

Medical Sailing Ministries (MSM) Vanuatu Mission 2017

SHIPS LOG – Mission 4

Date/Duration:	Friday 8 September – Monday 25 September 2017 (18 Days)		
Location:	TORBA Province, Islands of, Santo, Maewo, Merelava, Gaua, Vanualava, Ureparapara		
Sailing Volunteers:	Rob Latimer (Skipper), Matt Bryant, Matt Latimer, Martin Burgess		
Team Leaders:	Richard Tatwin		
Team Numbers:	15 (Sailors & Health)		
Local Health Workers:	Dental Care: Dr Wellin Jerethy, Barkon Japheth & Bob Natuman		
Local Eye Care:	Jay Watson		
Medical Volunteers:	Dentists: Dr Barry Stewart		
Dental Nurses:	Deb Allen		
Doctors:	Dr Graeme Duke & Dr Jeremy Duke		
Nurse:	Cathy West		
Assistant:	Annette Vincent		
Mission Results:	Islands Visited:	6	Clinics Held: 10
	Oral health Surveys	179	Mission Duration: 18 days
	Dental Patients seen:	120+	Teeth extracted: 135
	Medical Patients seen:	300	Referrals for ongoing care: 44
	Eyecare Patients seen:	155	Spectacle dispensed & ordered: 65
	Eyecare Referrals:	12	



Images from Mission 4

BACKGROUND

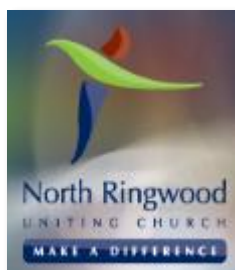
Medical Sailing Ministries (MSM) began in 2009 to provide remote-access transport and logistical support amongst the islands of Vanuatu. It is a partnership program of the North Ringwood Uniting Church (Melb), The Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu and the Vanuatu Ministry of Health, using the Westernport-based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

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

NATIONAL ORAL HEALTH SURVEY 2017

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

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

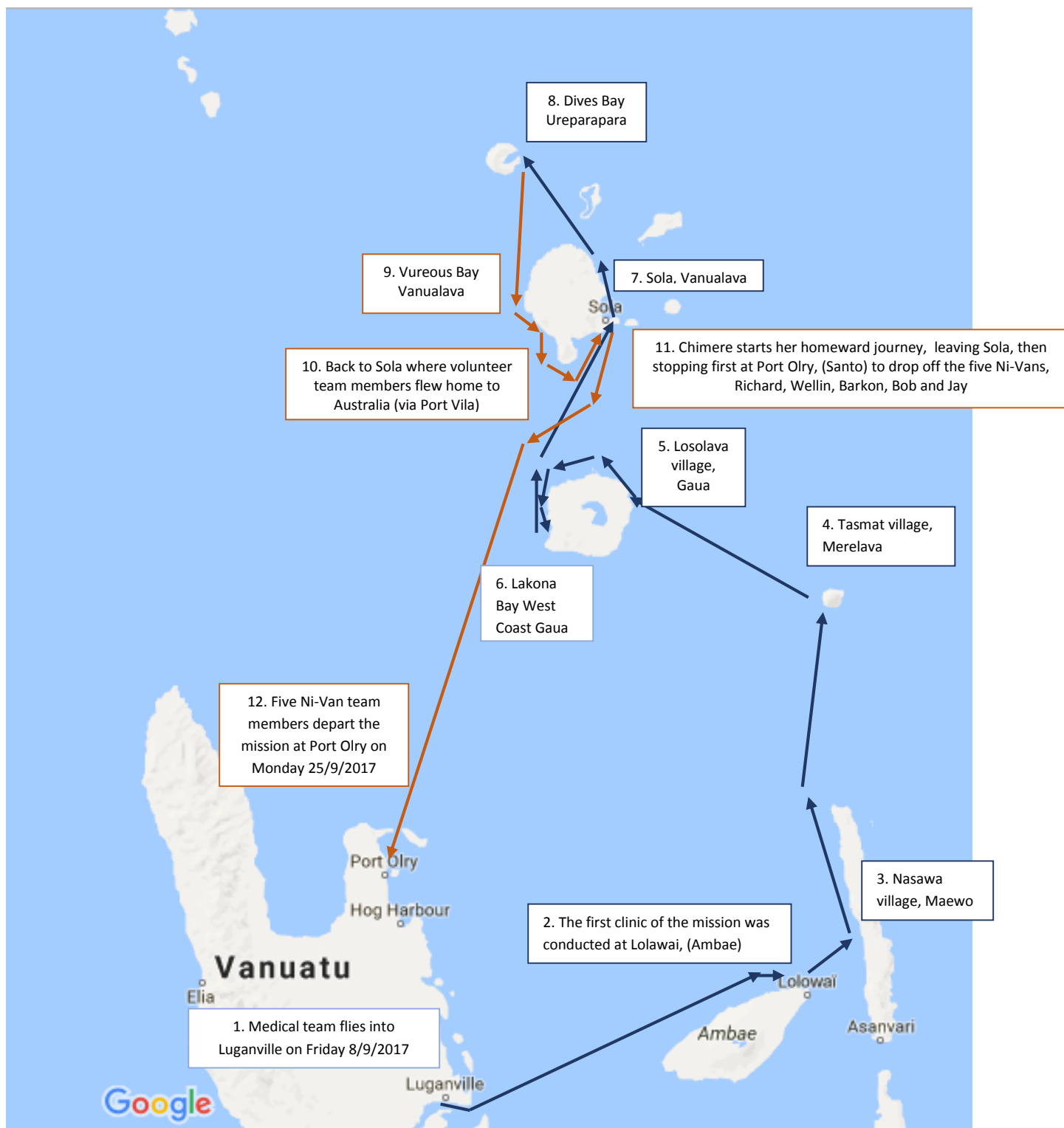


Vanuatu
Dental Care
Services



2017 Ships Log – Mission 4

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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Mission 4 prepares for launch

Sunday 3 September 2017

Sydney airport

Barry Stewart and I are heading back to Vanuatu

Up at 4 o'clock this morning, at Melbourne airport by 6:00, and now in Sydney, we'll be in Luganville (Santo) by the end of the day. Me to join Chimere in preparation for the next medical mission, Barry to complete a week of Oral Health survey work before also joining us aboard Chimere as dentist for Mission 4.

There is a sense of excitement but also familiarity as we enter the final stages of this year's overall MSM mission

Having led the first mission as skipper of Chimere in June and July it has been a great joy for me personally to have read the daily messages from the volunteer teams, both sailing and medical/dental/optical, on Missions 2 & 3.

A massive congratulations to everyone involved!! Especially skippers Phil and Jon and their loyal crews as they have cared for the ship and all on board. Great Work!!

Chimere is now anchored on the edge of the Second Channel, off the Beach Front Resort, Luganville and as I write this the medical team and some of the crew are preparing to fly out after their two week tour of duty.

Barry and I have just made it to our seats aboard Air Vanuatu's jet plane – a Boeing 737-800, which is dwarfed by the Air Singapore A380 parked next to us.

I'm being asked by a nice Ni-Van lady to turn off my device, so it's ...

... smooth flight, tail winds and Mission 4 prepares for launch

Rob Latimer

www.msm.org.au

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Rob Latimer & Barry Stewart head to Vanuatu for the start of Mission 4



Did it! – Mission achieved

Sunday, 03 September 2017

Well, followers of the Chimere blog, this is the last entry from the Mission 3 team. As reported last night, we are anchored off the Beach Front Resort in Luganville. Deb, Bob, Jay and Dick left immediately after our celebratory breakfast as they are all involved in the next mission to the Banks Group, the northern most part of Vanuatu.

They are also doing the dental survey here on Santo starting Monday. Annette and Steven left today on the 0900 flight to Port Vila, Anne and Christer were dropped off at their resort on Aore Island, adjacent to Luganville, while Ray and Grant left on the 1800 flight to Port Vila leaving just Mark and myself to tidy up and finish the cleaning.

Mission 3 "After Shot" at Luganville (Beachfront Resort)
l-r Steve, Dick, Grant, Mark, Annette, Bob, Debra, Ray, Jay, Jon, Ann & Christer



The primary aim of our mission was to conduct a dental survey of 1% of the population of Pentecost and Maewo Islands. We met this aim with a lot of hard work, mainly because it was often difficult to find the people of the right age and gender to participate in the survey. This task was made more difficult because school holidays had started and another group running a similar mission had preceded us by a couple of weeks.

Mission 3 was not all work however, how could it be when you are visiting some of the most beautiful Islands in the Pacific? As reported earlier, we hiked up a volcano, which was subsequently assessed as a level 3 (evacuate) warning meaning that we would not have been permitted on the mountain. We swam in fresh water streams, waterfalls and an impressive gorge. The sea water was so warm and clear that we started the Chimere swimming club with many of the team swimming more than a kilometre before work each morning thanks to the prompting from Deb our resident fitness coach. But the highlight was probably the snorkelling using "leg blong duck duck and glass and pipe" (which translates to goggles and fins).

The coral and resident fish were amazing, colours that are so vivid that it is hard to believe that they are a part of nature. We saw groups of fish wearing the same uniform, prompting Deb to name them the football teams going to practice. We even attempted to snorkel into some under water caves but the tide was too high and the sea too rough.

As with many missions before, Chimere has performed faultlessly. She does all that is asked of her accommodating all 12 team members, transporting all the equipment and dealing with whatever nature throws at her. She is a very safe and competent boat. As reported in our first log entry, Chimere was in excellent condition at the start of our mission and it was going to be a challenge for the Mission 3 team to keep her that way. I am pleased to report that she is at least as good as we found her or even better as we were able to address a few persistent defects. I wish to pass on my thanks to the team for their hard work and support in this matter.

As with most things, the success of a mission relies on the performance of the team. I have been fortunate enough to have worked with a very competent, adaptable and just plain, the nicest people you could ever hope to meet. We have all shared in the communal duties, all contributed to writing the log each night, shared in the survey duties and even all had a go at driving Chimere's boats.

All of us had a turn at Chimere's helm, a first for many of us. Even the often-difficult job of finding somewhere for everyone to sleep turned out to be a non-issue as everyone was able to find somewhere that met their needs. The only area to cause some concern was the menu. The three ladies on board had rather particular thoughts on what we should eat and what we should not. They also required some different ingredients from the rest of us for a variety of reasons. All this led to some lively discussions, all in good fun, but at the end of the day the ladies always won and the men ate more greens and fruit than is our normal practice. But all is not lost men as Mark, me and later Rob, who turned up ahead of schedule, dined on pancakes tonight. We called them protest pancakes!

Our thanks goes out to all the people who have worked behind the scene making our mission possible. Your support and the support of the folks at PCV have been invaluable.

So here we are at the end of our mission with mixed emotions. On the one hand there is a real sense of achievement of having succeeded in what we set out to do, but on the other hand we have to say goodbye to good friends as we all go back to our lives. We have all swapped contact details with the view to staying in contact and who knows, there may be a reunion.

Yours Aye for the last time,

(Capt) Jon



Above: Grant, Jon, Deb, (guide Reubin) and Ray behind the camera on Ambrym volcano trek
Below: Jon & Ray work on the main winch



[Edith West](#), [Tanya Steven](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Cathy West](#), [John Fisher](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Michelle Reardon](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Dorothy Russell Viney](#) liked this post

Easing back into the saddle

Monday 4 September 2017

Anchored off the Beach Front Resort, Luganville, Santo

It appears the Blog writing “baton” has officially been passed to me as the new skipper for Mission 4, which by the way is still a few days away from its official start. Jon’s ... “Yours Aye for the last time” sign-off to last night’s message kind of made that clear.

So here we are. The three of us sitting quietly in the saloon after a collaborative dinner creation – by Mark and Jon that is – Thai Green Curry on a bed of rice. Jon is reading a book about Captain Cook (of course) and Mark is writing his journal (with a pen, on paper, in keeping with his analogue nature). Chimere is riding nicely at anchor, gently bobbing to the small waves. The constant sound of the wind and the slop, slop, slop of the dinghy tethered to the stern the only real noises.

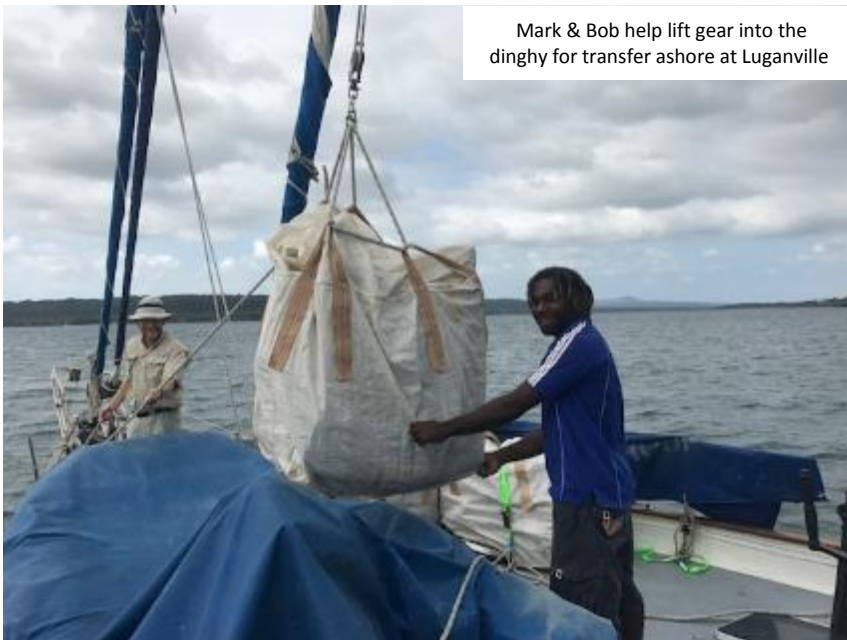
After my “surprise” arrival last night, (maybe I did forget to tell Jon and Mark the exact time) and too many pancakes (that stuff goes off if you don’t cook it) thickly piled with lashings of plum jam, sleep came very easily. It had definitely been a big day, and thanks go to the security guard at the Beach Front Resort and his strong torch for finally gaining Jon’s attention onboard, because my yelling from the beach, into the wind in the dark, just wasn’t going to cut it. Particularly when I discovered how much fun they were having below cooking pancakes.

I suppose I really should have got Jon’s phone number in advance, to let him know I was coming in on the late afternoon flight. Notice I only said Jon. Mark I knew wasn’t going to have a phone number. I’m not sure he even brought a phone with him. He certainly didn’t get a local SIM card, although he assured me he knows what a SIM card actually is, just doesn’t know what it stands for; either do I for that matter.

Rob enjoys some “energy food” before heading to Vanuatu



Mark & Bob help lift gear into the dinghy for transfer ashore at Luganville



After a great night’s sleep, up in the forward cabin we all shared breakfast together, planning the day – as you’d expect.

“Bob, Annette (Vincent) and Barry will be here at 8:00am to pick up the dental survey gear. I’ll probably go with them to set up the survey station”, I said ... “what have you guys got planned?”

“I’m going into town later on” said Mark ... “And I’ve got the circuit breaker to fit” chipped in Jon.

Not quite as busy as when there’s 9 or 10 medical and dental folk aboard of course; the ship is practically dead by comparison.

As discussions turned to planning for the mission ahead and Jon contemplated his return flight to Australia in 3 days he came out with ... “I’m already starting to feel like the third wheel ...” Yesterday a rooster, today a feather duster?!

My taxi driver from the airport last night, Solomon, gave me his phone number, so it was him I called when transport was needed this morning. Not that he arrived on time, causing me to question whether he was as reliable as he at

first appeared. “That’s longer than 10 minutes?!” I grumbled to Bob. “Maybe it was a Ni-Van 10 minutes??” I said to Bob, who agreed that he could be here at any time between now and who knows when. “I’ll call him” I replied “He’s talking Bislama Bob?!” ... “me no savi ... I’ll give you to Bob ...”

Bob then got to the heart of the matter. He was having tyre troubles and will be here in 5 minutes. Five minutes eh??!!

After 15 minutes Bob and I wandered the short distance out to the main road with the intention of grabbing the first bus or taxi that was going by. No vehicles. Two minutes passed ... “Oh look, here’s Solomon!!” “Sorry tumas ...” he beamed ... and all was forgiven

We were soon in town, setting up the Oral Health Survey chairs, table, seats and of course the painted sign right next to the town market. It was then a case of making sure participants were selected at random, rather than those who inquired about “... yu fixim sore tut?”



Bob, Annette and Barry set up the National Oral Health Survey at the Luganville Market – first survey of the day

With Barry, Bob and Annette underway with their survey work I found a café further into town where I could take advantage of free WiFi over a very long drawn out black coffee. But not before dropping into the Ministry of Health’s Northern Office to arrange the pick-up of a very large pile of boxes they asked us (Skipper Jon and his team that is) to transport up from Port Vila. Not exactly sure what they are, something medical I suspect.

After stretching out the coffee into lunch and sitting in the café long enough to hear the James Blunt CD play through at least 5 times (I know because that’s how many times I heard the song “You’re Beautiful etc etc” come on) I moved on to the Digicell office to get a second SIM card for my iPhone, just in case my existing TVL SIM card didn’t provide sufficient coverage up through the northern islands.

Strolling back to the market, where I figured they’d be thinking about packing up, I met a swag of people I knew. Among them Richard Tatwin, head of PCV Health, Kalmaire from Paunangisu village, plus a lot more I recognised and smiled nicely to, but couldn’t quite remember their names. All these folk were returning from the annual Presbyterian Church Assembly meeting held down the road, a very long and dodgy road as it turns out, (particularly when it rains) at Tasariki in SW Santo.

There was even a Melbourne man named Peter, carrying a cardboard box, who stopped when he read the words on my shirt ... “Are you Robert?” he asked quietly. “Ah yes, that’s me” I said ... “Oh, I’m on your Medical Sailing Ministries email list and I know the Zurrers who support the Ni-van farm workers who work at KooWeeRup, Victoria,

I'm working for 2 years in North Ambae at a school..." I also know the Zurrers, plus many of the other people mentioned during our 10 minute chat ... that's just the way it is here

Back at the market, it was indeed pack up time and I rang Taxi-Solomon who was there in a flash; wheel problems obviously fixed.

The dental gear was all loaded and carted away, with Bob, Annette and Barry heading back to their accommodation. I headed back out of town towards Chimere's anchorage, but not before having a long chat with Jenny Hamer, a palliative care specialist from Tauranga NZ, finishing up a volunteer-month at the Port Vila hospital with a group called the Butterfly Trust. Jenny was also a sailor and recreational diver and had made it to Luganville for a few days to dive on the sunken American WW2 troop ship at Million Dollar Point.

We met her when she simply inquired about what we were doing and it was amazing to hear of the valuable work she was doing in palliative care and to discover how limited the services, facilities and even awareness, of the issue is here.

Dying in pain, with minimal access to suitable drugs, just seems the norm here. Which really isn't surprising when you think about it I suppose; but far from ideal. It would be great to see Jenny's work develop further!

It was by now 5:30pm, the brief tropical twilight was at hand and I thought I'd better call Jon aboard, at least to request pick-up from the beach.



After a month at sea on mission 3 Mark and Jon remain good friends and appear at the point of sharing favourite recipes and completing each other's sentences

"Where have you been? We've done our hair, we're all dressed for dinner, and here you are out all day and coming back at this hour..." whined Jon. "On the beach in four minutes, I replied ... "sure thing, I'll send Mark over to pick you up" returned Jon

So ended my first day as we count the days to the arrival of the new crew and medical team and the start of Mission 4. For Jon and Mark it's just two sleeps before they take their last dinghy ride ashore ... Sounds rather sad when you put it like that

Smooth seas, fair breeze and easing back in the saddle ...

Rob Latimer

[Edith West](#), [Matt Bryant](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Cathy West](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post

Tuesday, 04 September 2017

Hi, it's Mark here. As I am flying back to Oz tomorrow I offered to do the blog today.

After the usual night at anchor, getting up occasionally to silence noises, we woke to a dull morning with promise of humidity.

We had to get 27 boxes for the Luganville Health Centre from Jon's cabin up on deck then into the dinghy for collection from the beach at 0800, which we timed to perfection, more by good luck than good management. So good to have that space available for a bunk.

Our day involved a trip into Luganville to get some electrical spares. But as Rob was with us, we first went to the slip yard to see Ken's trawler-yacht *Trinity Castle*, who was involved with MSM in 2013 and who recently broke his propeller shaft. We went to several engineering shops and electrical stores without much success. The stores here close at lunchtime, forcing us to the Natangora Café for lunch.

Whilst there Barry, Annette and Richard arrived from doing the Oral Health Survey for their lunch. So many MSM and PCV shirts in one café!

Back on board *Chimere*, Jon started work on repairing the old solenoid, to keep as a spare for the anchor winch. Tonight, we went over to Aore Island for tea with Christer and Ann, who were dental staff of Mission Three, for them to meet Rob.

One of the joys of being on a yacht and commuting to the shore by dinghy is having a wet bum. Unless the water is completely flat (surf less than a foot high) and the sand is gently shelving, you have to jump out of the dinghy into what you hope is knee deep water (the water here is very clear and often you can see the bottom in 5 metres of water), to help steady the dinghy, turn it around, keep the propeller out of the sand and so on. Also, when leaving the shore you jump from knee deep water onto the dinghy and swing your wet feet across where you will be sitting, dripping salt water. And, often enough water splashes up from the bow bashing into waves, to wet your upper legs and hips. There's no point washing and changing as you will be doing it all again shortly, so you have a wet bum all day. I don't know if anyone has any salt water sores on their bum – no one has said anything. I am taking a wet bum as a good thing – it means I am not at the office!

Fair winds and smooth seas

Mark Stephenson

For those who don't know me, I am from Devonport, Tasmania. I recently retired from over 30 years at Centrelink and have been involved with building and sailing a steel yacht for most of my adult life. I first met Rob last December when he sailed *Chimere* into Devonport. For those that do know me, thank you for your prayers and support during these last two months.

[Phil Wicks](#), [Lynda Brayton](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Agnes Webb](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Edith West](#), [Denise Stephenson](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Dorothy Russell Viney](#) liked this post

Rob & Jon transport one very heavy load of health supplies ashore at Luganville transported aboard *Chimere* from Port Vila for the Regional Government Health Office



Above: Advertising the National Oral Health Survey
Below: Jon's final task was to repair the broken solenoid switch



Ship's dentist Barry does extraction for Dutch yachswoman off a nearby boat at anchor, Luganville

A Dutch couple, 7 years sailing the world, diverted from their Fiji to PNG voyage to find a dentist. Dropping anchor next to us they noticed the word "Medical" on the side of our boat and after a few phone calls, Barry Stewart was more than happy to drop in after this day doing the oral health survey to provide treatment.

After a day's rest, without going ashore or needing to clear customs, they will be on their way to PNG

One very happy patient and her supportive partner... (not sure about the tooth fairy protocol this far from home)

[Edith West](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Jacob Westley](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Thea Kooy](#), [Marianne Spalek](#), [Ian Northfield](#), [Hel Ana](#), [Megan Thwaites](#), [Maureen Yaxley](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post



Above: Dr Barry Stewart, ably assisted by Bob, attends to an emergency patient off another yacht

Below: Mark and Jon finally say good-bye after a job well done on Mission 3

Is there a dentist in the house

Wednesday 6 September 2017

Beachfront Resort Anchorage, Luganville

The day started sad with the 7:00am departure of Skipper Jon and crewman Mark. They had served their Tours of Duty with distinction, for Mark two tours in fact, so there were mixed emotions as they took the dinghy to the beach for the very last time. From there it was just a short walk to the main road and a brief wait for a local taxi to come and take them away. (The pre-arranged taxi just didn't show?!)

As I write this Ships Log Jon and Mark will probably be landing back in Australia.



There was a definite sense of loneliness as I dragged the dinghy back down the beach and into the water. Now there was just me. Not that I'd have long to wait before Chimere would once more be a hive of activity. The new crew and the medical team will all be piling aboard late Friday, ready for the start of Mission 4 early the next morning.

Looking out into the bay, the wind and the waves had definitely calmed down, as predicted. It had also gotten rather crowded over the past two days, with 6 yachts now bobbing quietly at anchor; three having come in during the night.

Returning to Chimere in the dinghy I climbed aboard – and Yes, for certain family members, I did it particularly carefully because I know I'm on my own for the next two days and there's no one else aboard to giggle at any misfortunes, or even provide assistance if necessary. It was then a case of prioritizing tasks for the next few days ... swapping the empty gas bottle, exchanging dollars into Vatu (hoping the rate has returned to the high of Monday) catching up with Richard to confirm the Friday flights from Port Vila for the Government Dental Health who will be joining Mission 4, plus the many little jobs that always need to be done aboard.

No sooner had I put the kettle on ... got to have another cup of tea/coffee ... and “what’s this??” ... “a dinghy approaching off the starboard beam??” ... “wonder who they are??”

“AHOY”, came the call from a fellow sailor, (seven years out of Holland) Deep Boel, as he slowed his dinghy to a stop off the stern. “Greetings, heading to town?” I inquired.

“No, we have diverted from Fiji, we are on our way to Papua New Guinea, but my partner Mallika here has had toothache for several days and we felt another two weeks at sea was too much.”

Mallika then spoke up, “We saw the word Medical on the side of your yacht and was wondering if this included dental. I’m taking Panadol and started antibiotics yesterday, but it’s swollen and really hurts”
“Come aboard”



Above: Dutch yachtswoman (and Vet) Mallika receives special treatment from our on-board dentist Barry Stewart.

