

# Medical Sailing Ministries (MSM) Vanuatu Mission 2017

## SHIPS LOG – Mission 1

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date/Duration:        | Wednesday 21 June – Saturday 8 July 2017                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Location:             | <b>TAFEA</b> Province, Islands of: <b>Tanna</b> (Port Resolution, Sulphur Bay, Ierke & Kito) Aniwa (Isavai), <b>Futuna</b> (Isia), <b>Erromango</b> (Ipota, Williams Bay)                                                                                              |
| Sailing Volunteers:   | Rob Latimer, Gerry Snyder, Martin Burgess, Peter Wright & Daniel Baum                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Team Leaders:         | Morinda Kalmar & Bob Natuman                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Local Health Workers: | Dental Care: Morinda Kalmar & Bob Natuman<br>Eye Care: Dick Stanley                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Medical Volunteers:   | Dentists: Dr Antonio Celentano & Dr Tami Yap<br>Doctors: Dr Doug Utley & Dr David James<br>Nurses: Annette Hesselman & Deb Allen                                                                                                                                       |
| Mission Results:      | Islands Visited: 4<br>Clinics Held: 8<br>Mission Duration: 17 days<br>Dental Patients seen: 171      Teeth extracted: TBA (estimate 300+)<br>Medical Patients seen: 353      Referrals: 1<br>Eyecare Patients seen: 108      Spectacle dispensed: 68      Referrals: 4 |



### BACKGROUND

Medical Sailing Ministries (MSM) began in 2009 to provide remote-access transport and logistical support amongst the islands of Vanuatu. It is a partnership program of the North Ringwood Uniting Church (Melb), The Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu and the Vanuatu Ministry of Health, using the Westernport-based 53 foot cutter rigged steel yacht Chimere.

This year's sailing mission follows in the tradition of previous missions in 2009, 2010 and 2013 and once again we are seeking a range of volunteers - both sailing and medical - to fill each of the 8 stages that span from May to November (2017) - specifically dentists, dental assistants, doctors, optometrists and nurses, oh, and sailors.

### NATIONAL ORAL HEALTH SURVEY 2017

Along with transporting medical volunteers, this year Medical Sailing Ministries will also be coordinating a National Oral Health Survey of Vanuatu using strict World Health Organisation (WHO) methodologies; the first such survey ever to be conducted in Vanuatu.

The survey will encompass 1% (approx. 3,000 people) of the population across 5 different age groups in both urban and rural locations on more than 30 of the country's 63 inhabited islands. It's a big undertaking and with the recent withdrawal of Australian Federal Government funding to this vital, long-standing Vanuatu health program, it's something we are seeking to do solely through volunteer-contributions, private donations and fundraising.



## 2017 Ships Log – Mission 1

The following is a compilation of the daily Ships Logs, written & transmitted each day from the field by the MSM team and then published on the MSM website and Facebook site.



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## Two more sleeps!!

Monday 19 June 2017

Port Vila

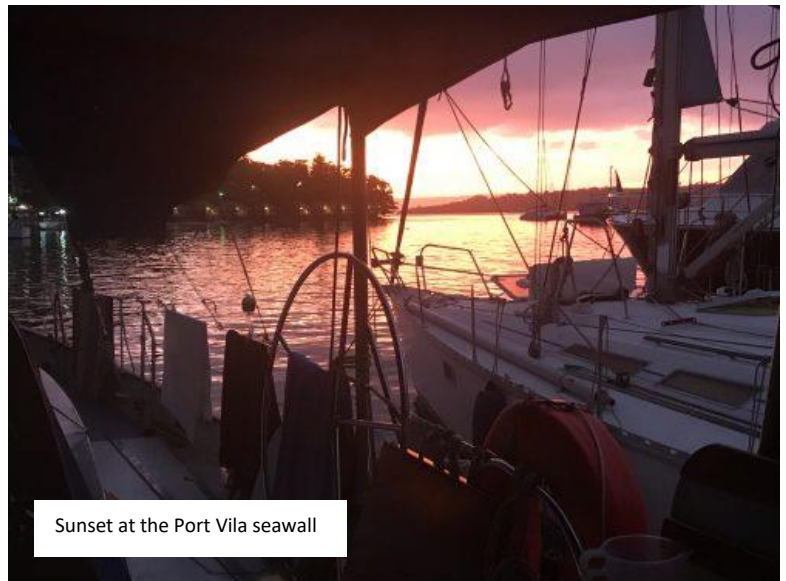
When it starts to get dark it doesn't muck about- It's dark pretty quickly  
Nice sunset tonight- red sky at night ...

The boat is starting to look ship-shape...  
literally. A place for everything and everything in its place.

You'd better believe it. Trouble is, most things have been in at least three different places in the past month, so it's hard to know where anything is.

Those days are now behind us!

No sticky painted deck to tiptoe around, no piles of donated goods looking for a place to be stowed, no tins of paint lying around (actually, they'll be stowed tomorrow) things are ready for departure



Sunset at the Port Vila seawall

Annette and Gerry led the charge in sorting the food, so we can, for example, find the tinned sweet corn in under 30 seconds. Not that speedy food-finding is part of our usual safety procedure, but you get the idea.

Peter cooked a lovely dinner after some time off to visit the Cascades and Daniel did whatever needed to be done – generally anything needing lots of muscles. I know who'll be head of the queue in pulling on the chain if the electric winch gives out

We have a morning planning meeting up at PCV Health tomorrow which should inform us about when everyone intends to come aboard on Wednesday. It's about 130 miles to Tanna, so it should take around 24 hours. The weather forecast looks good at this stage so lets hope it stays that way

We are taking some of the medical folk down south with us and another five will fly into Tanna on Saturday, making around 16 in all, counting the five sailors.

There are still a few things on our list which will need to be completed tomorrow on account of Wednesday being a holiday in remembrance of the president's passing.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and just two more sleeps

Rob Latimer

[Linda Latimer](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Cathy West](#) liked this post

*Twas the night before mission and all through the boat.*

Tuesday 20 June 2017

The air is still. It's 9pm and after 32 degrees and 85% humidity during the day it's now down to around 27 degrees. Positively cool by comparison.

The predictable beat and dulcet tones of a local one-man-band can be heard from the nearby Bar & Grill and the lights from the Iririki resort a short distance across the bay are reflected in the still water

It's truly a glorious evening if not a bit too humid still

This time tomorrow, however, it will be a very different story with the plan being to head out to sea around 1:00pm, making our way through the afternoon, night and following morning to our first anchorage – Port Resolution on the island of Tanna.

It's there on Tanna that 6 more medical folk will fly in to join us as we finally begin the medical missions in which so many have invested so much time and effort for so long

Aboard the good ship Chimere I am pleased to report that everything is ship-shape and Bristol fashion in readiness for the arrival of the three local health care workers, Bob, Morinda and Dick, plus Aussie health professional Debra who has lived here long enough to almost be considered a local.

Up at the usual 6:00am, the day really began with a dental talk and presentation up at the PCV clinic around 8:30am from Dr Barry Stewart, the (retired) dentist from North Ringwood Uniting Church who has largely designed the National Oral Health Survey and is now overseeing its implementation.

Last minute mission planning, as usual, involves the writing of lists and today this included:

- Change more Aussie dollars to Vatu
  - Fitting a new turnbuckle to staysail in order to increase the tension
  - Visit immigration to extend visa beyond 30 days
  - Fill up water tanks
  - Mark the anchor chain every 10 metres
  - Load mission medical, dental and optical equipment and supplies aboard
  - Lift the large dinghy onto the deck
  - pay berthing fees for past 16 days at the Waterfront
  - Obtain a supply of Vatu to pay for the medical teams land-based accommodation, food and transport costs
- Then there was the 35kg brass bell, plus 100kg of potting clay from Melbourne master potter, Alistair Whyte, to be delivered to South West Bay. We had intended to make a deviation to a later mission in order to make the special delivery but our neighbour here at the Seawall has kindly offered to make the delivery for us. You can track Norwegian Helge Witzo's progress aboard his yacht Morild and even on Facebook.

Thank you Captain Helge !!

Tomorrow will be a holiday to mark the recent death of the president and from what we understand there will be a very large procession that will pass by where we are berthed here at the Waterfront. It should all occur before we finally untie the lines and slip away.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and all quiet aboard

Rob Latimer

Cpt Helge agreeing to deliver the bell to SW Bay Malekula





## Dream sailing

Wednesday 21 June 2017  
35nm SE of Pango Point  
Lat -17.97 Lon 168.53

Pango Point? Sounds like it could be anywhere between Honolulu and Noumea doesn't it? ... but it's actually a short drive from Port Vila at the entrance to the harbour. It's now about 5:30pm and the sky is developing a darker shade of grey as day turns to night; quickly

The nav lights are on and we are doing 6kts over a gentle sea with the engine ticking over at just 1200rpm

Just an update, it's now 7:30pm and we've just turned off the motor. The wind has picked up a little and we are now finding we can maintain a speed of around 6kts under sails alone.

The boat is maintaining a lazy, steady motion with Peter on watch till 9:00pm, after which it'll be Gerry for three hours, then Martin, followed by Daniel at 3:00am. Then it's Peter back again at 6:00am. Being the captain apparently has its privileges – with so many capable sailors aboard, there was no room for me in the 3hrs on, 9hrs off schedule. The theory being that if anyone has any questions, or assistance is required through the night, I'll be the "go to" person.

As for the medical folk on board, Morinda found a bunk early on and we probably won't see her till morning. After some early lounging on deck Bob & Dick have been allocated bunks in the saloon and are all-but snoring. Deb has just announced she's retiring to a bunk, leaving Annette (wife of Gerry, and a very capable sailor as well as being a nurse) chatting in the cockpit offering to assist anyone on watch through the night.



Gerry and Annette have just chopped up and cooked up a very yummy vegie soup/stew, which may well last a few days, judging by the size of the pot used.

It's really good to finally be underway and by morning we will be working down the east coast of Erromango Island en-route to Port Resolution (Tanna)

The procession for the President was a very moving experience with the road lined with people from Parliament House several kilometers to the airport. Hopefully the photos convey something of the emotional experience.

Awaiting the presidents funeral procession



It's all pretty quiet aboard and I'm typing this on the ship's computer, which is linked to the Iridium sat phone. It's my first experience using this technology, so what could go wrong ! [nothing wrong from my end – webmaster]

Smooth seas, fair breeze and dream sailing !!

Rob Latimer

[Linda Latimer](#), [Edith West](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Cathy West](#) liked this post

Leaving Port Vila, 21/6/2017





## Things are going our way

Thursday 22 June 2017

lat -19.523 lon 169.499

Sailing southeast in this part of the tropics, at this time of the year, can be problematic when you consider the wind blows mostly from that direction; often at considerable strength day after day – hence the term “Southeast Tradewinds” no doubt?!

Heading NORTH , or WEST , or even EAST is usually a breeze (excuse the pun) but anything south-ish ???!! ... enough said.

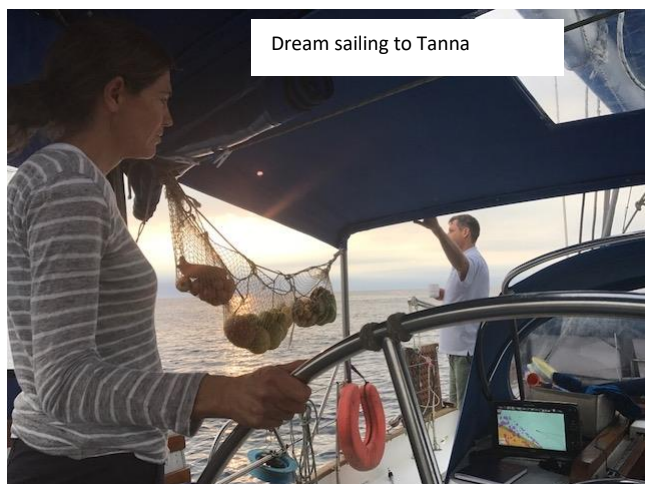
It is therefore with great pleasure, relief and a sense of satisfaction that we made the 130 mile trip down from Port Vila in around 26 hours, making good use of a friendly south-WEST breeze, calm seas and intermittent use of the motor. (As sailors we are far from being purists!)

We are now snugly anchored in Port Resolution, named by Captain Cook in 1774, although legend has it the locals had a few names for it too; and still do. Although way back then the harbour was reportedly 2km longer and 5m deeper – nothing to do with global warming, more the impact of earthquakes and probably the neighbourhood volcano Mt Yasur, that attracted Cook in the first place.

On the way down we made a drive-by visit to the rarely heard from village on Ipota on the east coast of Erromango Island; a village we have not frequented before. The reason for the stop was to check out the anchorage – part way up a river – (yes, that’s right, a river) in anticipation of the stop we will be making there towards the end of the mission.



Finally in Port Resolution, Tanna



Dream sailing to Tanna

The verdict in the end, after Annette kept the helm of Chimere half a mile off and Gerry took me and Bob ashore in the dinghy, was in local language... “istret”, or, “no worries” as most others would understand it.

This is in contrast to other places where, “tell ‘em ‘e’s dream’n” is more on the mark.

On arrival here at Port Resolution , with the anchor securely down, I took local health care workers Bob, Dick and Morinda ashore to confirm arrangements for conducting a week’s worth of medical clinics and the all-important National Oral Health Survey, plus the hiring of a truck to both transport the gear and the medical team of 11 and a few sailor-helper-tag-

alongs.



Oh, this also includes the picking up two volunteer doctors and dentists from the Tanna airport, (flying in from Oz) on the other side of the island, (Saturday morning) along with an optometrist from Port Vila hospital (hopefully) ... and who knows, a nighttime journey to the nearby volcano at discount “medical rates” if possible. If anyone can, local Tanna-man Bob can. Although, take a look at Bob’s hairstyle and you’ll understand why his current nickname is “Sideshow Bob”



I-r Dick, nurse Nancy, Morinda and Bob

Nancy, the retired Lenakel hospital nurse who has run the local Port Resolution clinic on a volunteer capacity for the past 6 years, was able to solve most issues; even accommodation for Morinda, who, it must be said, spent at least 25 of the 26 hours down from Vila “resting” on a bunk. There’s no doubt that walking on grass, or sitting under a tree have amazing restorative properties?!

Returning to boat it was then the turn of “the rest” – Gerry, Annette, Martin, Peter, Debra and Daniel – to explore ashore; something

we all intend to do more of in the brief lull before it all starts in earnest on Saturday.

That said, Nurse Nancy and many in the village, are Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) so Saturday is a day of rest. Others in the village seem to be Presbyterian, who’s day of rest is the more traditional Sunday ... but in the interest of health-necessity, I’m assured there will be a half-day clinic Sunday afternoon as a compromise.

Outside right now it’s as flat as! It’s about 10:30pm, everyone has gone to bed (Martin and Daniel are spread out on the foredeck I think) and the sky and water are very very black – save for the stars above and the luminous phosphorescence at any disturbance in the sea below. The only natural sounds are the distant rush of the surf at the harbour entrance, the ripple of the waves against the hull and naturally the hiss and bubble of the steam-vents and boiling water at the edge of the bay 200m off the starboard beam. Amazing what you can get used to...

Before I fall asleep a second time tonight...

Smooth seas, fair breeze and things are going our way

Rob Latimer

[Nicola Young](#), [Edith West](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Cathy West](#) liked this post

## The anticipation of medical arrivals

Friday 23 June 2017  
Port Resolution

After an amazingly clear, star lit night the day began sunny and warm with a light breeze from the Southeast

Around 7 o'clock we were joined by one of the many men in their dugout canoes that paddle and fish in this small bay. His name was Charlie and we explained that we will be running medical clinics over the next few days. He was very interested in attending and called to his friends, one of whom had a bad tooth that needed pulling.

