



Plain Sailing

November 2016

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FROM THE FLAG

I always know summer is coming when I get back from the coastal with renewed love of the NZ coast and a longing to explore more of it. After a memorable race—see Tony's report on his Solo Coastal—the crew and I were ready to relax and enjoy the return. However, the 'tuk-tuk,' as ex-commodore Rodney Janes would refer to it, died while preparing to leave Russel. And so we were faced with a decision to park the boat on a mooring for time unknown or to leave on the planned 3-day return to Auckland *sans* motor. With amenable crew and an acceptable weather forecast, we decided on the latter. This meant overnight watches (due to light winds), but we still managed a stopover at the Mokes' for a brief spearfish. Thanks to Josh and Tia for being such wonderful people to sail with.

Speaking of cruising about—the new RYC Cruising series is starting as this goes to press. We have revamped the destination series to be more *cruisey*—adaptable to weather when possible, to include racers *and* cruisers, and to improve the events 'on the beach.' We wish for this series to regain its former glory—and ask that you consider coming out to join us having fun in the gulf this summer. Seems like an easy decision to me!

This year we are lucky to have renewed sponsorship support from **CRC, New World Birkenhead, Lidgard's Sails, Victoria Cruising Club, Volpower / Volvo Penta, Harken/Fosters, Coolstore Construction, Mt Gay Rum, Orams, Salt Services, and the Floating Dock**. Other sponsorship is in the works, so keep supporting our sponsors and let them know you appreciate them.

It is great to see RYC's Singlehanded Series find a long-term sponsor in **Vining Marine**. Vinings have a local office in Westhaven now—if you are looking to buy or sell your boat, do stop in and talk with experienced broker Tony Smith, the skipper of *Fast Company*. Many of our members got their first yacht with Tony's help. Another new sponsor is **Advantage Doors**. Owner Gordon is a committee member and has helped the club in numerous ways, the most recent being in the new dinghy locker doors! Lovely! (Now go get your mast back up!)

See you on the water! - Bryon Wright, Commodore

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

A very warm Richmond Yacht Club welcome to all our new members who have joined the club.

New Membership

Andrew Pollard, General Member
Peter Sumich, General Member, Harken, MRX
Rob Bassett, General Member, Wired, BW52
Parizad and Minoo Arsiwalla, General Family Members, Harken, MRX
Alan Retter, General Member, Patere, Stewart 34
Colin Maddren, Veteran member, Club Marine, MRX
Jurgen Dentener, General member, Aquaholic, Tracker
Andy Caldwell, Crew Member
Paul Walbran, Veteran Member, Local Hero, Ross 930
Debbie Whiting, General Member, Tequila

Friday Night Special Crew Members

Nikita Derevianteo, Pierre Mace,
Sasha Goloborodko, Susanne
Waller, Bruno Lopes, Landon
McNaughton, Sharlene Chouvier-
Taylor, Frank Braden, Paul
Jennings, Paula Slack, Rachel
Shanks, Chris Crone, Jon Culley,
Marie Stainwright, Miles King, Matt
Schaff, Tony McGeorge, Simon
Tailby, Geoffrey Cornelis, Evan
Fong, Alexis Mousse, Richard
Wemyss, Guy Grant, Jennifer
Sturgess, Janneke Van Rooijen, Sue Johnson, Morgane Krier, Michele Blick,
Cameron Smith, Gregory Thwaite, Dave Gregory, Tommy Webb, Richard Heyes,
Colin Juneau, Emanuelle Desrochers, Tracey Anderson, Katie Kempthorne,
Freek Tavern, Igor Sabino de Freitas, Kate Costil, James Kempthorne, Kate
Newton, and Thomas Moulder.



CALENDAR & NOTICES

For the most up to date event information contact the RYC office.

