

A man with a beard and sunglasses is sitting on a sandy beach. He is wearing a dark t-shirt and shorts. In the foreground, there is a large, woven basket made of dried palm fronds. The background features a tropical beach with many palm trees and a clear blue sky. The water is a light blue color. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Paradise Has Teeth

Travels in French Polynesia

Mark Moxon



C O M M O N S D E E D

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0

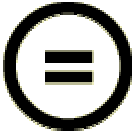
You are free to copy, distribute, display, and perform the work under the following conditions:



Attribution. You must give the original author credit.



Non-commercial. You may not use this work for commercial purposes.



No Derivative Works. You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

- For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the licence terms of this work.
- Any of these conditions can be waived if you get permission from the author.

Your fair use and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

This is a human-readable summary of the Legal Code (the full licence), which is shown at the end of this work.

Paradise Has Teeth: Travels in French Polynesia
v1.1, September 2004

Cover Photograph: On the beach at Amanu

Contents

Foreword	6
Map	8
New Zealand to Polynesia.....	9
Anatomy of a Yacht	9
The Strange World of Sailing.....	11
Sailing to French Polynesia.....	13
The Gambier Islands.....	26
Gambier Islands.....	26
Gambier Islands (Mangareva).....	31
Cooking on Board	46
The Sociability of Yachties	49
Rikitea Harbour	51
Gambier Islands (Southeast)	55
Gambier Islands (East)	62
Heading for Tahiti	68
Man vs Cyclone Kelly.....	68
Amanu	73
Amanu Street Scene	87
Makemo	90
Escape from the Yacht	92
Bushwalking in Tahiti	95
Tahiti.....	98

Further Reading 109

Copyright Notice..... 111

Foreword

This book is a collection of writing from the road, covering a four-month trip I made to French Polynesia in 1997. This was part of a much larger, three-year journey that took me through Australia, New Zealand, French Polynesia, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, India and Nepal, from 1995 to 1998.

The travelogue for all these countries and more can be found at my personal website at **www.moxon.net**, where you can also find travel tips, recommended journeys and further free books for you to download. If you enjoy reading this book, then I'd be delighted if you would sign my website's Guestbook.

I've released this book and its companions via a Creative Commons Licence, which means you are free to distribute it to everyone and anyone, as long as you distribute it on a non-commercial basis and make no changes to it. If you know someone who might like this book, please pass it on; I make no money from it, but I do enjoy the thought of people reading it and recommending it to their friends.

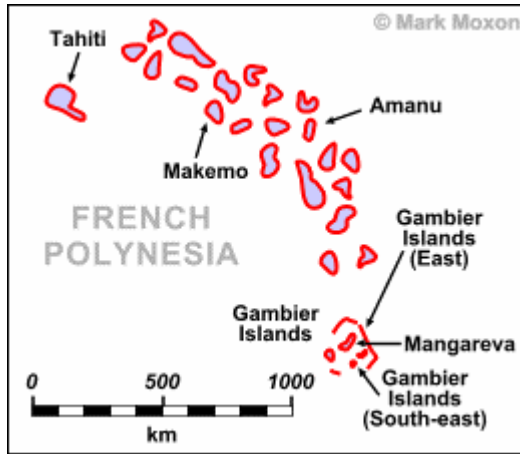
Finally, please be aware that this book is highly satirical, which means there's a slight chance that it might cause offence those who think my sense of

humour is amusing as a puddle of mud. On top of this, some parts will be out of date – which is why each article is dated – and others will betray the naivety of a traveller who discovered his way in the world by throwing himself into it headfirst. It is, however, an honest account of how I felt as I travelled the world for three years, and as such, I hope you enjoy it.

Mark Moxon, September 2004

www.moxon.net

Map



New Zealand to Polynesia

Anatomy of a Yacht

Written: 24 April 1997

Let's look at this boat, then, all 36-feet of it. *Zeke* – a happy name, don't you reckon? – is a home, a place to explore and explore in, an intriguing mixture of mod cons, traditional equipment and sea-salt-worn fittings that holds together as a safe environment. Let's do a tour...

The main cabin is large, stretching from the bow of the boat to about three quarters of the way to the stern. It's very open plan, with the front point being taken up by the forward locker, home to spare sails, ropes, the anchor chain, diving equipment and a huge range of bits and bobs that are essential for an easy life on board. The rest of the room contains a v-shaped settee with a collapsible table that turns it into a double bed; heaps of locker space, storage space for more tins of tomatoes, sweetcorn, corned beef and bloody processed peas than you've ever seen in your life... all the provisions we bought in New Zealand are tucked away in here somewhere; the toilet, or the 'head' as it's called on a boat, which contains a hot shower (only usable when there's enough fresh water and the engine's been

running); the kitchen (or ‘galley’) complete with kerosene oven/stove, fridge and a spice collection to rival the best; the navigation table, where the charts, radios and GPS (Global Positioning System) live; and right at the back of the boat, separated from the main cabin by the engine compartment, is Rob’s cabin. The only other area is the cockpit, above the engine, where the actual sailing is done and where the ropes all come back to.

Ah yes, the ropes. My first sailing experience back in the Coromandel was confusing, to say the least, and one reason is the terminology. Sailing language isn’t English, at least it’s not the English normal people use, and the rope names clouds the issue on what is a relatively easy system. Halyards are ropes that pull sails up, sheets are ropes that alter angles of sails, and on top of that are specialised ropes that have crazy names.

Zeke is a sloop, which means it has one mast in the middle of the boat, with the mainsail attached to the back of it, and a boom along the bottom of the sail. There’s also another sail in front of the mast, called the jib, which rolls up around a rigid wire, the forestay, which goes from the top of the mast to the bow. The main and jib halyards raise and lower the mainsail and jib respectively, and the main sheet and port and starboard jib sheets alter the angles of the mainsail and jib. The boom vang pulls the boom down, the topping

lift lifts the boom up, the preventer stops the boom from swinging from side to side, and you now know enough to blag your way through a crew position on a yacht. All you have to perfect now is the ‘blurrghhh’ sound that marks the graduation from landlubber to seasick mariner, and you’re sorted.

Though if you can remember all that when the sea’s pitching at 45° and the sea is breaking over your head, you’re doing better than I ever did...

The Strange World of Sailing

Written: 1 May 1997

On the Pacific, my dreams seem to become numbed (and by ‘dreams’ I mean aspirations rather than REM sleep). For some reason, my usual concerns – destination, cash flow, cultural experience, maintaining a reasonable social life, wishing I’d been around in the sixties, the normal sort of thing – become both irrelevant and disconnected when I’m surrounded by sea for weeks, with no contact for so long. The desert was never like this, because however desolate the outback might be, it’s teeming with folklore, wildlife, mountains, gorges, strange plants and, above all, amazing people and settlements. The Pacific is totally different, and although I wasn’t expecting the sea to be anything like the desert in terms of psychological effect, it’s surprised

me to feel so detached.

