

Medical Sailing Ministries (MSM) Vanuatu Mission 2017

SHIPS LOG – Mission 3

Date/Duration:	Sunday 20 August – Monday 4 September 2017 (15 Days)			
Location:	PENAMA Province, Islands of: Pentecost (Pangi, Melsisi, Loltong, Abwatuntota), and Maewo (Asanvari)			
Sailing Volunteers:	Jon Colclough (Skipper), Mark Stephenson, Ramon (Ray) Rees, Grant Rees			
Team Leaders:	Bob Natuman			
Team Numbers:	12 (Sailors & Health)			
Local Health Workers:	Dental Care: Bob Natuman Eye Care: Jay Watson & Dick Nakat			
Medical Volunteers:	Dentists: Dr Christer Lindée & Dr Steven Chan Dental Nurses: Ann Lindée & Deb Allen Nurse: Annette Hesselman			
Mission Results:	Islands Visited:	2	Clinics Held:	5
	Oral health Surveys	TBA	Mission Duration:	15 days
	Dental Patients seen:	TBA	Teeth extracted:	TBA
	Medical Patients seen:	TBA	Referrals:	TBA
	Eyecare Patients seen:	TBA	Spectacle dispensed & ordered:	TBA
	Eyecare Referrals:	TBA		



BACKGROUND

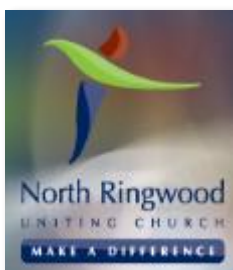
Medical Sailing Ministries (MSM) began in 2009 to provide remote-access transport and logistical support amongst the islands of Vanuatu. It is a partnership program of the North Ringwood Uniting Church (Melb), The Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu and the Vanuatu Ministry of Health, using the Westernport-based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

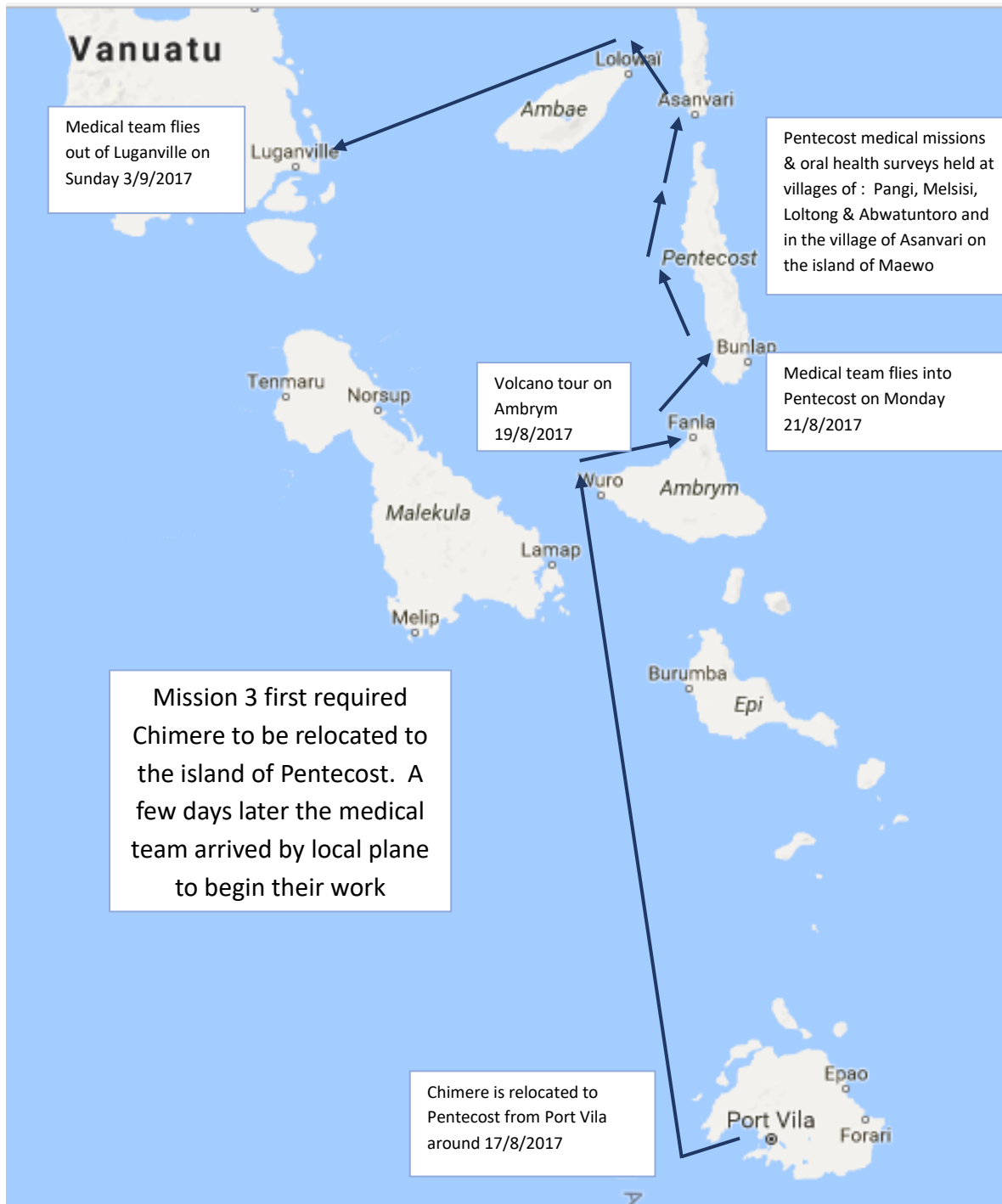


Vanuatu
Dental Care
Service



2017 Ships Log – Mission 3

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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Alo from Vanuatu

Friday 11 August 2017
Port Vila, Sea Wall Waterfront

My first impression of Port Vila, is that there is less apparent damage from cyclone Pam than I expected, although there are still a number of major buildings with temporary roofs.

Most of the vegetation seems to have recovered and the place looks very much as it was in 2013. My other first impression was how great Chimere looks. It maybe that a skipper always thinks his ship is beautiful, much like the parents of a new borne baby, but Chimere is a picture with her paint work gleaming and a very smart new, blue canvas Dodger and Bimini.

Stepping onboard, memories come flooding back of the transit from Sydney to Port Vila and Mission 1 in 2013. Chimere looks great from stem to stern, a credit to all those who brought her to this high standard and to the crews of Missions 1 & 2 who have maintained her so well.

No pressure Mission 3 crew.

The crew for Mission 3 are all onboard now.

There is a good deal of experience in the four of us as we have all served on the good ship Chimere before. Ray and his son Grant were a most welcomed sight, as they were accompanied by two big bags of home-made cookies and cherry ripe brownies. A big thank-you to Ray's wife Pamela.

We have been very fortunate to have two of Mission 2s crew remain for a thorough handover. Todd heads home tomorrow having passed on to us his extensive knowledge and Mark is the "continuity man" as he is staying on for Mission 3. Two very important crew members as they are the only ones who know where the treats are stowed. Meeting Todd and Mark has been a highlight of the trip so far.

We have made contact with the PCV Health team who have been extremely helpful. They impress as being very experienced and competent at providing medical services to remote communities. Many of my initial concerns were quickly allayed after just one meeting with the team. We all look forward to working together over the coming weeks.

Deb, working with PCV Health, invited us to the Yacht club for a very pleasant dinner last night. We also met Nicola at the club, one of the crew members from Mission 2.

The most annoying part of the trip thus far has been communications. It has proved very difficult to establish reliable communications and something that would take you a few minutes at home requires hours here. The up side is that every day we seem to make some progress and we now have phones and intermittent internet. We would probably have been better off if we had a teenager on board but we are managing to muddle our way through.

We are stepping ashore to farewell Todd this evening so I will sign off now. Thank you one and all for your support and tata.

Yours Aye

Jon Colclough



(Skipper) Jon Colclough,
the "before" shot

[Phil Wicks](#), [Edith West](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post

Alo again from vanuatu

Sunday 13 August 2017

Port Vila

No sooner had our little crew bonded; we had to say goodbye to Todd, who had kindly stayed on after Mission 2.

Todd decided that he was going out in style, so he shouted us to one of the better restaurants in Port Vila. After we had demolished the biggest pizza you have ever seen and a couple of bottles of wine to wash it down, we returned to Chimere for a night cap.

Many stories and discussions ensued about all the wonderful experiences we have all had. The jury is out on whether we were sadder to see Todd go or if he was sadder that he was leaving.

Such is the camaraderie on Chimere. On the port side of the photo is Todd, Jon and Mark. On the starboard side is Grant and his father Ray. The next morning, we had 'hands to cleaning stations'. It is amazing how dusty and dirty a boat gets when you remember that there is very little dust at sea. We all agreed that cleaning was OK if what you were cleaning looked markedly better than before you started.



l-r Todd, Jon, Mark, Ray & Grant

Thankfully this was the case for Chimere, and we are now squeaky clean. The photo shows Ray and Grant discovering how effective the product pictured is when scrubbing the deck.

Mark and I headed to church after cleaning stations. As with church services throughout the South Pacific, our service was a very colourful affair with great singing and a very happy congregation. I was surprised at the number of babies in attendance. I take more notice of these things now as I am about to become a grandfather for the first time. There is no stronger visual representation of human love and emotions than the look a mum gives her troublesome baby in the middle of the service.



Father & son team Grant & Ray get to work on the deck

On return to Chimere, we decided to finish our equipment checks and uncovered a few problems that are going to keep us busy for the next few days. Luckily, we have a few more days and the skill sets onboard, to sort the problems out before we deploy on Thursday.

Well, our not so lazy weekend draws to an end and we will be busy tomorrow, sorting out our equipment and stowing all the mission equipment that will be arriving tomorrow.

Good night and Tata

Jon Colclough

[Phil Wicks](#), [Linda Latimer](#), [Edith West](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Sue Horwood](#), [Martin Burgess](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post

Chimere is still tied stern to the wall at Port Vila

Monday 14 August 2017

Port Vila

The good ship Chimere is still tied stern to the wall at Port Vila.

One of the jobs we identified was with the anchor winch, the solenoid (a heavy duty remote switch to operate the winch's electric motor) has been inconsistent for a while now. Jon, being an ex-navy electrical engineer, was keen to investigate and worked out that the solenoid wasn't making a good electrical contact every time. The time it was making a good contact was getting fewer and fewer. So this morning, after Monday devotions at PCV Health, Jon and I headed off to find a replacement.