Nov' 16	11	Fri	Friday Night Sailing Race 3
	12	Sat	Westhaven Triple Series Race 1
	13	Sun	Singlehanded Series Race 4
	16	Wed	Wednesday Race 4
	18	Fri	Cruising Series Race 1
	18	Fri	Emergency Services Regatta
	21	Mon	Committee Meeting
	25	Fri	Friday Night Sailing Race 4
	30	Wed	Wednesday Race 5
Dec' 16	3	Sat	Cruising Series Race 2
	7	Wed	RYC Potluck Lunch
	9	Fri	Friday Night Sailing Race 5
	11	Sun	His and Hers Race 1
	14	Wed	Wednesday Race 6
	21	Wed	Crew.org Rum Race
Jan ' 17	18	Wed	Wednesday Race 7
	27	Fri	Cruising Race 3



*Apparition with her
mast intact—for
more on this story
see Gordon's article
on the Spring Re-
gatta*

Welcome to the last issue of Plain Sailing for this year. And what a year it has been with plenty of sailing and social activities on at the club.

The presentations we have had at the club this year have been superb with members talking about their trips around New Zealand and up to the islands have been inspirational.

In this issue we again have a variety of articles from members who have been sailing in the recent Coastal Classic, the Ovlov Volvo Spring Regatta and the Vinings Single Handed series.

We have an article from Tony Evans on the history of the Victoria Friday Night Special Series, which celebrates its twentieth year and estimates 1,200 people through the Friday Night Series, which is an awesome effort !

In this issue we also feature a new section which we hope will continue with each edition entitled ***Dedicated Readers***.

Our first dedicated reader is **Jensen**, the son of Evelien van Vliet and Andy Gilmore; owners of Morning Star, a Davison 31.

If you have a picture of someone reading a copy of *Plain Sailing* then we would love to print it.

Happy Reading!
Mark Lloyd
Plain Sailing Editor



Dedicated Reader No 1!
Jensen

WILD OATS' COASTAL CLASSIC EXPERIENCE

The build up for the Coastal Classic included getting a new Cat 3 certificate (my first, which was easy once I'd checked the list 3x and made a few small purchases. I still felt more anxious about the inspection than sailing in the race though). There were also regular weather forecast checks (so I could plan the race in my head over and over again), and last minute sail repairs. I also had a couple of media interactions as the new Solo Division got some attention. The forecast became surprisingly stable a week out, and the conditions looked to be great.



Tony Being Presented with his Well Earned Trophy at the Prizegiving

My goals were simple. Get to Russell in one piece, sail the boat well, and do my bit to make sure the Solo Division proved to be feasible and became a regular part of this great event.

Race day dawned clear with the promised SW wind. I was up and out of the house early, excited to be part of the Coastal Classic. This would be my first visit to the BOI by boat. There was a long period between the check-in (with the committee boat) and our start,

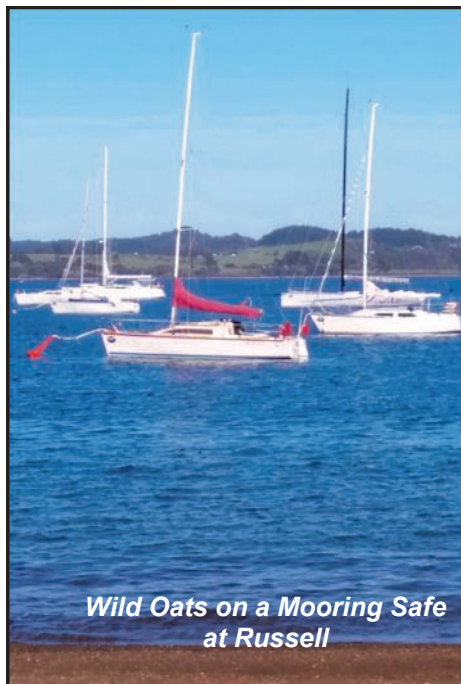
and plenty of wind in the harbour. Add to that the large number of boats and the fact that handling a Ross 930 solo with runners, etc means you're busy in tacks and jibes. It was a relief to be on the start sequence and able to concentrate on the race.