So what if I've got so-and-so dollars in the bank? It's no bloody use to me in the middle of the ocean. So what if I meant to write a letter to blah-de-blah? There aren't any post offices halfway to the Gambier Islands. So what if I haven't showered in two weeks, and all my clothes are smothered in salt crystals? There aren't any people here to meet anyway. The situation is like no other: if it wasn't for the daily radio contact, the whole world could disappear, and we wouldn't have a clue. (In fact, I arrived at the Gambiers knowing that the UK had had a General Election about two weeks before, but I didn't have a clue as to the result. It took quite a bit of effort to find out, too.)

The world of *Zeke* on the ocean makes me think of a play: a play is self-contained, with a few actors, a couple of different scenes, and a plot (or a destination, if you like), and just like on *Zeke*, the play is cut off from reality. Sure, plays are normally set in a familiar environment – a house, a garden, a supermarket – but the connections to reality are all in the audience's imagination, and taken as a self-contained entity, a play exists apart from the world in which it plays. How else can one play be a story of everyday life in one country, and a seriously subversive piece of literature in another? So *Zeke* is like a play, and like all plays the actors don't necessarily behave like normal humans would: there's

melodrama, comedy, soliloquy and so on, things that happen in everyday life, but which occur more intensely or dramatically in a play than in the real world, and believe me, four weeks on the ocean in *Zeke* makes things plenty melodramatic.

One result of *Zeke* being like a play is this feeling of being totally cut off from reality. I have never felt so truly alone before, yet this doesn't imply loneliness, more an appreciation of isolation. The nearest land is 1000 miles away, and the progress of *Zeke* at around 100 nautical miles per day makes this distance feel sizable. We're getting there, but it's a slow process, and it's such a radical change from the hustle and bustle of normal life.

Sailing to French Polynesia

Written: 13 May 1997

The journey to the Gambier Islands was as near to a living hell as I have ever been. I had never been sailing on the open ocean before, and I discovered early on that there'd been a reason for that. I *hated* it.

The final stages before leaving involved shopping for supplies – a total of about NZ\$1400 at Pak 'n' Save, in eight baskets, covering us for five months for items that would be expensive in French Polynesia, like canned food, and about three or four months for

everything else – and finishing off all those little jobs that had to be done. I'd spent a total of about four weeks on the boat, painting it when it came out of the water, working on all sorts of jobs from stripping plastic off the rails to fixing electrical switches in the bathroom, and by the time we finally got out of Whangarei, I was getting pretty impatient. There's always too much to do on a boat, but four weeks was getting ridiculous. Luckily the immigration man was very understanding, and didn't give a hoot about my lack of visa.

We finally left New Zealand on Wednesday, 16th April, saying farewell to Whangarei after an overstay, for me, of 17 days, something that the immigration people didn't seem to mind much at all. The crew: Rob, Australian captain and owner of the yacht *Zeke*; Laurent, Swiss-French chef and pending disaster; and me, still slightly bewildered from plan changes and the enormity of the coming challenge.

As with all strange departures from normality, I had done my research: it's surely easier to be aloof and nominally detached from reality if you're well informed. Boats, the sea, diving, swells and maritime climates were all a mystery, slowly unravelled by books and other people's advice (the latter mainly consisting of 'Have you ever been on yacht before? No? You must be crazy... but I'm as jealous as hell!'). I still know relatively little, but I can get by at cocktail parties on the

subject of cruising, even if I end up explaining in graphic detail how much I loathe it.

So I had lots of theory – sailing theory, weather theory, outdoor survival theory, even social interaction theory – but theory is no use when the mind is no longer in control of the body. The concentration slips, and before long the wrong thoughts are slipping in: too much saliva, goddamn it; stomach contents slopping; another hard roll of the boat; don't *whatever you do* think of badly made meringue; a cold sweat; slightly itchy palms; logic goes out of the window; and it feels like your first alcoholic experience again...

Shit. Over the side for the fifth time, unintentionally feeding the fish. I was stuck in the middle of the South Pacific, and my very worst fear had struck. I had *le mal de mer*, and it hurt.

No Peace, No Quiet

The first week of the trip was probably the worst week of my entire life: the seasickness was pretty severe, though totally normal according to the captain, who managed to keep his colour only because of the time he'd already spent over the years hurling *his* guts up over the side. As I ran for the side again I couldn't help picturing that split second when the last glass of port suddenly makes itself known, awkwardly sitting on top of too much Stilton and cheddar biscuits, and the world

switches from a rosy glow to a shaky sweat. The toilet beckons, there's no escape, but once the dinner's been dispatched, it's back to the party as a great feeling of relief sweeps over you...

Except with seasickness the relief is only a reprieve, and the feeling's back within an hour, as rough as ever and worse on an empty stomach. On top of the nausea, though, is the real killer: the feeling of having absolutely no energy. I had never felt so consistently exhausted in my life, and the resulting lack of interest in life and the art of sailing didn't help me to appreciate my situation. Truth be told, at times I found myself regretting ever seeing the advert for the position: surely nothing is worth four weeks of feeling as rough as the human body can, while still having to do things like sail the boat, do the washing up, go on watch and so on.

There's another aspect to ocean passages that's particularly unpleasant (and bear in mind that the vast majority of yachties haven't done even a few days at sea, let alone the long four-week haul to the Gambier Islands, something that I can totally understand after enduring such a journey). The boat's moving: fine. But it moves a hell of a lot, because the swell out in the Pacific is huge, and it's incessant: when Magellan named the ocean after his word for 'peace' because it was so calm compared to the Atlantic, he obviously wasn't in the same ocean as I was.

When the boat's moving – rolling constantly, pitching and yawing most of the time, and getting smacked on the side by hefty waves that knock you over reasonably regularly – imagine trying to wash up, when anything you put down rolls away unless you wedge it in. Or how about cooking, something that mutates from a simple act of combining and heating into a test of endurance? Even simply existing – standing up, sitting down, and, surprisingly, just lying down – is a major effort, because your body is constantly tensing and relaxing muscles to maintain its balance, and it takes it out of you even when you're doing anything. Even sleeping is an effort if you're being thrown from one side of the boat to the other every two seconds, and on top of the debilitating effect of seasickness, it's a serious shock to the system.

