

Queensland, Australia! The weather forecast was favourable for our departure on 11 September and we had the best passage of the whole trip. The MPS was set as a spinnaker for one 38-hour period without any adjustment and the ESE trades carried us the 900 miles to Australia in seven and a half days.

We changed our destination to Gladstone after a couple of days. This brought the wind more on the quarter, as the square running gave us an uncomfortable roll. We dropped anchor in Pancake Creek just before dusk and next morning woke to the sound of kookaburra laughter. I felt we were truly home.

In due course, our son Chris, and daughter-in-law, Barb, met us on the same landing that they had waved goodbye from, almost twelve months before. Our log showed that we had covered over 12,000 nautical miles. We had spent 42 days sailing 4,300 nautical miles on ocean passages. It had been a very worthwhile experience.

How has this affected my life? It has reinforced much of what I already knew. For example, I

have a loyal and adventurous wife who is an excellent sailing companion. The cruising life and farming life bear remarkable similarities. The weather dictates your good fortune or otherwise. There is a need for self-motivation and perseverance, long term planning with day to day flexibility and an independent nature.

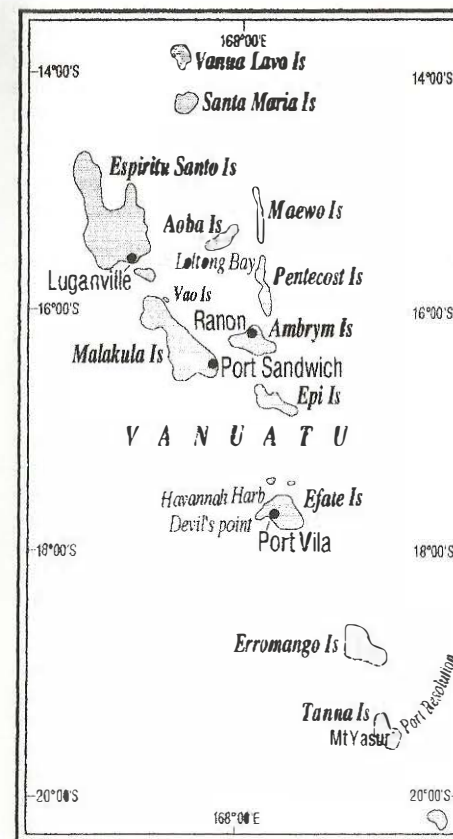
It has also changed the way I think about other countries. I am especially aware of the lifestyle of our near Pacific neighbours. The international cruisers with whom we became friends have added a new dimension to our world and continue to do so as we follow their voyages by mail. We both found that we valued having a home, family and friends to return to. I think the greatest change for me is that I now feel as if I exist in two worlds and I know that Mal feels the same way. The cruising lifestyle is always there beckoning us to return. We will go again sometime, out there, beyond Backstairs Passage.

'A man who knows his ship is sound can sit back and enjoy the storm.'

Blaise Pascal (1623-62)



Dugongs and Volcanos: Just Jane in Vanuatu



Jo Capel

Vanuatu, known until independence in 1980 as New Hebrides, is a double chain of 80 islands, with a population in 1986 of over 140,000, growing then at 3.1% per annum. The people are Melanesians, speaking more than a hundred local languages. The official language is a pidgin known as Bislama. The islands have been inhabited for several thousand years, and the first European explorer to visit the group was Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, on 25 April, 1606. He named Australia [sic] del Espiritu Santu, where he planned a city of La Nueva Jerusalem on the banks of the River Jordan. He left after 55 days. In 1768 Bougainville passed through the group, and Cook in 1774 explored and named most of the southern islands. His longest stay was sixteen days on Tanna. Bligh named the Banks Group during his open-boat voyage in 1789. The sandalwood trade began at Port Resolution on Tanna Island in 1825, and in 1839 there was a massacre of missionaries of the London Missionary Society. More missionaries followed them from Samoa and New Zealand. Blackbirding, originally based in Twofold Bay, NSW, began in 1847, supplying virtual slave labour to Queensland

cane fields. In 1886, after years of negotiation, a unique joint French-British condominium was established, which survived until independence. There was brief dollar prosperity during the Second World War, which left long memories, especially through the Jon Frum movement, with aspects of a Cargo Cult. The main industry is now tourism. — Information from *Pacific Islands Yearbook*, 16th Edition (1989).