No one went away empty-handed with three Footscray football club caps (donated by Bulldogs tragic Carmel Noble) being given out



I'm not sure whether it was after breakfast, or before breakfast that everyone (except me – someone had to stay on shark-watch ... that was a joke by the way, if you happen to be friends with, or related to, anyone on board) went for a swim to the steam vents

While everyone was relaxing in the hot water by the age of the bay I received a phone call from Morinda onshore saying that Nurse Nancy had fainted but was now resting on a bed.

A quick dinghy ride and our very own nurse Annette was at Nancy's side, ably supported by Deb, taking blood pressure readings, pulse and asking all the usual medication and "how-does-that-feel" questions

It was around this time that travel plan "refinements" were in full swing as texts and emails were exchanged back and forth between me in Port Resolution, Bob in Lenakel on the other side of the island, Mike Clarke and Graeme Duke in Melbourne and doctor David James and Richard in Port Vila.

"Did you know David James is flying into Tanna today, not tomorrow with the others? Can we get someone to meet him at the airport, he'll need accommodation too?" started Mike

"I'll see what Bob can do? I suggested

"Yes, me pick im up no worries" came Bob's reply

"All sorted Mike... Bob can get David" I assured

Then note from David...

"Sorry to add to confusion but think sorted I am going to Santo on sat 8 am plane from Vila with the rest of team . Staying in Vila as lots to do here's and thought simpler to arrive with the others rather than make special arrangements for me"

Did he say Santo?? I hope not!! Cos the other team members are coming south to Tanna not north to Santo.

Thanks be to modern communications ... or maybe they created the problem in the first place

Back on board the boat, with Nancy resting and medical team member movements clarified, a picnic lunch was packed and the crew headed off to do some exploring through the village to the ocean beach on the far side.

I was happy to remain on board with lots of catching up to do including baking bread, mission planning and boat maintenance



But soon after the departure of Chimere's explorers I was joined by another fishermen in his dug-out canoe by the name of Tawa. Tawa was keen to trade fruit and vegetables for a mask, snorkel and flippers – or as they say here ... “feet blong duck duck” which I was happy to oblige.

In the end Tawa joined me for lunch and enjoyed two new taste sensations – beetroot and Vegemite! Well, he said he enjoyed them and who am I to doubt his integrity.

Ship's Log readers from previous years will know that I put a lot of energy into teaching the making of Low Smoke stoves, made out of sun-dried mud bricks. It was something of a crusade which, in the end, didn't seem to

gain much traction. Well I raised the idea with Tawa and after showing him some photos and additional information on the health benefits of low smoke stoves he seemed genuinely interested; for his own wife and children plus the community more generally

In the end we developed a plan that we would meet at church on Sunday and make a stove on Monday not out of clay but out of concrete!! The problem with the sun dried clay bricks seemed to be that they took too long and the system seemed too complicated. If it is something Ni-Vans understand it's concrete, and so I've been busy redesigning my earlier models into what I'm calling the “Port Resolution 4-Burner Special”. We'll see how it works out on Monday. I asked Bob to bring a bag of cement over from Lenakel, which by the way, are sold in 40 kg bags here!



Stay tuned for the next exciting chapter in the “Low smoke stove Chronicles”

If you want to know just how bad smoke inhalation is, just a small amount of searching on the web will reveal the horrible truth. At around 2 million deaths per year it certainly kills more than malaria in the developing world.

The stars are out bright as ever tonight and tomorrow we will have the whole team together, if all goes to plan

And as I write this by myself on the foredeck of Chimere I am joined by Daniel, Annette, Gerry, Deb, Martin and now

Peter ... out to gawk at the amazing profusion of stars above our heads ... I'm reminded of the scene from The Lion King ... you had to be there

There is a rumour that everyone will be going to visit the mouth of the volcano tomorrow night before the clinics start for real ... but we'll see

Smooth seas, fair breeze and the anticipation of medical arrivals

Rob Latimer

[Alison Sedgwick](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Lorraine Rose](#), [John Fisher](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Josh Shakespeare](#), [Preet Shakespeare](#) liked this post



## Blog by committee

Saturday 24 June 2017  
Port Resolution, Tanna

About an hour ago, before I dozed off for the first time tonight, the seven of us aboard Chimere sat around the saloon table and did a brain-dump of all that has happened today.

As we do on boats, a list of topics, issues and items quickly formed and so it was decided that tonight's blog would be a "compilation"; each event sequentially recorded and described much like as travelogue – or travel-blog – I suppose.

It was suggested that a writing task-force be formed and a management committee formed that would then appoint a sub committee to flesh out each item and report back in the fullness of time. We could present a short-list at a specially arranged conference, with lanyards, giveaways and printed shoulder bags ... I think it was about here I dozed off ... zzzzz

Considering the list, and starting at the end of day, not really sequential, was tonight's epic quest to the volcano. This involved all of the team (except me who was very happy to stay on the boat – having survived the volcano-experience once back in 2009) piling into a 4wd and making the arduous climb to the base of the cinder cone, where it was then a relatively straightforward task of trekking UP to the rim of the crater – and no further.

When I mention "all of the team", I also include the new arrivals – dentists, Antonio and Tami and doctors Doug and David – who landed at Lenakel airport from Port Vila this morning, and finally made it to Chimere in time for lunch accompanied by local dental care worker Bob and eyecare worker Dick. Morinda would have joined us on the boat for lunch, but the combination of the two – boat and lunch – still has her shore-bound for the time being



In short, the volcano trip was a big hit (Hopefully I can secure a photo from one of the thrill-seekers for this Ship's Log to better tell the story) with the primal violence of the explosions and spouting lava showers truly being a surround-sound, all-senses experience that you feel, rather than simply observe.

The ladies of the local Presbyterian Church made lunch for everyone on their return and so by around 8:00pm those boat-based folk, Martin, Peter, Daniel, Gerry, Annette, Deb and me were safely back on the boat, (dinghy ride through coral in pitch blackness made easier due to full tide) with the land-folk, Morinda, Bob, Dick, Tami, Antonio, Doug and David preparing to settle into their "allocated accommodation"

Having reported so far on topics as diverse as swimming, fishing, sailing, volcanoes, picnics etc ... it would be easy to get the picture that this truly is a south Pacific cruise, a la P&O ... but rest assured, everything to date has been building up to the moment tomorrow afternoon – after church – when the eye, dental and medical clinic will officially open and some of the first National Oral Health data will be collected.



It really is a great moment to savor

To mark the significance of the occasion all 14 of us were officially welcomed by the head of the village, Chief Johnson Noar. It was a simple but moving ceremony with words of welcome being expressed and our own Bob Natuman giving one in reply. We were each presented with a flower garland and given an opportunity to introduce ourselves and say what part we were playing in the mission.



Welcome ceremony Port Resolution

nearly everyone in the photos naturally) and discussing the history of the region and their appreciation of the arrival of missionaries like John Paton who brought a new message of love and light, replacing a culture of cannibalism, pay-back and superstition

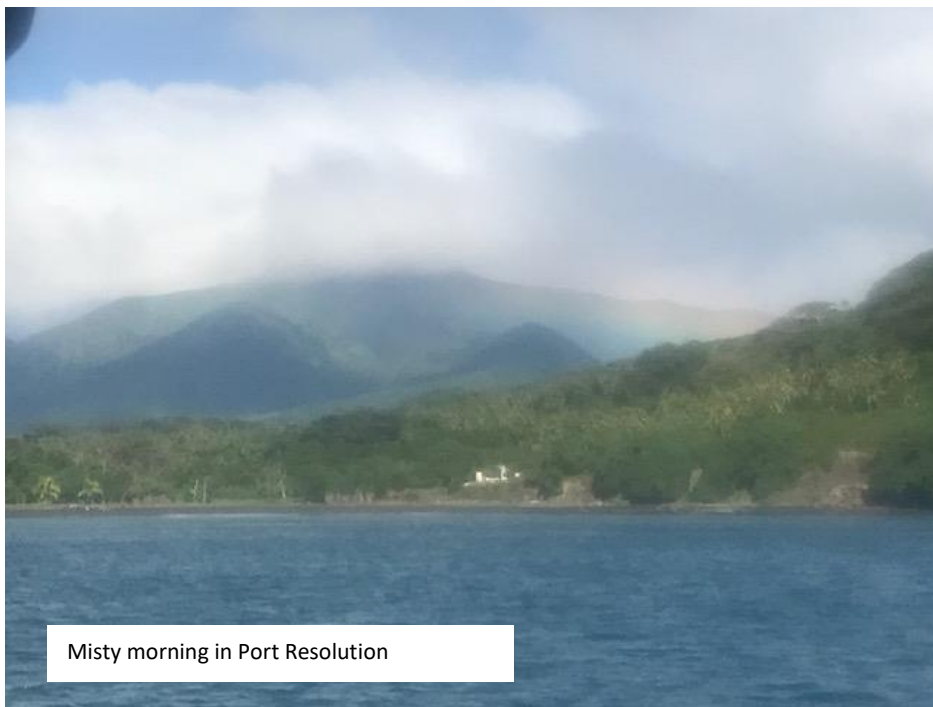
This finished around 3:00pm and as the team began preparing to head off to the volcano, I made moves back to the dinghy. On my way I made the comment to Morinda that maybe a few of the officials might like to come out to the boat for afternoon tea since I was heading back alone and would be filling in time till the team returned and needed a dinghy ride home. So it was that I was joined by Chief Johnson, Elder Sampson and Principal Thomas for a couple of hours aboard, chatting, eating, bonding, looking at old group photos on the computer from our earlier visits here (and yes, they recognised



Paster Sampson, Chief Johnson & Principal Thomas

While serving fruit cake and snacks to my guests I also finished off the bread making for the day, baking two loaves which were sampled with appreciation, leaving everyone too full to eat their dinner after being delivered back to the shore on sunset. A burst of rain then engulfed the boat and as I set about rigging up the deck covers in the dark to enable us to keep the hatches and windows open without letting the water in, I gave a thought for the volcano-adventurers getting soaked to the skin

I'm now about to doze off for the second time tonight and so let me just say, in deference to the list mentioned earlier, that ...



Misty morning in Port Resolution

Daniel and Peter had an early morning swim to the steam vents, narrowly avoiding burning their bums like a pair of Japanese snow Monkeys, as they sat on the submerged rocks nearby.

Martin sanded and stained the wooden toe rails, Deb cleaned the cockpit. Annette whipped up an amazing biblical lunch for everyone using the leftover loaves made yesterday and the remaining fishes ... well, fish actually, part of the 100kg marlin given to us by the motorboat parked near us the other day in Port Vila.

Gerry and I worked our way through a trouble-shooting list, and a

process of elimination, in connection with our wonderful Paguro 6kva, diesel generator which runs beautifully, but currently generates NO 240 volts – like having a highly tuned Ferrari in the garage with no wheels. After some emails back and forth with our mechanic Steve in Melbourne it seems like a simple case of burnt out capacitors. They're pretty useful apparently and when I say "simple" it's not what you'd call an off-the-shelf-item here in Port Resolution. And just when everything was working so well too, and I was on the edge of say ... "what could possibly go wrong now?"

On return from their swim Daniel and Peter assisted with the general clean up, Peter giving the waterline of the boat a bit of a scrub as he splashed and frolicked. Tonight's recount by Peter of the "nasty brown stains on the starboard side" shan't be repeated here – maybe I shouldn't have said that.

In the course of all the comings and going Nurse Nancy was checked on and she still has high blood pressure, but the rest has definitely done her good. Instead of "bulk billing" her services I think Annette must have "banana billed" because there was a bunch of them out in the cockpit – a sign of appreciate from Nancy for all the care and attention, for which Nancy constantly apologises,"... putting you to all this trouble...I'm sorry tumas"

I think I've got through the list satisfactorily. Amidst all the chatter in the dinghy coming back to the boat tonight I asked "and who would like to write a blog about the volcano experience" ... well I think I now know how to shut everyone up !! But hopefully a new "Cub Reporter" ... or "Guest Contributor" might emerge over the next few days, particularly with the official start of the clinics and Oral Health Survey tomorrow afternoon ... watch this space.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and blog by committee

MSM Team Chimere

[Preet Shakespeare](#), [Linda Latimer](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#) liked this post

Annie Ware

1:45pm. 25 June Sunday 2017  
Port Resolution



Nambawan!!

Annie Ware (Pro. Wah -ray)

First National Oral Health Survey participant, just 2,879 to go, in 90 more locations and on 31 different islands!

Now mum let me read that before you sign anything ...

[Kylie DellaBarca Steel](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Rae-Ellen Graham](#) liked this post



## Sea Rescue – lift raft, red flares, sinking yacht, action stations ... the works!!

Sunday 25th June 2017

Port Resolution

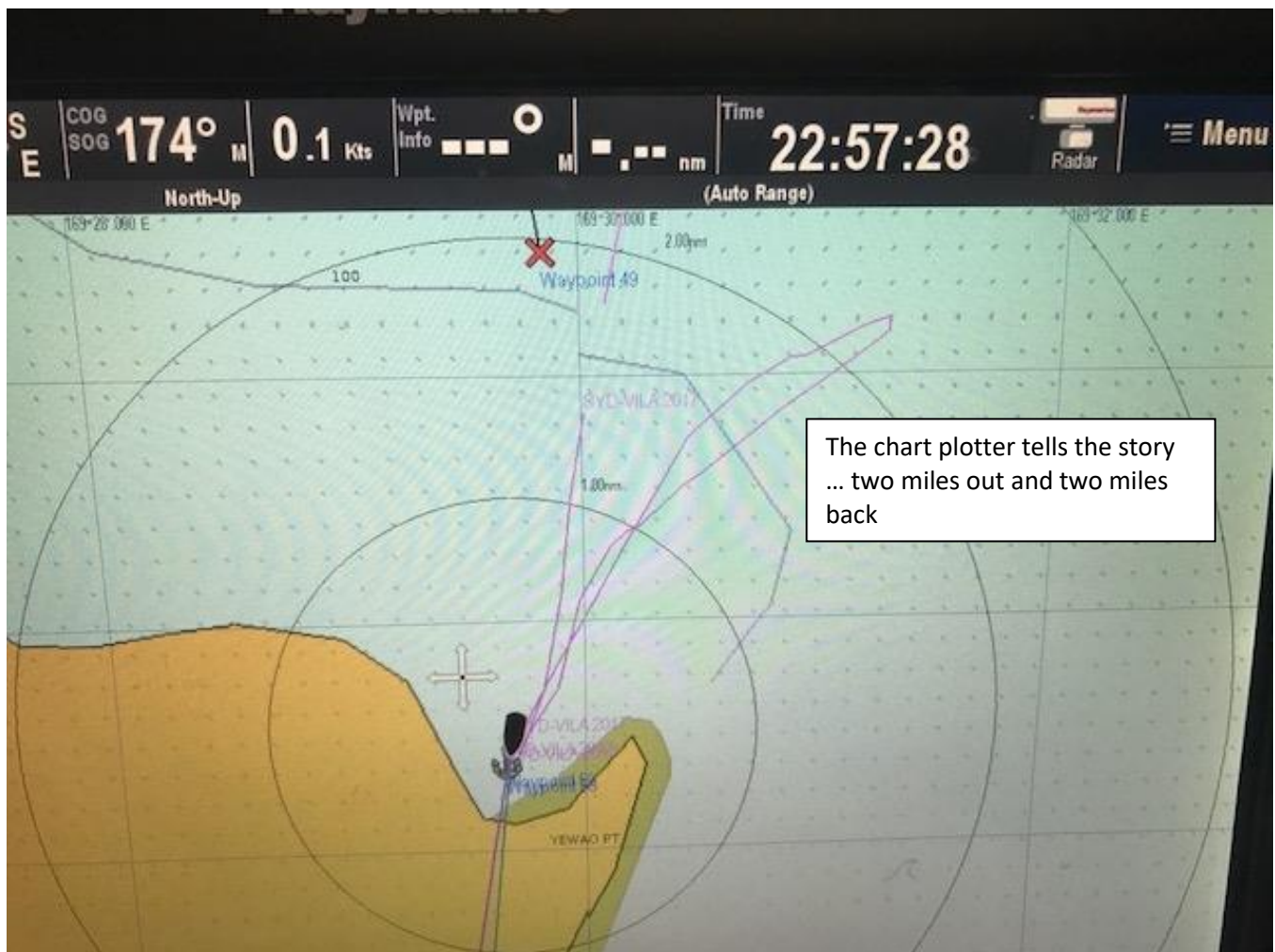
We were enjoying dinner on shore after the first days clinic, and that was going to be the topic of tonight's blog- not the meal but the clinic and the official start of the National Oral Health Survey

Then, as we were discussing the day's activities, a concerned looking chief Johnson and a group of men approached us out of the evening darkness asking, "Captain Rob, there is a yacht, hit rocks off the white beach coming into the bay. It has sent up red flares. They are on the radio"

Sure enough, I pulled out my mobile VHF radio and there was the distinct German accent ... "we have deployed the life raft, we are sinking, can some one help us please"

Now here's a first! But from then on, "Team MSM Chimere" swung into action, accompanied by half a dozen strong, fit Ni-Van men.

