

Medical Sailing Ministries (MSM) Vanuatu Mission 2017

SHIPS LOG – Mission 2

Date/Duration:

Friday 21 July – Friday 4 August 2017 (15 Days)

Location:

SHEFA & MALAMPA Provinces, Islands of: **Emae** (Novo), **Tongoa** (Lumbukiti), **Epi** (Lamen Bay), **Lamen Island**, **Paama** (Liro), **Ambrym** (Utas, Craig Cove)

Sailing Volunteers:

Phil Wicks (Skipper), Mark Stephenson, Todd MacDougall, Vic Aston

Team Leaders:

Morinda Kalmar & Bob Natuman

Local Health Workers:

Dental Care: Morinda Kalmar & Bob Natuman
Optometrist: David Lawry Eye Care: Dick Stanley

Medical Volunteers:

Dentists: Dr Barry Stewart & Dr Samuel Luan
Doctor: Dr Nicholas Allen Nurse: Glenys Janssen-Frank
Oral Health Recorder: Nicola Young

Mission Results:

Islands Visited:	6	Clinics Held:	7
Oral health Surveys	129	Mission Duration:	15 days
Dental Patients seen:	232	Teeth extracted:	238
Medical Patients seen:	213	Referrals:	Nil
Eyecare Patients seen:	275	Spectacle dispensed & ordered:	180
Eyecare Referrals:	20		



BACKGROUND

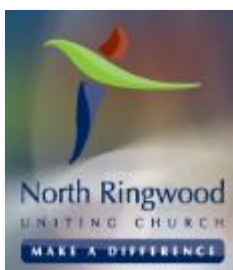
Medical Sailing Ministries (MSM) began in 2009 to provide remote-access transport and logistical support amongst the islands of Vanuatu. It is a partnership program of the North Ringwood Uniting Church (Melb), The Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu and the Vanuatu Ministry of Health, using the Westernport-based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

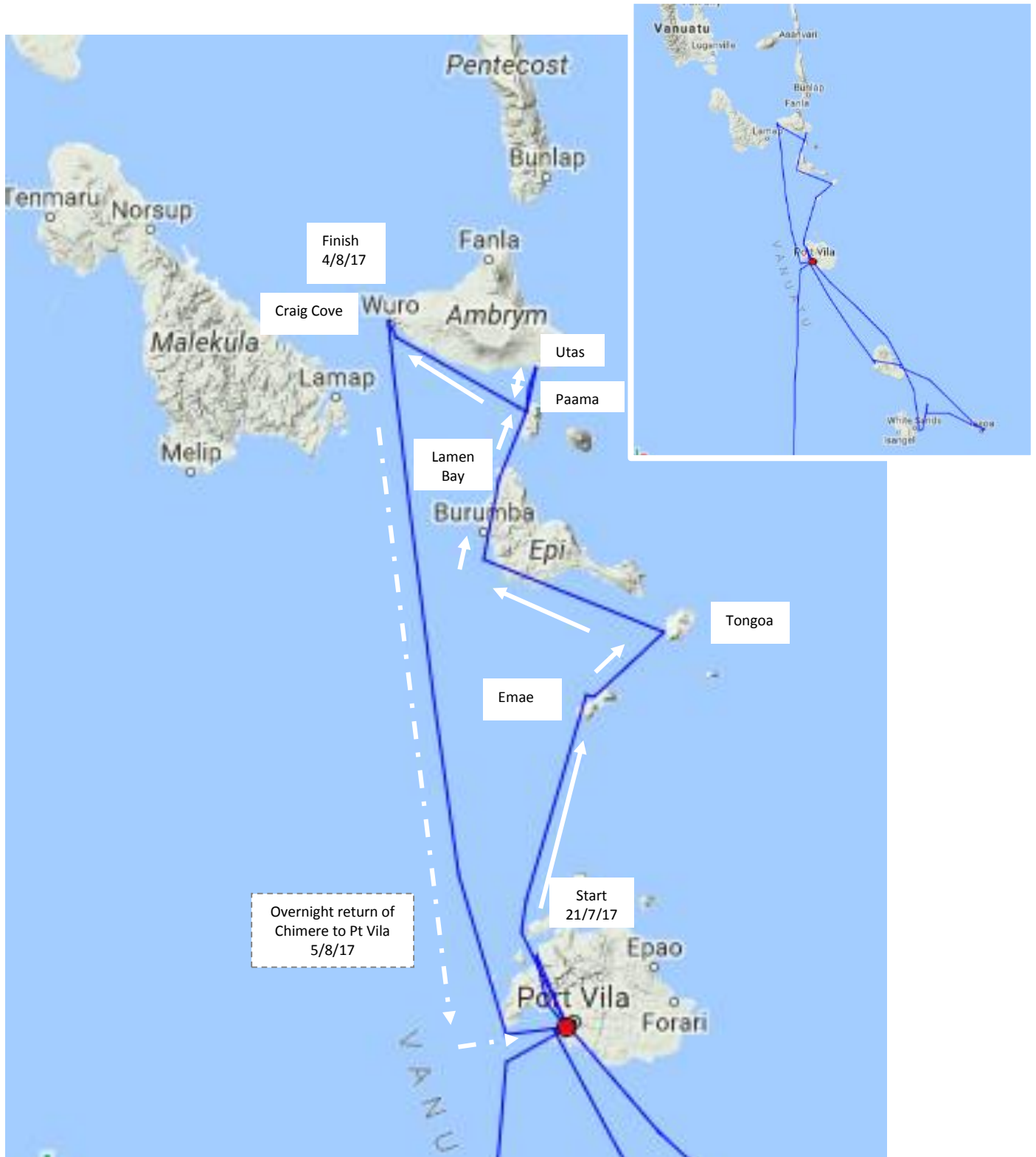
Along with transporting medical volunteers, this year Medical Sailing Ministries will also be coordinating a National Oral Health Survey of Vanuatu using strict World health Organisation (WHO) methodologies; the first such survey ever to be conducted in Vanuatu.

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 2

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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Like ships that pass in the night

Wednesday 12 July 2017

Port Vila Waterfront

Meetings, planning, paperwork, access to Internet, refining itineraries, calculating costs, fund raising... at the end of the day, after attending to an array of back-office tasks I'm left wondering..."what did I actually do today?"

At least Chimere seems to be ticking over nicely... no pumps to replace, electrical faults to solve, no toilet to unblock, no furler to recondition... amazing... one of those brief moments in time when everything seems to be traveling in harmony.

If you are anything like my darling wife Linda at this point you're saying to yourself... "what are you thinking, don't say this .. you are bound to put the mozz on things?!"

But I'm not the superstitious type. Not really. Sure, as a sailor I won't go to sea on a Friday, but that's different. As for having umbrellas on board? Well that was a new one to me but our earlier Norwegian sailing friend from 3 weeks ago, the one who agreed to deliver the large brass bell and potting clay to South West Bay, said to me ... "when you parked next to me I see you have two umbrellas hanging on the rigging ladder there ... we'll I might be an atheist but

I will not have an umbrella on my boat... it's bad luck"
I replied ... "and what about setting sail on a Friday?"
"Well no, I don't do that either..."

Funny bunch these sailor folk!! The other ones I mean ... not me of course!

Speaking of sailors, we have the first sailor of the next mission due in by plane tonight at 11:30pm, although if it's anything like my flight it'll be closer to 1 o'clock tomorrow morning. Mark Stephenson is his name and I'm nicking out to pick him up at the start of what will be a two month tour of duty

This will be closely followed by Peter Wright's departure on the 7 AM flight back to Australia. (The same plane after it's had a few hours rest)

Given that Peter will be picked up at 5 o'clock tomorrow morning the two of them will only be sharing about four hours on board together... not really enough time to build any form of rapport or relationship. But I'm sure Peter and Mark would've got on well

The rest of the new crew will come in over the next few days but as for me I'm gonna catch an hour's sleep now before heading out to the airport around 11 o'clock

Smooth seas fair breeze and like ships that pass in the night

Rob Latimer



Peter Wright heads home at the end of Mission 1



Mark Stephenson, fresh from Tassie, ready for Mission 2 & 3 ... the "before shot"

Mark's first day in paradise

Thursday 13 July 2017
Port Vila

As Mark's first day in Port Vila draws to a close, sleep once more makes its successful assault on the senses. I don't know why – it happens every night – but around this time each night I get to thinking ... “better do the day's Ships Log” ... then I fall asleep, or come very close.

That said, tonight I did plan ahead somewhat by asking Mark a few hours ago if he would write his own “Chimere Crew View” ... after all, at the time he was writing his own daily diary and I figured something for wider circulation would provide another interesting perspective.

Around this time I was starting to heat up last night's chicken leftovers (with a spoon of curry powder for good measure) for tonight's feast, and we heard a man off the stern getting into his dinghy with a stack of groceries and other things. It was dark and I called out ... “I'll give you a hand passing the stuff down”. There came a distinctly American accent in reply, offering thanks and informing me that he would first need to pump up the dinghy on account of a persistent leak.

His ankle brace and crutches kind of got my mind thinking and when he was done pumping I handed down the drums of what I took to be water, plus shopping and a few boxes of other things. “Why thanks for your help with all this, my names Harold, by the way, I've written a book and it's just been published”

We chatted for a bit and he told me he was off a big old clunker of a boat up the harbour. Then soon after it started raining – not too heavy, but enough to make you think more was to come. “I'll get you a tarp to put over everything” I said ... “No, that's fine, I won't be long” came Harold's reply as I said farewell with a “have a great night” and walked aboard our stern-plank.

Then followed a time of domestic activity on Chimere – putting on the rice, heating up the chicken, rinsing and washing dishes ... while outside the persistent ... “prrrrm” ... prrrrm” ... “prrrm” ... of a 15hp Mercury outboard motor which would NOT fire into life, no matter what combination of choke, throttle, effort, face gesticulation or expletives was employed. Finally the noise of the *&%#!!! motor ceased as Harold stopped pulling the starter-cord and sat in the light rain reflecting on the situation. “I should go out and see if there's anything I can do to help” ... I said in a quiet voice to Mark as I climbed our stairs to see what state my new acquaintance Harold was in ... head in hands ... oh, that's not positive?! Don't say we guys can't read facial and emotive clues.



SV Cassiopeia, Harold's treasured home ... just a shadow of her former self (Insert)

"There's probably nothing I can do to help, you've no doubt tried everything already ... but I feel your pain with an outboard that won't start" ... this was my opening remark and Harold was more than willing to engage in conversation about the so-and-so Mercury and how it was not what he was promised when it was bought some time ago, and it's given him no end of problems etc etc ... "but if you'd be kind enough to tow me out in your dinghy, that would be right kind of you"

"No worries" I said, "I'll just get a torch"

So began my UberDinghy tow up the harbour, pretty much to the end of Iririki Island to a boat, nay "Schooner", that Mark and I had passed earlier in the day as we'd together explored the bay. At the time I was so intrigued by the boat that I took a couple of photos and sure enough there was a hand painted banner advertising the aforementioned book ... "about adventure & dreams" ... to be found at ... www.haroldneel.com

"I must confess, your ship gives the impression of a Hollywood movie set", I said in the nicest possible, upbeat way as two inquisitive cats peered over the gunwale at me ... "Oh wow, you've got cats too!!" hoping my earlier comment hadn't offended.

"Yes, she's known as the pirate ship round these parts ... I used to run day tours out of Vila here with a pirate theme and there was a short movie made of it, but that was a while ago now"

Harold then went on to describe a list of prior achievements and pinnacle-moments of this once glorious vessel from the Caribbean to Vanuatu.

"Stop, stop!!" I jokingly called ... "you'll spoil the book ... I'm keen to read it!! ... just send me a text, or call me if you can't get your outboard started and you want a lift to shore - I'll come and get you"

By now Harold had clambered aboard passing words of thanks back to me as I started retreating back through the drizzle to Chimere and dinner preparations; which Mark had expertly appropriated.

I've attached the photos of Harold's boat (which I'd taken earlier today) and from the brief Google-Search I was able to do of

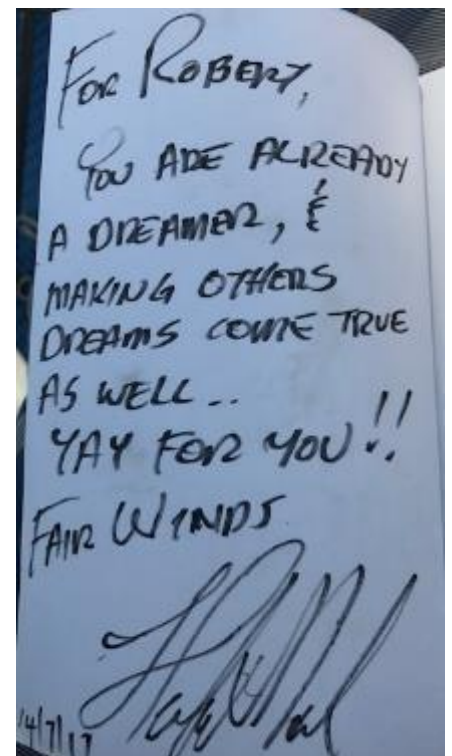
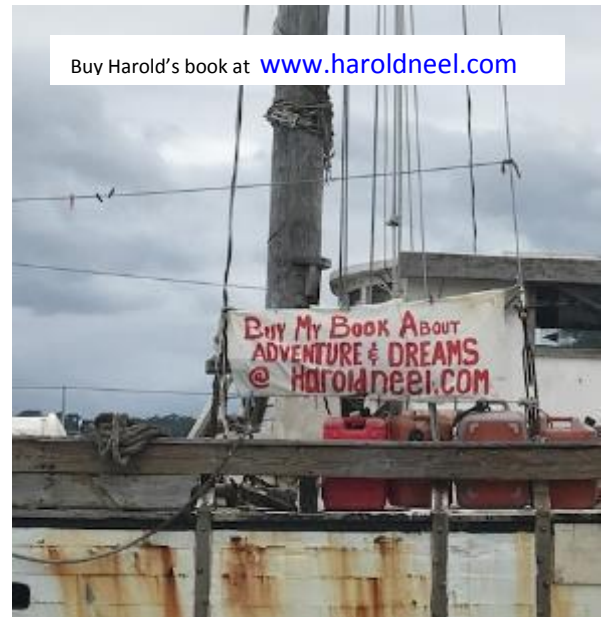
Harold and his book, he bares more than a passing resemblance to Lieutenant Dan from the movie Forrest Gump ... Especially with the crutches, which had me holding back the urge to say ... "Lieutenant Dan, you've got new legs!!" ... in that thick southern, Forrest Gump twang...