This year there were 7 boats in the Solo Division and because we had our own start line on the southern side of the committee boat, we had plenty of room and all got away cleanly at 9.45am. In fact we all elected to be conservative, and 6 of us took a tack at Bean Rock rather than a jibe. I left it too late to launch the big kite before converging with the rest of the fleet in Rangi Channel, needing to wait

for a calmer patch with sea room closer to the lighthouse for a launch. All went well, except I short hoisted by 2m! Not a problem I thought, autopilot on and took two steps forward to the cabin top to complete the hoist. Yeah, Nah. Tiller pilots don't hold boats straight in those sea conditions downwind.... big roundup into the path of a Catamaran, which I did avoid - but not by much. 40 minutes later I felt ready to complete the hoist!

So, big kite all the way to Kawau. No complaints there. The wind puffed a bit but the angles were good and all aboard were happy. The first radio sked at Flat Rock was ok, but I was behind boats that I wanted to be up with. At the time the wind had eased so making the radio call was easy enough on my own, as opposed to later in the race (Sail Rock) where being too busy ended up in a decent broach while reporting in.

I'd always planned to go further offshore, as the wind might have a bit more strength and I wanted plenty of sea room. Things take longer when Solo - you don't want to be creating extra pressure and having to make additional manoeuvres due to islands or boats around you.



After Kawau the wind came forward, and initially I decided on the 3 sail reach with the FRO. That was a mistake as the wind freed slightly and eased. So another sail change (all in slow motion compared to fully crewed) and up with the Fractional Gennaker. I love this sail, and held it for the next 4 hours or so. Boat speed and direction then became a function of the highest wind angle I could hold without the boat falling over. At times it was the quickest I've had from the boat (18+ knots) but unfortunately I was heading for Tonga. Wipe outs become more frequent not long before dusk - definitely time to go onto an upwind configuration and head inside of

WILD OATS' COASTAL, cont

the Poor Knight Islands. I had a good position on the other Solo boats, but in the track to Brett I was always going to struggle with the longer boats in my division.

Shooting the gap (Cape Brett / Piercy Island) was a thrill (albeit a slow speed one). I'd planned to go outside but with the wind now pretty light I was looking to save miles. It was now around midnight - I was tired but well fed and keen to reach the finish. My tacking improved as I practised and practised; crossing other boats meant keeping a good lookout. The wind continued to drop, and I ghosted to the finish line at 2.33am.



Russell was everything I'd been told about - so great walking around and everywhere I looked were sailors that I knew. It felt great being part of the tribe.



Prizегiving was kind to me, Wild Oats snagged the handicap win for the Solo fleet (mostly due to the conditions suiting the boat), and a bunch of spot prizes came our way. These had to be shared with other crews - my crew couldn't hold them all! I was joined by John Marais on

Sunday was the day with no wind. Never mind, we really enjoyed a cruise under motor through the BOI. Sitting on the beanbag on the foredeck was a great way to relax and recover and we were able to take photos, eat and chill. Motor-sailing all the way to Whangarei Heads was worth it to practise a night time entry to Marsden Cove – I'm all ready for the Route 66 now!

Monday was more motor-sailing until just off Mangawhai, then we had enough breeze for the code 0 until we cleared Cape Rodney. From there until Waitemata Harbour was the big kite and although too light and shift to have much fun, it was a nice way to return home. The countdown is on for next years race. I can only hope for similar conditions but regardless, I'm definitely up for it again.

*(Want to sail like Tony?
Come join the soloists racing
the Vining Marine
Singlehanded Series!)*



CLUB ROOM RENOVATIONS

So have you noticed anything different around the club recently?

Over the last few months a committed sub group of the committee have been working to make a few changes in the clubrooms. Under the directions of an interior designer we have been working to add a bit more atmosphere back into the club décor and reflect more of what we do and who we are.



New look bar

The new large photo panel in the entrance is a great example, taken by Deniz Unlusu of the start of one of our races.

See if you can pick out the boats next time you drop into the club.

