

ARCOORIE: Adelaide to Vanuatu

Almost a year ago, Ken White left the Squadron in ARCOORIE for Singapore, arriving there in November 91. He has set up a headhunting (executive search) business with Boyden International in Singapore and with the Americans and Europeans developing manufacturing and marketing operations there for the developing Asian market, he is finding business buoyant. He intends staying in Singapore for about a year before heading off in ARCOORIE for Europe. On his way to Singapore he visited New Caledonia, Vanuatu, New Guinea, Darwin and Indonesia. The following is Ken's description of his trip as far as Vanuatu.

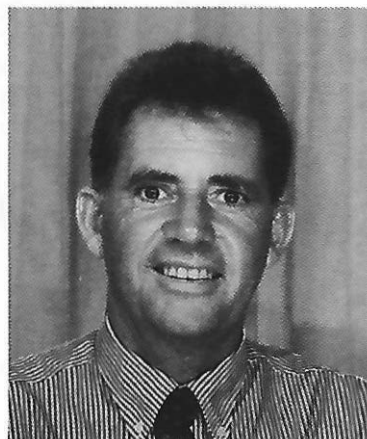
I left Adelaide on 30th March 91 and had quite a boisterous sail to Sydney. The wind was in the SW all the way to Wilson's Prom and I made good time with my 2 crew. The crew left the boat at Wilson's Prom and hiked back to civilization. I continued on singlehanded encountering a gale from the east and taking three days to get to Eden from Wilson's Prom. I steered by hand all the way as the mount of my auto pilot hydraulic ram was wrenched from the deck beam in a heavy quartering sea. By the time reached Eden I was drunk with tiredness and my eyes looked like road maps.

After some repairs and sleep I continued on to Sydney with an American student, a friend of my son. In Sydney I moored at the Sydney Amateurs in Cremorne, one of the most delightful and friendly yacht clubs in the world. I hauled ARCOORIE out for antifouling prior to heading off into the Pacific Ocean. I was persuaded to call in at Lord Howe Is by the racing fraternity at the Amateurs who race there every year. I set off for this tiny spec some 300 miles to the NE of Sydney with a journalist friend Robin Harris.

We encountered strong winds, rain, lightning and heavy seas. Lightning knocked out the sat nav and excessive water over the decks penetrated the circuit board of the auto pilot in the engine room below. At one stage in blinding rain and heavy seas the auto pilot jammed in the on position with the rudder full to port. We kept circling, with sails flapping, pitching and rolling as we came through the

wind. I went down into the aft cabin with a screwdriver and disconnected the auto pilot and we continued on our way. The cold fronts passed over us in quick succession and it was only possible to take a few sextant sights in the 3 days we were at sea. I had calculated that we were about 12 miles from Lord Howe Is but visibility was so bad we could not see the prominent land form of the island. I radioed the Harbour Master but got no answer. It was only later discovered that nearly all the inhabitants of Lord Howe Is are Seventh Day Adventists and I was calling on a Saturday morning when they were at church.

By sunset of the third day with no sight of land and ominous black clouds we noted our DR position in the log and turned for Coffs Harbour 400 miles to the west.



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The weather moderated and we arrived in Coffs Harbour 3 days later just before sunset making about 133 miles a day.

I spent a week in Coffs Harbour repairing the sat nav and auto pilot. Robin had returned to work and I set about recruiting some crew for the trip to New Caledonia 900 miles out into the Pacific. I put a note on the notice board of the local backpackers hostel and the following day a young Irishman and his Swedish girlfriend came knocking on my cabin top at the marina. The fees by the way at Coffs harbour marina are \$40 per week and the facilities are quite good with a supermarket close by and a fish cooperative right on the dockside.

The 2 backpackers had no previous sailing experience but were keen to come. Making sure they had enough cash and air tickets out of New Caledonia I agreed to have them aboard.

We left on the evening of 30th May with a strong SW wind blowing. In the first 2 days we had made 330 NM flying along in the fresh breeze of 25 to 30 knots with no 1 jib full main and mizzen.

On the third day the wind swung to the east and strengthened to 45 knots. At this stage we were hard on the wind smashing into the oncoming waves. The crew being inexperienced were not a great help. The Irish lad, however was good at taking his turn at the wheel. We took 4 hour watches but there was no way this lad could learn how to master the seas. He kept a straight course at all times, straight into the oncoming waves.

