue...everything out, look at the engine...all dry .. so where's it coming from ?...notice drip drip coming out of the anchor locker pipe...ah well yes, we know about this and have all the bits to deal with it...so, lets do it !

Get one of these NZ watertight food containers with the O-ring seal, bored holes for water in, pump out, pump mounts, power...installed the small bilge pump with auto switch and plumbed the outlet up through a one-way valve to a deck fitting covered with a small cowl. So when the water level in the box gets to 10mm, the pump comes on and pumps it out – lets see how it goes.

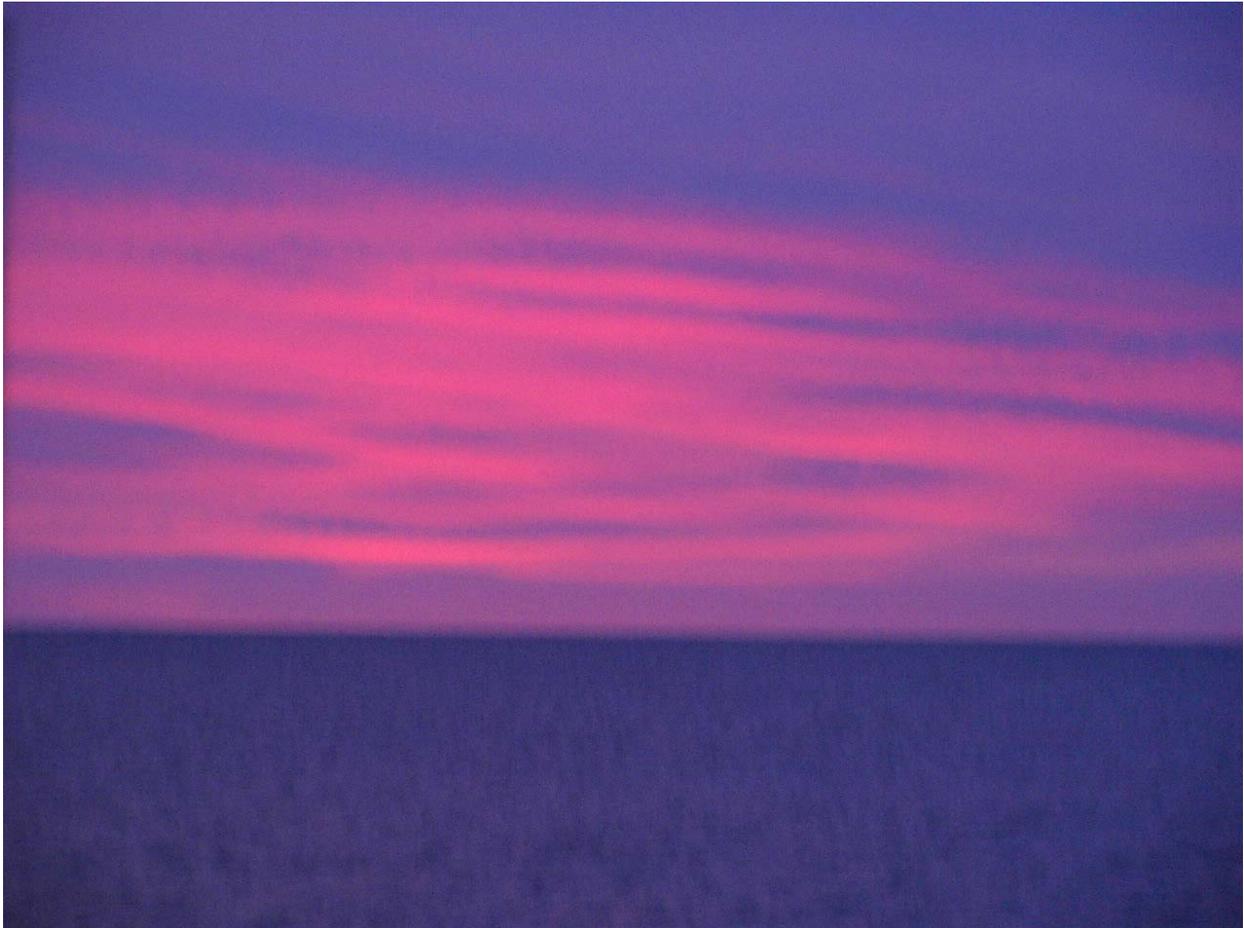
It's the water that comes in when the chain goes into the locker and also from the sea sweeping the deck and going down the chain pipe, even though I block it up with clay – all because the anchor locker can't have an external drain 'cos its below the waterline !