We were soon chatting in the cockpit like old friends, and after a call to Dr Barry Stewart, who was setting up at a nearby school for a day’s oral health surveying, it was confirmed that Mallika would be seeing a dentist by the end of the day, here aboard Chimere. The visible relief on their faces was priceless.

We chatted some more over tea and coffee and as it turned out Dutchman-Deep was a real handy man when it came to boats, and anything I’m sure, a photographer by profession, and Mallika was a Vet. Both had spent seven years getting to this point in their sailing life-adventure which had seen them sailing up the Amazon River, travelling through the Panama Canal, chartering for several years in the Caribbean, exploring the Galapagos and making landfall at the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia.

After showing Mallika and Deep around the boat ... after all, every yachtie is interested in what other boats look like on the inside ... we got to lifting the floor panels to explore the engine ... “oh that’s a beautiful engine” exclaimed Mallika ... What a woman !!

“Is there anything I can do to help with the maintenance on your yacht while we are here?” inquired Deep “I can come back after lunch if you like” . “Are you serious” ... I replied?

“Yes, certainly”

So it was that after I’d returned from town having exchanged the money (yes the rate had returned to the high of two days ago) obtaining a full bottle of gas, plus a few groceries, Deep returned to Chimere dressed in his old clothes ready for work.

“It would be good to get the prop-shaft brake working again, maybe we could work on that?” I suggested. This seemed to be a particular specialty of Deep’s, but after lifting the floor boards and having a good look around with the light this led to the observation that there was evidence of salt water in places where it definitely should not be. This naturally led to the water-cooled exhaust system under the galley sink and that was how we discovered the leaking hose clips; a new job for tomorrow ... along with the prop-shaft brake, which we are still to address.

The arrival of Barry and Bob brought boat-maintenance to a halt and so Deep went off to get the patient while I went ashore to get the dentist and his assistant.

Pretty soon Barry, assisted by Bob, were doing their thing, complete with dental chair, injection, (dental) hand tools and cotton wool. There was a ceremonial tossing of the offending tooth over the side as Mallika expressed immense relief and appreciation at Barry's abilities. Barry and Bob were soon on their way which left me more than happy to take up Deep and Mallika's invitation to dine aboard their catamaran.

It was indeed a lovely dinner and I also got to meet their cat, yes a cat! Not a sea dog, but a sea cat, aboard a cat-amaran no less. I didn't get the cat's name, but after 7 years aboard

it is very familiar with life at sea and has its own set of well-established routines and habits. Given quarantine regulations in most countries it also lives almost exclusively aboard.

Rather than head straight back to sea tomorrow, our new best friends will stay another day here at anchor – making sure not to step on land, thereby requiring formal Customs, Quarantine and Immigration entry. The extra day would enable Deep to continue assisting with the prop-shaft brake repairs and for Mallika's to be sure her tooth extraction has indeed healed.

Anyone who has ever had tooth-ache, and it doesn't have to be aboard a yacht, 5 days from land and 14 days from the next main port, will know how Barry's experience and abilities were appreciated beyond measure. Tank Yu Tumas Barry from your two new Dutch best friends

Fair winds and smooth seas is there a dentist in the house ...?

Rob Latimer

[Linda Latimer](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [John Fisher](#), [Jeannette van Beveren](#), [Matt Latimer](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Nicola Young](#) liked this post



Dutch yachties Deep & Mallika (plus their sea-cat) invite us over for tea and biscuits aboard their catamaran. After the extraction Mallika can now smile again

Twas the night before Mission

Thursday 7 September 2017
Beachfront Resort Anchorage, Luganville

The morning dawned still and warm with the heat and humidity building through the day.

Today's list of tasks included fixing the prop-brake, along with the leaking hose clamps on the exhaust water cooling system. What is a prop-brake, I hear you ask ... well everyone knows that the propeller goes around when the engine is put into gear and we drive from place to place. We prefer to use the wind, but sometimes there just isn't enough, or it's from the wrong direction, or we need to manoeuvre in confined spaces. But when the engine is off and we are travelling under sail alone, the propeller keeps rotating, because of the passing water, and this wears out all the moving parts – for nothing.

The solution? A “brake” on the prop shaft to hold it stationary, because shoving the gear lever in reverse just doesn't have the desired result.

Yachties down the ages have been quite inventive when it comes to solving this problem, using a range of mechanisms including screw drivers jammed in strategic places, light string and multi-grips. The trick is to make sure that whatever you use, it's removed BEFORE putting the engine into gear, otherwise it can get a bit nasty down there. Some sailors even profit from the free-wheeling prop shaft by attaching a power generation system to charge the batteries, indirectly gaining electricity from the wind. Chimere came with an ingenious devise using car brake pads fitted either side a disk plate attached to the shaft itself. Pull a rope under the chart table and the brake pads clamped each side of the disk pad by way of a steel cable; much like the front wheel of a bike. At least that's how it's supposed to work, but corrosion and slipping cable clamps had rendered it unserviceable.

That's where our new Dutch friend Deep, (partner of yesterday's emergency dental patient Mallika) off a nearby yacht has been able to exhibit his super powers. This man is not one to give up easily and after three hours of upside down fiddling, unbolting and adjusting I am very happy to report that we now have a fully functioning prop brake again. As for the leaking exhaust hose clamps, well I bought more this afternoon and after reattaching with lashings of sticky stuff I'm hoping there'll be no leaks tomorrow when I fire up Perkins. Whilst in town I ran a few errands, including changing more Aussie to Vatu, buying new exhaust hose clamps and starting on the grocery shopping.

Back aboard Chimere in the late afternoon the first thing was to fit the new hose clamps and then start the process of cleaning up and packing away all the tools and hardware items.

Deep popped back to share some free navigational software and to say his final good-byes on behalf of him and Mallika. It's been great getting to know them and I look forward to keeping in touch. If you want to check out their website it's www.catamaransailing.holiday and their yacht is called Yemaya

This is the last night before the start of Mission 4. This time tomorrow we will have quite a crowd on board. I think it's 12, with 2 or 3 more staying ashore and then joining us early Saturday morning prior to our 6:00am departure. I suppose I really should know the exact number, and I'm sure I will by mid afternoon tomorrow. All I know is that I

Above: While Barry fixed his partner's tooth, Deep spent a considerable amount of time aboard Chimere fixing things. It seemed a very fair exchange!



need to have as many bunks as possible available for allocation. The boat also needs to be clean and I'm required to have a safety and awareness presentation rehearsed ... seats upright, tray table, seat belts ... Who gets which bunk is always a complex calculation requiring an algorithm whose variables I'm not at liberty to divulge. I will say, however, that if you are in the "senior" demographic, with qualifications in something like, say, dentistry, or medicine, then you are more likely to receive "most favoured treatment" ...

Cleaning the fridge is a job I'd been putting off, knowing that the tuna head and various portions of its body were still floating at the bottom in a soupy cold red liquid. Whilst I never saw a photo of the fish I can attest to its size having now seen its head; a treasured part of the animal in local circles apparently (that's why it's still in the fridge).

Next on the list of "Things to Do" was sorting through the food stores and exercising my legal right as skipper to gain access to the Mission 4 food "sarcophagus" right below where Mission 3s food stash was stored. Hoping beyond hope that "food robbers" hadn't gained access and made off with the chocolate, muesli bars and other tasty treats ... otherwise known as "rubis kai kai". I started out with good intentions, but then got hungry and put it off till tomorrow.

Having washed and re-packed the tuna, I couldn't resist eating a raw slab in soy sauce and lemon juice as an entree to my tinned spaghetti, toast (using freshly baked whole meal bread; a gift from Mallika), grated cheese and lemonade. This batching sure has its perks !!

Smooth seas, fair breeze and Twas the night before Mission

Rob Latimer

[Nicola Young](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Martyn Vincent](#), [Jennifer Fenton](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Edith West](#), [Cathy West](#) liked this post



Above: That is one serious fish-head; left over from Mission 3
Below: Checking the food supplies and records for the up-coming Mission 4



Short and sweet

Friday 8 September 2017

Beachfront Resort Anchorage, Luganville

The new crew and medical team have arrived safely and Mission 4 will get away tomorrow morning at 6 o'clock bound for Lolawai on the island of Ambae

We have 12 on board tonight and 3 more to come aboard at 5:30am tomorrow.

The journey should take just 7-8 hours. Wind and seas are slight so it'll be a drive

I'm very tired and need to sleep

Smooth seazzzzzzzz

Rob

[Check out all the pics uploaded in the last week in [2017 Mission 4 Gallery](#) – Webmaster]



That's what we were looking for ... chocolate.

[Lorraine Rose](#), [Norma Harbour](#) liked this post

All aboard for the Lolowai Express

Friday 8 September 2017

Last night at Luganville

Apologies for the lack of a Ships Log entry yesterday. In the end it was a case of events, and the need to actually ... "do stuff" ... overtaking my ability to document them.

I can't say it won't happen again, but it's been a big few days. Partly due to the relatively short break of just 6 days we allocated between Mission 3 and Mission 4. This always had the potential to create "preparation issues", but fortunately the care and attention, not to mention maintenance and repairs, shown to Chimere by the previous two teams left her in a wonderful, ready-to-go- state.

Still, things happen, and the arrival of the Dutch sailing couple ... one with a dental emergency (Mallika), which Dr Barry was able to treat, and the other (Deep) with a willingness and ability, to repair the prop brake, presented an opportunity I couldn't pass up. In the end, thanks to Deep, Chimere not only had her prop-brake repaired, but we also uncovered a leaking exhaust-water hose that we were able to fix .

As we sit here at anchor in the idyllic Lolowai Bay, yesterday seems a very long time ago now. But in the end most things got done, including the ...

– Sorting of food and the purchase of extra stores such as cheese, frozen mince and fresh fruit and vegetables. (Plus cans of lemonade and Coke ... but don't tell anyone because our official line is that it's "not good for you" – rubis kai kai – sugar and tooth decay and all that ... it's just that I like having it on board for semi-medicinal reasons as a treatment for seasickness and lack of energy – not for me, but for those who show signs of "suffering". It works wonders)

Deep puts the finishing touches to the prop-brake mechanism



- Return and re-packing on deck of the dental gear used for the past four days in Oral Health Survey work around Luganville
- Planning work for the upcoming Supporters Tour
- Tidying of Chimere inside and out to make way for the new “mess” that was about to descend

Deep and Mallika sailed past mid-morning for a final good-bye wave as they departed the anchorage bound for Port Moresby. Once again they conveyed their heart-felt appreciation for the dental care provided, which I was very happy to accept on Barry's behalf.

Heading into town around lunchtime the tide was out and faced with the task of dragging the small dinghy up the beach (which is always a bit of a challenge) I looked around and spied a young man sitting under a tree who was more than willing to lend a hand. “Name belong yu?” I asked ... “My name is Godey”. We then chatted for a while about what he was doing and his future plans and interests, which in the short term revolved around attending to the family garden up in the bush and developing his music.

“What sort of music” I inquired ... “Guitar” was the answer. I then explained what we were doing and that come 6:30 tonight we would have a crowd onboard the yacht and if he wanted to come out for a few hours to play music with my son Matt, then he'd be most welcome. I even mentioned that we had a violin onboard and Matt might even be persuaded to play it for us.

As we parted Godey said ... “I will come tonight”

The new team members flying into Luganville from Australia on the evening flight from Port Vila included doctors Graeme & Jeremy Duke, nurse Cathy West, plus crew members Matt Bryant and Matt Latimer. Other team members already in town included crewmember Martin Burgess of Delivery Voyage and Mission 1 fame, plus dental worker Deb Allen, dentist Barry Stewart and helper Annette Vincent. Then there was PCV Health manager Richard Tatwin, dental care worker Bob Natuman and eyecare worker Jay. Plus local Ministry of Health employees, dentist Wellin and dental therapist Barkon. Hopefully that all adds up to 15.

Of course those coming in from Australian, as Barry and I had done last Sunday, would be tired puppies by the time they'd landed in Luganville around 5:30pm

Richard made the short trip out to the airport to meet everyone, with a taxi that was big enough to accommodate everyone, plus their gear. By 7:00pm excitement levels were high aboard Chimere as a mountain of bags and medical gear was loaded aboard in 4 trips from the beach and bunks and cabins were allocated. It didn't take long for healthy noises to begin emanating from the galley, suggesting some had taken the task of preparing dinner in hand.

As I made my way off the beach with the last load of passengers and gear a torch light could be seen making its way along the beach. It was actually after 7:00pm and I'd actually given up on seeing Godey, as arranged, but still I said out loud ... “Oh, I'd better go back and see if that's Godey”. On reaching the shallows I cut the engine and called to the light, now closer, “is that you Godey?” ... “YES, it's Godey”

Talk about cutting things fine.

Dinner was a wonderful tuna and bok choy ensemble on a bed of exotic, fast cooking noodles (2 minutes I think the packet said) Yes, the tuna caught a week ago by Bob and Jay at the end of Mission 3; a fish that keeps on giving!



Above: Waving good-bye to our new Dutch sailing friends, diverted from their Fiji to PNG voyage for emergency dental treatment

Below: Local lad Godey comes aboard briefly at Luganville for some fun music and to meet the Mission 4 team



Naturally there was an extra bowl of dinner for Godey who entertained us with his singing and guitar playing, including a very good rendition of what would have to be the all-time classic Vanuatu favourite ... Hotel California.

Matt did indeed get the “ship’s violin” out and amazed Godey and all of us with his playing. He even gave Godey his first violin lesson. If enthusiasm is any measure then Godey will go far, but by 10:00pm it was time to drop him ashore, with everyone sad to see his smiling face go.

Sleep and a satisfied calm finally overcame the boat around 11:00pm. Richard Tatwin, Wellin and Barkon were staying ashore with the agreement being that I would pick them up on the beach at 5:15am.

It must have been close to 11:30pm that I gave up on the idea of writing a Ships Log, as the distant doof doof beat of an onshore party, barking dogs and crowing roosters could be heard from onshore. (Yes, roosters, at 11:00pm. And as for the doof doof music, it was still playing at 3:00am when I got up briefly, then again at 5:00am when the alarm sounded!)

Smooth seas, fair breeze and Twas the night before Mission

Saturday 9 September 2017
Lolawai, Ambae Island



Below: Martin tidies the deck as Chimere heads out of Luganville down the Segond Channel while Richard and Wellin watch on



Above: Barkon, Bob, Richard and Wellin taking time to relax.

The day’s forecast looked promising, N-NE winds (most unusual!) less than 10 knots with seas less than 1m.

By 5:30am, the three remaining team members were onboard and by 5:45am we had retrieved the anchor and were heading down the Segond Channel, past Million Dollar Point to port and Aore Island to starboard.

As it turned out the wind eventually backed from the south east and with the engine ticking over in the background we made around 7 knots for much of the 46 mile hop, with a mix of sunshine and driving playing havoc with my washing

By 1:00pm we were lining up the white, onshore leads into the small and extremely snug Lolawai anchorage, passing one other anchored yacht, Alba with husband and wife Nick and Susan aboard who got to know Phil Wicks and his team on Mission 2, a couple of months earlier at Epi and Paama Islands

Congratulations go to Matt and Matt for organizing lunch just prior to arrival and once at anchor Richard, Jay, Wellin, Bob and Barkon went ashore to do their usual organizing. In brief, it’s church ashore tomorrow at 8:00, then set up for an afternoon clinic with a full day clinic on Monday.

Dr Graeme, Dr Jeremy & Nurse Cathy set up the Lolowai clinic while children look on through the window



The fish that keeps giving once more formed the basis of the evening meal, with the fish-head finally making its way off the boat (and out of the fridge where it had taken up half the bottom level) to feed the lads staying ashore

The large catamaran Rendezvous came into the anchorage in the afternoon. They do charter work around the islands, skippered by either Gary or Justin from the Port Vila boatyard. Today it was Gary in charge and we dropped over in the dinghy for a brief “g’day” as they awaited their “customers” return from a day’s fishing on a local motor boat.

Then after dinner, out of the darkness, a banana boat approached our port side with a couple of Ni-Vans aboard, plus an older Aussie man; a charter passenger off Rendezvous. Shining lights back-and forth I jokingly confirmed, “you not pirates I hope?!” to which the reply came that this man was out fishing today and a three-barb hook had gone into his lower leg, possibly hitting an artery because there was a lot of blood spurting out. The Ni-vans had managed to pull out the hook and it was bandaged so I suggested “... come on up the ladder”.

Not wanting to suggest that all emergencies aboard are of a dental nature, Dr Graeme Duke was called for this one. His first words without seeing the man were ... “Jeremy, I’ve got a referral for you ...” Jeremy was doing the dishes at the time and I think that’s where he stayed for most of the consultation because Graeme gave it a good once-over as the man explained that he’d had cancer in the leg and there were several screws holding the bone together which the hook might have got near. The long and the short of it was the bleeding had stopped, Graeme re-dressed it, gave him a course of anti-biotics to combat the inevitable risk of infection and said he was one very fortunate man. We wrapped his bandaged foot in a garbage bag – to keep it dry – for the 200m boat ride back to Rendezvous and to show their appreciation they gave Graeme one of the large tuna they had caught earlier in the day, plus some mandarins.

Who would have thought? More tuna, when we were just starting to run out?!

Good work Graeme. So far the emergency treatment score is neck-and-neck ... Barry 1 – Graeme 1. At the moment, it’s only the sound of the waves on the nearby beach, the chatter of fruit bats and the occasion rooster (yes at 11:00pm) I can hear as the first day of Mission 4 draws to a close.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and all aboard for the Lolowai express

Rob Latimer

[Carmel Noble](#), [Lorraine Rose](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Edith West](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Jeannette van Beveren](#) liked this post

Just when you thought

Sunday 10 September 2017

Lovely Lolawai

The ten “sleepers” onboard slowly emerged in their own time between 6:00 and 7:00am to a glorious morning; still seas, a gentle breeze and sun in the sky. Breakfast was a case of grazing to suit.

Richard, Bob, Jay, Wellin and Barkon stayed onshore and we’d be catching up with them later in the day.

The plan was to attend church around 8:00am, after which the dental and medical gear would be transferred to the black-sand beach to our stern, loaded on a truck (4wd)

and then taken to a community area for an afternoon clinic – plus of course more Oral Health Surveys



First stop Lolawai and transporting the gear ashore for the start of the day's clinic – Martin, Rob and Jeremy

By 7:30am I figured the generator could be turned on without interrupting anyone's sleep, or the onboard “vibe”; it's a quiet unit, but the noise is still a bit intrusive. Anyway, the battery voltage was getting lower and lower over the previous 24 hours as laptops, phones, cameras, GPS units, VHF radios, torches, iPads, dental headlamps, and I'm sure other things I can't remember, sucked AMPS from the battery bank – which is the way it's meant to be of course. On the panel the battery monitor had gone from “green bars” to two “yellow bars”, which is just one stop before a single “red bar” and truly uncharted territory.

After turning on the generator, then the breaker switch, I checked the charge-rate on the panel and quickly discovered nothing was going into the batteries. Nothing! No AMPS whatsoever. Most perplexing. I did the usual re-checking of things and eventually ended up at the Xantrex battery charger behind the saloon seat, a trusty unit that has been working faithfully for at least 7 years. Today, however, it showed no lights whatsoever and gave the appearance of being turned off, even though the switch on the wall clearly indicated it was receiving 240v power from the generator.

I pressed the unit's “On” button and an “Err” message displayed in red, followed by a “CHF” message. A quick look in the manual (yes we blokes do eventually read the manual) revealed the following:

Err = Error CHF = Charger Hardware Fault, “Call for Service”

At this point things began to look a bit bleak because we rely on this Battery Charger to, well, charge batteries. In short, something that's essential to the operation of the mission. I quietly excused myself and motored over to Gary, the skipper of the large charter catamaran “Rendezvous” (whose fishing customer came over for medical assistance last night from Graeme) still anchored in the bay.

Gary is the step father of the owner of “The Boatyard” in Port Vila and someone I thought could give me a few tips. After the initial ... “hey thanks so much to you guys for giving medical care to one of our guests last night”, and then

over a coffee, hearing all the things that can and have, gone wrong on a boat where guests are paying \$3,000 per day – from blocked toilets and faulty cabin lights to broken alternators and water pumps – he suggested I talk with Bradley at Santo Hardware, or Justin at Port Vila. We discussed some possible strategies, but everything seemed to point to us returning to Luganville overnight, leaving the medical and dental team here to live ashore and then returning tomorrow night for Tuesday morning's departure to the next island ... hopefully having obtained a new battery charger in the process.

Returning to Chimere everyone headed off to church except me, Matt Bryant and Matt Latimer – affectionately known as “Old” Matt and “Young” Matt. Old and Young Matt's job was to pull the charger apart to see what might be done to fix it ... my equivalent of “Calling for Service”

In the end the unit was declared “dead” and so it was agreed that the charging of the batteries will now be done solely by the alternator attached to the main engine, and that we should make a judgement about a quick dash back to Luganville after fully checking the main engines ability to fully charge the batteries.

We then proceeded to turn on the main engine and after checking the charge-rate on the panel it became apparent that here too there was no charge ... no AMPS ... going into the batteries. There was also no revs showing on the panel – a sure indicator of a dead alternator.

At this point the battery voltage was hovering around 12 and there was possibly another couple of days charge before the lights went out ... and fridge, freezer, radio, laptops, phones etc etc ... So where do you get a new alternator in a remote village, on a lonely island, miles from anywhere? As it turns out, at the bottom of the wardrobe in the captain's cabin (now occupied by Annette and Cathy) all wrapped up in its new cardboard box after being purchased a week before setting out from Westernport (Australia) back in May.

Two hours later we had replaced the alternator ... actually, when I say “we” ... I did hold the torch a lot and at one point even fed (young) Matt a banana. This was necessary because Matt had squeezed himself under the floor in order to gain better access to the unit on the front of the motor. He might be tall, but he was the skinniest of us all

Finally the main engine ... our beloved Perkins ... was fired up and the charge-rate showed 40 AMPS going into the batteries ... to much jubilation all round.

The result ...? We do not have to sail back to Luganville tonight, only to then return for Tuesday morning!! Yeh!! And we can charge our batteries using the main engine alone.

I know it was a mistake to declare out loud that problems often come in “threes”. Here were two big problems in short succession – the dead battery charger and the dead alternator – and again I wondered out loud “I wonder what might be next?”

Matt Bryant and Matt Latimer work on replacing the engine's alternator (with a new one from Chimere's storeroom) following the failure of the main battery charger and the old alternator.



As it turned out I didn't have long to wait. Maybe two hours tops. It came as I returned from transporting gear to the beach. The 25hp motor on the back of the large dinghy was behaving "funny". It seemed to lack power. On closer inspection it was revealed that the back of the boat, the "transom", to which the motor is attached, was moving. In short, cracks had appeared between the sides and the transom, due to 8 years of metal fatigue in a spot that takes a large amount of stress. Not only when accelerating, but every time the motor is raised and lowered.

On return to Chimere, we lifted the dinghy aboard and Martin and I set about bolting and riveting aluminium angle-brackets in the vital spots, only completing the task in the fading light.

We look forward to inflating the dinghy again and testing it out tomorrow.
In "Clinic & Survey News"...

Doctors Duke & Duke continue to make referrals to each other – although from what I hear it's a one-way street currently

A total of 12 dental surveys were conducted in just 3 hours, with the occasional rain leading to some pretty wet volunteers

More news and a broader range of mission perspectives can be obtained from the following websites:

Graeme Duke: www.dukenews.wordpress.com

Annette Vincent: www.vincentsinvanuatu.blogspot.com

Smooth seas, fair breeze and just when you thought ...

Rob Latimer

[Lois Noye](#), [Nicole Fox](#), [Laura Langman](#), [Lola Janine Bryant](#), [Edith West](#), [Liz Bolton](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post

Today it rained, and rained

Monday 11 September 2017
Lolawai Anchorage, Ambae

When I say it rained, I mean, it really did rain.

Which wouldn't normally be a problem, but our "brief" from Richard last night was to ... "be ashore at 8:00am for the official welcome at the hospital ... in our official shirts" Around 7:00am, aboard Chimere, as everyone was getting stuck into breakfast, the rain had already been coming down for an hour or so, with no sign of abating. The dinghy was wet and filling

fast, water was flowing along the deck and just a few seconds in the downpour had you absolutely drenched.

I know this, because I was keen to catch as much of the water as possible – in the tanks, thereby reducing the need to run the generator and desalinator; which we will need to do tomorrow. This involved me wearing just my bathers



Lolawai hospital didn't seem to know we were coming, with the rain just adding to the slow and frustrating start to the day

and working in the rain to plug up the drain holes along the deck and then simply waiting for the water level to rise. The fresh water then just poured into the filler hole on the port side.

Around this time, as “ready to go ashore noises” could start being heard I said to (old) Matt, “we’re all going to get drenched ... just getting into the dinghy”

The thought then occurred to me to make a tarpaulin cover for the dinghy, supported by a central pole, for the passengers to shelter under.

This all worked well and there was even a second tarpaulin for the first load of six to shelter under as they walked in close step, centipede-style, the 400 metres from the landing to the hospital. It was a funny sight, but I suppose you had to be there. Dressed only in my bathers I was too wet to care and it was amusing to see some of the local lads lathered up in soap taking advantage of the opportunity to have a shower. It seems this was the first rain to fall in this region for some time.

The good news is that all ten from the boat were ready (and dry) at 8:00am as instructed, the bad news is that the rain had caused many others, including Richard, Bob, Wellin, Barkon and Jay to be delayed, with few people venturing out; for any reason, including medical and dental attention.