Once through the reefs of Lautoka Island, Fiji the passage is a clear run in a westerly direction for 520 nm to Efate Island and Port Vila. As we had a 25-knot SE we automatically double reefed the main. We never used the first reef in the main, as we tended to roll up our genoa a little instead, so we removed that reef line when we were in New Zealand, leaving us with a choice of a double or triple reefed main.

Sailing along at about 7 knots we talked to Derek from Sydney Penta Comstat, to report our position and pick up the latest weather information. The forecast from Taupo Maritime Radio New Zealand on the HF radio indicated that we would have a 20 to 25 SE, giving us a fast passage to Port Vila.

By the afternoon *Just Jane* was well under way. Tim was reading and Arnold and I were doing absolutely nothing except scanning the horizon for other boats. *Wild Chorus*, a 30-ft yacht that had left from Momi Bay on Lautoka with us, called us up on the VHF to say that they were turning back and would wait until the seas and wind had calmed down before setting out again. Even though we were moving fast through the water, we were having a very uncomfortable ride, a bit like I would imagine how being inside a washing machine would feel. However, the weather forecast was fine, we had a SE trade wind, and I figured we would be in Vanuatu in 3 days time.

By the time evening came, Tim was ready for dinner and started to put the pressure on me to cook. Usually on passages we, meaning Arnold and myself, don't eat very much for the first few days. I am never hungry, and it's usually a waste of time for Arnold, as it goes down one end and very quickly comes out the other. So if we did want to lose weight (and Arnold did) and save money, (we both did) long passages were definitely the answer for us. For the first day or



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so Tim usually feeds himself on snacks like Muesli bars, dried biscuits or potato chips or fruit, which are placed strategically in a cupboard right next to where he usually positions himself for long trips. Our stove is gimballed and no doubt is very effective when operated in the gimbal mode. However my theory is that if we are on that much of a lean or bouncing around so much that it is necessary to use the stove in a gimballed position, then I am not likely to be feeling like eating or cooking. At this stage we were bouncing around a lot, I was definitely starting to feel a little unwell and the stove was unquestionably required to be in a gimballed position if any cooking was to be undertaken. Tim decided soup was a safe bet, as one can quickly heat up water in a kettle on a securely fixed stove.

By the second day the wind had picked up to 30 to 35 knots, but was still SE and we were quickly putting the miles behind us. The Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* called us on the VHF. We gave them our position but they didn't seem to want to give us theirs, so we kept our radar on but never picked them up. On the third day the wind was down to 20 to 25 knots and Derek on Sydney Penta Comstat announced before the sked that Princess Diana had been killed in a car accident. Because his voice was a little muffled, we didn't pick up who exactly had been killed, but we gathered it must have been someone of great importance for Derek to broadcast it. At 0630 on Day Four we could see land ahead of us, and by midmorning we were comfortably anchored in Port Vila after an uneventful washing machine ride of 73 hours.

Clearing Customs was quick and easy. The Quarantine and Customs officials came out to us almost straight away and Immigration was a simple visit to the office. We dinghied ashore to a wonderful and exotic place. There were craft and clothes shops and a market along the waterfront, as well as a place to sit down for croissants and coffee. The language was a mixture of French and Bislama (Pidgin English). Bislama is a fascinating and hilarious language, and we tried to learn as much as we could about it. For example 'Name blong yu emi wannem?' means 'What is your name?')

As we walked around town, vans kept stopping

next to us and we thought they were just being friendly, until someone told us that they were local buses. For a couple of dollars you could go quite some distance. You didn't always go in the direction you required straight away, but as long as you weren't in a hurry and didn't have a time limit, you eventually got to the place you wanted to and also had a scenic tour on the way.