"Ship in distress, ship in distress, this is yacht Chimere coming to your assistance, we will be with you shortly, do you copy?!!!"



"We are sinking, can you come and help us?", the voice was full of concern



After explaining to the medical team what we knew of the situation, all of the sailing team, along with the Ni-vans made our way down to the dinghy and out to Chimere. All the while giving reassurance on channel 16 to an evermore urgent voice from the darkness

Once aboard Chimere it was a case of quickly preparing Chimere for sea, taking down deck awnings, starting the motor – putting the steering wheel back on, yes don't ask – and then winching up the anchor.

Anchor winch wont work, how can that be??!! Why now for goodness sake. Great to have a bunch of fit locals aboard!

"Ni-vans, pull on that chain!!!"

So it was that 40 metres of 13mm chain, maybe 150-200kg in all was retrieved along with the 40kg anchor, in record time!! One big pile on deck.

Gerry then took the helm, supported amazingly by Annette, Deb, Peter and Martin, with Daniels ample supply of toughly muscles put to good use winching the small dinghy higher on the stern davits out of the way of the tow lines. Meanwhile I headed off out to sea at speed in the dinghy with Ware in the bow with his torch

"We see your lights, we will be with you shortly" I radioed

"Ya we see you" came the reply

The wind was behind us as we travelled as fast as we dared in the darkness and the rising seas the further we got offshore.

We could clearly see the masthead light of the yacht, so it was obviously not quite under the water yet, and as we came alongside the deployed orange life raft hung off the stern along with their dinghy, in a surreal kind of "survivor movie" fashion.

It was then a case of reassuring the men, assessing more completely the state of and radioing this back to Chimere so they could prepare in advance of their arrival; still maybe 15 – 20 minutes behind us



their boat and the water leak

To cut a long and rather intense story short, Ware clambered aboard the yacht to assist them pull their anchor and 30 metres of dangling chain up, while I assisted with the attachment of two tow lines (from the dinghy) as Chimere did a slow pass.

From then on it seemed to continue as a text book rescue, even though we just kept making it up as we went along; planning and adjusting our actions as necessary

The 2 mile return to the bay was done at around 3 knots with the rudder-less yacht gliding smoothly behind after Gerry had completed the initial wide turn to home.

Another yacht in the harbour used their dinghy to pick up our portable generator from shore – it was being used to provide lighting in the hall where we had enjoyed dinner- and after coming to anchor we rafted the other yacht alongside and went aboard with our high capacity pump to assist in pumping her out

I must say it was a sobering experience to enter their saloon and be ankle deep in water, and to see stuff floating around all over the place ... every boat owner's nightmare!!

Our mobile 240volt pump and 35mm hose did its job and things began to calm down a bit.

In summary, without the depth of experience aboard in the amazingly talented and diverse crew, plus the resources we have packed aboard at our disposal, this episode might well have ended very differently

As it is we now have two very relieved German sailors aboard their "saved" yacht rafted up alongside and a bunch of very tired puppies on Chimere fast falling asleep in their bunks.

No doubt there'll be more to report tomorrow!! It'll be a story to dine out on for years to come no doubt

Smooth seas, fair breeze and sea rescue ends well!!

Rob Latimer

[Elke Hofmann](#), [Manfred Schloesser](#), [Carsten Bette](#), [Han Asoka](#), [Kushila Stein](#), [Julie Mitchell](#), [Cathy West](#), [Robert Hardgrave](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Sian Williams](#), [Mark Stephenson](#), [Laurence Baum](#), [Barry Newman](#), [Max Brooks](#), [Linda Latimer](#), [Jenny Newby-Fraser](#), [Matt Latimer](#), [Robyn Clarke](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Lorraine Rose](#) liked this post

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8 Responses to "Sea Rescue – lift raft, red flares, sinking yacht, action stations ... the works!!"

[Matt Bryant on Facebook](#) says:

[June 26, 2017 at 1:18 pm](#)

Well done to all. Salvage rights which would be covered by their insurance.

[Anna](#) says:

[June 26, 2017 at 2:35 pm](#)

So relieved, when I read the first few lines I thought it was you who was sinking

I am so glad you were there to assist and that everyone was safe at the end of the adventure.

[Medical Sailing Ministries on Facebook](#) says:

[June 26, 2017 at 8:33 pm](#)

Have to get our people to talk to your people to talk to their people

[Cathy West on Facebook](#) says:

[June 26, 2017 at 10:19 pm](#)

Wow! That's epic! Go team!!

[Petrea McCarthy on Facebook](#) says:

[June 29, 2017 at 1:02 am](#)

Terrific job guys.

[Manfred Schloesser](#) says:

[July 2, 2017 at 1:36 am](#)

Many many thanks to you and your crew! We know this sailing ship Doertita and the skipper Heiner and Ede from Germany!

[Elke & Werner, SV na ja](#) says:

[July 4, 2017 at 6:30 am](#)

We Thank you so much for your help!!! Heiner is one of our best Friends and we sailed several times together. We Are so happy that dortita is rescued!!!

Fair winds to you all and big hugs

Werner & Elke

*Wolfgang Eichler* says:

[July 4, 2017 at 8:46 pm](#)

Many, many thanks for helping my friend Heiner an Ede says Wolfgang, who was cruising the same waters in 200.5

## Tanna on Tanna... of course

Monday 26 June 2017  
Port Resolution

It's been another big day and it's hard to imagine what has been packed into the last 24 hours.

The yacht rescue continued in a fashion all night with the German yacht needing to pump water from their boat through the night by use of our pump and portable generator; we'd put it across onto their deck around 11:00pm for them to operate as needed.

They remained rafted up to us through the night and due to the roll of the sea at anchor it became necessary to add several more spring lines and winch them in tight to eliminate the risk of damage as the upper section of their mast and rigging came very close to ours as their roll increased.

Come morning, it was time to better assess the damage and it became clear that the back of the boat has come down hard on rocks or coral thereby pushing it up through the bottom of the boat bending the very strong 100mm solid stainless steel vertical rudder shaft like a banana and opening up a half metre gaping hole through which you could see the big blue.

Attempts were made to stuff things into the cavity from inside and out (by diving over the back) but all to no avail

A group of local fishermen then approached us in their dugout canoes and made the suggestion that "maybe now while the tide is up, you might like to beach the boat on her side on the soft sand – the tide will go out and you can fix"

They went onto explain that a previous yacht that hit that, or a very similar, rock did this successfully.

We took their advice, these guys know boats and the ways of the water – and with the aid of our two dinghies as tug boats we deliberately drove a yacht onto a sandy beach, going against all my natural instincts.

It was a big attraction for the locals and at lunchtime the whole school turned out, pulling on lines to stabilise the boats movements as the sea receded.

That's the sea showing through the crack in the bottom of the boat as we lay on the sand at low tide

Again – a long story short- Gerry, Daniel and I, using a veritable Bunnings-worth of hardware from Chimere's workshop, Aqua-epoxied, ply-wooded, screwed, builders-bogged and expander-foamed the stern compartment of the boat around the offending hole.

Just as she was beached, we un-beached her on the rising tide, again with the aid of a large number of locals.



The damage to the steering mechanism and hull is clear to see





As the sea returned and our repairs were seriously put to the test it was pleasing to see that only a tiny flow of water was seen seeping under some fast drying epoxy.



And this is a shot of the repairs with her fully floated

After helping the Germans re-anchor with instructions to call us on the radio in the event of further problems ... after all we offer a 24 hour guarantee on all our boat repair and salvage jobs, we got a call from Martin asking whether the movie night was still on up in the community hall; the fact that the portable generator was still on the yacht started to raise questions

“Yes, no problems, we are heading back to Chimere now and will pick up the projector and computer”

So it was that about an hour and a half later we presented our movie night to the community to a packed house. And what movie would you naturally show on the island of Tanna... the movie called [Tanna](#) of course



You can just make out a couple of the 100 or more heads in front of us in the community hall to view our screening of the film Tanna

Here we were in the shadow of the featured volcano with extras from the movie actually in the audience... one of whom was Chief Johnson who'd come out the boat for tea the other day who actually had a speaking part plying the role... of a chief

By then I was tired enough to sleep on concrete... more tomorrow

Smooth seas, fair breeze and Tanna on Tanna

Rob Latimer



And this is how we left them tonight bobbing on her anchor... and if you look closely that is an Aussie flag being waved by our two new best German friends. (Yes we have a few of them on Chimere too)

[Elke Hofmann](#), [Petrea McCarthy](#), [Denise Stephenson](#), [Bobbie Hammond](#), [Bruce Jacobs](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Lorraine Rose](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Cathy West](#) liked this post

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One Response to “Tanna on Tanna... of course”

[Cathy West on Facebook](#) says:

[June 26, 2017 at 10:25 pm](#)

Amazing work Team Chimere!



## Clinics and Oral Health Survey in full swing

Tuesday 27 June 2017  
Port Resolution, Tanna

Medical clinics (and Oral Health Surveys) were conducted here at Port Resolution on Sunday afternoon and yesterday but today the show went on the road north along the coast to Sulphur Bay ... drawing its name from the effects of the nearby volcano Mt Yasur.



Off to work for the day

Peter informed me that there were 15 people loaded aboard the 4wd twin cab ute, with the gear being carted earlier by the same vehicle; owing to the fact that a second truck couldn't be found.

Sulphur Bay could equally be called Ash Cloud Alley because that's what you get when you live downwind of a very active volcano and it's not always good for your health; in fact, rarely.

What I know about today's medical, dental and optical activities was gleaned from brief discussions tonight ashore over dinner (catered as usual by the woman from the local Presbyterian Church) with the returned team members. In summary they were flat out

all day, Antonio the dentist saw around 15 patients with his tooth-pull-count after 2 ½ days at around 100 apparently. The doctors saw around 30 patients today I believe, but I wasn't able to get details of the eyecare activity.

After some encouragement however, we can expect some diversity in the evening report-writing (aka Ships Log) with nurse Annette likely to step up with an In-The-Field contribution, plus maybe Tami in relation to the progress of the Oral Health Survey and Daniel with a younger perspective; sorry Tami and Antonio but you must be at least 30 now?!

Three crew members joined the ranks of the medical-folk, Daniel, Martin and Peter, each doing useful support-work such as collecting village water samples, sterilising dental equipment, dispensing spectacles, carrying gear (and there's a lot of it) and setting up the clinics; including mobile dental chairs and erecting the sun/mozzie shelter.

The team arrived back tonight in the dark, a bit late at around 6:30, with their prior VHF radio message being relayed from another yacht in the bay. It was clear the team were keen to return to their bunks when 7:00pm came around as they were pointing to the door. It was "good-night", "see you tomorrow" all around as those onshore lingered a bit longer before retreating to their "bunk-house" next door – maybe I should also get one of the doctors to



Dr Antonio & Bob at work



Dick does eye testing



write a “Cub Reporter” contribution. I overheard tonight’s discussion about a boy with a broken wrist (from falling out of a tree) who had further infections caused by Kastom Medicine’s attempt to cure the problem by cutting the skin in various places. Dr David and Annette did all they could to locate the mother and initiate an effective course of treatment but it seemed there was resistance which hopefully they can overcome upon their return tomorrow; for the sake of the boy’s whole hand and possibly more.

Gerry and I remained aboard Chimere, trying to fix a few “issues” with creating new ones.

Given we’d anchored a long way out in the bay at the conclusion of Sunday’s rescue mission and it had become quite rolley, our first task was to raise the anchor and relocate further in. Oh yes, that’s right the anchor winch decided NOT to work when it was most needed Sunday night, giving a pathetic “click” from the switch box when the all-important button was pressed instead of a manly “GrRrRrrr” from the motor accompanied by the clunk and rattle of chain passing through the mechanism.

We’d fall back on the hand-over-hand method, just that now we didn’t have 6 burly Ni-Van men aboard to drag the chain and anchor aboard,

just little ol’ me and Gerry and a hand winch at the base of the mast. Then after testing everything with the volt meter Gerry pressed the button one more time and bingo, the machine simply sprang into action – that simultaneously horrible yet beautiful mechanical noise.



Peter multi-tasks in the dental clinic

OK, there’s two items ticked off the list – Fix Winch and Re-Anchor, and it’s not even 8:00am – are we on a roll or what?

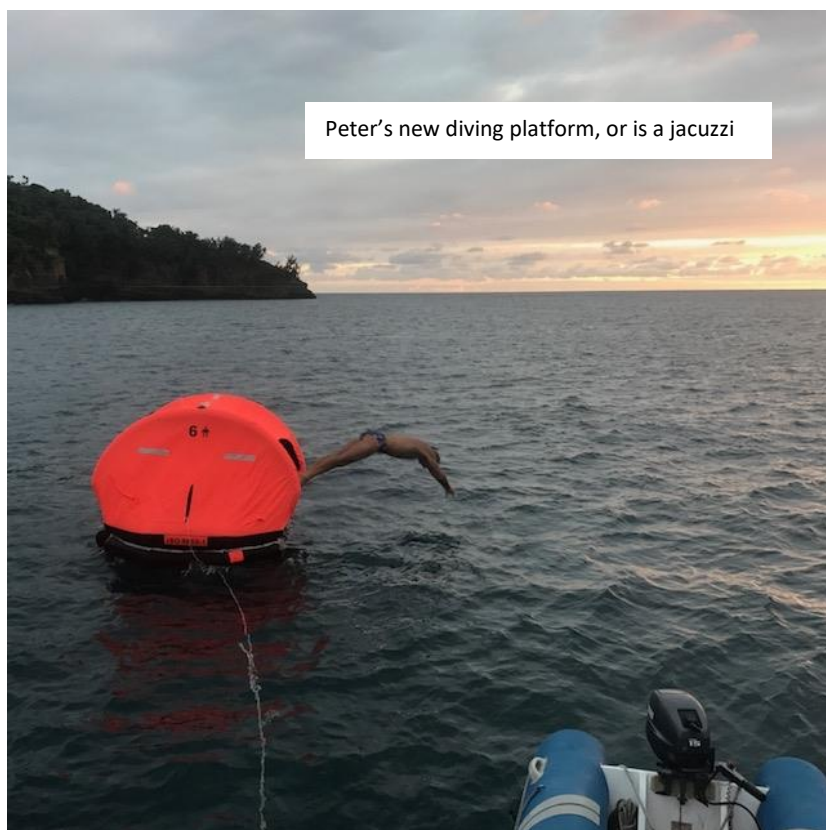
We then set our minds to the 6kva generator whose motor worked beautifully, just that it didn’t produce any 240volt electricity – you see the problem? No 240 volts and we can’t run the water maker. No water maker and it’s a case of transporting drums to and from shore, hoping it rains enough to fill the tanks, or limiting ourselves to about 2 litres, per person, per day for the next 10 days, and I don’t see that happening. In the end it came down to two burnt out capacitors, which we hope to have sent down tomorrow and received aboard at the latest Thursday. Let’s hope the parts arrive and we can get the system running again.