The Ship's Watch

The other main aspect of sailing that your average crewmember gets to know and love is being on watch. You might think that the chance of boats colliding in the middle of the ocean is minimal – and you'd be right, as the chances are ridiculously small – but it *is* possible that you might hit another boat and die, so keeping a good watch for 24 hours of every day of every week is essential, until you're safely anchored. It's simply not worth risking death for the want of checking the sea

every so often.

Being on watch is, unfortunately, the most boring part of sailing, but in a strange way. On one hand sitting in the cockpit for three-and-a-half hours, scanning the horizon every 20 minutes, is pretty tedious, especially on the 12am to 3.30am shift, and if the weather's lousy then it's simply miserable. On the other hand, though, is the realisation that you're a good 1000 nautical miles from the nearest land, surrounded by water that is kilometres deep, and that you're surviving... that's quite a thought, though I think you appreciate it more when the trip is over and you can sit down and examine the marine charts of the voyage.

Cravings

I also developed more cravings than a pregnant mother. I had passionate feelings for pizza, a craving such as I had never experienced before. Visions of pepperoni, ham and mushroom on a thick crust brought back memories of Pizza Huts and the exquisite pizzas in Spain, where they crack an egg in the middle just before taking it out, so the yolk goes everywhere and is still runny when they serve it. I simply adore pizza, and the fact that I couldn't get any on board *Zeke* made the longing even keener.

Then there was the craving for anything fresh, prompted by the last of our fruit and vegetables

disappearing after ten days at sea. Fresh tropical mango, pineapple straight off the tree, freshly squeezed orange juice... all these cravings were quite understandable in the circumstances. But the biggest craving I had was for fresh cream cakes or chocolate sponge in custard, and on top of that I wanted to start a long and deep relationship with a plate of chips.

And finally, I craved land. Land doesn't move; land is predictable; land lets you get a good night's sleep. And land doesn't wash over the boat and crew when there's a storm going. One particular night springs to mind, the night, quite early on in the trip, when all hell broke loose. We had to reef the sail in the middle of the night, as the waves lashed around us, the wind smashed the sails around, and we froze in our wet weather gear, falling asleep on one hand and desperately trying to save the boat on the other. It was a nightmare: the boat gybed twice (when the wind, coming from behind you, snatches the boom and swings it across from one side to the other, a frightening and dangerous event) smashing the GPS housing and compass mount, and the whole event stressed us out completely, enhancing the grief we felt at such a long voyage. On top of this I was being copiously seasick: I was totally miserable.

And yes, the sea really does wash over the boat and crew when there's a storm going, just like in the movies. And yes, it really sucks.

Low Point

On the fourth day Laurent and I had a full-blooded but extremely short argument about nothing at all, and I swear if I had had a gun I would have blown his head off. We made up two minutes later, but as I sat outside afterwards, sitting in the unpleasant afterglow of altercation, I broke down and cried. All I craved was peace: peace from the constant rolling of the boat, peace from the continuing sickness, peace from the mundane rigours of conversation. I just wanted to be alone, and paradoxically it was the feeling of being totally alone that brought tears. They were brief, but signalled a low point from which I hoped things could only get better.

The *really* low point happened exactly halfway through the journey, after 14 days of rolling and throwing up. By this time I realised that I had to eat *something* if I was going to survive, so I went below decks to make myself something edible. It took forever: the smell of kerosene nearly knocked me out and I kept having to go outside for air and to stare at the horizon, but in a feat of sheer willpower I managed to make myself a bowl of perfect scrambled egg. I ate it very slowly, savouring the flavour, and the second I swallowed the last mouthful I felt that old familiar ache spreading through my stomach muscles and the whole lot came right back up, sitting in the bowl as if I had never touched it. I lay down in the bottom of the boat,

curled up and cried my heart out.

I remember thinking that whatever happened to me in the future, things would *never* get worse than this. So far, they haven't.

Fresh Tuna

On 28th April we caught a tuna. I'd never seen a whole tuna before, and they are the most gorgeous fish you've ever seen, with shiny silver flanks and yellow-green tints that make supermarket tins look positively dull. They're big too: the one we caught was about four feet from tip to tail, and it tasted delicious, keeping us in fish for about three days. The fishing method? Drag a long line behind the boat, fitted with a big metal hook, shaped vaguely like a fish: this twists and turns like a little fish, luring the bigger fish to take an early lunch and become a late dinner (the system, not surprisingly, is called a lure).

This was the first time we'd used the lure on the trip, and it worked a treat: after that we were either too knackered to go through the rigmarole of scaling and gutting, or we were too close to the Tuamotus and the paranoia of contamination from the nuclear testing (though this was only paranoia, as the fish outside of the affected atolls are fine).

Phosphorescence

It was on board *Zeke* that I discovered the delights of ocean phosphorescence. There I was, pissing off the back of the boat, and thinking how beautifully the stars were reflected in the wake. And then I realised that it was cloudy, and that's when I remembered about phosphorescence. There's a certain type of plankton that lives throughout the oceans of the world, and when it gets excited, such as by the passage of a yacht, it lights up like a glow worm, so the boat leaves a trail of little lights behind it at night. Most eerie, I can tell you.

The Death of Doris

Perhaps the most annoying mishap on the trip was the death of Doris. Doris, the wind vane, steered the boat automatically, using the wind as a guide and as a power source, but on the fourth day of the trip an especially heavy swell ripped off Doris's bottom part, breaking the stainless steel joint, totally removing the wooden rudder part of the vane, and rendering the whole thing useless.

So we moved onto Eric, the computerised autopilot, who steered us remarkably well to our destination, gobbling up electricity like buggery but preventing us from having to hand steer all the way. If we hadn't had Eric we'd have been hand steering for 24 hours a day for the remaining 24 days, a particularly unpleasant concept (and something racing yachts do, the mad bastards).

Company... of a Sort

We saw one ship once we'd pulled out of New Zealand waters. Yes, one ship during the whole bloody trip. And there we were, scanning the horizon every 20 minutes, looking for potential collisions for 28 days and finding just one, one that was nowhere near hitting us anyway. Perhaps that's why finally arriving in a place with human activity and other boats was such a momentous feeling.

I should add that when we spotted this ship, we decided to call it up on the radio so the crew could tell us how big our radar shadow was (a handy thing to know). So we cranked up the radio, raised the ship, finding out it was a Philippino cargo boat bound for somewhere far, far away.

'Can you tell us how big our radar shadow is, please?' asked Rob when the niceties were over.

'Sure thing,' said the radio operator on the other ship. 'Hang on just a second while I just turn our radar on...'

Makes you feel all safe and sound, doesn't it?

