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Cruising Association



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The weather predominates in our thoughts, as always. After so much sunshine in May and much of June, July has really let us down and only now, as I draft this letter in the last week of the month, with the schoolchildren now enjoying freedom from brain work, is the sun making itself felt once again. The weeds and the grass, courtesy of all the rain, are growing faster than I can interest any grandchildren! It shouldn't be much longer before I can do these jobs myself once more.

Peter Denning has sent me an account of the Barbecue Rally and I include this for you. If there are to be more of these, for his sake I hope there will be more members interested to come along.

I hope you will have good sailing and sunbathing weather for your holidays, which I imagine will soon be occupying your thoughts. Do please set them down on paper, so that we may bathe in the sunshine with you, when we read them next winter!

Mary,

*The rally was a success for those attending which happened to be 3 people on board **REDOUBLE** only!. Saturday was forecast SW 3 - 4 locally 5 so we had 6 locally 7.*

Studland looked packed so we went in to Poole Harbour, Upper Wych Channel by Shipstal Point and ate on board. The area is good for barbeques with a shingle / sand beach and is sheltered from the sw'ly winds. The sail back on Sunday was a slow one with around 10 knots of wind again from the SW.

***ARD-NE-GRENE** had engine problems so were at Elkins Boat Yard getting it repaired - should be done by this Saturday 7th July.*

***THINK AGAIN** motored out on Saturday and then had engine problems which meant that they struggled even to get back into the harbour on the Saturday - hopefully this is being repaired as I type.*

***MARICAT** is not yet afloat - hopefully this week.*

***DUPLICAT** was OK though Shirley is still convalescing so they did not attend - with the wind, the best way.*

The main question is though, What do people want from the association?.

It is the same people who organise and try to attend with no new blood coming in.

I am at a loss as to how we can expand.

Is this what Associations / Clubs do though after a few years in existence?.

Regards, Peter Denning

A CATALAC COMES HOME

By
MARTIN MINTER-KEMP

ECHO sat in the RAF marina in Akrotiri, basking in the hot sunshine looking very much the weekend sailer. She also looked very small. Nine tons lighter than our last boat, was she up to the passage to UK? Five countries, 27 islands, three canals and lots of lock later we know that she was. What we had thought might be a fun boat for the grandchildren turns out to be a very comfortable and seaworthy second home afloat.

Our first optimistic plan was to sail west from Cyprus, around the toe of Italy and enter the Canal du Midi via Gar du Roi. The winds thought otherwise and we ended up on the Turkish coast in Finike Marina. So kind were the staff and so reasonable the rates that we left “Catnick” there for the winter, returning in the spring of 2000 to continue homewards.

The Turkish coastline is truly enchanting with tiny villages, (all selling carpets at rock-bottom prices) and really friendly people. Turkish food is delicious and the water of the pure spring variety. Skirting Greek islands, which appear improbably close to the Turkish mainland, we finally took our leave of Turkey south of Bodrum and entered Greece (and the EEC) at Kos. Here we met officialdom in all its bureaucratic splendour! Customs, Immigration and Police, the latter demanding £36 to enter Greece from a country outside the Common Market, even though the boat had originated inside it! From then on, however, no official came near us during our meandering course across the Aegean, Patmos, Livitha, Amorgos, Thira, Skhinousa, Paros, Kithnos, Cape Saunion, Poros, Vathi, Epidavros and Corinth. Our most lasting impressions were the sunken volcano of Thira, still steaming and emitting noxious fumes, and the amphitheatre near Epidavros, so acoustically perfect that a speaker standing on a marked spot on the stage can be heard by all of the 9000 audience.

We arrived at the eastern end of the Corinth canal to be reassured that “*little boats pay little money*” and that 8.9m was “*very little*”. Our top speed of four knots however meant sailing at the back of the west-going convoy which suited us fine. The canal really is a wonder of the ancient world even though a motorway now crosses it. A slight delay was due to the floating bridge at the western end getting stuck, due we were told to lack of maintenance, due to lack of traffic, a downward spiral we suspected.