ARCOORIE would become airborne and then crash belly down in to the trough, lying in my bunk it was impossible to sleep. I tried

explaining to him to pull off the wave, take in on the quarter, ride along the crest and slide gently down the back. But alas my teaching was wasted. In truth I think he was terrified and just kept hanging on to the wheel for safety.

I must say that I was quite scared myself when we were 500 miles from Australia and 400 from New Caledonia with the weather getting worse with continual rain squalls and constant jarring as the boat leapt from one wave to the next. I was not sure how much punishment the boat could take. With the pounding on the hull one of the stainless steel nuts on the windward chainplate sheered off under the strain.

I should have reefed earlier but with the conditions so bad and knowing I had to go forward and do the work I just kept putting it off. I switched on the deck lights on the fourth night to go forward and reconnect a spinnaker pole that was banging about and to my amazement saw that the jib was torn along the centre seam. I put Sean on the wheel and set about taking the jib in and hoisting a No 2 and taking a reef in the main. Our speed dropped to just below 8 knots and less water was coming over the deck.

As we neared the coast of New Caledonia the seas became smoother although the wind still remained above 25 knots. On the seventh day we saw the land and identified our position a beam of Bay St Vincent some 30 miles NW of Boulari passage through the reef to Noumea. The next day we had a delightful sail down the coast in light winds and were abeam of Boulari passage by dusk. Strong easterly winds sent us scudding along at 10 knots and I was reluctant to enter the passage at night. We hove to with just the mizzen and waited until morning to enter.

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By lunch time we tied up at the marina of the Bay Du Moselle a few hours short of 8 days from Coffs Harbour. We cleared Customs and Immigration and began the cleaning up. The engine room was full of wet clothes as even with our wet weather gear on we were continually drenched with salt water. All of us had salt water sores from being constantly wet for 8 days. The sails stowed up forward were wet with salt water coming down the anchor chain hause pipe. The whole boat smelt like the Victoria Square mens' public toilet. We cleared everything out of the boat and hosed the inside with fresh water and detergent.

Noumea is a delightful place, colonial French architecture, abundant cheap wine, the smell of fresh bread and very expensive commodities. It was delightful to have a hot shower and stroll the streets of Noumea and buy fresh fruit and vegetables from the market on the dockside. I took the opportunity to have the generator repaired and 3 sails stitched, reluctantly parting with A\$1000 for the 2 jobs.

In talking to the many skippers who had sailed from the US across the Pacific to NZ and Australia they told me that the crossing from Australia to New Caledonia was the worst passage they had experienced with some boats taking 20 days with most taking between 8 and 10 days. If this had been my first ocean crossing I think I would have given up sailing and taken up stamp collecting.

After 2 weeks of sophisticated living I set off alone for Vila in Vanuatu, a journey of 300 miles. On clearing I asked the Customs official if I could stop at Uvea Atoll on my way. He said "No. If you do stop and there is problem it will be your problem". With those words of encouragement I left Noumea for Bay Du Prony on the Southern tip of New Caledonia.

It was a pleasant day's sail, a trifle tense in avoiding the numerous reefs along the way but I came to anchor in a very well protected bay completely alone, on a mirror like sea with a grey sky.

The following morning I left the anchorage and proceeded toward Havana Passage out of the reef area and along the north coast. By evening I had cleared the danger zone and passed a number of wrecks on the reef and was in the open sea heading to Uvea Atoll some 60 miles away. The wind was behind me as I sailed in 15 knots of breeze and a gentle sea. During the night the sat nav suddenly went off and my auto pilot refused to work. The steering had become quite stiff as I made my way by dead reckoning to Uvea Atoll.

I took a few compass bearings during the night to confirm my position and in the early hours of the morning I could just make out a land form (only 30 metres above sea level) way in the distance. As I came near the entrance passage using Alan Lucas' book, a severe rain squall hit, obliterating the atoll and the buoy marking the reef at the entrance. I hove to until the storm passed and then sailed through the passage to the white sandy beach fringed with palm trees and anchored in front of one of the 12 churches on this atoll. The water was light jade in colour and incredibly clear.