The End in Sight

Relief arrived on May 14th... or, to be more accurate May 13th, because we'd done a Phileas Fogg and crossed the dateline, meaning we turned up to find ourselves a day ahead of ourselves, if you see what I

mean. The final approach to the Gambier Islands was frustrated by three days of almost no wind, but finally on the last morning we saw land. The relief was like nothing I have experienced before: all the grief and stress of the last four weeks seemed to evaporate as the sun silhouetted the islands against the sky.

As we approached the islands, painfully slowly because of the serious reefs around the Gambiers, an amazing thing happened. I could smell land! It smells musty, damp and downright homely, and with the sensitised nose of someone who has only smelt salt and sea breezes for four weeks, I could smell pine trees, damp earth and the scents of civilisation. The final journey into the anchorage at Rikitea on the island of Mangareva was idyllic, and after a quick but necessary shower the three of us piled onto land to clear immigration and customs.

And the land swayed. I fell around like a drunken sailor, tripping over invisible obstacles and falling sideways for no apparent reason. I felt like you do when you come off a particularly violent fairground ride, and I spent the whole day in a haze. I clearly remember finding ice creams for sale, and almost freaking out on the taste sensation, but a lot of the rest of the day was a haze of delight and relief. The long trip was finally over.

As soon as we arrived, Laurent jumped ship to await any other yacht to take him away – he was sick of

arguing with Rob, and Rob was sick of him. I was just incredibly relieved that I survived 28 days of mental and physical stress, the likes of which I have never experienced before and hope never to experience again, without falling out with anyone, and without leaving the boat myself. That's no mean feat.

And just for the statisticians out there, the length of the trip was 3000 nautical miles (3450 normal miles, or 5550km). To put that in perspective, that's exactly the distance from London to New York, and is further than the distance Columbus sailed when he discovered America. From stepping off land at Whangarei to stepping on land in Rikitea, the trip took exactly 28 days in real time (but only 27 days on the calendar). It's the longest sea voyage I've ever done, and I'm sure it will always be the longest sea voyage I've ever done.

'Never again' is a phrase that springs to mind... but I don't regret going. I'll just never get on an ocean-going yacht again.

The Gambier Islands

Gambier Islands

Written: 16 May 1997

The Gambier Islands are part of French Polynesia, the French-controlled area of paradise that comprises the following:

- The Society Islands, which include Tahiti and Bora Bora and most of the tourism in French Polynesia.
- The Marquesas Islands, a collection of 12 islands some distance to the northeast of the Society Islands and north of the Tuamotus.
- The Austral Archipelago, seven islands lying due south of the Society Islands, and home to the southern islands in French Polynesia.
- The Tuamotu Archipelago, the biggest of the five archipelagoes, which stretches in a 1000-mile line southeast from Tahiti and contains Hao, Makemo, Amanu and Mururoa among the 76 Tuamotuan islands.

- The Gambier Archipelago at the southeastern tip of Polynesia. This archipelago is made up of the main Gambier lagoon¹, plus the Actéon (or Actaeon) group of islands and the atolls of Marutea Sud, Maria and Morane. The Gambier lagoon comprises four main islands (Mangareva, Taravai, Akamaru and Aukena) and ten smaller islands or motus (including Agakauitai, and the coral motu of Totegegie, home to the airport).

The Gambiers are in the remotest part of French Polynesia, some 1643km from Tahiti; if you head east

¹ The Gambier lagoon is a classic atoll surrounding the inner Gambier Islands. An atoll (pronounced 'ah-toll', not 'ay-toll') is one of the most classic natural phenomena in the Pacific, and is responsible for beautiful coral reef, motus and protected anchorages galore. The islands of the southwest Pacific are all volcanic in origin, being formed by the clash of the Pacific, Indian, Eurasian and Philippines tectonic plates: the clashes force magma up into the sea, which creates islands in the ocean, and with the perpetual drift of the plates, this has formed a string of islands from Pitcairn Island and the Gambiers in the east, to Indonesia in the west and Japan in the north.

As the volcanoes form, they cool and harden to form islands, and over time the islands are slowly eroded away by the sea, and this process gives rise to the atoll: coral forms around the islands, and as these islands erode and disappear the coral remains, leaving large strung-out rings of coral reefs, sometimes containing islands (as in the Gambiers). The resultant lagoons inside coral atolls are placid and full of life, and assuming there's an entrance into the lagoon (which is not that common), the anchorage is wonderfully sheltered from the ocean swell. A motu (pronounced 'mow-too') is an island formed by debris and sand collecting on top of an atoll reef, and normally consists of a thin strip of sand, a few coconut palms, and wonderful diving opportunities. The Tuamotus are mainly atolls, and as such they're beautiful but a pain to navigate because atolls aren't visible until you're very close: then again, that's part of their charm.

from the Gambiers you will come across Pitcairn Island (owned by the British, at the continuing behest of the inhabitants), Easter Island (Chilean), and then after a long, long gap there's South America. The biggest of the Gambiers (at 14km²) is Île Mangareva, which contains the capital of the Gambiers, Rikitea. That's not a large area when you consider how remote these islands are and that the *total* land area of the archipelago is a mere 35km²...

The first people to visit the Gambiers probably came from the Marquesas around 1200 AD. The remains of houses and burial grounds have been found on the smaller islands, but some of the more interesting archaeological remains were destroyed in the euphoric insanity of the Jesuit mission that changed the islands forever. The first European to arrive in the Gambiers was Captain John Wilson of the London Missionary Society, who explored the islands in 1797 aboard *HMS Duff*, naming the islands after Captain Gambier, a Frenchman who had supported his expedition.

But it was the French evangelists who had the biggest impact on these remote islands. The record of Honoré Laval, the Jesuit priest who came to the Gambiers in 1834 with Father François Caret and Friar Columban Murphy in tow, is shameful and, unfortunately, typical. After converting and completely dominating Maputeoa, the last king, Laval ruled the

islands as a despot. He set stringent rules (called the Mangarevan Code) and started a huge building programme in which he forced the people to erect more than 116 coral stone churches, convents, mills and other buildings, some of which are strewn all over Mangareva as ruins, and some of which are still standing and cared for, like the monstrously large cathedral in Rikitea. In the process Laval caused the death of over 5000 people, eliminating the will of the people to survive, and destroying an entire culture. The cathedral and ruins stand as monuments to his egomania, yet the inscription on the statue donated by France reads, 'His memory is blessed in these islands.' Laval's rule came to an end when Tahiti was declared a French protectorate in 1871; today, only a few pure blood Mangarevans are left, and there certainly aren't many people blessing Laval's memory.