Since the clubs inception in 1903 we have been collecting memorabilia, mostly photos and trophies.

The club has a large collection of black and white photos of the many yachts that have sailed with the club.

These have been collected together and mounted on two large photos walls, Its quite remarkable the variety of yachts. This wall also includes other little gems, like the clubrooms first building committee, and patron our first club house and boat shed amongst many.

We have also created a "Commodores Wall" in the hallway by the office door, So far we have all the photos of commodores boats on display that we current have. We need more so please let us know if you can help us out with some.

Our supply of international and national boat club burgees is back on display now in the office hallway, along with a bunch of other surprises worth checking out, Also check over the bar for a great couple of peices of memorabilia.



Check out the new nautical wall

the key pad systems and working with Garador to get the new doors and motors fitted and working together.

During our recent 75th year celebrations of being at Westhaven, we had a lot of club members provide photos of club boats, onboard action, and after race events, that we displayed around the club.

As part of our current plans we want to include more of these photos so members will be able to see more of their boats on display.

So dig through your photo pile and find your best shots and we will send out a call when we are ready to start this phase of our plans.

So keep an eye out over the coming months for the changes.

Our Décor team; Kate, Tony, Gordon, Keith, Mark, David, Andrew and Max.

After many years of service the old "tilt a doors" of the dinghy lockers have been replaced with new flex-A- door systems.

Gone also are the old pad locks that have given us endless problems, replaced with electronic key pads and electric motors that make the doors open and close in a nice smooth action.

Many thanks to Gordon Dyer of Advantage Doors for supplying



All wrapped up in knots

RYC CRUISING SERIES



The Richmond Cruising Series is about bringing together our cruising members with our racing members. We have 6 races over the summer, varying in destinations around our beautiful Hauraki Gulf. You choose whether to race with the fleet (with or without extras) or to just potter along in your own time to the chosen destination where you can enjoy the prize giving and make some new friends over a sausage cooked on the barbecue.

Race 4 will finish at Islington Bay where we will be holding the 'Not the Issy Bay Ball' with music provided by one of our more intrepid members who is known for his weekend trips to the Barrier in his Reactor where he plays at the Irish Bar.

Members and non-members are all are welcome to join us; although we might try to twist your arm into joining up. Look out for a non-compulsory, informal beach clean-up.

This year our generous sponsor Coolstore Construction has provided us with a 2 Horse Power Yamaha Outboard (with a three year warrantee) to give away at the last race of the series. One entry will be received for each boat that starts a race and another entry to every boat that checks in at the Richmond barbecue. So we look forward to seeing you at the beach... the more you participate, the better the chance of winning a brand new outboard.

Courses are all provided in the Notice of Race, however where there is a choice of course, a decision will be made on the Wednesday prior, so we end up with a 'wind friendly' destination in mind. The beach will be announced by the patrol boat as per the Notice of Race

Race fee is \$25, all yachting New Zealand affiliated club members welcome.



And just something nice to think about.... Its not unknown for Richmond members to turn up on the beach with scallops and other sea bounty.

Escape Auckland!



One Lucky
Cruiser will
WIN this
outboard!*

Get away from it all with the 2016-17

RYC Cruising Series*

** New Format for Racers and Cruisers*

Waiheke 1

18 November 2016

Gulf Party

18 February 2017

Peter Blake Memorial

3 December 2016

Waiheke 2

17 March 2017

Mahurangi Night Race

27 January 2017

Kawau Easter Rally

14 April 2017

Contact RYC to Join in the Fun!

www.richmondyc.org.nz

** See RYC's Cruising Series Website for details*

TONGA to AUCKLAND on *ATAMAI*



RYC Burgee over Tonga

Over the 2015 Winter Race series I picked up an unusual crew. It was Simon Malpas, someone I knew from my work at the University, and also as a competitor on the water – he raced *Black Dog*, a Lotus 950, prior to getting *Atamai*, a Beneteau First 44.7.