A couple of girls paddle up while I'm doing this...just sit there, giggle every now and then and then paddle off....Later on an old fella paddles up and admires the boat. Whistles and makes a funny clicking

sound. He asks me for some fish hooks, I give him a few and some swivels, line and a sinker...he's very happy! Paddles off clicking with glee.

Another funny thing that happens – when beating on port tack and going fairly fast with the watermaker on, the galley sink fills up with water ! Its because the sink outlet is lower than the loop in the watermaker waste hose so it takes the path of least resistance...into the sink. Solution ? put the plug in the sink and jam it in hard.

Fried rice with onion, garlic and mushrooms for dinner.....must be fascinating to know what I have for dinner each night !!



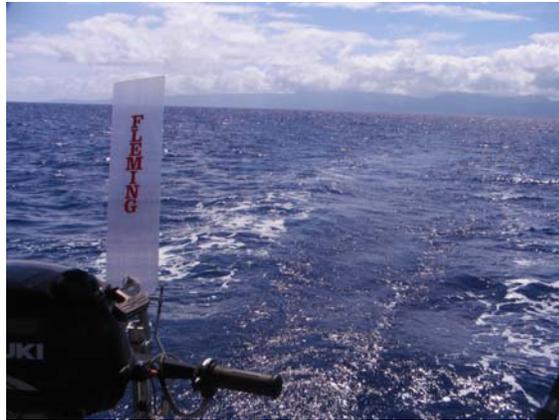
Wednesday August 25

0600 (1900UTC) Rag of the Air net on 8173kHz Dave on "Chameleon" ex forecaster says Wed ESE 11, Thurs E13, Fri E14, Sat ESE16

Prawn man was to come early he said...I'm up before 0600 Preparing to go to Ambrym – start engine – takes a long time to get to 14V, that's a sign the belts slipping...tightened the belt..its nearly at the end of its adjustment..needs replacing next time..that's better 14.5V in 2 minutes...check when I last replaced it...discovered that belt has been on there for 500 hrs, so not bad !

Prawn man doesn't come --- I'm off..

Breeze is E 13-18 beautiful beam reach across to Ambrym. The Island turns the E into ENE and we're running with main only and Mr Fleming is steering perfectly



Ambrym is an active volcano and its spewing out smoke and ash as we pass it.



1430 turn the point towards Craig Cove, breeze has almost died. Motor in to Craig Cove, but it's a lee shore...breeze is SSW in here only 8 knots, but not a hospitable place to anchor... look at that wreck !



Decide to shoot across the 10 miles or so to Port Sandwich where its totally protected.

Sailed all the way in to Port Sandwich and anchored in the same spot as before. Completely quiet only one other boat here – clunky looking American double ender festooned with junk. Dinghy rows over from the beach...turns out it's the skipper and his lady crew from London – names I don't remember – they thought Diva was rather "racy" looking.

1730 Enjoying a beer in the cockpit – they're not exploding anymore thank goodness – look over at the US yacht and the crew is stripped down to bra and pants and is washing the deck – that's the way !

Thursday August 26

0800 Listening to Namba net on 4003kHz – advice on coming through the Havannah Canal, New Caledonia ..this guy has just been through and timed it wrongly...he was too early...had a chat with him after the net and made some notes.