We caught up with *Little Swan* and had our usual rum night, only this time we were all subdued as we watched Princess Di's funeral on the TV. *Midnight Sun* was anchored nearby, so we had a great evening with John and Wendy Taylor.

It was now September and we had been cruising for almost a year. Tim had done so much snorkelling that when he saw a dive shop he decided to do a scuba diving course. He completed the very intensive scuba dive course in three days. He started at about 0700, did two dives a day as well as theory, and then sat his test on the third day. He passed with flying colours and came back to the boat with his open water dive certificate. While Tim was doing his course, Arnold and I did a quick refresher dive course and went scuba diving as well.

Tim doing a dive course relieved me of the 'Lack of school work' guilt feeling that I was battling with. I figured that it pretty well covered most areas, such as science, maths, English, environmental studies, in fact it could probably be enough for two weeks worth of schooling, as that is how long it took Arnold and me to do the course several years ago.

After two weeks in Port Vila we were ready to leave in search of a dugong that we had heard lived in the waters at Epi Island. Our first stop was Havannah Harbor, still on Efate Island. The book *Vanuatu: A Cruising Yachtsman's Notes and Drawings* advised us to 'prepare yourself for a rough passage around Devil's Point' and to 'give the point as much room as possible as the seas get quite turbulent and steep with overfalls if the tide and wind oppose each other.' We left Port Vila with SE winds and strong wind warnings, but it was only about 20 to 25 nm to Havannah Harbor and the wind was behind us most of the way. It was a little rough around Devil's Point but not that bad, although a couple of yachts going in the opposite direction were really ploughing into the seas.

For David Taylor's account of a less tranquil rounding of Devil's Point in *Polaris*, see *Squadron Quarterly* September, 1996: 18-22.

Havannah Harbour was a delightful place, and the villagers in their canoes came out to greet us when we anchored. We took the dinghy up a creek, which reminded me of my favourite film *The African Queen*, and came across some Vanuatians in Mother Hubbard dresses doing their washing and then spreading the clothes out on leaves on the beach to dry.

Little Swan caught up with us and the race was on. We were going to anchor off Pul Iwa reef, which was about ten nm W of Emae Island, 20 nm N of Ngouna Island and go diving. *Just Jane* had every sail up, including the mizzen staysail, and both yachts were powering along in the 20 to 25 knot trade winds. We had heard that trawling between the islands is fantastic and the most common fish that are caught are the mahi mahi, wahu and barracuda. Fishing was not one of our skills, and apart from the fish we had caught in the Fiordlands of New Zealand, we had not had much luck anywhere else. This was about to change in a big way.

The GPS was telling us that we were heading right for the reef and getting uncomfortably close, so we quickly stopped racing and commenced pulling down the sails. I could see the reef ahead, and at the same time Tim yelled out that we had caught something.

'Sure Tim, in your dreams,' I yelled back, but he was right.

So the three of us in our excitement tried to get the sails down, slow the boat and drag this fish up before we hit the reef. Tim winched the fish in; Arnold tried to pull it up with a gaff; and I continued to worry about the reef looming up ahead of us. When we finally anchored in about 40 feet off this reef, *Just Jane* looked a mess. There were sails everywhere and tangled fishing line but what a fish we had caught! It was a 25 to 28 kg mahi mahi, and with it we had a great fishing story.

After our dive we headed on towards Lamén Bay, Epi Island in search of the dugong, which apparently fed daily in the bay. We anchored in about 25 ft. opposite the village. Lamén Island is across the bay and its residents paddle across