It is not unusual that other skippers come crew for me on *Revolution Blues*, my Ross 830, and I find that there are usually one of two reasons – either their boat is broken or they want a ‘sporty’ ride for a few races. In this case I spent most of the time worried about clocking (very tall) Simon on the head with my (quite low) boom, but appreciated his presence as he’s great to sail with. Toward the

end of the season I arrived at the conclusion that he was the one checking me out when he asked if I wanted to help him sail his boat back from Tonga the following season. Easy answer – ‘of course.’ This being done, I never saw him on *RB* again!

Intense preparations are required in NZ for a boat planning to sail offshore. Simon, his wife Pip, his friends and crew all pitched in to help prepare the boat – a daunting task made lighter with help. I helped Simon where I could and when asked, including polishing, setting up a few systems, and then sitting in on the Cat 1 inspection, conducted by another RYC member, Kevin Lidgard. Kevin gave his approval, and the trip up was a go.

In my eagerness to do some blue-water sailing I had forgotten a geographic reality. The trip up starts cold and ends warm, and the opposite trip is the opposite. The up crew smugly reminded me of this, tossed lines, and headed north. Clearing out of Auckland into a confused sea left some of the crew nauseous, but the boat kept a steady and fast pace and before long they stopped at Minerva Reef, spending two days going into both South then North Minerva, harassing sharks, etc. More on Minerva later. The final stretch to Nuku’alofa, Tongatapu was hard as it was upwind, but in the end a well prepared ship, crew and skipper celebrated a safe passage.

The up passage done, the real point of the trip commenced – several months of having a floating bach in Tonga for Simon and Pip and their friends and family. This is a tale I can’t tell, but all were pleased as could be, by report, and spent time in all three island groups: Tongatapu, Ha’apai, and Vava’u. Fish were caught, places explored, friends made, and a great time had by all. One thing that did not happen with great regularity

was the raising of sails! Apparently, '...there's plenty of time for that on the trip home.'

Before long, the 'down' crew; consisting of myself, an intrepid Swede Kris and his American partner Kim were having farewell drinks at the Auckland Koru lounge. It

always surprises me how short the 'island' flights are – and before two bad movies could be watched we were lading in Nuku'alofa. We had an unexpectedly long layover – which is not unusual for local travel, with prop planes, unpredictable delays, handwritten tickets, check-in ladies also working the plane-balance calculations, etc. – and so we went into town. Bags were stored in the back of a local car, the driver of which was running errands in between ferrying her tourist passengers about. We walked around downtown, saw a market and a large number of young people – the school had let out midday on Friday. I did not know what to expect in Nuku'alofa – but it is a basic place for commerce, mostly local, and is not set up for the pleasure of tourists, which suits me just fine. The taxi / errand lady was at the meet spot on time, and we were able to stop off to pick up a few more supplies on the way back to the domestic-terminal for the flight to Vava'u.



Kim at the Nuku'alofa Market

We arrived in Vava'u to a fellow with a van/taxi holding a handwritten 'Byron' sign (or was it 'Brian?'), close enough! We got in and made it to the meet-spot, at the Mango Café in Neiafu. *Atamai* was looking resplendent with a banner and a sunset to boot, happy in her 'Port of Refuge.'

We spent a few days enjoying Vava'u with Pip, who was not joining for the return passage. For me, a highlight was swimming into 'Mariners' Cave' – a cavern with an underwater entrance that I had first heard of from RYC's adventurous Bradshaw family. We went fishing (no luck), raided an abandoned orchard for lemons, had a wonderful evening with a beach fire, and when time had come to leave, returned to Neiafu to drop Pip off and to prepare for departure.

Prior to leaving I was given the task of getting rid of the rubbish – two large bags by that stage. After we docked at the customs berth, double parked, and found we had a two-hour delay, of course!, I headed out with my bags, at least a kilometre away, to a place where tourists could dispose of trash. Along the way I must have (*cont. on pg 21*)

FRIDAY NIGHT SPECIAL - 20TH BIRTHDAY

Affectionately known as the FNS, we are pleased to celebrate 20 years of a very successful series for Richmond and our Friday crews.

