



Eric Taylor, Kate Jennings, David Barnfield, Michael Fuss, Adam Tassicker celebrate their win in *Reprive*. (David Barnfield)

As it may well be a long time between drinks, and as I missed the opportunity to say something in Port Lincoln, I wish to place on record my thanks to Jim Howell for the chance

to go to Hobart way back in '89; and to Bill Strangways and Jim for always taking the time to personally acknowledge *Reprive's* better performances!

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Wandering thoughts on South Pacific cruising

Di and Ian Moncrieff

Di and Ian Moncrieff left Brisbane last May on *Pied Piper II* to cruise New Caledonia and the Vanuatu archipelago. Vanuatu proved to be such wonderful cruising territory that they left *The Piper* on the hard in the Vila boatyard for the summer and flew home. They have persuaded Phil and Marlene Tassicker to let them crew on *Crusader* when she sails to Vila in May this year. *Pied Piper II* will then journey north through the islands again.

An enduring impression of our 2001 cruising season is one of doubt. Serious doubt that the time and energy we as Australians spend creating and maintaining our sophisticated society, delivers a lifestyle any better than that of relatively simple social and economic structures.

What has caused this nagging doubt? Vanuatu is the culprit! We cruised the central islands last year, spending about three months there.

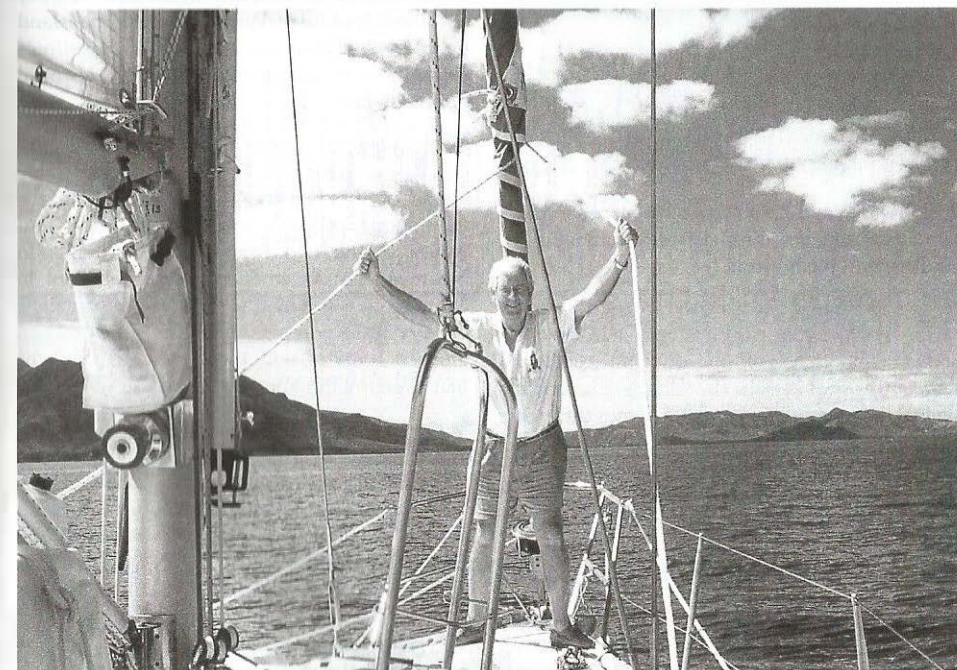
The balance sheet looks something like this:

Community life: Family connections are very strong amongst Ni-Vanuatu.

Children relate daily to a whole host of people of all ages. Each has a vast network of familiar people to care for it. We saw children cry twice only, when toddlers were afraid of us the strangers. We saw no attention-seeking children. They are safe to roam and play, in the rainforest, the garden, on the beach, in canoes or in the warm sea.

Restrictions on children are few. Tired? Then sleep, no matter that the little one is perched in the bow of a dugout canoe. Hungry or thirsty? Then eat and drink. Children climb coconut trees from an early age.

Adults also enjoy a huge network of familiar people; one can't imagine a Ni-vanuatu being lonely.



Ian Moncrieff at the bow of *Pied Piper II* inside the lagoon at New Caledonia towards Woden Canal.



Di Moncrieff and her Job fish, Ouvea Lagoon, Loyalty Islands.

In Australia we certainly see more older people, no doubt as a result of our medical system. However, many are lonely, and feel as if life is not worthwhile.

There is a danger of course, when observing island life as a short-term visitor, to romanticise the place and the lifestyle.

Outside of the two main urban centres, Vila and Luganville, everyone depends upon gardens for food. Having rich, volcanic soil and excellent rainfall, this provides an abundance of seasonal food. Mind you, when a cyclone comes through and destroys everything except the taro and yam reserves stored underground, the menu can be a bit tedious and scant. Villagers cannot expect Vila to offer relief and need each other to work together rebuilding gardens and housing. It seems however, that this interdependence during crisis reinforces the bonds that make village life work.

Whilst tensions over land use are evident there seems to be a fair balance between communal

activities, ownership and interest, and those of the individual. Elected village chiefs have large responsibilities in this area.

Many Australians work all their lives accumulating material possessions, which, in their mature years, they are keen to shed so that they can live more simply in a small habitation (a caravan, shack, or modest holiday house) near the sea in a warm climate. Nivauatu do that all their lives!