Those ashore are apparently craving such things as muesli, peanut butter, milk, bread etc, so a “Survival Food Parcel” will be sent ashore tomorrow morning which will be before 7:00am I am assured to ensure the day’s activities are accomplished.

One of the promises made to the medical team – I forget by whom – was that the ship-based folk would return in the morning with freshly baked bread. Not wishing to disappoint, I started the baking process, for 2 loaves, soon after stepping aboard and now, two hours later I’ve just tipped them out of the tins and onto the cooling rack for morning. It did require me to run the engine – good ol Perkins – for half an hour to heat the dough and yeast because we sit the dough under the floor board just near the motor; everything gets warm down there. In my haste however, I’m just hoping that having the oven on 130 degrees for the first 25 minutes instead of 230 degrees hasn’t spoilt the outcome – the loaves look alright ... I really should taste some to be sure, but how to do it without it showing, maybe from underneath ...?

With our departure from Tanna planned for Friday, I am keeping a keen eye on the weather forecasts of the region and so far it’s looking good, if a little too much on the nose. We’ll be heading East to Futuna, and a wind from the south east would be OK, however it’s set to move east-south-east and then East by the week-end, but fortunately the seas are calm, and Perkins can do more than assisting in raising dough at anchor when called upon to do so!

The latest news on our German friends is that tomorrow we will be helping them build a jury rig rudder for the back of their boat. It will involve the use of a spinnaker pole, floor panels and a collection of bolts and brackets, so watch this space!!



Peter's new diving platform, or is a jacuzzi

In order to thank the people in the village for their assistance they gave their fully inflated life raft to the village to be used by the kids of the village on the lake behind the beach. It should be a lot of fun. Peter, Gerry and I know because we could resist clambering in and using it as a dive platform and conversation pit. There was also the thought that we could turn it into a jacuzzi, or a back shed if it hung off the back of our boat much longer

Smooth seas, fair breeze and Clinics and Oral Health Survey in full swing

Rob Latimer

[John Fisher](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Jim Davies](#), [Maddy Shoebridge](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Larissa Quigg](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Lorraine Rose](#) liked this post

## Another day in the Bay

Wednesday 28 June 2017  
Port Resolution, Tanna

Before I begin another ... “day in the life of Chimere & MSM” ... I’d like to thank everyone who has sent through encouraging comments and supported us in so many ways. The team really appreciates it !!



Where to start? Probably the first thing is “power” ... 240 volt power to be precise ... the stuff that makes the lights work when you flick the switch or makes the TV go [or recharges our drill batteries for getting coconut drinks]. Well at the moment we are having a few issues with generating sufficient 240 volts to run the water maker

The tank’s getting low, and everyone is going to notice it in a couple of days if the problem is not solved!

Through the miracle of modern communications we have been able to locate the required capacitors for the generator in Port-Vila and through Barry Stewart’s assistance and that of

the other Barry who works in the PCV clinic, a small parcel containing the essential components, was put on the afternoon plane to Tanna.

The goods were picked up at the electrical warehouse in Port Vila this morning and around lunchtime driven were driven out to the airport. I have visions of Barry handing the parcel to the pilot and him poking it under his seat for the flight down but that’s just me I suppose.

I am assured that the parcel is now in Lenakel on the other side of the island awaiting pick up

Pick up can be done in one of several different ways. First, I could get myself on a truck traveling to Lenakel, pick up the item in person and then return. Or, I could find a driver who is going to be going there anyway and ask if he might pick it up from the post office and bring it back.

This second option seemed the most efficient, enabling me to remain on the boat doing work. And so tonight after dinner, Bob led me through the village with the aid of the torch to meet a man who might solve our problem.

It’s at this point I fell asleep out here in the cockpit. It’s late, dark and quiet but at the end of the day I’m sleepy and nature takes over.

Smooth seas, fair breeze... until tomorrow

Rob Latimer

[Mark Stephenson](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Jim Davies](#), [Lynda Brayton](#), [Lorraine Rose](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post



*Tomorrow we go, early.*

Thursday 29 June 2017  
Port Resolution (last night)

So much happening on so many fronts, it's hard to report on them all.

Gerry trucked it to Lenakel to find the generator parts, which is a blog in itself as he persisted with his fruitless inquiries at the post office only to end up at the airport itself where he found the small bag of capacitors.

I remained the day on Chimere and with the assistance of local man Stanley we carted 320 litres of water onto the boat in drums- effectively as a Plan B in case we can't make water in the short term.



We said good-bye to the Germans; they came over for coffee and to see my onboard Bunnings warehouse!?! They jokingly suggested we might be riding higher in the water after the amount of stuff used on their boat.

While at anchor they experimented with their new tiller and from the smiles in their faces they were very happy with the result.

In the end, the farewell was quite an emotional thing – within the blokey unwritten code of practice of course – and through bear-hugs and handshakes all round, both expressed again their deep thanks and appreciation for being plucked out of a ... “no hope situation” to use the owners words as he mentally

re-lived the experience of just 5 nights ago and the very real prospect of eventually abandoning his sinking vessel and retreating to the life raft.

The medical team wrapped up a successful day and tour to this part of the country-hopefully more detail from them soon.

We currently have three large bulker bags full of dental, medical and eye care equipment on the foredeck with the medical team coming aboard in the morning- at 5:30am to be precise, for the 40 mile excursion out to Futuna island. The medical team won't have to stay on the foredeck, they'll be given a bunk and afforded all the comfort we can provide.

Due to the early start – and it's already 10pm I'm deliberately signing off now- before I involuntary fall asleep and because I really need to catch up on my sleep.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and tomorrow we go

Rob Latimer

[Nicola Young](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Lynda Brayton](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Liz Ogden](#) liked this post



Leaving Port Resolution for the drive to Sulphur Bay

## *We gave it a good go*

Friday 30 June 2017

Aniwa Island

Our 40 mile journey from Port Resolution Bay to Futuna Island started well.

All were aboard in the morning darkness, but I'm sure new coral heads had grown overnight because the dinghy seemed to find itself in a minefield of them, all new and totally unfamiliar and nothing to do with the operator of course.

After lifting the medical team's personal gear aboard (the clinic gear was lifted aboard late yesterday) along with the dinghy, we hoisted a reefed main and about 50% of the jib then made a cautious exit of the bay around 7:00am, taking special note of the rocks nearby on which the Germans had most likely had their "encounter" just 5 nights earlier.

Wind was from the East South East (ESE) at around 20-30 knots, with our destination- Futuna Island, pretty in the same direction. None of this would generally be a problem except the seas had built to around 2-4 metres and so within a short period of time it was clear this was not going to be a fun day out on the water.

At one point the sun came out to bath the growing wetness (and cold it must be said) in a warm, soft light and there was even a whale breaching some distance astern quite obviously enjoying the conditions more than us. It was around this time that a series of questions were considered in my mind ... do we really have to go to Futuna Island today, couldn't we perhaps swap with nearby (downwind) Aniwa Island where we plan to be on Sunday? Will the medical volunteers and others aboard still love me at the end of the day if we keep this bashing to windward up for the next 8 hours? Ignoring the passengers and crew for a minute, isn't this putting extra unnecessary strain on the gear and rig?

So it was that after consulting with Ni-Van health workers Bob and Morinda it was decided to change plans and go first to Aniwa (less than 10 miles away) and if the weather improves still sail down to Futuna on Sunday. We were outside phone range, but it was agreed that they would all understand and that plans could be rearranged in this way.

It's amazing the difference a 160 degree turn to port can make to the motion of a yacht ... and it must be said the mood onboard – talk about instant-calmer ... and the other sort too possibly. Within 90 minutes we were in the lee of the island, anchor down, beginning to lay out lunch with Bob phoning the island elders, church leaders and health

worker to organise a vehicle to cart our substantial pile of medical, dental and optical gear from the dinghy up to the island clinic.

Aniwa is a small island with a population estimated at around 300 a short distance off the NE coasts of Tanna. Futuna is a bit further away with a population of 600 and while Aniwa is flat and long, like an aircraft carrier, Futuna is





roundish and high – rising to a central plateau of around 650 metres (and covered in jungle) – as close to Jurassic Park as you are likely to find.

After a few dinghy rides delivering gear and people to a small concrete landing on shore, through a gap in the coral and behind a reasonable surf break when the tide was in, we had completed Step 1 in preparing for the next day's mission. Word will pass quickly around and so we should expect a big turnout tomorrow.

Back on board Chimere ... the generator parts arrived from Port Vila yesterday and mid afternoon today Gerry fitted them and wacko !... we were back in business producing 240 volts along with freshwater from the indigo coloured sea around us.

Dinner tonight was mostly a spag bol creation from Daniel and it should be mentioned that both Peter and Daniel have just returned from a couple of hours in the darkness watching a Jon Frum cult singing and dancing "performance". (Maybe do a websearch of Jon Frum)

Our communications are limited to the satellite email, so unfortunately there are no new photos

We are fortunate in having a written contribution from nurse Annette, which you can read below.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and we gave it a good go...

Rob Latimer

## Report from the field

There is a particularly persistent skipper sitting beside me, 'encouraging' me to write about the health services provided thus far! To be fair, I have been procrastinating for a few days and I did volunteer to do this given that I am the nurse and I have been working alongside Dr David and Dr Doug. So, now while we sit at a beautiful anchorage at Aniwa Island, I shall put pen to paper.

You may ask why we are anchored at Aniwa Island and not Futuna Island this evening (just in case you are closely following the itinerary). Unfortunately, the weather was not too kind today with a strong easterly wind and squalls which made for some uncomfortable sailing and a few 'green' passengers/crew. Rob made the wise decision to alter course for Aniwa Island with the hope that when the wind settles we will be able to sail back to Futuna. We will keep our fingers crossed. Despite the wild weather, we still had a beautiful sail with the sighting of a breaching Humpback whale, flying fish and the stunning indigo coloured sea set against a backdrop of the mountainous, volcanic Tanna Island. There certainly are a few perks to nursing amongst the Pacific Islands.

When I reflect upon the past week I feel so privileged to be a member of the MSM team and to have supported the outreach health clinics in the villages of Port Resolution, Sulphur Bay and Ierke. I feel so privileged to have been welcomed by each community; each members generosity of spirit, inclusiveness and warmth. We have all been embraced with unconditional regard and given so much from those with so little. If only, the villages knew how much we take away from our experiences. We have been provided with beautifully prepared breakfasts, lunches and dinners, decorated with flowers, tablecloths and sounds of village life surrounding us: children laughing, playing and crying, cows mooing, the chatter of the women as they prepare our food. We have provided clinics with the distant rumble of Mt Yasur serenading our health assessments.

Our clinics have been visited by young and old, healthy and frail, dogs, pigs and kittens and community members whose bodies are pleading for rest to relieve the back and knee pain from years of hard work.

In each of the villages back pain, knee pain and respiratory tract infections have been recurring themes for many adults presenting to the clinic. Thankfully, high blood sugars were infrequent. However, it was confronting to hear of some incidents of domestic violence leading to ongoing physical and emotional distress for many women and no doubt children. On a more positive note, there were also impromptu consultations where both Dr Doug and Dr David

were able to provide support. This included providing education and medication to a man whose 34 year old brother had recently suffered a Stroke.

For the pikinini's, recurring themes included ear infections (many as a result from diving), skin infections and respiratory complaints. One little patient who caught our eye and touched our hearts was a young boy who had been playing outside the 'window' of the clinic at Sulphur Bay (by the way, the clinic was an old concrete structure with holes for windows and sticks across the door to prevent pigs entering. It resembled more an old abandoned farm shed than health/dental clinic. Given its unwilling status, the space proved to be a humble but effective clinic for the day). This little boy was observed with a piece of material wrapped around his wrist. Hmmm I thought. What could be under this? A quick game of 'cat and mouse' and I plucked the little boy up and over the sticks (remember the pigs?). What met us under the cloth was of grave concern. The little boy had fallen out of a tree and broken his arm (Collie's Fracture) one month ago. The village had practiced Kastom medicine and cut the boys wrist in two places to assist with healing. Unfortunately, the wrist was distorted with swelling and infection. From a Western medicine perspective, the arm required immediate treatment. Whilst Dr David was able to give an immediate dose of oral antibiotics, apply a backslab (a cardboard box lid) and dressing, a cultural dilemma became apparent. All attempts were made to encourage the boys guardians to take the boy to the hospital however this went against the villages traditional healing Kastom. The following day, Dr David and Bob, our Ni-Van Team Leader, went back to Sulphur Bay to check on the little boy. Dr David was able to provide further oral antibiotics however a hospital stay remained uncertain.

It is without doubt that we would not be able to run these outreach clinics without the support of our local village volunteers to assist with communication and cultural understanding. Alice was our 'angel' who worked tirelessly in this role. Alice became one of the team and wore her blue PCV health shirt with pride. I smile as I write this thinking of how Alice enlisted (at short notice with an ear piercing whistle) some young men to assist with carrying all of the medical boxes back down to the beach. The young men were ten 10 years olds who bounded over with great enthusiasm, picked up the boxes and randomly plonked them on the beach as if they had been blown ashore in the last storm!! It was such a privilege working with Alice.

There are many more experiences which come to mind on reflection of this extraordinary week of assisting with the health outreach clinic. Stay tuned for the next installment. There is also a whole story regarding the National Oral Health Survey and all of the tremendous work of the dental team on this mission. I think the skipper may need to 'encourage' Deb to write about this. I do hope my story has provided a little insight of Medical Sailing Ministries mission.

Annette Hesselmanns  
Registered Nurse

[Phil Wicks](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Lynda Brayton](#), [Lorraine Rose](#), [Sophie Snijders](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post

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2 Responses to "We gave it a good go"

*Rae-Ellen Graham says:*

[July 1, 2017 at 2:32 pm](#)

Thanks Annette for your report from the field. It helped paint a picture of what you're doing. You are so right about having the local assistance and I imagine they are learning a lot which they can put to future use, to help their communities.

## Night sail to Futuna

Saturday 1 July 2017

Aniwa Island

It's now very quiet here at anchor on the west coast of Aniwa. It's around 8:30pm and the string band music is playing on the CD.

All the clinic and survey equipment has been loaded and lashed to the fore-deck and all the sailing and medical folk are aboard – dentists Antonio and Tami, doctors Doug and David, nurses Annette and Deb, local health care workers Morinda, Bob and Dick, plus sailors Gerry, Martin, Peter, Daniel and myself – 14 in all.

The fresh bread is out of the oven and everyone is settling down for a good night's sail to Futuna. Some of the medicos are already testing out their allocated bunk and Martin has finished putting waypoints into the chartplotter.