Having experienced first hand something of the man, I can't wait to read Harold's book!

Smooth seas, fair breeze and Mark's first day in Paradise

PS

Harold finally got his outboard started and I bought a copy of his book this morning when he tied up near our stern. Looks like a true Ripping Yarn... (or mostly true). Well worth checking out on line



The First Day

Thursday 13 July 2017
Port Vila

Rob has asked me to make a contribution to today's blog with the impressions and expectations of a new arrival. For the record I arrived just before midnight last night into the hot and humid Vanuatu air. Living in Tasmania I was expecting to be hot, and I was, but I was unsure how I would cope.

After not-enough sleep, the day broke promising to be warm (hot) and Rob and I walked up the hill from here for a meeting at PCV Health. As a newly arrived sailing person with no medical training, I had nothing to contribute to the meeting, but had plenty of time to reflect on the merit of a good airflow and drinking plenty of water.

Port Vila is noisy, cheerful and full of colour. The roads are busy and the footpaths are narrow. A lunch of fried fish in the market, among the locals, full of noise and colour, was a marked change from yesterday's cheese sandwich.



One of the things I have been looking forward to is a tropical ripened banana. And I have now had one and can confirm that they are much tastier than the ones we get in Tasmania.

For anyone who knows me they'll realize how I was in my element this afternoon as Rob and I looked over a traditional Polynesian catamaran, albeit with fiberglass hulls, then visited the slipyard where the yacht that the intrepid crew of Chimere rescued last month was being repaired.

Tomorrow will be a time of settling down to the business of sorting out Chimere for the next mission. Filling tanks, re-stowing gear and supplies and waiting for the other new crew members to arrive.

Mark Stephenson

[Elke Hofmann](#), [Jenny Mountney](#), [Melissa Maber](#), [Lorraine Males](#), [Fiona Müller](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Dorothy Russell Viney](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Heather Reid](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Edith West](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post

Circus comes to town

Friday 14th July 2017
Port Vila

Once again I should've started this ships log before now. But Mark and I have been across at the Boat Yard. Not all day. Just for the Friday party, circus performance and live band ... oh yes, and food and maybe some beer too, although Mark was driving the dinghy so he was well behaved at least.

The Boat Yard is where our German friends are staying – in their boat, up on the hard, while it gets repaired. It's also where the Port Vila Cruising Yacht Club has its home, and being a paid up member – I have the flag to prove it – it seemed only right we should attend

I mentioned circus. Not something you normally associate with Port Vila or Vanuatu more broadly, but there was juggling, break dancing, an acrobatic thing 5m off the ground using two long lengths of fabric, plus lots of music. No elephants, but what the young kids lacked in polish they more than made up for in raw enthusiasm, athleticism and joy.

Of course Heiner and Ede (our German friends) were there and it's still hugs all round when we meet, plus with their German sailing friends. "When are you coming to Germany?" Was the question, asked in the form of an invitation; one more thing for my "bucket-list" I suppose.

Over beer number two, Ede (the one with the Santa Clause whiskers) said, "Up until now, the most favourite county I have travelled to is Australia, especially de outback pubs. You know crocodile Dundee? Those places. Coober Pedy? Is that what you say? Very hot. Wonderful place". Ede went on... "but Vanuatu... I cannot believe how lovely the people are. So friendly and helpful. Unbelievable"

After a few more beers the conversation moved to the night of Sunday 25 June when they hit the rocks entering Port Resolution. "The water just came in so fast, and it was very dark. You try to stay calm, but it's all unknown, what will happen next, you don't know, we were sinking "

Also at the party, behind the bar as it turns out, serving food and drinks – the commodore of the yacht club, was Gary the local marine surveyor.

"I've submitted the insurance claim for the Germans and thank you for your report, it was good. In my assessment, it would have been a total loss, so the insurance company should be happy"

Later, Heiner explained that he had been on the phone this afternoon to Stanley down at Port Resolution. In a further sign of his gratitude to the assistance shown by the local men, he is arranging for a kava mincing machine to be sent down to them.



l-r Heiner, Ede & Rob after a successful day rudder-building in Port Resolution, Tanna



The circus by the boat yard show-cased the amazing athletic skills of the local youth & the dedication of their coaches

In passing, Stanley said there were currently 17 yachts in the bay ... 17!! That's an armada!!! All part of the regular ARC Round The World cruising rally. And guess what ... all those yachts are heading this way and will be tying up on the Seawall here tomorrow or the next day. That's why we've got to move away in the morning, onto our anchor. Not far away, but no longer will we be able to step on and off the shore as we please down our own private plank. It'll instead be a dinghy ride to land and no shore power or water; just like being back in the islands?!

For those interested in reading all of the Ships Logs from Mission 1, or sending a link to friends and family, this is [available here](#) or the link on the right under Latest News.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and the circus comes to town

Rob Latimer

PS When I finished the above it was 12 midnight and I was hanging out to go to sleep, now it's 1:00am and I'm wide awake. And part of me is saying don't type this Robert, along the lines of ... "what happens on the tour stays on the tour" ... but in the morning, it's already the morning I know, I mean when I wake up later today, I will probably think this was all a dream and will be relying on this written record to verify my sanity. I suppose it all started when Mark and I got back from the Boat Yard party. There was Harold's inflatable dinghy (not so inflated as we have come to learn) with its temperamental Mercury outboard firmly attached to the back, still tied up on the seawall near our stern

"Harold's late getting home" I thought

Then a bit over an hour ago I heard noises off the stern, rattling, fumbling and a fair amount of one way discussion. Fearing the worst, I quietly climbed our companionway ladder into the cockpit all the while staying in the shadow to investigate the source of the commotion – to discover whether it be friend or foe.

And what, or who, should the source of the noise be but Harold, negotiating his way from the concrete Seawall down into his dinghy along with his various parcels, in a rather, how shall we say, "affected" state. I watched for a while, as he pumped the necessary air into the dinghy – not so much as was needed as it turns out – and then came the starting of the outboard, or the attempt at least. This only lasted a short while with the one-way conversation plus a variety of expletives then being hurled at the motor.

I broke in with ... "g'day Harold, I'll give you a tow, I'll just get a torch" "Oh maan, did I wake you with all my noise? I am sooo sorry maan", came the response

"No, no, I was up anyway, hand us your bowline"

So it was that I once more towed Harold back to his beloved Cassiopeia, but if that was all then I'd already be in bed.

As we approached his boat and after I'd turned the motor off, Harold came out with... "I'm thinking this reminds me of the song ... what do ya do with a drunken sailor"

"How many verses has that song got" I inquired

"Maybe this could be a new verse" replied Harold

All was going well. The two cats came to the edge for a smooch – (their names are Penelope and Pepi I think) and I was hearing more about



Harold looks happy, but if only cats could talk...
(That's either Penelope or Stripes)



Rob & Mark help Harold aboard Cassiopeia

the boats history ... the problem then arose when Harold stepped onto the side of his rubber ducky to climb aboard his ship only to have it collapse, or deflate, or something, because within a very short space of time his dinghy was full of water, pouring in over the side and the heaviest part – that blasted motor – was sinking fast by the stern

I managed to grab the handle of the motor and with the water up to my elbow and the motor pretty much out of sight, and Harold surveying the scene calling “how the &@%*#! did that happen” I called, “Harold you gonna have to help me here, get a line around the motor, I can’t hold it much longer”

Talk about comedy capers. Harold did eventually get a line around the motor all the while switching between ... “how the @*##!! Did that just happen” and laughing out loud at the sheer absurdity of the predicament The line around the motor was finally attached to a wobbly winch on deck and the whole stern of the dinghy was soon lifted clear of the water. Then it was the turn of the bow.

The floating items in the dinghy were retrieved and along with patching the holes in that dinghy the motor will now most certainly need to be dismantled and service

Soon after I took my leave, wishing him a good rest and that “tomorrow is a new day”; and reflecting on how this situation could have ended quite differently. At this point my own motor stopped suddenly- the bow line wrapped around the prop !? What next? “Hang on Robert?” Called Harold “If I can pump up my dinghy I could give you a tow...”

At least he still had a sense of humour.

Now I am most definitely going to bed!!

[Nigel Anderson](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Kate Storey-Whyte](#), [Tracey James](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Iris Malone](#), [Martin Burgess](#), [Dorothy Russell Viney](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post

Change of view

Saturday 15 July 2017

Anchored in Port Vila inner harbour

After last night's antics with Harold and his sinking dinghy it was a lazy start to the day aboard Chimere

A wander uptown to change some currency revealed a larger than usual quota of white-folk like me walking around, which could only mean one thing... it was cruise ship day; a time of frenetic bus and water taxi activity not to mention the local helicopter.

Speaking of changing currency, I went to the store "Goodies" noting on the digital screen a rate of 81.95 Vatu for each Aussie dollar. Reading the receipt I noted a rate of 81.35 ... prompting my question to the lady behind the counter and glass screen, "me no save, why sign say 81.95 and paper say 81.35?"

"Oh sign e-wrong" came the response.

"But people like me read the sign in order to decide whether to do business with you or not ... but the sign is wrong?" I persisted

"Yes, sorry tumas"

There was no point pushing it further but I did suggest she turn off the sign until it was fixed.

Nicola Young, who will be joining the medical team in a week's time, came aboard around 10am to help us move Chimere to our current location just a few hundred metres away

We also nicked up the bay to assist Harold lift his outboard and dinghy onto the deck of his yacht and I can confirm that the cat's names are Penelope and Stripes

Mark showed off his galley skills cooking dinner along with baking bread and biscuits/ slice and we look forward to the arrival of the skipper for the next mission, Phil Wicks – more tomorrow.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and a change of view
Rob Latimer

The floral colour of the Port Vila market in the morning



Is that a wry smile Mark ...?



Mark comes good with both
"normal" bread & Logan Bread

[Clare Parry](#), [Barry Stewart](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Mary Levett](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Agnes Webb](#) liked this post

New skipper steps aboard

Sunday 16 July 2017

Anchored in Port Vila Harbour

It was a lazy start to the day, with Mark and I travel ashore by dinghy around 9:15 in order to make it up to the Presbyterian church service by 10. Around this time a flotilla of yachts began arriving as part of the ARC Round the world rally, or race, I'm not quite sure. They certainly made the Seawall look crowded (which was the reason for us having to move away, and in a way I'm pleased to be anchored 200 metres away; still close enough for easy access, but far enough away to feel private. And I do enjoy not having to pay 2800 Vatu per day mooring fees. (Approx. \$35/day)

The lady that owns the waterfront has allowed us to remain at no cost on the last three occasions, but following cyclone Pam, things have apparently been a bit tight, hence the fee

After a lazy lunch it was soon time to catch a bus out to the airport to meet new crew member ... correction... new Skipper... Phil Wicks, who would be arriving from Melbourne via Sydney at 3:10pm.

Phil is a highly capable sailor and in conjunction with his wife has been a live-aboard boat owner in the past.

Phil will be supported by crew member Mark, plus two additional crew members Todd and Vic due in another three days

This coming week will be used to familiarize Phil and Mark, plus the new crew, with more of Chimere's ways, before relocating the short distance north to Havannah Harbour on Friday. It is here they will be met by the full medical team who will go aboard late Friday for a sleepover to enable an early getaway Saturday morning, north to the island of Emae; signifying the official start of Mission 2

All the dental and most of the medical and optical supplies have already been loaded aboard, it's now just a case of working through the final list – food, top-up, fuel, water, equipment check and a few sea-trials.

Along with evacuating my cabin – the skippers cabin – in favour of the new skipper, Phil, I was also on dinner duty; and no one opens a bottle of Pataks Chicken Butter sauce like me... sorry Antonio.

As proof that we are an high-class establishment we put chocolates and flowers on Phil's pillow – as an arrival surprise. I'd found the half finished block of Aldi chocolate, the nice stuff with almonds, but I thought we only had one "flower", self raising flour, but having done an audit of the Mission 2 supplies Mark was quick off the mark (excuse the pun) with ... "you can't just have one, it needs to be a bunch, there's corn flour in the locker too". Not sure Phil took it in first time – the array of foodstuffs on his pillow ... must be the new surroundings, but as they say it's the thought that counts.

It's now 9:00pm, Phil is in bed after his big day traveling, Mark has just said goodnight and there is a very good chance I'll be following their lead very soon.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and new skipper steps aboard

Rob Latimer

[Malcolm Garnham](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Dorothy Russell Viney](#) liked this post



The ARC Round The World yachts take a breather in Port Vila



New skipper Phil takes in the sites, Day 1

Countdown to Mission 2

Monday 17 July 2017

Hideaway Island Anchorage, Mele, Efate

Phil's first day in Vanuatu dawned warm and sunny, although my automatic urge to turn on the generator to charge the batteries at 5:45am was probably a bit ill-timed. Especially since I'm technically not the skipper anymore. But how was I to know that it sounded very much like running onto rocks to a half-asleep, or was that half-awake, sailor. Sorry tumas guys ... but it was just 15 minutes off our agreed wake-up time

By around 8:15am we'd had our breakfast, attended devotions at the Presbyterian church office onshore, borrowed a SIM card from Deb's collection (a long story) and topped it up from the nearest TVL "dealership" ... a lady sitting under an umbrella by the side of the road; everyday, except Sundays.

After the TVL top-up we still couldn't get Phil's SIM to work properly on the inter-web (data), even after the phone was passed around a few of her friends sitting nearby, so we wandered down to the TVL head office where the lady quickly established there was a mix-up with the thingy-function that needed readjusting – simple. After Phil's problem was fixed up I couldn't help but ask the nice lady why it was that I couldn't get the Hot Spot function to work on my phone – with my SIM card.