Rikitea is an interesting mixture of tropical primitiveness and modern influence. The islands are full of lush vegetation, with fruit trees everywhere that provide more fruit than the population can eat: the result is a paradise where you can walk around picking fruit whenever you want it, or even plucking one of the plentiful fishes or lobsters from the sea. On the other hand, the shops sell canned fruit, canned fish and other western delicacies like Coca Cola and ice cream, and the islanders find it easier to buy cans than catch their own

meals. It's a bizarre turnaround when you consider how westerners think of cans as a poor substitute for fresh produce.

There are other problems too. The lobsters and fish inside the lagoon are not fit to eat for two reasons: there's a nasty red algae that originates in the vicinity of L'Île des Lapins, and then there's the bacterial contamination from raw sewage released off Île Mangareva. The locals told me that their lobsters were bad to eat because of the nuclear tests in nearby Mururoa: they said that the French had washed their contaminated ships down inside the atoll and had poisoned the fish. However this, like much of the local gossip relating to the nuclear tests, is just a myth: in fact the 1995 tests in Mururoa were performed underground in sealed chambers and no external contamination was possible, and in 1996 a test by the International Commission found no contamination in the Gambiers. The only two instances of contaminated maritime vessels in the area happened when two rockets were launched through a mushroom cloud in a 1967 experiment to collect samples, but these were decontaminated at Hao in a dedicated facility. Nobody would deny that the 1995 tests were unfortunate given the gradual turn away from nuclear weaponry in the West, but it's easy – and unfair – to blame France for everything just because we can't understand how

anyone could perform nuclear tests in paradise.

And it *is* paradise. The weather is balmy, with little rain at the time of year I was there, the local wildlife is exquisite, the water is warm and fresh and away from the settlements it's incredibly clear. The sight of coconut palms fronting an idyllic island beach where *nobody* goes and sunbathes is enough to make you understand why the locals are so friendly and are always smiling. And as for the little kids... they're a picture of innocence and happiness.

Gambier Islands (Mangareva)

Written: 4 June 1997

Soon after arriving in the Gambier Islands the chef, Laurent, jumped ship onto another yacht. Rob (the captain) and Laurent had spent considerable periods of the trip from New Zealand arguing and threatening to kill each other, so it was a pleasant change to have just two of us on board as we settled into island life.

All through the long haul to the Gambiers it had never felt as if we were anywhere particularly *foreign*: the sea is the sea wherever you are, and it doesn't have particular cultural or geographical between the various seas and oceans (apart from the weather). The Gambier Islands, however, were a wonderful culture shock.

'It's the television that's really destroying the

island's culture,' said Napoleon, sipping his *sake* and sampling the latest batch of Rob's award-winning pancakes. 'Before we got TV a year ago, the main street would be full at night with people walking over to see their friends, and the place would be buzzing. Now the town is dead, because everyone's watching TV. They watch it all day, and do nothing. It's destroying our culture.'

Napoleon lived over the hill from the main harbour in a bay called Baie Ngatavake, and he was a real find: one of only three people on the island who could speak English, he transformed us from lost tourists to informed experts in the space of one day. It all started on the morning of Thursday 15th May; we'd decided to get some fruit, not a tricky procedure given the number of communal fruit trees around, but we figured it was only polite to ask the people in the nearby houses if would be all right to pick their fruit. So we waltzed up to this young guy who had just turned up in a jeep, and asked him if he knew where we could get some fruit, especially some mangoes.

He introduced himself as Napoleon, a twenty-six year old farmer from Ngatavake, and he told us that if we wanted some really good fruit, we could hop in his jeep and get a lift over to his house on the other side of the island. That wasn't the sort of offer we could turn down, so before long we were bouncing along the dirt

road, hanging on for dear life as the jeep careened over the hill to Ngatavake, a collection of two or three houses looking over the most stunning bay you're ever likely to see. Napoleon's house was surrounded by fruit trees of all descriptions, and as we wandered around, he pointed out goodies we could pluck. Having tackled some mangoes² he had picked up from his sister for us, we wandered off down the road towards Rikitea, stopping every few metres as Napoleon spotted another fruit tree and insisted we fill our bags. We had mangoes, grapefruit, papaya, mandarins, guavas, lemons, breadfruit, pistache, coconut, little red tomatoes and oranges, all as fresh as they come; by the time we got back to the boat we figured Napoleon deserved a drink, so we pulled out the bottle of *sake* that Rob had stashed away in the bottom of the cupboard (the only alcohol we had on board) and treated ourselves to a glass each.

It was then that we cooked up the pancakes and started talking about the island. We learned lots of interesting snippets about the Gambiers that weren't in the books, like the fact that the islanders used to make

² Mangoes have to be the most delicious fruit in existence. I'd first come across the sweet taste of mango in Melbourne, where they correctly proclaimed it was the food of the gods and showed me how to eat it by slicing off one side of the fruit, scoring it crisscross and turning it inside out so the flesh stands up like a grid of cocktail cheese cubes. The mangoes in the Pacific islands are from another world, though, with a flavour that makes Melbournian mangoes taste like old boots, and I soon became quite an expert at spotting mango trees and hunting for mangoes that had fallen down onto the forest floor.

their own fruit wine, but the French made it illegal so the locals would have to buy beer and wine at inflated prices from the local shops; the attitude of the local *gendarmes* (two French and one local) towards the natives was apparently quite arrogant, something the islanders didn't like at all. It's a sad story, but a familiar one if you know anything about the exploitation of the Pacific, and it was made all the more real by Napoleon's explanations. It was a very interesting afternoon.

Meeting the Other Yachties

That night we expanded our social circle even further, with Joe and Janet from the Canadian sloop *Tegan* dropping by for a chat on the way to their boat; their visit soon extended into a couple of beers and a sampling of my mango cake, of which I was rather proud. Joe and Janet were to turn out to be excellent company during our Gambier stay, and told us lots about the other yachties in the harbour (there were six boats in total while we were there). It's never ceased to amaze me how the world of yachting is like an extended family, with people just striking up conversations with other yachts, and extending the warm hand of friendship to complete strangers for no other reason than them having a boat too. It's a very pleasant club, and makes a distant harbour feel like home in the space of a few days.

Joe and Janet also mentioned that one of the boats had a welding machine on it, and that the owner – known as ‘Peeyoo’ for no better reason than his initials were P.U. – was a very friendly guy who would probably help us out with fixing Doris if we asked him (Doris being our broken wind vane). Rob jumped at the chance, and the next day he went over to Peeyoo and enlisted his help to spend half a day welding steel; as a thank-you we invited him round for dinner, and yarned the night away. Peeyoo, a fascinating man from Sweden, was sailing round the world single-handed – no mean feat! – and proved highly entertaining company.