After a supermarket victual ling stop at Corinth we sailed at dawn with an easterly wind, which blew us up the Gulf of Corinth, gusting to f.6. Suddenly we felt that we had left the eastern Mediterranean and were back, almost, in European waters. We moored in Novato’s and climbed the hill to view the tiny harbour from the ramparts of the castle whose walls encompassed both town and harbour. The following day we sailed through the straits where what looked like a new bridge foundation was being laid across the mouth of the Gulf. Turning north we followed the coast, with the mountains giving way to low hills and marshes. Our destination was Corfu but the islands en route made it hard to hurry. Small wonder that Onassis bought one of them for his own personal use, (*with the one next door for his dairy herd*).

Reluctantly leaving the calm of the Inland Sea we entered the Lefkas Canal after waiting for the swing bridge to open. Now we were in the Adriatic proper and the wind obliged, allowing us a close reach towards Corfu. We worked up the east coast, keeping a wary eye open for the almost continuous stream of ferries that criss-cross from Italy, Greece and the islands. Our goal was a tiny bay on the north east tip of Corfu, with Albania less than a mile across the strait. Dropping anchor in the bay was like entering a land of milk and honey; a cable off the beach lined with tavernas, pure water to flop into and far too much ouzo on tap.

Moored on the beach, we made friends with another 9m Catalac and her artist owner, who walked ashore down his gangway straight into his local taverna. This we decided is what catamarans are all about and followed suit, filling our water tanks at the same time. While parts of Corfu have turned into concrete costas, the North and interior of the island remain unspoilt and we hired a car to explore. Looking across to Albania, remote and mysterious, it was not difficult to believe the stories of desperate crossings of the strait on inner tubes, only to be repatriated if caught, by the Greek Border Guard boats.

The only excitement on the boating front was the loss of our CQR due to a failed swivel. I had seen a Bruce 7.5 kg anchor in town and found it cost under £25. So far it has not dragged, once in all sorts of weather and conditions, and is easier to handle and stow than the CQR, highly recommended!

After an *alcoholic* farewell evening ashore we sailed for the Straits of Messina with *fuzzy heads*, but remembered the advice to keep well to the Greek rather than Albanian side of the channel north. Murphy's Law gave head winds after motoring across the shoals of Othoni and Mathraki islands, (thank heavens for our shoal draft), and we finished up on the heel, rather than the toe, of Italy. Marina di Leuca is a fishing port boasting an enormous marble staircase ordered by Mussolini, as a welcome symbol to Italy. It also has a useful lighthouse, since we arrived in the small hours. After a few hours' rest, we proceeded under power, again towards Messina Strait, only to be blown out of it by the local and violent wind. Anchoring off the beach we had the bonus of a clear view of Mount Etna above the mists and the bells of a church in the village nearby. The harbour on the chart had silted up but next morning a flat calm allowed us to follow the coast to Reggio di Calabria for fuel and water. The marina was crowded and expensive, the Italian navy appears to control it, and we elected to leave on the northerly tidal stream and a fair wind.

The Isole Lipari lie 20 miles north of Sicily and advertise their volcanic origins by the fumes which wreath the islands. They are high peaks dropping straight into the sea with villages clinging to the edges. The natives however were as friendly as most islanders tend to be and sold us wonderful fresh fruit, eggs and milk. We motored away in a flat calm looking for win which, when it arrived, was once again on the nose. Electing for a port tack, we ran into a 7 km. fish net at two in the morning. Such nets are meant to be lit by lights at either end – not much help if you arrive in the middle. Once more blessing our shallow draught we used our bread knife to cut away the net from the screws and fled NE, raising Isola di Ponza the following day. This is a delightful island with colour co-ordinated homes around a sheltered harbour with good anchorages and no marina. It is a favourite weekend destination for Neapolitans and the ferries to and from Naples were frequent.

Taking advantage of a NE breeze, we next headed NW only to suffer a flooded crankcase due to a water-pump failure. Anzio was to starboard and we limped in to find a berth and mechanic. This was our first real experience of an Italian town and its inhabitants and we liked both. Italians seem to fizz, the women are immaculately dressed and all the cars appeared to be new. Scooters use road and pavements with equal abandon while the police admire their profiles in their driving mirrors! Re-provisioned and with both engines pulling, (*or should it be pushing?*) we slipped for Elba.