By 8:45am there seemed little sign of “official action” and so (old) Matt and I requested leave to return to Chimere to work through the day’s important tasks. This included running the main engine all day to charge the batteries, baking bread, cleaning and many other small things that seem to just fill in the day.

The weather slowly cleared through the afternoon and around 5:00pm it was time to reload everything back aboard, with the large dinghy now back in the water with a repaired transom that performed as good as new.

It was fascinating to hear Barry’s ‘dental stories’ from the day’s clinic, as well as Graeme and Jeremy’s medical cases – we’ll be hearing more from them in due course. If Graeme is able to get internet coverage, then “his side” of the MSM mission can be found here ...

www.dukenews.wordpress.com

Although, as an unauthorized commentary and account, Graeme warns that in this age of “fake news” it can’t be fully relied upon. Team member, Annette Vincent, has a blog running here ... www.vincentsinvanuatu.blogspot.com

It’s now still, starry and silent, in contrast to earlier in the day, apart from the usual chatter and “going to bed noises” of 10 people living in a space about the size of an average lounge room

Tomorrow we pick the five Ni-Vans up from the beach around 6:00am with our plan being to head off to the nearby island of Maewo and the village of Naravorovo; although we like to say the name with a few more ... “orovos” for added effect

Smooth seas, fair breeze and today it rained, and rained ...

Rob Latimer

[Martyn Vincent](#), [Lola Janine Bryant](#), [Liz Bolton](#), [Sue Duke](#) liked this post



Above: After a slow start to the day, Jay gets down to testing eyes .

Below: Graeme Duke makes good use of his swim to also give Chimere’s bottom a scrub



Hey, there's a giant turtle

Tuesday 12 September 2017

Nasawa Village, Maewo

Last night I wrongly informed everyone that we were headed for the village of Naravorovo on the island of Maewo (pro: My-woe). Well I got the Maewo bit right, (hard to miss a whole island) but I misled you on the village. Simple mistake. It's actually Nasawa. Pity really, because the village of "Nasawa" isn't nearly as much fun to say as Naravorovo.

They are close, about 10 minutes by boat, and fortunately the anchorage is pretty good – sand at a depth of 10m with minimal roll.



After two nights at Lolowai it was onto a warm welcome at the Village of Nasawa (Maewo)

Getting here from Loloawi took about 2 hours, with the 20-25 knot breeze off the starboard bow pushing us along at around 6-7 knots with just the jib hoisted; plus the engine ticking over in the back ground at 1200rpm, mostly to charge the batteries.

The Ni-van dentist, Wellin, from the Ministry of Health and his dental hygienist colleague, Barkon, quite clearly had gained their sea-legs after day one, when they were starting to feel queasy in the calm of the Second Channel; before we'd even made it into open water. On the other hand, it might have had something to do with being prescribed one of Graeme Duke's "Power Pills"; with more likely to be handed out before the mission is complete. The rain was off and on all day, with the transfer of the five from shore at 6:00am being a relatively smooth, and dry, exercise.

The island of Maewo was shrouded in a cloudy mist, obscuring all but the bottom third of the 1000m high central mountain ridge. As we got closer, more detail could be made out ashore, with a spectacular waterfall in one spot carving a vertical swath through the otherwise jungle-green terrain.

Our initial landfall was a bit too far north and after a phone call from Richard to the local nurse, it was confirmed that we were indeed at the wrong place – Naravorovo – when in fact we should be at Nasawa (not as much fun to say)

"I'm standing on the shore holding an umbrella" said the nurse on the phone. "Can anyone see someone ashore with an umbrella?" yelled Richard.

Soon we were in the correct bay and had found some sand amongst the coral on which to sink our anchor. But not before sending Martin over the side with his flippers (known in the local language Bislama as ... "leg blong duck

duck” ... and mask to confirm the best spot to release the chain, making absolutely sure we weren’t going to get caught up on a big rock of coral reef.

“Hey, there’s a giant turtle!!” yelled Martin ... “ask him how old he is” someone yelled back.

It was sometime later that Martin made it back to the boat, well after we’d dropped anchor and turned off the engine, truly enjoying his task and making his way around the whole bay looking at the coral here, and the coral there... Always good to enjoy your work.

Launching the dinghy, I went ashore with Richard, Bob, Jay and Wellin to check where the clinic was to be set up, and the accommodation for the medical team ashore.



Village of Nasawa (Maewo), onshore bungalow accommodation for most: l-r Bob, Wellin, Jay, Graeme, Barkon, Deb, Barry, Annette, Richard, Cathy and Jeremy – the other four, Matt, Matt, Rob and Martin are probably looking after Chimere

My first impressions of Nasawa are that it seemed like a little piece of paradise. A waterfall up the valley leading to a river running through the village. Buildings, including the clinic, school, church, bungalow-house, market-building and private homes spread out along the coast amidst lush lawn, gardens, trees and forest. The “beach” was enough to make most from the UK homesick, comprising uniformly round stones from really small at the water’s edge, to much larger further up the steep bank. Chickens, cows, pigs and the occasional dog, wandered peacefully around at leisure and we followed the local custom of shaking hands and saying hello to the strangers we met; from old ladies with walking sticks to little kids with their mums.



By 12:00 noon all the medical and dental gear had been transferred ashore and carried a few hundred metres to the local medical centre, with the bags and other belongings of the medical team transported to the bungalow, just up from the water’s edge, but a few minutes further up the coast

We all had lunch ashore together, provided by the bungalow owners, and around 1:30pm the medical folk began

doing their thing at the nearby clinic, with the four sailors, Matt, Matt, Martin & Rob (me) returning to Chimere for a cup of tea and a good lie down.

Much like Lolawai, there will be a full-day's clinic tomorrow, and if things go to plan I'll have contributions from other team members to include soon.

At clinic closing time there was an opportunity to swim and play on the nearby rocky-beach with the locals as the sun got closer to the horizon out to the western horizon; a walk up to the waterfall above town somehow being a problem due to the recent rain causing the track to become too muddy and slippery.



Above: No sandcastles here at Nasawa, only stonecastles.

Below: Having fun with the locals at the waterhole
Left: Trench dug by locals for the hydro-power that will one day come



Smooth seas, fair breeze and hey, there's a giant turtle

Rob Latimer

[Thea Kooy](#), [Mark Stephenson](#), [Edith West](#), [Lorraine Rose](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Laura Langman](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Sue Duke](#), [Liz Bolton](#) liked this post

Two teams – One family

Thursday 14 September 2017

By Matt Bryant – 1st mate mission 4

As a member of the sailing team (and a return volunteer from 2013) it is my mission and my passion, to transport the medical team safely between destinations; some of which are truly idyllic bays.

Although we are two teams – sailors and medical/dental/optical – we really are one family as we live in close quarters, learn about each other's children, business interests, hobbies and how they take their tea and coffee.



Most of the team: l-r Graeme, Rob, Barkon, Jeremy, Bob, Cathy, Richard, Matt, Wellin, Annette, Deb, Martin & Barry

In my “normal” sailing I am used to racing boats that normally consist of short passages, where everything is “state of the art”, lightweight to go fast. Chimere on the other hand is strong, sure, robust and with a purpose set for a long voyage.

Here's a summary of the Mission's journey so far ...

Lolawai

The entrance to Lolawai shouts South Pacific pearl. Steep cliffs, green water, palm trees with heavy vegetation. A safe anchorage awaits.

When we arrived the people of Lolawai were celebrating Mother's day (loosely translated) which was great fun. They took turns calling groups up to dance, sometimes traditional, other times disco with Michael Jackson tunes popular. We made friends with Celia who encouraged us to the dance floor (dirt). Not sure what they made of Matt L and Jeremy as they entertained all with their digging ditches dance. I love the way the locals laugh being both raucous and infectious.

Nasawa Village, Maewo Island

Nasawa is surely one of the prettiest anchorages (although they have a habit of getting better) with a waterfall and a river running through the village. They have wonderful volcanic soil and plenty of water. I am sure they can grow anything. We enjoyed coconut, bananas and a lunch of snake bean, small meat and way too much rice – “medical team” time for a talk.

While the medical team did their role we heard of an electrical problem they were suffering in the dispensary – no lights. The lights were installed 12 years ago, worked for 2 or 3 and have not worked since. Surely it must be something simple was Captain Rob's cry. With trepidation we attempted to sort it out. Bad batteries, bad regulator, only 1 solar panel working, missing parts, what can go wrong?

Matt L and I jury rigged the setup and did a bit of surgery. After a few hours it was not looking good and we had basically given up when a local ran in and announced a light was working. We had success! I have to admit it was daylight and probably the solar panel was running it. Hopefully the batteries will charge but we skipped town by nightfall, so we can only hope. We celebrated with some awesome snorkelling over coral and a guided tour of the waterfall by enthusiastic youngsters.

Lolawai to Merelava

Today we travelled 42 Nautical miles, with about half in rough conditions of 25Knot winds, 3M swell and chop. The wind was east off the starboard side and with the speed regularly exceeding 8kts, we ended up averaging 7 knots; so it was a 6 hour run.



Richard, Wellin & Barkon relax aboard Chimere between anchorages

We had 15 on-board including 5 Ni-Van's . To their credit no one was sick as they are starting to settle into the rhythm of the boat, the sounds, motion and most importantly where to get a good handhold as we cop another rogue wave across the aft quarter.

Merelava

Captain Rob is the king of anchoring! A strong SE wind howls as we inch up to a rocky outcrop which provides only a slither of shelter. I am at the helm as we spot anchors painted on the rocks, this must be the spot but it can't be as the wind continues to howl.

Finally, we rest in that protected slither first go. Later we put out a stern anchor so that we remain in our slither of protection only 20 metres from angry rocks. The wind howls around us but Chimere provides us safe protection. On the plus side the washing is dry!

Smooth seas, two teams – one family

Matt Bryant

[Lois Nove](#), [Martyn Vincent](#), [Norma Harbour](#), [Lola Janine Bryant](#), [Andrew McDonald](#), [Liz Bolton](#), [Thea Kooy](#), [Edith West](#) liked this post

The Ups and Downs of Merelava

Friday 15 September 2017

Tasmat Village Anchorage, Merelava Island

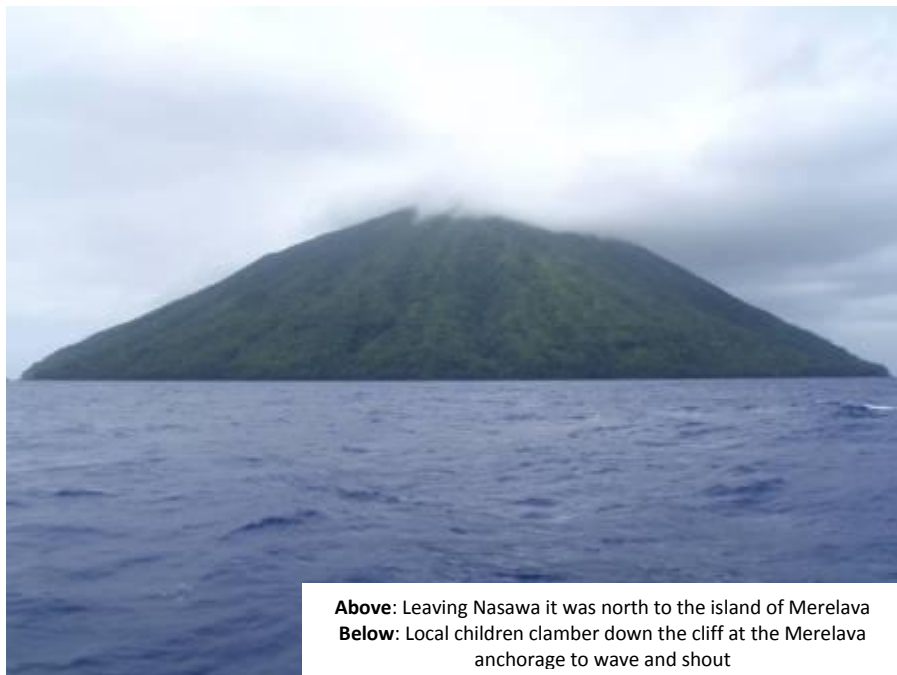
Introduction by Rob Latimer

There's something very special about Merelava. This is our fourth visit in eight years. Each time similar but each time very different.

First there's the scale and remoteness of the place. Ninety nautical miles NE of the regional centre of Luganville, out on its own in the ocean, rising 1,000 metres into the air and just 4-5 km wide. A jungle-covered cone, a once-active volcano, surrounded by a sharp, black volcanic rock ledge.

Then there's the people. A resilient, welcoming, generous bunch who seem incredibly fit on account of the steepness of the terrain and just how physical and challenging everything is here.

On arrival, many of the local kids clambered excitedly over the rocks that rise from the sea near the anchorage, leaving your heart in your mouth, hoping beyond hope they didn't trip and fall onto the rocks below, or into the sea. But no chance of that. These kids are agile like no others. Following the kids were pigs of different sizes and colours also negotiating the rock-hopping track.



Above: Leaving Nasawa it was north to the island of Merelava
Below: Local children clamber down the cliff at the Merelava anchorage to wave and shout



As the kid-numbers grew there was much squealing, yelling and hand waving as we secured the main anchor and then the stern anchor, all the while the wind howled and the rain-showers came and went.

Despite the rough seas off the point, this little corner of the island, fairly close to the rocky coast and below the village of Tasmat, provided a sufficiently calm anchorage, with a sandy bottom of between 5-12 metres, to make life aboard bearable.

On arrival, yesterday morning, the gear and people were transported ashore and with lots of willing hands, the considerable pile of gear was carried up the steep track to the village.

Through the night, torrential rain and wind gusts down off the island in the order of 30-40 knots kept our wind generator operating at maximum capacity. The anchor held well and whilst the rain seemed to have passed, the wind gusts remained strong all day.

Our amazing Survey assistant Annette takes up the story from an on-shore, clinic perspective ...

By Annette Vincent – Misfit, Mission 4

I describe myself as misfit on two counts –

- 1) that I am neither medical nor sailing crew, so counting myself very fortunate if somewhat confused to be included on this mission, and
- 2) that I am the lone Kiwi among a crowd of Australians!

Seriously, I have been volunteering with Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV) in Port Vila along with my husband for 6 months, and I happened to get involved as a recorder for the National Oral Health Survey on the Missions around Efate, so my application to join Mission 4 described me as Nambawan Recorder and Generally Useful Person – and it worked!

Day 2 on Merelava – So far every day has brought some sort of an adventure. Just getting to our clinic today was an adventure. The first challenge (excluding getting up after a night of rocking and rolling in a strong wind and only our sliver of protection) was getting from the dinghy onto the wet and slippery rocks on shore in the still strong wind and significant swell.

Captain Robert did an excellent job of holding the dinghy hard up against the rocks so we could achieve this. All our equipment had been carried up to Tasmat village the previous afternoon, but even with just our own day packs it was quite a hike up a very steep path, with more slippery rocks and tree roots to negotiate – the second challenge. I arrived bathed in sweat – so much for having a shower last night!

However, once there, the warm welcome by the people made it all worthwhile. We achieved the target for the Oral Health Survey, and there were plenty of people requiring medical, dental and optical treatment.

At lunchtime, there was fun and games with the children, instigated by Deb getting the team to do the Hokey Pokey and teach it to the local children. They thought it was hilarious watching us doing it first, but then they had lots of fun joining in. There followed several more games with Deb and Martin teaching the children some and then Greslin, the church secretary, getting the children organised to teach us some.



There were plenty of adults sitting around the perimeter of the village communal area, thoroughly enjoying the spectacle.

Richard then started teaching the children some cricket skills. Three cricket bats and several tennis balls appeared, and a short section of coconut tree trunk and a box of soap made adequate wickets. After a



The many faces of Annette Vincent



few variations on the game, there was great fun with several batters and balls and lots of catching, running and fetching, and of course giggles.



Above & Below: Unloading at the very “average” Merelava anchorage before the strenuous climb UP to the village of Tasmat



Merelava is a steep cone of black rock, covered with lush vegetation apart from a skirt of bare rock around the base. Not many boats come here because there is no good harbour and landing is difficult, so our visit was much appreciated. The village and the climb up to it are truly beautiful, and although the climb down again was a bit scary, none of us have any regrets about going there.

There was minor injury along that path on both the way up and down, with Dr Graeme Duke going for a slide each time and acquiring two minor scrapes. Our local helpers negotiated it with apparent ease while wearing jandals (thongs for those from the West Island) and carrying boxes of our medical supplies! However Kresline told us she had previously broken her leg on that path – wish she had told us after we had completed it not when we were on the worst section!

As we departed on the dinghy, a few small girls waved us goodbye from the rocks – they were so cute that Rob had to do a loop around in the dinghy to get a photo of them. The people are so wonderful, and we had a very special time there but we have other islands to visit, so it is time for farewell.

Fair breeze, smooth seas and the Ups and Downs of Merelava.

Annette Vincent

[Maria Tierney](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Martyn Vincent](#), [Anne Simmons](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Sue Duke](#), [Clare Veronica](#), [Edith West](#), [Liz Bolton](#) liked this post



It's excitement all-round after making a safe and successful landing at the island of Merelava. White painted anchors on the rocks are useful aids to navigation



Chimere lies at anchor below the village of Tasmat, Merelava



Dental therapist Barkon and Bob wait for the next patient



Above: Dentist Wellin takes a break from the clinic while the Merelava children show off their oral health kits

My hero ... Leg blong duck duck boy !!

Saturday 16 September 2017

Losolava Anchorage, East Coast Gaua Island

Introduction by Rob Latimer

After two nights anchored at Merelava in less than ideal conditions we headed off to the island of Gaua (aka Santa Maria), getting away a little later than expected, as crew member Martin explains below.

With a 20-30 knot wind from behind and seas in the order of 3 metres with an untidy chop of a further 1 metre, it was a fast, rolly ride.

The entrance to Losolava is through a gap in the outer reef with surf breaking each side, a reminder, if one was needed, that any mistake can be costly.

After dropping anchor and having lunch it was time to go ashore and meet with the local health worker (who was expecting us) and work out specific clinic and survey details for the next two days.

Over to Martin, our carry-over crew champion from Mission 1 and the Voyage over from Australia ...

*Halo, nem blong mi **Martin** and today I am blogging.*

This morning, Saturday 16th September, between 5:00am and 6am we prepared to leave Merelava Island enroute to Losalava Bay on Gaua Island. A 5 hour sail in 20 to 30 knot South Easterly I believe; fortunately the winds were behind us!

While at Merelava we had a bow and stern anchor down to keep us steady from the winds and swell, and it all worked well.

Time to leave! We started winching in the stern anchor line first to drag us out to slightly deeper water. Good idea, as we were anchored fairly close to the shoreline and some serious looking rock formations.

The stern line becomes particularly hard to winch in. That makes sense we thought, after all we were pulling good old Chimere, beam first, out. So let's put some muscle in and keep winching. Bad idea!! Broken stern line with now about 20 metres of line plus anchor chain plus anchor at the bottom! So much for our 6am getaway.

We could have just sailed away and put it down to experience. An important, and expensive life-lesson. But that anchor and chain



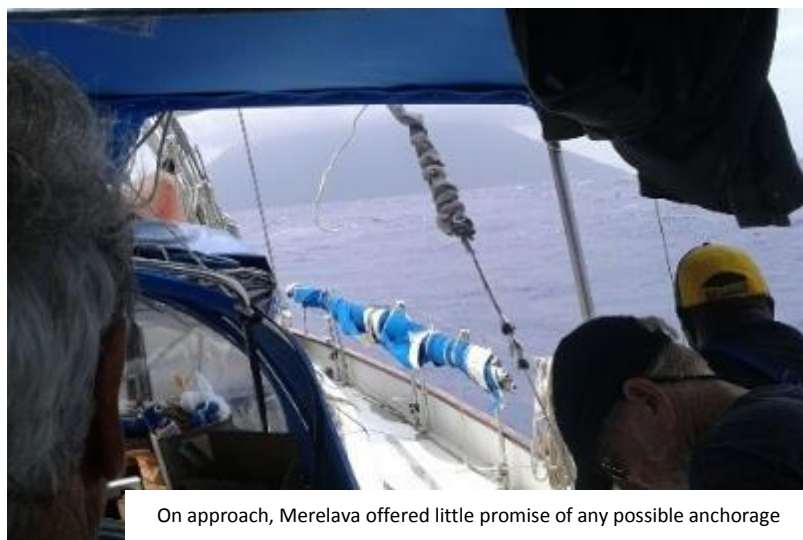
Above: Kids wave a final farewell from the rock landing at the island of Merelava

Below: Deb and Martin look alert, but not alarmed as Chimere heads out to sea once more



needs retrieving of course so it's time for someone on board to don the snorkelling gear and go for a swim. So who is the resident snorkeler/diver? Oh wait, that's me. Me, the one who is so not a morning person. Not to worry, the water is warm and the anchor can't be that far down.

Plan A, I can easily jump in, swim to the bottom, collect the rope and be back on board Chimere in 15 minutes. Who am I kidding!!

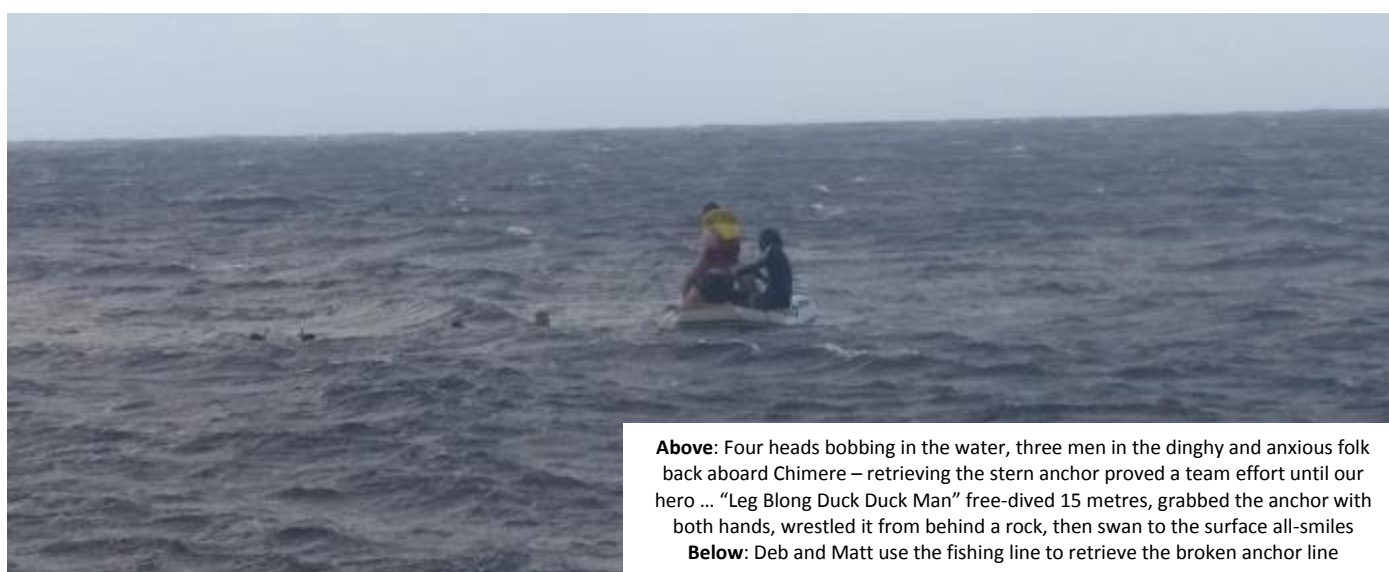


On approach, Merelava offered little promise of any possible anchorage

The anchor rope is lying nicely along the bottom, maybe 9 or 10 metres down, probably 2 or 3 metres too deep for this 50+ snorkeler, the anchor itself was further out in maybe 15 metres of water. After a couple of attempts that fall agonisingly short we go for **Plan B**. Send down a fishing line and lure, hook the rope and bring it up. Success first time. So, now I have the end of the anchor rope in 1 hand, about 25 metres from Chimere and a rope will not be pulled back to the boat.

Plan C, enter team Latimer; Rob and Matt and the dinghy, to take the rope from me and pull it up. Easy solution – NOT! As I swim along the length of the rope and along the anchor chain it

is obvious the chain is hooked under a large rock formation and the anchor is up against yet another rock. We are now 30 minutes into this salvage operation. But we won't be deterred.



Above: Four heads bobbing in the water, three men in the dinghy and anxious folk back aboard Chimere – retrieving the stern anchor proved a team effort until our hero ... "Leg Blong Duck Duck Man" free-dived 15 metres, grabbed the anchor with both hands, wrestled it from behind a rock, then swan to the surface all-smiles
Below: Deb and Matt use the fishing line to retrieve the broken anchor line

Plan D, I direct the dinghy, now with three of our Ni-van team members – a dentist, a dental therapist and an eyecare worker – in the water with me, to go this way and that to get that anchor chain free from the rocks. More success, the chain is free. Matt now pulls up the rope and anchor chain until it is taught, but alas the anchor is not going to let go of that rock.

With that Matt decides to gracefully exit the dingy head first with his ever-loving father hanging onto his feet but who quickly realises this is guaranteed to drown his first born, and so he lets go causing Matt to



fall completely overboard. With cheers from the yacht with diving scores from 7 to 10, Matt climbs back into the dinghy.

Plan E, we now have 4 young Ni-van boys from the village in the water with us, three wearing swimming shorts and one of about 12 years of age, who either did not have time to put his on or thought swimming naked was more efficient.