Fortunately, the bus drivers here know the places, so after visiting five engineering and motor spare parts places all over Port Vila, long story short – Chimere now has a much more reliable anchor winch. Keen followers of this blog will notice that I have had a haircut – one of the things I squeezed in between jobs on board.

Meanwhile, Ray and Grant were busy replacing the earth strap on the diesel motor. An uncomfortable head down stretch into the engine space.



Mark employs the "hands off" management approach to the supervision of Jon's repair of the anchor winch switch



Grant contemplates the question ... "where do you put all this stuff?!"

Also, some of the stores were delivered today, these are to be given to clinics on Pentecost Island and Espirito Santo island. Finding space without sacrificing bunk space is such a challenge on a yacht.

As Tuesday is a public holiday for Assumption Day, we were glad to get what we planned done today. Tomorrow we will start re-stowing things, and on Wednesday we will be provisioning (a nautical word for grocery shopping).

Fair winds and following seas

Mark Stephenson

[Phil Wicks](#), [Edith West](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#) liked this post

Assumption day

Tuesday 15 August 2017
Port Vila

Today is a public holiday on Vanuatu – Assumption day – and the day began with devotions for the more devout members of the crew.

After such a busy and fruitful day yesterday, the public holiday began slowly. We continued to deal with connectivity issues with Ray and Jon heading up to the health centre to work through the problems that have been slowing down communications and then changing money to ensure the remainder of the mission continued smoothly.

Eddiy, whose village (and island, Mataso) had been wiped out during cyclone Pam, was welcomed aboard and before long he was busy cleaning and giving the upper deck a fresh coat of paint. Once the paint had dried, in preparing the boat for sea and in order to have the boat ready to sail at a moment's notice, the awning was removed and all loose gear was stowed.

Major changes occurred in the crew organisation with our thanks go to the supporters who supplied the various recipes for ship borne meals. In working through the book Mark continued to demonstrate his skills after producing a tuna casserole for dinner last night and then by cooking delicious muffins for afternoon tea he surpassed himself at dinner by serving up sausages a la Chimere – a new gourmet recipe that is about to hit the Australian market. After tasting it and then taking a couple of ad breaks, the on board Masterchef judges unanimously voted him as chef of the month for Mission 3. [tuna casserole image courtesy of Mission 2]



MSM Stock photo of tuna casserole (from the previous mission) similar to that culinary masterpiece created by Mark, but eaten before it could be photographed

All retired for the evening after a delicious cup of hot chocolate and having been serenaded by a local rendition of Bob Marley favourites, courtesy of our hosts at the Yachting world marina and the waterside bar and grill. Fair winds and following seas

Ray Rees

[Phil Wicks](#), [Down Under Rally](#), [Linda Latimer](#), [Edith West](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Denise Stephenson](#) liked this post

Our last day in Port Vila

Wednesday 16/08/2017

Port Vila

Today marked our last day alongside in Port Villa and as such it meant a busy day for all onboard. The day started off early for our skipper Jon, with a morning of meetings to finalise arrangements with the local health workers. For the rest of us the day was all about storing the ship and getting ready to sail, with Mark and Deb taking on the most important responsibility of sorting out the ships food supplies. After a trip to the "Bon Marche" (the local supermarket) for the dry stores and the local markets for the fresh fruit and veggies the boats food stores were full, a welcome sight for all onboard.

Ray and Grant spent the morning onboard awaiting the arrival of medical stores and tidying up the deck in preparation for the sail. We all took time out from our busy list of jobs to have a crew lunch at one of the local burger joints, all of us walking away well satisfied and ready for our crew brief with the PCV medical team. After a long walk, up the hill we had a chance to meet some of the medical crew we would be working with, along with some of the behind the scene crew that are helping to make the mission possible. We left the brief with a better understanding of the finer details of the mission, and a reinvigorated passion for the weeks ahead. We wasted little time after the meeting all heading back to the ship to load the final medical supplies, and tidy and secure all of the deck cargo in preparation of tomorrows sail.

We finished the day with a low-key crew dinner onboard, all of us satisfied that the boat and crew were ready for the voyage ahead. Bring on tomorrow....

Ta ta

Grant

[Phil Wicks](#), [Kate Storey-Whyte](#), [Kerry Tait](#), [Lorraine Males](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post
[Facebook](#)

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One Response to "Our last day in Port Villa"

[Martin Burgess on Facebook](#) says:

[August 16, 2017 at 11:57 pm](#)

Have a great third mission guys. May Smooth seas and good winds abound.

Being her back safely so I can share in mission 4.

Martin.

Mission 3 underway

Thursday 17 Aug 2017

North of Efate en route to Ambryn

Good evening everyone.

Well we are finally at sea fully provisioned, loaded with equipment and three passengers Deb, Bob and Dick. We left the wharf with a fresh little ESE blowing which made letting go lines, pulling up the anchor and retrieving the dinghy in a tight spot with plenty of spectators, a good test for the new crew. I am happy to report that everything went according to plan. BZ to the crew (Navy for well done). Once away we hoisted sails and made our way to the SW corner of Efate where we needed to jibe to make our course to the North. Another test for the crew and another safe execution although we will get better once we are more familiar with our little ship and her gear (who invented boom brakes that lock up?). Currently we are heading North at a nice clip hoping to make the lee of some northern islands before the wind drops and we are left with our sailing banging while we flop around in a reasonable sized sea.



l-r Jon, Mark, Rav, Dick, Bob, Deb and Grant

Although glad to be away, we will miss the noise and convenience of having a bar a few metres from our stern. Over the past week we have heard an island take of nearly every music genre, some OK and some bordering on terrible but they were always finished at a reasonable time, so the whole experience was fun.

Grant made spaghetti for dinner tonight. It is a testament to gimbaled stoves that he was able to cook anything as we rolled around with the sea on our quarter. Very tasty and I was pleased to see that everyone had something to eat so even those of us who are a little green around the gills are OK.

I am going back on watch now. It is no chore as it is a dark night and the stars are putting on a breathe-taking display; wish you were here to see it.

Good night all,

Yours Aye

Jon

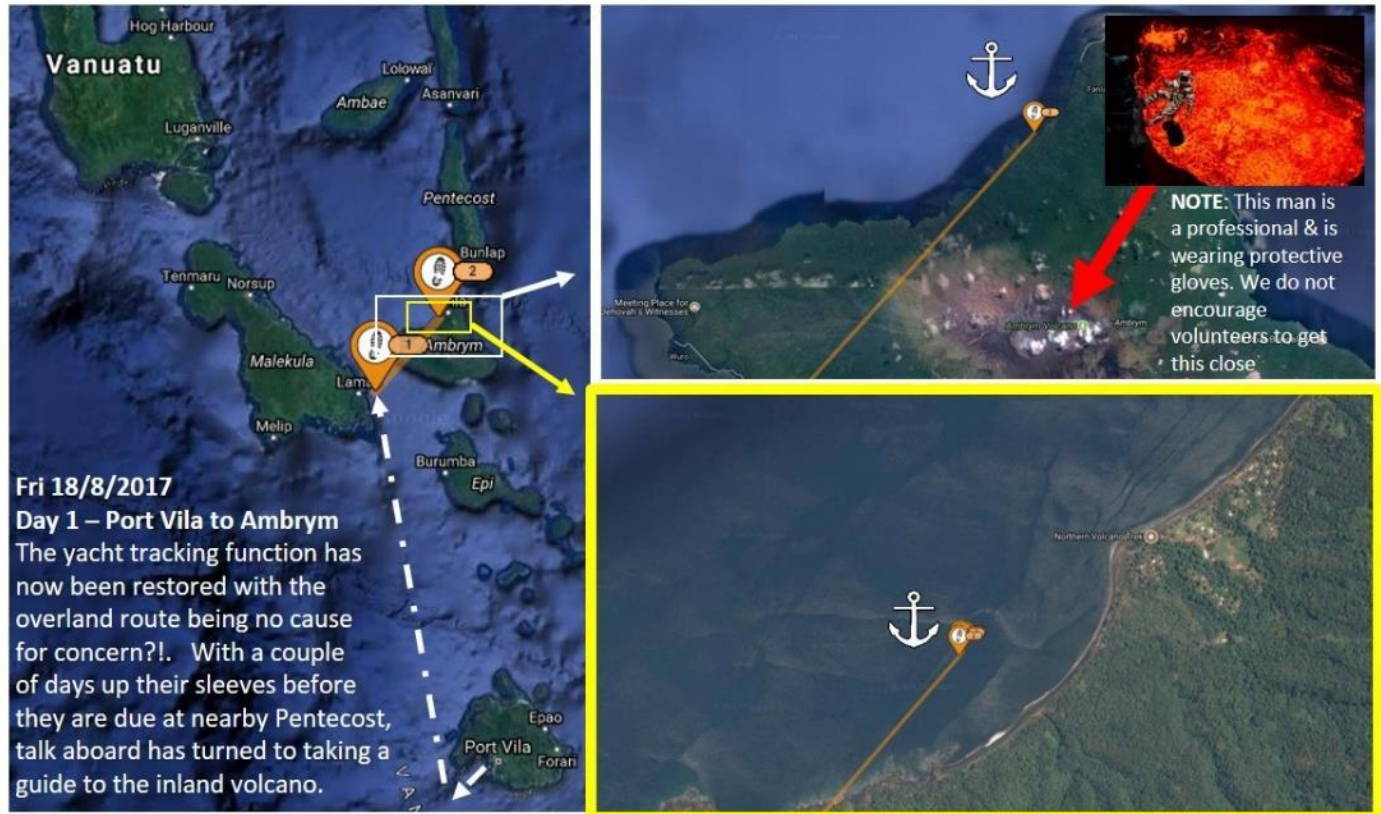
[Clare Veronica](#), [Nicola Young](#) liked this post

Springs and stars

Friday 18 August 2017
Lamvetlam, Ambryn

Hello Shipmates,

Chimere is anchored off the village of Lamvetlam on north Ambryn, which is in the Malampa Province. We can see Pentecost Island from here – our destination for Mission 3.



We were all a bit tired this morning, as we sailed from Port Vila, Efate yesterday and travelled for 22 hours, and passed most of the islands MSM visited in Mission 2 (Emae, Epi and Paama). We passed a cruise ship and two coastal traders around midnight and can only be grateful for the technology on board which meant we could identify and monitor these ships.

Jon, Deb, Bob and Grant went to the village this morning to arrange a trip up the volcano tomorrow, as we are a day ahead of the schedule. Captain Jon says it is a “team bonding” expedition.