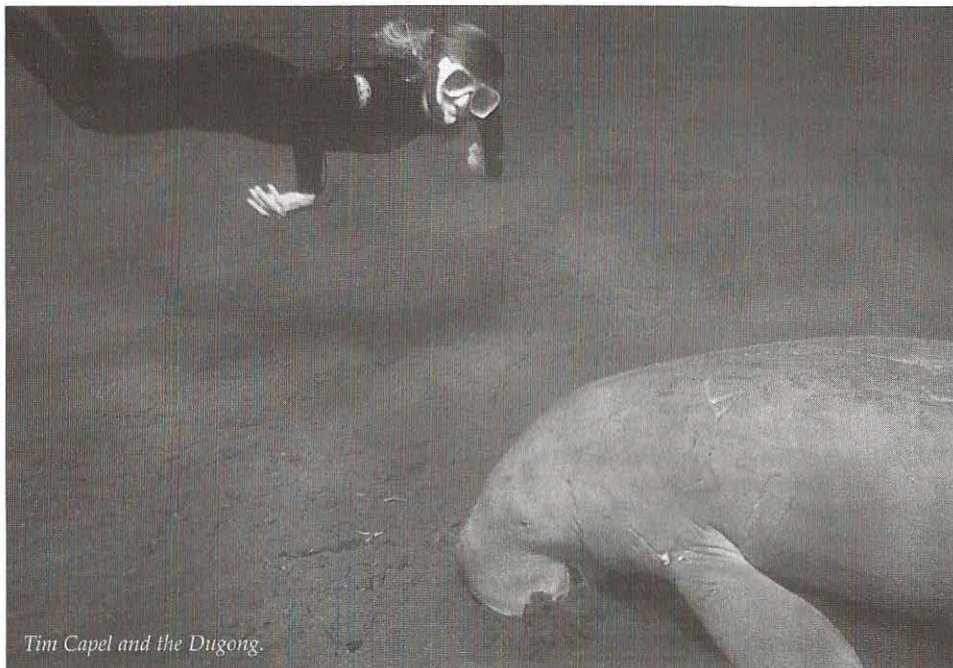
daily in their canoes to the 'big island' to go to their gardens and then sail home using large palm leaves for their sail. You can buy/trade fruit and vegetables from them on their way home. Lamén Island also is home to three breeding dugongs, which can be seen with their young.

We, of course, now had this huge fish. Tim doesn't eat fish, so we shared it with *Little Swan*, as there are usually several backpackers aboard and they are always hungry. We did not trawl a line again for the rest of the trip.

Little Swan left the next day for other good diving spots, but we stayed and commenced our 'dugong watch'. This involved taking it in turns to climb the mast and stand on the spreaders to view the bay. We also snorkelled around the bay at the times the dugong was known to come in to feed. When anchored in this bay no one used dinghy outboards, as the dugong was petrified of the noise and would either not show up or disappear very quickly. Our dugong watch started about 0700, and Tim was usually the first one up the mast. We maintained this 'intense' watch system for about four days, with absolutely no luck. Finally there were only us and two other yachts left in the bay, as everyone else had moved on. We decided that we wouldn't leave until we had seen the dugong, as we figured that we might never be in this area again.

Our watch system paid off. At last, one afternoon when we were snorkelling across the bay, the dugong appeared and put on an incredible performance for us. Tim via the VHF announced its arrival, and the other yachties emerged from their afternoon naps to slide quietly into the water and swim over to the dugong. For almost an hour we watched her feeding, and scratching herself on a log in about 10 to 15 feet of water. We were able to swim with her and pat her. It was a magical experience and sheer pleasure to watch Tim swim and dive with her.

From Lamén Bay we sailed up to Ambrym Island and Ranon anchorage, which brought us to the fiery heart of the islands. Whilst anchored in Lamén Bay we could see the intimidating red glow from the two live volcano vents on Ambrym, Mount Marum (1,336 metres) and Mount Benbow nearby. Full of history and intrigue, this volcanic island is home to some of



Tim Capel and the Dugong.

Vanuatu's most powerful black magic, and at Ranon are carved most of Vanuatu's Tamtams (drums made from logs). We met the local woodcarver who was creating Tamtams up to 4 m tall. [The population in 1986 was 7,828.]

Next stop was Loltong Bay on Pentecost Island, about 40 nm away. On the way we anchored at Wall Bay, where we hoped to see the famous land diving towers. Unfortunately the villagers knock them down and start building new ones prior to the land-diving ritual (or original bungy jumping as Tim calls it), which is held in April and May. [Pentecost Island is 61 km long and 12 km wide, with a population in 1986 of 11,452.]