After a couple of unsuccessful attempts by me to get down the 15 metres or so to the anchor to free it and more attempts by team Latimer to manoeuvre it free with the dinghy, I see a Ni-van boy of maybe 15 years of age borrow his friends flippers (known as leg blong duck duck in the Bislama language) take one big breathe and swim down. I'm thinking 'good effort lad but you won't get down that far and still have breath to free the anchor. But down he goes and yes, he does get to the anchor. Wow, great effort. I'm impressed. But now what, I ask. You are too small and slight to free the anchor and surely you need to come up for some air.

Wrong again!

He takes hold of that anchor, gives it a mighty heave, and sets it free. Now I'm in awe! But he's still a long way down and must be struggling.

I stay on the surface and then watch him as he gracefully powers back to the surface for a much needed breathe of fresh air.

Seriously that was amazing to watch and I am glad I got to see it. Maybe he collects lobster on a daily basis, maybe crab or turtle or maybe he is just one young man with ability, a passion to succeed and one great set of lungs. As he gives the leg blong duck duck back to his friend, I yell to him and clap my hands. He turns, gives me a smile and a wave and swims back to shore and probably off to school. Easy, he's probably thinking. That was just a bit of fun.

For me I just swim back to Chimere, climb aboard and tell everyone what I just witnessed. What started as a bad morning for Chimere, her crew and I ended up being yet another fantastic adventure in beautiful Vanuatu. So, until next time good night from all of us on board Chimere.

Martin Burgess

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



Below: After finally retrieving the stern anchor Chimere leaves the island of Merelava in her wake as Graeme takes the helm. Richard, Barkon and Bob take the opportunity to recline on the foredeck



Sunday – morning of rest at least

Losolava, Gaua Island

Sunday 17 September 2017

For some people in the village of Losolava Sunday is their day of rest, for others it's Saturday; it all depends on your denomination. There's a rumour that some fall into the "two denomination" category in order to get both days off, but maybe that's being a bit unkind.

Nonetheless, it was a lazy start to the day for the MSM team, with 6-7:00am sleep-ins all round; sheer luxury. Church ashore was at 8:00am, this time of the "Traditional" Anglican persuasion, with robes, candles and bells, plus the expected Melanesian singing; which did not disappoint.

It was decided to set up clinic in the church building itself, after lunch. So it was that around 12:30pm all the dental, medical and optometry gear had been transported ashore and carted piece by piece the short distance from the landing.

A queue of hopeful patients soon formed under the nearby mango tree, keeping the team busy all afternoon. About 40 medical consultations and around 20 dental, not to mention eye tests and the dispensing of spectacles. Tomorrow the clinic will be relocated 5 minutes down the track to the official village clinic building. A "neutral" piece of ground for those locals who felt uneasy about today's (Anglican) venue. As for the PCV Health and MSM, we are truly ecumenical, treating all-comers and in all villages – even those of the French persuasion, Roman Catholics and non-name brands?!

To find out more about the medical side of the mission, go to Graeme Duke's (unauthorized) MSM blog at ... www.dukenews.wordpress.com

While most were at the church service (older) Matt ran Chimere's main engine and generator to both charge the batteries and run the water maker; both of which were getting low.

Returning to Chimere I started the process of making two loaves of bread, plus a slice-cake- like concoction known as "Logan Bread", packed aboard in batch-sized, easy to prepare bags by Edith West, a wonderful MSM supporter and also the mother of team nurse Cathy as it turns out.

It was then time to track down the man I was keen to meet, having seen him briefly yesterday when we landed, Chief John Star. John is a paramount chief and a man I'd met on three previous occasions, (we'd even [given him a lift to the next island north, Vanualava](#) in 2009) but we'd only ever met him on the west coast of this island, which is where I'd hoped to see him again this time. John had "retired" to Losalava, on the east coast to live with his son and family; his son (Jonathan) being a school teacher.

Having found the chief and hosting him and the primary school principal, Mark, out on Chimere, I was able to present him with a gift. It was an unusual gift in many ways, a carved wooden statue of two dolphins, around 30cm high (about a foot for the older folk). I came across the statue in Melbourne last year quite by accident and immediately thought of Chief John Star. At the time I had no idea how to get it to him, and had it sitting in my office with a Post-It note stuck to it that read – for Chief John Star, Lakona Bay West Coast Gaua – and here I am, able to give it to him in person



Chief John Star on our first visit to Lakona Bay, Gaua in 2009

And why two dolphins? Well back in 2009, our first MSM sailing mission to Vanuatu, it was John who had met us on arrival in the remote Lakona Bay. He was paddling his dugout canoe and wore a cap with the word "Manager" on

it. In the course of showing us where to anchor John tapped the side of his canoe twice and two dolphins leapt out the still water behind him. I remember being totally surprised and amazed and exclaimed something like ... “do that again” ... which he did, with the same result.

Four years later on a return visit in 2013, several men of the village put on a kastom dance for us to film, to assist them in promoting a festival they were

Rob meets Chief John Star again and presents him with a wooden carving of two dolphins



intending to start the next year. (Matt – the younger – put a video online which you should be able to view by searching “Lakona Bay Kastom festival youtube”) One of the head-dress costumes in the dance, depicted a model of two dolphins, in memory of the two dolphins who had lived for a time in the local bay.

Hence the immediate connection between Chief John Star and the two dolphin statue

John was delighted with the gift and so that the school principal didn't go away empty handed, I promised we'd try and fix the leaking tap on a 5,000 litre water tank I'd noticed earlier in the day at the Primary School when I'd walked to John's home. Plus some fiberglass resin, matting, sandpaper and miscellaneous bits to help repair a hole in his 1,000 litre fiberglass personal water tank.

Back at the clinic late-afternoon things were starting to slow down, but there was a need to do a dash back to Chimere in the dinghy to obtain an asthma preparation for a woman in late stage pregnancy.

On top of this there was a woman on one of the other two yachts in the bay (definitely NOT a local) who had an infected foot and needed a reassuring word or two from a doctor, (or a word from two doctors – which we have) plus some antibiotics. There was the added complication that her husband and the wife of the man on the other boat, had gone for a walk to the famous inland jungle waterfall, which was supposedly a 4 hour roundtrip trek. “They haven't run off together” both the remaining wife and husband assured us ... several times ... which had me thinking Shakespeare and the line “... she protesteth too much” ... but who am I to judge.

By now it was around 7:00pm, pitch black, and their respective spouses, (plus their young local guide Stuart) were at least four hours overdue, given they'd left at 9:00am this morning and the 4 hour round trip estimate was probably really 6 hours after adjusting for Ni-Van distance.

Matt (the older) and I drove our dinghy to a few landing spots around the bay and radioed Richard ashore to see if there had been any word of the travellers, (who didn't take their own radio, after all they were only going to be 4 hours ?!) Richard informed me that if they weren't back in 1 hour that he would inform the local leaders and they would start a night search up the track, but very fortunately, to the relief of everyone, a small light could be seen travelling across the water in the direction of the neighbouring yacht.

I'd love to have been a fly on the wall when those two individuals stepped aboard their respective yachts ... stay tuned to the next exciting instalment ?!

Tomorrow we plan to run another half-day clinic and extend it to full-day if numbers demand. If things go quiet, we'll load the "circus" aboard Chimere around lunchtime for a 1:00pm departure to the other side of the island; a sail of around 3 hours.

Good news from the National Oral Health Survey front is that all the required participants were assessed for this village.

In addition to running the clinic, Graeme has requested the two Matts to have a look at the solar power system at the official village clinic building. A structure with which past MSM crew members are very familiar, having worked on it in 2009 and then again in 2013; including taps on two rain water tanks, gutters, downpipes and roof paint, plus the construction of stairs and some veranda strengthening. The building is starting feel like an old friend!!

Smooth seas, fair breeze and Sunday – morning of rest at least

Rob Latimer

[Evelyn Lugto Stewart](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Liz Bolton](#), [Sue Duke](#) liked this post

The stuff of dreams

Lakona Bay, Gaua Island

Monday 18 September 2017

The day dawned sunny, no sign of rain, with the wind abating. The distant roar of the surf on the outer reef seemed to have dropped a notch and all seemed right with the world.

After last night's later-than-expected-return from their inland bush walk, the folk off the neighbouring yachts were keeping a low profile with no sign of life on deck or in their dinghies.

All the dental and medical gear was ashore from yesterday's well-attended half-day clinic in the Anglican church building so one of Richard's first jobs was to obtain a local truck to assist in relocating everything to the regional clinic building a short distance away.

Barry Stewart remained aboard sorting supplies on deck, leaving the dental work to Wellin and Bakon.

Everyone else went ashore, in two dinghy loads, and assumed their assigned roles. Matt and Matt, got to know the enthusiastic local nurse Stephen very well as he showed them the faulty solar power system that would not run the

clinic fridge; a problem that had persisted for many years. Stephen dubbed our two Matts ... Senior and Junior ... and was truly overjoyed when a faulty, corroded wire was diagnosed as the problem. After fixing the wires the fridge once more began purring in the corner. A wonderful thing !

Bakon and Bob at the end of a successful clinic and ready to carry the gear down to the dinghy for loading back onto Chimere once more



Meanwhile Martin, Jay (the eyecare worker) and I, walked off to the local Primary School armed with a bag of tools, repair-goo and teflon tape to fix the tap on the school water tank. (Plus a bag of tooth brushes to give away) While doing this we met principal Benjamin as well as Chief John Star, again, but this time also his wife Susan.

While there, I inquired about the supply of fruit – bananas, pamplemousse (grapefruit) and whatever else might be available – that I was promised by school chairman Mark yesterday in exchange for the epoxy and fiberglass matting, not to mention selection of small-diameter rope for starting such things as generators, brush cutters and motor mowers.



Dr Wellin & Friends

“Maybe he lie to you?!” exclaimed Chief John. I said I welcomed his honesty and made the point that it was quite expensive stuff that I had supplied.

“Yes, that was valuable materials and he said he would give you some fruit” replied John. Maybe Mark came good with his side of the bargain after we’d sailed out. But I’d made it clear what time we were leaving and so this is probably a long-shot.

“No worries” I said to John and Susan as we made our final farewells.

After running what turned out to be a half-day clinic we were all aboard and “lunched” for a 2:00pm departure. The wind blew consistently from the south east at around 20 knots, pushing us along at around 7-8 knots; blowing from behind, then off the port beam, then finally on the bow as we made our way around the island in an anti-clockwise direction.

The blue-sea-swell of around 3 metres, approached from the stern causing us to first rise, then surf down the face, as the foam from the spent wave gathered on each side of the bow. The process was repeated over and over again, all the while the deck remained virtually level with the 15 of us either resting under the boom, chatting in the cockpit, sleeping below, or singing and playing guitar on the deck. It really was a dream-sail, with even the engine given a rest for much of the time.

Our arrival at Lakona Bay a short time before the sun sank in the west was made even more special with the arrival of a pod of dolphins, which seemed to leave just as soon as they had arrived.

The Five (Ni-Van) Amigos – Richard, Jay, Wellin, Bob and Barkon – were dropped ashore and soon the message was received on the radio that they had found their accommodation and will report back early tomorrow with specific set-up details

Meanwhile on board Chimere, Annette coordinated the cooking and presentation of a wonderful dinner and we all chatted and reviewed the day's amazing sailing experience.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and the stuff of dreams

Rob Latimer

[Edith West](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Liz Bolton](#), [Lois Noye](#), [Sue Duke](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Lola Janine Bryant](#) liked this post

Back amongst friends

Lakona Bay, Gaua Island
Tuesday 19 September 2017

It was a rather roly night at anchor, which was strange given the calmness and shelter of the anchorage. But sometimes it just happens. A lazy swell around a headland, a tidal flow going the wrong way and an offshore wind that holds the boat beam-on. They conspire to form a side-to-side roll that seems to just get worse with each motion.



Below: Back amongst friends at Lakona Bay, Gaua
Right: Photo from the same spot on our first visit in 2009



"We've got to fix this roll!" ... Matt (senior) and I agreed. Our earlier attempt at laying a stern anchor coming to little.

First things first. And it was a call from onshore to say we should bring the gear to a nearby beach for portage piece-by-piece up the

headland to the village meeting place where the clinic would be established.

A catamaran in the bay offered to carry our people to the beach and the owner of the yacht a man named Ritchie, said he knows the woman who was the previous owner of Chimere; from his own home state of Western Australia. Quite a coincidence, particularly given that it was only yesterday that I'd mentioned to Graeme that the previous owner was a doctor who might be interested in what Chimere has been up to since 2009

Once established, the clinic was well attended with a steady stream of eye, dental and “body” patients – plus of course the “National Oral Health Survey”; the highest priority of all.

I made it to the clinic around 10:00am, leaving (senior) Matt aboard to top up the fuel tank and make freshwater; plus a general clean up.

As I was standing around, one old man shuffled in from the edge of the village and after introducing myself and shaking his hand, he asked about treatments offered, in particular eyes.

With his hand on my shoulder we then made it carefully to the right spot, me quickly realizing that he was really quite blind. Later in the day I asked Jay how he went and he said that he’d prescribed -5 spectacles, which he had in stock. “Must have made a big difference?” I inquired. “Yes, he can see much more light and make things out better now”, he replied

The village was aware that we were coming (thankfully), but to be sure that the nearby communities had also got the message I made a run up the coast in the dinghy, accompanied by Chief Bruce

(sounds like the sort of chief we’d have in Australia?!) one of the many sons of Paramount Chief John Star (of earlier Ships Logs)

Bruce was a strong and commanding bloke and throughout the day we got to know each other well, particularly after the coffee & cake session aboard Chimere late morning, accompanied by a few others.

Travelling up the coast we pulled into two remote communities. At the second we went ashore after weaving through the outer reef at the left, right, straight-ahead hand signals of Bruce and another man – Jimmy, whom we’d picked up along the way. Once ashore we met the locals amidst a cloud of smoke from some serious burning off they were doing. The purpose of the burning, and chain sawing and building, was the construction of a kava bar and meeting space to accompany the adjoining soccer pitch.

The soccer pitch itself was something else. Carved out of the forest it had a kind of surreal quality about it. Almost like the jungle was ready at any time to reclaim the playing field for its own; once more to be covered by trees, vines and coconut palms. I imagine it’s a constant exercise to keep the pitch in order. But each village has a team and tournaments are a regular feature of the yearly calendar, with winners going on to play for the region, island and Province. It’s high stakes and the honour of the village is on the line when others come to visit. Plus of course the opportunity to earn some money from the sale of kava and food



Above: Chief John Star and his wife Susan do child minding duties like grandparents the world over



Below: Dr Jeremy & Dr Graeme consult with patients in the Merelava Church



It was wonderful to catch up with Anglican Priest, Father Levy, and his family, and to present him with a religious stole made by Yvonne Joyce from North Ringwood Uniting Church. Father Levy is a great worker for his community on the west coast of the island of Gaua

One man I was very keen to meet again was the local Anglican priest, Father Levi Sandy. We got to know him well in 2013 when he requested assistance in promoting a Kastom Festival he and the village were planning to start in 2014.

At the time the village put on a series of dances for us to film, forming the basis for the promotion. In early 2014, Matt (the younger) edited the film and put a promo on Youtube. I then contacted cruising forums and websites around the world, letting them know that if they were sailing around Vanuatu, then they should make sure they put Lakona Bay, West Gaua on their schedule.



That was 4 years ago, and with communications as poor as they are it wasn't surprising that I've heard nothing about the success or otherwise of the event. So it was great to hear that the event has developed into a very successful regional happening, with 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 getting bigger and bigger.

In our discussions, Father Levi expressed heart-felt thanks. Later in the day, after having a painful tooth extracted by Bakon, earplugs provided by Graeme due to having a perforated eardrum, (plus antibiotics for an infected foot too I believe), he talked to me about his passion for helping the bright and clever children of the West Gaua region pursue their Year 11, 12 and 13 education. One of the biggest expenses a parent faces here is paying for education. Beyond year 10 it's a case of no money, no education, with children from remote regions like this having to board on other islands, where higher education is provided.

To assist parents pay for schooling, Father Levi and a group of prominent people in the village have established the West Gaua Student Association. As it was explained to me, parents can become a member, and their children then have the potential to receive funding assistance, which they must then pay back in later years. It's a bit like a private, cooperative version of a Higher Education Loan Program. In addition to parental funding, the community tries to fundraise (through the Lakona Bay Kastom Festival) I talked with Father Levi about ideas to boost donations and fund raising and even obtained details of a village development bank account they run for such a purpose. Before we said our final good-byes I gave the "Association" 10,000 Vatu (approx. \$AUS120) from the MSM funds (sorry Mike,

no chance to obtain prior approval with that one) and said I'd mention the fund in my daily Ships Log in case others would like to make a donation. If you feel called to give something, just flick me an email.

The clinic slowed down a bit in the afternoon and as Graeme continued trying to poke ripe mangoes off a very tall tree with an extremely long stick, others spoke about snorkeling and having a BBQ picnic as the sun went down. The five (Ni-Van) Amigos had a dreadful night's sleep ashore, as it turned out. Unbeknown to us they were provided with the local clinic building in which to bed-down, a building with few comforts.

Tonight it is a very different story. Particularly after we re-anchored Chimere into a very sheltered, close-to-shore part of the bay, with a line off the stern to a tree ashore to keep us still. All 15 team members are sleeping aboard, with three Ni-Vans lying on mattresses on the foredeck under an awning, two in the cockpit and the other 10 in their "usual" spots

Our plan is to be up at 5:00am and away at 5:30am. Our destination, the regional town of Sola on the island of Vanualava, about 32 miles north east of here. With everyone aboard for the night, meaning there'll be no early pick-up from the beach, it will almost be a case of up anchoring and driving away – remembering to retrieve the line to shore of course !

Phone and internet communications via Digicel and TVL are very poor here ... read non-existent. We are hoping for better success tomorrow in Sola. Might even be able to get some photos out !!

Smooth seas, fair breeze and back amongst friends

Rob Latimer

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PCV Health Eyecare worker Jay in action



Martin receives thanks from the Losolava Primary School Principal after he and Robert repaired the tap on the water tank

Chief Graham ... what are the chances

Sola, Vanua Lava

Wednesday 20 September 2017

Having re-anchored earlier in the day, it was a blissfully still night with all 15 aboard ready for an early getaway – for the next island north, Vanualava.

Finding a non-rolly part of the anchorage meant getting in close to the shore and edge of the bay and when the depth sounder bottomed at around 2.1m early in the evening I thought maybe we were a bit too close, but as the tide came in and the number increased, so my concern lessened.



The “5 Amigos” sing and play as we enter the Lakona Bay anchorage – Bob, Wellin, Richard, Barkon and Jay

It’s amazing how the body and mind adjusts to its environment. After finally getting to bed last night around 12:00 midnight I crawled out of my saloon bunk at exactly 4.59am, with just enough time to put on my glasses and check the time on my iPhone which then sounded my alarm – 5:00am. Which meant, time to get this show on the road, or the water as the case may be.

I had initially thought of letting the Ni-vans continue sleeping on the foredeck under the awning, as we simply lifted the small dinghy astern, hitched the large dinghy to a tow-line and drove away. But given all the activity aboard, they were all up and about by 5:15am and it seemed prudent to do it all properly the first time. This meant clearing the foredeck, putting away the sunshade and lifting up the big dinghy and lashing her down.

After retrieving the stern-line from its onshore tree there was little anchor chain to stow before we motored out of the bay; past the two other yachts still fast asleep.

As a parting gesture, local man Stephen paddled his canoe out to say good-bye in the morning light, smiling in the same way he did back in 2009 – our first visit to the bay – when he’d met us in the same manner but joined by his tiny baby at the time, barely able to stand while gripping the wooden side of the canoe.

In the end it was 5:45am, 15 minutes late, by the time we cleared the bay, with sails up setting a course north. Once out of the lee of the land the wind increased, till we were easily making 7 knots under (single) reefed main and full jib.

It was a steady motion and after breakfast most went back to sleep; finding a comfy spot on the deck, in the dinghy, on the coach house, in the saloon, or in someone else’s vacant bunk. With the engine off it was the sound of the waves and wind that reminded us that this truly is a sailing vessel and this was her best point of sail – trade winds on the beam.

Oh, the other sounds of note were the occasional cries of ... “dolphins” ... “they’re jumping clear out of the water” ... “there’s a fish on the line” ... “there’s another fish on the line”



Above: Annette tests her balance as Chimere races along
Below: We're having fish tonight
And Matt Bryant & Cathy entertain another gaggle of
curious local kids in the Lakona Bay anchorage



This really was an amazing sail ... although the lack of an engine meant the batteries were left depleted after their night's work, a state that will definitely have to be addressed tomorrow, with two “yellow bars” now showing on the panel. By arrived 11:00am we were dropping anchor in 6 metres, on sand, in the relative calm of the Sola bay, known as Patterson Harbour. Around this time two loaves of bread were drawn from the oven thanks to Matt (the junior) and Cathy. The small dinghy was launched and soon after arriving Richard, Bob, Wellin, Bakon and Jay were dropped ashore to check out their bungalow accommodation and liaise with the local health officials in relation to the next day's clinic – whether to set up in the local market area ... or further out of town at the hospital. On board, lunch saw to the near-demolishment of the bread, after which Graeme, Jeremy, Annette & I went ashore with all the gear – assisted by Martin and Matt (the senior). With two dinghies and three bulka-bags full of gear and personal belongings it was very apt when Matt asked ... “shall I back the Torana out so you can get to the Kingwood...?” Once ashore a local truck (Toyota 4wd) was obtained to move everything to the clinic – including us folk hanging on (as tight as possible) in the back, Ni-Van-regulation-style It was around this time, as Annette, Jeremy, Graeme and I were walking along in the direction of the hospital – waiting for the return of the truck – that I saw Graeme ahead talking to a local man in the middle of the road (little chance of being run down here)

I'd hung back to clean the gravel out of my wet shoes under a shady tree, so when I caught up with Graeme and moved to introduce myself with the usual ... “name blong me Robert”... I hadn't even said a word when I looked intently at the man for a brief moment and exclaimed “Chief Gra-ham”.

For those familiar with the film Forrest Gump, it was truly a “Lieutenant Dan” moment, because the last time we had met, in fact the first and only time, was Saturday 18 & Sunday 19 July 2009, (eight years ago) on the west coast of this same island – in Vureas Bay. ([“All aboard for the Vanualava Express”](#) and [“A day of rest?”](#))

“Captain Rob !”, Chief Graham said as we embraced – again, little chance of being run down on this main road. We then chatted for some time as we walked along about all the things that had happened since he and his people had shown us such hospitality all those years ago; which might have included one of my few kava experiences, albeit a very authentic one with personally crushes roots and calico sieving aboard Chimere late one very dark night

Chief Graham was keen to catch up some more and we explained that we were heading to Ureparapara further north for a brief stop, then on Saturday we would be back in Waterfall Bay and could easily drop down to Vureas Bay to catch up.

Since our last visit, a road now links Sola on the east coast to Vureas Bay, and the even more remote village of Vatrata, on the west coast.

Richard exchanged phone numbers and it was agreed that we would meet again on Saturday. Stumbling across Chief Gra-ham in this way could never have been planned, but it is so typically Ni-Van, with these sort of encounters and experiences having been repeated over and over again in the eight year life of MSM

Once at the hospital we checked out the details for tomorrow’s clinic and Oral Health Survey and met with local eyecare worker and nurse, Sandy, plus the nurse in charge Douglas. We were also introduced to a solar system that only half-worked, and a new water reticulation system with a leaking connection and tap.



Above: Chief Graham and Dr Graeme as they looked back in 2009 during our first visit to Vureus Bay, West coast Vanualava, back in 2009

Below: The two Matts – older & younger – locate the offending wire, corroded and hiding under ground, at the Losolava Clinic. Soon after they restored “some” power to the clinic to the delight of everyone – particularly the local nurse



“Maybe you could have a look at fixin’ them ... no problem if you can’t ?” suggested nurse Sandy.

Sounds like another job for ... “Matt & Matt” ... with tomorrow’s Ships Log possibly being headed ... “Fixing Solar in Sola” ... but I don’t want to put them under any pressure, although if they can pull this one off it’ll be a hat-trick – three solar systems, three clinics on three different islands

Soon after our arrival the two yachts with whom we shared the Losolava anchorage, Good as Gold ... and (can’t remember, TBA) joined us here at Sola – the ones who were very late returning from an inland trek – or more correctly, the wife off one yacht and the husband off the other were late in returning from an inland trek. It turns out they had hired two local guides and both had got lost?! And no, they hadn’t run off together.

No surprises for guessing we had tuna tonight and despite the good intentions I still went to sleep after dinner and then woke up with a second wind (plus a cup of strong coffee) to record the day’s events and plan for tomorrow.



On the communications front ... I’m glad I bought a Digicel SIM card in Luganville before starting this mission because my usual TVL SIM card has been next to useless – no offence TVL. After buying more credit ashore, and with 4 bars + 3G showing on my screen I duly received a squillion emails – so sorry if you haven’t heard from me for a while. As sheltered as the Sola anchorage is, wouldn’t you know, it’s a bit on the rolly side too. Although to the team’s credit, no one has really mentioned anything. Maybe we are getting used to it – a bunch of sea-kittens becoming toughened sea-dogs?!