"Oh Hot Spot doesn't work on iPhones with TVL SIM cards ... we have told the technicians, but they no fixim" ... so there's the answer to my month-long frustration.

It was then back to Chimere for lunch and a brief stop at the Yachting World fuel dock to top up our tanks. This wharf is one of the smallest you'll find, maybe 3-4 metres in length and when you consider Chimere is 16 metres in length you can imagine there's a bit of overhang at each end! It also requires a bit of precision parking in order to keep damage to a minimum, but fortunately lines were attached promptly as we came to a halt with the aid of Yachting World's expert boat-man Moses.



Moses helps out with the lines as Chimere fuels up

The amount of fuel taken aboard was exactly 419 litres, which is the sum-total of all that has been consumed since leaving Sydney (when the tanks were topped up) back on ... well, a long time ago. We now have a total of 1,400 litres aboard to cover the next three missions through till October.

Taking the opportunity to test Chimere's systems (prior to the next mission) we headed off to Hideaway Island (not so well hidden as you might think – we found it first time) where there is a delightfully still anchorage in Mele Bay just 1 hour from town. Once at anchor we set about further charging the batteries (reading battery charging manuals – that was Phil) and tidying up the deck and all the accumulated stuff that had accumulated around that mast – buckets, tarps, flippers, lifejackets, rope etc etc.

Mark took command of dinner and in a truly inspired piece of "My Galley Rules" originality dished up what he described as a Thai Tuna Curry Chicken Combination ... of course "Combination" denotes something slightly more than the sum of the parts ... but it can also mean "in the one pot – ie combined" ... which wasn't quite the case here because I actually saw the bokChoy, green beans and onion being fried in a separate saucepan to last night's leftovers and "Dolphin friendly" tuna. In summary, what it looked like didn't matter, the important thing is that it tasted delicious!

Some readers may recall Eddiy Baul, my trusty “Seriously Good Boat Care” man who helped me more than a month ago sand, scrape and then paint Chimere’s deck; the man who came out with the classic line ... “a man who can’t paint, can’t get a wife”.

Well Eddiy called me out of the blue the other day and after some attempts at catching up over the past few days we finally had a decent chat tonight and if everything works out he’ll come aboard on Wednesday to help us scrub the decks and do some touch-up work.

Eddiy explained that in the last month he has already travelled to his (remote) island of Mataso, north of Efate, and has started his home. With a bit more work – and income – he’ll be able to return again to his island with more materials to maybe finish the job. I wonder if he has any photos !!

Not sure what the average cost of a house-and-land-package is on Mataso, but if you want to contribute to Eddiy’s future ponderosa then let me know, I can definitely guarantee it will get to him on Wednesday !! Now that I think of it, Eddiy already has the land, he’s just building the house.



Watching the meter tick over ... the excitement of the fuel dock ?!

Tomorrow we intend to sail a bit further around the coast, to Havannah Harbour, just to check out Gideon’s Landing, the place where all the medical team will come aboard on Friday night. After that, we’ll make our way back to Port Vila to start final preparations for the start of Mission 2.

As part of the official “Skipper Hand-Over” I’ve invited Phil to start writing the Ships Log, which can be found below. And in passing, I hope you enjoyed today’s date 17-7-17, a great set of numbers we’re not going to see again for a while.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and countdown to Mission 2

Rob Latimer

I have arrived.

Monday 17 July 2017

After the long trek out of the Melbourne cold it was a wonderful thing to land in the warmth of Vanuatu.

Fortunately after clearing Customs I spied Rob as it is quite daunting to walk out into the Port Vila street. The streets are very different to what we are used to in Australia. So an interesting ride in a local bus (like an Indonesian Bemo) to the waterfront and the dinghy ride out to Chimere.

What a pleasant surprise to see Chimere looking so good. Well done Rob for all the work completed since I saw her last. She's scrubbed and painted and looking great.



Chimere makes a handsome site in front of Iririki Island

And what an amazing anchorage off the holiday units on Iririki Island. Good to meet my fellow crew, Mark.

After a good sleep we were up early and off to the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu office where we took part in their devotions at 7.30am. We had the opportunity to meet with a number of the Medical team that operate out of the offices, nice people.

Then to the Vanuatu Telecom office, the office is a lady under an umbrella on the street. She took out money and loaded the sim ready for internet reception. All good, we now have communications. Changed some money then back to the waterfront via the local market.

Following lunch we raised the anchor and motored over to the fuel dock and filled up ready for Mission 2, to the islands to the north. After leaving the dock we headed west, raised the sails and made our way around to tonight's anchorage behind Hideaway Island, one of Vanuatu's tourist getaways, you can post a letter from underwater here.

A very interesting introduction to what we will see over the next 3 weeks. The locals are very grateful for what Rob has been doing for their country.

Phil Wicks

(Skipper Mission 2)

[Edith West](#), [Scott Michelle Wilson](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Liz Broadbent](#) liked this post

Test run to Gideon's Landing

Tuesday 18 July 2017

Port Vila Harbour

Overnight Rob came up with the brilliant idea that we do today what we are going to do Friday. So after a most pleasant night behind Hideaway Island we lifted the anchor at about 6am.

The plan was to sail to Havannah Harbour in the north west of the island of Efate and look for Gideons Landing where we are to pick up the Medical Team on Friday. With the wind behind us we set the sails and had a very pleasant sail up the west coast of the island.

When we arrived in the very large harbour it was out with the phone to refer to google maps to see if we could narrow down where to go. That worked. Meanwhile Rob was able to speak with Gideon himself and we were guided onto his mooring and invited ashore.

A very pleasant time sitting in Gideon's fantastic restaurant while Rob and Gideon discussed their shared best friends. While talking, Gideon sent a photo of himself and Rob to their Vanuatu friend in Melbourne then they had a three way phone conversation.

The technology available today in the most remote parts of the world is amazing. It was quite a heavy beat into the wind to get back to Port Vila, I imagine that was good experience for getting back from the islands in the north in three weeks time.

So Rob, it was a good plan, Mark and I are now very comfortable about where to go and what to do Friday.
Fair winds, flat seas and Gideon's landed.

Phil Wicks

Rob's note ...

It was a glorious anchorage in the lee of Hideaway Island, although when the wind died off around midnight the effect of the swell, as slight as it was, beam-on produced an unexpected roll.

Not a big roll but enough to cause something in the forward region of the boat, where I now reside, to come loose thereby producing a "clunk" ... "clunk" ... "clunk" with about a 2 second interval, but then occasionally a "clunk" would be missed, thereby upsetting the half-asleep mind's anticipation of what was inevitably coming next.

And do you think I could find the source of the disturbance... and it's amazing how the smallest of sounds gets magnified through a steel hull on a still night. In the end the need for sleep overcame all and the origins of the noise will have to remain a mystery.

It was an early breakfast, and in my case I had it on the way, because we were on our way just after six, around the point to Havannah Harbour about three hours away.



Gideon & Rob and the tranquil serenity of Havannah Harbour & Gideon's landing



This was to be something of a test run, first to find Gideons Landing and then second, to locate a place to stop when Phil and his trusty crew – Mark, Todd and Vic return in earnest on Friday to pick up the medical team.

In the end it was a very successful excursion and having been made aware that Gideon and I had a mutual friend in an Australian woman (about my age), Alison Haysey, it was great to see how modern communications could instantly bring the three of us together as Gideon first emailed a photo and then called Alison who just happened to be available. Just amazing.

Gideon allowed us to use his mooring, which was far more satisfactory than dropping an anchor because I knew he was keen to protect his coral and giant clams- situated just metres off the beach.

So if you are looking for an “Eco” holiday with a difference- including some serious fishing – check out Gideons Landing if Facebook

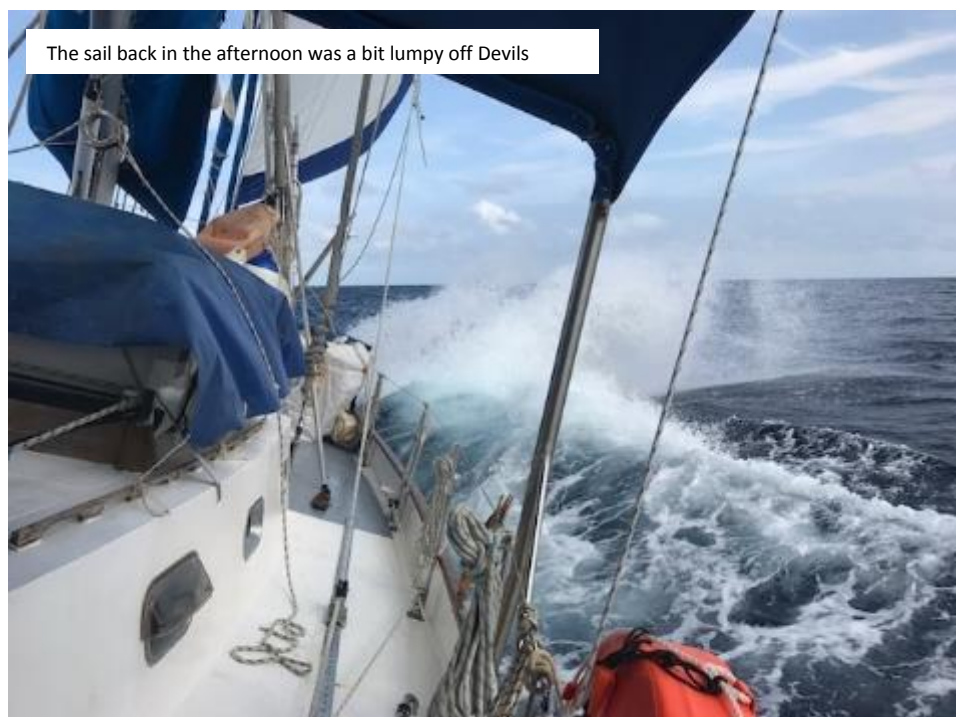
The trip back from Havannah, round the aptly named Devils Point, was a bit on the lumpy side at times, but now we are anchored once more in tranquil Port Vila Harbour; just off Iririki Island

With just 3 sleeps before I head home my list of “final tasks” should be getting shorter, but that doesn’t seem to be happening. I’ve got Eddiy working on the deck again tomorrow so it’ll be good to catch up with him again.

Rob Latimer



Gideon's Landing, Havannah Harbour – note that beautifully painted deck ...



The sail back in the afternoon was a bit lumpy off Devils

[Edith West](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Dorothy Russell Viney](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post

All together now

Wednesday 19 July 2017
Port Vila Harbour

Rob started the day picking up Eddiy, the seriously good boat care person, to come aboard for some jobs that needed doing. Suspect Rob may be helping Eddiy in his quest to build his house and find a wife.

Rob and I made our way up to the PCV office for some final preparations for Mission 2. Then down the street to negotiate with the local money changers for local currency to use for accommodation transport etc. As it was a significant amount we were able to get a better than offered rate.

Worth noting that the rate for exchanging cash in Port Vila was something like 30% better than the rate reportedly received from the Flight Centre in Melbourne. Anyone coming this way, be aware.

Nicola from the PCV office was good enough to take us up the street with jerry cans to collect 115 litres of petrol for the dinghies and do a small amount of shopping. Thank you Nicola. We are fortunate to have Nicola join us as crew for the sail on Friday.

Eddiy, back aboard to do some cleaning, scraping and painting



Loading up with outboard fuel, Phil takes care on the wonky pontoon

Thought I'd try the local custom today, siesta from 11.30 to 1.30, think there's a future in that. Although a little frustrating when you want lures and the fishing supplies shop is closed.

Rob made his way to the airport once again to meet the last crew members to join us, Vic and Todd. Great to meet them. Not sure if they thought it was so great when we had them straight into rehearsing swinging the big dinghy over the edge among other things.

Looking forward to us all having a good time serving the medical crew

over the next couple weeks.

The day has finished with Mark excelling himself once again by dishing up a very nice Tuna casserole straight from the ships cook book. Twas very nice. Tank Yu Tumas Mark from all of us.

Fair winds and smooth seas and all together now

Phil Wicks

Rob's note

Two sleeps to go...

The clock is ticking on my time here in Vanuatu. The new skipper and crew are aboard and the good ship Chimere is running like a well-oiled machine ... although I probably shouldn't have said that.

I picked up Eddiy around 8:00am from the dinghy wharf and he stuck at the scrubbing and sanding and painting all day, ably supervised by Mark who remained aboard baking bread, cleaning, charging the batteries and catching up on a range of other jobs.



Eddiy explained that in building his house on his island of Mataso he's been making his own lime from "rocks" he collects on the beach, which are then burnt on a fire and uses this, mixed with sand and water, to render branch woven walls. Quite a process!

It was good to pick up the new crew members Vic and Todd at the airport and to see everyone starting to settle in aboard.

Hope you enjoy the photos...

Rob Latimer

[Norma Walker](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Nigel Anderson](#), [Raymond Wicks](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Larissa Quigg](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Edith West](#), [Liz Broadbent](#) liked this post



Mataso after Cyclone Pam

Published on Mar 22, 2015

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGbiUOrGTP4>

The rocks where they hid the children and all the adults huddled Around them in the open shielding them from the wind.

We're ready now

Thursday 20th July 2017
Port Vila Harbour

Mark was off to immigration this morning for citizenship... no sorry, to extend his visa as he is staying past the standard 30 days allowed on your normal visa.

Vic, Todd and I took the opportunity to walk the street and check out the market. Rob was off for a presentation at a combined churches gathering. All busy in our own ways.

After a swim and lunch on Chimere, Rob and Mark headed for the wholesale store for final provisions for our time in the wilderness.

And home comes Rob having commandeered another of his friends to bring out a load of provisions. Would you believe his friend works with the water police in Victoria, hope his boss doesn't see the photo although no chance of overloading being an offence here.

Next, Mark arrives in Chimere's dinghy with a boat load of friends. There was Deb from PCV health, Annette who along with her husband is doing several months volunteer work with PCV, David a dentist from Ballarat volunteering with the program and Charlotte, David's grand daughter from the Gold Coast, with Mark driving.

Tonight Rob and Mark have headed around to the boat club on special invitation from the Germans that they rescued in Resolution bay a couple weeks ago. No doubt there will be more stories to be told.