In this placid lagoon I set about dismantling the sat nav and the auto pilot. After working all day on these 2 projects I discovered that it was my house battery that was flat. By using jumper leads I was able to charge the battery and all was ok.

At mid day I sailed across this placid lagoon to Fayole the administrative centre. On the way the auto pilot stopped working. If it is not one thing it is another. Cruising seems to consist of

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90% maintenance and 10% fun. I anchored off the administrative centre. There were other yachts BATEAU and ROMANIC permanently moored there. I looked ashore through the binoculars and saw about 10 people on the shore and only 1 woman among them. I thought nothing of this at the time.

Later, I went ashore and spoke briefly to the only person on the beach, a good looking Frenchman of about 25 years old. He spoke no English and I no French so the conversation was brief. He wanted to know my nationality and the nationality of the flag on my boat. I wanted to know where I could buy bread. Following our brief trade, I set off for a walk along the road. I passed a couple of locals who reluctantly answered my hello with a subdued bonsoir. I walked past the French equivalent of Telecom and could see that there was nothing interesting ahead. I turned and walked west where I saw a cat sitting on a wall and I contemplated taking a photograph to show the quiet idyllic nature of this place but then thought no one would get the point and I walked on. I saw a derelict garage with twisted rusting framework and 2 rusty Renault cars abandoned in the wreckage.

I thought there must have been a cyclone through here and then I saw a look-out with sand bags around it. I thought that it was a vestige of the trouble with the Kanaks last year. I was about to take a photograph when I noticed through the new barbed wire a soldier with a gun. I kept walking, this was the Gendarmerie. Those guys on the beach this morning were soldiers. My mind raced. I should not be here, I have cleared Customs, the Customs Officer had said if there are any problems "they will be your problems." Here am I walking along with a camera, I am going to be stopped any moment, what shall I do. Act naturally, keep walking. I continued on

around the corner next to the public school. However, I could not help noticing the barbed wire around the Gendarmerie, with large cans hanging on the wire to alert the guard if someone was to break in. There were several other pill boxes with sand bags.

There were signs of destruction to some of the buildings; a fire of some sort. The guard on duty kept watching me. I passed 2 more local guys dressed in revolutionary or antiauthoritarian clothes, a woven beany, an ex French paratroopers jacket and bearded, they reluctantly returned my "giday", given in an accentuated Australian accent. Then I saw a slogan painted in the road. Obviously the locals are still fighting the French. Later I was to discover that 32 local people were killed by the French last year here.

The sail from Uvea to Vila was a long 200 miles and took me 2 days. I left the anchorage at Fayole at 5.30 am and motored to Baelari passage some 20 miles across the lagoon. I had no chart of the lagoon or detailed chart of Efate Island where Pt Vila is. I have a map of the South Pacific which gives me the direction and the list of lights that gives me the lat and long of the leading lights of Vila. Also I have Alan Lucas "Cruising in New Caledonia and Vanuatu" which provides sketch maps of Uvea and Vila Harbour. The photographs and the map of Uvea was quite adequate in finding my way to the open sea.

The trip was difficult and exhausting. I suffered from little sleep as the auto pilot was playing up requiring me to steer almost continuously. By midnight of the second night I had calculated that I was 40 NM south of Vila and estimated that I would arrive at about 7 or 8am. At first light the sea was grey and so was the sky. A few light showers fell and although I was 15 NM from land, I could not

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see anything. Eventually as I closed the island I saw the gap in the reef and headed in through the shipping channel. I did not see the light on the end of the reef and when in a little further I saw through my binoculars, a drying reef straight ahead. This was not the shipping channel and I turned around and headed back out to sea to re read the Pilot. It said "Do not mistake Eracore Point for Pango Point 3 miles to the north. Sure enough, 3 miles further north I found the light structure (although the light has not worked for some time) and passed through the reef.

I made my way around the point and into Vila where I anchored near the yellow quarantine

buoy to await the Customs officials. After several hours, I noticed 2 people waving to me from the shore. I lowered the dinghy and went ashore where I picked up the 2 Customs Officers and brought them back to the boat. This year their budget had been cut and they could not afford a boat to inspect incoming ships.