Needless to say, the wind backed to the NW and pushed "Echo" relentlessly towards the shore. The river Tiber offered an overnight possibility and we thankfully sailed two miles upstream to a berth alongside a yacht club on the riverbank. Here we saw cantilevered fishing nets similar to those on the Garonne, lining the banks for miles. It was strange to think that we were just downstream from Rome on a river with so much history. An early morning start took advantage of a strong ebb and swept us back to sea where the wind allowed a course to be set for Elba. This was not to be however and we motor-sailed to the remarkable peninsula of Monte Argentario, arriving in the old port at dusk. Here was another delightful circular harbour fringed with pastel-coloured houses and restaurants. Once again we appeared to be invisible to the locals due, possibly, to our small size and discreet livery!

Sailing at dawn next day, with a calm sea and hot sun, the islands along the coast shimmered in the heat haze. Sadly mirror-like seas show up the plastic flotsam all too clearly – roll on biodegradable plastic bags. By late afternoon we were off Porto on the west coast of Elba and made for the anchorage at the head of the forest-fringed bay. While deep-keeled yachts jostled for space, we smugly sailed on until we could see the bottom and anchored in splendid isolation.

Elba is a beautiful island, it has been said that Napoleon was truly happy here, albeit under enforced circumstances, and would have been content to take up permanent residence. We promised ourselves a return visit. Our next leg was to be aimed in the general direction of the French Riviera and the tiny island of Capraia stood in the way and, with evening approaching, we anchored off the small harbour and rowed ashore. The island was, and in parts still a penal settlement with convict cell-blocks dotted around the northern mountainous slopes. We reckoned that life for the inmates could not have been too bad.

The cafes around the port were full of the "beautiful people" from French resorts aboard their beautiful yachts. One such yacht, thinking that we were anchored in deep water, made the mistake of anchoring alongside us and went firmly aground. With very little tide the ensuing pantomime made amusing viewing!

An 18-hour passage with a light following wind raised Cap d'Antibes in the early morning. The brown haze over the water turned out to be smog from the numerous gin palaces and high-speed motor launches tearing from A to B and back again, (or simply in circles). Having our tanks filled by a blonde in a micro-bikini was also a new experience, but being invited to pay double fees as a multihull in the marina made us opt for island anchorages, as we moved west past the well-known resorts, St. Raphael, St. Tropez, Iles d'Hyeres, Toulon and Marseilles. Surprisingly the coast offers numerous anchorages in between the ports and marinas, often with one or two yachts anchored in a sheltered bay.

Our last stop before crossing the mouth of the Rhone was at Cap Couronne and after a memorable fish dinner, we sailed at dusk to arrive at Grau du Roi in the early morning. The presence of the Rhone made itself felt five miles to seaward with the current pushing "*Echo*" south in no uncertain way. Visibility then closed in and we had genuine fog for the first time since Cyprus. Thanks for the GPS the entrance to Grau du Roi appeared out of the mist exactly where it should and entered the canal-like harbour, (which is what it is), and tied up below the swing bridge among the fishing boats. The latter sell their catch direct to the restaurants that line the quays on both sides with tourists already much in evidence.

The bridge opens every four hours and we passed through it and up to a second lifting bridge carrying the new bypass. Thereafter the canal continues north for six miles to the impressive fortified walls of Aigues Mortes where masts have to be lowered. This we did without any dramas, thanks to Mary Lack's explicit instructions and applause from the inevitable boat watchers. Due to a family wedding, "*Echo*" was moored on a quiet canal reach, the keys given to a friendly French live aboard and a flight home from Nimes via Ryanair was simplicity itself.

NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

By Lucien Contesse

Chapter 36

Tuesday – Friday 4-7 July

Heinz arrived late yesterday afternoon. He had a very worrying trip too, but he went a different way in the second part of the journey. He had to stay all night at the quarantine mooring, as the officials had stopped working. So he joined the yacht club on Wednesday morning.

We have already been three times to town, a trip of 20 minutes walking on tar-sealed roads. There are also buses going, but we haven't seen any yet. The yacht club lies practically opposite the Suva prison. The offenders seem to have a fairly good life there. Many times we see them doing some roadwork, with only one guard.