Loltong Bay is a safe protected anchorage and home to many turtles. In the book *Vanuatu* by Bob Tiews and Thalia Hearne, it states: 'Once you have identified Loltong, the entrance into the anchorage is straightforward. The [large] banyan tree is very visible and the leads are low on the beach with an approximate bearing of 70-75° True.' The banyan tree is indeed very visible and the leads are low on the beach.

● Once inside the reef we anchored in about 5 metres of white sand. The anchorage can hold perhaps four to six boats, but one must be careful to keep the leads clear because sometimes at night copra boats visit and their shore boats use the leads.

We were in luck. Some yachties who were just leaving told us that there was a circumcision ceremony the next day at one of the nearby villages. Tim and Arnold looked decidedly unwell at the mention of circumcision and immediately decided that they didn't need this cultural experience. However, the villagers who sit under the huge banyan tree and greet you as you go ashore told us in a mixture of English and Bislama that at the village over the hill a chief was going up in rank. It was actually a pig killing ceremony. We were invited to attend, as long as we didn't take any photographs and stayed in the background, because it was the real thing and not a performance put on for tourists.

We packed a bag with a few snacks and drinks and followed the trail of villagers

along the track to the village, a walk of about 30 minutes. As we came closer we could hear the beat of drums and could feel the intense excitement. The walk into the village was just beautiful. Everything was lush and green, with hibiscus bushes and flowers everywhere. The drums were beating out an hypnotic rhythm and dust was already being kicked up by the native dancers. The next few hours were spent in awe watching the magnificent ceremony. Villagers from all over the island came to take part. A chief was going up in rank and pigs had to be presented and eventually killed. The grass skirts, feathers and paint on the women's faces added to the mystique and we felt very privileged to be able to watch this unique experience. We desperately wanted to take photographs, but knew that we had been asked not to by the chief, and in fact white people were not really welcome at all at this ceremony. At about 1600 we decided to head back to *Just Jane*. The dancing and the kava drinking would go on all night and the frenzy was increasing. Apart from that, we were trying to avoid the danger of malaria and usually stayed on board at dusk and night-time.

On arrival at Port Vila on Efate Island we started taking tablets for malaria. Efate Island was supposed to be clear, but the remaining islands of Vanuatu were not. In the end we gave up taking Doxycycline, which had been recommended to us, not because they were having any side effects but purely because we forgot to take them. Many of the Americans were taking Lariam, which gave them strange side effects, like hallucinations and changes of personality, or so they informed us. We just made sure that we had screens on hatches and the companionway and wore long-sleeved shirts and trousers.

From this fabulous anchorage we did several day hops until we ended up anchoring at Luganville on Espiritu Santo. Here in 1942, America set up large naval and military bases. This was a fascinating town and did not look like it had changed much since then. The buildings were run down, the roads were dusty and there were many Chinese shops. The language was a combination of French, Bislama, English and Chinese.

Espiritu Santo is the largest island in Vanuatu, named by de Quiros. It is 145 km long and 65 km wide. The highest peak on its western mountain range is 1,877 metres. The island is heavily wooded, with many streams. The population of the island in 1986 was 25,313 and of Luganville 5,621.

We organised with Aquamarine Dive Shop to dive on the SS *President Coolidge*, the largest and most accessible such wreck in the world. It was a cruise ship used in the war to carry heavy artillery and machinery and ended by blowing itself up. We left *Just Jane* on a mooring off the Aore Island Resort and were picked up by the dive boat.

It was cram packed full of very experienced divers, who were going down with two tanks and some were carrying a huge amount of photographic equipment. As we only had two complete dive sets, we had to hire the equipment for Tim and were a little surprised to see how old and run down it looked compared to the diving gear in Port Vila. Arnold made doubly sure that Tim's gear was operating and safe. We were very glad to get into the water, as the dive boat was rolling horribly, and you could hardly move because of the numbers of people and their gear.