0900 Off motoring out of Port Sandwich – best anchorage in Vanuatu – Breeze is SE so sailing close hauled down the coast of Malekula Is past the Maskelyne Isles (Maskelyne was The Astronomer Royal in Cook's time). Breeze gets a bit more E in it , pick up a few degrees. Eventually tack over and get on a good track for the northern tip of Epi Is.

A few hours later we're headed by the breeze going more E, tack back and as close hauled as she can be Diva is doing 5 knots in 10 true – beautiful sailing. I took advantage of this tight tack to put some stickyback Dacron on the foot of the genoa where it chafes on the lifelines when reaching – really for offshore there's no reason to have the tack so low – six inches higher and there wouldn't be a chafe problem the performance difference would be negligible..



Ambrym from the South



Pass another volcano that's doing its thing and venting heat and ash from the under the surface.

1630 Anchored in Lamén Bay 16deg35.72S, 168deg09.82E ... A great day's sailing – I really felt at one with my ship, the sea, the wind and the sun – glorious – Motessier sneaking through here !...and why not !

Saw two dugongs wallowing around...they come in here to feed



1730 Windflower (ICA Chief) arrives and anchors next door.

The locals maximize the capacity of their small boats...just like Tonga..and no lifejackets...they go miles !



Local boat



Windflower arriving in the background

Steak and chips for dinner...with a dob of Foie Gras on the steak !



Stunning sunsets

Friday August 27

0730 Caminata – Candian Waquiez 40 from Montreal arrives. We met them in Lughanville Bay over the dinghy incident. Digicel phone credit has run out – apparently there is a shop ashore that sells recharge cardsso we'll dinghy in later and see.

Dinghy over to Windflower and have a chat with John – he tells me there's a co. in Westhaven – C-trek, or Sea track or ... that's replacing Inmarsat Mini-M systems on larger yachts with the new superfast Fleet

Broadband. They're selling off the used Mini-Ms for about \$2k and they're 150kbps...hmm...maybe worth checking out.

Went ashore and found the "shop", 200Vatu recharge card costs 240Vatu..."its what we sell them for". Walked through the village and past the "resort" – hard to tell where the village ended and the "resort" began – all pretty primitive.

On the way back to the boat stopped to say Giday at Caminata – invited aboard for coffee – turns out he, Robert, is French Canadian, she, Carmen is Peruvian....they speak French...he talks an awful lot. Nice boat inside ... very comfortable with a raised saloon. Robert says its quite shallow drafted and doesn't point very well – 50degrees to the apparent wind is the absolute best he can do...but for reaching across the Pacific its fine...they did Peru to Papeete, with a few detours , 4000+ miles in 39 days – been away now 5 years.

Making bread...turned the thermocouple in the oven around 90 degrees and its working !

1700 Windflower is leaving followed by Caminata.....they come past to say goodbye.."See you in Vila !"

Saturday August 28

0600 up early to listen to Rag of the Air – must have slept funny again – sore upper left arm today, yesterday it was the shoulder. Breeze seems to be E/ENE – those two will be having a good sail to Vila, should be getting close now.Ragof the Air weather...can hardly hear him...have a chat with Graeme "Adamite" after the show, he plans to be in Noumea last week in September.

Bright sunny warm day.....

1030, sailing out of Lamén Bay. Passed by a French cat going north with all 3 crew, man + 2 women naked ! Good on 'em..that makes 4 of us ! Cheery wave as we pass; off on our separate adventures.

1230 Anchored in Revolieu Bay, only boat here, calm...doing washing. Noted that you have to be careful approaching this bay from the north...the reef sticks out a lot further than the chart indicates...best to stay about a mile off and then come in at 90 degrees to the beach. Hung out the washing and lost 3 more wooden pegs...damn.



Local out for an evening fish



The fridge !...That's 31.4 in the cabin, **-24** in the freezer!