Communications are still poor – read, non existent – and so sending emails and photos are out, but the Iridium satellite is getting a word out; although those satellites don't always line up the way you'd like, making for frustrating delays and temperamental transmissions

The full day clinic on shore was indeed a "full day" with the two doctors and nurse (Annette) seeing 79 patients including around 30 kids with conditions as diverse as epilepsy, malnutrition and what the doctors describe as "grotty ears". There were a lot of "giggling girls" who arrived in groups.

A rewarding aspect was working with the local island nurse, Anne Marie, who helped greatly in explaining each person's condition and made assurances about future ongoing care and follow-up where necessary. There were also the usual back and chest pains from hard work in the gardens and life generally, plus high blood pressure likely caused from cooking with salt water.

Another occupation condition amongst a select group of men and boys was ear problems caused from deep diving. We were shown great hospitality, despite our unexpected, impromptu arrival, 2 days early.

Anyway, it's now getting close to 10:00pm and the sailors are doing what they must to prepare Chimere for sea ... closing hatches, stowing things low, starting the motor etc, and directing the medicos to their bunks for some much needed sleep.

I'd better sign off now, and pick things up later

Smooth seas, fair breeze and night sail to Futuna

Rob Latimer



*Just arrived Futuna*

And they have Internet!!!!

Dentist Tami and Antonio work the lens!!!



[Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Jean Beriki](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Barry Stewart](#) liked this post

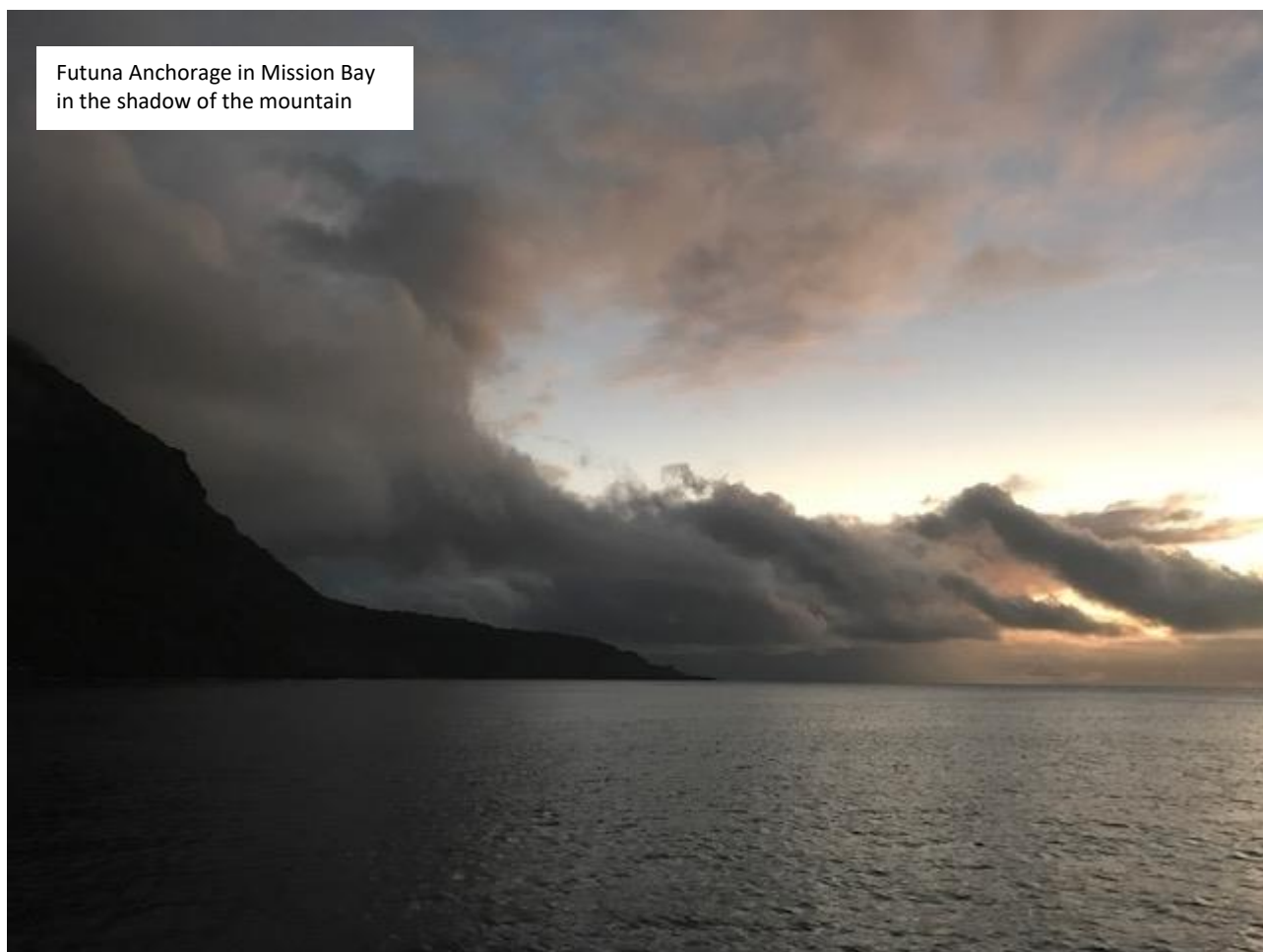
## Rest day at Futuna

Sunday 2 July 2017

Futuna Island

The Admiralty Pilot (book) to the Pacific Islands Volume II refers to the anchorage at Futuna as: "...W coast of NE point, steep-to except for foul ground, indifferent anchorage at a depth of 44m ... landing on sandy beach in small cove." And at the main village in Herald Bay ... "no anchorage on account of the great depths, landing is reported to be precarious"

So here we are anchored in Mission Bay, Futuna Island, in 20m of water with the anchor and chain resting below us on coral and rock, more like a mooring, than a real anchor, with the 630 metre high island rising dramatically from the water just 500m off our starboard bow.



It's a stunning sight and ample reward for the night sail from Aniwa; a time of (mostly) sleep on the part of the medical volunteers and attentive shift-work, and sporadic rests for the sailors. Whilst the wind was largely on the nose for the whole of the 40 miles, the seas were mercifully low and so we could motor sail at an average of about 4-5 knots, arriving around 9:00am this morning.

On arrival and after Daniel had done a brief snorkel over the side to confirm the best spot (out of a generally bad area) many went for a swim and generally mucked about – it was Sunday after all.

I ran Bob, Morinda and Dick ashore in the dinghy to discuss the next day's clinic and survey, only to find that the nurse and pastor/elder were at the other end of the island at Herald Bay.

Some of the sailors grabbed an opportunity to catch up on some sleep, while most went ashore in the afternoon to wander around and explore

On arrival we were met on the beach by a young 12 year old lad, Lenson, who later swam out to the boat. I saw him sitting with a towel over his shoulders in the cockpit drinking a hot chocolate and felt compelled to inquire whether he was a stow-away, or he'd been kidnapped. The answer was a bit unclear, but I got the computer out and showed him some video and photos of our previous visit here in 2010. Pretty soon he could identify his 5 year old self in the old photos and pointed out ... "that's my mother" ... "that's my sister ... my brother" etc

He was a very pleasant young man and was finally dropped back to the shore by Daniel, complete with backpack, shirt and cap.

With no clinic today it really was a chance to relax and catch up on things. In my case, and out of necessity, I did some clothes washing and even had a shave. Others read, slept or explored ashore.

After much radio communication back and forth between Bob and myself, it was confirmed that the clinic and survey will be at Herald Bay on the other side of the island, despite the poor anchorage reports. If needs be we will drop everyone off around 7:00am tomorrow and return to this anchorage to wait the day out. But contrary to what I've read, the locals say it has an OK landing and anchorage, so I'm keen to discover more.

Morinda, Bob and Dick are staying ashore, leaving 11 of us aboard for the night. Today's two loaves of freshly baked bread and herb rolls came out perfectly once more, with Antonio taking charge of the galley tonight in pursuit of the most perfect Italian Pasta Creation, after which he performed wonderfully on the guitar to everyone's enjoyment.



The sea can be heard crashing on the nearby rocks and beach and there's a gentle roll to Chimere's motion.

Being such a different island to Aniwa it will be interesting to hear from the medical team at the end of tomorrow whether any real difference can be observed in the general health of each island.

With so much having been packed into this last week it's hard to believe that it's only a week since the high-drama rescue of the two Germans and their yacht at the entrance to Port Resolution, Tanna.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and rest day at Futuna

Rob Latimer



Monday 9am

Herald Bay, Futuna

PS Sorry about the lack of photos and replies to email etc – communications is poor at Mission Bay but much better from Herald Bay

Heading from Mission Bay to the more challenging Herald Bay to drop off the medical and dental equipment and volunteers



Dropped Oral Health Survey team off onto small beach at Herald Bay then retreated back to relative calm of Mission Bay where we will run clinic for those in need



Gerry does a great job hovering in the roly Herald Bay while we run the Survey team ashore



[Wayne Monastra](#), [Yvonne Bain](#), [Mary-Jane Hesselmanns](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Matthew Ogg](#) liked this post  
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## Changing plans at Futuna ... again

Monday 3 July 2017  
Futuna Island

After a relatively peaceful night, with only the occasional chain-on-coral sound from the anchor deep below to focus the mind, it was another early start. Particularly for the sailors who readied the boat from 5:30am to be around the other side of the island at Herald Bay for the unloading of the clinic and survey gear, along with the team, for 7:00am. Breakfast was enjoyed on route

All went to plan, but as predicted we were greeted in Herald Bay by big rolly seas, little shelter, and no obvious landing spot.

"Ello Rob, ello Rob dis is Bob, OVER" ... the VHF radio crackled to life as we rounded the point into rising seas

"Hello Bob, where is the village ... and the landing spot, OVER??", I replied

"Can you see me?, OVER"

Between passing rain squalls, all we could see onshore, apart from a towering mountain disappearing into the clouds above, was forest, rocks and surf ... sadly no Bob. As for the village, there was no sign of it.

"We can't see you Bob, where's the village?, OVER?", I called.

"Village is up da mountain, on the hill, can you see me?, OVER"



This exchange went on for some time until we had fully entered the bay and more detail could be made out onshore. It was then a case of Gerry keeping Chimere in a holding pattern in the bay against the wind and sea while Daniel and I wizzed Tami, Antonio, Deb and Martin ashore in the dinghy through a very narrow gap in the coral and onto a small sandy beach – where Bob was standing under a tree out of the rain.



As for the many fit young local lads who were supposed to be helping to carry the gear up from the beach, well they were possibly and very sensibly, still in their beds.

So it was decided ... the oral health survey team would start their work up in the village, and if anyone required medical, optical or dental care, then they could venture around to the better anchorage at Mission Bay – two hours by slippery walking track.

Phone communications the way they are, the next hour saw a range of plans made and then re-made until finally it was agreed that the local aluminium boat (with a covered half-cab) could be sent around to bring the gear and remaining team members back to Herald Bay to run a clinic alongside the survey; as planned.

Three quarters of an hour later and still no boat, we decided to transport the medical team plus minimal gear the 2 miles back to Herald Bay in our own dinghy. A rather wet experience due to the continuing rain and breaking seas over the bow ... and occasionally each side too it must be said.

On arrival at Herald Bay we met the aluminium boat on its way to Chimere, which it did, returning with the two bulka bags full of dental gear.

After the epic climb up to the village, which included at one point a tall ladder up a cliff face, things progressed well in the clinic, however, whilst there were lots of kids, as it turned out there were very few adults, owing to the fact that most had walked to Mission Bay (yes, the exact spot where Chimere was anchored) to assist with tidying up on the small airstrip.

So it was that with no dental patients the dental gear remained in the aluminium boat at the bottom of the hill. If only we'd known about everyone being at Mission Bay for the day we might have saved ourselves a lot of trouble and expense in hiring the local boat.

With everyone back on board by 5:00pm it was a time of relaxation and downloading about the day's events and it was agreed that even though the clinic didn't exactly run to plan, the Oral Health Survey achieved its objective of surveying 15 random people, or is that 15 people at random, three from each of the five age groups, approx., 5, 12, 15, 35 and 65.

Hot showers were all the rage back on board, thanks to our ability to once again make water (after Gerry fixed the generator) along with putting on dry clothes.

Our time here at Futuna is now at an end, and after Peter and Doug's amazing dinner of chicken, tuna (from a can it must be said) beans, corn, rice and grated carrot was consumed to great acclaim, we are once again preparing for an overnight sail with 14 aboard. THIS TIME, however, it's in a north westerly direction and with wind from the south east, (as it so often is) we are expecting what we sailors refer to as a "dream run".

Smooth seas, fair breeze and more changed plans at Futuna

Rob Latimer

[Nicole Parfitt](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Lorraine Males](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Bruce Jacobs](#), [Barry Stewart](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Lynda Brayton](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#) liked this post  
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## Big day in Ipota in pictures

Tuesday 4 July

Ipota, Erromango

Smooth overnight run north from Futuna to Erromango and passing morning showers deliver surprise delights. The most vivid of rainbows such that I need a wider lens.

Rainbow enroute to Erromango



Anchoring in a river... now that's a first for Chimere!!

And who else should be here at the same time but the Polynesian catamaran Oceanos on a regional promotion of the up-coming Pacific Games



Chimere shares her anchorage in the Ipota village river with the Polynesian inspired Okeanos

Dental care worker Bob wakes with a smile. He sleeps so well we've suggested he count his dreadlocks each morning because it would be easy to cut one off while he sleeps as a souvenir to take back to Australia.



Bob ready for a new day

We have offered to run a movie in the village tonight and this gaggle of kids on the shore nearby took a shine to Daniel, the Pied piper of Chimere.





Daniel brings his new friends aboard for a look-see

Pretty soon they were all aboard learning about the democratic process... put your hand up if you want Lion King, now put your hand up if you want Nemo ... Ice Age ... now only one vote, one pikinini ... after some of the kids joined me in singing Hakuna Matata I think the Lion King it is !!

Check out all the new photos in the [Mission 1 Gallery](#) and scroll down this page and zoom in to see where Chimere is now (and has been) on the Predict Wind map.

Liz Mallen (using images and text from Rob Latimer)

[Mary-Jane Hesselmanns](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Yvonne Bain](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Phil Wicks](#) liked this post

## Up the river at Ipota

Tuesday 4 July 2017

Ipota Village, Erromango Island

In a first for Chimere, we are now anchored a short distance up a river at the village of Ipota on the east coast of the sparsely populated island of Erromango; “land of the mango”

Our stern is facing the shore, with a couple of lines holding us in position, along with the anchor from the bow of course (plus an extra smaller anchor on the port side just to be sure!)



On the way south to 3Tanna 10 days ago we dropped by to check out this anchorage, because the thought of entering a narrow river, where the depth is unknown and turning room is limited didn't really appeal; at least not without some additional firsthand knowledge.

On arrival around 10:00am, after our 12 hour overnight sail from Futuna – and, yes we did indeed sail most of the way without the motor running – we lowered the large dinghy and Gerry and I did a quick reconnoiter up the river and soon devised our plan, which very much went ... to plan.

The quote for the day however, must surely go to Gerry, who, after everything was tied down and we were ready for a cup of tea said ... “this is great, I get to do drive someone else's boat in places I'd never take my own boat...” In retrospect that probably sounds a bit worse now than it did at the time, but we really do have a great depth of experience and ability aboard that has allowed us to do things others would be reluctant to try; but certainly not in a reckless manner

The village was expecting us and pretty soon there was a fair crowd on the rocks a short distance off the stern, and Bob, Dick and Morinda headed off up to the local clinic in order to liaise with the local healthcare worker, elders and church leaders.