Some went down to about 55 to 68 metres at the deepest end of the *President Coolidge*. Our group of eight divers to one dive guide went down to 33 metres. The dive guide took us along the promenade deck and through the portholes inside the wreck. The scenery was amazing, with fish everywhere, moray eels, guns and equipment. Tim was under very strict instructions not to leave the group and go off exploring on his own, as it would have been exceptionally easy to become lost in the wreck. Towards the end of our dive, we returned to the decompression stop and had a head count, before surfacing to the dive boat.

The transport in Luganville was different but cheap. Unlike Port Vila with its vans for buses Luganville had utes. When one with a B plate came along you flagged it down, jumped into the back and leaped out at the required spot. Screaming around dusty roads in the back of a ute seemed far more dangerous than sailing across oceans, but the scenery was great and you met some interesting people.

Little Swan joined us again and we had a final rum-n-coke and farewell party, as they were

heading up towards the Solomons and we were returning to Port Vila on the way to New Caledonia. As we left we altered course a little to investigate something floating in the sea. It turned out to be a dead cow, which was quite swollen. We were thankful that it wasn't anywhere near the dive spots, as sharks would soon eat it.

Before we left Vanuatu we wanted to visit Tanna Island to see the spectacular Mount Yasur volcano. From there it would be a quick two-day passage to New Caledonia.

Tanna Island is 51 km long and 24 km across. It is the most fertile of the group, with several mountain ranges. The highest is Mount Meleu at 1,043 metres. Cook stayed here for 16 days in 1774, and it was at Tanna that the SW Pacific sandalwood trade was first established in 1825 by Peter Dillon. This began a period of great violence, described in Dorothy Shineberg's *They Came for Sandalwood: A Study of the Sandalwood Trade in the South-West Pacific 1830-1865*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1967. The 1979 census showed a population of 15,593.

Tanna was not a port of clearance and it was about 140 nm south east of Port Vila. This means that one would have to beat to windward down to Tanna Island, then sail back up to Port Vila to clear customs and have a fairly close-hauled sail to Noumea, New Caledonia. To get around that and clear

Vanuatu from Tanna, you can arrange to have an Immigration officer flown there at your own expense. This is done through the immigration office in Port Vila. The return flight for the Immigration officer is about \$US170, and the cost can be shared by any number of boats.

We heard via the wonderful grape vine on the VHF radio that a group of yachts was planning to clear from Tanna by the end of October, which meant we had about three weeks to cruise back down to Port Vila and join them. This was easier said than done. The wind seemed to be a constant 30 knots SE, which was just the direction that we were heading.

Hopping down the coast of Malakula Island seemed to be the easiest way to approach this next leg against the strong south easterlies, and anyway we wanted to explore some of these little anchorages as well.

Malakula is the second largest island after Espiritu Santo, 88 km by 24 km. The western portion is somewhat inaccessible, but the long eastern coast is broken by numerous harbours and bays, with fair-sized streams running through undulating well-wooded country. ... The interior is still not very well known, and the islanders may sometimes be unfriendly. The 1986 population of 18,363 makes it one of the most heavily populated islands in Vanuatu. *Pacific Yearbook*: 614.

For the next few days we did 20 nm and sometimes only 10 nm hops from one anchorage to the next. When anchored behind Vao Island opposite Malakula Island, children in canoes visited us for hours. The conversation was very limited, as they only spoke French and my schoolgirl French was definitely not up to standard.

In Port Sandwich, which was a delightfully quiet anchorage at the beginning of a river, there was a warning on the jetty advising people not to swim there because of shark attacks. This anchorage was deceiving. It was calm and with no wind. We could not pick up any weather reports, but by now our method to predict the weather was if the clouds were moving fast in the wrong direction we stayed put. As they were lately always moving fast in the wrong direction, because of what people kept telling us was the 'reinforced' trade winds, we decided to leave anyway and make a dash for Epi Island and Lamén Bay, where the dugong was.