Oh, and did I mention, this is the only spot in Vanuatu which has crocodiles? Yep that’s right, dinkum salties! Apparently they live up the nearby Sulphur River and unfortunately I don’t think we’ll have time to go looking for them – although onboard PCV Health eyecare worker, Jay, has a relative (maybe an uncle, cousin or brother) here in Sola that has apparently offered to take us if we want to go. I suspect time will be against us.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and Chief Graham ... what are the chances ?!

Rob Latimer

[Lois Noye](#), [Julie Brown](#), [Sue Duke](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Lola Janine Bryant](#), [Liz Bolton](#) liked this post

A busy day ashore

Sola, Vanua Lava

Thursday 21 September 2017

I do sometimes go ashore. But generally my focus is on the ship and the overall planning of the mission and so I'm mostly dropping others ashore to do their good work

Today was different. With two crew members feeling a bit poorly ... OK you forced it out of me, it's Annette and Matt (the younger) but they are fine, on the mend and just needed a day's rest – remember we have two doctors aboard, and everything will be fine – and with nurse Cathy staying aboard to provide care, love and attention, it meant I was needed onshore.

My duties centered around the Sola hospital, about 1km out of town, and the activities of the clinic we'd set up there for the day.

It was valuable to observe close-up the medical, dental and eye folk in action, not to mention the Oral Health Survey exploits, and to hear some of the stories that lay behind each case that presented ... a total of 60 medical patients, the same number of dental cases, 40 eyecare cases and nearly 30 Oral Health Survey participants.

There was the lady who was treated by an overseas aid group 4 months ago and in the course of having a couple of teeth extracted they'd dislocated her jaw and despite attempts to fix the problem at the time she has remained that way since. To imagine the implications of this, try pushing your lower jaw forward an inch or so, then try talking, eating, being taken seriously by people you meet and generally functioning normally.

After four months, you can imagine that with inflammation and other complications, the jaw is not going to just pop back into place. And don't think big strong Barkon and Wellin didn't try; after ensuring sufficient pain killers were administered.

In the end the lady was just over-joyed at being able to simply chew a biscuit for the first time in 4 months and with a range of medications including anti-inflammatories, pain killers and relaxants it is hoped that by Sunday afternoon when we once again return to Sola that her jaw will be pliable enough to complete the "manipulation". If not we will either take the woman south to the hospital in Santo, or arrange referrals and flights etc.

Jeremy made a couple of kids scream uncontrollably for a short time today, despite the repeated ... "you're a good girl" reassurances from the mothers concerned. I was just sitting nearby and heard it all play out as Jeremy lanced some boils from the kid's legs. Within ten minutes it was all over and I saw one of the girls being lifted onto her mum's shoulders for the walk home, quietly crying as she clung to her mum's generous curly locks; seemingly well over it all

Of a non-medical nature, I acted as Matt's (the older) apprentice in assessing the solar system and whilst it could produce power to run the lights it could not produce 240 volts to run things like the microscope and other equipment. Diagnosis ... dead inverter



Above & Below: Once more Matt Bryant (the older) works his magic to deliver much-needed light. This time into the pharmacy room at the Sola Hospital (Vanualava Is.) where no light had shone for 7 years, according to the local pharmacist



“Do you think you could put a light bulb in the pharmacy room?” came the request from the hospital pharmacist, Micah, via Graeme Duke.

In a short time Matt and I had made our assessment and it seemed feasible to use the box of bits already in the hospital storeroom to run a wire from the bulb in one room, up through the roof cavity and down into the pharmacy room, to which another bulb could be added. No separate light switch, but a light is a light.

Either the roof seemed a lot higher than normal, or the ladder was just too short, but in the end it took Jay’s athletic ability to get up through the man hole into the roof – and safety back down again – so as to thread the wires through the right holes. Matt did the technical bit, wiring up each end and before long there was LIGHT !!

Now you might think it’s just a simple light bulb, but if you can imagine a room with no windows, other than a small dispensary-shelf through which medicines are passed then you have an idea of just how dark the room is. Up until now, when a patient was prescribed medicine, they would appear at the little dispensing hole in the wall – about eye-height, and Micah would then turn on his mobile phone light-app. to both read the script and then find the appropriate medication on his rough set of shelves that line the walls.



Above & Below: With no shut-off valve, fixing a leaky hose connection at the Sola Hospital proved even wetter and more strenuous than anticipated. Here Rob uses a broom handle pushed inside the pipe to temporarily shut off flow

So you can imagine just how happy Micah was with his new light when he exclaimed ... “This is the first time in 7 years I have had a light in this room!!” SEVEN YEARS in the darkness, unbelievable.

Whilst Matt took the lead with the lights and the wiring, I had a look at the new water reticulation system that had been fitted to the hospital, and much of the town in the past few months, compliments of Red Cross and a range of donors which varied depending on who I spoke with.

It’s a great system that brings fresh water from a long way away, except the tap, or gate-valve, that supplied the hospital off a big-diameter main line – possibly 75mm, was leaking, creating an ever boggy region around the back of the hospital.

“Can you fixim?” asked nurse Sandy, the man who seemed to be in charge of this sort of thing. “I’ll give it a go ... where’s the shut off valve?” I asked.

“What do you mean, shut-off valve?” replied Sandy

“You know, so I can fix the tap, we need to shut the water off. Otherwise the water will go everywhere when I disconnect the small pipe from the big pipe. Is there a plan of the system so we can find the cut-off valves?”

After a lot of searching and walking, it seemed no cut-off valve could be found, so my mind then turned to a plug, or stopper to poke in the pipe when it was disconnected from the mains to somehow stem the flow. As it turned out the broken end of a broomstick was just the thing.

From a distance, unscrewing the hospital supply pipe from the main-line must have looked comical. Up close it was very wet and exhausting as getting the broom handle into the pipe and then held there against the pressure took every ounce of strength. Realising my dilemma, nurse Douglas dived in to render assistance, putting his muscles to good use. I was then able to unscrew the in-line valve and re-attach it using Teflon tape and sealant; as should have happened when it was first installed. All the while Douglas is using his strength to continue forcing the broom stick into the “live” pipe at my side. Then came the time to re-connect, with water once again going everywhere at high pressure as we maneuvered the two ends together with cries of “NOW, screw the fitting while I hold it, quick !!”



After fixing the leaky pipe at the hospital, two more “leaky hose jobs” emerged for Robert to “look at” – and fix

Once the drama was over, in a typical Ni-Van way, there was laughter, whooping and handshakes all round as the success of the exercise was enjoyed and appreciated. One of those classic bloke-bonding moments

It was then time to wash off all the mud and while I was doing this nurse Douglas asked ... “do you think you could have a look at the leaking tap at the staff houses?” What can you say? After fixing that, I returned with the men to the hospital and it was at this stage nurse Sandy sheepishly volunteered ... “just one more pipe if you could maybe have a look at him...?”

This leaking pipe was in a room, next to the pharmacy that had the title “SURGERY” written above the door. Not sure if surgery was ever conducted in this room, but currently it is used to store building materials including concrete reinforcing mesh. As for the leak, sure enough, the disconnected and bent-over pipe from the sink in the corner was leaking and had formed a large, deep puddle in the room. By now I was on a roll and having located the supply line outside on the back wall and turning the in-line hospital gate-valve off (fixed by me an hour earlier) it was a simple case of fitting a stop-valve which was in the hospital’s box of tricks.

In other news, there was a 6.4 earthquake today in Vanuatu and a big thank you to everyone who has inquired after our welfare. All good up where we are.

The clinic finally finished around 4:00pm and it was then a case of re-loading everything back aboard Chimere, plus her complement of crew and medicos

We re-anchored closer to the shore in order to reduce the persistent roll from the swell and around this time Deb, Matt and Martin appeared on the beach for pick-up with arms-full of freshly baked bread, including coconut bread, just out of a local oven; a very low-tech, wood fired oven.

Tomorrow it’s off north again, this time to the amazing island of Ureparapara where we actually sail into the middle of what was once an active volcano – cool.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and a busy day ashore

Rob Latimer

[Sue Duke](#), [Lorraine Rose](#), [Edith West](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Liz Bolton](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post

Anchored back in the volcano

Friday 22 September 2017
Dives Bay, Ureparapara

It was a case of “Up at 5:00am, away by 6:00am” ... with our destination being the amazing island of Ureparapara, about 25 miles north of Sola where we’d spent a slightly less rolly night on account of re-anchoring closer to shore

After picking the five Ni-Van team members up from the beach and completing a few last jobs aboard, it was actually 6:04am that we weighted anchor and headed out of the bay – known locally as Port Patterson after an earlier Anglican missionary.

Chimere approaches the entrance to Ureparapara



The wind was steady from the south east, as it normally is at this time of year in these parts, and so the wind was pretty much on our tail. This gave us the opportunity to dust off the spinnaker pole in order to hold the jib out one side while the mainsail stuck out the other – a classic sailing manoeuvre, Bakon took the helm for a good part of the leg and did a very good job despite the waves advancing from the stern and a confused chop.



Above: Barkon takes the helm (very ably) while Cathy, Jeremy and Rob relax
Below: Annette, always smiling and ready for the next task aboard



By 10:00am we were making our way into the entrance of the once-active volcano that is Ureparapara, with its jungle-covered razor ridge encircling us on virtually all sides. A good anchorage was soon found and after dropping the Ni-Vans ashore to organised the afternoon’s activities, those aboard loaded the bulka bags of gear into the large dinghy in readiness for the next run ashore – actually a beach, with white-ish sand.

With Annette and Matt (the younger) feeling better, it was Graeme’s turn to take some time out on the bench, which meant that I spent much of my time running back and forth in the dinghy to get this or that, left behind in the rush – a box of giveaway soap, hand-held optom machine, bag of caps, day packs ... the list goes on.

In the course of my zipping back and forth, I got to meet several prominent locals who joined me for the ride, including Chief John (who initially came out in his canoe) Chief David and Andrew, the local wood carver who I have met here on two previous occasions.

“I still have the wood rasp you gave me last time” said Andrew. So it was very pleasing to be able to give Andrew a stack of additional tools mostly donated by the Ringwood Men’s Shed in Melbourne, plus sandpaper and epoxy glue.

Once the locals had carried everything up from the beach, it seemed a matter of minutes before the team had seat up their respective stations – reception, eyecare, medical, dental (read: extractions) oral health examinations and oral health survey questionnaires. It was fine to see.

Everyone seemed genuinely sad to hear we would be heading away tomorrow morning, our main task of completing the required surveys complete.

As for the clinic itself, it appeared very busy with everyone working extremely hard ... except Graeme of course who was back on the boat resting, leaving his under-study doctor (and son) Jeremy to take charge of the medical side of things

The clinic wound up around 4:30pm and the process of transporting, packing and stowing aboard was put into action. It was then back to the beach around 6:15pm to share dinner together and put on a movie night – showing Ice Age 1 & 2 to great appeal.

This pretty much ends the formal medical and survey part of Mission 4, with tomorrow seeing us start the journey south; initially to Port Vila, then the return to Australia in about a month's time. As a concession to the hard-working team, a sleep-in has been approved for tomorrow. Instead of being up at 5:00am, it's now 6:00am – a full 1 hour extra in bed.

Our destination tomorrow will be the west coast of Vanualava – including waterfall Bay, named for the obvious (a great place to relax and “frolic”) as a brief stop-over on our way back to Sola where many of the team will fly home on Monday.

Starting to wind down now !!

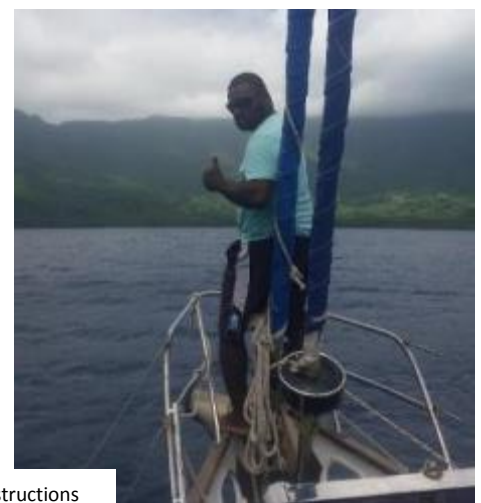
Smooth seas, fair breeze and anchored back in the volcano

Rob Latimer

[Matt Latimer](#), [Edith West](#), [Martyn Vincent](#), [Andrew McDonald](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Sue Duke](#), [Julie Brown](#) liked this post



Above & Below: Chimere approaches the amazing island of Ureparapara



Right: Richard Tatwin prepares to receive instructions from the local boatman as Chimere approaches the Dives Bay anchorage, Ureparapara Is.

It's hard to leave paradise

Saturday 23 September 2017
Vureas Bay, Vanualava

Things are winding down.

Our last official clinic and Oral Health Survey session for Mission 4 was yesterday at Ureparapara. So today was a big sleep-in day. Instead of getting away from the anchorage at 6:00am, it was a very sociable 8:00am by the time we were making our way out of Dives Bay; all the while gaping at the sheer green cliffs that surrounded us on all sides, except for the narrow strip of water before us.

Just prior to winching up the anchor we were joined by Chief John and (wood carver) Andrew in their canoes offering us a bag of fruit each and a heart-felt thanks and farewell.

Our meeting this time was so brief, yet the afternoon clinic yesterday was extremely well attended. Wellin's oral health talk to the 50 or so gathered at the meeting-house at the end of the day was also listened to with great attentiveness. The message to brush your teeth with "wan Colgate" ... was mentioned many times.

The sail south, back to the island of Vanualava – this time on the west coast – always had the potential to be problematic. That's because the wind nearly always blows from the south east, and after a few days of this the seas begin to grow, making sailing back into these conditions very uncomfortable.

Fortunately, the wind had abated sufficiently over the last few days for the seas to settle and at the same time it had veered more "east" of south-east, meaning that we could hold a good course, in reasonable comfort. In fact for half of the time we had the engine off, making 7 knots and more with just the sails. Wellin, our Ni-Van dentist, had a go at the helm and did a great job.



Above: Dives Bay clinic, Ureparapara

Below: Barry, Martin, Annette and Wellin await the next patient



Above: Chief John & Andrew (the woodcarver) Ureparapara

Below: Chief John waves good-bye





Above: Dives Bay anchorage, Ureparapara surrounded by a mountain ridge which was once the rim of a volcano in times past

Below: Team shot at Waterfall Bay, Vanualava on the return from Ureparapara

After about 35 miles, our eventual destination was Vureas Bay. On the way, however, we made a stop-off at the appropriately named Waterfall Bay, where a large river, tumbles 15-20 metres onto rocks and then into a beautiful lake, before then flowing into the nearby sea. The whole thing is just so picturesque it has the makings of a scene from Lord of the Rings or Narnia.



The snorkelling on the nearby coral was also amazing and Martin once again gave the cry “turtle!” to which there was a chorus of Finding Nemo quotes along the lines of “Hey duuuude, ask him how to get to the EAC” and “Make sure you find your exit buddy”.

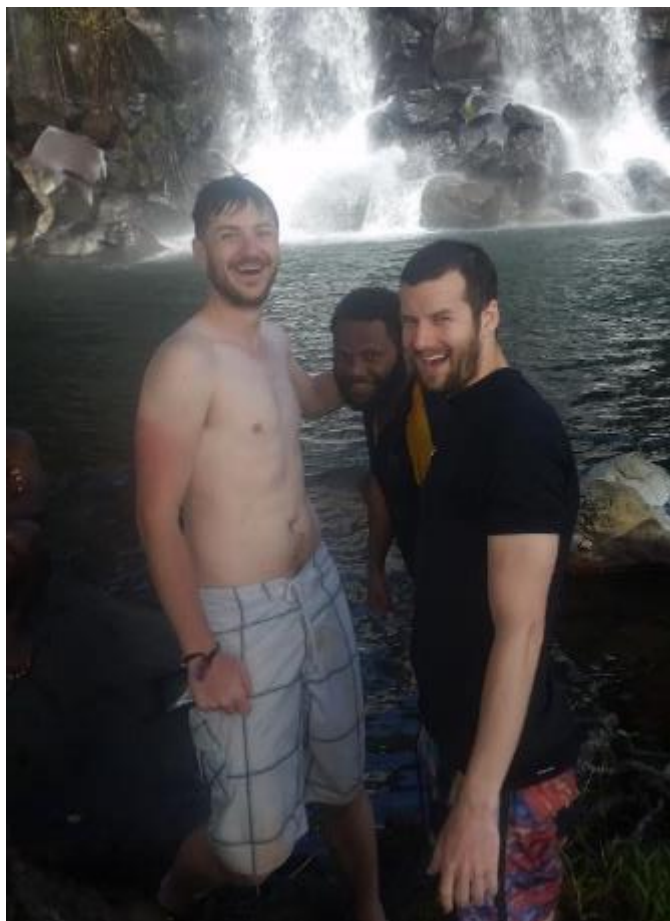
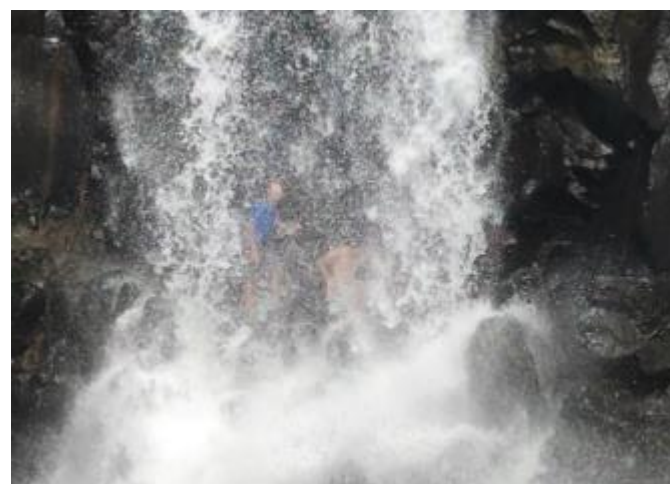
Consequently, after a couple of hours playing in, under, in front and on top of the waterfall, it was hard for everyone to say goodbye and return to the dingy for the ferry back to Chimere. It was then a short hop down the coast to Vureas bay, and although the wind was right on the nose, we hoisted the “iron headsail” and had a very pleasant motor (no-sail) to our anchorage.

A quick dash ashore, which I tell you about tomorrow.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and it’s hard to leave paradise

Rob Latimer

[Matt Latimer](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Kerry Tait](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Edith West](#), [Larissa McLean Davies](#), [Sue Duke](#), [Liz Bolton](#) liked this post



Above: It’s hard to beat Waterfall Bay, (Twin Waterfalls) on the west coast of Vanualava, Twin Waterfalls from out at sea and up close with Matt, Wellin and Jeremy. Matt and Rob crawl under the base of the waterfalls in a father-son bonding exercise and the dinghy returns to Chimere with Cathy, Annette, Jeremy and Deb in view, plus of course Chimere in the distance

End of Mission 4

(back at) Sola, Vanua Lava
Sunday 24 September 2017

A bit over 2 weeks ago four volunteer sailors, six medical volunteers, plus five local Ni-van medical folk – 15 people in all – came together for the start of Mission 4.

Talk about an eclectic group. But despite our many differences, we each shared a common goal of bringing medical, dental and optical care to the people of Vanuatu, while also conducting the vital National Oral Health Survey on behalf of the Vanuatu Ministry of Health.

Like a cross between Survivor and Big Brother, Mission 4 has been no different to the earlier missions. Life aboard a boat, in close confinement with almost total strangers, miles from anywhere, is a test of patience, endurance and tolerance; an experience through which you can learn more about yourself and others ... or alternatively cry ... “get me out of here!” ... which fortunately no one did!

It was a peaceful anchorage last night at Vureas Bay, but with the promise of rain squalls, strong wind gusts and no



Team 4 group-shot, front l-r Rob, Deb, Annette, Jeremy, Jay, Cathy, Matt B., Richard, Barry, Martin & Graeme. Back l-r Wellin, Barkon, Bob and Matt L.

chance of anyone sleeping ashore, we needed to find bunks for all 15 inside Chimere. It was full capacity and we nearly had to put the NO Vacancy sign out (there's always room for more) and as a side-benefit it enabled me to once more sleep in the large dinghy on the foredeck, after first securing a tarp over top in the fashion of an A-frame tent.

In the end it was a bit wild and woolly with gusts down from the mountain, accompanied by rain, making you appreciate the qualities of our dear Chimere and the good holding-ground in this little corner of remote west-coast Vanualava.

Our purpose for stopping at Vureus was to locate a young boy, now a young man, named Adison, who had gone to Australia 12 years ago for facial reconstruction surgery. In 2009 and again in 2013 we had dropped by so that Graeme Duke and Richard Tatwin could do a follow-up medical examination and take photographs of his development.

Finding Adison has always been an issue, given the problems with communications and travel in these parts. But fortunately Richard was able to weave his magic late yesterday while ashore, and arrange for him to be delivered by truck to the nearby beach around 6:30 this morning.

In addition, there was Juliette with the dislocated jaw we'd found at the Sola clinic from two days ago. As it turned out she came from this side of the island too, the nearby village of Vatrata, and so rather than catch up with her upon our return to Sola this afternoon, she too was delivered to the Vureas Bay beach for pick-up early this morning; saving her the cost and risk of a ride back to Sola on the back of a truck with roads made extremely slippery from the rain.

With the pressure of meeting the daily "clinic-set-up" itinerary is now behind us, there was a bit of sleeping-in aboard today; including me. But by 7:00am, or thereabouts, Richard and I were heading down the coast in the small dinghy to the beach where a small group of people had gathered; including Chief John (from yesterday) little daughter and father Godfrey with an arm full of green vegetables for me.

Once ashore, all the introductions were made and it was decided that I'd take the extra six people back to Chimere in two groups so as to reduce the chance of getting our patients and guests (too) wet.

So it was for a time that Chimere had 21 aboard, including a local woman who attached herself to the group all the while holding her face as if in pain.

"Just a bit of tut-ache, she needs some extraction"... explained Richard



Above & below: Rob has a chance meeting with Chief John in Vureus Bay, Vanualava – the last time was in 2009. Also his father and daughter





Above & below: "Community Dentistry" as Barkon's emergency extraction takes precedence over privacy with a last-minute patient coming aboard at Vureus Bay. Matt (the older & younger), plus Bob and Jay look on ... and yes Jay is using a camera



Below: A very special boy, now a young man, Adison, plus his devoted father and PCV health director Richard Tatwin at Vureus Bay. Adison's life-saving medical "journey", initiated and assisted by Don & Meg MacRaid, PCV health, Rotary and the Melbourne Children's Hospital is one of courage, persistence and inspiration. MSM has travelled to Vureus Bay to conduct progressive medical check-ups in 2009, 2013 and again this year 2017. Check out the photos on the next page



Yes, she was in pain. Lots of pain. But pretty quickly, dentist Wellin had one of the dental chairs removed from the bulk-bag on the foredeck and with injection in hand, and with Chimere gently lolling up and down at anchor, and no sign of rain squalls, he found his target in the woman's gum as she sat reclined, mouth wide open. It's a sight I'll long remember, with half a dozen others gazing on, or taking happy-snaps.

Two extracted teeth later she was again holding the side of her face, but this time packed out with a cotton wool pad to soak up the blood.

Young Adison's father, Silas, also had a dental check-up, while Graeme made an assessment of Adison, now age 17. In summary, his face is growing normally, although his eyesight remains poor.

As for the lady with a dislocated jaw, she had her check-up and rather than opt for the brute-force, knee on chest, push it back into place option (my solution) those onboard with professional qualifications in this area recommended further anti-inflammatory medications and corrective surgery in treatment in Luganville which we will seek to arrange in the next few week

Time was ticking by and so with all the medical work completed it was back to the beach – six guests + me. Low freeboard for sure, but no one got wet because the wind was from behind and I went super-slow. On the beach it was emotional good-byes and Tank Yu Tumases all-round as we realized the finality of the moment.

Now, whose this coming along the beach towards me. It's Chief Gra-ham !! I'd left a couple of messages on his mobile phone, and had all but given up thinking I would see him again after our chance meeting a few days earlier in Sola

"Hello Chief Gra-ham" I called, shaking hands while inviting him out to Chimere for a drink of coffee or tea.

Arriving back at Chimere there were some quizzical looks in my direction, along the lines

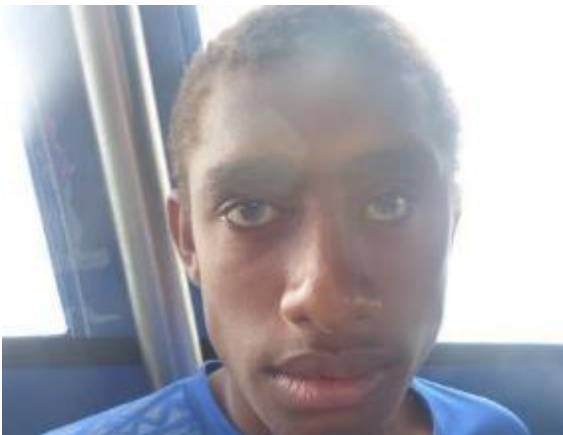
of ... "I thought we were up-anchoring?" The confusion was understandable, given I'd left with six passengers to then return with one ... but this was an opportunity I couldn't pass up.



2005



Above & Below: Richard Tatwin and Graeme Duke check on Addison's – now a young man of 17 – progress in 2017. Always by his side is Addison's father.