My shoulder is still sore today and my left upper arm...is that a symptom of cardiac problems?...no chest pain so unlikely.

Chrissy phoned to say she's leaving Sydney for Hong Kong tomorrow to see her sister and then back to the UK to find out why her charity has unceremoniously dumped her...no more Kenya...sorry !

Ph'd Peter RG who said that he got from Anne Greacen that PG was 17deg04'S, 172deg53'E course 312, 7 knots...plotted that...halfway between Fiji and North Vanuatu..looks like he's heading for Santo !

Sunday August 29

Up early ...off at 0730 – French Ovin “Sea Lance is coming down the coast probably from Lamén Bay. Motor out and we have ESE F3 by 0830 – sails up and we're off – we have the legs on him and pointing higher (he doesn't have a keel and it's a fractional rig)...great sail. Close hauled all the way to Nawaroa Matua Bay, 17deg25.70'S, 168deg19.37'E, Nguna Is. Got a bit blowy and ocean swell towards the end.

Banged my head twice today, once on the boom bails and once going forward to turn off the engine...not good. This pain in my left arm is persistent...took some paracetamol and that seemed to calm it down a bit.

Monday August 30

Up early again for Rag of the Air, Dave “Chameleon”, the weather man is in Vila now so we don't hear him so well (too close)Arm is still the same...maybe not quite so bad ? Trying to get an Oz weatherfax but the electrical noise level is too high and its unreadable.

Plan is to cruise to Havannah Harbour today and check it out as a possibility for Crew trials.

Took some paracetamol again for the arm pain....lessened it a bit.

1000 slowly drifting down past Meso Is at 3.3 knots in 6-9 knots from almost dead behind ..NE. Passed an Amel Super Maramu going north, French flag, "Champje" I think.

Depth sounder has suddenly gone from "so deep I can't tell" to 32m ! Isn't it funny having got used to no reading at all and getting stung by anxiety when it reads 30m !..that's 100ft deep ! Still it pays to be careful, it shoals very quickly around here and we could be on a reef before we knew it....Forward looking sonar would be good !

1100 down to 2 knots – but we're not in a hurry – the sea is gentle, the sun is shining

1200 entering Havannah Harbour through Purumea Channel



"Development" on the shores of Havannah Harbourlovely

1300 anchored north end Matapu Bay 17deg33.43'S, 168deg16.53'E next to "Gannet" from Dover. A woman on Gannet, wearing a blue sarong, is polishing everything ! ... I had one of those for a while ! Windflower is also here, so I am guessing that they didn't make it to Vila....yet.

Made curry for dinner with enough left over for 3 passage meals..just need some spaghetti and we'll be right for Noumea.

Tuesday August 31

Dull morning, showery turning to rain. Managed to get an Australian weatherfax 1200 South Pacific Anal @2000UTC on 7535 kHz from VMW which I think is Darwin. These maps are centered on the South Pole and extend in an arc from the East Coast of Australia to Chile and the Horn...a bit difficult to read, but it looks pretty calm for our area...bit more breeze in New Caledonia, and maybe a trough arching up our way ?...can't tell really.

Waiting for the rain to clear ..its looking hopeful before heading off to Vila to send this off.....

0900 bye to Gannet – Where are you bound ?...Vila !Good Luck ! motoring off down the harbor with the main up and the breeze is getting a bit stiff...20knots – take a reef in the main...carry on

0930 not even in the Hilliard Channel and its 28 knots+...take a 2nd reef ? Hold on ! what's the rush ?..if its 28+ in here, what's it going to be like out there ? Forget it it.....turn around and run back to the bay..anchored in the same spot.

10 minutes later dinghy comes over from Gannet “Just came to see if you are alright” she says..thanks, that's nice, all OK, just the wind I explain – Eva Birgitta, the polishing woman, Swedish, met the Gannet man a couple of years ago in Russell and fell in love..been cruising with him ever since – he's been going 15 yrs and is over 70 !!. Unfortunately he cut his leg on coral here and its infected – badly – he's got antibiotic powders, creams, pills, but it's taking a long time to heal, and meantime he's almost completely incapacitated.... So they stay here in the meantime.