Suva itself is quite a big town, bustling with life. The town centre is comprised mainly of shops, with a huge open vegetable market and adjoining fish and meat halls, nicely cooled, white painted and tiled. Indians run most shops, which is not taken kindly by the Fijians. It is unusual that the businesses have no prices displayed. One has to ask and make up his own mind if the price is too dear or not, mostly it is. One has to haggle for the right price and the shop owners expect that. Well, this makes for the spice of life and it is interesting; vegetables and meat were rather cheap but tinned goods were more on the expensive side. Luckily for me, I didn't need any for a long time.

8-23 July

We were still in Suva. The weather was bad and it rained a lot. Heavy winds blew over the island and the boats tugged on their anchors. Heinz and I had tied our boats together and laid four anchors out.

The anchorage by the yacht club was very shallow and sandy. The wind which was blowing up the harbour, made one-to-two metre waves on the shallow ground. The boats moved around a lot and pulled their anchors through the sand. The hurricane season had started and we felt ourselves secure there.

The scenery, with all the green hills and the towering cumuli clouds, were beautiful to look at.

We have not done much lately. The weather was just not good enough to go on excursions, so we stayed on our boats or visited the yacht club where we always met plenty of other yachties for a chat or a card game. Post has arrived nearly every other day, so writing letters and post cards turned out to be more a pest than a pleasure.

I have bought myself a second-hand sewing machine with motor and hand crank for 67 dollars. Its main feature is that it can make zig-zag stitches. Sewing sails should be a little easier in the future. I also bought two rolls of sail thread, each containing 2000 metres.

11 July

I wait for good weather. A strong wind blows over the island and the sky is mainly 90% overcast. It rains often, sometimes for hours. A heavy sea is rolling against the reef and at times can be heard in the harbour. The weather forecast has nothing good to say for the next few days. Clearing will have to wait.

As there is nothing else to do, I am reading a lot and paying visits to other boats. Today I am especially lucky; I change 15 of my books and receive 27 in exchange. Everything is written in English of course, but that bothers me not too much, as I am in need of practice in English. I have to be patient with the language and myself. One day the bad weather will be over and we can explore this beautiful country.

14 August

Finally the bad weather is over, rain and wind have subsided and the sun is shining again. Heinz has cleared out and we will leave tomorrow. We have decided to leave my boat in Suva and sail around Vita Levu, inside the reef, in Heinz's boat. We will make a few miles every day, in the time between half and low tide, as only then navigation with safety is possible. At least two men are needed, one for the lookout and one at the helm. We will need about three weeks till we return to Suva.

15 August

We weigh anchor at 10.00 am. in beautiful sunshine. Slowly we sail through the harbour from Suva to the first very important buoy that marks the entrance through the reef. Many more buoys will follow through these coral-infested waters. At a very slow pace and with great care, we follow the markers. A lookout is imperative here, as from the helm it is impossible to see what is in front of the boat. The water currents are a bit tricky, as we sometimes drift more than sail. In the bay of Lauthain Harbour, we run aground twice, but no harm is done, as the sea bed consists only of black mud. We followed the markers very carefully, but there seem to be some changes which are not consistent with our charts. In reverse gear, we pull our boat out of the mud and follow deeper waters. There we drop anchor and stay for the first day. The first six miles are done and we wait happily for the day to end. A small fishing expedition brings immediate success and our evening meal is provided.

16 August

After a leisurely breakfast, we are on our way to the island, Nukulau. It is only about three miles distant. We follow a zig-zag course, in order to dodge the many coral-heads in our pass. The wind is fortunately favourable, but very weak. The sailing is a Sunday, leisurely trip. After many tacks we arrive at 1.00 pm. on our island. We have time to study the reefs, which we will have to pass tomorrow. It is ebb-tide and all the obstacles are visible.

17 August.

We leave our anchorage at 7.30 am. and keep a sharp lookout for the pass through the reef from Nukulau, which has only three markers. We set sail and have the engine idling, just in case. At slow speed and with sails flapping, we motor through the pass and then along in between two reefs, till we reach the open sea. First we sail along the outside reef, but later we make a few tacks to be able to steer to the Nasilai Reef lighthouse. When we arrive there, we can change our east course to north, after two miles, the reef ends.