After lunch today Jon, Ray, Deb and Grant went for a swim in the hot springs. The springs are just off the beach and are indicated by bubbles rising through the water. Burying feet into the black sand, it ranged from warm to quite hot, which felt disconcerting. Mark stayed on board and made sure that Chimere was secure in her anchorage. We’ve gone from the noise and bustle of Port Vila to a remote part of an island, where we see pods of dolphins, the water is cobalt blue and the dense green of the jungle is edged with black sand. The silence, stillness and darkness is awesome. And without a moon, the stars are as bright as a Banjo Paterson poem.

Fair winds and smooth seas

Mark Stephenson

[Clare Veronica](#), [Edith West](#), [Denise Stephenson](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#) liked this post

One Response to “Springs and stars”

Martin Burgess says:

[August 19, 2017 at 4:02 am](#) All a bit tired. I guess that can happen after a little sailing, a little swimming and a little site seeing.

Take it easy crew and don’t over do it now lol.

Enjoy the volcano.

Craters and ash

Saturday, 19 August 2017
Lamvetlam, Ambryn

Hello Shipmates,

Chimere remains at anchor in the crystal-clear waters off the village of Lamvetlam on north Ambryn, which is in the Malampa Province, but Pentecost Island continues to beckon – so close and yet a world away.

It was an early start as Jon, Deb, Ray and Grant ventured back into the village for a 06.30 start up the volcano on their “team bonding” expedition with their guide, Rueben. Mark kindly ferried them ashore before returning to mind the boat with Bob and Dick. The weather was kind, providing a layer of cloud to keep the intrepid adventurers cooking in the tropical heat as they climbed ever upwards. Steep tracks, endless ridges, long ash plains and fine volcanic dust were the order of the day.

They reported “Finally by about 10:45 the end was in sight but nothing could prepare us for the awe- inspiring views when we reached the crater rim. Peering down deep into the abyss we were greeted by a cauldron-like pit of bright red lava, boiling and spitting as we viewed a microcosm of how the island began. With vents emanating smoke and steam the sulphur coloured cliffs added a perfect contrast to the lava and dense black sand and rock that had been blasted in every direction in times gone by. Finally, it was a bitter-sweet decision to begin the trek back down although our exhaustion was mitigated by Rueben knocking fresh paw paws and coconuts from trees in his garden to provide a refreshing and rehydrating afternoon tea with his versatile machete.”

Despite the poverty of the villagers, they were very forthcoming with gifts of paw paws and coconuts. To thank them for their generosity the adventurers took Rueben back to Chimere to provide him with a selection of clothes, hats and snorkelling gear to share amongst the villagers. True to form, the mission’s MasterChef, Mark cooked up a storm with a delicious dinner of apricot chicken accompanied by a loaf of freshly baked bread.

Those readers who track their daily steps with a Fitbit or similar may be interested to know that the bonding team climbed over 1,000M from sea level to the crater rim and walked more than 45,000 steps in their ten hour trek.

An early night awaits the adventurers and with a slow start, a relaxed sail is planned for 0900 tomorrow to reach Pentecost Island and set up for the first clinic.

Fair winds and smooth seas

Ray Rees

[Nicola Young](#), [Denise Stephenson](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Kerry Tait](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Jim Davies](#) liked this post

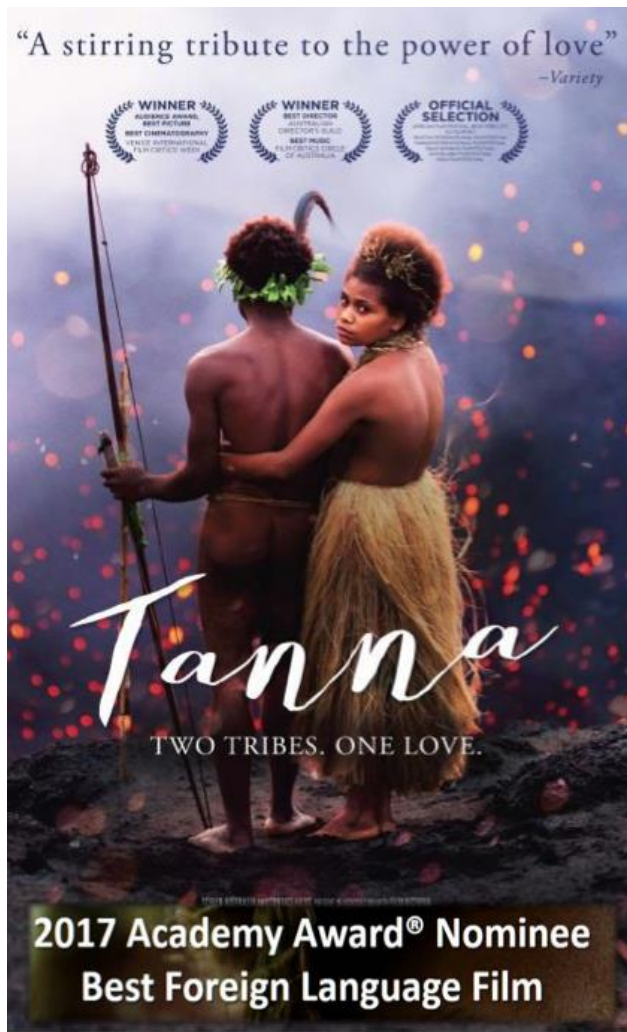


A brief stop on their 10 hour trek... Grant, Jon, Deb and guide Rueben, Ray behind the camera.



"TANNA" the movie invitation from MSM Vanuatu – 7:00pm, Fri 1 Sep 2017

Greetings from Medical Sailing Ministries



YOUR INVITATION

As **Mission 3** gets underway to the islands of Pentecost & Maewo, for those in Melbourne (or able to get to Melbourne) – *plus* their friends and family of course – we extend an invitation to a very special **Vanuatu Night** on **Friday 1st September**.

After receiving personal permission from the director and producer **Bentley Dean**, we are really pleased to be able screen the film **TANNA** – *and invite you along!*.

Details can be found in [attached flyer](#) and **below**:

VANUATU NIGHT – TANNA the movie & much more

A night of entertainment, fun & inspiration

Friday 1st September, 2017 7.00 p.m.

North Ringwood Uniting Church, 14 Dickson Crescent, North Ringwood

Evening highlights...

- Acclaimed movie Tanna
- Latest news from MSM Mission 2017
- Uplifting stories from "The Clinic Files"
- Last minute "Supporters Tour" invitation

If possible ... RSVP to Rob at msmvanuatu@gmail.com ... if last minute, then just come along anyway. The more the merrier.

Donation at the door.

View the trailer (and extra bits) here ...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=53&v=ynzP2Tq4dnM

Producers Background to the making of the film Tanna

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kytL7cCHJGI>

Tanna Movie – What do the tribe members think?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1bRgp_a8bk

[Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post

Little Surprises

Sunday 20 August 2017

Homo Bay, Pentecost Island

Hello friends of Chimere,

Since last night's tome, Chimere has island hopped about 12 nm to the southern end of Pentecost Island and is now anchored in the most oddly named Homo Bay. At the northern end of the bay sits Captain Cook Rock, so maybe as the world's most famous navigator sailed through these pristine waters, he had reason to name more areas than he was generally given credit for.

After a relatively leisurely start, we sailed at 09.00, waving good-bye to black volcanic sands of Ambrym as we washed them off our upper deck. Deb remained ensconced in her bunk for much of the day, having taken ill the previous night with some sort of gastric bug. After tending to her during the night, we remained concerned for her wellbeing and prayed that she would feel better soon and that whatever she had would pass quickly and not spread through the remainder of the crew.

After motor-sailing the three hours it took to find the anchorage off the village of Pangi we were relieved to find the sandy beaches were more traditionally coloured, which caused us to wonder how two islands so close could be so different.

After Grant ferried Bob and Dick and critical stores ashore to arrange for tomorrow's clinic the remaining crew set to work conducting important maintenance. Jon began dismantling key components of the electrical system after determining that the batteries were not charging correctly. In the mean-time I set to work, attempting a fix to the forward sump pump which seems to have a mind of its own, starting and stopping with no rhyme or reason. The pump sounds like a couple of kids in jet skis revving their motors right inside the boat and we figured there had to be a better way. Proving that two minds are better than one, Mark came up with an ingenious solution once I articulated the problem and so as this blog is written we are waiting and listening to see if the fix was successful. Jon eventually fixed the electrics although he decided parts would need to come in with the next crew to achieve a permanent fix.



Ramon (Ray) Rees Colclough, the "before" shot

Grant cooked a delicious meal of Chilli and after Deb ate a few mouthfuls of boiled rice, she again retired to her bunk. After a hard day's toil, we were rocked to sleep a southerly set that made Chimere pitch most uncomfortably on her anchor as we dreamed of better conditions in the morning.

Fair winds and smooth seas – we hope,

Ray Rees

[Lorraine Males](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Edith West](#) liked this post

Winds from the West

Monday 21 August 2017
Homo Bay, Pentecost Island

Hello friends of Chimere,

We reported last night that we were off to bed with dreams of better weather in the morning. Sadly, good weather turned out to be just that, a dream, as we awoke to a fresh south westerly that made things very uncomfortable for us. Undeterred, we loaded the boat with supplies at 06.30 and headed to the beach only to find ourselves in a small surf.

We managed to get the equipment ashore however it was obvious we could not continue ferrying equipment in these conditions. Various options for alternate landings were checked, to no avail. It turns out that there is no safe anchorage on the western side of Pentecost when the weather is coming anywhere from the west. This usually isn't a problem as we are told that the weather very rarely comes from the west, just when Chimere needs to support a clinic at Pangi. All was not lost however as the weather was true to the forecast and by 1400 we were able to deliver enough equipment to allow the clinic to start work. We achieved this considerable feat with the aid of 6 or 7 strong young ni Vanuatu men who simply grabbed the 150kg cargo bag out of the boat and carried it up the beach.



We now have an ESE breeze and the sea has abated to a pleasant little roll. As we prepare our dinner of steak and salad we were informed that 9 surveys have been completed – just 41 to go tomorrow. Ray has volunteered to work at the clinic tomorrow as the recorder. He is also gathering water samples from the village for analysis in addition to his new role as mission photographer. Standby to witness his photographic prowess. Thankfully Deb is on the mend and was able to attend this afternoon's clinic. She is feeling so well that she has volunteered to be the cook tonight, and as I write this there are smells emanating from the galley that speak to her cooking prowess.