The beginnings were humble back in 1996, when the gem of an idea was brought together by Barry and Marion Jones and many of the RYC committee members of the day. How do we get more people involved in our club, community and introduce them to sailing?

The answer was the FNS (then called Come Sailing). A real win-win for both our club and the people who come along to enjoy the social and community feel of our clubhouse and people as well as a great opportunity to give sailing a go.



Trish Beken Sailing Solo on Wishbone

Many of the crews keep coming back year after year and we are always over subscribed for crew spots.

I think it is a fine accolade for the hard work of those that bring this series together every year and our skippers past and present, who volunteer to offer their time, boats and of course skills, to take out our newest members, a big thank you.

Of real note are the opportunities that the Friday Special can offer budding sailors. Our very own Trish Beken was an inaugural member of programme some years ago. Trish has gone on to owning her own boat, Wishbone a Reactor 25. She sailed the gulf for several years and then embarked on a solo Trans Taman race along with many other long distance adventures.

A massive accomplishment is such a small, but awesome yacht. Trish became very involved with the general committee and was our commodore from 2011-2013. So, from small beginnings, many dreams are possible.

Dave Cashmore is another notable FNS starter back in the day. Dave has been actively involved in the committee for many years and regularly helps out with building maintenance and on the patrol boat. Georgina and Hayden Griffiths tell their own Friday Special story overleaf.

There's always an opportunity for crew to find regular spots on the yachts and for skippers to meet new crew prospects. Certainly lots of great friendships have been made over the years and rumour has it, even the odd romance!

Special mention of the Richmond members and committee that have made the series so successful over the years. Behind the scene, there is a tremendous amount of work involved in co-ordinating 70 crew and 20 odd yachts for every race. Thank you all so much.

Barry and Marion Jones started the FNS and are still active members, with a beautiful boat called Lili Marlene. Marie Morris was the co coordinator for many of the early years and Margaret Harvey then helped boost the series, with great success. Glenda Bennett had real skill in organising skippers and crew

Thank you also to Kate Herstell for going the extra mile to make sure the FNS runs smoothly. Tim Smedley and Andrew Burr – are so generous with their time helping out in the race tower and bar. Thanks guys.

All you skippers. Past and present – a BIG thank you. Richmond YC so appreciates your support.

Our sponsors also make this series possible, with great prizes. A big thank you to Victoria Cruising Club, Coastguard Education and Jacs from Mt Gay Rum/Hancocks.

In recognition of the past 20 years, Richmond will be celebrating in the coming weeks, so keep a lookout for cake, rum and fun.

How many sailors have been thru the FNS series? I'm guessing about 1200, that's awesome !



We started out in the 1998 season FNS I think as crew with the grand plan of getting our own boat to sail around the South Pacific. I remember sailing with Hans on Not Negotiable in my first outing. I was later allocated as crew on Rhythm n Blues one night where Barry gave me the job of releasing the aft quarter morning line - when he said so. However, in the rush to get going the throttle went down before I was told or had a chance to let go. So we lurched backwards and against the berth finger with all eyes on me. From then on I was assigned a role in front of the mast making sure the head sail didn't fowl in the tacks - it was a fractional rig!

Hmm I though this wasn't learning the ropes fast enough, so in April 1999 I forked out and bought a Farr 1020 called Bad News in large bold type on the side of the hull, which travelled fast *according to the previous owners. It's now just called News.* After a winter and Xmas cruising on her, it was me at the helm in the next FNS night, which with inexperienced crew was at times a little chaotic but fun.

George and I had help learning to sail from her family too, which included round the world cruisers, super yacht captain, Whitbread racer, sail maker, boat builders etc., so plenty of experience to draw on there. We bought our current boat Latitude in 2002 which George's step father and cousin designed and built in 1992 and have done most of the FNS since with her. On the side we were doing the Coastguard courses starting with Boat Masters, Coastal Skipper, and Yacht Masters, the latter we got top marks (geeks) for in NZ, so shared a joint prize - a boat clock and barometer which are mounted on Latitude's saloon wall today.