We sail into the Nasilai Mouth Bay and then motor behind the reef. We are looking out for a place called Mushroom Island. This island is a rock, which stands two feet above the reef. We anchor there. We have made another 10 miles.

18 August

After a restless night, caused through wind and waves, we are sailing with even more wind and tearing along a new reef called Tomberua. The waves are breaking with almighty crashes and great thunder and then rolling over the half-visible corals. By ebb tide we arrive at the Tomverua inlet, which ends in a bottleneck about 100 metres wide. The wind is taking a break and the passage is easy. While motoring slowly through the channel, we spot several turtles and bigger fishes. The water is clear and at times we can see the bottom. In front of us lies a little island, 300 metres in diameter, which is also called Tomberau. As we approach we detect a building

on the island and decide to stay here overnight. In late afternoon a piroque comes alongside with a boy in it. He brings us the message that we are invited by the manager of the hotel for dinner tonight and that we will be collected in one hour's time. We accept, of course, and ask the boy to thank the manager. After having a shave and putting on our best clothes, we are ready. Tui, that is the boy, comes with a motor runabout to collect us. The atmosphere of the meal is a little bit stiff, as we are definitely not in the class of the people present. Nor are we dressed for an occasion like this. But we do our best. After the meal is over, the people are more interested and start talking to us. We answer many questions. The evening gets more amicable the longer it lasts. We are no more intruders in a world where we do not belong. The alcohol has loosened the tongues and the class distinction has disappeared. It is a very long evening, which ends in a headache for me. Tui, the boy, enjoys the trip back to our boat. He makes a few extra circles with the runabout, which does nothing for my head. But why should he not have some fun too? Tired and very happy, we go to bed.

19 August

It is drizzly and a haze obscures our visibility. We wait a bit longer. Unfortunately it does not clear up. We set only the genoa and make good speed with the wind abeam. In two and a half hours we make the 12 miles to the next island. Leleuvia is the island and we search for a good anchorage behind the reef. In late afternoon we make a tour of the island criss-cross it. We find plenty of fruit and fill a backpack with bananas, papayas and mangos. The island is uninhabited and we live here like Robinson Crusoe. It is a beautiful feeling to stand on a piece of land where nobody is living. The island's palms give plenty of shade at the beach. The sand is brown white and very fine. The water is so blue and clear that we decide to have a swim with snorkel and mask. The fish are so plentiful. It is unbelievable. Heinz is tackling an octopus and doesn't know what to do with all those arms. The cephalopod is inspecting Heinz very closely. As Heinz tries to remove it, it gives him a blast of black ink. Heinz is so perplexed that he shoots out of the water. The situation is so comical I cannot stop laughing. This was Heinz's first encounter with an octopus and he is quite flustered about it. I have had many contacts with them, as I have been a scuba diver since my 16th birthday. Octopuses seem to be intelligent and great artists at changing colour. They are inquisitive and crawl all over you. Their suckers have plenty of strength and leave blue spots behind, if they are forcibly removed. Their eyes have a yellow iris with a slotted pupil and good vision. They are very nice to play with, if one doesn't mind a puff of smoke now and then. On our exploration, I see a big crayfish (lobster) and cannot resist catching it. That will make a million dollar dinner for tonight. We decide to stay one day more and explore the reef tomorrow.

20 August

The weather has recovered and the sun is shining again. Heinz and I pay the reef a visit. We have to swim for ten minutes to get to the inside of the reef. The corals we find there are of so many kinds it is unbelievable. They are all alive and flowering like cherry blossom in spring. Fish are of as many different colours as a painter could mix on his palette. In most of the holes sit big lobsters. Heinz would like to have one again for tonight but I have to catch it. As a penalty, he will have to cook it. This wonderland is so fascinating that we forget the time. This is such a beautiful experience; we don't want to get out, till we find we are shivering.