Tomorrow the adventure begins, Rob leaves at 5am for a 7am flight home. Rob, I know it's been a long haul for you from so many aspects. You have done an amazing job getting the boat ship shape and to get all the teams together. Go home knowing it has been a job well done, your Mission 2 sailing team hope they too can do you proud.

Tomorrow we are off to Havannah Harbour.

Fair winds, smooth seas and we're ready now.

Phil Wicks

[Bindu Susan Winter](#), [Scott Michelle Wilson](#), [Nigel Anderson](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Larissa Quigg](#), [Agnes Webb](#) liked this post



Rob and bags of donated caps and clothes for distribution around the remote islands, hitch a ride out to Chimere with fellow yachtie Bradley



Mark brings visitors out for afternoon tea, l-r Deb, Charlotte, Annette & David

Have we got some stories

Friday 21st July 2017
Havanna Harbour

Nah sorry can't tell you, all I can say is we heard these dulcet tones singing Lilly Marlene coming through the companion way a little after eleven last night. Mark says he and Rob had a most enjoyable time celebrating the birthday of one of the Germans the Mission 1 team had rescued. I understand quite an emotional connection has been made through the traumatic event.

Rob was dropped at the dinghy dock at 4.15 this morning and Mark saw that he was able to catch a bus to the airport.

We collected Charlotte from shore at 8am then lifted the anchor and headed off for Havannah Harbour. We raised the sails and made our way in the gentle breeze. Hooked up to the mooring in front of Gideons Landing a very nice way to start our mission.

The crew including Charlotte enjoyed a swim, a siesta and a walk to the small marina before finalising things ready for the medical people to hit.

The medical team arrived around 5.30 and several loads of bags were transferred to Chimere. Then we all had a very nice meal at Gideons with a briefing from Richard on what we are to expect over the next couple of weeks. A nice way to start.

We have 13 sleeping aboard tonight. We've sorted bunks for all with the crew on deck. The anchorage is being kind to us so we pray all have a good nights sleep.

Tomorrow we sail to Emae Island about 40 nautical miles to the north east.

Fair winds, smooth seas and have we got some stories.

Phil Wicks

[Rae-Ellen Graham](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Denise Stephenson](#), [Janine O'Loughlin](#), [Robyn Clarke](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Tanya Steven](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Dorothy Russell](#)
[Viney](#) liked this post



Rob heads out to the airport around 4:30am (after 4 hours sleep) after an exciting time as skipper on Mission 1 and a big night out celebrating with his two new best German friends



It could have been straight out of the Blues Brothers ...



Heiner, Ede and Rob celebrate the earlier rescue from a month earlier, along with Heiner's 67th birthday at the "War Horse Restaurant & Bar" ... this is around the time the karaoke started



Ballarat dentist Dr David Goldsmith and his granddaughter Charlotte share some time aboard Chimere. (Charlotte returned the next morning for the sail around to Havannah Harbour where the medical team gathered for the start of Mission 2)

we are off the grid

Saturday 22nd July 2017

Solvua, Emae Island

Feeling a bit shaky today, first night without internet. What do you do if you want to know something and there's no help available from Google???

Up a bit before 6 this morning, a quick toilet trip ashore, some breakfast and we dropped the mooring line at 6.50. It seems all 13 of us had adequate sleep.

No wind so we motored out through the opening to the north of Havannah Harbour into a smooth sea. The wind started to build so we raised the sails and gave some assistance to Perkins. As the morning went on the wind continued to build until we were traveling comfortably at over 7 knots.

We dropped the anchor into a nice patch of sand just before 1pm. A nice anchorage.

Straight into getting the large dinghy off the deck and over the side then load up the bags of medical goods. Several trips ashore using both dinghy's to transport people and goods. After a couple of hours Vic, Mark, Nicola, David and Glenys returned with a bag of coconuts, Susut (like Choko), Manioc (like tapioca), cucumbers, local lettuce, several Paw Paw among other things. There'll be no scurvy on Chimere.

Forgot to mention we successfully fired up Chimere's desalination plant yesterday on our way to Havannah. Within a couple hours we had the tanks topped up, we think we made something like 400 litres of fresh drinking water. Very easy, what an asset. Unfortunately our wind farm and solar farms aren't meeting our electricity needs in full at the moment.

A windy night 15 to 20 knots, a couple of crew have dived on the anchor and tell me it is nice and secure in sand. We have 9 on board tonight. With help chopping up lots of fresh vegetables, Nicola prepared an amazing stir fry for dinner, very nice.

If you can read this we have managed to work the Satellite Phone.

Fair winds, smooth seas and we're off the grid

Phil Wicks

[Liz Ogden](#), [Edith West](#), [Kate Storey-Whyte](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post



The Havannah Shopping Centre ... it's on the west of the island but you wouldn't call it "Westfields"



Life is slow at Gideon's Landing ...



Mission 2 began with the medical team meeting Chimere at (Gideon's Landing) Havannah Harbour. All aboard for a night's sleep it was then an early morning departure for the first hop north to the island of Emau

An afternoon with Chief Samuel

Sunday 23rd July 2017
Sulvua, Emae Island

After a good night on anchor it was off to church. Eight of us in the small dinghy carefully made our way through the coral to shore. Then a 3 kilometre walk past the cows through a gate to the village of Novo. The pastor of the local church was away at another village so we had a small service led by an elder. The service and singing in Bislama was great, well the music was great can't say I understood too much of the service.

To the local clinic to set up for tomorrow's session. They will have a bit of a lighting problem as there is no electricity at the clinic.

Back to Chimere for lunch. Then Barry led Nicola, Glenys and myself for a walk up the hill to the village of Sesake a bit over 5 kims. We passed cows, goats and chickens along the track. Interesting to see the fence posts actually growing.

Chief Samuel from the village came along and welcomed us. A dozen smiling kids came racing out very curious. They couldn't understand English, but wanted their photo taken, they followed us everywhere we went, we felt like the pied piper. It was pretty obvious very few westerners came up here. Chief Samuel was so welcoming and so friendly.

He offered us a bunch of bananas, we were a bit taken aback when he walked over and chopped the whole tree down. He wouldn't accept any money so we gave a couple of kids some money for him, by our standards the village was very very poor.

For us a very interesting afternoon with lots of photo's. Meanwhile Rob will be very pleased that Todd, Vic and Mark did a great job scrubbing the waterline on Chimere while we were away.

Another day in paradise, work for the medics starts in earnest at the clinic 7.30 in the morning. From comments and questions around the villages they will have a big line up tomorrow for eyes, teeth and general health issues.



Anchored well off shore, the dinghy landing at Emae was via a narrow channel in the coral.



It's Sunday and on Emae you do what the locals do ... walk to church

Nicola, Phil, Chief Samuel & Barry, with a “giggle” of local children in tow.



Sorry, no photos, couldn't get enough internet anywhere on the island, I'm told you need a Digicel sim card and we all have TVL [or Rob to provide images from 2013 and from PredictWind map (below) – Webmaster] . It seems we can text and talk but no data, hmmm.

If you are reading this the satellite worked again.

Fair winds, smooth seas and an afternoon with Chief Samuel.

Phil Wicks

[Robyn Milat](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Bindu Susan Winter](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post

Chief Samuel and his generous gift of bananas



Approaching the Emae beach via the gap in the coral



Team leaders & dental care workers, Bob & Morinda stay warm in Chimere's cockpit on the way to Emae

Conga line clinic

Monday 24 July 2017
Sulvua, Emae Island

Today was the first clinic in Mission 2 on the island of Emae.

It was also Children's Day today so it was a public holiday and the children weren't at school so they had to be rounded up for the clinic. The supply ship came in today which also disrupted island life.

Our medical team included Glenys, a Registered Nurse and Registered Midwife from Melbourne who was on triage, dividing over one hundred people into dental, medical or optical queues.

The dental treatment was done by Samuel, a first year dental graduate Ni-Vanuatu dentist who impressed with his productivity, clinical skill, and cheerful disposition. He was pleased with his performance today, as compared with his usual practice workload. He pulled in excess of fifty teeth today. Samuel was assisted by Bob (a Ni-Van who works with PCV Health and helps organise these missions).

The Dental survey was done by Barry a retired, but still registered, dentist from Melbourne. He also helped Samuel by doing the local anaesthetic for those who needed extractions, to help speed up the extracting. Barry was helped in the survey by one of our sailors, Todd an ex-Australian Army Engineer, who did the recording, as well as driving the rigid inflatable along the narrow channel in the reef to the beach.

The Eye Clinic (PCV Eye) was done by David, an optometrist from Leongatha, Victoria. David had by far the longest queue, looking like a conga-line, spilling out the verandah onto the lawn. It seemed that this was the first eye clinic on the island for four years. Vic was David's assistant in pointing to the eye cards, and dispensing the spectacles. Vic from Melbourne, is also one of the sailing team, who says he is between building jobs, was impressed by the intensity and volume of the day. David worked in tandem with Derek (a Ni-Van who works with PCV Health in Port Vila).



I-r Nic, (local man-Emae) David, Glenys, Barry and Nicola



Todd records while dentist Barry conducts another oral health survey, as further, randomly selected participants, wait their turn.



Nicholas, a GP from England ran the primary care centre with Donald (the local nurse). They were reviewing Donald's more complicated patients. Also, there seemed to be a lot of right knee pain. Nicholas was impressed by Donald's knowledge of all his patients. Classic old-school primary care – he knew them and they knew him.

Nicola, an RN from NZ who's lived in Port Vila for two years, started helping with the survey then helped with triage, then helped with the survey forms. Nicola says the teamwork was good for the first day and appreciated the people's patience. Children weren't presenting and most looked healthy and well nourished. Nicola also enjoyed riding in the back of the utility.

But by far, the most difficult job of the day was done by captain Phil and myself, who had to mind the ship, including refilling the water tanks with the watermaker, planning the next day's passage, reading, washing, cooking... Sorry, but there are no photos as the Internet connection here is very poor (non-existent). Fair winds, smooth seas and a conga line clinic.

Mark Stephenson

For those who may not know, Mark is our chief catering officer, doing a fantastic job for all the hungry workers. He's also a very capable member of the ship's crew.

Phil Wicks

[Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Lenore Lott](#), [Denise Stephenson](#), [Simone Aston](#), [Judy Munting](#), [Kylie DellaBarca Steel](#), [Jenny Newby-Fraser](#), [Bobbie Hammond](#), [Robyn Clarke](#), [Heather Reid](#), [Faye Edmonds](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Hel Ana](#), [Dorothy Russell Viney](#), [Agnes Webb](#) liked this post



"Community" medicine ...



Glenys with another happy clinic customer



Todd brings some of the team back after a big day ashore ... Glenys & David, and Nicola, Nic, Barry and fellow crew member Vic

The thrill of a left hand break

Tuesday 25th July 2017
Lambukiti, Tongoa Island

Todd and Vic were off to shore at 7am to load the three big bags of medical goods and bring the four staying on shore back to Chimere.

After loading and tying everything down for what was expected to be a rough, wet ride with 20 plus knots on the beam we were ready to raise the anchor to head for Tongoa Island. Would you believe the anchor winch wouldn't go. After trying a couple of things away she went, we were off.

It turned out to be a fairly pleasant couple of hours crossing the 12 nautical miles. We travelled conservatively with two reefs in the main and the stay sail out.

Pretty easy to find an anchorage although quite rolly. As soon as the anchor was down the medicos had lunch and the crew swung into action hoisting the big dinghy over and loaded both dinghys ready to go to shore.

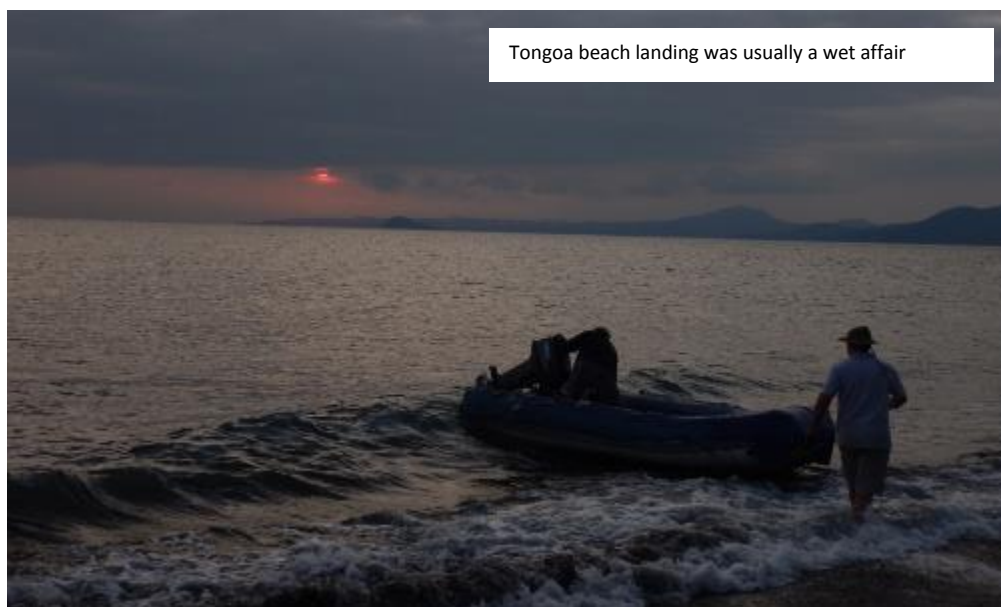
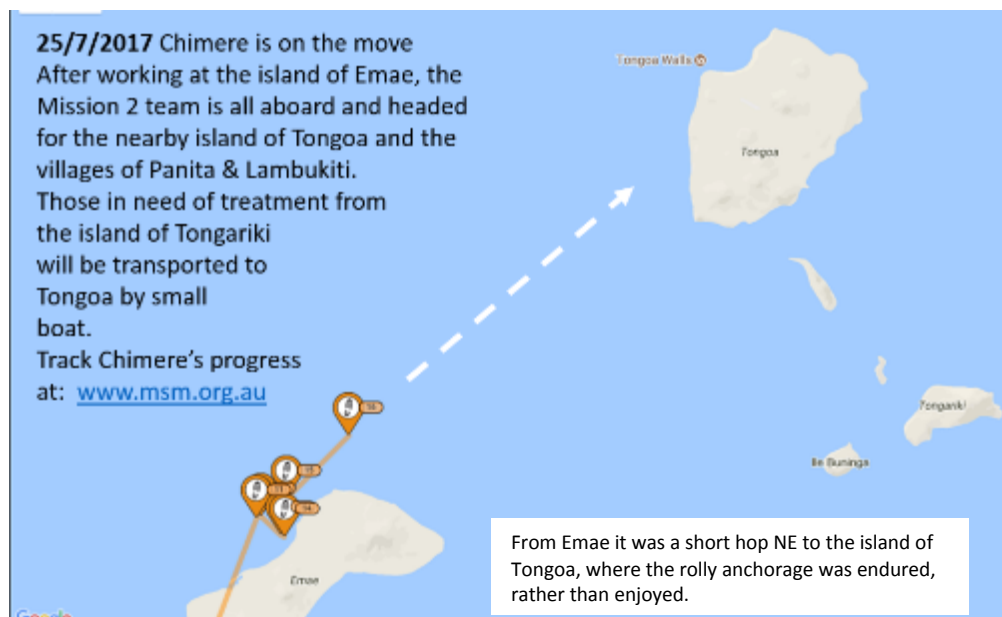
Approaching the shoreline they could see there was a really nice swell running (if you are a surfer) . They battled their way through and managed to get all the goods on a waiting truck for transport to the top of the hill. Then I'm told the truck ride up the hill was just as exciting.