Initial Exploration of Mangareva

The next day, Friday 16th May, I explored the southeast corner of Île Mangareva, following the road to what I hoped would be a beach, but which turned out to be a dead-end in the hilly forests of the island. Undeterred, I decided to bush bash my way to the beach, but little was I expecting seriously spiky plants (not quite bush lawyer, but enough to lacerate my legs) and towering fern thickets, so after half-an-hour of struggling downhill towards the shore and getting Pyke-like déjà vu, I turned round, made my way back to the road, sat down and ate a couple of mangoes. The moral of the story: rainforest is a bugger to bash through, wherever the country.

To make up for the bleeding legs, though, I got a lift back with a passing jeep, full to the brim with young teenage kids, and heaps of oranges that they'd just spent the day picking. They filled my bag with oranges, gave me chilled orange juice to drink when we stopped at one of their houses, and deposited me safely back in town with huge smiles and waves all round. It's a different world out in Polynesia, it really is.

Water Catchers

You may wonder how yachts survive in terms of water: after all, you can envisage months' worth of food, but water? Surely it runs out?

Indeed, it does, and our tanks ran out along with the month of May, not surprising seeing as we hadn't filled them since leaving New Zealand in April. But where do you get water in a place like the Gambiers, where the local mains water isn't fit to drink – even for the islanders – and there isn't a tap on the quay anyway? The answer: use a rain catcher.

A rain catcher does just what it sounds like: it catches rain and puts it into your tank. Your average rain catcher is simply a tarpaulin with a hole in the middle, to which you attach a hose that feeds into your water tank. *Zeke* had a rain catcher – at least it did when we arrived in the Gambiers – and we decided to set it up on the morning of Monday 26th. The rain had been

streaming down all night with a persistency that made Margaret Thatcher look fly-by-night, but we'd been entertaining Joe and Janet to a night of cookies and videos, so I'd only put up the small rain catcher, more as a gesture than a practicality. The next day, though, we decided to go for the big one.

Whoops. *Zeke's* rain catcher, which Rob had never used before, was crap, being a huge piece of porous (*porous!*) material and a kinked hose, down two sides of which you put wooden slats to retain the shape. The theory was fine, but in the strong gusts we were having, the material ripped right across the middle where the stitching had rotted, and one of the slats snapped in half as a result. The ramifications of all these shenanigans were that we got soaked to the skin, and we remained waterless while the heavens poured down more liquid than even Moses had ever had to cope with.

Tegan, bless them, had seen our plight, and offered us their rain catcher, seeing as they'd had theirs up all night and had filled their entire tank up, as well as all the other containers they could get their hands on. We gladly accepted, and in the next weather lull we dinghied over, picked up the catcher, and installed it on *Zeke*; as a result the sun came out and the rain disappeared faster than a shoplifter who's seen a blue flashing light.

My only other experience with rain catchers was

during a later storm, when we again borrowed Joe and Janet's system. I have no idea how much water we collected, but when Bob Geldof wrote, 'There's nothing more useless than a car that won't start/But it's even more useless at the end of the world,' it proved he'd never had to use a bloody rain catcher. We finally filled our tanks by doing three dinghy journeys to the local school, run by the Frères du Sacré Coeur, filling up jerry cans from their rain water tank until the dinghy was close to sinking, and siphoning it into our tanks. It cost us sweat and effort, but still far less grief than getting the rain catcher to work.

Fixing Doris

The Frères were useful for more than water, too. Being the local school – or one of them, I should say, the other being a state school rather than a convent – they were well equipped in the workshop stakes. We visited them on Tuesday 27th May to ask them if they could complete the repairs to Doris by making us a new rudder for it, and we spent an interesting morning communicating in pidgin French what we wanted, and making sure that the pupils who did the work drilled holes in the right place and knew what shape we wanted the rudder to be.

The job was very polished, and the cost was peanuts: we paid them US\$25 for the piece of wood, and

US\$25 for something like four hours' labour, probably a quarter of what it would have cost in New Zealand. Some things, like labour, are very cheap in the middle of nowhere, and some things, like chocolate, alcohol and electrical parts, are extortionate. Depending on your lifestyle, it either balances out, or it's a very expensive life in paradise.

Mont Duff

That afternoon saw Rob and I climb to the highest point in the Gambiers – nay, in the whole Tuamotu Archipelago. Mont Duff towers above the area to a snow-brushing height of 411m, and the climb up is something everyone who visits the Gambiers should do. We, however, managed to get our bearings completely confused, and ended up climbing the wrong mountain, Mont Mokoto, the second highest peak in the Tuamotus.

Still, with the mountains being so, er, huge, we simply slid down one and up the other, so after beating through some beautiful bush we finally got to the top of Mont Duff, admired the quite stunning view, and discovered a marked path all the way down to the main road, something we'd missed on the way up. The grapefruit we found at the bottom never tasted so sweet...

Six People and a Boat

On our way back to the quay we got talking to a new couple on the block, Laurent and Sonia from Chile, who invited us over for tea and a natter. I remember a number of things about our visit: excellent conversation, despite a language barrier (only Laurent spoke English); two adults and four kids crammed into a boat not that much larger than *Zeke*; wonderful ham sandwiches, fulfilling one of my most harrowing ocean passage fantasies; harrowing stories of the family coming through the Straits of Magellan, at the southern tip of South America; the kids showing me their homework, and the courses they had to follow in their schooling by correspondence; and a delightful caramel spread that transformed toast into something special, created by simply boiling an unopened can of condensed milk in water for two hours.

It's amazing what you can learn from one quick visit to another person's boat.

Walking Round Mangareva

To alleviate the potential boredom and frustration associated with staying in the harbour and spending most of the time fixing things on the boat (our current project was painting all the rust spots on the deck) I decided to circumnavigate Île Mangareva by foot. The total distance looked fairly large on the map –

something like 20km – but that wasn't not enough to deter a tramper like me, so armed with lunch, some water and a compass, I set off on the morning of Friday 30th May for a good, long walk.

It went well. The walk round Mangareva is beautiful, to say the least, with bay after bay after bay stretching out into the pale blue sea, little pearl farms standing in the sea and houses every now and then along the way. As I was leaving the outskirts of Rikitea – if a village that small can be said to have outskirts – I managed to pick up a dog, who started to follow me and wouldn't budge off when I made a point of ignoring him and not being at all friendly. After a couple of miles I realised that the little blighter was going to hang around for the duration, so I started to make polite conversation, asking him if he knew any good spots for a swim.

The response was pretty poor: all he did was run off the road every now and then chasing chickens, much to my embarrassment, so I named him 'Colonel' after the finger-lickin' father of Kentucky Fried, Colonel Sanders. Unfortunately, Colonel had one bad trait when it came to human obedience: like an experienced lover he only came when it suited him, which meant I ended up feeling responsible for him every time the farm dogs started their frenzied 'he be a stranger round these parts' barking. Still, he deserved part of my sandwich just for

sticking with me all the way round.