21 August.

In beautiful sunshine we start for the next island. Thangalai is its name. It is only two miles away. The anchorage is not especially good but it will do for one night. There are many coral heads in the water and their depth is hard to judge.

We explore the island for fruits but we can't find any. There are not many shells at the beach. Flora and fishlife change so quickly from island to island. They are all different and beautiful in their own way. You have to come here and see this wilderness to believe it. This is paradise; coconut palms at the beach, warm and clear water and time to dream, just paradise on earth.

22 August.

A weak breeze blows from the west, extremely favourable for the inlet to the Motuiti channel. Halfway through the channel the breeze takes a rest and the motor takes over. The surf on the reef is so feeble that it is barely visible. The sea is absolutely quiet. We have to use the engine on the whole trip to the old capital, Levuka, on the island of Ovalau. Luckily it is only 12 miles away. We visit the old town, which turns out to be only a shabby village, where we can't get a beer or a Coca Cola. We decide to eat fish and chips. They are cheap and we get big portions. Then we buy cheese, bread and eggs for the next few days. We will leave here tomorrow. Staying longer would be a waste of time.

23 August.

We fill our water tanks at the jetty and depart. A light breeze from the east allows us to leave the harbour without engine. Soon after, in absolute quietness, we motor behind the reef. The only ripple on the water is our wake. We are in no hurry. It is only 8 miles to the east side of Ovalau. The landscape passes in front of our eyes like something filmed in slow motion. If there were no palms on the beach, the hills would remind me of home in the Jura. (The Jura is a hilly region in Switzerland). In a huge coral field we drop anchor and go for a swim. Now we are back in the South Seas.

24 August.

The weather is rainy and we stay where we are. We take the rubber dinghy for a spin through the coral forest and try to catch a fish. We have no success and have to be happy with corned beef for tonight. The bay is so tranquil that I go for a dive with the aqualung. It is even ten metres deep. The water is so clear I decide to take some underwater shots.

25/26 August.

Rain, rain and more rain.

27 August

The morning does not look very good. The rain has stopped. We weigh anchor and leave for the island Nangani. The trip is more difficult than expected. We encounter many coral heads, which we sometimes have to circumnavigate. After three hours of constant manoeuvring, we anchor in a beautiful sandy bay. The water is very clear and we go for a swim. Then we walk along the beach and collect many nice specimens of shells. This island is probably not very often visited, as we can't see any litter of "civilisation". To come to this island was worth every penny. Not far from our anchorage we find plenty of papayas and cooking bananas. Heinz has caught a big fish (Grouper), about 10 kg. As the beach is covered with driftwood, we decide to have a barbecue. The fish is absolutely marvellous and the fried bananas are not bad either. For dessert we have papayas. Happy and content with full stomachs, we sit in the cockpit and watch the wonders of the universe. Nothing is more satisfactory than letting one's thoughts wander under a starry sky.

28 August

The weather has improved and we are on our way again. To-day's trip asks for a lot of concentration. The markers are wide stretches apart. We have to pass many shallow patches where we could easily hit the seabed. In the middle of our run, we nearly collide with a coral head. We are about 10 m. away, when I see it. A very quick reaction from Heinz and we circumnavigate it with only inches to spare. Our course brings us closer to mainland Fiji again. With good speed we sail the 15 miles to our next anchorage. During our lunch we recognise that we have chosen a bad place and decide to make a dash for the next one. It is 5 miles away and we are already tired from the continuous concentration. We start again, even though it is late in the afternoon, and the reefs start to disappear. After two hours more, we arrive in the bay, Nia Maria, where, exhausted, we drop anchor.

29 August.

At 8.00 am. we are already sailing out of Nia Maria. With a weak breeze, we make 2 miles and then lie becalmed. We start the engine and run under power for the next half hour till the breeze returns. In a gently swaying motion, we pass the great bay of Viti Levu. As the wind is increasing steadily, we decide to drop the main and sail with the genoa only, along the many markers. A very difficult inlet on the chart proves to be less complicated than anticipated. In a zigzag course, we navigate through the reefs into the harbour of Port Elington. What a noble name for such a lousy place. The bay is full of corals. The inlet to the harbour is very difficult and badly marked. To our surprise, the anchor ground is ideal with sand and black mud. We pay the place a visit and purchase two dozen eggs and an ice cream each. We order for to-morrow, five loaves of bread, and go in search of a cool drink. Cold drinks are not available, as the fridge is out of order. The whole settlement is comprised of Indian sugar cane planters, with miles and miles of sugar crop. We return to the boat, as there is nothing else to see. In the night, a mountain wind starts blowing at about 30 knots. The gusts are much higher and shake the boat. We are happy to have a good anchorage and not have to drift around in the corals.