I'm making more bread...it fills in the time !



Gannet

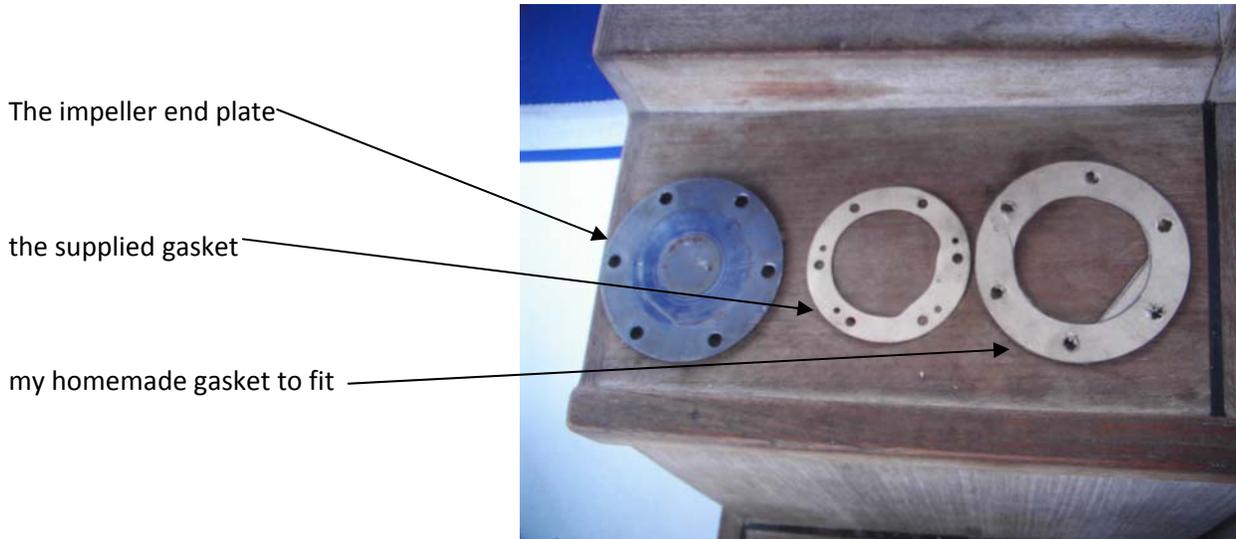


A Hunter something wrecked on the rocks !



Havannah Harbour looking from the anchorage towards Hilliard Channel...looks serene ?....it ain't !

Decide to change the raw water pump impeller gasket.....oops, the ones supplied are the wrong ones ..,too small ! Have to make one, just as well we have gasket material.....have to sort that out when we get back...no point in having spare impellers if we don't have gaskets to fit.



Wednesday September 1st

Forecast is for continuing wind.... There's an intensifying high over Australia / Tasman Sea which is causing strong SE winds in this area. On the 500mb chart there's a short wave trough extending from New Zealand up towards Vanuatu which is what brought the cloudy showery weather yesterday.

So for now, we stay put.

Thursday September 2

Nice morning... decide to go to Vila !

Easy sail out of Havannah harbor...NE here....turns E then ESE as we round the corner and head for Pointe du Diable or Devils Point.....good name...the sea here churns in eddies and vortices when the tide is going in and when the tide is going out and when its slack, its just messy...any way, hard on the wind in 24 knots with a reef and we're doing about 3 knots !...bang crash.....get to a layline and tack over...suddenly with the sea on the beam we're doing 5 knots in the same wind...take this board all the way to Mele Bay then tack across to the red / green markers (now that I know where they are !) and sail in to the anchorage...so here we are again at Port Vila.....