Having just finished Deb's superb steak dinner, I realise that everyone in the crew have worked above and beyond the call of duty. Grant has grown into a very competent small boat coxswain and coupled with his ever-cheerful forward hand, Jon, wouldn't look out of place on the set of on Bay Watch. Ray and Mark managed the lifting and winching of boats and heavy equipment on a heaving deck without a word of protest. Could this be the fruits of the volcano team building exercise?

We are a complete team now as the rest of Australians arrived by truck from Lonore airport and Jay, the ni Vanuatu optometrist, all arrived today. We only met briefly on the beach but the offer of sleeping on a rocking boat was politely refused, in favour of a bungalow ashore.

That's all for tonight. Thank you for your continuing support. Stay safe and all the best.

Yours Aye
Jon

[John Fisher](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Carl Suddaby](#), [Edith West](#), [Kerry Tait](#), [Jim Davies](#), [Ashleigh Joy](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post

2 Responses to "Winds from the West"

Annette Vincent says:

[August 22, 2017 at 9:43 am](#)

So glad you are recovering Deb! Keep up the good work everyone, I'm praying for settled weather for you.

Cam Heathwood says:

[August 22, 2017 at 5:50 pm](#)

Pangi village what a wonderful place! You are bringing back great memories of our time on Pentecost during the July 2014 MSM overland mission. Blessings to you all. Cam.

Mission Three is up and running

Tuesday, 22 August 2017

Homo Bay, Pentecost

As dawn broke today a soaking drizzle covered the village of Pangi and Homo Bay.

Fortunately, the clinic was set up in the church building. If you are imagining a soaring Gothic building with stained glass windows, you need to remember this is Vanuatu, in the tropics. This church is a rectangular building, made of concrete, with walls up to waist high, then pillars to support the substantial roof and verandas on each side.

The interior has a concrete floor and very little furniture. It was set up with sheets hanging from ropes to create rooms for some privacy for the various optical and dental treatments, unless you were outside – as the wall is only waist-high.



National Oral Health Survey gets underway in Pangi ... Dr Steve at the controls, Ann recording and Christer looks on ... patient has a name, but we can't tell you ...

Christer and Stephen were taking turns in dental treatment and the Oral Health survey. Ann was helping the dental treatment. Dick was doing triage and optometry. Annette who is a RN, was doing general medical as we don't have a GP on this Mission. (Annette was on Mission One and decided to come back for this Mission!) Jay was the other optometrist and was also helping sterilise the dental instruments. Deb and Bob were doing the Oral Health questionnaires. Bob is the mission leader and was very busy getting things organised and being present from the first boat load in the morning to the end of the day.



Nurse Annette delivers a community health message to a receptive audience

We were impressed by the community support in that people were still coming despite the rain, the school children turned up and the local nurses, Graham and Rosie also provided a lot of assistance.

South Pentecost is famous for its land divers (the origin of bungy jumping), so some of the team took the opportunity at lunchtime to see the land diving towers. It's not the season for land diving at the moment so there wasn't any opportunity to participate.

Of the ship's crew, Ray helped with the dental survey, and Jon and Mark were roped into getting the water samples. Grant stayed on board and cooked muffins.

The wind has swung around to the South East, so Chimere is lying quietly in the lee of the island.
Fair winds and smooth seas

Mark Stephenson

[John Fisher](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post

Ferries and sea legs

Wednesday, 23 August 2017

Village of Melsisi, Pentecost Is

After receiving steady drizzle for most of the night the crew and the medical team ashore awoke with high hopes and guess what we got – more drizzle. It was enough to wet but not enough to wash the boat.

By 0800 we were loading the clinical stores aboard and embarking the medical team aboard Chimere for the first time. After stowing the gear, providing a safety and familiarisation brief, the report went to the captain that Chimere was ready for sea. After weighing anchor and dragging to the surface what looked like a tonne of sand and mud from the bottom of Homo Bay, we were off. Soon after sailing the rain cleared to present a glorious rainbow as we motored ever northwards towards the next village. The winds were fair – fairly absent – and we had a following sea so the gods had smiled upon our new companions for their first voyage as we made our way to Melsisi.



By just after midday, Chimere was anchored safely off the village in about 8M of water – about 50M from the shore. At about 60M from the shore, the volcano upon which the island was made, drops off to an indeterminate depth. Being so close we wondered whether it was worth even launching the boat however the medical team was not enthused about swimming ashore so we decided that after a leisurely lunch they would take the traditional route.

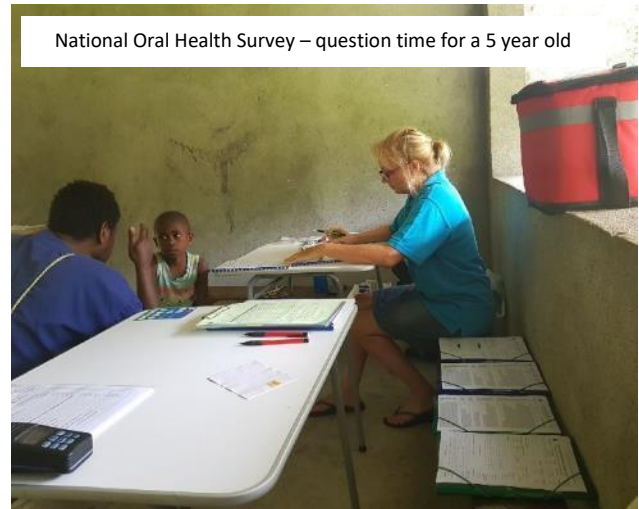
Lunch was a delicious mix of salad, cheese and crackers, with half the team opting for a mouth-watering bowl of two minute noodles, the chicken flavouring enticing the Ni-Van boys back for more. I'm not sure they realised we were just building their strength to help with the work, as the young muscle for our crew had gone down for the count. At the time of writing we are not sure whether Grant has the same bug that laid Deb low a few days ago or whether he has come up with something of his own. He showed no interest in either breakfast or lunch, which alarmed the rest of the



crew so much that we considered calling an ambulance. After discussing what such an emergency vehicle might consist of on Pentecost, we dismissed the idea. Eventually with all the sympathy we could muster, we decided he simply needed to harden up and that he would come good with a little bed rest and fluids. That's what comes from being on a mission like this with your father!

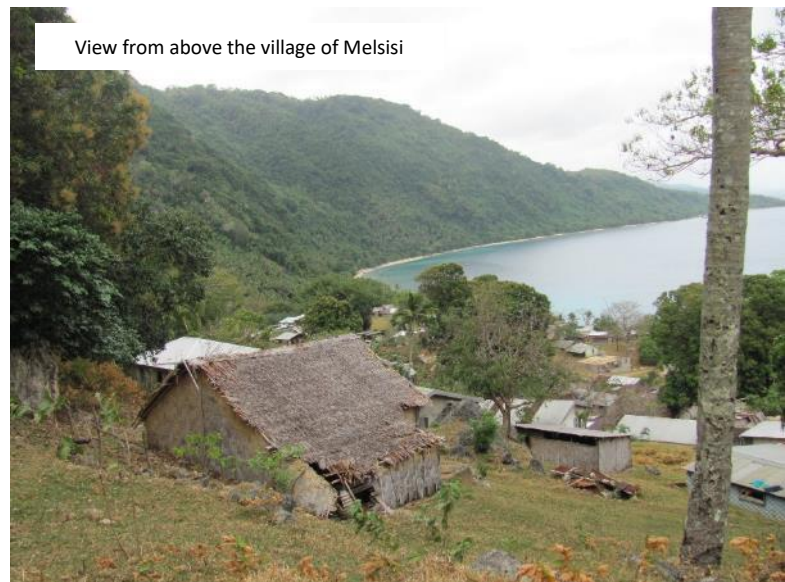


Local trading ship ... to avoid at all costs



National Oral Health Survey – question time for a 5 year old

In short order, the medical team managed to get ashore, mostly dry from the waist up as they were all but thrown onto the pebbly beach. Captain Jon was the only casualty as he jumped out of the boat and stubbed his little toe on a large pebble. He was kind enough to remind us off it for the rest of the night and with Annette, we discussed the need to amputate it and put us all out of our misery. With a local truck carrying their equipment, they began the trek up to the village to begin their afternoon clinic with Mark joining the team to act as one of the recorders. Nine went ashore and only three returned – the remainder partaking in the hospitality of the village.



View from above the village of Melsisi

Local nurse Laurence was very helpful, with ten dental patients queued up and nurse Annette was immediately dragged into assist with a medical emergency. Five oral health surveys were completed and half a dozen other patients were seen. The dedicated dental team continued to work as the sun went down and the boat people returned to their safe haven – or what they thought was safe. We were then informed that a ferry was due in overnight although it was unclear how we could possibly be in their way. Nonetheless we prepared for sea on the off chance we would need to sail at short notice.

Fair winds and smooth seas

Ray Rees

p.s. The ferry was Vanuatu Cargo, who delivered a load of pigs, and we didn't have to move.

[Lorraine Males](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Melanie Sargison](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Ashleigh Joy](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Carl Suddaby](#), [Liz Broadbent](#) liked this post

No bread today....

Thursday 24 August 2017
Melsisi, Pentecost

After a long night dealing with unexpected boat traffic, the morning started bright and early with a crew breakfast and a morning boat run to drop Deb, Annette and our designated dental recorder Mark ashore for a busy day of clinics. With the rest of the boat crew's primary job for the day done Ray, John and Grant (now feeling much better) had a relaxed morning on board cleaning and organising the boat after the previous day's activities. With the boat clean and organised Ray and Grant headed ashore in search of adventure, aiming to find the "Gorge" mentioned in one of the many Vanuatu guide books in the boats library.

After a few hours of walking around in the hills and valley's around town and swimming in some beautiful crystal-clear rapids and plunge pools they returned to town. Not entirely convinced they had found the "gorge" but happy with their adventure none the less they headed into town to find the medical teams and hopefully some fresh bread.

After finding the medical team and being invited to join them for a local lunch of rice, beef and Lap Lap they were pleased to hear of the team's great progress. Mark had a busy morning with the primary school kids, checking the local 4-5year old's teeth busily recording the Dentists observations, both impressed by the overall oral hygiene of the young children. Meanwhile Annette and the medical team had spent the morning handing out soap, deworming tablets and treating various medical cases as they presented.

After touching base with Deb and finding out about the clinics busy afternoon plans (20 15-year-old school kids due for their check-ups!) Ray and Grant set out in search of bread before eventually giving up, defeated by the local shops running to "island time" and heading back to Chimere to break the bad news to the skipper John. John took the lack of fresh bread in his stride and headed back ashore for his own land adventure, eager to get out after a morning of route planning for the upcoming voyage.

