

Australian International Cadet Championships

Stuart Emery, Junior Captain

The 36th Australian championship races of the International Cadet Class were held at the Sandy Bay Sailing Club in Tasmania from 27 December, 1997, when local boats scooped the pool. The championship consisted of eight races over Olympic courses, two each day. We had excellent weather for the 52 boats taking part, with morning winds of 10-15 knots, rising to 15-20 in the afternoons.

The new Australian champion is Jamie Chung Gon from Tasmania, sailing *Pelorus* with Mark Jeffrey. Second was *White Magic*, and third *Brass Monkey*, both also from Tasmania. Results for the South Australian participants were —

21st *Tornado* RSAYS-CSC
Andrew Hughes/Sarah Peterson

23rd *How Bizarre* RSAYS-LBSC
Stuart Emery/Adam Kretschmer

25th *Delta* GSC-RSAYS
Shane Hughes/Todd Hughes

32nd *In the Groove* RSAYS-LBSC
Emma Homan/Samantha Homan

38th *Swiftsure* GSC
Alan Hutchinson/Sam Muirhead

43rd *The Saint* RSAYS
Sophie Krakowski/Brooke Kilowsky

Next year both Australian and World Championships will be held at Geelong. This will be an excellent opportunity for our Juniors to sail against the best the world has to offer. SQ

Holdfast Trainer State Heats

Glen Emery

The Port Lincoln Yacht Club held the second round of State heats for 42 Holdfast Trainers on the weekend of the Australia Day holiday (24-26 January). The wind was around 20-30 knots, and in the first race only about 25 boats finished the course. For the second race the wind gusted to 30 knots or more, and only 16 finished, but on Sunday it was a more modest 15-20 knots.

Bubblegum, sailed by Glen Emery and Brad Windram, finished sixth in Heat 4 and was first on handicap in that race, being placed sixth overall in the State Championship.

Next season we hope to have at least four Holdies racing from the Squadron, to give us a good chance of winning the team trophy. SQ

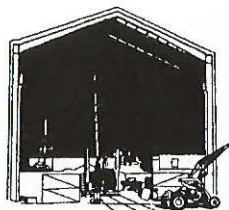
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Just Jane ventures into the Pacific

Jo Capel

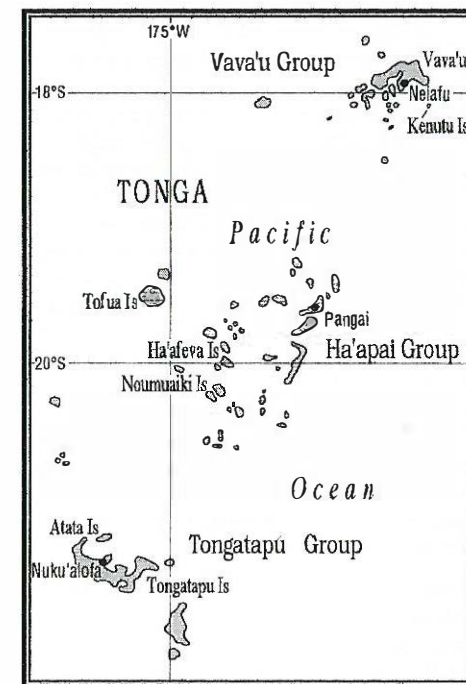
Continuing from our last issue, in which the Capels reached the Bay of Islands and finally Opua, to clear Customs and proceed to Tonga and beyond ...

As usual, we left with a favourable weather forecast, and as usual after a matter of hours it deteriorated. We were about 50 nm on our way, sailing in a 15 knot E, when John Taylor of the South Australian yacht *Midnight Sun* called us and strongly advised that we head back. His weather fax showed an intense low pressure system off Fiji. We decided against turning back for a variety of reasons. Fiji was a long way away, and the intense low might weaken before it got to us. We were sailing quite comfortably and making good progress. The real reason was that if we did turn back, we would then have to psych ourselves up to leave again, and we found that the most difficult of all.