It was an ordeal although on return this evening the swell was more severe with some two foot waves breaking over the dinghy. Fortunately all returned wet but safely with no damage to equipment, well done Todd and Vic. While up the hill getting things ready for the clinic they pulled a casual five teeth. The local people are so grateful for the instant relief from the excruciating pain.

All hopped in under Vics guidance to make Casava patties, very nice.

Fair winds, smooth seas and the thrill of a left hand break

Phil Wicks



Report from Mission 2 doctor ... Nic Allen

Found through the online MSM medical Vanuatu adventure sailing "dating site" ... www.msm.org.au UK doctor Nicholas Allen explains a bit about himself and how he's found himself half a world away from where he calls home...

As I sat in my kitchen, rain beating against the window on a dark and stormy February day in England, I began planning my 12 month Sabbatical. Sailing was one of my passions, and expedition and adventure medicine my theme for the year. I began an internet search of likely options, after many false dawns I eventually came across the MSM blogs from previous years and began reading intently. This would fit the bill, sailing whilst seeing the world through more than a tourist's eye, hopefully helping a few people on the way and somewhere warm and sunny. Perfect! Primary care was my day job at home, but in a developing country, (from a luxury 53 foot yacht, I was promised) going back to basics in medicine would be a real challenge. An old University friend lived in Cairns, so tagging on a visit to see him and his family sealed the deal in my mind.

After some very prompt, enthusiastic and encouraging correspondence with Rob, I was sold on the idea and pencilled in the dates around my other adventures. I sailed the Atlantic in a 72 footer in

November/December with a youth Charity called Tall Ships completing a long held dream to cross an Ocean, then worked in Nicaragua /Costa Rica for 3 months with Raleigh International, a charity promoting sustainable developmental work in rural Central America. This focused on water and sanitation projects, involving the local villagers, with Raleigh bringing together technical assistance and also youth volunteers from Nicaragua, Costa Rica and also Europe to add energy and endeavour. After 3 months of hard graft, we had dug a trench 4.5km long through jungle, across a river and finally succeeded in delivering fresh water via a gravity fed water supply to a small rural community. To cap off an epic trip, our final challenge was a 300km trek across Costa Rica, unassisted and with only 1960's maps for guidance, we managed to lead 12 venturers from the Caribbean to the Pacific amid great celebration!

After all this preparation, I now felt ready to take on MSM! With my recent experience of sailing and rural living, I was excited about the tasks ahead.

After 3 days of the voyage I have not been disappointed.....

Dr Nic Allen



Lucky the locals hide their paddles ... Nicola, Nic & Barry



The faces of boots-an-all Dr Nic...



[Judy Munting](#), [Robyn Clarke](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Edith West](#) liked this post

Safe landings

Wednesday 26th July 2017
Lambukiti, Tongoa Island

The swell was still breaking on the shore when we dropped off the medical team a little after seven this morning. With great athleticism they streamed off the front of the dinghy onto solid ground, well solidish black sand. With water streaming over the stern of the dinghy it was a major undertaking to get her turned into the waves to get back to Chimere. All went okay. Fortunately the swell was much easier when picking them up tonight.

The medical team with boat crew Todd acting as dental nurse and Vic assisting with eye examinations completed another successful day. Dr Nic noted some goitre problems, fishing can't be too good around here. Chatting tonight I learnt he did a home visit yesterday and found the chickens running about the house a bit disconcerting.



Talk about redefining "Community Medicine" ... it's when the community turns out to watch the treatment ... In this case it's actually not treatment but another oral health survey being conducted, with Morinda in the background completing a written questionnaire with an older participant.

Below: a brand new baby ...

We are to load up the equipment at 7.30 in the morning ready for a 40 mile sail to Lamén Bay on the island of Epi for the next clinic. After studying all information about Lamén Bay we are pretty excited to see that there may be a jetty to land our goods on.

Fair winds, smooth seas and safe landings

Phil Wicks



[Chris Chalcraft](#), [Carl Suddaby](#), [Mary Lawry](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Liz Broadbent](#) liked this post

A whale of a time

Thursday 27th July 2017
Lamen Bay, Epi Island

We leave Tongoa with mixed feelings. The work was steady and very productive with the full complement of dental surveys, extractions, eye and medical examinations completed. The local people were very hospitable, appreciating all of our efforts.

The anchorage unfortunately was exposed to wind, tide and current which meant those on board suffered for a second night. Testimony to the spirit of the team that the work was achieved with a minimum of fuss. The final logistic move from the shore to ship was done in the presence of a couple of whales – a mother and her calf we believe. Perhaps their frolicking was a demonstration of appreciation – or maybe they were just giving us the green light to head to Epi.

Anchor raised at 9am, the engine throttle opened and we were off and running with the wind for the next few hours. With the conditions favourable, the engine was cut and the sails were fully deployed allowing us to enjoy a very pleasant starboard reach for most of the voyage. Our attempts at 'going native' extended to lunch today with fried battered local produce. While the effort to make the banana fritters was appreciated, the so-called bananas (plantain, or cooking bananas) tasted more like sweet potato and were not to everybody's taste.

As Epi island came in to view so did the volcanoes of Mount Marum and Benbow on the isle of Ambrym. The volcano of Mount Benbow is still active with little puffs of white smoke billowing every 10 minutes or so. As long as they remain little puffs we can rest easy while in this idyllic location.

Fair winds, smooth seas and a whale of a time.

Todd MacDougall

From rolly Tongoa to the dream anchorage of Lamen Bay



Who tells the whales how close they can get to the boat ...?

[Edith West](#), [Raymond Wicks](#), [Ruth Alway](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Natural Organic Living](#), [Scott Michelle Wilson](#), [Irene Aston](#), [John Hembrow](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Maureen Yaxley](#), [Mary Lawry](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Dorothy Russell Viney](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#) liked this post

we deployed and the men were rescued

Friday 28th July 2017
Lamen Bay, Epi Island

It's a strange thing, just on dark, Bob who was staying on shore called on the two way radio saying two men had fallen out of their canoe and were in the water being carried by the current running between Epi and Lamen islands. We quickly deployed Todd in a dinghy with a small crew to the rescue. As it happens an American friend on the yacht Bravo also went on the hunt. So with two dinghys zipping about the water in the dark the search was on. Before long an American accented message came over the radio "we've got them and we are towing the canoe to shore". What a disappointment, we thought we had the story to match Robs.

Initially there were some issues with the clinic here today due to Vanuatu Independence day celebrations and the local nurse having gone missing. Never the less our medical team were off at 7.30 and were able to complete their survey quotas, check 30 pairs of eyes and sort out some medical issues all before lunch. Bob and Morinda then organised for us to hold a clinic at Lamen Island approximately 3 kilometres across the straight. They organised a banana boat (local runabout) to take all the equipment across this afternoon and ready for our medics to start the clinic at 8am tomorrow. Great work by the mission coordinators.

Tonight we were invited to eat ashore and were served a beautiful local dinner. It included rice, chicken with island greens, fish in coconut milk, deep fried manioc and yam followed by banana cake; my favourite was banana pie and water melon. All very nice.

Our team are very tired and looking forward to another good nights sleep in this comfortable anchorage. Still no internet so no photos and this is going out via satellite.

Fair winds, smooth seas and we deployed and the men were rescued

Phil Wicks



The generosity and appreciation of the locals is often expressed in the wonderful catering



The ominous 1400m high cone of the Lopevi volcano looms large in the background

[Edith West](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Jacqui Jones](#), [Doug Utley](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Agnes Webb](#) liked this post

Dinghys across the straight

Saturday 29th July 2017

Lamen Bay, Epi Island

Once again the team awoke to the brrrm then purrr of the generator at 6am. A little after seven Todd headed off in the small dinghy to collect the four who had spent the night ashore. They came back to Chimere to rendezvous with the rest of the team who were in the large dinghy ready to go. The task ahead being to travel across the passage to Lamen Island together.

“Go quietly across together I said ...” and in the most part instructions were followed with Vic’s Donald Campbell demonstrations being explained as giving the motor a good “clean out”

They had another good day surveying and serving the needs of those on the island, in between Independence Day celebrations. Dr Barry noted the walk from the dinghy to the clinic was a highlight, walking through the beautiful tropical forest with the sea through the trees on one side and small cleared areas with huts seen through the trees on the other side, a botanical garden walk. The music, soccer and carnival atmosphere was very much enjoyed by the team after tending all the needs of the locals. The islanders seemed much more laid back than those on Epi, the main island and again they were so appreciative of what our team are doing. Both dinghys arrived back safely to Chimere followed soon after by a banana boat full to the brim with our equipment and five of our team. Surprisingly the team had been able to buy a bottle of wine on the small island, a 2016 Shiraz Cabernet going by the name of Outback Jack from Yenda, NSW, amazing what you find.

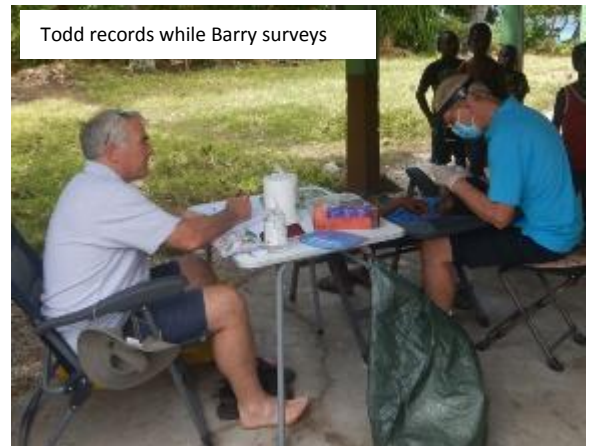
Five of the team sleeping ashore tonight, Nicola has joined the others, with eight on the boat. Mark cooked up a very nice chicken sate with rice. We all tried a bit of sugar cane that had been given to us for dessert, probably won't be added to our regular menu it wasn't as nice as expected. There's cards happening for some and reading for others tonight, quite windy outside but very pleasant.

The last couple of nights we have been able to see the glow of a volcano over the island, tomorrow we move to the island of Paama where we should have a very good view of at least two active volcanoes. Still no internet, no photos.

Fair winds, smooth seas and go quietly across together I said.

Phil Wicks

[Clare Parry](#), [Edith West](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Mary Lawry](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Down Under Rally](#), [Hilary Hatch](#), [Robyn Clarke](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#)



A Yam of a time!

Sunday 30th July, 2017.
Liro, Paama Island

After a reasonably peaceful night with occasional strong gusts of wind to send the wind generator into a frenzy, we welcomed the overnight land party aboard and immediately set sail in the direction of the source of the fiery glow we had observed during the previous evening to the north of our anchorage in Lamen Bay, Epi. With a brisk Easterly wind and swell around 2 metres, Chimere appeared to relish the challenge with a steady speed of around 5-6 knots under main and foresail. The anchorage site at our destination, Liro (Paama), was almost perfect and provided shelter from wind and swell just 200 metres from the beach.



Another short hop, this time from Lamen Bay (Epi) to Paama Island

Following the established routine, the Ni-Van members of our team went ashore to make contact with the local church and health clinic personnel while the rest of the team rested on board. Early afternoon we received a call from Bob that we were expected to join the local parliamentary representative, MP Taso, as special guests at the opening ceremony of the Paama Island Yam Festival, which was apparently instituted in 2015 as part of a drive to encourage tourism to the island. Following a small group of men in traditional costume we entered a grassy clearing where the



Photo ops. on the foredeck, l-r Samuel, Bob, Morinda, Todd & Dick



l-r Bob, David, Morinda, Nic, Dick & Samuel



On arrival at Paama, Dick obtains instructions from the locals as the crew prepare the dinghy for hoisting over the side

people of the village had gathered, men on one side and women on the other with dogs and chickens in between. We were all presented with garlands of flowers and ushered to the seats behind MP Taso, local Council leader and chiefs.

Several speeches later, including one from our very own Morinda, who was invited to speak on behalf of MSM Medical Team, we were treated to the Yam story delivered by one of the men in traditional dress. The MC finally announced the program of activities planned over the next couple of days and we were

all invited to inspect the varieties of Yam on display, some of which were enormous. I couldn't help think that my mate Robert should be here with his video camera with a view to putting it up on You-Tube with the slogan "Equally best public toilet in the South Pacific."

Evening revealed the glow of the volcanoes on neighbouring island, Ambrym and a great meal of Tuna bake ended a wonderful day of sailing, camaraderie and culture.

Fair winds, smooth seas and a yam of a time!