After a few hours John, Mark, Deb and Annette returned to the boat in time for pre-dinner drinks and snacks while the sun set, discussing the day's work/adventures till the light was gone and all that was left to do was eat dinner and get a good night's sleep ready to get up tomorrow and do it all again.

Fair winds and smooth seas

Grant

[Jennifer Fenton](#), [Rosalie Long](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post



Bread today, gone tomorrow

Friday, 25 August 2017
Melsisi, Pentecost

For those of you who follow Chimere's log, you are in for a treat today as we are going to get a medical team member's perspective and impressions of our mission. I will hand you over to Annette, our registered nurse, proficient sailor and all round good hand.

Hello All,
My goodness these skippers are pesky! First Rob and now Jon (without the H). Gentle persuasion to write the Blog! Here goes....

Yes, two skippers and two missions. I have been the nurse on Mission 1 and Mission 3. One South and One North. One with doctors and one without. One sailing to the islands and one flying to where Chimere is waiting. One staying aboard and one sleeping some of the time ashore. Different skipper and crew. Deb, Bob, Dick and Chimere remain the only constant ever faithful and passionate to complete the goal. It is so interesting to see and appreciate the subtle differences between each Mission. It is so special to be back in Vanuatu.

The Islands

It seems that regardless of whether you are in the North or the South, the people throughout Vanuatu are warm, generous, welcoming and always smiling. This is no different at Melsisi, on Pentecost Island. This morning whilst walking to 'work', children waved and laughed on their way to school; a man with a finely woven basket shook all of our hands with a 'good morning' and a family going about their morning rituals waved and shouted 'Bonjour' as we gasped for breath climbing the hill.

Melsisi is a village like no other I have seen in Vanuatu. One could almost think we were in the Mediterranean with hill top homes perched on the cliff, colourful concrete buildings, pillars and baguettes. Cows wander about peacefully chewing grass. There are barges collecting/dropping off cargo and this afternoon, a precariously balanced ferry dropped off passengers. There is a hospital with a compliment of staff and opportunity for those very unwell to be flown to Vila. There has been no end to chicken wings being served for lunch and dinner which makes me think all of these wings have come in a packet from somewhere else. A little different to the chicken served on Aniwa and Tanna Island where some hapless chook was sacrificed to feed the hungry team and crew.

Doctors and Nurses

On Mission One, we were blessed with two fine doctors, David and Doug who shared most of the burden of diagnosis and treatment whilst I triaged, assessed and educated. Education, always a comical display like a game of charades demonstrating lifting techniques and back strengthening exercises. On Mission Three, I am the sole representative of the medical team. However, I am not working alone. Each village has its own health service staffed by incredibly skilled and knowledgeable nurses who work autonomously and tirelessly. Somehow, they have welcomed me, shared their equipment and scarce resources and been my interpreter to prevent further charades! With the 'yellow' Health Workers Treatment Manual as my 'standing order' I have been assessing, diagnosing, treating and educating. Thankfully, Dr Graeme Duke has been invaluable answering my emails when I am not sure of a diagnosis or treatment.

Pipe cots and Floral Sheets



On Monday, the dental team and I arrived in Pangi after a scenic flight. Chimere and her crew were anchored close by however, due to the inclement weather, were unable to launch the dinghy. Whilst the crew were boat bound, we were welcomed to our accommodation: a sensory overload of floral sheets, pink and blue mosquito nets, teddy bear blankets, flowers and sarongs decorating the walls. Whilst the toilet may not have met OH & S standards, the shower (a PVC pipe nailed to a tree with black plastic lining) 'did the job'. Our hosts ensured we had a thermos of hot water available for our use and provided beautiful meals laid out on table cloths and flowers. Whilst Chimere is certainly comfortable, there is a more functional purpose to her. However, what Chimere is lacking in colourful linen and table cloths, she makes up for with her colourful skippers and crew!



It's a steep climb up from the Melsisi beach to the village, Grant, Mark, Steve, Annette & local (Chimere at anchor in the background)

The Skippers & Crew

On both missions, both skipper and crew have been an eclectic mix of ages and personalities. Regardless, both skippers and crews have ensured the smooth and safe sailing of Chimere whilst providing plenty of opportunity to ensure her team taste the highlights of sailing about the islands of Vanuatu.

Today has been a perfect example of the opportunities

galore. After finishing the dental survey, dental treatment and health clinic at lunch time, the health team, skipper and some of the crew followed a magnificent river upstream to rock pools and a gorge. We soaked in crystal clear turquoise water before ambling back to the beach. We all shared afternoon tea aboard Chimere before Deb, Stephen and I went off snorkelling amongst the coral and clown fish. A perfect day for the health team. The crew spent the late afternoon bringing the equipment aboard in the drizzling rain. During this time, local nurse Dominik requested to come aboard as he had never been on a yacht before. His excitement and enthusiasm was contagious as Deb showed him about Chimere. He wore a smile from ear to ear and marvelled at the nautical names for kitchen, dining room and bathroom.

Like all good, hard working sailing ships, a little more maintenance is required. This awaits the skipper and crew in the morning. This afternoon, the main halyard winch objected and refused to do its job whilst hoisting up the dental/medical equipment. Now that's a story for another day... Oh, and we got the bread!

Best wishes,

Annette Hesselmanns

[Edith West](#), [David James](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Ashleigh Joy](#) liked this post

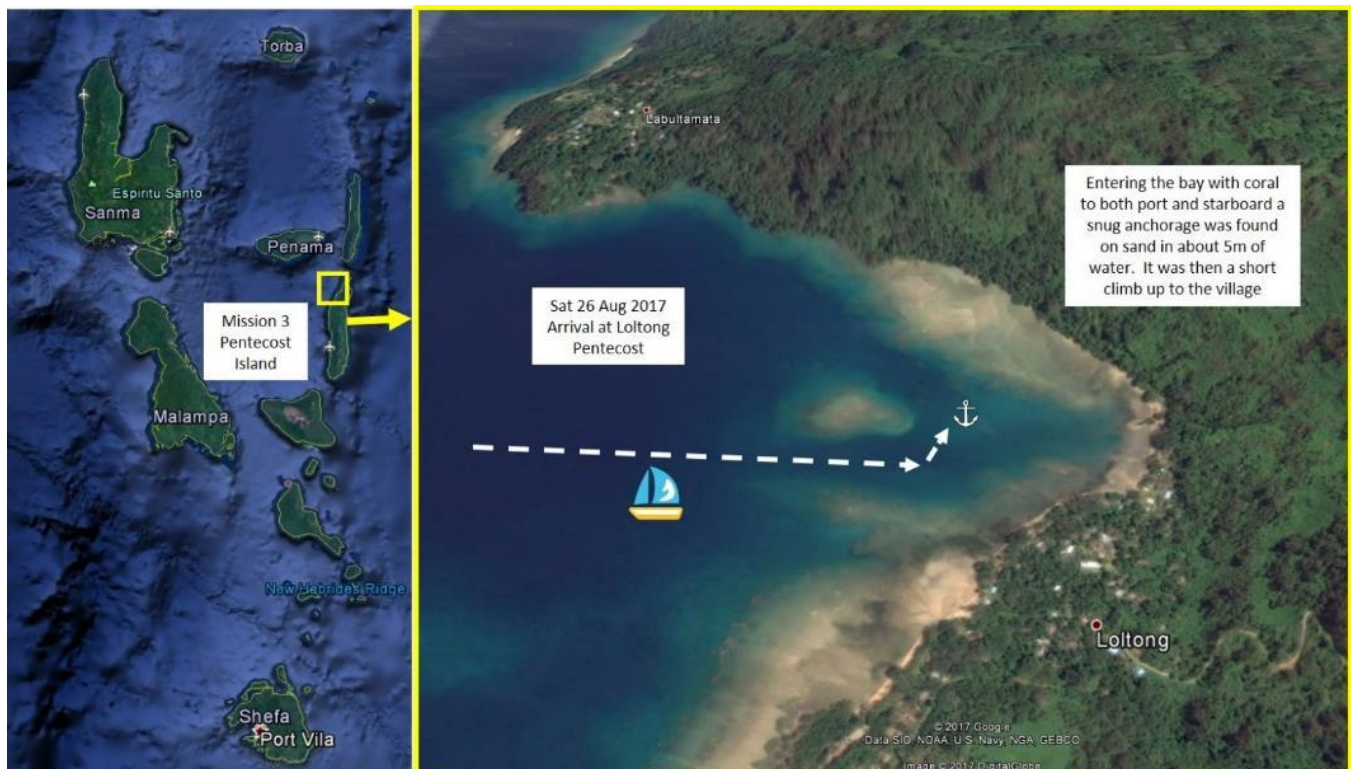
Winches and Reefs

Saturday, 26 August 2017

Loltong, Pentecost

Hello to all our followers on this rather pleasant Saturday afternoon. We are anchored off Loltong on the northern end of Pentecost Island and the medical team has gone ashore to conduct dental surveys. We have this afternoon and tomorrow after church to complete 50 surveys, before we move further north to Abwatuntoro for another 50 surveys and any arising clinical work from both Loltong and Abwatuntoro.

We are anchored inside a reef next to the village with sandy shores, ringed by high mountains. Pentecost Island is very rugged with lush jungle down to the shore line. There are no really good anchorages on the island as they are all exposed to any weather from the west and from wind bullets when the south easterly trade winds blow strongly. But the lack of anchorages is compensated by the sheer natural beauty of this part of the world.



As reported yesterday, the main halyard winch decided to grind to a halt. It was very difficult to turn the winch even with no load on it at all. Never fear, Chimere's crew have a plan. We tried a number of alternate rigs to no avail, including the anchor winch. We then investigated swapping the main sheet winch for the defective main halyard winch.

We soon discovered that the bolts securing the winches were not going to be undone without disassembling the winches, something we feared doing as they are very complicated pieces of equipment consisting of numerous cogs, springs and bearings.

After removing the two circlips we were able to lift the winch drum off, revealing several needle bearings and what is essentially a gearbox underneath. It was soon apparent that the lubricant in the gearbox had deteriorated into a thick paste that was preventing the gears from moving freely. We then used a solvent to wash out the gearbox, noticing that the winch turned more freely than it had all mission. After replacing the lubricant, we tested the winch by lifting the supplies bag into the big rib to support the team ashore here at Loltong. We are very pleased to report that the winch is working perfectly. Well done to the team!