Above & Below: "Found" in the remote village of Vatrata, near Vureus Bay on the west coast of Vanualava, by a PCV Health team in 2005, life-saving surgery was then arranged by Don & Meg MacRaild (founders of the Vanuatu prevention of Blindness Project) through ROMAC (Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children) www.romac.org.au It was then a long journey involving travel to Melbourne, surgery and many months of recovery, all the while supported by his devoted father. The Children's Hospital was certainly a long way from the remote west coast of Vanualava



2006



2009



2006

MSM transported a PCV health medical team to the west coast of Vanuatulava in 2009 and here we see the happy reunion of Don & Meg MacRaild with Addison and family.

"It's Chief Gra-ham ... put the kettle on !", I yelled, as we clambered aboard and did the introductions

"Do you need a checkup Gra-ham? ... body, eye, tut?"

At this stage Jay was called on to get his eye test-case out and assess Graham's eyes ... the verdict being e was able to prescribe and supply 2.50x reading glasses. A great result.

Now it really WAS time to up-anchor and so after hot-chocolates all round, I raced Chief Graham back to land for an emotional farewell. Oh, but not before getting Graham to take a group photo of us all on the foredeck – the official "after shot"

The sail south around the bottom of Vanualava, to Sola, was always going to be a challenge, given it was largely into the prevailing weather. In the end everyone held up well with the final approach to Sola, with the wind on our beam being a very pleasant thing.

We chose the lease-rolly part of the Sola anchorage and after food, rest, a wash, plus some cleaning up it was time to get the Ni-Vans ashore and plan tomorrow's exit.

Those flying out of Sola tomorrow are Wallen, Barry Stewart, Graeme Duke, Jeremy Duke and Matt Latimer, with new passenger, and co-owner of Chimere Barry Crouch flying in to join us for the trip back down to Port Vila.

The plan at this stage is to set sail late afternoon tomorrow for a night-sail to Port Olry on the north east coast of Santo. From here the remaining four Ni-Vans, plus Martin and Deb, will catch a truck south to Luganville and home. The remaining crew, plus new-man Barry Crouch, will then start the leisurely 6 day sail back to Port Vila.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and end of Mission 4

Rob Latimer

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2008



2013

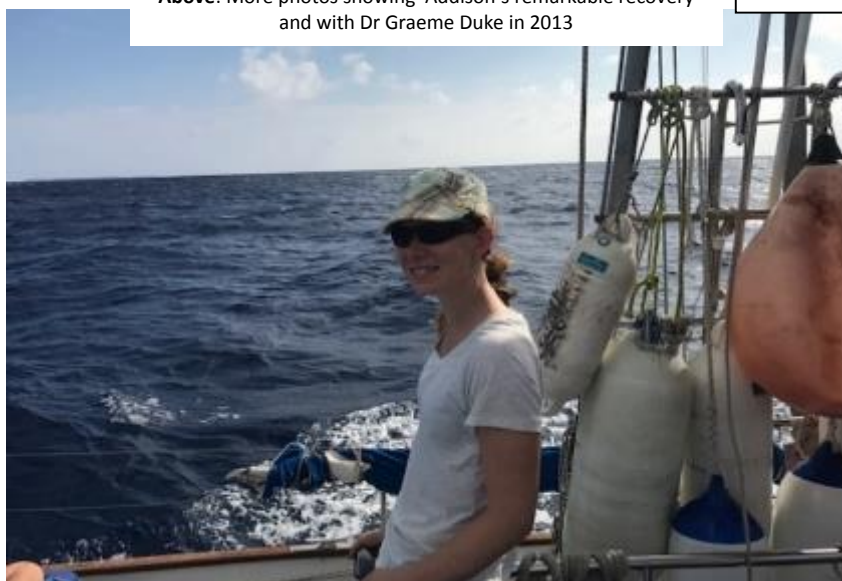


2013

Above: More photos showing Addison's remarkable recovery and with Dr Graeme Duke in 2013



Above: Rob returns Addison, his father, the dental patient and others ashore before up-anchoring and heading around the southern tip of Vanualava to the regional centre of Sola



Above: Cathv enjoys some "down-time" between islands

Comings and goings

Monday 25 September 2017

At sea, between Sola and Port Olry (Espiritu Santo Island)

Bags were packed, electronic devices (and their chargers) were retrieved, past Vatu loans and reimbursements were settled and final farewells were made.

Flying out of Sola on the mid-day (Monday) plane were doctors Graeme and Jeremy, dentist Barry and sailor Matt (the younger)

Flying in to join the good ship Chimere is my co-owner Barry Crouch. A man whose generosity and support of MSM extended to him buying half of Chimere six years ago and believe it or not he's only been aboard – for a sail – for just four days in that time. So it's a great joy to be able to have him aboard for the next week as we work our way south back to Port Vila – enabling him to get some personal enjoyment from his half of the boat.

The five Ni-Van Amigos are remaining aboard for this last and final 80 mile leg that will take us to the north east tip of Santo, to village of Port Olry. From here it's an easy drive south to the main town of Luganville and from there a (cheaper) flight back to Port Vila. Although in Jay's case he will remain in Luganville as he heads up the PCV Health eyecare program there.

Just when we thought it was a simple case of moving people and bags to and fro and preparing Chimere for sea later in the day, a call came through from Richard early in the morning to say that there was a lady with toothache, who missed the clinic the other day and could we prepare the foredeck again for surgery.

Things were still a bit rolly and so after discussions with Barry we thought it might be better to set up onshore under a tree. But after Barry had done a bit of a test run he admitted that the dentist with the injection is rolling at the same rate as the patient, so it should be fine?!



Above & Below: Mission 4 draws to a close as some fly out, (of Sola) co-owner of Chimere Barry Crouch flies in and Chimere is prepared for the journey south to Port Vila. Matt Latimer shakes hands with Martin and Matt Bryant takes Barry, Matt & Jeremy ashore



The extraction took longer than anticipated with a small amount of curved broken root persistently holding on till the last.

Good news was the lady, Jenny, went away smiling ... sort of.

After waving good-bye to the four returning volunteers, it was just a short hour-long wait for the arrival of Barry Crouch on the next flight.

It was then out to Chimere and a chance to soak in the surroundings. The five Ni-Vans joined us around 3:00pm and by 4:00pm we were on our way south west in the direction of Gaua Island and Port Olry beyond; our morning destination.

Before the sun sank as a red ball in the west (volcanic ash in the air can do that) we'd had two glorious hours of tropical sailing, racing along at 7-8 knots over lumpy but not too uncomfortable seas.

By 6:30pm it was dark and with Deb asleep in readiness for her later watch it was 11 of us in the cockpit having chop suey, prepared earlier in the day by a band of food-choppers, led by Deb.

The crescent moon glistened on the calming seas and one by one people went below to their bunks.

In the lee of the island of Gaua the wind has now calmed off, along with the sea, and we are motoring along at around 5-6 knots. In a couple of hours, as we head more into clear seas, it should become windier and we might even be able to turn the engine off.

This time it's Wellin conducting emergency surgery on Chimere's foredeck, with Jay once more on the camera



Above: Waiting for the "uber" truck-transport to the Sola airport, l-r Graeme, Bob, Jeremy, Barkon, Barry, Jay and Matt (the younger) plus a local boy
Below: Graeme learns the finer points of both paddling and building your own canoe



There's not a lot else to report, other than Matt is on watch from 9:00pm-12:00 midnight, Martin is on watch between 12:00 – 3:00am and I'm on from 3:00am – 6:00am, our expected arrival time, oh, and that dinner was delicious

Smooth seas, fair breeze and comings and goings

Rob Latimer

PS Have you seen the news that the nearby volcano of Ambae has woken up again and evacuations of those living in the danger zone (approx. 5,000 people currently) have commenced. The earlier village of Lolawai is on Ambae and we intended to travel through the area on our way back to Vila

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Above: The 5 Amigos ... Jay, Bob, Richard, Barkon and Wellin wait to wave good-bye to fellow team members Matt, Jeremy, Graeme and Barry (below)

Left: Martin finds a peaceful spot, with at least 2-Bars of internet transmission.



Above: Fresh off the local plane from Port Vila, co-owner Barry Crouch waits for his dinghy transfer aboard.

And making friends with the 5 Amigos as Chimere clears Sola and Port Patterson on her overnight voyage to Port Olry on the north east tip of Santo

Beautiful Port Olry

Tuesday 26 September 2017

At anchor, Port Olry, North Santo

The 80 mile overnight sail from Sola ended up being far smoother than I'd anticipated. The seas were calmer, our speed faster and around 12:30 this morning we actually had to cut things back to around 4 knots so as NOT to arrive at the narrow harbour entrance (between two islands) 'too early' and in the dark. The ride was also quiet, with the engine being given a rest for much of the time.

It seemed unfair. All the time we are trying to make the boat go as fast as possible, then occasionally there are times when going slow is the prudent, most appropriate thing to do.

It was therefore around 6:00am, as the sun was rising, that we arrived, making our way through what looked like a narrow gap between two islands, but which was, as Matt pointed out, wider than the entrance to Sydney Harbour. In the end it was a good thing we arrived in daylight because the chart plotter eventually showed us tracking through the headland on end of the smaller island, rather than through the middle of the entrance; which was clearly made of seawater. This inaccuracy is not unusual in the more remote areas – in fact most places out of the major towns and where cruise ships tend to drop anchor

As the morning sky grew lighter, in anticipation of the sun's appearance, so the five Ni-Vans began to make an appearance from their various bunks and sleeping spots. Laughter, joking and chatter increased with the excitement of arrival and the satisfaction of having made it through the night, mostly asleep.

Jay took a turn at the helm and having grown up with canoes in a remote village on the north coast of Ureparapara, he quickly gained a feel for Chimere's ways and in holding a straight course.

Around 7:30 we finally dropped anchor in the quiet, turquoise waters of Port Olry. Calling it a "port" probably makes it sound a little grander than it really is. Certainly there's a road, back to the main town of Luganville further south and past the very popular tourist stop-off point "Champagne Beach" and you can buy baked bread after about 4:00pm most days, but it's still a sleepy kind of place centred around a glorious curving white-sand beach and amazingly coloured water.

Below: Don't trust the chartplotter ... at least not when close to land. Here we see Chimere's course running through the headland, when her actual course was right through the middle ... on the "blue"



After dropping anchor on white sand in turquoise blue water Deb and Martin were transported ashore to their "treehouse" bungalow accommodation

Not quite a remote, deserted island, but Port Olry was definitely a very special place. Chimere is anchored in the distance and after a short dinghy ride ashore, Barry Crouch completes his sandy-walk in time for a beer with the others after a restful night's sail from Sola on Vanualava



There are beach bungalows for hire. Some built into the large trees which are surrounded by manicured lawn just above the beach sand-line, making this part of town look like a film-set for a Lord of The Rings sequel, “Hobbit Town by The Beach”. To top it all off there is a restaurant and bar named “Serenity Restaurant” serving cold drinks – yes, even Tusker beer ... apparently – overlooking the waves, the sea and the sand in the far distance Chimere at anchor; and by late afternoon four other yachts – as I say it’s a popular place.

A woman called Angelique seems to run this place and from my observations did everything but rake the leaves on the lawn. She even had her two gorgeous kids, around age 4 or 5, collect plates and glasses from the tables.

We are now down to five people rattling around aboard Chimere – Barry Crouch (co-owner of Chimere) who arrived just yesterday by plane into Sola, Annette, Cathy, Matt (the older) and myself. The bulka-bags remain silent – lashed to the foredeck, along with the diminished supply of medical, dental and optical consumables and “tooth brush giveaway kits”. There are no teams to transport ashore, no large meals to prepare and no more controlled but slightly frenetic activity. Idly sitting here in this quiet and picturesque anchorage, with time even to go snorkelling, there’s almost a sense of guilt about it all... I said almost.

In heading back to Port Vila, we were a bit unsure which way to go. As it turns out, the breaking of a high pressure line in the water maker, at the very same time that all water tanks are empty, kind of sealed things. We will head directly to Luganville – around 35 miles – tomorrow in order to fill the tanks at the public wharf. The alternatives are – run water drums from a beach somewhere, or wait for a heavy downpour of rain?! A hose from a wharf kind of won the day.

In terms of timing, we’re just glad it happened now, not 2 weeks ago with 15 people aboard, all wanting showers, cups of tea and needing to wash clothes !!

Whilst I have around 40 litres of drinking water in spare drums on deck – that will cover tomorrow’s needs, I didn’t have the two required high pressure hose in “spares”. A bit of an oversight there. We had two short high pressure hoses, but not the long ones. We’ll have to get them sent across

While lounging around on the white sand feeling guilty for not working, we met a German couple in their late 60s, Volker and Dorothea, who were renting one of the treehouse bungalows. They appeared well tanned and after a brief discussion we discovered they were both doctors and had devoted much of their life to travel. This latest trip was taking them on an island hopping tour of the Torres islands (further north) Motalava, Vanualava, Santo, Gaua and Ambrym – most unusual for the average tourist. But these were not your average tourists. They spoke passionately about the 20 years in which they owned a yacht, travelling from their home in Hamburg to the Caribbean and around Europe and Scandinavia.

They jumped at the chance to come out to Chimere for lunch and over dinner, at the “Serenity Restaurant” ashore they spoke about the places they had been and the people they had met over the years. “I have been to all but 7 countries in the world, and all the states in the USA” said Dorothea quietly. “We drove for 5 months around Australia, and Tasmania is beautiful”. And their powers of recall were amazing ... the salmon catching bears of Kamchatka Peninsular, the tribes people of Angola, markets of Saana in Yemen ... even getting around the need to be married to enter Saudi Arabia by getting a letter drawn up by the authorities in Jordan to say they were but the papers hadn’t arrived yet. The discussion was like having a talking Wikipedia of Travel at our table and as Dorothea explained, at the age of 9 she started her travels on a bicycle, which led to hitchhiking at 15 (because you could go further) and no doubt aeroplanes soon after. As we left them their next dream was the possibility of buying a yacht in Australia or New Zealand, partly to visit some of the remaining countries on their list including Nauru; although as Aussies we had our suggestions as to how they might get there?!



Above & Below: Treehouse bungalow accommodation at Port Olry



Barry tests the beer-temperature at the “Serenity Restaurant”, on the beach, at Port Olry

They say the most dangerous part of flying is the take-off and landing. It’s much the same with dinghies. Particularly when boarding off a beach, through the waves, in the dark. What could possibly go wrong? All five of us got wet, but none more so than Annette and Matt who were on the other side of the dinghy from me. To give you an idea of just how wet they got ... well at one point in that critical sand-wave-boarding “transition stage”, as the depth of the

water increases beyond the knees and the dinghy is pushed forward over the next advancing wave (to avoid it breaking over the bow) and everyone is supposed to jump aboard, all I could see of Matt and Annette was their head and shoulders.... oh, I could also see their hands and forearms as they clung to the rope around the side of the dinghy.

“Wait, not everyone’s aboard!!” came the cry ... “tell me something I don’t know” thought Matt and Annette!!! Once aboard, and the laughter had subsided we agreed that if you are going to get wet at 8:30 in the evening you want to do it when the water temperature is 29 degrees and the air temperature about the same. Back on Chimere we each dried off, had a hot drink, soaked in the beauty of the surroundings and retired to our bunks early.

Tomorrow we head south to Luganville and the big smoke

Smooth saes, fair breeze and beautiful Port Olry

Rob Latimer

FURTHER MISSION NEWS

Just a reminder that Graeme’s (unauthorized) mission blog and news about Vanuatu activities can be found here ... www.dukenews.wordpress.com

And team member, Annette Vincent, has a blog running here ... www.vincentsinvanuatu.blogspot.com

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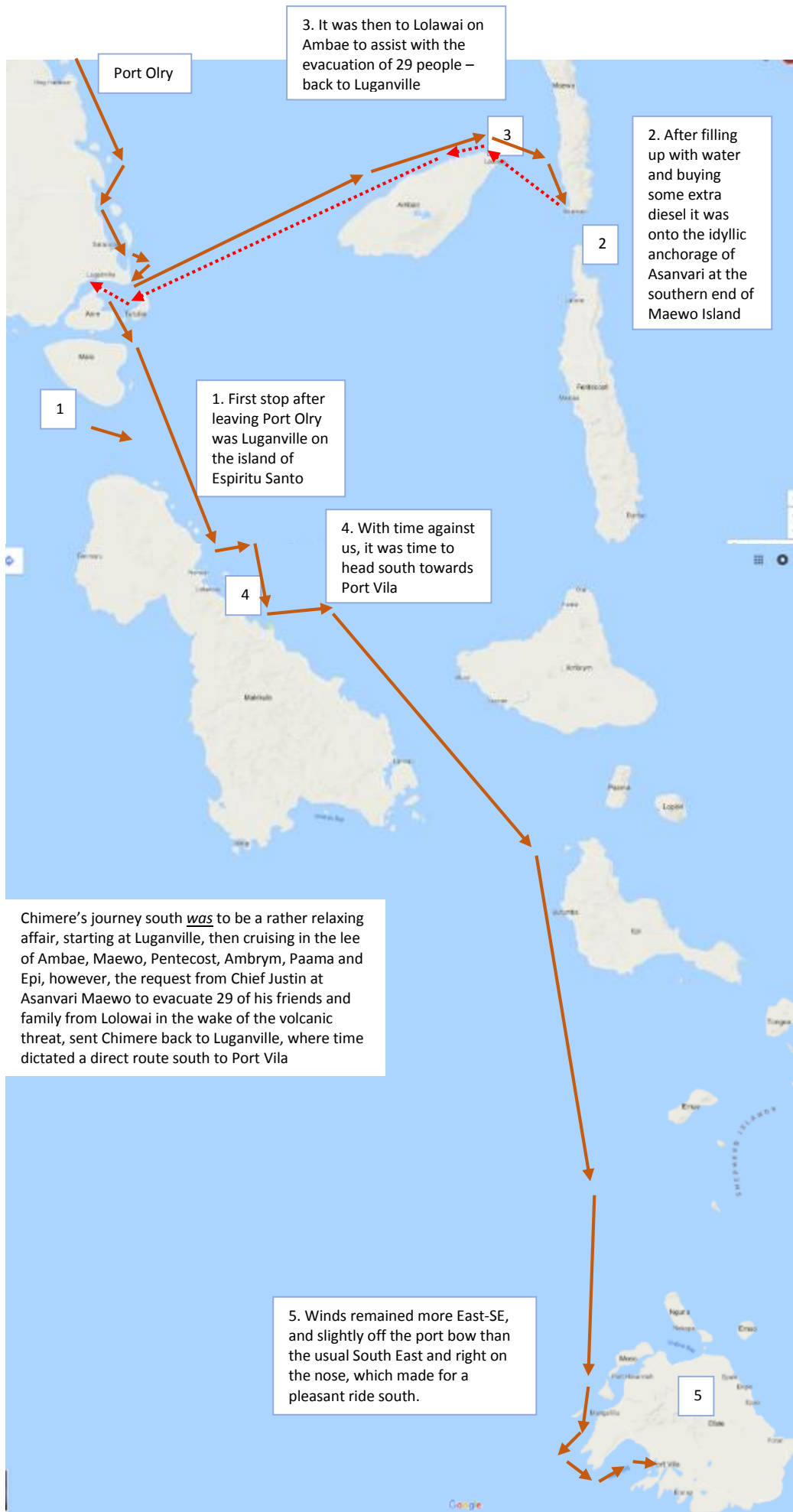
Our new German friends, Volker and Dorothea come aboard for morning tea



Chimere and her crew bath in the surroundings at Port Olry ... talk about 50 shades of blue

Heading south to Port Vila

Wednesday 27 September 2017



Chimere's journey south was to be a rather relaxing affair, starting at Luganville, then cruising in the lee of Ambae, Maewo, Pentecost, Ambrym, Paama and Epi, however, the request from Chief Justin at Asanvari Maewo to evacuate 29 of his friends and family from Lolowai in the wake of the volcanic threat, sent Chimere back to Luganville, where time dictated a direct route south to Port Vila

After seeing off the Five Amigos – Richard, Jay, Barkon, Bob and Wellin – in Port Olry it was time to head south to Luganville, where we hoped to obtain water from the public wharf; due to the onboard watermaker having “issues”.

From Luganville we intended to head east to the beautiful anchorage of Asanvari before heading south towards Port Vila in the lee of Pentecost, Ambrym and Epi islands.

Little did we know that due to the volcanic threat we would be asked to assist in the evacuation of 29 people and their personal belongings from Lolowai on the island of Ambae all the way back to Luganville; our starting point.

After dropping off our passengers, and buying more diesel, it was then full steam ahead south-east towards Port Vila, all the while hoping that the prevailing southeast winds remained in the eastern quarter and the seas did not build further.

Please can we have some water?

Wednesday 27 September 2017

Moored off Aore Island Resort (near Luganville)

After getting away from beautiful Port Olry at the scheduled time of 6:00am we headed south down the east coast of Santo towards Luganville. As expected, the wind and the waves were on the nose, but still we could maintain around 5 ½ knots. As a bonus we were able sneak inside some nearby islands, where sea conditions were sheltered, giving us a chance to also view some lovely anchorages and on-shore properties, some of which looked like resorts.

Being such a popular cruising region, we saw more yachts in just a few hours than we had in the past couple of weeks. There was also a large cruise ship arriving at the Hog Harbour, Champagne Beach, anchorage as we sailed past; a sign that we were truly back in civilisation.

Around 1:00pm, on arrival at Luganville, we made our way to the commercial wharf in order to find a hose to fill up our water tanks; our tanks being empty and the watermaker high pressure hoses having broken as mentioned in yesterday's Ships Log.

Getting access to the hose naturally involved us tying up at the wharf, always something to raise your blood pressure, but as it turned out there was a Chimere-sized gap between two island trader ships, right there in front of us. To the amused entertainment, laughter, yells and waves of the various ship's crews and wharf workers, we first hovered stern-to the breeze a short distance off, yelling greeting and questions back and forth, then we made our approach.

In the end, there were many willing hands to grab our lines to make us secure, and our fenders certainly earned their keep against the rough concrete and steel that passed as a wharf. It must be said, this was a very "industrial" area and in stepping ashore there were potholes, tripping hazards and discarded rubbish aplenty to ruin your day. But amidst it all there were the curious, always-happy locals, and despite the obvious differences between us and our vessels, we shared a natural sea-faring bond. It was also clear that very few yachts tie up here.



Above & Below: A brief stop at the Luganville public wharf enabled Chimere to re-fill the water tanks. It was a tight squeeze between the local trading vessels



Tied up in front of a big, ugly boat, Matt makes out they're steaming down on us

“Do you think maybe we could get some water? We have run out” we asked a particularly helpful man, who turned out to be “captain John” off the vessel behind us.

“Should be no problem. The man to ask is in the car over there” came the response. After explaining our requirements to a man in a fluoro safety vest ... along with who we were, where we’d been, what we were doing etc etc, he felt he needed to go off and talk with his boss, who had gone to lunch and was not here. “But I will go and find him and come back”.



Above: A cruise ship ties up at the new Luganville terminal
Below: After refilling the water tanks Chimere picked up a mooring at Aore Island Resort opposite Luganville – a very restful night indeed.



The nearby hose had already been laid out on the ground from the shed to the quay-side by a helpful deckhand off one of the trading boats, but the lock on the tap had prevented him from being any more helpful.

In the meantime we chatted with the local blokes, sharing anchorage horror-stories and learning about each other’s vessels and lives.

We invited Captain John aboard for lunch, (laid out below by Cathy and Annette), and through the discussions we learnt that his older brother was a dentist who works in Luganville and has spent the last few weeks travelling around on another yacht delivering medical services to remote communities. The group’s name was Pacific Yacht Ministries.

John explained what he would do if we weren't given water for our tanks, but fortunately the man in charge was happy to unlock the tap for us and soon the water flowed.

After a couple of hours it was time to leave and by tightened one line and easing off on another, we soon had the bow away from the wharf, sufficiently clear of the vessel in front, to fast-forward out of there before the onshore wind blew us back. "Retrieve lines !!" came the call and again, with the assistance of a big crowd onshore we were away to cheers, yells and hand waving all-round.

With no work to perform we motored across to the Aore Island Resort where we picked up a mooring and went for a swim and snorkel

Tomorrow, our goal is to make it the 60 miles across to Asanvari on the island of Maewo. Another 6:00am start. At least we won't have to retrieve an anchor, just unhook the mooring line and drive away.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and please can we have some water

Rob Latimer

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Donated caps were given away as Chimere travelled around the islands, here to a little girl in Asanvari by the Mission 3 team – this would have to be one of the cutest photos of the whole mission

Take me back to Asanvari

Thursday 28 September 2017

Asanvari, Maewo

After a gloriously still night on the mooring at Aore Island Resort, with the lights of Luganville across the Second Channel, it was an easy departure around 6:00am. No need to winch aboard the chain and anchor, just a case of lifting the mooring line off the bow cleat and dropping it into the water.

Our destination this day was the beautiful anchorage at the village of Asanvari on the southern tip of Maewo Island. Sixty miles away and around 10 hours sailing, assuming we could average 6 knots and 12 hours at 5 knots.

The one thing we didn't want to do of course was arrive in the dark and have to rely on the chart plotter and moonlight to determine where to drop the anchor.

In the end the sailing conditions could best be described as "varied", with a brisk 25 knot south east wind keeping us on our toes for the open-water stretch between Luganville and Ambae, then very little wind in the lee of Ambae, then brisk conditions again from the eastern tip of Ambae to the sheltered west coast of Maewo.