By the end of the first day, the wind was about 25 knots from E, and — horror of horrors! — my worst fears came true. The intense low had turned into Cyclone June and was heading in a SE direction towards us. After much discussion, we still decided to keep going, with the option of turning round and running if conditions really deteriorated. We made sure everything was secured. All locker covers, floor boards, cupboard doors, fridge doors, every possible moving object was fixed in place, so that if by chance we did roll nothing would fly out.

On day two the wind increased to about 30 knots and we were close hauled. Cyclone June had intensified, and so had the size of the seas. On day three we hove to in order to assess the situation. We were also hungry, and, as Tim said, he needed a toilet stop. Taupo Maritime radio announced that Cyclone June was weakening to become a tropical depression. While this news made us feel somewhat relieved, we were then experiencing 30 to 40 knot E, with some very unfriendly waves breaking over us.

On days four and five the winds increased to 40 to 50 knots, and we were slamming into what seemed like concrete walls. At this stage we had only a small jib up, and due to the unusual seas we were physically airborne as we lay in our



bunks. Awful reports came through on the HF radio skeds. One yacht was rolled and activated its EPIRB; another jettisoned his anchor and chain because the chain had pounded through his bulkhead; *Little Swan* (with whom we were travelling in company) had broken her rudder; and others were hove to or lying a-hull to bear the brunt of the weather. The wind screamed through the rigging and the waves came straight over on top of us. The weather forecast for the area was still called a *tropical depression*, which was a good description of our mood. Tim, who never fails to maintain his sense of humour, compared it to a roller coaster ride. He suggested that instead of being the Entertainment Officer as he usually is on our long passage, he should change his role and become Comfort Officer, as he thought we looked a little stressed. This brought a grin to our faces and cheered Arnold and me up.

On the evening of day six the wind peaked at about 55 gusting to 60 knots. We were still

sailing under reduced jib, and although it was extremely uncomfortable we were crawling along at about three knots in the right direction and everything was still in one piece and operating. On day seven the wind abated. *Little Swan* sent a crew member overboard to fix the rudder temporarily; search and rescue were out doing grid patterns looking for the yacht which set off the EPIRB; and we pulled our main up to increase speed. Getting it up between lazy jacks was easier said than done. The seas were large, so holding *Just Jane* into the wind was going to be extremely difficult and whoever pulled the sail up was going to get very wet. Putting on wet weather gear was sensible, but this was guaranteed to make us seasick, so we dismissed that idea. I suggested to Arnold that he should take all his clothes off, but he wasn't keen. He had visions of being seen on the news as 'naked sailor washed off deck while trying to hoist sail'. Eventually he was persuaded and unhappily stripped off. Tim just thought that his parents had gone mad.

In the afternoon of day seven it seemed that we had sailed into another dimension, out of a long dark tunnel and into light. The sun came out, it was warm, the wind was now behind us at only 15 knots and Tim cooked us all a great meal. On day eight we really felt we were in heaven. The sailing was perfect, with blue seas and sky, and we were so excited at being close to Tonga that we stayed awake that night. As the sun rose on day nine we saw Tonga. We had arrived in Paradise.

Tongans came out to greet us and led us through the reefs to a safe anchorage at Atata Island. As we anchored we could hear magnificent singing, as it was Sunday and they were at church. In our week there, we enjoyed their singing and dancing and attended a church service, where the minister yelled loudly and cried profusely, leaving Arnold and me wondering if we were indeed terrible sinners. [According to the 1989 edition of *Pacific Islands Yearbook*, the largest religious group in Tonga is the Free Wesleyan Church, with several breakaway Wesleyan groups and various minority denominations. — Ed.] We sailed on to Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga on the island of Tongatapu (the most southerly of the Tongan islands) and tied up Mediterranean

style in the harbour. The town itself has a third world flavour, complete with large numbers of pigs, dogs and chickens which roam the streets. Poverty and subsistence life are clearly evident. [In 1986 the population was 34,715 — Ed.] We very quickly became aware of the 'Tongan Way' (Fakatonga), which is, 'Do it tomorrow.'