Jon Colclough and Ray
conduct open-gear
restorative surgery on
the main winch



While the crew were busy with the winch, the medical team commenced their helmsmen's proficiency certificates. This involved Annette, our sailing nurse, mentoring Steven (dentist) and Anne (dental assistant) as they steered Chimere from Melsisi to Loltong. After tentative starts and some accidental engine rev changes, things calmed down and by the end of their hour each on the helm both seemed quite relaxed, if only in a straight line and under motor power. Both candidates performed admirably and both were assessed as competent helmsmen. The rest of the medical team are looking forward to their turns in the future.

When the medical team went ashore to set up the clinic here at Loltong, they were mobbed by

happy, smiling, excited children. The team reported that the ni Vanuatu nurse Marie had everything organised with the clinic to be set up in the village nakamal which is a large building in the centre of the village made in the traditional style of natangora roof, woven walls, dirt floor with a fire pit inside. The team quickly decided that it was too dark inside so they set up the surveys under a tree. It is not often that you see a dentist working under a tree. Tomorrow we will set up our tents.

Sorting "the gear" on the foredeck ... Grant, Jay, Bob, Dick, Deb and Steve



The team staying ashore have very good accommodation; individual huts, right on the water's edge under overhanging trees. They have invited us ship dwellers to dine with them tomorrow night, an invitation we readily accepted.

The medical team have been one staff member short for the

whole mission, so one of the crew have been working as the dental recorder. This interaction of medical and sailing teams, as well as the sail training, volcano hike, river hikes and swimming have all served to bring both teams together and I for one am thoroughly enjoying the mission and the company of some pretty extra ordinary people.

That is all for tonight.

Yours Aye

Jon

[Kerry Tait](#), [Edith West](#), [Clara Chan](#), [Liz Ogden](#) liked this post

Church, Children and Chocolate

Sunday, 27 August 2017

Loltong, Pentecost Island

Ahoy me hearties!! So, Cap'n Jon has finally worn me down and nagged enough for the humble dental nurse on this intrepid adventure to put pen to paper (or finger to key). Being the team member with negligible sailing experience and sadly the only one to suffer the curse of sea sickness, I hope I will not disappoint you in that I can share nothing of ANY significance when it comes to the workings of the ship. I have no idea what the winch is up to, nor whether the hatches are up or down...but I have enjoyed the few hours of motoring we have done so far...and my Stemitil and Phenergan and dodgy Chinese sea sickness patches that I bought off EBay are serving me well. May it long continue!

The two dentists and myself have thus far been staying in the villages with our three Ni-van team members. We have been very well looked after and every effort made to make us welcome and comfortable. We have eaten lots and lots of rice and taro and cassava with several variations of chicken wings! I have no idea where all the wingless chicken ends up, but there must be a lot of them! Every now and then a lovely banana, piece of pawpaw or pomelo

comes our way which is very much appreciated.

We have really been 'living it up' in our waterside Loltong guesthouse. We have two bedrooms and a dining and food prep area and are even hosting a rather flash dinner for the team here tonight. The shower in our front yard consists of a little tin shack with half the sea facing wall missing. It has a



Yellow-roofed tent and local meeting house are used to conduct clinics and the National Oral Health Survey in the village of Loltong

great view...both ways perhaps... There is a bucket of water to douse ourselves with, after which we soap up and douse again. Very refreshing at the end of the day. The toilet is a bit more of a hike up a stony path past the cooking hut. It looks legit. White pedestal, cistern, toilet seat and even paper...but sadly, no water. That has to be emptied into the loo by bucket from the 44 gallon drum outside. Oh well, it still serves the purpose.

This morning Cap'n Jon picked us up outside our door in the dinghy and took us 'around the corner' to attend church in Lantano where we also stayed for the day to do our Oral Health Surveys. The service was lovely, conducted in a mix of English, French, Bislama and the local dialect. The singing was of course done acapella in stunning four part harmonies. Such a beautiful privilege to experience.

The surveying was a bit slow going with a couple of our Ni-van recorders being a bit under the weather today, but by the end of the day we still managed to accomplish quite a bit. The children in this village have been very forward and confident from the start. We have played a few games and done the hokey pokey, and I have had to keep a close eye

on both the dentists' and my stool to be sure that our little three year old friend didn't keep stealing them. Whenever one was missing, sure as eggs, this little guy would be happily perched on it somewhere nearby.

So, while we have been slaving away with our dental and child entertaining skills who knows what our dedicated crew have been up to. I have heard rumours of naps and tedious housekeeping chores as well as the worst lunch so far.

I actually did Ray a favour yesterday by depositing an appropriate amount of mud from my sandals in the bottom of his dinghy thus giving him a good reason to give it a good wash. He accused me of bringing cow pooh onto his boat so I may now have to answer to the unfortunate name of Annie Pooh Shoes...but there is NO WAY it was cow pooh. Just saying...



Melbourne dentist, Dr Steve takes a brief rest between patients

I had best sign off now to our faithful followers, as there are increasingly impatient requests for me to finish up so the crew can head back to Chimere. But that is OK. All will be forgiven soon I have no doubt...as I have chocolate!

Thank you for your interest in our adventures. Over and out.

Ann (Aka Annie Pooh Shoes)

[Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Kerry Tait](#), [Edith West](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#) liked this post

In your Dreams

Monday 28 August 2017

Abwantutura, on Northern Pentecost Island

Imagine a teenage boy in the seventies, confined to an isolated, snowy mountain town in northern Sweden, where summers are three months of the year and 10 degrees, winter the rest, dreaming of a tropical island in the South Pacific. Imagine him borrowing every book in the library about those islands and dreaming. That is I and that is "chimère". I had to look the word up in a French dictionary and it means "in your dreams". I am Christer Lindée, one of the two dentists and Ann, who wrote yesterday, is my wife. I didn't quite manage to have my career as a dentist on a Pacific island but close. We have lived in far North Queensland for nearly 30 years. But now, the "chimère" is happening, in Vanuatu.

North Queensland dentist Dr Christer Lindée takes out the "relaxed dentist"



After having had rice and, chicken wings for lunch and dinner every day, the only variation being whether it is served with taro, cassava or yam, I can perfectly well understand that the locals take to white bread, Coca Cola, lollies etc but it sure isn't good for their teeth. It is really sad to see how much dental decay there is here and along with that diabetes and other Western plagues. One town we visited had a dental chair at the hospital, not working mind you, no power, running water or instruments; that makes work here limited to extractions. The most important teeth which we call the six year molars, were pulled out on kids in Australia and Sweden in the forties; that is happening here now. When they are pulled out the other teeth move and the bite becomes a mess and on top of that the best chewing teeth are lost. It is sad to know but that is what we are doing. Sometimes we have to pull out front teeth too, on young people – sad but true.

My wife and I have volunteered in New Guinea but it is different there. Often the New Guineans don't have access to shops and if there is no sugar, there is no tooth decay but

they never brush their teeth so their teeth come loose from gum disease making them easy to pull out. Here in Vanuatu, we are pulling teeth out because of decay and the roots are big, long and firmly attached so extractions are much harder. Another interesting detail, for dentists at least, is that people get their wisdom teeth without trouble.

In Australia, jaws have become smaller and when it is time for the wisdom teeth to come through they don't fit. Here, the jaws are still big and all teeth fit without trouble. I even saw one guy with an extra tooth behind the wisdom tooth.

The other amazing difference to Australia is how good the kids are. As a dentist, you hardly ever do any treatment on an Australian kid without complaints, often even tears. Here they just sit in the chair and smile and after treatment, which in our case is only extractions – the worst of all treatment, they are happy and proud. My thoughts are that we are over-protecting our kids (it is called “curling parenting” after the sport where team members sweep the way in front of the puck) and we scare them by repeating things like “it won’t hurt”, “don’t worry”, “you are so brave” “you will be much better than mum” which obviously makes kids suspicious. They don’t know what to be afraid of but obviously there is something....

The boat has just dropped its anchor at Abwantutura, on Northern Pentecost Island, and after “smoko” which, strangely enough, is coffee and tea, we will go ashore for two days’ work. One dentist will do surveys and the other extractions. This is apparently the biggest town on the island so there will be plenty of patients. For the survey – that is good because we are a bit behind in numbers – so hopefully we will be able to catch up. So for now “so long”.

Christer Lindée

[Edith West](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post

One Response to “In your Dreams”

Martin Burgess says:

[August 28, 2017 at 10:29 pm](#)

Well written and a great description of the oral health in V2 and also the care free attitude of the kids and adults.

Thanks for the blog.



“Flowers of Thanks

” I-r Jay, Christer, Dick, Bob, Steve, Ray (front) Annette, Deb and Ann (missing, presumably aboard Chimere: Jon, Grant & Mark

Abwantuntora Dreaming

Tuesday 29 August 2017
Abwantuntora, Pentecost

To follow on from some of the words Christer wrote yesterday, I would like to comment from a lay person's perspective. Yesterday I was acting as a recorder for the dental surveys when Steven emerged from the surgery – picture a barren room, a bare concrete floor with the patient reclined in a portable fold up chair in the corner to make the most of the natural light streaming through the louvred window. One of the biggest teeth I've ever seen had just been pulled from the jaw of a girl not much older than ten or twelve and we hadn't heard a peep from her.

The tooth was wrapped in gauze and he cradled it, almost tenderly. I really didn't want to look, nevertheless before long I found myself studying it in morbid fascination. Three huge roots came together at the crown of what was once a strong and proud molar that should have served the girl for her whole life but instead it had been significantly eaten away by decay. It was a stark and heart-breaking illustration of the effect that western habits are bringing to many of these islanders. When one surveys a 12-year-old, generally their teeth are in nearly perfect condition but by the time they reach fifteen, it is amazing to see the deterioration over a few short years.

This morning, after an early morning swim with the skipper and yoga class on the foredeck, nurses Deb and Annette, headed ashore for the morning clinic. They were assisted by crew member Mark, who has become known as 'the ideas man' for his knack of coming up with solutions to seemingly intractable problems. After completing our morning chores – a sailor's job is never done – and with Grant ship keeping, Captain Jon and I climber the hundreds of feet up the winding road to see how things were progressing. It was most pleasing to see crowds of patients lining up for the various services that were on offer.



Jon assumes the role of "village water sampler" with the assistance of locals

After a local girl, who spoke remarkably good English, took us around to get water samples from various water sources around the village, we returned to Chimere where I took a well-earned swim and Jon took a well-earned?? nap. It was gratifying to see the abundance of live corals that abound following the devastation of cyclone Pam a few years ago, proving just how resilient Mother Nature can be. There is no shortage of small tropical fish inhabiting the reefs and bommies although there was almost a dearth of larger fish. We suspect the locals, who paddle around in dug-out canoes day and night, have overfished the crystal clear inshore areas.