However, one doesn't want to be a Nivauatu in need of medical treatment. Doctors are very thinly spread and medical infrastructure scant. Schools cry out for trained staff and educational resources. But there are few drug problems, and petty crime is very low indeed. A missing spear gun from an anchored yacht was a major misdemeanor.

We were stunned at the enormous difference in the 'auras' of New Caledonia and Vanuatu. We decided that it was the difference of self determination. Not being mineral rich, the New Hebrides was abandoned by French and English governments early in the 20th century and the Republic of Vanuatu was born. Island people now determine their own destinies through elected provincial and central governments.

New Caledonia, however, rich in nickel and cobalt, has remained firmly in the repressive hands of the French. The differences in the indigenous people's lifestyle, attitudes, and values of the two countries are extreme. In Noumea, Kanaks working the nickel plant in Noumea live crowded in high rise apartments, built to the same plans of those on European industrial estates, with the incumbent problems that overcrowding breeds.

In the Loyalty Islands, (part of New Caledonia) locals still smart from the repressive actions of the government, (including a massacre) in response to their demands for independence a decade or so ago. A few concessions in the supply of education for Kanaks and parliamentary representation have been made, but not nearly enough to satisfy their need for self determination. There is however, more access to health services in New Caledonia than in Vanuatu.

Whilst winter cruising Queensland in recent years, we have felt the limitations of being bound to the coast. Our 4WD cruising mates enjoy much inland territory. But in the Pacific, cruising by sea is about the only practical way of visiting and experiencing the great range of island life.

Without one's own boat, inter-island travel is by light aircraft, copra boat or island traders. The latter two are uncomfortable with short calls one after the other to coastal villages. There are no timetables. Outside the major centres, accommodation is very basic or non-existent. So we feel especially grateful that *Pied Piper II* provides us with both home and transport.

We found that some villages we visited in Vanuatu had a strong Christian influence, mostly Catholic or Presbyterian. Here Melanesian customs were not obvious. Others were decidedly 'custom villages'. Some seemed to blend both worlds.

At a Lamien Bay village on Malekula Island, Custom Dancing for yachties brought in much sought after cash as well as contact with westerners, who could supply medicines and clothing cast-offs and occasionally light cargo transport from Vila. Paying western women were allowed into sacred dance areas that local women were forbidden — an economic, pragmatic decision rather than custom. Jake, the chief's son, took advantage of the village HF radio, contacting yachties to organise transport of medical supplies from Vila.



Custom dancers at a Lamien Bay village on Malekula Island.

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In a land that constantly challenges one's everyday assumptions, we were surprised and indeed delighted to exchange greetings with a magnificent specimen of young manhood we recognised He was soberly dressed in T shirt and shorts, playing with his small child on the beach. Only the day before he had been the highly athletic lead dancer in the custom dancing show, dressed only in a pandanus leaf penis sheath and seed pod castanets.

It was a little disconcerting to meet Jake's father, Chief Sidal, who was Ian's age. The two shared thumbnail sketches of their lives and found enough common ground to enjoy a good chat. His teeth, into their seventh decade were in better condition than Ian's, (we saw no sugar cane in Vanuatu) but given his age, we wondered if in his younger years he had munched on a human limb or two. We were too shy to ask.

Port Vincent Sounding Plan

Peter Dermott has given us a sounding plan of Port Vincent, compiled in 1950. All soundings are in feet and bearings are true. He wrote —

As stated on the full version of the attached plan, I can confirm that 'Mr Rynmill and his crew' compiled the drawing. Henry gave the crew the task with the view that the finished product would be of assistance to Squadron Members when 'working' the Port Vincent area: ie to stop them from going aground.

The crew of *Sea Hawk* at that time consisted of Warwick Guy, Ian McBryde and myself, all Senior Members of the Squadron. All of us had been in the Scouts at school, and that training, particularly mapping, was now to be put to the test.

The old commercial wharf alignment was used as the base line, and all bearings were taken by a handbearing compass. Soundings were taken with a hand leadline, at low water when possible, and checked with the tide board on the wharf.

The exercise was undertaken during the Christmas-New Year period of 1949-50, in between being official boat for various yacht races. At the time Warwick was working in the CM-Holden drawing office at Woodville, so it fell to him to produce the plan, a copy of which was

A church leader in LitsLits village further up the coast of Malekula, however, volunteered that he was very sorry that his villagers had eaten missionaries in the past. What can one say? Let bygones be bygones?

We look forward to returning to Vanuatu this season and continuing our cruising to the more remote Banks and Torres Island groups in the north. From Vila, we will effortlessly fill our time with day sailing as we island hop north, having fun with cruisers from all over the world, and enjoying the Ni-vanuatu as we try to understand a little more of their world.

We will leave our summer list of 'should do's' at home and enjoy the freedom of cruising one of the most wonderful places imaginable.

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eventually placed on the notice board in the bar of the Ventnor Hotel bar, with drinks all round — ??

To some extent the plan may have reduced yachts grounding. Henry bought *Beth* in the following year, and in her and in *Nyroca* many yachts were refloated over the years. An occasional 'Thanks, Henry!' was received. If considered appropriate, a copy of our plan was passed to the embarrassed skipper.

A copy of the plan reduced to A4 paper can be obtained from the Editor.



Racing at Port Vincent before the War
(G.S. Hargrave)