A weekend marine medic course was fun too - tips for rip & bust fixing the damaged body while on the high seas alone. George managed to break a syringe needle on a

practice pig trotter, needless to say that I would be administering my own injections. In 2003 we did our South Pacific cruise for six months, an awesome experience of exploration and camaraderie. So I guess that all shows that through RYC you can go from being a green land lubber (me at least) to doing an offshore cruise with a little determination and help along the way.



With a forecast all week promising a serious blow, we were lucky to start with a moderate northerly...with the promise of more to come. We started with a reef and the #3, had an absolute blinder of a start at the committee boat end with Transformer on our tail. The bigger boats Transformer and Titanium and Activator were revealing in the breeze, and soon began to stretch out from the rest of the fleet. We beat out a bit past Rangī light and tacked back onto port for a long fetch along the coast of Rangī to Billy Goat Point, where we cracked sheets,

popped out under Rakino and off to Gannet Rock. At this stage of the boat race, we lost sight of Titanium for a few hours, who took the scenic route to the north of Rakino.



Around Gannet rock, ... we further cracked sheets in a solid 25knots and we were starting to hoon it... 12 knots under a two sail reach with the help of a wave or two... still expecting the forecast 40 knots to arrive at some stage, we popped the oldest fractional kite we had for a seriously quick ride against the tide down the bottom end of Waiheke Is (later discovered on our GPS we had cracked 18ks!). All was going well until needing to get inside of Pakatoa, we executed a chicken gybe....dropped the kite first.... gybed and then bugger me reset a dogs breakfast!... Peppermint Planet closed in on us whilst we were sorting this lot out and were never more than half a dozen boat length from our stern from Sunday rock until our "oh f..k moment".

Heading back up the Tamaki Straights in flat water and a slightly moderated breeze, we shook out the reef in the main and worked hard to keep in front of The Planet. We should have had an inkling of what was to come when in one puff approaching Browns Island.... saw the entire brains trust at the blunt end of the boatMe, Tony Evans and Murray Johnson, tossed in a heap on the lee side of the cockpit. After extracting ourselves from this heap and regaining our dignity we pressed on pretending nothing had happened. Half an hour later, after having rounded Browns Is beacon, cracking the sheets some more and somewhere of St Heliers, we got nailed by a big squall, instead of being in the high 20s, it was in the high 30s. The boat shook as we got nailed and the mast took on an unusual rake! An inspection below deck revealed a compression break 2/3ed of the way around the mast. Peppermint Planet took us in a flash as we got the sails off and most fortunately keeping the rig standing.

Well we had raced for 47/50 miles. A short motor home with a few medicinal Mount Gays and we were on the way back to feelin chipper about the day. A great sail with good mates, a stellar kite ride, and a slightly munted mast, but sure was a great day a sea.

It was gusting 60 knots as the 2016 Quiz night got underway with six teams who took on the challenge of toppling the twice victorious Transformer crew. Quizmaster Mark had prepared a series of yachting questions from horns, speed rules to the new VHF channels and effective dates.

As usual, there was the post questions rounds of games which had us fishing for a variety of catch including yellow ducks, bowling, putting and potting. Mayhem ensued amongst the laughter and intense competition.

Fun & Games at the Quiz Night



Finally it was time to declare the quiz results, and the new champions being announced as the Ball and Chain team, Mauraunders were 2nd, and Transformers 3rd.

Prizes for trivia and 'most' games were distributed and the bragging rights continued to the last winter pre-race manoeuvres.

Thanks to Mark for the quiz, Richard for game set up and marking with lady's name), as well as the ladies who made dinner. As always a big thanks to Tim who manned the bar throughout the night.

passed at least a dozen overflowing bins, with more trash piled alongside! I do wonder if the locals like the spectacle – but more likely that getting rid of rubbish is an unwelcome task made more so within the confines of island life.