A steady line of patients to see Annette kept her busy all day. After treating a couple of quite unwell children with anti-biotics, her afternoon was spent mainly with village elders and other adults, including a couple of men with dangerously high blood pressure. Annie Pooh Shoes organized the dentists, Christer and Steven and when they were not doing surveys, they were busy with even more extractions. The eye team alternated between working with eye patients, helping out with the survey questionnaires and scrubbing dental instruments. A total of fifty-four surveys were completed by the time the clinic closed its metaphoric shutters for the day. Anyone who has taken part in such a clinic can attest to just how draining it can be.

The medical team finished work at about 1500 hours and the task of packing up and returning the stores to Chimere, commenced. The newly refurbished winch made short work of the lifting, with most loads coming up in top gear with the grinder using one hand, until he ran out of puff. Dick, one of the Ni-vans on the team even pitched in to the

sounds of wild cheering and encouragement from his peers watching from the shore.

A presentation of thanks is made to the team members



The team headed back to the clinic at 1800 for a special thanking and closing ceremony before a delicious meal of yet more rice, local vegetables and a hint of some sort of meat tantalized the taste buds. Eventually the boat people, as we have become known, made their way back down the steep and winding track to the shore. The walk could have been romantic and it could have been by moonlight but as fate would have it, that was not to be. It was a pitch-black night and everyone was doing their best not to slip and fall. Had someone at the rear

of the group gone down, it would have been like a bowling alley with ten pins going in all directions as they all tumbled down the hill. Finally, they reached the almost silent waters lapping around the dinghy that would return them to the relative safety and comfort of Chimere. All this amongst the chatter of flying foxes and the noise that other jungle dwellers make during the early nightfall. During this adventure, the remainder of the team retired to their shore based quarters for the night.

Another peaceful night at anchor beckons before we sail for our next exciting adventure to conduct the final clinic of the mission on Maewo Island.

And so, until tomorrow...

Ray Rees

[Hilary Hatch](#), [Robyn Clarke](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Ashleigh Joy](#), [Edith West](#) liked this post

The tale of two Nakamal

Wednesday 30 August 2017

Asanvari, Maewo

Hi, name blong me Steven. I'm one of the dentists on MSM mission three. I live in Melbourne and am recently semi-retired. I came to be involved with the MSM mission through Dr Barry Stewart and the Australian Dental Association Vic branch.

This is my first trip as a volunteer dentist on the MSM mission. Actually, it is my first time as a volunteer in the capacity of a dentist. However, it is not my first time to Vanuatu. I've been here on two occasions previously on scuba diving trips. The reason that I have become involved is that, it has troubled me at times, that I would enjoy my time as a comparatively wealthy tourist in a poorer country.

This blog is largely one of my impressions about what I have seen and experienced over the course of the mission. My strongest impression is from the people of Vanuatu, the Nivan. They are a people who appear to be happy, clean and orderly respectful. Their teeth are unstained by any betelnut chewing habits (as a dentist I can confirm this).

There doesn't seem to be any alcohol problems.

I notice that their lives are governed by two influences, the church (largely the Presbyterian Church) in recent times and the ancient influence of Kustam (evolved over centuries of tradition). The two seem to coexist comfortably. Yet there are contrasts.

The previous Sunday some of us attended a Catholic church service, the only reason of which it was convenient being close to our mission work location. Yes, we worked on the Sunday afternoon. Our work location that day was in the village Nakamal; which is what might be best described as a large one roomed hut that serves the purpose of being the central location for village social and administrative life.

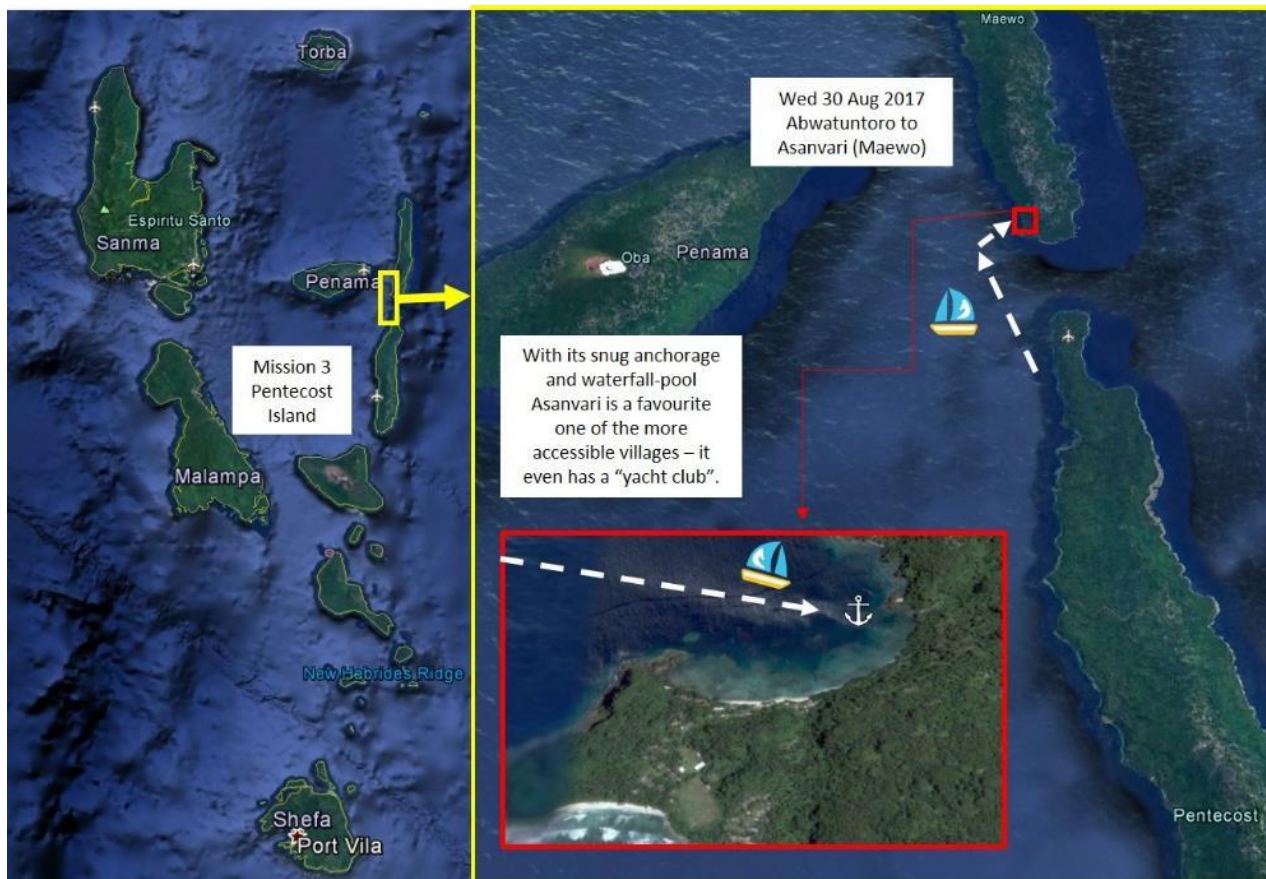


Village construction methods mostly use local products

There seems to be two significant buildings in a village. One being the Nakamal and the other the Church building. When you enter the church building your first impressions are of bright space, clean, a concrete floor that may or not be polished and the air smells, well like air. There are many rows of benches with a central aisle, plenty of seating for everyone. People would sit on the benches and face the front towards a cross and altar.

When you enter the Nakamal it is dark, there is a residual smell of smoke and there is a fire pit immediately to the left that is about two metres in diameter sometimes smouldering. The air smells of smoke and people. The dirt floor is uneven and chickens roam around freely. There is no formal seating and people sit anywhere. To the untrained eye it seems somewhat disorderly. Quite a contrast to the church.

However, people seem to meet in the Nakamal every day, but the church once a week. Nakamal meets the needs of everyday lives while the church the spiritual. The whole village sings in the church, and very beautifully too. Whereas specific groups of people who meet in the Nakamal sing traditional ceremonial songs prior to doing business, sitting on woven mats in a large circle in the middle of the room. Such as when we witnessed the senior women of the village doing what I was told is monthly community banking. The village chief and elders are never far from the Nakamal as we found out when we would enter the various villages. I found it interesting that church has a door and the Nakamal has no door whatsoever. I'll leave any conclusions to others.



Today we had a rest day after what must have been the busiest day of surveys and dental work. The dentists were exhausted, and yours truly was almost in tears having to extract large adult teeth from six-year-old kids. Arriving at the next island, our last, we had a chance sail across the small strait under wind power for the first time at 3 knots, later the engine powered up to push us along faster.

At our anchorage, we had the privilege of seeing a dugong, well I saw its nose anyway.

We also visited a beautiful waterfall that had a pond at the base full of carp that fed out of our hands. The day finished with a great dinner cooked by our skipper Jon and we watched a sunset over an adjacent island. Ah paradise.

Maybe I will come along to the next mission trip.

Fang (the dentist?)

[Edith West](#), [David James](#), [Liz Broadbent](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Kate Storey-Whyte](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post

This entry is filed under [2017 Dental Survey](#), [2017 Mission 3](#), [2017 Ships Log](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

One Response to "The tale of two Nakamal"

[Stuart Letton](#) says:

August 31, 2017 at 11:00 pm

Hi Steven, we met earlier today and I've been looking at the MSM site. Having been cruising through the Pacific islands this and last year and always struck by the poor to appalling state of dental health we were both really impressed by the commitment of you and the rest of the team, "medics" and sailors together. Well done.

The Local View

Thursday 31 August 2017
Asanvari, Maewo

Tonight's blog is brought to you by the PCV Health team –
Bob Natuman, Mission 3 Team Leader and Oral Health worker
Dick Nakat, Eyecare worker
Jay Watson, Eyecare worker
Deb Allen, Oral Health Educator

The waterfall and garden at the village of Asanvari really is a piece of paradise

Bob

Medical Mission 3 long yia 2017 hemi makem out wan narfala team blong medical we hemi consist long 4 crew memba, 2 dentis, 2 nurse, 2 Optom mo 2 dental nurse. Team I bin wok start long South Pentecost long village blong Pangi olsem stat blong wok blong team, team I wok folem island long 2 nara station we hemi Melsisi mo Abwatuntora. We hemi north blong island blong Pentecost mo team I bin continue blong mapem aot wok blong olgeta long wan narafala island hemi Maewo long village blong Asanvari. Olsem team mifala bin cooperate together blong mekem ol work ia. Ol pipol long evri village we team visit oli very fortunate blong lok mo tekem ol services we mifala I karem aot.