Barry Stewart

[Edith West](#), [Bob Morley](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Rae-Ellen Graham](#) liked this post



Arrival at Paama coincided with Independence Day & the local Yam Festival, which made the team instant celebrities ... l-r Dick, David, Nic, Morinda, Bob, Nicola, Barry, Glenys and Phil

Another day at the clinic

Monday 31st July 2017

Liro, Paama Island

The medical team were off to shore and on the job at Liro on Paama Island at eight this morning. Liro is a very pretty village of approximately 500 people and today was the public holiday in recognition of Vanuatu Independence Day. The local people have a plot of land of approximately 7.5 acres some distance up the mountain from the village that they make their living from. They are very welcoming and appear to be a very happy lot. Mark and I had a game of volley ball with a few of the youth when we went for a walk this afternoon.



Having three active volcanoes in the neighbourhood might make you anxious, with occasional ash and smoke in the air, but it does make for pretty sunsets

The day turned out to be very busy for all. Dr Nicholas the general practitioner attended to 49 clients. Sadly one client was found to have Parkinsons, and there is not much that can be done for him in these primitive circumstances. A more amusing case was the 80 year old lady who's blood pressure was through the roof. Nic then learnt that she had walked from the other side of the island over the mountain to see the doctor. She was asked to have a rest for an hour then come back.



David the team optometrist has found many eye problems and unfortunately has run out of a number of the common reading spectacles, actually its probably common weaving spectacles. Glasses make such a difference to their life.

I saw a 12 year girl have a tooth removed by Dr Barry. It was a moving experience for me. This poor little girl had her injection and you could see just how frightened she was. I should add that she asked for it to be removed as the pain was so bad and I'm told it was almost totally rotten. She sat in the chair on the veranda where Barry was operating with the villagers standing around watching while waiting for the injection to work. Barry very gently talked to her in Bislama and I could see he was doing the difficult job in a very caring, gentle way putting his many years of expertise to work. The poor little girl didn't utter a sound but I could see the tears, very brave.

It was also interesting to see how proficient Todd one of our sailing crew has become in recording for the national oral health survey. He has developed into being a great help to the medical team.

The day was so busy that the team has organised for the clinic be continued in the morning. A great experience to see the wonderful things the team are doing for the Vanuatu people.

Still no internet, still no photos, hope the world is still out there.

Fair winds, smooth seas and another day at the clinic.

Phil Wicks

[Mandy Fletcher](#), [Clare Parry](#), [Fiona Marchand](#), [Jeanette Draper](#), [Mary Lawry](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Maddy Shoebridge](#), [Nicole Parfitt](#), [Edith West](#), [Tracey James](#), [Jenny Mountney](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Matthew Ogg](#), [Simone Aston](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Jim Davies](#), [Tony Rowe](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#) liked this post

Paama Island – Video clip

Highlights of tourism on Paama Island in the Central province MALAMPA Vanuatu

<https://youtu.be/OL-ZuKL9tsU>



Landing at Paama airstrip – Vanuatu

(Just hope the camera was dash-mounted,
NOT held by pilot in spare hand)

Please excuse the music

<https://youtu.be/YuGveLGscJs>



Welcome to Paama

<http://www.positiveearth.org/bungalows/MALAMPA/paama.htm>

<http://visitpaama.wordpress.com/2015/08/22/welcome-to-paama/>

There may be internet tomorrow

Tuesday 1st August 2017

Liro, Paama Island

A geography lesson painted on the end wall of the school !!

Another busy morning ashore with the medical team on the job at eight. They saw 60 people this morning after 90 yesterday. So approximately 10% of the island have been seen by our Dentists, Optometrists and Doctor. Many had walked more than 2 hours to be seen at the clinic. Its a different world.

Glenys, one of our nurses, does the triage, for those like me of ten days ago, triage means she sorts the patients by priority and needs. Among the many very serious problems, there are the lighter moments like several people she has asked if they would like to see the dentist and with a big smile they say "evri wan i kam aot finish" and she notices they have no teeth. In general teeth on this island were in better condition than the other islands, maybe less western influence.

Today Dr Barry was surveying and pulling teeth in their maternity ward in the clinic. We noticed the bassinets were rusty and the linen all tattered. The islanders need lots of assistance.

The local plane came over this afternoon and didn't land. A couple were looking to get off the island on that plane and they informed us that this island has the shortest runway in the pacific and planes can only land one way so conditions have to be perfect. He then added "the Tuesday guys a chicken".

There is a young woman from Nebraska in the village. Jenny is with Peace Corp and has been living in the village for eighteen months. Our medical team found her to be an exceptional help, she knew the people and was able to help with communication as many didn't speak Bislama.

Tonight we were invited to a dinner in the village as thanks for all that our team had done for them. One of the senior village leaders gave a very long speech for our benefit of which most of us could only pick up bits and pieces of the Bislama. Morinda our mission coordinator also gave a very good speech in reply. A very nice meal of BBQ chicken, yam, rice and local greens, it seems that a number of our team have almost had enough yam for the time being. A very nice finish to our couple of days here.

We have a challenge in the morning getting the team to their next village on the bottom of Ambrym Island. It was good to be able to get some advice from Rob by telephone, I was able to get enough phone coverage by standing on a post in the corner of their basketball court.

Still no internet, hopefully tomorrow.

Fair winds, smooth seas and there may be internet tomorrow.

Phil Wicks



Glenys & Vic
take a break



Dr Nic recruits Vic for his stretching exercises

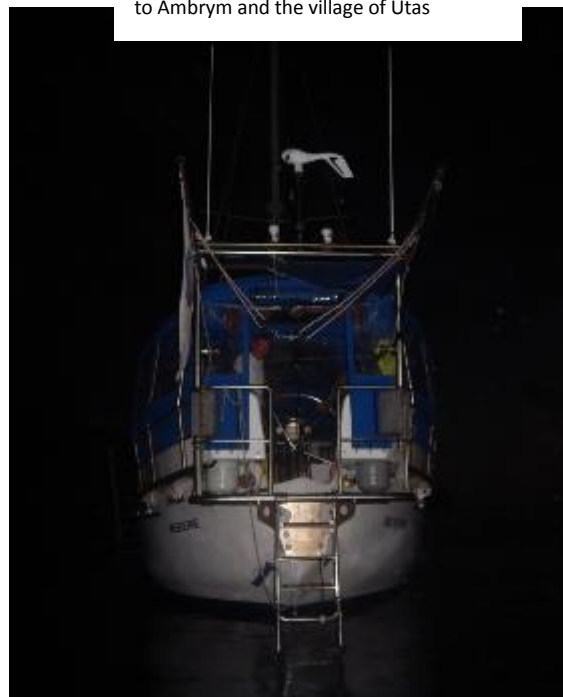
Stret no more

Wednesday 2nd August 2017
Liro, Paama Island

Well, actually a couple more stresses to go. We have to get the anchor down safely in Craigs Cove not a noted anchorage and we've got to get on the wall without getting on the wall if you know what I mean, at Yachting World in Port Vila.

Generator on at five this morning and picked up the shore party before 6am. Todd returned with the shore party plus Elder Morrison from the Liro Presbyterian Church and another young man who had come to help on our mission to Utas on the south east corner of Ambrym Island. The windy side of the island. So with 15 on board we lifted anchor and motored north with a 2 metre swell on our starboard bow for about an hour. As we neared Ambrym a local boat came out to meet us and yelled "follow me", well that's what I was told he said. He led us along the coast until there was a little bit of shelter from a reef with just a one metre swell. We followed the boat in and dropped anchor in about 6 metres in very roly conditions. So the anchor was down with a breaking reef in front, the shore to port 160 metres away, rocks less than 200 metres behind and an active volcano off the starboard side. With no depths showing on the chart, we spent the day rocking and rolling carefully watching that Chimere's anchor was holding tight.

Early morning start to the day-trip across to Ambrym and the village of Utas



Chimere at anchor while the local boat & Chimere's tender, take the team ashore behind the breaking reef



The chart-plotter shows Chimere's day trip to Ambrym and back



Chimere at a less-than-ideal roly anchorage



The dinghy ride ashore took the "inside-reef" route, with Lopevi looming large in the distance



Life in the village of Utas



Nice and calm inside the reef at the village beach

With heart in mouth and a great deal of athleticism due to the lumpy water we swung one bag of goods that were needed for the clinic into the banana boat. With four Ni-vans on board they headed a long way east through a narrow bit of water behind the reef to Utas.

While away we decided to drop our dinghy and it traveled with the banana boat on its next trip so as they would only need one trip back. It turns out the Pastor from Utas was on the banana boat helping. So good to know that the church in Liro and the church in Utas were working together to help us get our medical team to their village.



The medical team had another successful day seeing 46 people with again many extractions. The transfer back to Chimere was much more sedate as the wind and sea had died down. As we headed back across to Paama Island we could see the Paama airstrip and decided we are with the Tuesday guy from yesterday. It really is short; the golfers claimed that if they put a couple more bunkers in it would make a very nice par 3. Doesn't look more than 200 metres up hill straight off the sea, would be very scary aiming your plane straight at the mountain, then just as scary coming down the hill to get off before you reach the water.



The local banana boat helped with transport

The final clinic is done, we are all very tired tonight after a 5 o'clock start this morning. Tomorrow we sail for Craig Cove at the western end of Ambrym Island. We have great photos of the most perfect shape active volcano from our anchorage today and tonight out the back of Chimere we have the glow of two volcanoes on Ambrym Island.



Unfortunately still no internet, it's quite strange that we can make phone calls but no internet data.

Fair winds, smooth seas and stret no more.

Phil Wicks



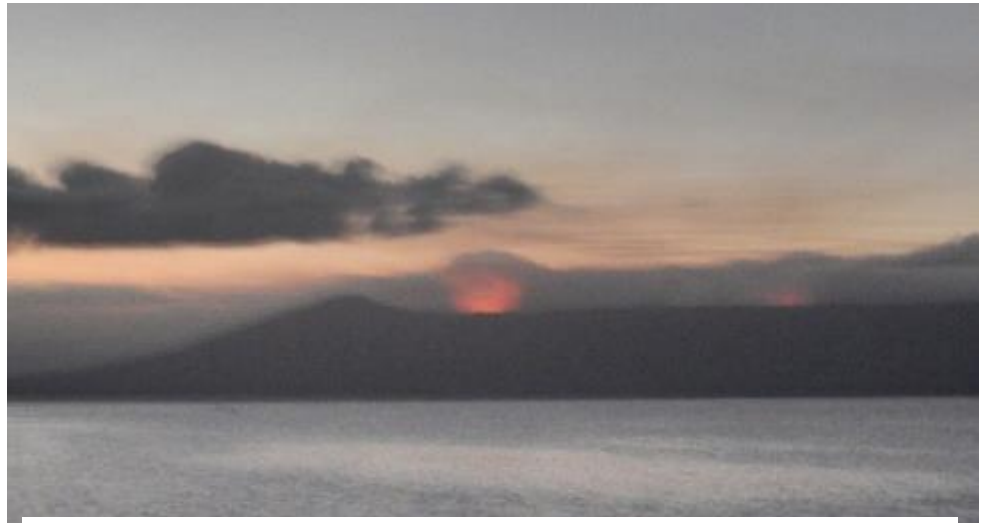
After seeing the Paama airstrip from the sea the crew could understand the plane not landing on Tuesday; to the disappointment of some. "Tuesday guy ... eh chicken" explained the locals



Getting to know your local, neighbourhood, just-over-the-hill, volcano ...
(Ambrym Island)

Here's a website you've probably never visited

... www.pacificdisaster.net and here's a link to a map and assessment of the volcanic history and risk presented by the Ambrym volcano on the island where the medical team is currently working ...

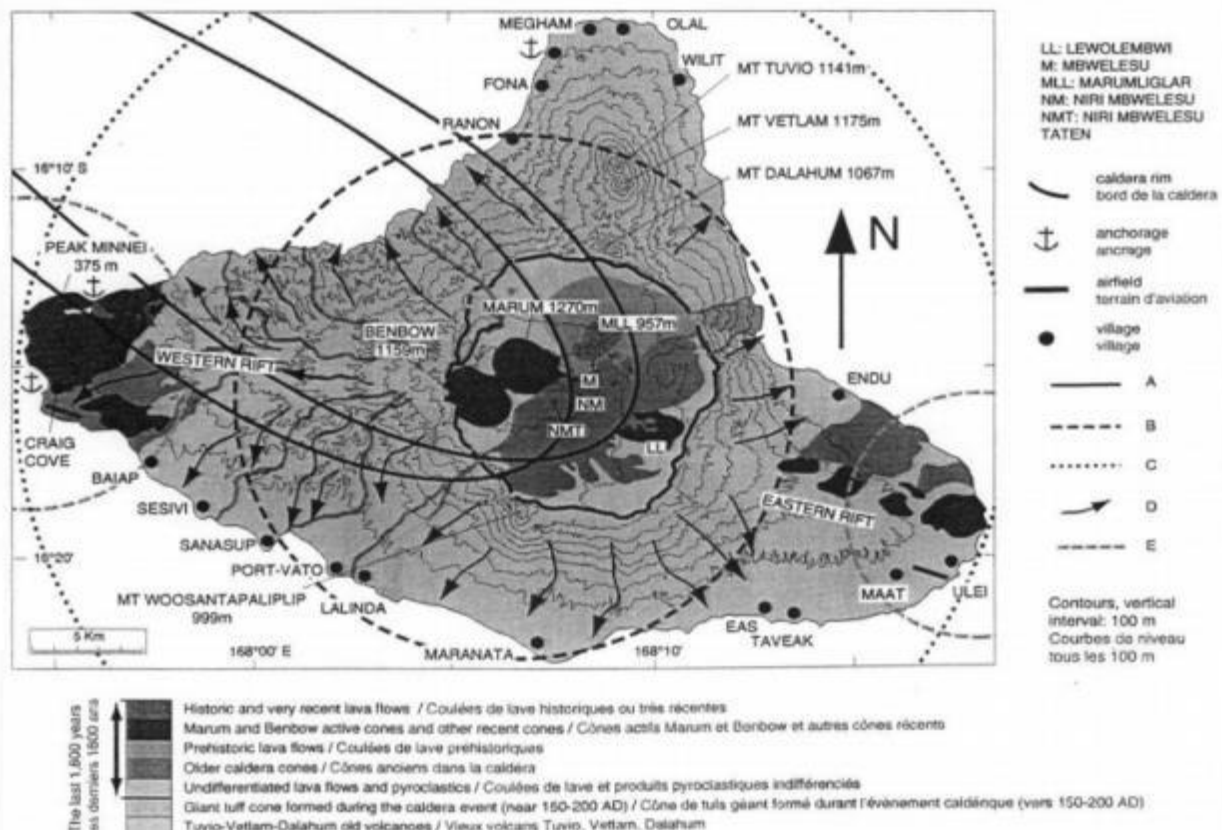


The Ambrym volcanoes from the Paama anchorage ... an very special sight through the night

http://www.pacificdisaster.net/pdnadmin/data/original/JB_DM504f_VUT_1996_Volcanic_hazard_map_ambrym.pdf

VOLCANIC HAZARD MAP FOR AMBRYM ISLAND / CARTE DES MENACES VOLCANIQUES POUR L'ILE D'AMBRYM (VANUATU)

by / par Michel MONZIER & Claude ROBIN (ORSTOM)



Some 1800 years ago, a gigantic eruption modified the relief of Ambrym and formed the caldera which crowns the island (a caldera is a big crater. 13 km wide in the case of Ambrym). During the last centuries, Ambrym volcano has experienced many eruptions.