The end arrived prematurely: I assumed I was no more than halfway round, but straight after lunch I arrived in Baie de Ngatavake, home to Napoleon and just over the hill from Rikitea, and true to form, as I wandered past Napoleon's house his family called over and asked, in French, if I would like any *pamplemousse*. Now I was pretty thirsty – thinking I had miles to go, I'd been rationing my water – so I took up the offer and wolfed down the grapefruit like there was no tomorrow. The conversation flowed like the juice dribbling down my beard, despite the low level of my French, and after about ten minutes I discovered that Napoleon's brother, Terii, spoke good English, and we continued the conversation to my advantage. Napoleon was working that day – and, it being pay day, would be getting plastered that night – but Terii, the older brother and more mature, told me all about his 12 years working for Marlon Brando on his private island near Tahiti, the reasons why he moved to Mangareva, his work on his own private pearl farm, his experiences of Tahiti, and plenty more. Needless to say, he filled up my backpack with fruit, and when he offered me a lift back to Rikitea, he chopped down the biggest bunch of bananas you've ever seen and handed it to me. Fruit might be ubiquitous in the Gambiers, but the kindness of the locals is still something to marvel at.

To cap it all, Terii gave me a lift over to *Zeke* in his canoe when we got to Rikitea. Mangarevan canoes are very fast (they use outboard motors to burn through the surf) and have outriggers to make them really stable. Arriving at *Zeke* via local transport with sacks of fruit felt pretty good, and we happily ate bananas solidly for the rest of our stay in Mangareva.

The Supply Boat

On Saturday 31st May a huge boat came into port, docked, dropped off lots of containers and fuel, and left again. I only say this to highlight the supply system here: you wait for the supply ship, buy everything you can while the shops are well stocked, and then hold out for another four weeks or so until the next one arrives.

The only other commercial traffic is by air, with three flights a month to Tahiti, mainly used by the locals to get to Tahiti for medical treatment or to discuss business there. The flight costs a lot of money – not surprising when you consider the remoteness of the islands – which might help to explain why the Gambiers aren't a major tourist spot.

Even when the supply ship has unloaded its goods, it can be challenging to buy anything. The shops shut for siesta in the Gambier Islands between 12 noon and 3pm. But bizarrely the shop that sells sandwiches also shuts between 12 and 3...

Welcome to Rikitea, the only place in the world where the lunch bars shut for lunch.

Ships' Party

Tuesday 3rd June was party night: Richard and Gail on the schooner *Jan van Gent* invited everybody who was anybody to a 'bring a dessert and a musical instrument' evening, a very well attended do that saw some amazing desserts (oh, and some of my ANZAC cookies from *Zeke*). I took my penny whistle, on which I could play 'Molly Malone', but that was about all I could manage until Laurent fished out his guitar. I scraped together a solo performance of The Senators' 'The Girl I Adore' and Billy Bragg's 'The Man in the Iron Mask' – it was good to play a guitar after so long without one – and we all saw the wee hours in with beer and good cheer.

It was a wonderful evening, especially as we arrived with a bowl of ANZAC cookies and left with a goody bag filled with chocolate cake, guava and peach pie, chocolate cookies, coconut balls, and a couple of leftover ANZACs... quite a trade!

Come and Go

Sometime during this time the gorgeous yacht *Illusion* arrived, complete with Jim and Ami, the American couple sailing it. Joe and Janet from *Tegan* had met Jim and Ami in South America, and their induction into the

Gambier knitting circle was swift and welcome.

Illusion was also interesting because it was on board that I got my first look at an American map of the world. As a European I'm used to seeing maps with the Americas on the left, Australia in the bottom-right, the zero degrees line sensibly arranged in the middle of the map, and the equator halfway down the page, equidistant between the top and bottom. Of course this is a fairly Euro-centric view of the world, and I've seen amusing maps in Australia and New Zealand where the world is upside down, with south at the top and north at the bottom, thus showing Australia at the top of the map. However, every map in the USA – yes, apparently *every* map, because Jim said he'd never seen a Euro-centric map until he left the States, and it had blown his mind – has the Americas in the middle of the page, with Europe and Africa on the right, and Japan, Australia and so on to the left.

That's not the weird bit though, because it's only fair and understandable that the Americans should have USA-centric maps; but on closer inspection, they've moved the equator down the page, so the northern hemisphere is bigger than the southern, making North America look huge and pushing Antarctica off the bottom of the map; and, even better, they've arbitrarily chopped Asia down the middle, with one half on the right and one on the left, but without any real overlap, so

some countries simply disappear, or become so crushed onto the periphery that they're easily missed. The position of the dividing line? Uncannily close to Vietnam. At least we have the decency to chop the world in half along a line between Russia and Alaska, which doesn't cut through any continents and only sacrifices a couple of mid-Pacific islands that wouldn't show up on a map of the world anyway. I suppose I should be grateful that the landmasses that aren't in North America weren't labelled *terra incognita*... but if you've ever wondered why Americans consider Vietnam to be at the ends of the earth, perhaps this might be the reason why.

Cooking on Board

Written: 18 May 1997

My culinary skill has improved immeasurably since Laurent left the boat and I became honorary cook. It's been an awakening, the discovery of a latent interest in something I've traditionally regarded as a pain in the proverbials: cooking in the bush was OK, because I had such a long time in which to do it, but my kitchen was little more than a camping stove, so the standard of my meals was pretty lousy (although very good in terms of nutrients, vitamins, carbohydrates, fibre and all that). I now have a whole galley to myself, a huge stock of

ingredients, and time to be creative. It'll be a different story when the boat's pitching and rolling to 45°, but while we're in an anchorage, it's wonderful.

And by 'cooking' I don't mean the reasonably standard spaghetti bolognese, stir fry, bangers and beans kind of meal, I mean real feasts with inventive use of spices, proper cooking with a modicum of help from recipe books. Witness the following successes from the kitchen of *Zeke*, all in the first few days of my self-appointment as chef...

On 14th May, we got given a rib cage from a goat that had been slaughtered that afternoon, so I cleaned it up, cut up the ribs and roasted them in a garlic and thyme concoction, producing spare ribs that would have made a restaurant proud. The main course of chicken in a creamy mushroom sauce with roast potatoes knocked every meal we'd had on the ocean into a hat. We finished off with a banana cake I'd thrown together, and which tasted delicious (though I say so myself).