For those who aren't fluent in Bislama – "2017 Medical Mission 3 is a new medical team which consists of 4 sailing crew, 2 dentists, 2 nurses, 2 eyecare workers, and 2 dental nurses. The Team started working in the village of Pangi on South Pentecost and in another 2 places at Melsisi and Abwatuntura. We continued to work on another island to the North called Maewo in the village of Asanvari. As a Team we have worked together to do all our work. All the people in each village where the team visited are very fortunate for all the services the team have carried out."



Bob takes on the Asanvari waterfall challenge

Dick

Olsem wan medical team memba long mission ia, mi really enjoyem taem blong mi wetem ol coliques blong mi. Wok hemi gud mo mi really kat wan gud taem. Thankyou long skipper mo ol crew we oli save lukaotem good mifala lo ship. Tankyu long Debra and Annette long ol nice sandwich lo lunch time yumi stap sail. Tankyu also to everiwan we oli part long mission 3. Bai God nomo i blessem yumi long ol works blong yumi.

Translation – “As a medical team member for the mission here, I really enjoyed my time with all my work colleagues. The work is good and we have a great team. Thank you to the Skipper and all the crew who have looked after us on the yacht. Thank you to Debra and Annette for the nice sandwiches for lunch when we were on the yacht. Thank you to everyone who has been part of Mission 3. May God bless us all and our work.”

Eyecare worker Dick assists with the National Oral Health Survey



Jay

Nem blo mi Jay Watson. Mi bin pat lo mission 3 we team I travel mo work long Pentecost from South to North mo South Maewo. During long mission mi fil hapi tumas from mi visitim different places mo long wok place everyone ol coliques blo mi I kaen mo friendly lo mi. Tank yu tumas long Debra blo save explainem samsamting we mi no save, ol nara Dentist, Nurse, Bob olsem team lida we i save organism ol good accommodation mo kakai. Mo tu tank yu tumas long skipper Jon mo ol crew we I save lukatoem gud mi long ship. Hope blo lukim yufala next time, mo bai God I blessem yufala long work blong yufala. Ta.

Translation – “My name is Jay Watson. I have been part of Mission 3 who travelled to work on Pentecost Island from South to North and to South Maewo Island. During the mission, I have felt very happy that I have visited different places and work with all my colleagues who have been kind and friendly. Thank you to Debra for explaining the things that I do not know, all the dentists, nurses and Bob, the Team Leader, who has organized the accommodation and our food really well. Also, thank you to the Skipper, Jon and the sailing crew who have looked after me on the yacht. I hope to see you all next time and may God bless you all and all your work. Ta.”



Captain Jay concentrates on steering Chimere, while Dick relaxes in the background

Translated by Deb from Melbourne, who was kindly taught to speak Bislama by these guys, over the 3 years working here in Vanuatu.

[Edith West](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Elke Hofmann](#) liked this post

One Response to “The Local View”

Martin Burgess says:

[September 1, 2017 at 11:24 am](#)

Great blog guys, thanks.

It's good to hear what you all thought of the mission.

And thanks Deb for the translation but I really didn't need it coz I'm becoming an island boy now Martin.

Kids everywhere are on the whole are polite, respectful,
make terrific patients and amazingly well adjusted



Local "facilities"



Chimere rests at anchor

A Time to Reflect

Friday, 01 September 2017

En route to Luganville, Espiritu Santo from Asanvari, Maewo

As the sun set on our final day for Mission 3 we hoisted sails and headed out of the beautiful bay at Asanvari on Maewo Island leaving the cobalt blue waters of the bay and waterfall behind and set our heading for our departure port of Luganville on Santo Island, some 60 nautical miles away. As we were heading off with our mainsail up, we received a call on the radio from some fellow yachties we had met yesterday, who bade us farewell and safe sailing and reminded us that the work we do is admirable. I agree and it's time to reflect on the Mission and think about what we have achieved, but first about our day.



Grant brings another load of visitors out to Chimere for a tour and a drink – this time at Asanvari

Today, after our early dawn swim, we held a morning clinic to see if we could finish the final 6 survey participants to reach our target for this village but alas with a big wedding in the village everyone was busy elsewhere preparing for the celebration. Annette (or Nettie as she is fondly known), our hardworking nurse, was the only one busy seeing patients with all sorts of interesting issues.

The last one was a solo French sailor who had a very badly infected leg from some coral cuts he received a few days earlier. With strict instructions to keep a check on his temperature, handing over her trusty thermometer (a big sacrifice for a nurse I think) and some drugs, instructions to get some assistance in sailing his yacht from some locals who may like a trip to Port Vila, we said goodbye.

I think he found that difficult as he was particularly keen on our Nettie. We packed all the equipment and once it was stowed on board we enjoyed a lovely lunch made by Erica our hostess at the small guest house where the medical team stayed. The Skipper announced that the departure time would be later in the afternoon to ensure we arrived in Luganville in the early morning daylight tomorrow. With an hour or so to kill, we followed Karl, a young local man, on a short walk to the other side of the island where he was to show us a cave that we could snorkel into and come up

in a lovely grotto a bit further around. We followed him into the surf and reef decked out in our “glass, pipe and leg blong duck duck” as snorkels and fins are called here and enjoyed the amazing coral and fish as we swam towards the entry to the cave. Alas, the sea was too rough to enter and we swam back to shore. We did walk back to the grotto to look into the caves where we would have come out and they looked amazing. These beautiful islands have some many hidden treasures to enjoy if you are lucky enough to get a bit of time off.



The village puts on a “Thank You” dinner for all



Ann gets to know two of the littlest members of the village

With everyone packed off into the dingy, Nettie, Anne and I decided to swim the kilometre or so back to the yacht for exercise. With everything packed and stowed on the deck by our able crew, Jon, Ray, Grant and Mark, it was time to go. As the sun set, we gathered in the cockpit to relax as we sailed and Bob, Dick and Jay settled down in the saloon to watch an action movie.

As usual any chance they get, they had set a line and lure as we left and before too long the noise at the stern of the yacht told us something had taken the bait. With a call to the boys of “fish on” the movie was quickly forgotten and the excitement of bringing in a very large yellow fin tuna on board overtook the action movie. Depending on who you ask, you get a variety of answers from 30 to 60 kg of fish. Whatever it is, it was huge and just so majestic.

I watched in awe of this beautiful fish struggling with the fact that we had caught it versus the fact that I would enjoy some yummy fresh tuna tomorrow! Grant’s dinner of spaghetti bolognese was devoured after the fish was gutted and stowed in the bottom of the fridge no mean feat, I can tell you. I have never seen such big grins on the faces of the boys. It was a delight to watch.

So, at the end of a very special day, it is time to reflect on what have we achieved. We have safely delivered the service we had planned which was to conduct the National Oral Health Survey on the islands of Pentecost and Maewo. We have provided medical, optometry and dental treatment to those in need. This was made possible this year with our volunteer medical team and Chimere’s hardworking crew. But what stands out to me the most of all, is the fact that we are a group of individuals, from different ages, backgrounds, cultures and customs who have so many different ways of doing things but at the core, we all have the same desire to volunteer out time to such a worthy cause. Congratulations Mission 3 team, you should be very happy with your achievements.

Deb Allen

[Jan McLean](#), [Edith West](#), [Jim Davies](#), [Clare Veronica](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post

One Response to “A Time to Reflect”

[Nicola Young on Facebook](#) says: [September 2, 2017 at 12:40 pm](#)

Well done Mission 3 team. It sounds like you’ve worked really hard and had some adventures on the way!



A relaxing swim at the end of the day – Annette, Jon, Deb and Ray

Ni-Vans chill-out at the Asanvari waterfall in the late afternoon sun



Dawn at Luganville

Saturday, 02 September 2017
Luganville, Espiritu Santo

Thump, thump, crash, crash, rattle, rattle, whirr, bang, crash. Woken from my sleep by the sounds of the crew on watch changing sail settings. What time is it? I'm not due on watch yet.

Later, more noises, but quieter. Time to get up (03.00). Captain Jon was sitting looking at the chart plotter, on-watch crew, Ray and Grant, were steering and keeping watch. Outside there were lights indicating that we were entering Luganville Harbour. The other islands we have visited are dark, very dark. Our plan to arrive at first light has gone terribly wrong – we are here three hours too early, despite reefing the main and furling the jib. With the care and planning of a retired naval officer, Jon coaxed Chimere into the port, past the shipping area into the yacht basin where we safely anchored. I stayed on anchor watch while the others retired to their bunks. Watching the dark night gradually change to grey. Soon, everyone will be on their way, to their separate lives.

To celebrate the completion of another mission, we arranged to have breakfast at the nearby resort, and to take the obligatory group photo. The medical team walked into the city centre whilst the sailing team caught up on their sleep.

Tonight will be another crowded night on board Chimere, but tomorrow all but Jon and I will be gone, on holiday in Espiritu Santo, or back to Australia. Then will be the clean up before Rob arrives on Monday and preparation for the next mission will begin.



Jon, Deb and Mark show two locals around Chimere

From a personal perspective, I am honoured to have participated in the Oral Health Survey – as I sat there recording the wellness or otherwise of someone's teeth, I thought, "This is why we are here" to provide the Vanuatu Health Department information of their people's oral health, from tiny

villages and remote islands. However, I enjoyed the looking after of the vessel more, and at times I had to pinch myself, "It's like I'm in a dream, but I'm awake", living on a yacht, in the tropics, doing boaty things.

Mark Stephenson

The team “after” shot at the Luganville Beach Front Resort – Dr Steve, Dick, Grant, Mark, Annette, Bob, Deb, Ray, Jay, Jon, Ann and Dr Christer



[Elke Hofmann](#), [Edith West](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Matt Bryant](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Clare Veronica](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Cathy West](#) liked this post
4 Responses to “Dawn at Luganville”

[Clare Parry on Facebook](#) says: [September 2, 2017 at 11:10 pm](#)

Nice one, Mark. Thanks and well done.

[Medical Sailing Ministries on Facebook](#) says: [September 3, 2017 at 9:03 am](#)

Tut doctor Barry heading back for more, Mission 4

[Medical Sailing Ministries on Facebook](#) says: [September 3, 2017 at 9:04 am](#)

Well done Mission 3 team C U later today

Rob

[Medical Sailing Ministries on Facebook](#) says: [September 3, 2017 at 9:24 am](#)

The muffin man ...?!