Three activity levels have to be considered:

Normal (or weak) activity: Lava lakes are present in the craters of Marum and Benbow: ash outbursts are dangerous only in the immediate surroundings of the active craters.

Intermediate activity (1863-64, 1871, 1914, 1962, 1968, 1972, 1986 and 1988- 89 eruptions): Explosions may provoke important ash clouds, several kilometers high, whose ashes, carried by the trade winds, commonly fall over the northwest slopes of the island (red ellipses A). Due to the small quantity of ash in the plume, the hazard is not great, but acid rain is probable. Ashes may fall elsewhere on the island if other wind systems are present. During such an eruption lava flows may cover a limited area of the caldera floor. Due to the intense fall of ashes and small blocks (lapillis) near the vents, and the high probability of pyroclastic flows being emitted from the craters and flowing over the caldera floor, the access to the caldera area must be strictly prohibited.

Strong activity (1820, 1888, 1894. 1913, 1929, 1937 and 1942 eruptions): High ash clouds are responsible for important and/or long lasting ashfalls which may affect all of the island if the trade winds are not strong. The thickness of ash deposits may reach 50 centimeters or more within the area delimited by the 8 circle and a few centimeters to a few decimeters within the C circle. During this type of eruption, lavas may overflow the caldera wall. Other lavas may erupt, along the great fracture line which cuts the island. Lava flows restricted to the valleys, reach the sea and threaten coastal villages. If strong ashfalls are accompanied or followed by rains, all the valleys of the island as well as the coastal plains near their mouths may be ravaged by mudflows carrying trees and blocks. Such mudflows are extremely destructive (purples arrows D).

Lastly, magma-seawater interactions may induce very dangerous explosions at the western and eastern extremities of the island, both onshore and offshore (blue circles E). If an eruption occurs at one of these extremities or spreads from the caldera towards it, it might be necessary to evacuate the populations. A plan for the evacuation (by sea) of these populations should be beforehand prepared. The northern part of Ambrym is safe in case of a strong eruption: however, some ashfall may occur if southern winds are blowing.

Then there's Lovevi ...

Just a short distance down the road, or more correctly, upwind a few kilometres over the sea ... is the volcano-island of Lovevi; 1,400m high and an island with no inhabitants since 1960

Lovevi also has its own website

... www.lovevi.com

Lovevi is the most visually impressive volcano in Vanuatu. It's steep stratovolcano shape rises steeply from the Pacific Ocean (1413 metres) southwest of Ambrym Island. Lovevi is one of the most active volcanoes in Vanuatu and is [rarely visited](#). Lovevi volcano previously had two villages but the island was evacuated in 1960's due to ongoing volcanic activity.



The view of Lovevi from the Utas village beach... just a few kilometres up-wind!

Lopevi volcano is noted for the periodic eruptions which produce a wide variety of eruption types. The island is not inhabited, but ash eruptions may deposit ash on the neighbouring islands of Ambrym, Epi, and Paama.

2017 Unrest

On 13th January 2017 Lopevi volcano was raised to level 3 alert (on scale of 1-5).

Lopevi is subject to cultural restrictions which prohibit women from climbing the volcano.

John Search

Volcano Adventurer, Filmmaker, and Scientist

[Megan Jones](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Mary Lawry](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Bernadette Campbell](#), [Clare Parry](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Lorraine Rose](#) liked this post



The six am generator once again

Thursday 3 August 2017
Craig Cove, Ambrym

Our team seem to be finding the six am generator firing up a little tiresome. Once again our day started at six with the generator starting. Breakfast then the five that slept ashore were picked up at seven.

The anchor was raised from our comfy anchorage here at Paama and we were motoring across the bottom of Ambrym Island with a very gentle breeze behind us. We were delivered fair winds and smooth seas, thank you.

Very pleasant with a beautiful view of the volcanoes and the most unusual terrain, sort of like cruising alongside a national park in Australia. Even Morinda, our mission coordinator who normally very much dislikes the sailing, seemed to be enjoying this trip.

Once again we started Chimere's desalination plant while we were crossing the beautiful clean water, we had emptied two tanks since last running the water maker. It is such a wonderful thing to be able to do, particularly when 10 or more people are using water for washing clothes and showering. To be able to replace it in two or three hours is very nice.

After much deliberation we dropped anchor in 11 metres of water on the southern side of Craigs Cove. After doing a run around in the dinghy (to check for coral heads) we were confident we were safe and the anchor was holding firm.

Once again the Ni-vans were dropped ashore to find out where we could hold a clinic, a suitable place was found near where we could get the dinghy landed.

All equipment was taken ashore and readied for the clinic in the morning. A number of the medical people have to be at the airport at midday so the clinic will be short.

All on board have been busy writing about the mission tonight, so no playing cards as there has been the last couple of nights.

We are quite sad that tonight is the last night aboard for some. The crew and the medical team have got along so well, amazing really when we all come from such diverse back grounds. They have all been very patient and caring to the captain (me) and each other.

Fair winds, smooth seas and the six am generator

Phil Wicks

[Edith West](#), [Clare Parry](#), [David James](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Denise Kehl Barte](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Martin Milat](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post



The last night together

Thursday 3 August 2017

Craig's Cove, Ambrym

Captain Phil has asked me to write this, (from all the way over here in Melbourne where it barely topped 12 degrees today ... brrrr) ... just like he's asked everyone else on board to put pen to paper – and they have!! (As you can see below.)[Click on thumbnail images to see who's who]



As I've discovered, it's not always that easy to get people to actually "write stuff down", Well done Phil!! Although I suspect he might have asked a few times over the past week. But with everyone aboard in Craig Cove for the last night – that's 13 people by my reckoning – Phil might have had some additional "leverage" now everyone knows the workings of life at sea and running clinics ashore.

Leverage such as ... there may not be room in the dinghy for you tomorrow morning, or ... I think your bunk might be needed tonight, do you mind sleeping in the anchor-well, or ... I'm not sure there'll be enough dinner to go around tonight, or ... worst of all ... NO Ice Cream For You !! ... Actually, I just made that one up.. We don't have ice-cream aboard. We did once and it nearly caused a riot when the local kids heard us quietly say the words. Got good ears those kids. And who would have known "ice-cream" translates into Bislama so well.

Truly though, I have no doubt that when Phil makes a request, those on board would be more than happy to oblige, given his gentle, caring nature, coupled with his strong assured leadership style. So while Phil has given me the floor, so to speak, let me just say that I endorse everything the team members have said (below).

Phil has done an amazing job as skipper, at times in rather difficult conditions, and MSM – plus everyone on Mission 2 – has been really fortunate that he stepped forward to volunteer. Thanks also go to all the volunteers, both medical and sailing. People who naturally give up so much to participate, in terms of time, money and comforts, but as you'll read below, these truly are priceless experiences and I'm sure everyone feels they are taking away far more than they've given. To the local Ni-Van medical staff who lead and participate, we thank you for welcoming us into your world and encourage you to maintain your enthusiasm and commitment in serving the people of your country as you do

Whilst every mission comprises similar ingredients, they are each unique in their own special ways ... the combination of people; their backgrounds, experience and characteristics ... the weather, sea conditions and places visited ... x-factors, variables, emergencies, unknowns and curved-balls ... the list goes on ... Mission 2 has been no exception.

Well done everyone !!

Smooth seas, fair breeze and [enjoy] the last night together

Rob Latimer (reporting in place of Phil, this night only)

Everyone has a turn



Morinda Kalmar, Joint Team Leader & PCV Dental Care Worker

I would like to thank all team members for all the hard work done in this second mission. It's been great leading a team of old and young professionals which helps build my leadership skills. With all different skills put together to accomplish a great mission.

May God bless you all as He has blessed our people through your good work.

Tank yu tumas. Morinda.



Bob Natuman, Joint Team Leader & PCV Dental Care Worker

It was a joyful mission on the second mission; just like Mission one. There were 13 of us: two nurses, two dentists, one doctor, two optom, two dental assistants and four crew members.

As the dental assistant in the team, I was very fortunate to work with Dr Samuel. A young Ni Vanuatu dentist from Vila Central Hospital Dental Service. He is very capable and confident to work in very remote islands where the team visit to deliver the medical and dental

services.

The team travelled in very calm seas on this mission with the hand of Phil who was our cool and capable skipper and the helpful hand of its three other crew members.

A highlight was when we were on Epi island and we helped a local who was going across to the small island of Lamen Bay in his canoe which sank!

Bob Natuman.



Dr Samuel Alex. Dentist Ministry of Health Vanuatu

The journey in carrying out this mission was fantastic. Seeing several islands that I haven't been to before and meeting new friends and families. My first time journey on a yacht was awesome despite bad weather.

In carrying out dental treatment (tooth extractions) in a village setting was a big challenging for me. However I did appreciate the experience.

The good thing about the treatments was that I managed to complete all the treatments in the outer islands. I met new friends on board – the medical team and the crew members. I am so fortunate to have worked with new work mates Dr Barry and Bob. The journey was awesome and I am looking forward to many more to come.

God bless, Samuel Alex.



Dick Stanley, PCV Eyecare Worker

The journey was good. I really enjoy the tribe. Even though it was a long journey. As an eye care worker I really appreciate Dr David the optician and Vick (a sailor) who helped us with all the eye patients. Thanks to all the crew members who came for us on the ship and also the medical team members.

Dick Stanley



David Lawry, Optometrist (Volunteer Victoria)

Not knowing what to expect I arrived at Port Vila airport with some trepidation being transported to the yacht Chimere that evening, quick introductions, a meal and onto the boat.

Sailing to Emae and we were greeted by the first of the many friendly NI-Vans we were to meet from there it was clinics with lines that ran almost out of sight

The local Ni-Van has so much and so little they live in astounding scenery with abundant food but access to doctors dentists and optometry is intermittent at best with many having not seen any for up to four years.

Reading glasses were heavily in demand. Sun related eye disease is prevalent mainly pterygium and cataract from a young age. We were kept busy with the eyes and hopefully left many better for the visit. Regardless of what we could do they were happy and laughing at all times.

The combination of sailing and working made this a great trip and will leave lasting memories the most vivid being the friendly nature and greetings from the islanders, the volcanoes and stunning scenery

David Lawry



Dr Nic Allen, (Volunteer, UK)

The MSM mission has been a fantastic and fitting finale to my sabbatical year. The crew have been both professional and dedicated, working tirelessly to support the on-shore team.

The dental, ophthalmic and medical team have worked flexibly and effectively to deliver care to many Ni Vanuatu and hopefully leave a lasting improvement to their health.

Above all I have been impressed by the Ni Vanuatu in-mission team. Their humour, patient care, and energy have been an inspiration.

A big thanks to MSM for a great trip and I hope to return in a year or two.

Dr Nic Allen



Nicola Young, (RN NZ Oral Health Survey Coordinator)

I have really enjoyed mission two. Having helped out in Vila over the last few months with the oral health survey planning it's great to take part in undertaking the survey in five of the islands.

We have had a wonderful team of people who have worked really well together. Everyone had different skills and talents to add including professional skills, bread making, cooking, joke making etc! It was so interesting to experience five of the Vanuatu islands: Emae, Tongoa, Epi, Paama, and Ambrym. (*plus* little Lamen Island too, Ed.)

The local health staff (nurses and nurse aids) on each island welcomed us warmly and worked hard to help us organise the clinic and the patients. They do amazing primary health care work. As well as this the people in each village were welcoming.

Our team leaders Bob and Morinda did a fantastic job and it was great to meet medical colleagues. Thank you to the crew – we felt safe and well looked after.

Thank you PCV and MSM for this opportunity. I will remember this experience forever and I look forward to continuing to help with the survey when I'm back in Vila. I hope I am fortunate enough to work on another mission in the future.

Tank yu tumas bae lukim yu fella back again sometime.

Nicola Young



Glenys Janssen-Frank (RN & midwife, Volunteer Australia)

It sounds like a holiday. I write this under a starry sky with a gentle ocean breeze across the stern of the yacht. The last few weeks we sailed to remote Vanuatu Islands and set up medical, dental and optometry clinics.

It was delightful having a warm welcome from the pikininis – waving, yelling and following us through the village. As a volunteer it was challenging sharing the yacht with up to 13 people. But it is rewarding reflecting on how 464 people have been seen in our clinics in 2 weeks.

There were big smiles from people arriving to get a pair of glasses. Lots of laughter and smiles from those saying they didn't need a dentist because they didn't have any teeth!

Glenys Janssen-Frank



Todd Macdougall, (MSM Volunteer Crew Member)

My involvement in the mission started during the dry dock phase at Hastings. Chimere was a sad sight that transformed to the beauty she is today over the couple of months of hard work, fairly adaptive planning and a lot of logistic support. Seemed that the more we scraped and peeled back surfaces the more work was revealed beneath. It was a labor of love that we knew had to be done right.

The mission was a talking point for a few months prior to leaving as friends, relatives and colleagues drilled for more information about the mission reckoning it was a bit of a holiday or a swan in the South Pacific for a couple of weeks. The reality was certainly different with duties on board followed by supporting roles with the dental survey team. It was full on for the entire trip.