Having mentioned the island of Ambae, I should also mention that it is currently in a state of heightened alert on account of the resident volcano reaching Category 4 on the five-point danger-scale. Fearing a major eruption, evacuations have started taking place and we saw from a distance the Vanuatu patrol boat picking people up along the north coast and dropping into Loloawai at the eastern tip of the island. Our course along the north coast of Ambae might have appeared to be a case of "volcano chasers", but it was the most direct and comfortable route to Asanvari, given the winds blow from the south east most of the time. It will also position us better for the serious run south to Po Vila in a couple of day's time



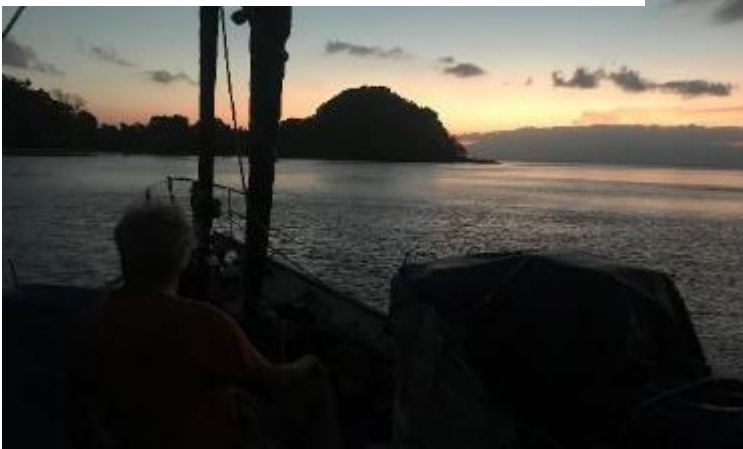
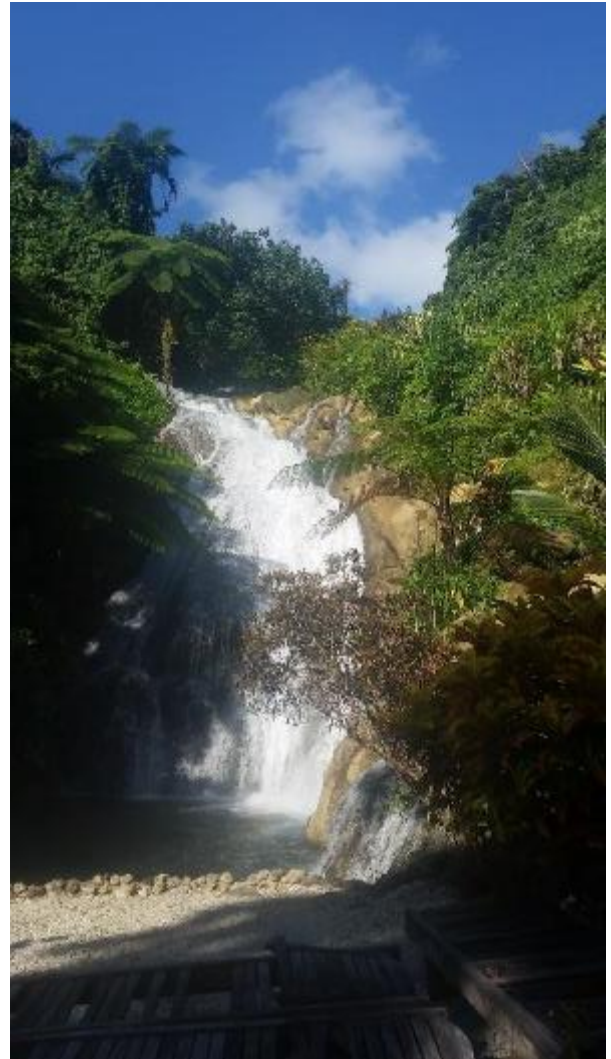
Above: Barry Crouch enjoys the Maewo coastline, then soaks up the serenity of Asanvari, (Maewo) on a most beautiful sunny day

Below: Annette, Matt, Cathy and Barry head towards the local waterfall for a swim





Matt waves good-bye to the local "Waterfall Chief" the astute Alex.
You can see why it's a place that keeps drawing you back



After some fast sailing at the beginning of the day, then some slow sailing into the wind after lunch, in the end we made it to the Asanvari anchorage at exactly 6:00pm, with 15 minutes of daylight up our sleeves.

It was quite a relief to find a sandy bottom in 13 metres of water in which to drop our anchor. After the lumpy seas experienced earlier, the stillness of this sheltered bay is fantastic, with the sound of a waterfall over the stern the only real noise from onshore. Above us, the stars are shining and the reflection of the half-moon on the water is enough to illuminate the dark outline of the distant headland and the high, jungle-covered island interior Cathy and Annette had dinner ready for our arrival (great work !!) and after a 12 hour sail everyone seems ready for sleep.



There's a gentle breeze outside now, but the stillness of this anchorage means we could almost break out the pool table?! Captains orders for tomorrow are to ... sleep-in at leisure ... followed by a swim ashore to the waterfall ... some snorkelling, plus a visit to the village to meet the people Mission 3 got to know while they were here running a medical clinic and Oral Health Survey about a month ago. We might even spend tomorrow night here too.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and take me back to Asanvari ...

Rob Latimer

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In the shadow of the volcano

Friday 29 September 2017

Asanvari, Maewo

The day began very slow and sleepy aboard Chimere; Asanvari is that kind of anchorage.

Having arrived just on dark last night there was no chance to go ashore to meet with any of the village leaders, but around 7:30am the first canoe could be seen heading our way from the main beach.

“Save a pancake” I said to Cathy in the galley, “we might have a guest”.

Our visitor introduced himself as Chief Justin and in a very humble and obtuse kind of way presented a problem ... “that you might be able to help us with ... but only if it's not too much trouble ... and if you can't that's fine ...”

As it turned out there was a boy in the village who had hurt his arm playing soccer and they needed to take him over to the Lolowai Hospital on Ambae. Plus they needed to bring back people being evacuated on account of the volcanic activity ... and ... “what we were after was some fuel ... some petrol”

“Yes, we can help with some petrol, and maybe our nurse could have a look the boy. We'll bring the fuel over in the dinghy shortly”

As he was leaving we asked Chief Justin how many people they were intending to bring across to Asanvari and he said around 150, with tomorrow set as the date for evacuation of the whole island.

“Would it be useful if we took our boat over to assist?”, we asked.

He agree this might be a good thing and we exchanged phone numbers when we met on the beach a short time later, after Cathy determining that the boy was fine and that the local nurse Olivette had done a great job bandaging up the graze.

After giving Chief Justin 30 litres of petrol (supposedly in exchange for some fruit ... bananas, pamplemousse and especially mangoes) we waved him good-bye. Meanwhile the island of Ambae, 10 miles away was reasonably clear and silent, although as volcanologists would probably agree, looks can be deceptive. Apparently last week the explosions from the top of Ambae could be heard 20 miles away and were sending rocks into the sea several kilometres away; locals could see the splashes when they hit the water.

Meanwhile we all enjoyed the snorkelling and the nearby waterfall, with our host (Chief) Alex showing us around and

The island of Ambae, just across the water from Asanvari on the southern tip of Maewo, begins to get unpredictable and potentially dangerous; for the whole region



Local lad, and guide, enjoys some time in the dinghy

making us feel welcome. Also, Martin, a young boy of 10 (and brother of the boy with the sore arm) took Annette, Barry, Matt and Cathy on a guided tour of the village.

Mid-afternoon, I received a call from Chief Justin to say that he had spoken with the regional disaster coordinator and there was a view that Asanvari and the whole region of south Maewo and north Pentecost was still too close to Ambae to send evacuees, on account of the tsunami risk in the event of earthquake.

So the request from Justin was ... “could we evacuate people 28 people to Santo ... Luganville, tomorrow?” This would mean going back to where we had started. But at least the wind would be from the behind.

“Yes, we can assist, we can be there at 8:00am tomorrow morning.”

Chief Justin was supposed to come back in the banana boat this afternoon, but we’ve seen no sign of him. Likewise, we haven’t been able to raise him on the phone ... but that’s not so unusual in these parts.

The rest of the day was spent tidying up Chimere in readiness for the 90 minute sail across to Lolowai in the morning and the welcoming aboard of 28 people. From Lolowai to Luganville should be around an 8 hour sail, so we’ve organised some in-flight food for our guests. Just have to sort out the entertainment now.

In chatting with “waterfall chief”, Alex, he recalled the mud brick demonstration I did in the village back in 2010 and expressed interest in seeing it again. This involved an enjoyable walk up the mountain to obtain the clay, all the while learning more about this fascinating guy and the politics and history of the region.

As a past-meteorologist, journalist, radio station founder and business man, Alex is certainly not your average Ni-Van! After making 5 very handsome mudbricks and leaving him with an instruction manual, plus a mold we’d made from onboard materials, Alex promised to send me a photo of the building he intends to make from the bricks.

Barry led the charge in making dinner ... a very tasty spag bol ... after which he declared “there are no more condiments left in the galley”. Suggesting he might have been unclear which herb, spice and sauce to add, so he’d included them all.

With a big day ahead it was an early night for all.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and in the shadow of the volcano

Rob Latimer

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Chief Alex shows interest in the making of mud bricks and after a trek up the hillside to find sticky clay, it was down to business. Robert’s first mud brick demonstration, for the making of low smoke stoves, was conducted in the village back in 2010



Boat people of Ambae

Saturday 30 September 2017
Asanvari, Maewo

Having made our promise to assist Chief Justin with the evacuation of his list of 28 people from Lolowai (Ambae Island) to Luganville (Espiritu Santo Island) – a journey of around nautical 55 miles – we first had to make it to Lolowai.

The agreed pick-up time was 8:00am, so we were up and away from beautiful Asanvari around 6:00am for the 10 mile hop across. There was still no sign of Chief Justin, who was expected to return from his “research-mission” trip yesterday afternoon, so we assumed he ended up staying the night in Lolowai. My many phone calls to him throughout the late afternoon and evening remained unanswered, but I assumed he was ... “out of credit” ... a familiar message everyone hears on their phones here.

We arrived at Lolowai around 7:45am, and made it into the narrow pass around the stern of patrol boat 02 RVS Tukoro, after first radioing our intentions on Channel 16. Entering the bay we saw two coastal traders already loading people and their belongings. One a red landing barge with her ramp down on the main beach below the hospital, the other a black vessel only it’s mother could truly love, anchored a little way off the beach, using its large dinghy – back and forth – loaded each trip with what seemed like perilously little freeboard. We were familiar with this black vessel, because it was tied behind us at the commercial wharf in Luganville a couple of days earlier when we’d refilled with water. We’d got to know Captain John and half expected to see him again this time.

Meanwhile, things appeared calm onshore, although there was a large number of people and their personal belongings onshore at the main beach, obviously waiting to be loaded onto the two ships and more that would inevitably come throughout the day. Otherwise it was a gloriously sunny morning, in one of the best anchorages to be found.

The phone rang, it was Chief Justin. “Hello Robert, I called a few times, I have your fruits, bananas and things, here for the petrol”

“Good morning Chief Justin, where are you?” I inquired.



Evacuating 11,000 people requires a lot of effort and resources, here we see one of Vanuatu’s patrol boats (Tukoro) and two of her crew keeping an eye on proceedings.



Rob says hello to Anthony, brother of Chief Justin (Asanvari) who had requested our evacuation assistance.

"I am here in Asanvari. We came back last night. Where are you?" came the reply

"I'm in Lolowai, as we agreed yesterday, for the 8:00am pick-up. Is everyone ready onshore do you know? Who was the contact person?" I replied "Sorry tumas, it was very busy yesterday and we came back late. The contact man in Lolowai is a man called Lesley Mera, I will give you his number, he is expecting you. And my brother, Anthony is on the patrol boat Tukoro". I reassured Chief Justin that it didn't matter about the fruit and 10 litre fuel container, but that I would call him once I'd got everyone aboard. Knowing there would be delays in loading everyone, my "drop-dead-departure-time" to get away from Lolowai, was around 9:00am, in order to return to Luganville in daylight; and of course have time to unload everyone.

Finally, after maybe six or more trips to and from the landing beach, it was around 10:30 that we finally made our way out of the short Lolowai Bay channel, over the coral, and into open water, All aboard Chimere was ready to receive our guests. Everything was packed away, we all wore our "official" MSM and PCV shirts. I even dug out some yellow fluoro vests I'd bought at one time, in order to convey a greater sense of confidence and reassurance ... plus I got to wear my "Captains Cap" ... for the same reason ... any other time it had just been a bit of a pretentious joke. Given the number of caps that seem to blow overboard, the latest cap I had been wearing said "Knackered Sailor", which even I thought a bit inappropriate given the circumstance.

The loading process started with maybe 5 phone calls to Lesley. The first around 7:45am along the lines of ... "Good morning Lesley, I have been told you are the man in charge ... how many people are there ... and is everyone ready?"

"Yes, good morning Robert, we are just finding a couple of vehicles to transport the people and their things, maybe we be there at 8:30"

Around 8:45am and still no sign of our passengers, my next call ... "hello Lesley, we need to be away at 9:00am, are you nearly here ... remember it's not the main landing beach under the hospital, it's the beach around the bay, under the trees, close to where we are anchored?"

"We are nearly there, just a few minutes"

Meanwhile we had two visits from the Maritime Police tender off the patrol boat to check on our purpose, intentions, contacts, that we understood the process of providing a list of all the people loaded and registration at



Above & Below: Running 2 hours behind time, the last of the 29 evacuees, plus their belongings, make their way to Chimere



the other end etc, and that we were in fact taking everyone to Santo, not places like Asanvari (where we'd come from that morning) where there was a perceived Tsunami threat in the event of an earthquake.

The men off the patrol boat were very respectful and professional, great blokes and one of course was Chief Justin's younger brother Anthony. "Tank yu tumas for what you are doing, we really appreciate your assistance" each of them said.

"You guys have got a big job, how many people are you evacuating? I asked.

"About 11,000 people. We will be here till next Friday. Yes, it's a big job. Tank yu tumas for your help"

Finally our people arrived at the beach and we began the process of loading – luggage first. Fortunately, the many medical transport missions we have conducted around the islands has made Chimere and her crew proficient at moving people and stuff.

But I hadn't fully realised, 29 people (yes, 29, not 28 as originally suggested) have a lot of stuff! Not just bed-rolls, woven mats, carry bags, stripy bags and back-packs, but bags of rice, bags of bananas, bags of miscellaneous stuff, and a piglet in an old sugar bag. I first realised it was a piglet when someone stepped on a bag in the dinghy as were coming off the beach and the bag squealed something dreadful.

"It's a pig!?" I exclaimed ... to the laughter of all.

Oh, and there's the request I'm not likely to hear again for sometime ...

"do you have a fridge that I can put my bats in?". Yes, that's right "bats", not cricket bats, but tasty flying fox bats. Two of them in a plastic bag – dead mercifully.

Around 10:00am, with Chimere crowded with people, all finding their spot for the journey – mostly women and babies in the cockpit, boys and men up the bow and children and older women and men on the foredeck as I was gaining confirmation from Lesley that ... "is this all?" ... there was the call, there are two more people.

"where are they?" I half pleaded.

"They come soon" was the reply.



Above & Below: After compiling a list of those onboard for the local police and evacuation authorities, it was up and away for the 8 hour sail back to Luganville, where our chances of arriving in daylight were diminishing due to our two hour delay loading everyone aboard



Above & Below: Women and babies tended to fill the cockpit, while men and boys mostly found a home on the foredeck under a tarp.





Above & Below: Annette serves drinks, while Cathy gives a mother a break by taking charge of a wriggly baby

I returned to the beach with Lesley, as the big black coastal trading vessel left the bay loaded down with people and belongings, to hand over the written “final list of names” to the land-based police, who were assisting in the evacuation.

“Where are the two extra people I asked Lesley. We need to go. Are they coming now? Do they have much stuff?” I asked as we landed on the beach, the crowds of people (and piles of gear) increasing as more and more small banana boats began appearing to evacuate family and friends

“There’s the truck now, with the extra two people” called Lesley as we went off to let them know we were leaving and that they should put their

stuff in the dinghy pronto. No wonder they had their own truck ... they had a lot of gear ... but we were so far into the process, it was now just a case of ... “load it on, let’s go”



Meanwhile, as I stood in the shallows holding the bow of the dinghy, a French journalist from Noumea, who’d apparently come in on yesterday’s flight, approached me again for information on the situation and what we were doing. She then lifted her video camera onto her shoulder and pushed a microphone forward – this really was a one-woman travelling media unit – “can you tell me what you are doing ere ...”

My impromptu “media commitments” complete ... and more importantly, the dinghy loaded, the final-final list handed over (and photographed on my iPhone), Lesley and the two extras onboard, we made our way back to Chimere for the last time.

Chimere was still high in the water as I approached, which was a good sign, albeit down in the bow because of the big crowd and with a list to starbo

ard on account of the gear on deck, but overall she looked good.

It was then a case of passing the last of the stuff up from the dinghy and tying her astern – there was definitely no room for the large dinghy on deck !



Are we there yet ... ?

I did my “welcome and instructions” speech, covering everything except the... “brace position”, “tightening your safety belt”, “stowing the tray table” and “putting your seat in an upright position for landing” ... but there was definitely a section on toilet

use (and avoiding abuse), lifejackets, always hanging on when moving around and “look to the crew for instructions”. I think I might have said, the crew are in fluoro vests, but then as someone said to me earlier ... “they’ll know who we are because we are the white ones” mmm... very true

It was then time for a short prayer ... for safety and for those whose lives are being affected by the volcano and the emergency service personnel who are working so hard.

It was then time to up-anchor and away.

Out from land, we gained clear air and set the sails. It was then time to put up awnings as shelter from the sun for those on the foredeck. Cathy and Annette in their official PCV shirts, did amazingly with handing out drinks and snacks, and Cathy took charge of the piglet-in-a-bag, hanging it from a frame at the mast and providing some shade. The sail across to Luganville was a mixed bag ... starting at 8 knots plus, with a steady trade wind up our stern quarter, followed by no wind, then wind on the nose, then a return of wind on the beam and slightly lumpy seas. It was these lumpy seas that coincided with me having a couple of hours sleep below, as Matt took charge.

My return to deck was greeted by Matt's comment ... "been a few sick boss" ... Sure enough, there were a few suffering in silence, gazing out to space, lying listlessly, or with heads over the toerail.



Above & Below: "Wriggly baby" keep Matt (the older) and Cathy entertained



Below: Chimere's "Purple Mascot Dragon" toy, which came with the boat when purchased in 2006 did the trick in calming the baby.



By this time the black ship was very close but finally got the message and thought better of docking in the vacant space ahead of us.

Soon after all this we made the final checks ... 1. Bats out of fridge 2. Pig-in-bag off boat 3. All bags collected 4. Sign final release with clip-board man concerning numbers delivered, vessel name, captain etc.

Up on the bow and foredeck "the lads" were moistly laughing and joking when they weren't sleeping. The sun set as we approached the entrance Luganville harbour, with a general feeling of excitement and expectation settling over the human cargo, knowing that this part of their journey was soon at an end. Chimere's crew were also pleased the eight hour journey was at an end, it must be said, but as the "drop-off" wharf got closer and the sky grew darker the concern about docking in the dark grew. Fortunately we had been here before in filling the water tanks, but of course that was in daylight.

All the lines were made ready, the sails dropped and all fenders deployed on the port side as we made our approach. "Oh, the dinghy behind!!" came the call ... "someone shorten the lines!"

With only one boat at the wharf, and the black ships mentioned earlier on our tail, in the end our "landing" was very respectable, with many hands there in the torchlit darkness to take our lines.

In fact on shore there was a marquee, men with clip boards, officials in fluoro vests (just like me), police, media with video cameras and crowds of others. Once secured a policeman came aboard and thanked us for our assistance and Lesley came over to organise the disembarkation through a roped off corridor to ensure the crowd and the evacuees didn't mix. The luggage was then man-handled piece by piece into a sizeable pile, no doubt to be claimed and removed soon after.

The big black vessel made motions to dock in front of us and was getting closer and closer, but the system of people removal required that everyone needed to pass through the roped-off corridor, and they could not dock until we had departed, the "gate" being at our side. An official man with a mega-phone, then began yelled very loudly something like "Yu NO STAP LONG PLES HIA !!!" ... "Yu WAITEM NO MO" in short ... DO NOT DOCK HERE ... YOU MUST STOP & GO AROUND & WAIT"



Above: The big ugly boat (that we'd met in Luganville three days earlier) was now in the same Lolawai harbour loading evacuees.

Around this time Jay, the PCV Luganville eyecare worker came down to the wharf to meet us in order to pick up his "test case", but as he described later in his quiet way ... "there were a lot of people and the security wouldn't let me near. But I saw you drive away and the other boat had to wait for you to first unload"

Once away from the wharf we tooted our horn at the big black boat in fun and headed away to a quiet anchorage off the Beachfront Resort, our regular spot, passing the impressive tall ship "Tenacious" (out of Southhampton) tied up at the cruise ship wharf. Tenacious being a three masted, 200 foot sail training ship run by the Jubilee Trust for people with disabilities and a vessel we passed in March when she was anchored off Refuge Cove, Victoria.



Above: The final approach down the Segond Channel into Luganville into a setting sun.

The anchor down, Barry prepared a rice and out-of-the-can meal (chunky beef I think) and we sat around and relaxed, discussing the events of the day. It truly was a day to remember

Tomorrow, permission was given for everyone to sleep in, with our big plan being to buy more diesel – our supply getting short on account of the day's activities – and start heading south to Port Vila where we are due on Monday or Tuesday.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and the boat people of Ambae

Rob Latimer

Below: It was indeed dark when Chimere finally tied up at the Luganville wharf, mmmercifully, just 5 minutes before the big ugly boat, which was requested to stand off and wait till we had "correctly" off-loaded all our passengers

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Now it really IS time to head south

Sunday 1 October 2017

At sea, between Luganville and Port Vila

After yesterday's excitement, the still, sunny warmth of the morning saw each of the crew emerge in their own time. Unusually there were six other boats anchored around us off the Beachfront Resort, making it a delicate procedure last night to pick our way through the crowd by torchlight, finding a spot a respectful distance from others, but still in a deep, safe spot close to shore.

Matt brought the dinghy, still tethered to the stern, around to the portside and we pumped it up a bit more. Breakfast was had and around 9:00am, Annette, Cathy, Barry and I headed off to the town wharf-for-small-boats, located around the back of the Santo Hardware and a short distance from the fuel station across the road; a dinghy ride of about 10 minutes at top speed. Jay met us at the refuelling station to obtain his optical test-case and we briefly discussed the last few weeks of mission activities and his return to work tomorrow heading up the PCV Prevention of Blindness Program in Luganville.

After filling up our four, 20 litre drums with diesel, having an ice-cream – all except man-of-steel Barry it must be said – it was back across the road to the dinghy where we said good-bye to Jay.

Back aboard Chimere, we raised the dinghy to the deck, poured most of the diesel into the tank, had lunch then up-anchored and set sail down the Segond Channel – Luganville to our port and Aore Island to our starboard. It was 12:45pm by the time we departed and although our 160 mile course would have us heading into the prevailing south-east wind for most of the next day and a half, the wind was mercifully still out of the east (well off our port bow) and the seas were mild. Consequently, our speed regularly hit 7.0-7.50 knots, with good ol' Perkins giving us at least half of that.

In the distance, off the port side, Ambae Island could still be seen with its ominous smoke trail, indicating that it was still very much alive and dangerous. Three further trading vessels could be seen heading in the direction of the island, continuing the evacuation that would likely last all week. With the last of the 3G TVL communications we were pleased to learn that the Australian Government had offered assistance and we assume this includes naval and air support plus shelter and food for at least some of the 11,000 evacuees.

The front cover of the local newspaper bought while we were in Luganville read ... "VANUATU 'NOT READY': PM", Vanuatu Daily Post. Which is a refreshingly honest statement from a politician, let alone the Prime Minister; Mr Charlot Salawai. But the sad reality is, Vanuatu faces many natural threats such as cyclone, tsunami, earthquake and



Above: Annette savors a First World delight after nearly a month at sea
Below: Departing Luganville Chimere takes the narrow passage between Tutuba and Bokissa Islands. Once clear of the reef it was then a case of setting course for Port Vila 160 miles to the south.



of course volcanos (of which there are currently seven) and with limited resources even in the good times, they rely on friendly (wealthy) neighbours such as Australia and New Zealand to help out in times of need.

As the sun went down, we were still plugging our way south, with the island of Malekula off the starboard beam, all the while reminding me of the many times sailing the waters of Bass Strait, particularly as thousands of shearwaters, (mutton birds) crossed our bow in a steady stream. Never before have I seen so many birds in Vanuatu, and I had no idea these birds were found in such numbers here. Then Cathy suggested, “maybe they are migrating south for summer”. Which made more sense,

given these birds winter in the northern hemisphere – as high as Alaska I believe – and then return to the same burrow each southern summer, in New Zealand and Australia. It made sense that if this was October, and the birds needed to be south in time to breed over summer, then they would be passing through here about now.

The birds kept flying, from north east to south west, and our view of them only stopped when the sky was finally dark.

Despite the rocky conditions, Annette prepared a wonderfully tasty curry and kumala feast with the last of the mince as Matt and I started a 3 hour on, 3 hours off, watch through the night, with Cathy, Barry and Annette sharing duties as desired.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and time to head south

Rob Latimer

[Andy Tiver](#), [Edith West](#), [Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Christine McDonald](#), [Phil Wicks](#), [Matt Latimer](#), [Kate Storey-Whyte](#), [Ryan Crouch](#), [Liz Bolton](#) liked this post



Near Malekula Island a steady stream of migrating Mutton Birds – all heading south-ish towards Australia and New Zealand were seen. NOT so easy to make out in this shot unfortunately

Back in Port Vila again

Monday 2 October 2017

Waterfront seawall, Port Vila

A series of tacks between Malekula and Ambrym Islands through the night, then a long tack to get into the lee of Epi in the early morning, then saw us on a steady course to Efate and our eventual destination Port Vila.