In Nuku'alofa we were lucky enough to attend a party put on by the Minister responsible for tourism for the Official Opening of the 1997 Cruising Season. With several other yachties and kids we arrived at the appropriate time to indulge in what we thought would be a few nibbles and a couple of free drinks. Three hours later, several yachties didn't have a clue which yacht they came from, or even if they had any kids. We were given any drink we asked for and plate after plate of delicacies came round. As soon as we finished one drink, another arrived in front of us. At this stage I was starting to think about the huge bill to be issued as we left, but everything was free, and we all staggered back to our yachts, very happy to be in Tonga. The next morning the harbour was very quiet, and many yachties looked decidedly ill.

From Tongatapu we sailed about 60 nm to the Ha'apai Group and Noumuaiki, a prison island. We found a couple of prisoners and a guard, living a relaxed and easy lifestyle, which involved a bit of fishing, a bit of gardening, a bit of afternoon dozing and a bit of vegetable gardening. We were able to walk round their island, do some snorkelling and blend into the prison way of life. *Little Swan* was with us, and had a group of backpackers as crew. *Easy* was an American yacht, with a twelve year-old boy called Life [sic] and Johanna, a girl of fourteen. Tim and the kids spent most of their time between the three boats.

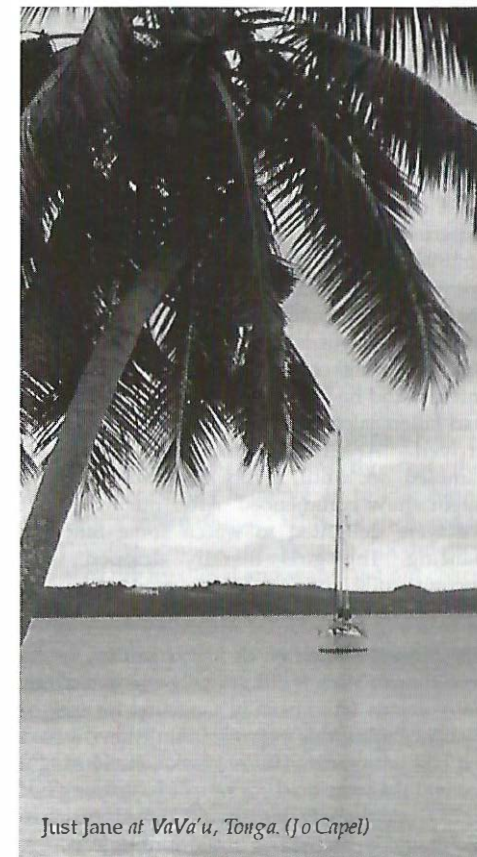
Tongan weather forecasts were few and far between and in keeping with the Tongan Way. Consequently some days we had a forecast and some days we didn't. One thing was consistent, for when we did have it, it was always the same, '15 to 20 knot SE winds, outlook fine.' This had quite a remarkable psychological effect, because even though it may be blowing NE at 25 knots with a rolly and uncomfortable anchorage, you can always comfort yourself by saying, 'Well, the forecast was for fine weather and SE winds.'

[Noumuka, S of the main Ha'apai Group, was visited by more voyagers than any other island in Tonga. The large pond still exists from which fresh water was taken by Tasman, Cook, Bligh and others. Total population of the group in 1986 was 8,979. — Ed.]

From Noumuaiki Island *Just Jane* with *Little Swan* and *Easy* sailed on in fine weather and 15 to 20 knot SE winds 22 nm to Haa'feva Island, where we found a beautiful anchorage behind a reef. This island is quite remote and involved some great orienteering skills (of which we have none) and some intricate tracking through bush paths to find the village.