As we left Port Sandwich we could see very large swells against the horizon and the clouds were really hiking through the sky. It was only about 20 nm to Lamén Bay, so we persevered and tacked backwards and forwards until we finally anchored again in dugong territory. We all immediately jumped into the water and were thrilled to come across the dugong straight away. This time there was no intense dugong watch: she was just there.

From Lamén Bay, it was an overnigher to Havannah Harbour. As we got closer we heard *Midnight Sun* on the VHF. Yachts were talking about the cyclone warning that had just been issued. This explained why for the last few days the wind had been around 30 to 40 knots, so we too hightailed it into Havannah Harbour, which offers a reasonable amount of protection in most winds. The cyclone did not eventuate, so we hurried into Port Vila to meet the other yachts organising clearance from Tanna Island.

Diesel was cheap in Port Vila, as we could get it for 60 cents a litre (Vanuatuan currency, which was the equivalent of 45 cents Australian money). We filled up with diesel and water and headed 140 nm SE to Tanna Island. We were lucky, for the wind had dropped out

considerably and was only about 20 knots and more E than SE. With a little help from the motor we could just hold the course.

The first European to see Tanna was Captain Cook in 1774. Sailing southwards through the group of islands which he named the New Hebrides, he observed a great light in the night sky. His ship *Resolution* hove to until daylight, and in the morning entered a wide bay standing in the lee of the mighty volcano Yasur. He named the bay Port Resolution, after his ship. According to something I read somewhere, from then on Cook referred to Yasur as 'the great lighthouse of the South Seas'. Apparently when trying to find out from the natives the name for the island, he pointed to the ground with a questioning look. Thinking he was asking their name for the earth, they replied 'Tanna', which has remained the name of the island to this day.

George Forster's entry for Friday, 5 August, 1774 includes —

We collected a number of words from these people, among which, far the greatest part were entirely new to us; but sometimes they expressed the same idea by two words, one of which was new, and the other corresponded with the language of the Friendly Islands. They also told us that they call their own island TANNA, a word which signifies 'earth' in the Malay language. This last we looked on as a great acquisition, for the indigenous name of a country is always permanent. ...

We saw the flame of the volcano in the evening, blazing up, with an explosion once in five minutes or thereabouts. Some of the explosions resembled very violent claps of thunder, and a rumbling noise continued for half a minute together. The whole air was filled with smoky particles and with ashes, which occasioned much pain when they fell in the eye. The decks, rigging, and all parts of the ship were covered with black sherry ashes in the space of a few hours. [Schorl is an old German word for a black mineral. Forster was a Hessian.] The same sand, mixed with small cinders and pumice stones, covered the sea-shore. The distance of this volcano from our harbour was five or six miles, so we only saw its summit, which threw up smoke from a crater, consisting of several tagged points.

Forster G. *A Voyage Round the World in His Britannic Majesty's Sloop Resolution, commanded by Capt. James Cook, during the years 1772, 3, 4, and 5*. London, MDCCCLXXVII, Vol II, pages 267-8.

At Resolution Bay, we anchored in about 4 metres in volcanic ash, then went ashore to arrange to visit the volcano. Four other yachts joined us and we were taken up in the back of a ute. The ride through the jungle was wild. If we didn't hold on tightly, we were in danger of being thrown out of the ute and if we stood up, we were in danger of having our heads knocked off by overhanging branches.



Visitors to Just Jane, Tanna Island, Vanuatu.

The volcano itself was absolutely awesome. There were no guardrails, no warning signs and no rules. The crater itself was about a mile wide and half a mile deep, and at times it was like a vision of hell. In recent months the volcano was spewing some large and very hot rocks, which had actually hit three people and killed them. Whilst it was still daylight, we walked partly round the crater, and as the sun went down we could see these hot rocks rocketing out of the crater. Arnold and I saw one aiming straight towards Tim, and we both yelled at him to run. On inspection of the landed rock, we could see that it was hot and huge and could understand how easily it would be to get killed up there if you weren't careful. With darkness came a spectacular sight of hot lava and rocks, complete with thunderous explosions, the smell and taste of hot sulphurous ashes and the feeling that the earth was literally moving beneath us.