The most memorable aspect of the experience for me was the environment generated by like-minded people wanting to make a contribution to people who have very little and want for even less. Applying our collective experiences to a common end of making someone's life a little bit easier, or living with having less pain, is so simple and the reality of our involvement.

The locals are just so happy and appreciative of our efforts everywhere we go.
Cheers

Todd Macdougall



Mark Stephenson (MSM Volunteer Crew Member)

All that is left of Mission 2, from my perspective, is to take Chimere back to Port Vila; over 100 miles – an overnight sail. I could call this my half way point as I will be staying on for Mission 3.

I have cooked, cleaned, set sails, set anchor, driven outboards over reefs and small surf onto black sand beaches. As well as a myriad of minor repairs that need doing on any yacht in constant use. I've sat anchor watch whilst anchored on a lee shore with the sound of the surf on the nearby reef for company, and played grab everything as a set of waves start the rolling that threatens to throw everything that isn't tied down onto the floor.

I've seen tropical sunsets, glowing volcanoes and amazing white smiles on dusky children.
All in all a fair exchange for a Tasmanian winter.

Mark Stephenson



Vic Aston (MSM Volunteer Crew Member)

Reflecting on what has been a great experience, the memories that I will carry away will stay with me forever.

The constructive attitude of a team of volunteers working with volunteer Health Professionals has been an enlightening experience. Myself being part of the sailing crew supporting the medical crew dealing with the native population of small remote villagers, is an experience that I would have never believed that I would be part of.

The dedication of the management and liaison crew of The MSM organisation has been total, in ensuring the success of this mission with more than 600 patients being consulted and assessed. As part of the sailing crew I can only thank the professionalism and ability of skipper Phil Wicks, crew Mark Stephenson and Todd MacDougall for keeping us all safe when conditions have been marginal at times.

I congratulate The MSM for their commitment to the Ni-Vanuatu people.

Vic Aston "Sailing Crew Member"



Dr Barry Stewart, (Volunteer Dentist, Australia, National Oral Health Coordinator)

It's an Island life... or is it?

Island hopping by yacht in the Shepherd Islands, Vanuatu, is breathtaking – densely vegetated, often steep slopes arising from mainly black sand or coral beaches, here and there a small clearing for village gardens, puffs of smoke from subsistence farmers clearing vegetation for new gardens or from cooking fires, copious coconut palms, cloudy mountain peaks, volcanoes that emit red glows that are clearly visible at night, thatched dwellings,

outrigger canoes, coral reefs, island tramp vessels, and other visual delights.

Stepping ashore... welcoming smiles, small neatly constructed traditional dwellings, broad shady trees with benches often fixed to the base of the trunk, kava bars, nakamals (for village gatherings and meetings), chiefs, elders, groups of women with their pikininis, pigs, dogs, sometimes cattle, and a profuse number of roosters, and little chicks following their mother hens.

Football (that is, the real code... soccer) is probably the most popular sport for boys and volleyball for girls. Climbing trees, paddling outrigger canoes, fishing, swimming, lots of fun and laughter, however, are universal pastimes. Traditional music and dancing is a bit repetitive and bland for my ears, but the opportunity to attend a church service is guaranteed to please through the natural ability of islanders to sing in harmony... one person will start singing a few bars and the rest will just simply join in.

Life appears to be so uncomplicated... most people, especially the 'olfala', don't even know their birth dates! Kids have basic playthings, so a simple gift such as a toothbrush together with a small koala toy, pencil, a hair tie, or just a simple sticker brings out the broadest of smiles. It's the sort of life that might satisfy the soul as opposed to the trappings of a modern society with TV, supermarkets, cars, 'climate control' in homes, Netflix, and every kind of electronic device to keep ourselves entertained and in touch with the 'world'.

In reality, however, life in the islands is harsh. Any desire to live a simple, island way of living is quickly dispelled... average life expectancy is significantly lower than in Australia. Common medical problems include musculoskeletal problems from everyday activities such as gardening and mat weaving, diabetes, high blood pressure, worms, and accidents that are often untreated or uncontrolled; the incidence of eye problems such as pterygium and cataracts is significantly higher... something that could be reduced simply through wearing of sunglasses and hats; then there are the dental problems... many people have suffered from chronic dental pain for weeks, months, and even years... but this is likely to be the result of the more recent increase in consumption of foods containing refined sugars rather than a traditional problem. Gum disease, on the other hand, is most likely to have been just as common in the past even before Western influence.

The perceived poor status of oral health in Vanuatu is in fact the main driver for one of the key objectives of MSM 2017... a National Oral Health Survey covering around one percent of the total population and half of the inhabited islands in the archipelago.

After seven weeks of checking many mouths of people of different ages in Port Vila and the Shepherd Islands, it's time for a welcome break... all I can think of is having the first hug with my wife Evelyn in a few days! The rest will be short-lived, however, as I will be departing for a further 3-week stint in September, including a week in Luganville and finally MSM Mission 4 in the Banks Islands.

Smooth seas, fair breeze, and a better island life for the many people served by the MSM Mission 2 medical team and sailing crew. Well done everyone... and thanks for the great time and your wonderful company!

Barry Stewart

[Lorraine Males](#), [Clare Parry](#), [Edith West](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Dorothy Russell Viney](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Robyn Milat](#) liked this post

View more photos from Mission 2 here: <http://msm.org.au/photo-gallery/2017-photos/2017-mission-2/>



Port Vila bound

Saturday 5th August 2017

Off Devils Point, Efate Island, Vanuatu

Clinic yesterday morning, although we gave the medical team a break as we didn't start the generator until 6.10. The dentists surveyed 20 people but only pulled 4 tut. They said their teeth were generally in better condition on Ambrym, maybe less western influence.

Some of the medical staff left on a 1pm plane and some on a 3pm flight, it was a sad farewell after a couple of the most enjoyable while intense weeks together. The airstrip was walkable from the clinic although some went with their bags on the back of a ute. Nicola's dad arrived on the earlier plane; they are joining us for the return journey to Vila.

Craig Cove is a very dusty dry place, they have water problems, as there has been little rain of late, water is carried in from a spring some distance away. The air is polluted and the ground is dusty from the volcanoes. It is interesting and a bit different from the other islands we have been to. Where we brought the dinghy in there was a pen with pigs in it, right on the beach. Women and children were among the rocks on the waterfront doing their washing. When we first anchored we could see all these colourful things on the rocks, turns out it was their clothes drying.



l-r Nicola, Vic, Glenys, Phil, Todd, Barry, Mark, Nic & David

By 3.30 the clinic was all packed up and Chimere was ready to set sail. We pointed toward the island of Efate, into a 15 knot breeze about 40 degrees to port with a mild sea running. A beautiful mild night with a near full moon giving us plenty of light. A cruise ship passed us about two hours ago. We have nine aboard for the trip back, our four sailing crew, Nicola and her dad Peter, Bob, Dick the optometrist and Sam the dentist.

It is now 7am and we are just off Devils Point with a couple hours to go. It has been a very pleasant night, although Perkins has done a fair bit of work. Turns out it has been my phone not getting internet, so I am off to TVL once we get Chimere settled in to Port Vila. Hopefully we will get some photos through today.

[Check out both [Mission 2](#) and [Vanuatu Life](#) galleries]

Fair winds, smooth seas and Port Vila bound

Phil Wicks



Local dentist, Dr Samuel, takes to life aboard Chimere with Glenys and Nicola

[Jan Peggie](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Julie Mansfield Webber](#) liked this post

An experience you just can't buy

Saturday 5th August 2017

Port Vila, On a mooring off the Water Front

Chatting tonight about our last two weeks out in the islands with the medical team, the boat crew agreed that it has been an experience you just can't buy.

We also came to the conclusion that the number one highlight for us was working with the local Vanuatu people. What the mission was doing was supporting the people of Vanuatu, it is their very professional program.

As boat crew, we also concluded that we are the truck drivers delivering the goods. As we have seen and experienced firsthand, the mission is all about building up and supporting local people and local health services – the PCV Health staff and their outreach program, plus Government health workers and of course those leaders in each village; pastors, chiefs and teachers.

We suspect for Rob the highlight probably has been getting his ship back in Port Vila in a similar condition to when he left. Further, we would encourage anyone who has the opportunity, to get on board and join future missions. Find some way to do it ! Whether that be joining as medical crew, boat crew or perhaps financially. As Dr Nicholas from the UK said, there are very few opportunities around the world to partake in something like this and to really make a difference to others lives.



I-r Samuel, Morinda, Barry, Dick & Bob



Ol' faithful, Chimere, at anchor Craig Cove



I-r Dick, David, Nic, Morinda, Bob, Nicola, Barry, Glenys & Phil

The places we visited, too, are very much off the beaten track where the people receive very little assistance from anyone. We found they were materially very poor, but in many ways they can teach us a lot about what it takes to be thankful, appreciative and resilient.

Fair winds, smooth seas and an experience you just can't buy.

Phil Wicks,

Mark Stephenson,

Todd Macdougall,

Vic Aston

We're off to bed now.

[John Hembrow](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Maureen Yaxley](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post

Pizza on the wall

Monday 07 August 2017
Port Vila

Chimere is currently tied up at the Yachting World marina at Port Vila.

The trip back from Ambrym of around 100 miles was completed overnight by motor-sailing as the wind was fine on the port bow. Towards dawn we were overtaken by several ships, but fortunately they passed well clear of us. Apart from this the night was uneventful.

Today all the crew walked up to PCV Health to attend the 7:30 am devotions, and also completed a mission appraisal with Deb (an Aussie who is working here with PCV and us).



Todd's gift to cooking, and Chimere's on-board menu

After devotions we arranged to move Chimere from a mooring onto the wall here which Captain Phil was rather nervous about. It's never easy to reverse up a concrete wall, but all went well and the crew of Chimere could relax, which we did by playing the tourist for the rest of the day.

Don't think we are suffering here – Todd excelled himself by making pizza for tea! Is it still called a pizza if it is rectangular?

Phil and Vic fly home on Wednesday – they are both looking forward to being home, but concede that staying on a yacht in Vanuatu is better than being at work.

Those left behind, Todd and Mark, will be continuing to prepare Chimere for the next mission.

Fair winds, smooth seas, and pizza on the wall...

Mark Stephenson

PS Don't forget to check out all the new images in [Mission 2 Gallery](#)

[Clare Parry](#), [Louise Surmon](#), [Samuel Alex](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Michelle Reardon](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this

Some final thoughts

Thursday 10th August 2017
Redcliffe Queensland (QUEENSLAND??? ... that's not in Vanuatu?!)

The new (Mission 3) skipper arrived in Port Vila yesterday. My tour of duty had come to an end and in the evening I landed safely back in Brisbane, met up with my wife Rosemary and drove to Redcliffe where we spent the night by the water.

Some final thoughts.

Firstly, thank you to Rob for his faith and courage to ask me to look after his boat for the mission 2 adventure. It was said that I volunteered, I'm pretty



Captain Phil enjoys some time ashore with the team

sure I was pushed. Thank you for pushing me past my comfort zone. None of us know what we are capable of without stepping outside where we are comfortable. And thank you for the absolute support throughout. I don't think you sleep, your advice was there night and day, and much appreciated.

Throughout the mission I could strongly feel the power of prayer. There were several situations where things opened up that were beyond our control. Events unfolded that could only have come through a power greater than us. It was very comforting to know you had taken the time. So a very big thank you to all who prayed, there is no doubt in my mind that the mission was successful because of you. Keep praying.



Phil, back with supportive wife Rosemary and on the road in Queensland

To the crew, Mark, Todd and Vic, thank you so much for your patience and support. You all worked so hard doing all things ... from the sailing of course, to the anchor watches and who could forget the amazing cooking. Like me, I think at times you were stepping outside your comfort zones, and maybe we proved that old dogs can learn new tricks. Well done and thank you. I also thank each of you for your wisdom and advice, you made us a pretty good team.

Having mentioned the cooking, let me say that in this department we so appreciated of the menu set out for us each day. While it wasn't strictly adhered to, it did give thought provokers and variants our cooks could use. It would have been very difficult without it. A very big thank you to Edith West who put so much work into it's planning and creation - it was greatly appreciated. The 'Logan Bread' with it's pre-packed bags and jars has also been greatly appreciated and so easy to cook; it's hard to get it wrong. (Although if anyone could I'm sure I could have ... that's why the task was delegated to others)

There was also a Ships Cook Book, (from previous missions) which was continually used. Very often with some well thought through variations due to something or other not being available locally. Thank you for all the hard work putting it together. On the topic of bread ... this is a wonderful thing, made fresh daily and consumed generally within the hour !! But it was Linda Latimer who put all the work into this. Linda, the way you put the flour-packs together in separate loaf-sized-bags, plus the bags of yeast in the freezer, not to mention the laminated, precise instructions ... it made it so easy for the cooks to come up with the perfect bread every day. Well they made it look easy to me. Thank you so much, it was a highlight - and I hope our appreciation hasn't left the next missions short of stock ?!

It seemed to me that each of the medical team were specially selected. Not just for the terrific things you did for the local people but the way you all fitted together. Just amazing that such a diverse lot could get along so well. You came from different races, different countries and very different backgrounds. Not once did I hear an angry word or a complaint of any sort. Pretty amazing for two weeks of such close living in confined, unfamiliar and sometimes traumatic circumstances. Thank you all for making the experience so good and so worthwhile.

Now to mention Chimere and all her supporters. I have to admit when starting out I didn't think too highly of our ship, actually I thought she was a terrible old boat. However over the past few weeks I've grown very fond of her. She didn't put a foot out of line, nothing went wrong and she did everything asked of her. And she even looks good. A real credit to all those who put in the many many hours of work. For all who put in, from prayer to hard labour, feel good about yourself, you were very much part of our mission.

Finally to all the people at PCV Health. Thank you for your very thorough organisation, your hard work leading up to the mission made it all run smoothly. And thank you for your support as we travelled, it was an honour to be able to be a part of what you are doing.

Now over to Captain Jon for Mission 3.

Fair winds, smooth seas and some final thoughts

Phil Wicks