After lunch the medical team, along with their gear, moved onshore and after a considerable amount of local





muscle-assistance (in moving each box, chair and table) around 2 hours of health and survey work was completed, as a prelude to a full day tomorrow.

Doug, David, Antonio, Tami, Dick, Morinda and Bob are all staying ashore tonight, with me, Martin, Gerry, Annette, Peter, Daniel and Debra staying aboard as usual.

With the medical folk off the boat it gave us a chance to run the generator this afternoon, filling the tanks with freshwater from our on-board desal plant (at a rate of 3 litres per minute) baking more bread and generally tidying the place up.

We invited a local canoe-man, Charlie aboard for a chat and a bite to eat and were amused at the steady group of

local kids who sat onshore near where our lines were tied, either enjoying the sight and novelty of us gently bobbing up and down, or just waiting to see us meet with some undefined misfortune.

Regular communications via the VHF radio kept us informed of clinic developments and at one point I wildly suggested to Martin – who was helping out in the clinic – that maybe we could run a movie night. This was initially rejected on the grounds that there was nowhere to show it, but later it was proposed that the temporary Presbyterian Church building could be used.

So it was that Daniel and I carried the generator, cable, computer and projector (actually young Daniel carried the generator) the 10 minutes up to the village where the Lion King was shown to an appreciative gathering of mostly young people. Special mention here should be made of Daniel's IT trouble shooting skills in coming through with the actual screening. We had the gear, we had the venue, we had the audience, but do you think the DVD would automatically load. Oh no!!?? Apparently my computer is Region 4, whereas it needs to be Region 1 to play... Agrrhhh. Anyway Daniel did his thing while about 30 kids sat in almost total silence for upwards of 10 minutes as this or that option was tried.

Back on board and still sleep-deprived from the overnight sail last night I know where I'll be in about 4 minutes – asleep in my bunk.

One amazing thing is that here in the back of beyond I have the inter-web. It's not consistently reliable, but I've been able to send some photos and hope to send this Ships Log too without having to resort to the arduous Sat Com lottery.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and up the river at Ipota

Rob Latimer

[Kate Storey-Whyte](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Yvonne Bain](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Matthew Ogg](#), [Matt Bryant](#) liked this post  
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## Big day's clinic at Ipota

Wednesday 5 July 2017  
Ipota Village, Erromango Island

The eye, dental and medical clinic had steady business all day with the Oral Health Survey meeting its target of 10 participants (two from each age group) by 11:00am; they are getting good!

With an island population of around 2,500 the survey requires a sample of 25 (on this island) – all selected at random of course. Nearby Tanna island has a slightly smaller land size, but has a population of more than 30,000, so requires 300 survey participants ... you've probably figured out the 1% sample-size methodology by now ...



Back on Chimere, there was a steady stream of locals invited out for a tour, of all ages, which would invariably involve a feed of rice crackers, bread and vegemite, beetroot, Logan Bread, cold water from the fridge, jelly (both lemon and raspberry – a very bit hit it must be said!) plus Doritos and baked beans (as a substitute for the salsa sauce which we couldn't find) – and in one case a little bit of each.

Who would have thought that inviting that first group of kids aboard yesterday would lead to a steady stream today...?! But as they say in Alaska, "pat one husky, pat them all" So as groups gathered and demonstrated their persistence by sitting on the rocks, we'd eventually relent and nick across with the dinghy and pick them up – so much for that afternoon nap!

With one group I pulled out the laptop and started showing photos I'd taken back in 2009 when we visited the (relatively) nearby village of PotNarvan (north along the coast from here) In conjunction with the head teacher at the school I'd offered at the time to take, and then print and laminate, class photos. So when I showed the photos today, 8 years later, they excitedly pointed to face after face that they recognised, giggling and laughing at each one. This

went on so much that in the end I pulled out the ship's printer and laminator and did them a copy to put on the school noticeboard for everyone in the village to see.

As we returned each group to the shore we'd sometimes drop a hint that "maybe you find us some banana, or fruit?" ... and one group returned late today with a bag full of goodies. Just great kids !

A local boat-man, George, came alongside with his red topped "banana" boat and asked if we had any fishing lures he could buy. He came aboard and there were several old ones I gave him as I apologised for being such a bad fisherman. "you from Ipota? ... I asked

"No, me from PotNarvan, one hour and a half up the coast" he said.

To engage him some more in conversation I said, "We've been to PotNarvan two times before, in 2009 and 2010 we met a man with a boat there ... in fact we fixed the roof of his boat"

"yes, it was the yellow boat, I remember now ... maybe you come to PotNarvan and fix the roof of my boat ?" he said with a cheeky grin. "How much vatu for these?" he asked, holding up the handful of old lures, trace and hooks. "E-free, to you, no charge" ... which made him happy. And as a bonus I gave him one of our cheap, basic, but near-new life jackets, plus a coil of rope ... two things in very short supply out here!!

The general consensus amongst those we met was that this was the first yacht they had ever seen anchored in the river – not quite sure how to take this – but when you look at the lack of detail on the chart plotter I can see why. Whereas the inaccuracies at other anchorages (such as Aniwa island) showed our position on the chartplotter as in the middle of the island 500 metres away, here at Ipota it shows us out to sea, off the coast! Almost as disconcerting.

All the children who came aboard were so respectful and polite. It just seemed a universal expectation that you sit quietly and observe, rather than make lots of noise. Questions centred around ... "where are you from?" "Who are your family, pikinini blong yu? Wife?" and "where have you been?"

Cyclone Pam hit this island, along with nearby Tanna, particularly bad two years ago, and whilst leaves and branches have mostly grown back on the trees, the buildings and infrastructure are a different story. One young girl explained that they sheltered in the school and clinic from the worst of the storm, and summed it up in terms of ... "things go on, but there is sadness still. We lived in an Australian AID tent"



We asked the kids why they weren't at school ... "no school today?" we ventured ...

"Yes" came the answer, (as is the answer to most questions when asked) ... "No school because of the clinic"

"So there's no school so everyone can go to the clinic?" I inquired deeper ... "Yes" came the reply again.

Funny thing, later in the day we had one of the local primary school teachers out on the boat, a great bloke called Sanuel (with an "n") and in making conversation I put it out there ... "I hear school was cancelled today so children could go to the clinic?"

"No" (uncharacteristic answer) "No, only for those children who need to go, they were

given time out of class"

"ohhh, I understand" I said with a smile, "maybe the kids misunderstood?!" to which Sanuel smiled heartily

Towards the end of the day, with bread out of the oven cooling on the side and plans for dinner well advanced, the VHF radio crackled into life ... “Ello Chimere dis is Bob, do you copy, OVER?” ... so began the process of de-camping the clinic, carrying everything back to the dinghy, (thanks to a large collection of local volunteers and conscripts too no doubt) stowing it into the white bulka bags (making sure the heavy items like the gas bottle were at the bottom) and then lifting them onto Chimere’s deck, to be lashed down and covered with a tarp.



The medical team members ashore, Tami, Antonio, Doug and David, plus Bob, Morinda and Dick will be returning to Chimere at 5:30am tomorrow – along with their bags – to begin the relatively short 5-6 hour sail around to the other side of the island at Williams Bay.

But more of that tomorrow.

In closing I should say that Ipota has left a very positive impression on all of us and Chimere will be taking a little bit of her away with us – mostly paw paw, passionfruit and a small quantity of bananas.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and big day’s clinic at Ipota

Rob Latimer



## Onboard "Cub Reporter Daniel" submits his first post-from-the-field...

Ipota, Erromango Island  
Wednesday 5 July 2017

Dearest Readers of the MSM blogs,

My name is Daniel and at 23 years old I am the youngest crew member aboard Chimere. I dare not hazard a guess by what factor I am the youngest, however I am sure that no one would take objection to me suggesting I am the youngest by at least a decade (or two...or three...or...).



First let me introduce myself. I am currently studying a Master of International Public Health and am also a keen sailor. Long story short, I came across MSM last year in a search to satisfy my desire for adventure whilst broadening my understanding of health care delivery in under-resourced settings (and it is safe to say it has delivered on both fronts!!!).

With the other organizations that I have been involved, I have taken considerable time to evaluate whether their mission, objects, and delivery of their service coincide with my own values. This process was a short one with MSM. With the stars aligning this year, I finished my last exam and was on my way to join the crew in Port Vila the following morning.

Before arriving I certainly had my anxieties. Although I had been to Vanuatu on two prior occasions and felt relatively comfortable with village life and the country on the whole, the realities of a mission such as this have considerable unknowns.

One of these unknowns being who I would be spending the next 4 weeks with, in quite intimate proximity and in quite testing scenarios (which I am sure has been made clear from Rob's previous blogs!). After a welcoming cup of tea and a biscuit or two, I was made to feel immensely comfortable. It was immediately clear that the crew had huge diversity of experience that I knew I would be able to learn a lot from.

Broadly speaking, there have been no shortage of 'character building' moments. In these environments you are exposed to settings and situations that often require you to pinch yourself. From observing tooth extractions as pigs and dogs walk within inches of the threshold of the surgery, to seeing children who will not receive simple treatment to prevent life-long damage (see Annette's post), to rescuing a shipwreck, to living in a close proximity with people you don't know, to standing in some of the world's most isolated regions, to engaging with completely foreign cultures, to communicating post operative instructions when neither of you speaks the others language, to eating local cuisine...the list goes on.

It has been one thing after the other. It has been exhausting but immensely rewarding. From my perspective I have gained considerable insight into the functioning of a health care NGO, in the areas that work well, the areas that can be improved upon, and the areas that will be a challenge to overcome, no matter what, I might just add that the shipwreck fiasco might be quite a novel scenario for a health care NGO.

It is easy for a group such as this to come in and deliver short-term primary care for the day that we are in the village.

Where I have taken great joy in this context has been through the bottom-up approach of the mission. Although providing primary care has been an important part, empowering our Ni-Vanuatu team leaders to make the changes in health care that they want to see in their communities is of the greatest value. Cultural attitudes towards healthcare must come from within. This is a long term process and it has been an absolute pleasure to say that I have been a part of it in its infancy.

I will say that if you are considering jumping on board and being involved in an organization like this, you have to be mentally prepared. These settings take their toll emotionally and can drain your energy quickly. However, if/when you get the chance to reflect on it, as I currently am writing this, you won't regret your decision to take the journey.

Don't worry about any differences in age or culture, just be receptive to learning from those around you, and the trip will be worth it. Challenging, but worth it.

This certainly isn't a contiki tour around Europe, but an education on steroids. I have found I have learnt so much about myself, about other individuals and about another culture in such a small space of time that it has been at times challenging for my brain to compute. What I have been able to process however, I can say with absolute confidence, enriched my still elementary understanding of the world.

Wishing you all the best on your future travels,

Daniel

[David James](#), [Martin Burgess](#), [Lenore Lott](#), [Nicole Parfitt](#), [Carol Ryder](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Mary-Jane Hesselmanns](#), [Lorraine Rose](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Jim Davies](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Kate Storey-Whyte](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post

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17 Responses to "Big day's clinic at Ipota"

## Pictures Galore!!!

Thursday 6 July 2017

Rob has sent plenty of Happy Snaps. A selection appear here but see them all on the [Mission 1 Gallery page](#).

Off to sea again, this time from Ipota on the east coast of Erromango around the top to Williams Bay on the west



More Ipota locals join us aboard for snacks





Daniel keeps watch in the early morning light



Morinda and Doug at sea again



Gerry, Annette, Deb and Martin enjoy some down-time aboard on the sail from Ipota to Williams Bay, Erromango



Also, for those with curiosity and a strong stomach, Dr Barry Stewart has a whole series of posts on his Facebook page describing how the Dental Survey is progressing in Port Vila.

For those with Facebook logins click this link to go straight to his wall

<https://web.facebook.com/profile.php?id=1378677592&pnref=story>

For those sensible people who have avoided the temptation thus far, you can see each of the individual posts here

[https://web.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=10213751841815132&id=1378677592&pnref=story](https://web.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10213751841815132&id=1378677592&pnref=story)

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blessings

Liz Mallen

[Jim Davies](#), [Linda Latimer](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#) liked this post  
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## From one side to the other

Thursday 6 July 2017

Williams Bay (aka Dillons Bay), Erromango Island

At 4:00am this morning it was pouring with rain, the wind was howling and Chimere was rolling more than normal, tied as she was stern to the bank and two bow anchors set mid-stream in the river.

It was still 90 minutes before the scheduled pickup of the volunteers, Bob, Morinda and Dick, on the nearby rocky shore and I was having visions of them coming aboard drenched and somewhat less than content.

I'd written a text to Bob and Morinda suggesting we defer the boarding one hour till 6:30am, but in the end something inside said "don't send it" ... which was fortunate because within an hour conditions had abated and the "miserable" situation had improved to a bearable "dreary".

The pick-up went to plan and then it was a case of undoing the two shore lines and retrieving the anchors in a step-by-step manner in order to stay in control at all times within the confines of the narrow river entrance.

We'd heard word yesterday that a trading vessel was due into the river entrance today, and after asking the same question what seemed a dozen different ways, the consensus view seemed to be that [if it came] it would be after lunch, maybe 3pm, but maybe the next day.

"Will our boat be in the way?" I asked ... "Yes" came the answer "no problem..."

"Show me where the trading ship anchors ... is there enough room for him to turn around?" I persisted. "E drives against the shore, lowers a platform at the front, on the other side of you, so plenty room, e-gud"

Having seen these trading ships in action around the islands you would understand my apprehension, but this particular ship was supposed to make its first stop at nearby PotNarvin, so it seemed [almost] clear that a 6:00am diesel-fumed-song-and-dance arrival in this particular river mouth port was not happening tomorrow.



As the sun appeared over the horizon and with all lines and anchors retrieved, Gerry slowly and steadily piloted Chimere out into the open sea making sure not to sink the bow (and thereby cover the foredeck with water) into the inevitable steep and troublesome waves that linger in such places.

Once clear of the rocky headlands we bore away north with the east-south-east wind on the starboard stern quarter moving us along at 6.5 knots



under jib alone with the engine just ticking away in the background at low revs

As a designated “travel day”, today was always going to be about comfort and relaxation ... despite the early start. There was a plan to make it the 40 odd miles around to the other side of the island in time to run a half-day clinic, but at the very least we should set up the clinic ready for a full day tomorrow.

Soaking up the sun aboard



The lush, rugged and mountainous terrain on our port side was bathed in morning light, made even more idyllic owing to the steady breeze and (largely) calm seas.

Antonio ... our multi-talented dentist of Italian origins revealed more of his super-powers by remaining in the galley for what seemed like hours today; much to the amazement of all, given he was “affected” to some degree by the ship’s movement a week ago while sitting in the breezy cockpit. But there he was, cutting and creating his way through an ample supply of

local produce – taro and manioc I was told. Plus there were kidney beans, herbs, spices, an assortment of green-stuffs, plus amazingly ... delicately cut and prepared croutons, (made from the bread we baked last night) prepared in a traditional Italian manner ... just like Nona used to make ... I think.



MGR (My Galley Rules) champion  
Dr Antonio cooks up a storm

Admittedly, sea conditions favoured time in the galley – today of all days – and it must be said the results were impressive, quite apart from being extremely tasty, satisfying everyone’s need for lunch around 11:00am. Talk about “Iron Chef” mixed with “Survivor” mixed with “Big Brother” ... Antonio’s performance today has gone straight to Chimere’s equivalent of the “pool room”; the makings of a whole new TV reality show genre !

The Erromango coast line truly is impressive and with breaching whales once more drawing our eyes to the distant blue we wished we had more time to stop and explore.