After Simon cleared us out – with the required paperwork and stamping and ‘... oh, I didn’t know we had to have *that*...’ we departed. Up to this stage I had eagerly awaited a whale sighting – with humpbacks being common in Tonga at this time of year – and we got one at the last, a pair and baby were heading in as we headed out. We caught our first fish – a wahoo – that afternoon, and with a great weather window - moderate reaching winds and little swell - and happy crew, we settled into a rhythm, including our night watches.

I will note here that sailing an ocean cruising passage on *Atamai* was in stark contrast to racing about the Hauraki Gulf on *Revolution Blues* – basically, my usual job of ‘stuck to the stick’ is taken by an autopilot and you spend your time watching the horizon for the rare instance something happens, or the odd reefing procedure (not that I’m complaining, but thank goodness for good company and podcasts!). On the morning of the third day we sailed around North Minerva Reef and into South Minerva Reef – there was little to no wind or swell, and a huge school (flock?) of flying fish greeted us as we motored through the passage and into the lagoon. Anchor down in the middle of the ocean!

Minerva Reefs are two atolls about a third of the way back from Fiji or Tonga to New Zealand. They are a refuge for sailors in transit and a paradise anchorage with no land to obscure the view. We headed straight to South Minerva, the ‘figure of eight’ shaped one. Weather and sea conditions were ideal, and the passage went smoothly as Simon had already scouted it on the up trip – he found the Navionics charts to be spot on. I’ve spent time in some remote places – but South Minerva Reef is surely the most surreal. We soon were freediving in the clearest waters imaginable, with the most dense sea life on a reef I’ve experienced. The reef itself seemed half comprised of giant clams, and we explored the wilderness amongst turtles, sharks, octopi, and fish of every type.



Job Done

On the second night, in search of a

fabled harvest of crayfish, we took the dinghy far onto the reef, got out and walked outward. The e open ocean was pounding the reef and a constant stream of water flowed inward, giving the impression of fording an infinite river. I went to the edge and for a moment lost track of the others and felt the most isolated I've ever felt, with only the sounds of the breakers and the sight of the deepest dark of the ocean night sky. It was a relief to break the trance and ford back to the group, to return to the dinghy, then to *Atamai*.

The weather was cooperating, and we had two wonderful days at the reef before we had to catch what looked to be a reachy ride home. Supplies were running low on the last leg of the trip, and a bad luck with fishing had left us being inventive with meals once the fish from the reef spearfishing ran out. Also, fuel was a concern given the lighter-than-expected conditions, hence more motoring. We had enough fuel for about half of the distance, and in the end used almost all of it.

A day or so out of Minerva Reefs and we started to encounter thunderstorms. The lightning displays were glorious, but the prospect of sailing through them was not welcome. This brought our only truly challenging sailing when a 40 knot squall, complete with horizontal rain, hit us suddenly. The crew and a triple-reefed *Atamai* handled it with aplomb. Thanks to modern weather forecasting (we were using the PredictWind / Iridium Go combination) we experienced no unexpected weather hardships. Thankfully we also had on-board Kris, a pilot, who was keeping up with tradition by taking sextant sights to confirm the accuracy of our many and redundant GPSs, in case the Yanks (wait a minute!) killed the GPS signal...



0.5nm Accuracy!?

The next and final fish of the trip came just miles from our sighting of the Mokohinaus, a tuna was pulled in, gaffed and bloodily filleted. It left a lasting legacy due to a clogged wheel drain. Nonetheless, after we pulled into the customs wharf, it's a good thing the officers did not ask too many questions as to why the back of the boat looked like a hastily-cleaned abattoir.

A sign of a happy boat and crew can be found in the immediate preparations that began to get her in race mode for the following Wednesday! Thanks to Simon and Pip and Kris and Kim for a memorable trip and passage. 'Ofa Atu!

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