Tim, Arnold and I set out in search of it, complete with a machete to get some coconuts on the way, and the Swiss Army pocket knife which I have discovered to be a must for all male yachties. I have observed that Swiss Army knives are popular topics among guys when they are sitting in cockpits drinking rum or whatever. Invariably the topic comes up, and immediately they each bring one out to compare notes. These knives are indeed all different and have various attributes. Their male owners compare their various sizes, their uses and new ones on the market. On *Just Jane* I have noticed that such a discussion can extend over several hours, and my comments that this represented some sort of technique for male bonding were either ignored or frowned upon.

The three of us spent a long but unsuccessful time in search of the village, until we came across an old Tongan who was macheting his way through another track. Asking for directions involved a lot of hand gestures and a few drawings in the dirt. The old man grinned, used his machete to get a coconut, on which he started to carve a map. He decided that wasn't the right tool for drawing maps on coconuts, and out of his pocket he drew — a Swiss Army pocket knife! This astounded us, and I did not dare look at Arnold. I could see the glint in Tim's eye and the smirk on his face, and I hoped that they wouldn't feel obliged to display their own versions of the type. Nevertheless, the knife did a good job, and the intricate work of art led us on a delightful tropical bush walk to the village itself. This was a real eye opener. There were pigs everywhere and squalor, but



Just Jane at VaVa'u, Tonga. (Jo Capel)

the people were overwhelmingly friendly and insisted on giving us yams, oranges and shells. With our coconut map we safely made our way home to *Just Jane*.

Our next stop was 25 nm to Pangai Harbour, newly constructed as a gift from the Australian Government to that of Tonga. Here we celebrated Tim's twelfth birthday with *Little Swan* and the kids from *Easy*. The party went well into the night, and we were joined by some of the locals when Tony from *Little Swan* set off some outdated flares to celebrate the occasion. The locals informed us that a lady in the village had died, so for three days they would be in mourning and everything would be closed. It was also the King's birthday, so there would be a public holiday and another three days of nothing happening.

With this in mind, *Little Swan* and *Easy* decided to head further N to the Vava'u Group. Despite mourning and birthday celebrations, the annual cultural Ha'apai Festival was about to start, providing a week of festivities ranging from dancing and singing to diving and swimming races. We chose to stay in Pangai, as we thought Tim should have this educational experience. We arrived on time at the local hall at 1800, but keeping in mind the Tongan Way we were not surprised that the advertised time for the talent competition between villagers from the various islands was delayed to 1900. By then the ticket collector at the door had lost interest and had disappeared, several Tongans had fallen asleep and the guest speaker hadn't arrived. At 1930 introductory speakers rambled on, until finally at about 2015 the talent show commenced. After our long wait we were delighted to watch some fantastic dancing. The girls literally dripped with coconut oil, and the boys produced very impressive blood-curdling shrieks.

The festival carried on as it had started, in the true 'Tongan Way. It didn't really eventuate. The daily events were usually cancelled for lack of interest, with the promise that they would happen tomorrow. After a week experiencing a festival that was on the verge of happening but didn't, we thought we should move on or we too would be engrossed in the Tongan Way.

The next few days were spent hopping from island to island, snorkelling and trading with the locals for fruit and wood carvings. With the usual weather forecast of 'Fine weather and SE winds, 15-20 knots' we headed 65 nm to the Vava'u Group [34 islands with a population of 5,273 — Ed.]. The island of Vava'u is the largest, and is well known to have one of the most beautiful harbours in the Pacific. Vava'u is not as backward as the Haapai Group, but it has seen very little change in the past fifty years. The waters are crystal clear and pollution is minimal. The charts are somewhat inaccurate, and the three that we had of the area are all different. The islands had different names, were at different places and one chart had a couple of extra islands. By this stage I was getting used to such discrepancies, and they didn't worry me as much as they would have a few months earlier.