Internet access came and went, with a communications tower being seen on the top of the tallest inland mountain, which still is amazing given just how remote this place really is.



Williams Bay (aka Dillons Bay) was reached around 1:00pm and after anchoring on sand in around 7m of water – just north of the river entrance, we were met by David in his dugout canoe, owner, founder, manager and no doubt Commodore of the Williams Bay Yacht Club.

After his official welcome and invitation to come to dinner tomorrow night David joined us aboard for a cup of tea ... and vegemite on fresh bread. I also pulled out the laptop again and showed David pictures of when we last met during our last visit here.

Next it was a trip ashore to allow Bob, Morinda and Dick to organise the accommodation for the medical and dental volunteers, while the large bulka bags of equipment were not far behind. A large group of volunteers seemed to appear from nowhere and very soon all the gear was inside the nearby hall being set up for action.

With everyone ashore, some walked up the river exploring, others checked out their bungalow accommodation, others swam – including Antonio who quickly befriended a local fisherman with an enormous spear gun that looked like it could bring down an elephant, and was last seen swimming out to sea with him and another man escorting them in his canoe. The weather was glorious and so just sat around chatting to the locals, with the lush river banks and sweeping pebble-beach of the bay giving this a Garden of Eden look about it.



Dr Antonio goes spear fishing with his new friends at Williams Bay

There was also a chance for us to gently motor the dinghy up the river as far as the rapids and what I recalled from last time to be the village “laundromat” ... and sure enough once again there were the ladies and children pounding their washing on the rocks, while clothes lay around on grass, branches and rocks drying in the sun. This is the point at which freshwater from the interior tumbles over several acres of rocks and pebbles to meet the tidal flow from the sea. It’s also the place where many come to collect their household water; mostly with the aid of 20 litre drums aboard dugout canoes as we observed.

It was good to renew acquaintances from my earlier visits and to also discuss the latest news about the appointment of (Presbyterian) Pastor Obed Moses as the new President of Vanuatu, following the sudden and unexpected death of the previous much-loved President, Father Baldwin just a few weeks ago. In talking with many of the men, as we

sat on the grass overlooking the bay, I mentioned that I'd been in Port Vila for the very solemn funeral procession of the President through the main street of Port Vila and was able to pull out my trusty iPhone in order to share the footage.

This led to me suggesting we hold a movie night – tonight – so we could show everyone the footage of the Presidents funeral, plus of course a major feature ... Finding Nemo.

This idea was well received, and was also well attended, although at 7:00pm, with just a few hardy souls in the room I ventured to ask ... "yu think many come tonight" ... "yes" came the reply, the ringing of a loud bell not appearing to achieve the desired results. "Once people hear the generator they will come" ... the logic being that no one would dare waste fuel and so once the generator starts, proceedings are bound to commence soon after. And sure enough, after a couple of short warm-up videos I looked behind me while inserting the Nemo DVD and the place appeared packed. My biggest challenge was to then remain awake, or at least fall asleep discreetly without falling off my seat

There is one other yacht anchored in the bay – way down the other end – and it was pleasing to learn from the local men that a damaged yacht with two Germans aboard had also anchored in the harbour yesterday and departed for Port Vila this morning; accompanied by another yacht.

We were informed that the German yacht had a make-shift rudder mechanism on the stern and there's no doubt the locals were impressed to hear the story of the rudder's making, the patching of the leak in the hull and our rescue of the yacht 10 days ago in Port Resolution; read earlier [Ships Log entries](#) for detail!

Tomorrow is the last clinical day of this first Medical Mission for 2017 and is shaping up to be well attended ! I also look forward to chatting with the men some more about low smoke stoves; something I did in 2010 but maybe this time there'll be more action arising !

Smooth seas, fair breeze and from one side to another

Rob Latimer

[Steve Burgess](#), [Martin Burgess](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Edith West](#) liked this post

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This entry is filed under [2017 Mission 1](#), [2017 Ships Log](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

7 Responses to "From one side to the other"

[Nicola Young on Facebook](#) says:

[July 8, 2017 at 10:24 am](#)

So good to read these updates thanks Rob! Some adventures you are having! Say hi and best wishes to the team from me and Barryx2 and Rufina etc x



## The Last Night

Friday 7 July 2017

At sea between Erromango Island & Port Vila, Efate

The end of Mission 1 for 2017 is at hand. We are currently doing the 80 mile hop between Williams Bay (Erromango) and Port Vila. It's almost a full moon and everything outside is bathed in a soft light as we glide over a relatively calm sea at 6-7 knots under full "canvas".

It would be nice not to have the engine on, but our weight and rig-size mean that the wind would need to be a bit stronger than 15 knots for us to make a respectable passage under sail alone.

After a well-attended, full day's clinic at William's Bay, we up-anchored around 9:00pm tonight after a final farewell dinner at the Williams Bay Yacht Club overseen by enterprising David and his family.

I say enterprising because after being the first to meet us in the bay, in his dugout canoe, and inviting us all for dinner, he then asked if we had any fish, or maybe some oil, onions, or similar, to assist with the dinner. Gerry thought this was a novel business model, and bound to be a winner when your patrons are charged for dinner but are also asked to bring along the ingredients for which no off-setting payment is made; bingo!

When I suspected David's conversation was heading in this direction I relayed a story to him (with much mirth) from a dinner put on by the chief at the Asanvari Yacht Club on the island of Maewo in 2010 – "for all boats in the bay". I explained the chief's strategy at that time was to paddle from anchored-yacht to anchored-yacht building up a varied ingredient-list sufficient to fully cater for the function for which we were each then charged. Despite his very good command of English I'm not sure David put two-and-two together because still he asked for the ingredients with a straight face.

"Maybe we should make it 400 Vatu a head instead of 500 Vatu", I teased as I handed over a generous box of goodies, containing the 2kg of frozen marlin (given to us by another boat 2 weeks ago) rice, noodles, three tins of beans, some onions, an old bottle of olive oil containing around 150ml, half a bottle of sesame oil and three herb containers.

David didn't take the bait, but the box of goodies was a different matter. "You can have all the ingredients, David, but I need to get the bottles of herbs and oils back again", I was very firm about that. And now, writing this, 30 miles north west of Williams Bay, I realise one thing I forgot to do tonight was retrieve my bottles of herbs and sesame oil from the kitchen of Commodore David ... Doh!!





Ah-well, we are just hours from being able to buy as many new bottles we like in Port Vila, but it's the principle of the thing!

Like the Bob Newhart comedy routine from years ago about the final address from the captain of the mythical submarine USS Codfish at the completion of its two year, non stop, "endurance" voyage around the world (well worth looking up) I find myself reflecting on Chimere's deeds and events and those of her crew and passengers – some glorious, some best forgotten, but all worthy of being recorded in the pages of history.

Taking each vital character, in no particular order, there's Daniel: the

young, bright, questioning, enthusiastic, fit, late-entrant on the sailing list but one who has proven to be both a worthy crew member, and a key part of the medical team at times as he seeks every opportunity to broaden his community health experience with a view to eventually becoming a doctor. It's been great having you in the program Daniel and thank you too for your Ships Log contribution the other day.

Speaking of doctors, we've had two as a part of this team – Doug and David. Normally we have just the one doctor, but when a second doctor said "can I come too?" ... hey what's a bloke to do? Despite the obvious risk that it only takes two doctors to commit someone to an institution, I thought what could go wrong? ... and the constant reference to "which doctor" (are you referring to) might still be funny after 2 weeks?! To the point, both doctors have done an amazing job, under sometimes rather trying conditions. They have shown a deep desire to help everyone that fronts at a clinic and whilst referral facilities, diagnostic resources and medications are obviously limited out here, their main "prescriptions" have included universal respect, understanding and information. Tank yu tumas Doug and David !

Gerry and Annette are what I'd refer to as a "double act" ... not only are they both amazing sailors – owning their own large yacht – but Annette is also a highly qualified remote-access nurse. Both Annette and Gerry appear unflappable ... and I feel qualified to say this given I put them to the test many times, and in many ways. Thank you for the skills, experience, passion and commitment you have brought to this mission !

Speaking of double-acts, I now turn to Tami and Antonio, both dentists and from what we could all tell both deeply in love with each other – and their profession, in that order I believe. It's hard to believe but it's 2008 that I first emailed Tami – we go way back. Nothing to do with "winks" on e-Harmony, but about the possibility of her assisting with a dental care program we were thinking of establishing in Vanuatu ... the rest is history! Antonio ... what can I say? What ever it might be it would be in an outrageous, Nino Carlotta Italian accent, with many hand gestures, and louder than usual in case you didn't quite understand the words being used?! In this man there are many men ... or should I say "a, mare-nee, mare-nee men" (insert hand gestures here) ... there is first and foremost the passionate, enthusiastic dentist – the "speed extractor", all done with no pain. I know this because in chatting with some of the "blokes" in the village, several said "tut-doctor, he pull-im tut ... no pain!" And there was the lady today who required 11 extractions ... yes that's right 11 ... most simply roots at gum level, the remains of what were once teeth, all rotted away; try to image it, I can't. Oh, back to the many men of Antonio ... there's the extreme master chef, the musician/guitarist/singer, the ... you must meet him for yourself, I know for me ... the Tami-Antonio experience has been "Amazing" (insert hand gesture here)



Deb Allen, (whose In-the-field message is below), is truly a one-off. A sailor who was also employed by Dental Health Service Victoria for many years, Deb is someone I stumbled across maybe 4 years ago when she was participating in a yacht race from Melbourne to Vanuatu and wanting to learn more about the place. Now Debra would be the first to admit that life's path can be many and varied if we open ourselves up to change and being led. Perhaps not always from the 'burbs of Melbourne, to living in Vanuatu, learning the language etc, but there you go. As a one-time dental nurse and now fulltime oral health program coordinator, Deb's approach is to empower, encourage and equip those involved with the program, particularly locals on the ground here in Vanuatu. With a passion for the National Oral Health Survey, Deb has been the glue between the many components that have been assembled to pull it off – it's been great to finally get you aboard Chimere Deb !

Annette, Deb and Martin up the Williams River



Peter Wright is quite that ... the right man, at the right time, in the right place. A reader of the magazine Cruising Helmsman, Peter responded to an article of mine that appeared in the April edition (just 3 months ago) and as a retired scientist-academic and life-long sailor, he is also a committed Christian from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne – what a fit !

Thank you Peter, and also your wife Gigi, for your assistance in getting Chimere away from Westernport on time and for your thoughtful and committed assistance throughout this mission. Your ability to also consume so many meals from your stainless steel mug with plastic multi-tool-spoon is an inspiration

Martin, what can I say? You've been there since Sydney – the voyage over – you were there for the Port Vila preparation and you were always there whenever needed over the past two weeks of the mission. Your breadth of experience and cheerful willingness to take on any task has been a constant support to me and the program. Thank you for writing the Chimere Crew-View (below) and thank you for committing to coming back to Vanuatu someday!

Whilst not technically volunteers, dental care workers Morinda and Bob, plus eyecare worker Dick, are part of the reason all of us volunteers are here. And it is through you that we gain a window into your country and its people; for which we feel privileged. We value your friendship and greatly appreciate your leadership.



Oh my, this has been a long Ships Log entry. And there's much more that could be said ... but I'll let Deb and Martin close with their reports below.

It's now 2:00am on Saturday 8 July, and we are still sailing along towards Port Vila, so it's technically tomorrow's blog already, but as the sun rises tomorrow we'll be gazing on the familiar skyline of ... either Port Vila or Noumea ... I think ...

Smooth seas, fair breeze and the last night ...

Rob Latimer

7 July 2017

## *In-the-field-report from Deb Allen (Oral Health Coordinator)*

### **The Quest for a National Oral Health Survey of Vanuatu**

After the many months of Skype calls, meetings, project planning, development, mentoring, risk analysis, stakeholder management, itinerary development, training days, clinical validation, volunteer recruiting, process mapping, budget headaches and sleepless nights, the 1st mission (of 17 in total) of the Vanuatu National Oral Health Survey has been completed.

Thanks to the hard work of many people in Australia, New Zealand and here in Vanuatu, we managed to complete the 153 planned surveys in the remote villages on the Southern Islands of this beautiful archipelago; Tanna, Aniwa, Futuna and Eromango Islands. This was made possible on this mission, by using the sailing yacht Chimere, which in itself was a full-time project for many people who volunteered their time, skills and energy to such a worthy cause.

The surveys, which consist of a questionnaire then a clinical assessment for each participant, were conducted on random people in 5 different age groups; 6 years, 12 years, 15 years, 35 to 44 years, 65 to 74 years. This was developed based on World Health Organisation (WHO) methods to enable world comparison, base data for future surveys in Vanuatu and scientific analysis.

This 1st mission was always planned to be a trial and evaluation time and we only ended up with a few issues that we hadn't foreseen as being a problem or risk. Our main concern was always going to be accessing a random sample of people that would pass the scrutiny of scientific research. This did indeed pose a few problems but the survey team had brainstormed alternatives which came in handy.

The survey development team had trialled both the questionnaire and clinical assessment times but in practice the clinical assessment team were able to conduct 12 assessments to one questionnaire. This posed a problem with the assessment team wasting valuable time waiting for the assessments to be completed. One of the 'willing' sailing crew members was recruited and trained as an assessment recorder which allowed our planned recorder to conduct the questionnaires. In the end, we had two questionnaires being conducted which were then passed onto the assessment team.

While the main focus was always to conduct the survey, the decision was made very early on that it would be great if we could include a separate dental, eye and medical team to provide well needed treatment to these remote areas while the survey was being conducted.

Unlike previous years where the medical team were able to spend more time in each village to provide the treatment to the many that line up each day, this year's hard-working treatment teams were under pressure with limited time. As well as acting as survey data recorders, Chimere's hardworking crew were commandeered to work clinically scrubbing instruments, taking water samples from each village and supporting the teams in what-ever way they could. Their support proved to be invaluable in being able to achieve what has been achieved. This was often done after the crew had done hours of sailing watches while sailing overnight, so a big Thank you is due to Chimere's hardworking Skipper and crew.

Personally, I feel incredibly lucky to be working in a job that combines two of my passions (sailing and oral health) and feel honoured to be part of the planning, development and implementation team on the project. I look forward to the possible outcomes the data can provide in improving the oral health of this small nation, that has stolen my heart.

Deb Allen

7 July 2017

## *Chimere crew-view from Martin Burgess*

### **49 days on Chimere.**

That's how long I have been on this boat, Chimere, and on this mission. What an experience!

I have spent time with 17 different people spanning two separate crews. I have sailed from Rushcutters Bay in Sydney to Port Vila in Vanuatu and then around the southern islands of Vanuatu.

I firstly had the pleasure to share the boat with skipper Cam and fellow crew members Rob (Lott), Bruce and Josh. A better bunch of Christian blokes I could not ask for. We sailed across the Pacific for 10 days straight. We were occasionally sick but more often having a great time above and below decks sharing food, stories and lots of laughs. The weather, winds and currents were kind to us. A following wind, plenty of sun and a smallish swell. We saw whales, flying fish an occasional vessel and lots of beautiful blue ocean. A couple of times we took the opportunity to drop our sails and swim in an ocean that was deep (4000 metres deep) and as blue as far as you could see.

After 10 days we arrived in Port Vila and were warmly greeted by Deb Allen and Nicola Young, two outstanding ladies from Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu whom we would be working with on our first mission.

We quickly settled into Vanuatu life. Fresh fruit and vegetables, an abundance of fresh seafood, smiling happy Ni-Vans (the local Vanuatu people), beautiful waters and landscapes and soooo many things to see and do. I could so get used to this lifestyle!