Vanuatu is one of the few remaining tropical paradises left in the world. I was to stay there for a month and was hired to search for a wave recorder buoy that had come adrift 60 NM off the coast, but more about that in my next letter. SQ

Breaches of the Boating Act

In May, Mr R S James, Dept Marine and Harbors Senior Marine Safety Officer wrote to the Commodore to bring to our attention that some of our members are not observing some of the requirements of the Boating Act and other marine legislation. To help members to better understand their obligations under the Act, Mr James in his letter explained in some detail those matters that are causing his staff concern. The following is the text of his letter.

It has been brought to my notice by Marine Safety Officers from this Department that on occasions some of your members have been found to have been operating their vessels whilst in breach of some of the requirements of the Boating Act. From information available to me the two most prevalent breaches which are readily apparent involve the operation of unregistered power driven tenders and registration numbers not displayed on yachts whilst they are being operated under power.

Section 12(1) and 16(1) of the Boating Act, 1974, respectively, clearly indicate, in relation to the above, the requirements and responsibility placed upon the operators of such craft. To help overcome any ambiguity

which may exist regarding the above I will explain in more detail each issue separately.

TENDERS

A tender, under the Act, is a boat that is not more than 3.048 metres (10 feet) in length and is used as a means of transportation between the parent vessel and the shore but for no other purpose. Tenders used in inshore waters (up to 1.25 nautical miles to seaward of low water mark), are exempted from the requirement to carry safety equipment. They are not however, if they are motorised, exempted from the requirement to be registered. If the tender, or any other motor boat, does not exceed 3.048 metres in length and the motor is not capable of developing

Breaches of the Boating Act...

more than 5 horsepower then a registration fee at a concessional rate is applicable.

MOTORISED YACHTS

A motor boat, under the Act, is any boat that is propelled by an internal combustion engine, an electrical engine, or other similar device regardless of whether that engine is the principal means of propulsion or not. Quite clearly then, it follows that a yacht which is fitted with an auxiliary motor, whilst it is being propelled wholly or to some extent by that motor (eg power sailing) for the purposes of the Act, is a motor boat and the same registration and licensing requirements apply including the requirement to display

registration numbers and labels.

I request that you bring these facts to the notice of your members so that those members who may currently be in breach of the Act are given the opportunity to remedy any deficiencies. There is a maximum penalty of \$500 applicable for any of the above mentioned breaches. Please be advised that any vessel operators detected for future breaches of the Boating Act or any other Marine Legislation are likely to be facing prosecution proceedings. I would hope, however, that this course of action will not be necessary. SQ

A Delivery Voyage with a Difference

Well known local racing yachtsman Ian Moncrieff was recently invited to crew on a delivery voyage with a difference. The task was to take a river boat from Mannum to Renmark. After 5 seconds of careful consideration, he made one of his better decisions and said "yes". The following is Ian's account of the adventure.

The principle purpose of the voyage was to position MV PALPERIPA at Jane Eliza Landing, Renmark in readiness for the Olympic River Run which commences on 4th July 92 and finishes on 11th July 92 at Wentworth in NSW.

PALPERIPA from the keel to the deckline consists of a carvel built 19 mm (3/4") plank, 9.2 m (30') long Queenscliff cutter hull, believed to have been built around 1930. The superstructure was reconstructed more recently to give full headroom below. The quarterdeck portion serves as wheelhouse, lounge, dining room and a cosy sleeping berth when the canvas side curtains are zipped down. A 3 cylinder 40 hp Perkins marine diesel provides power to a 48 mm (1 7/8") 3 blade prop. The vessel has a draft of 900 mm (3') and has an electronic depth sounder that

proved to be a key instrument of navigation as the trip progressed. The ship was well maintained and a credit to its owner.

The crew comprised Milne, the PBO, Don the cook and expert bowman, and myself a visitor. My special duties were making morning and afternoon tea which was always warmly accepted, and giving useful advice which was always ignored. I immediately felt at home as it was so much like sailing on PIED PIPER.

Each day we commenced travelling at 0700 hrs aided by the early morning cup of tea. Our speed averaged 5 1/2 knots and as there was virtually no tide (sorry, current) it was made good. The weather was mostly clear and fine. "Anchoring" for breakfast and lunch consisted of grabbing and lying against a willow. Just before nightfall we pulled up at a suitable