We were now well and truly into the Tongan Way of Life. Tim's school work was practically non-existent, and any maintenance work on the boat was put off until the next day. I decided to take a positive approach to Tim's schooling. Although he was not entirely completing the boring curriculum assignments that the Open Access College in Adelaide was sending him, he had perfected his skills in using the dinghy and the outboard motor; he could navigate, read the GPS and plot our position on the chart; responsibly use the VHF and HF radios; cook; and entertain and socialise with any age group.

The Vava'u Group of islands was ideal for safe and relaxed cruising. The distance between anchorages ranged from 5 to 15 nm, and the water was so clear that we could see the bottom 30 metres below the surface. Every morning at 0830 the cruisers' net came on the VHF radio. This was run by volunteers, and informed us of weather forecasts, tide times, anyone wanting to sell, buy or trade, functions or feasts or anything about anything. We spent our days exploring all the different anchorages, snorkelling over coral reefs, listening to the whales singing under the water and viewing the tropical marine life. This was perfect cruising! It was the stuff we had read about in yachting magazines.

We dived at the famous Mariner's Cave, which is underwater and difficult to find. The instructions were that we had to 'be on the lookout for a



Tim Capel in search of the prominent coconut tree marking Mariner's Cave. (Jo Capel)

patch of white leaching or stain on the rock cliff face. When you are about a hundred feet from the cliff, you will see one prominent coconut tree standing right above the white patch area. Mariner's Cave entrance is directly below this position.' As we motored up and down parallel to the cliff face, we noticed that there appeared to be an awful lot of white patches and prominent coconut trees, until eventually we decided that one was indeed the most prominent. As it was too deep to anchor, we did the dive in turns. Some New Zealanders left their yacht at an anchorage about three run away and joined us with their kids. While they stayed on *Just Jane* and motored up and down, we took the kids with us and swam over to the cliff face under the prominent coconut tree. The cave was not visible from the surface, and to get into it we had to dive down about eight feet to the entry, and then fourteen feet through a passage under the rock until we could resurface inside a large cathedral-like space illuminated only by the blue light diffused from the entrance. The gentle swell increased the pressure in the cave and made the eardrums pop. The increased pressure also condensed out the high humidity into a misty green fog, only to disappear a split second later. Some of the adults were reluctant to swim through the dark underwater passage, but the children went in and out like fish.

[The first European description of Mariner's Cave was by William Mariner in 1817 and was woven into a celebrated poem by Byron called *The Island*. This has been copied and annotated for the Squadron Library. — Ed.]

Our favourite anchorage in Vava'u was Kenutu Island. To get there we had to navigate

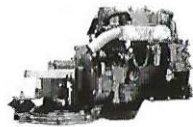
Just Jane through some reefs marked by crude sticks with coconuts fixed on top. Kenutu is the most easterly of the islands, and has a German lady caretaker. She lives in a tree house with Moses, a Tongan from a neighbouring island. It was at Kenutu that we successfully tried spinnaker kite flying. Bern off a New Zealand yacht claimed to have instructions on how to do it. What he didn't tell us was that they were written in German, but there was a good photograph which was enough to get us going. Tim shot up in the air with the kite like a rocket, and *Just Jane* looked spectacular with a huge spinnaker flying and him suspended underneath.

The time came to leave Tonga. We had been in this tropical paradise for almost three months, and we were ready to move on to Fiji. Along with other international yachts we anchored in Neiafu, the 'capital' of Vavau'a [population 5,273] to top up diesel and water, get out charts of Fiji and double check rigging and safety equipment. We cleared Customs and sailed to a well protected bay to finish preparations for the passage and get a good night's sleep. Some friends from the yacht *North Star* asked if we could come in their boat to show them exactly where Mariner's Cave was. Even though we were now illegally in Tonga, we couldn't resist one last visit, so we grabbed our snorkelling gear, jumped aboard *North Star* and went in search of the 'prominent coconut tree'.

Next morning, with the usual forecast of 'fine weather, SE winds 15 to 20 knots' we sadly left Tonga and set sail for Suva, Fiji ...

SQ

[To be continued. The spelling adopted is that of *Pacific Islands Year Book*, which looks sufficiently official.]





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