But we were here for a reason. Chimere and its volunteers had been engaged to help with a survey across the islands on what the oral health of the population was like and how it could be improved, so there was some work to be done.

I then had 2 weeks in Port Vila as we transitioned from the delivery crew to the Mission 1 crew. Over the space of that 2 weeks our new crew arrived, Skipper Rob (Latimer) and fellow crew members Peter, Gerry and Daniel. We spent the time, apart from swimming, playing and being tourists, tidying the boat, painting the decks and generally readying the boat for the first mission.

By now I had been on the boat for about 30 days and was having an amazing time in an equally amazing country.

The time came for mission 1. On Wednesday 21st of June our crew along with some of our medical team of Debra, Annette, Dick, Bob and Morinda left Port Vila for Tanna Island. On arrival in Port Resolution we were joined with the remainder of the medical team in David, Doug, Antonio and Tammy. 14 people on board was fun and interesting at the same time, but it worked.

Over the course of the next 2 weeks we spent time with people from 9 villages from 4 islands. We conducted over 150 oral health surveys, saw and treated hundreds of patients needing medical assistance, provided optical glasses for many and treated again hundreds of people needing dental help. We ate in the local villages, shared stories, showed movies at night and immersed ourselves into the culture of the people of Vanuatu.

On top of all of that we had the opportunity to rescue our new German friends who ran their yacht aground at night and began sinking when entering Port Resolution. That in itself was a mission and not something you experience everyday. Credit for that rescue must go to our more experienced crew members in Rob, Gerry, Annette and Deb who were faultless in their efforts to save ship and crew.

It is now day 49 for me and time to go home. Mission 1 is over and has achieved its objectives. I personally have sailed hundreds of nautical miles across the Pacific Ocean and around the southern islands of Vanuatu. I have spent time in close quarters with 17 great people, many of whom I now call friends and I have an experience deeply embedded in my heart and mind that I will never forget.

I give my thanks to everyone involved in this experience, my skippers, my fellow crew members, the medics who bring their experience and the Ni-Van people of Vanuatu.

I can say with little doubt that one day I will return to this magical place.

Martin Burgess

[Linda Latimer](#), [David James](#), [Greg Cadman](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Down Under Rally](#), [Andrew Lawrence](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#) liked this post  
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10 Responses to "The Last Night"

[Cameron And Suzi Heathwood on Facebook](#) says:

[July 8, 2017 at 2:41 pm](#)

Wonderful job Rob! Well done also to Martin, Deb, Tami, Antonio, Daniel, Peter, Gerry, Annette, Doug, David, Bob, Morinda and Dick. Read More...

[Medical Sailing Ministries on Facebook](#) says:

[July 9, 2017 at 7:39 pm](#)

That's very kind and generous of you Cam

It really has been a great team effort

Blessings to you & Suzi

Rob



## Back in Port Vila

Saturday 8 July 2017  
Port Vila Sea Wall, Efate

Chimere maintained a speed of close to 7 knots through the night to arrive in Port Vila this morning around 9:30am.

Chimere back once more in Port Vila



The seas were smooth, the wind was from the stern quarter and except for the sailors on watch, most slept soundly.

Relying on my excellent crew and after writing an unusually long Ships Log, I ended up laying out my swag inside the large dinghy on the foredeck; a very comfy place as it turns out, although if there's a next time I'll make a point of removing the small anchor from under the mattress. I slept from 2:30am till around 8:30am, at which point I poked my head up and we were already on approach to the harbour, just amazing.

On arrival and after tying up stern to the sea wall it didn't take long for folks to disperse, some to alternative accommodation and some to just go for a walk.



The two German sailors – of earlier Port Resolution rescue fame – came past with their two sailor friends, which was really nice. They explained that their boat is currently up on the dry at the boat yard and it might take about 3 weeks or more to get it back together and sailing again. In the meantime they are still living aboard and making the best of the situation. Peter and I will zip across there tomorrow in the small dinghy to say hello and also join in the weekly small-boat sailing activities at the nearby yacht club.

After a preliminary clean of the boat, it wasn't hard to fall asleep this afternoon in my bunk. It's strange how it all started to catch up with me immediately Chimere was safely tied up and people began organising their personal things in preparation for departure. Whilst I clocked up a few hours on the pillow this afternoon, that sleepy feeling still persists, but that might have something to do with the group dinner we had at the nearby Waterfront Bar & Grill.

Tomorrow a few of us will be up at the Paton Memorial Church for the 10:00am service ... we hear that the new president Pastor Obed Moses will be there; a man I have met on many occasions due to our involvement with the Presbyterian Church.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and Back in Port Vila

Rob Latimer

[Louise Surmon](#), [Wayne Monastra](#), [John Hembrow](#), [Sue Duke](#), [Larissa Quigg](#), [Maddy Shoebridge](#), [Phil Wicks](#) liked this post  
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## Long God yumi stanap

Sunday 9 July 2017 [See also post for Saturday]  
Port Vila Sea Wall, Efate

In God we Stand ... it's on the Vanuatu coat of arms, the currency – everything official and Government related. The constitution refers to the country and the laws it passes, as being grounded in the Christian faith and today this was seriously reaffirmed when the newly elected President of the Republic of Vanuatu participated in a service of Dedication and Commissioning at the Paton Memorial Church.

It was a big afternoon, with the man himself, Paster Obed Moses having been a Presbyterian minister (of 30+ years standing) up until just a couple of weeks ago – talk about one serious promotion! In fact Paster Moses was living in a church house next to the central office up until his official inauguration the other day at parliament house, when a big black car came and took him off to his new residence.

Paster Moses, now His Excellency President Moses, either ran or attended many of the church meetings I've attended over the years here in Port Vila and he was well aware of the work we have been doing through Medical Sailing Ministries in support of the people of Vanuatu

The service started at 2:00pm – (not all that long after the usual morning service had wound up) and to say it was well attended would be an understatement – I've never seen the place so packed, with rows of seats outside as well. There were speeches, singing, prayers, but most importantly the address from President Moses, who reaffirmed the need for national unity, peace, honesty at all levels of society, the importance of remembering the vision and struggle of independence and a reminder that this is a Christian country, with laws and values based on the teachings of Jesus.

Once the Paster, now the country's President His Excellency Obed Moses gives an address at his Commissioning Service



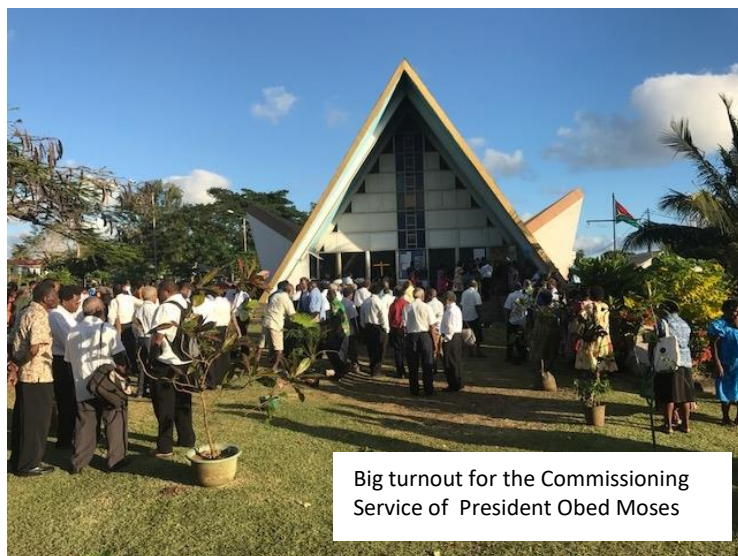
Given the political turmoil of the past couple of years (read: 14 members of parliament out of a house of 52 sent to jail for corruption) President Moses seems just what the country needs, the challenge to deliver, effectively starts tomorrow.

Around 3:30pm the service was winding up and as the President and his wife filed out, closely followed by the church leaders and other dignitaries, I leaned over to Barry Stewart and wondered out loud "I wonder if they do the hand-shake thing with so many people here, it'll take hours"

Well guess what ... they did the handshake thing! And 30 minutes later we were still



sitting in our seats waiting for our row to get its turn to stand and shuffle to the middle aisle for the final push to the exit and the personal handshake with His Excellency. Barry Stewart was just in front of me and having been one of his patients, Paster Moses, sorry, His Excellency President Moses, warmly shook Barry's hand and thanked him for coming. My turn next and with a big smile and a strong handshake The President said, "hello Rob, when did you get back?" ... "Ah ... yesterday and congratulations, well done, we wish you every success!"



Big turnout for the Commissioning Service of President Obed Moses

So there you go, quite definitely the ONLY president of any country in the entire world that knows my name !! Quite apart from knowing we'd sailed off with a medical team around 2 weeks ago and were due back about now! I felt really privileged. (as fond as I am of taking photos, even I thought a selfie on the steps of the Paton Memorial Church – just me and the President – would appear a bit crass?!)

I got back to the boat around 4:30pm and after a day without an internet connection – apparently you need credit in your account, which I was able to remedy with Barry's technical assistance – I sifted through a collection of emails before heading up to Deb's place overlooking the bay for a group sunset

and pizza night; something of a farewell too as many people are flying home over the next few days – Doug, Tami, Antonio, Martin, Gerry and Annette, with Daniel and David leaving today.

Having been such a dynamic and talented sailing and medical group – brought together through a pretty random, self-selection-volunteer-application-process – it's somewhat sad and anticlimactic to have everyone drift away, back to their usual, normal lives.

If I was getting poetic I'd say it was a bit like a "sandcastle on the beach of life" ... a thing built at one particular time, and for one particular purpose, only to be washed away by the incoming tide; leaving only a memory ... plus of course a stack of photos, videos, blogs, Facebook posts and comments etc etc. Although in this case hopefully a lot more – with a swag of very satisfied dental, medical and optical patients – plus the all-important Oral Health Survey data ... 154 participants from 7 separate locations on 4 different islands!

While I was mixing it with the President up on the hill, Peter and (Dr) Doug made their way over to the Boat Yard to meet "the Germans", check out the underwater damage to their boat, while also dropping into the yacht club there. They spoke with the marine surveyor and in order to complete his insurance assessment, of the German's damaged yacht, he indicated he'll be coming over for a chat at some stage.

It's a full moon tonight. The air is still, it's cool (by local standards) and very quiet. It's just Peter and me aboard at the moment with new crew, for the second mission due in the next few days. Tomorrow it'll be case of continuing the clean-up and starting the sorting and restocking for the next team – the show must go on !

Smooth seas, fair breeze and Long God yumi stanap

Rob Latimer

[Edith West](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post

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## Chimere Crew View – Peter Wright

Monday 10 July 2017

Introduction by Rob Latimer... It's now down to Peter and I living aboard as preparations continue for the start of the next mission in a couple of weeks. Being Monday I attended the morning devotions up at the Presbyterian Church (PCV) at 7:30am and the Clerk Pastor Allan Nafuki led proceedings after explaining that Pastor Obed Moses was rostered on this morning but owing to him being elected to the position of President of the Republic of Vanuatu we wasn't available ... to the amusement of all.

MSM crew member Peter Wright provides us with a new perspective about life at sea aboard Chimere on Mission 1 ...



Two days after our return to Port Vila, Chimere rests quietly at Yachting World Waterfront. All but two of the sailing team for Medical Mission One have left the boat for Australia, or for work, or for rest and recreation on Efate. What has been the life of a sailor on this good ship during the preceding three weeks? It started first with maintenance, specifically painting the deck in white and grey and oiling the toe rail.

There were also some electrical problems with the water-maker and generator to be fixed in the first days. Maintenance during the trip involved some more oiling, polishing out scuffs on the topsides, and scrubbing the waterline. A few below-deck items also needed attention e.g. removing escaped salsa and beetroot juice from the refrigerator and general cleaning of the saloon being used by 14 people. All non-organic rubbish was retained and returned to Port Vila in bags.



The hardest physical work was raising and lowering Bulka bags (volume approximately one cubic metre) containing all equipment for the shore-based clinics. Three, sometimes four were hoisted up using a masthead halyard and handy billy over the lifelines and into the inflatable dinghy (and back). There were five anchorages and this happened each time often in the dark. The dinghy also had to be winched back and forth.

Other non-sailing duties included some cooking on the boat and onshore roles – acting as a recorder (Martin), dental assistant (Daniel and Peter), water collectors (Daniel, Gerry and Peter). The water will

be analysed later for fluoride content. The most common source was hill water collected above the villages, piped down and stored in plastic tanks. Other sources were roof-top rain water, direct river water, and ground water pumped up manually as required. Collecting the samples was fun. It usually meant finding the chief and/or Presbyterian pastor and having general conversations about a variety of issues whilst touring the village. The sailing team also did many dinghy trips between the shore and Chimere.

The passages between anchorages were great for those who did not suffer seasickness – the majority. Some took medication to assist. We had overnights Port Vila to Tanna, Aniwa to Futuna, Futuna to Erromango (Ipota), and Erromango (Williams/Dillons Bay to Port Vila. A daysail to Futuna from Tanna was changed to Aniwa on route because of head winds and lumpy seas. The most enjoyable was the daysail around the top half of Erromango. It was a sunny day, winds 15-20 knots and an interesting shore line to follow. For the majority of the trip we motor-sailed under jib and main, both reefed on some occasions. We also used the staysail on one occasion. Average speed was 5.5 to 7 knots.

Anchoring had the potential to be stressful. There were no problems with depth and bottom conditions at Port Resolution (Tanna) and Williams Bay (Erromango). However, Futuna and Aniwa required a bit of hunting for sandy spots and Ipota required manoeuvring Chimere into a tricky “hole in the wall” with limited space. For the latter, the dinghy was needed to determine a good approach strategy and handle stern lines. The other tense situation was the rescue of the sinking Dortita which will remain on our CVs, never to be forgotten for the experience, and for the successful outcome.

All in all, a great sailing experience.

Peter Wright

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## Adjusting to life back in the big smoke

Tuesday 11 July 2017

After several weeks at sea with upwards of 14 people living side-by-side in a space barely bigger than the average kitchen, it's now just me and Peter left on the boat.

Over fruit salad and custard tonight Peter commented ... "there really are two Vanuatus ... the one we've experienced out in the villages and then life here in Port Vila"

And he's right. With 80% of the country being rural and subsistence the bright lights, resorts, buses and fumes of Vila – what most tourists take away from their fleeting visit to this South Pacific country – is really something of an oddity.

Expensive by western standards Port Vila is hardly a place the average Ni-Van can afford to live, at least not without some serious sacrifices, such as time and money spent traveling long distances each day from their village. With

wages low and costs high, for some it becomes a simple choice to instead remain living in their village, tending their garden and maintaining a subsistence lifestyle, rather than pursuing the expected "work path" for the marginal financial benefit it brings.



Special Bulldogs cap for Charlie our first visitor of the day

Out in the remote islands and villages of course that choice is largely denied, with income earning opportunities being thin on the ground and the necessity of survival – food, shelter and water – largely driving people's choices and actions.

Stanley helps with the water transport

But despite the subsistence lifestyle there is still a vital need for Vatu – currency, money – to pay for such things as children's education, fuel, travel, health care and the like.



Maybe it's the apparent contentedness and generosity of the people here, plus a general resilience and friendliness across all ages, in the face of such meagre material wealth, that contrasts so much with our own society back home; where our pockets might be full but our hearts are often empty.

And naturally Bob stumbles across his auntie and family while chatting with nurse Nancy

The process of readjustment back into “normal life” for volunteer team members must have something to do with the body having arrived home but the heart and mind – or at least a portion of them – still being back in a Vanuatu village somewhere.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and adjusting to life back in the big smoke

Rob Latimer



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