Forster investigated a volcanic vent ('soltarra'), but when he returned with Captain Cook to climb the volcano, hostile natives prevented them from doing so. —

We suspended a thermometer, with Fahrenheit's scale, on a tree in the shade. This thermometer stood at 78° on board the ship, at half an hour past eight, which was the time of our departure, and after hanging for five minutes it remained at 80°. We made a hole in the earth, deep enough to contain the thermometer in its whole length, and it rose in half a minute to 210°, which is nearly the heat of boiling water. ... We got a sight of the volcano [and] saw its eruption, and took notice of the immense masses of rock which it hurled upwards in the smoke, and some of which were at least as large as the hull of our long-boat. ... About a dozen men, well armed with bows and arrows, clubs and darts were sitting on their hams in a row, who instantly started up at sight of us. We concluded it was best to return. ... We were forced to give up all hopes of approaching the volcano; but it is surely advisable to abandon a pursuit where knowledge cannot be obtained without bloodshed and injustice. *Ibid*: 297, 308, 331.

Tanna is the leading island of the Jon Frum cult created in the early 1940s. Tanna natives, seeing the abundance of material goods being brought into the New Hebrides Islands by the United States for the campaigns of the Second World War, believed that some day the same rewards would become theirs. The cultists believed that Jon Frum lives beneath the fires of the Yasur volcano along with an army of 5,000 men. This army throws rocks out of the crater in defence of their land and cult.

On our way back to our yachts the driver of the ute decided to stop at a kava bar for 'refreshments'. Tanna Island is also known for its kava, the best in the Pacific. Tim of course had to try some, but it was so strong that our lips very quickly went numb and it seemed rather hard to move our bodies. As we climbed back into the ute for the hair-raising trip back to the anchorage, I vaguely remember clinging on to Tim in case he was tossed out and lost forever in the jungle.

The next day we dinghied out to the reef to do a bit of snorkelling. As I jumped into the water, a dark shape loomed up in front of me and I very quickly found that I was face to face with a dugong. Arnold and Tim quickly came over to me, but this dugong made us feel very uncomfortable and we ended up back in the dinghy as fast as we could. We had heard that there was a dugong that visited the bay every day, but at times it was a little aggressive, as his mate had been killed by one of the villagers. Apparently he was known for wrapping his flippers around people, particularly men, or grabbing their arm and dragging them under. Having heard all these stories, we didn't feel any urge to find out if they were true or not, and when this dugong kept circling us and bumping us and pushing Arnold and myself away from each other we got out of the water as quickly as we could.

One of the Americans who was with us was so excited about seeing this dugong, as he had missed seeing the one in Lamen Bay, that he jumped into the water with his clothes on and swam over to where it was. The stories were proved right, and George was indeed dragged down, but he managed to pry his arm loose and spluttered to the surface.

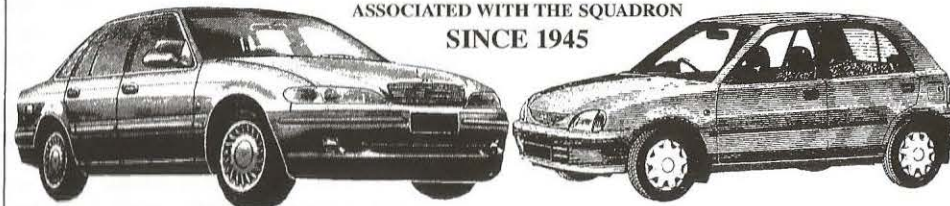
Vanuatu was a fascinating place, and we felt that we could have stayed for a lot longer, but it was now the end of October and the cyclone season was already with us. The Customs officer flew down from Port Vila and went from yacht to yacht, helped by Tim in the dinghy, and cleared us all. The next day, with the other yachts we left Port Resolution and set sail for Noumea, New Caledonia, 260 nm away.

To be concluded...



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