The wind held from the East-Southeast at around 20 knots and with moderate seas we were able to make up time, with our speed regularly hitting over 8 knots

Devil's Point was rounded in daylight and from there it was a steady 1-2 hour slog into the wind with the lights of Port Vila in the distance.

Once in the harbour we picked up a mooring around 7:30pm, finally turned off the engine and breathed a sigh of relief – the four medical missions for 2017 were now at an end.

It didn't take long for bags to be packed and for Barry and Annette to take their leave via a short dinghy ride to the shore. Their prompt departure can be put down to Barry's wife Andrea having flown in earlier in the day and Annette's husband Martyn meekly waiting ashore for the safe return of his wife. Meanwhile, onboard, Cathy and Matt cooked up a lovely dinner and sleep soon followed.

Tuesday 3 Oct 2017

The day dawned sunny and with plans set for a sumptuous breakfast together ashore at Jill's Café, (at the amazing sleep-in hour of 9:00am) we first made arrangements to bring Chimere to the sea wall.

This is always a nervous time, that involves first, backing Chimere (straight) towards the solid seawall while, second, picking up a mooring line at the bow and shore-line at the stern. The lines fore and aft are then tensioned to keep the stern just the right distance from the concrete wall.



Above: Final dinner, at the Melanesian Hotel, l-r (back) Cathy, Wellin, Martin, Annette, Barry, Deb, Matt (the older), Bob, Barkon & Rob
Below: Chimere back in her Sea Front position at Yachting World, Port Vila



In the end it was a text book landing, with Matt taking charge of the bow, Cathy of the stern and the Yachting World staff in their boat helping at all points.

Breakfast was indeed a decadent feast compared to what we have been used to for several weeks aboard and it was great to catch up with Andrea and Martyn. The rest of the day just seemed to disappear, with the dental and mission equipment and supplies being retrieved from Chimere's foredeck in the afternoon, interspersed with ongoing cleaning, tidying and for some reason, a regular urge to lie down and fall asleep.

Oh, there was also Wellin's bag of fresh fish, placed in our freezer up in Sola, Vanualava, what seems ages ago now. This was an impulse-purchase Wellin made off a local banana boat fisherman as we all stood in the shallows waiting to head out to Chimere for the last time before heading home. "Hurry up Wellin!" someone yelled in Bislama ... "He doesn't have change of a 1000 Vatu note!" called back Wellin. Solution ... "Buy more fish Wellin !!" Which quickly had Wellin climbing into the dinghy with a bigger than usual bag of fish to be placed in Chimere's freezer for the return voyage. I've no doubt that's a fisherman's sales tactic used the world over – and not just by fishermen!

Barry and Andrea generously hosted a dinner for all available team members and partners – still in Port Vila – up at the Melanesian Hotel – and it was great to catch up with Wellin, Barkon and Bob again, plus of course Martin and Deb. Richard, sadly couldn't make it along because of a recent death in the family.



Chimere was close enough to the Water Front restaurant to almost qualify as an extra table

Wednesday 4 Oct 2017

With the Supporters Tour starting in two day's time, and around 20 people coming over to Port Vila to enjoy something of the "local experience" it was now time to give thought to all the many loose ends that needed to be addressed.

This took most of the day, with time also shared with fellow yachties and new best friends from a yacht also tied up at the waterfront – Amos & Anat Raviv, off their yacht "Amosea Island". Their stories of sailing from Israel, of family, and of life generally were fascinating and Barry, Andrea and I had a lovely coffee and cake aboard their beautiful yacht before Barry and Andrea headed off to the airport to visit the volcano down on Tanna for a couple of days. In reflecting on Barry's short time in Vanuatu, he could almost be described as a volcano-chaser, having sailed past the Gaua volcano, Mt Garet, evacuated 29 people from the newly-awakened Ambae volcano, seen close-up from at sea the glow of Ambrym's two volcanos Mt Benbow & Mt Marum and is now heading down to Tanna's Mt Yasur to stand on the rim and look into its exploding cauldron of molten earth.

Living on the edge Barry ?!

Thursday 5 October 2017

It's now Thursday 5 October – a public holiday, Constitution Day ! So things are even sleepier than usual ... but there's a rumour (my friend) the President will be speaking somewhere today, so I'm going to check it out. And I'm also meeting with Kalmaire from Paunangisu Village to iron out any last-minute details for the Village Experience Day next Monday and the Supporters Tour generally.

Smooth seas, fair breeze and time to head south

Rob Latimer

[Edith West](#), [Jake Remyn](#), [Carmel Noble](#) liked this post

One more sleep

Thursday 5 October 2017

Waterfront seawall, Port Vila

The “Supporters Tour” begins tomorrow. What’s that I hear you say?!

In keeping with past tradition and in conjunction with our friendly travel agent Ari, we have organised a 10 day holiday package that is both a fund-raiser for Mission 2017, but also a chance for “supporters” to enjoy a more grassroots Vanuatu holiday experience, without sacrificing too much on comfort.

The itinerary includes a “Village Experience Day”, trips out on the Port Vila harbour aboard Chimere, visits to the local medical clinic, church and market, plus an opportunity to experience life through the eyes of the locals

Around 20 people have signed up for the “Tour” and so it’s been a full-on task to get Chimere in a tidy state and to put the finishing touches to the itinerary, including the printed “Tour Pack” each person will receive on arrival

I was making inquiries two days ago with various contacts about Eddiy Bule, the man featured in earlier Ships Logs, who we hired on a daily basis earlier in the mission, to assist with sanding and painting aboard Chimere.

“He’s back on his island, but I will let him know you are here” said his friend and employee at Yachting World who own the Waterfront here where we tie up. Then an older man, John, got my attention today and introduced himself as Eddiy’s father, “Yes, Eddiy is son of my brother” ...

“So that means he’s your nephew? You are his uncle?” I inquired. “No, I’m his father, his other father. That’s the way it is here.” John replied. Not a bad system really. All part of it “taking a village to raise a child”.

Then, 10 minutes ago I had a call from an unidentified local number ... “Ello, Robert ‘ere” I answered ... “Ello boss, is that you Robert? It’s Eddiy” came the reply

“Eddiy, great to hear your voice. Where are you?” I continued

Eddiy then went on to explain that he was dropping into the Waterfront each day recently and finally one of the people here asked ... “why do you come each day?” and he said he was wanting to know when Chimere ... and “his boss” as he now calls me, returns.



Above: Eddiy checks into his flight to Australia
Below: An Aussie flag was modified by Matt (the younger) as a gesture to our New Zealand team member Annette



Seeing that we weren't about he headed to the island of Emae, a short distance north, to assist with the re-building of a church building. "I will be back in a couple of days, I will call you then" insisted Eddiy

Some further background to Eddiy is that a month or so ago we bought a small solar system for Eddiy in return for a promise to work 7 days aboard Chimere before she returns to Australia. It was all drawn up on paper and signed by Eddiy and skipper Jon of Mission 3 fame and so Eddiy is obviously keen to keep his side of the bargain.

In other news today there was an Australian Air Force transport plane fly over after presumably dropping aid for the people being evacuated of the island of Ambae. In addition there is what was described on the VHF Channel 16 as "Australian War Ship" anchored way out in Mele Bay, for the same reason as the plane. Great to see, and a wonderful use of a "war" ship ...

Being tied up so close to the "bar and grill", Chimere's cockpit could double as another restaurant table, with the chatter of patrons (increasingly well lubricated given it's now 9:00pm) and the clink of plates and cups sounding like it already is. I was automatically thinking ... "what a rowdy bunch of Aussies" ... then after catching a few "bros", "A" and discussion about a woman prime minister I figured these are rowdy Kiwis ... "Sweet as bro, yeh cool man, another beer ... thanks man" Not me, that's the New Zealander ...

Tomorrow is a big day ... with my darling wife Linda also coming on the Supporters Tour ... so it's not just Chimere that's been getting a clean-up?! I might also get the opportunity to trade my bunk for a real bed up at the Melanesian ...

Smooth seas, fair breeze and one more sleep

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Big day in Paunangisu

Monday 9 October 2017

Best Public Toilet in the South Pacific is still the best !! Village Experience Day comes to an end



Paunangisu Village and the Best Public Toilet in the South Pacific. Oh, and the end-of-the-day Village Experience photo of the Supporters Tour and village locals – it was a great fun day

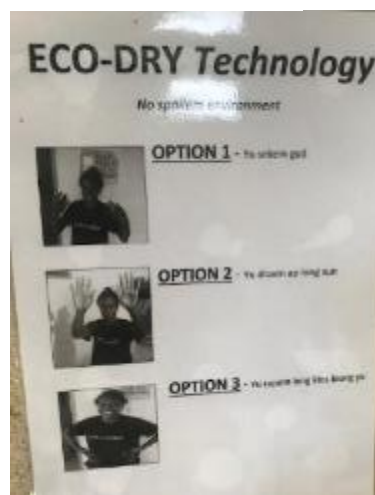
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Above: Best Public Toilet in the South Pacific - and the regular cleaners who are keeping the vision alive through their commitment to maintaining high standards



Above: Crew member Peter studies the health messages on the walls inside
Right: Three Eco-Dry hand drying options – Shake, Sun, Wipe



Above & Below: The Supporters Tour on The Three Hour Tour, the Village Experience Tour and morning tea aboard Chimere



A day on the water!!

A personal best for Chimere... 40 on day one and 35 day two
The Day Sails to Hideaway Island with a large number of friends and Our Paunangisu 'family' was a great success. For most it was their first time in a yacht and to the small island just out of Port Vila
A big thanks to the Chimere catering division, the Chimere sailors and the very kind weather

[Mark Stephenson](#), [Jenny Newby-Fraser](#), [Marina Amoz Tamara](#), [Jan McLean](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Keitha Kim Muir](#), [Robyn Clarke](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Barry Stewart](#), [Andy Tiver](#), [Jake Remyn](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Alice Kalontano Kailes](#), [Martyn Vincent](#), [Phil Wicks](#) liked this post
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Above: The Supporters Tour, plus another 20+ locals from the village of Paunangisu on The Day Sail.
Below: End-of-the-day group shot of the Day Sail ... 40 passengers on day one and 35 the next





Above & Below: Happy faces all round on the Supporters Tour



Bringing her home – 2017

This blog begins the voyage home for Chimere after more than 4 months of [hyper]active service throughout the lovely islands of Vanuatu.

The last 3 days have been a conglomerate of meeting new blokes, travelling together, arriving in Port Vila and being greeted by Rob Lat and Martin Burgess, before finally meeting Chimere herself at Yachting World, Port Vila. Our activities since arriving have included unpacking and repacking pretty much everything (food, supplies, tools, equipment, dinghys) and provisioning for the return voyage including fresh food, water, fuel. Chimere has been thoroughly checked from bow to stern, masthead to keel, engine serviced, halyards run, steering adjusted, dinghy repaired and cleaned out. Out course and best timing for sailing have been negotiated, explained and plotted, along with weather apps consulted to prepare us for what lies ahead.

Of great significance in our journey has been meeting and getting to know our crew, who are:

- Skipper: Cameron Heathwood, seasoned pilot, ocean racer and cruiser who would rather be on a boat somewhere (oh, he is!).
- First Mate: Rob Lott, crusty sailor, constant friendly evangelist and teacher of us all in almost everything.
- Second Mate: Ray Clark, chief fixer of complicated stuff, adviser, boat owner and....Dad really.
- Bosun: Jonno de Puit, ships builder, cyclist and Laser sailor, about to learn heaps.
- Chief Cook and Baker: Gwilym Seibel, passionate food purveyor and connoisseur, always up for a laugh.

Some highlights from the last few days include:

- Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu – letter of support received for exemption from port dues – currently being negotiated.
 - Rob Latimer having a 20 minute private audience with the Vanuatu President – Pastor Moses.
 - Experiencing the drop in centre that Chimere is and meeting many interesting and interested folk.
 - Sending Cam up the mast for some cool photos (and some odd jobs),
 - Going to the friendliest fresh fruit and veggie markets for supplies and a great feed.
 - Seeing brown faced smiles wherever we go and meeting yachties from the world over.
- Planning to be up early tomorrow and away heading west across the top of New Caledonia through the Grand Passage.

Catch you tomorrow.

Jonno de Puit

[Glenys Janssen-Frank](#), [Lorraine Rose](#), [Nicola Young](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Martyn Vincent](#), [Barry Stewart](#), [Cathy West](#), [Carmel Noble](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#) liked this post



Above: New crew members Jonno and Rob begin preparing Chimere for the return voyage

Below: Rob Latimer gets to meet his friend Obed Moses the President



Below: Return skipper Cameron Heathwood checks out the mast fittings



Return-crew now aboard

Tuesday 17 October 2017
Port Vila

Monday morning might have seen the Supporters Tour members fly out, but the afternoon saw Air Vanuatu's big plane return from Sydney with Chimere's new crew of five. The task of preparing Chimere for the return voyage starting almost immediately.

Eddiy

Eddiy, our "regular" boat painter, sander and now polisher, has been helping out in the maintenance department and even came out on the two Day Sails to assist where needed. He met us at the Waterfront on our return from up north and was keen to start "paying off" the seven day's work he owed us under our earlier agreement whereby we'd bought him a solar unit for his island; so he could earn money from charging mobile phones and devices.

With the money he'd earned from earlier work, Eddiy was able to get a passport, and with the aid of his work references was recently accepted under the "farm worker" aid program. This program has the dual benefit of enabling Ni-vans to earn good money from hard work – which few seem afraid of – while supplying reliable labour to Aussie farms.

Last week Eddiy thought he might be headed to Queensland in a couple of weeks to carry bananas, but as it turned out he ended up at the airport at the same time as me this afternoon. We initially thought we'd be on the same flight.

However, after receiving his passport and boarding pass, Eddiy discovered – along with 15 other similar blokes – that he was going to Katherine. Katherine !! in the Northern Territory. "You really are in for an adventure Eddiy" I said as we discussed his specific travel plans – Vila to Brisbane (on a Virgin flight leaving around the same time as my Air Vanuatu plane) – then a flight to Darwin – then a bus down to Katherine ...

Eddiy is not one to show a lot of emotion, but I could tell he was excited on the inside, as I explained that the Port Vila to Brisbane flight was probably an hour shorter than the Brisbane to Darwin flight.

While in the queue I also had a chance to chat with the labour-hire agent; the guy who had recruited all the blokes, secured the farm work-contract and sorted out all



Above: The return crew, Ray, Jonno, Rob Gwillim and Cam
Below: Eddiy is farewelled by his parents and brother



Below: Robert receives a very special farewell morning tea from the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu, l-r Allan Nafuki (Clerk) Elder Roger, Margaret Marcel, Rob Latimer, Kalmaire Kalmar and Richard Tatwin



the travel details. A kiwi guy named Danny. By way of introduction I explained to Danny that ... “my friend Eddiy here has done work on my boat and we did a reference for him ... “ Seeing the way he interacted with each of his 15 fellows, speaking to them in Bislama, I could tell Danny had their interests at heart. I continued our conversation after he’d done his last handshake and good-bye to each individual in the queue and it was like he was seeing off his own sons. I’m sure he had a tear in his eye as he explained that “these guys have a good 7 week contract ... they’ll be

earning \$22 per hour and should be able to rake in \$1,000 a week”

“What about a bank account?” I asked. “I understand they are paid in cash?”

“No. The first thing they’ll all do when they get to Katherine, will be to open a personal bank account, and they’ll get a Debit Card. And they’ll be paid directly into that account.” Explained Danny.

It was reassuring to hear and after 15 minutes of chatting (it was a slow queue with two international flights leaving around the same time) Danny and I were good friends. I even discovered that he’d done a Hort Sci degree at Massey University whereas I’d done a Hort Com degree at

Lincoln University, Christchurch just a few years before him.

(Having heard and read the occasional “bad story” about certain farm worker experiences I made the point of checking out Eddiy’s agent Danny on my return to Australia. From all I’ve read he seems one of the best. Check him out at ... www.nougro.com)

Morning Tea Farewell

As the clock ticked on my remaining time in Vanuatu, the Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu, Pastor Alan Nafuki organized a farewell morning tea for me yesterday, which was a great privilege. Many people came, even Kalmarie, Roger and Margaret from Paunangisu Village, plus Richard Tatwin and others I have got to know well, and work closely with, over the years.

Pastor Obed Moses – now president of the country – wasn’t there of course, but I was keen to leave a gift for him; a religious stole made by Yvonne from North Ringwood Uniting Church, along with an MSM Mission 2017 shirt.

“We will go up to the President’s residence and deliver the present personally”, exclaimed Pastor Alan.

So after a few phone calls Alan announced ... “11:00 o’clock we see President Moses”.

Meeting president Moses

Leaving the morning tea around 10:45am and the remaining plates of sliced fruit for others to enjoy, Pastor Alan drove the relatively short distance to the Presidents compound parking at the shop across the road. We then made our way past the guards at the front gate (after a brief chat) and into the front office, where we were directed to the “waiting chairs”.

The air conditioning was cool and there were quite a few men in crisp black suits and highly polished matching shoes. Conversations and instructions were given in hushed tones and then at exactly 11:00 o'clock we were shown into the President's office to handshakes and smiles all-round.

Our 20 minute conversation covered a range of topics, with particular focus on the National Oral Health Survey that PCV Health and MSM were coordinating on behalf of the Vanuatu Ministry of Health and why it was so important as a foundation for establishing a national strategy in this vital area.

President Moses spoke more about Vanuatu being a "Christian Country" and that this is something now, more than ever, they needed to hold onto and reinforce; in accordance with the country's constitution. At the end of our conversation, feeling somewhat under-dressed in my sailing clothes, I was able to hand over my gift and get the obligatory "happy-snap".

A big thank you to Pastor Alan for being the "key" that opened the President's door and also of course to Pastor (President) Moses for making time at such short notice to see me. I feel very honoured

In parting, I wished President Moses well for the remaining 4 years and 10 months of his tenure as president, on behalf of North Ringwood Uniting Church, MSM and the people of Australia.

PVP meeting

In order to reflect on the Supporters Tour and the priorities looking forward, time was made for a Punaungisu Village Partnership (PVP) meeting, attended by Kalmairie, Margaret, Roger and me.



Above: Robert presents a religious stole and MSM shirt to & President Obed Moses

Below: Robert says good-bye to long-time Punaungisu Village friends



The village expressed a desire to uphold their end of the partnership agreement – as a two-way relationship – and talked about the possibility of a singing, cultural & mission tour to Melbourne in the next 18 months. The building of a shop near the Best Public Toilet was discussed, plus improved signage and ways to better market the facility with a view to taking it to the “next level”

Kalmairie even mentioned that ... “now that you, Robert, are Man-Paunangisu, next time you come to Vanuatu we need to find some land in the village for you to build your Kastom house, so you have a place to stay each time you come home ...” This really took me by surprise and I felt honoured by the gesture. Looks like my shopping list will include a “bush-knife” next time I visit the village.

Back Home to “normal life”

It’s now Friday morning 20 October and I’ve been back in Melbourne a day and a half. There’s been a lot of sleeping, with the garden and lawns around home looking a bit overgrown ... to put it politely. It’s also a lot colder than what I’m used to, although not having that feeling of “constant perspiration” is a welcome relief.

Adjusting back to “normal life” here in Australia typically takes a few days ... particularly under a barrage of (mostly depressing) news – both local and global – plus “urgent” media reports and conversations on such trivial, first-world issues as “same-sex marriage” and “fluid gender identity” ... save me !?

In contrast, Vanuatu, with its lack of material wealth and sophistication, seems remarkably well-adjusted and down-to-earth – capable of teaching us an awful lot about the important things in life.

Let’s just hope and pray that with the passage of time, we don’t inadvertently drag the people of Vanuatu down to our level. To a place where, as a country, we seem to have forgotten (or are hell-bent on white-anting) the foundations on which we derive our freedom and way-of-life. And where a cohesive community of caring people is fast being replaced by a selfish society of individuals, standing for little of substance yet willing to fall for anything. Time spent amongst the people of Vanuatu, particularly on the outer islands, helps put things into perspective ... particularly when their primary concerns are about food and water security, paying for kid’s education, relieving toothache, affording necessary transport, rebuilding after cyclones (or managing the impact of volcanic eruptions), obtaining pain relief in death and medical care more generally. Again, there is a lot they can teach us...

One day out of port

As I write, Chimere is making good time, having completed their first day at sea.

By tomorrow they will be past New Caledonia’s north coast and entering the Tasman Sea.

Track their location by visiting www.msm.org.au

Smooth seas, fair breeze and ready to return

Rob Latimer

[Julie Mitchell](#), [Liz Ogden](#), [Elke Hofmann](#), [Arianna Albertazzi](#), [Phil Wicks](#) liked this post

Supporters Tour

Of course the “Supporters Tour” has kept me busy over the past couple of weeks, or at least between 6-16 October, with 18 people joining us in Port Vila for a fun time of adventure and “local engagement”. With Chimere tied up at the Waterfront and my dear wife Linda staying with the group up the hill at the Melanesian Hotel, it was also a chance for me to spend some time off the boat, enjoying the comforts of clean linen, air conditioning and balcony views.



Above: Robert & Linda with Morinda and her son
Below: It's the little things that makes this public toilet “The Best”



By all accounts everyone had a great time on the Supporters Tour, with the key activities including The Village Experience Tour, (including complimentary use of the BEST Public Toilet in the South Pacific), The Day Sail (aboard Chimere), The 3 Hour Tour and the full day Church and North Efate tour; with lunch at the Olory Beach Restaurant.

A massive thank you to everyone who signed up for the tour and for making it such a success.

Thanks also go to Ari, that wonderful travel agent from HelloWorld Pakenham, who has been so generous with her time and skills. Her continuing support of MSM has been invaluable. If you are considering travel – anywhere – then we’d certainly recommend you call Ari for a chat.

Looking back on some highlights of the Supporters Tour...

... it was certainly a thrill to see and experience the Best Public Toilet again ... particularly how well it has been maintained, with local lady Asel playing a big part in this !!

The Village Experience Day showed just how things have developed over the past four years since the first Supporters Tour in 2013. There was the welcome, the singing, the food, the custom teaching & activities, the handmade dress (for the ladies) and shirt (for the men) plus the inclusion of a range of other local tours, including the Tanna Coffee factory and snorkeling at “Top Rock” – making for a very full day. Then there were the two “Day Sails”, from Port Vila around to Hideaway Island, with a “few” local Ni-Vans invited to come along; all designed to enhance that “local experience”.

To ensure the cost of transport from the village wasn’t an issue, a bus was arranged to transport everyone the hour from Paunangisu to Port Vila, with the expected number being around 12 – maybe 15 – a bus full. In the end total numbers came in at 40 on the Tuesday and 35 on the Wednesday, with only 10 these being what you’d call “white-folk” tour members. I suspect that once the word got out in the village it was hard to turn them away. Fortunately a swag of them were little kids, who didn’t take up much space, with someone later commenting on Chimere’s harbour exit and return that we looked like a “refugee ship”. It certainly had the feel of the Lolawai evacuation exercise, (refer to Ships Log “Boat People of Ambae”, 30 Sept 2017) just without the luggage, plus pig in a bag and bats in the fridge.

Despite the numbers, or maybe because of the numbers, it was such a fun and memorable day. An experience all will remember for some time to come.

Of course, it all eventually had to come to an end and so after a 4:00am wake-up call on Monday, the Supporters Tour members returned to Australia on the 7:00am flight. With all the “tropical relaxation”, there’s no doubt some will be returning to Australia in order to catch up on some sleep.

Ready to return

Port Vila to Melbourne
Wednesday 18 October 2017

It was back on Monday 2 October that Chimere returned to Port Vila. It followed the conclusion of Mission 4 and a week-long sail south from the island of Vanualava. This is where most of the medical and dental team left the ship, choosing to fly home the fast way. It all seems ages ago now.

I'm now sitting at the Sydney airport – in transit home to Melbourne – after taking the Wednesday afternoon Air Vanuatu flight out of Port Vila.

Chimere is in the hands of her return-skipper, Cam Heathwood, and crew ... Ray, Rob, Jonno and Gwilym (it's Welsh) ... spending her final night on a mooring in Port Vila harbour.

After re-fueling, topping up the water tanks, paying the port and berthing, plus of course making everything (literally) ship-shape, the lines will be caste off for the last time early tomorrow morning as they set a course for home.

It's been a very busy couple of weeks and it seems a bit strange doing a Ships Log from so far away, but then the last six months have been full of surprises and so nothing is really that unusual any more.

On the topic of re-fueling ... with tanks getting low we chose to top-up with 80 litres in Luganville, on our sail south, after the evacuation of the Ambae folk. At the time we estimated we had around 100 litres left in the final tank; about a day and a half's full-time use. So I was interested to receive a text from skipper-Cam a short time ago informing me that they had just filled up with 1,296 litres. That's 104 litres less than our 1,400 maximum holding capacity. Without the extra 80 litre top-up, we would have had just 20 litres in the tank on our return to Port Vila – which might have been a bit too close for comfort ?!

The return crew, Gwilym, Rob, Ray, Cam and Jonno, sporting a "lost-and-found" fashion motif



Smooth seas, fair breeze and ready to return

Rob Latimer

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