30 August

We collect our bread and then leave for a quieter place. The strong wind is still blowing and shaking the boat. We motor to the island Nanau-I-Thake, which is only one and a half miles away. The sea is still rough here but

much quieter than at Port Elington. We stay all day in stormy weather. The wind is cool and the water is not inviting for a swim, so we stay on board.

31 August

We leave Nanau-I-Thake with marvellous sunshine and an easterly wind. This gives us the opportunity to sail along the markers and reef with only a headsail. We are passing small islands swiftly and sometimes we are as fast as the waves. Then, in these conditions, the boat seems to stand still, at least to the movement of the water, as the same wave stays at the same place. But the reefs pass at 4 knots. We have ebb tide and all the corals are clearly visible, so no threat to our boat. In a very short time we make the seven miles to the island Malake, and drop anchor there. After a short nap following lunch, we explore the island, walking along a narrow sandy beach and climbing over mangroves that surround half the island. We find nothing of interest, but enjoy the walk nevertheless.

1 September.

Today is approximately a repeat of yesterday. After 10 miles of sailing, we drop anchor in a huge, long inlet without an exit, near the village of Tongorere. The beach is pitch black from volcanic sand. Further back the mangroves, standing there like an impenetrable wall, keep watch so that the sea does not claim more and more land. It is astounding that we find, now and then, holes in this wall, openings two to three metres wide, without any vegetation. No human hand has ever worked here, so why is there no growth?

2 September

We find a passage through the mangroves to Tongorere. There we catch a bus to MBA (whatever that means) a bigger place in the mountains. As we arrive there, we find a little township with a huge market place. Under an open sky, everything that the country produces is displayed. Fruit and vegetables take up most of the space. Then come household goods made from wool, pandanus leaves and clay. Live animals are there in cages and even flowers can be seen. The number of people here is amazing. They must have come from all over the island. On the outskirts of the market, meals are being cooked on small fires. The smell of all that cooking makes us hungry, so we find a stall where food is sold to the public. We have one of the local Indian dishes, which is very spicy. To extinguish the fire in our throats, we have a second beer, but it does not help much. The bus trip is very interesting and we make a few rather unusual observations. The bus is nearly full of Fijians and Indians, but no Fijian is sitting on the same bench as an Indian. That brings us to the conclusion that the two races do not like each other much. Also, the villages seem to be separated too, one village for the Fijians and another for the Indians, at least in the sugar cane region. The Fijians mostly go fishing whilst the Indians work the sugar cane fields. Everything appears a bit muddled, as we have not contact enough with both parties and do not stay long enough with both parties and the Indians are very friendly. The Indians show clearly their dominance in business and prefer a European building style, at least on the outside. The Fijians prefer unequivocally their own style, huts made from palm leaves, practically without any furniture. Pandanus mats cover the floor on which they eat and sleep. Comparing the families, it seems the Fijians are more blessed with children. Whether the Fijians or the Indians are winning the population stakes we do not know. At the moment, we would judge the situation to be about 50:50. We would have to live here for a few months to get a clear picture. Once more, Heinz and I are invited, by a Tangorere family to a Kava drinking session. Kava is made out of water and a root, which is first dried and then pulverised. It seems to have some narcotic properties which become apparent only when one has drunk great quantities. The natives consume it mainly on festive occasions. When drinking Kava, a hand clapping ritual has to be observed. The head of the family, the oldest man, gives the sign to drink, the person who fills the coconut shells has to clap three times. The person receiving the drinks has to clap once. When the coconut shell is empty, which has to be managed in one go, everybody claps three times. Each person gets only one drink. Then the oldest man gives the sign for the next round, and so on, all night long,