The next day, encouraged by my success with the banana cake, I made a less successful, but perfectly delightful mango cake from the fruits of our day with Napoleon, and for a main course we had pancakes with a pork curry filling (the pork had to be curried, as it was about to walk out of the fridge and demand squatter's rights). It went down a treat.

The night of Peeyoo's visit, I concocted a meat loaf,

something I'd never even thought of making before. Damn, it's easy, and tastes bloody good with sautéed potatoes in garlic and basil. It makes me hungry just thinking about it.

I've even cooked a pizza (and know two different ways of making the dough), have become a complete expert at making the most flavoursome and filling white bread, and the fresh fruit has spawned a collection of fruity and milky drinks that are heaven after a heavy snorkelling session.

I can even cook ANZAC biscuits, a traditional Australian cookie. The English know them as flapjacks, but the Aussie story is that the ANZAC soldiers at Gallipoli only had access to golden syrup, oats, sugar and flour, and managed to invent the recipe for these delicious cookies. I decided to cook some to try to make a dent in the massive supply of rolled oats on board: we'd bought heaps in New Zealand because we'd thought that porridge would be the best breakfast idea on the boat, but I've thrown up so much of it that I'm simply not interested, and we've still got about ten huge bags of the stuff. One day I'll discover something that requires mountains of rolled oats, but until then it's acting as padding for all the cans so they don't rattle in the night. Damn fine cookies, though.

On the subject of food, I've bloated since arriving in paradise. To be fair, when I arrived after 28 days of

appetite and breakfast loss I was as thin as a rake, and my hips stuck out like Karen Carpenter's rib cage. I am glad to report, then, that after only a few weeks of fine and copious food, I am beginning to grow fat (at least, fat by my standards) and can, once again, pinch an inch. It's good to be back, especially as this gut was replenished without the aid of beer, which at over US\$2 a bottle is a definite luxury.

Marvellous.

The Sociability of Yachties

Written: 18 May 1997

The sociability of yachties came home to roost on Saturday 17th May, when Joe and Janet came up with an idea for a party on their boat, *Tegan*: a pot-luck party where everyone provided something. We provided the meat, because when we left New Zealand we had 42kg of vacuum-packed frozen meat in the oversized freezer on *Zeke*, which had lasted very well and meant we had meat for longer than most yachts (who can normally only store a couple of week's worth). Our kilogram of gravy beef was like manna from heaven for Joe, Janet and Peeyoo, the other party-goers (Peeyoo being the solo captain of the yacht *Rammen*).

The night was pure delight. Joe is a gourmet chef, no doubt about it, and his marinade transformed our

slightly turning beef into a succulent delight that barbecued up a treat; the jacket potatoes, fresh salad and copious rum from Panama made even my cooking look humble. Stuffed and sated, we settled back for a night on *Tegan*, sitting in sheltered Rikitea harbour as the stars twinkled and the waves gently lapped.

Balmy evenings on a yacht don't get much better than this: perfect temperature (shorts and T-shirts all day and all night, without too much humidity), no annoying insects (they get more serious further north), a gentle breeze, perfect peace (a total lack of tourists means a total lack of noisy all-night bars, nightclubs and so on), and wonderful company. Yachts are also immeasurably cosy, with dim lights casting homely shadows inside the al fresco cockpit, and comfortable settees inside with pub-like combinations of wood panelling and memorabilia. In fact, if it weren't for the fact that yachts pitch and roll, and take a serious amount of effort and expense to maintain, it would be a pretty close thing to a perfect living environment for one or two people. Maybe a canal boat is the compromise, but sitting out on the Trent and Mersey isn't quite the same as decking out under the Polynesian moon...

The party went on until 5.30am, by which time Rob had gone to bed, the rest of us had quaffed a fair amount of alcohol, and we'd had a good ol' sing-along to a collection of songs, most of which I either didn't know

or wouldn't admit to knowing. True to form, I lost all public-performance nerves after the rum, and we sang into the wee hours; but surely the best part of the whole evening was when Joe asked if any of us smoked cigars, and my face lit up like a beacon. That was when Joe showed us his cigar collection.

I should add at this point that *Tegan* had spent the last goodness only knows how many months making its way from Vancouver (Joe and Janet's home) down the west coast of the USA, and down to Panama and South America, where Joe had been able to pick up stunning Cuban and Panamanian cigars for next to nothing, the sort of delights that people, literally, pay US\$50 each for in the USA and London. Imagine my delight, then, to find that Joe was as pleased to have someone to smoke cigars with as I was to be someone with whom to smoke cigars, and we whiled away the moonlight talking about fine port, good whisky, excellent food and the art of enjoying life to the maximum, Cubans gently glowing in the gloom.

What wonderful people with whom to explore the Gambiers...

Rikitea Harbour

Written: 26 May 1997

Quick! Let me grab the moment and describe the

feeling, a succinct summary of the sub-tropical paradise of anchoring off Île Mangareva. The date – I have to check this electronically as I have absolutely no idea what day of the week it is, let alone date – is Monday 26th May, and it's dark, the time being 9.30pm.

Zeke is moored in the beautifully sheltered harbour at Rikitea, the water gently rippling against the sides and lapping the dinghy with slightly metallic slaps, a homely sound because it shows we haven't lost our means of getting to shore. The last three days have been pretty miserable (in terms of weather, not lifestyle), and this is the calm after the storm, surely brought on by the fact that we put up our water catcher this morning to try to fill our water tanks with fresh Pacific precipitation, and managed to get it all set up just as the rain cleared and the sun burst through.

As a result of the storms the air feels so clean, so light, so cooling. The humidity that can build up in the sub-tropics is totally absent, and the gentle breeze wafts the smoky scent of the inhabitants' fires over the bow, where I'm sitting. Rikitea is spread around me like an arc, a crescent row of electric bulbs running from the town generator, reflecting in the water like lantern light reflecting off the river at Mardi Gras, like restaurant table light glimmering off the Seine as cognac and cigars are served, like pub firelight shining over the canal boats tied up alongside... it's a painting, and the

air is still.

But not totally still. Surrounding *Zeke* are the other boats that have been sheltering in Rikitea for the last few days: *Tegan*, where Joe and Janet are sitting outside, listening to music on their wonderful waterproof hi-fi, a cigar glowing in the dark and the occasional lilt of Canadian accent floating over the water (ironically the song's 'Another Day' by Paul McCartney, a song all about the repetitiveness of working life); *Teba*, the huge French boat that we befriended in Whangarei and kept in contact with all the way over, where there is activity involving generators and flickering torchlight; the schooner³ *Jan van Gent*, whose crew are the very friendly Canadians Richard and Gail; these boats and others are all here, creating a community feel in an otherwise empty arc of water.

When yachts get together, they synchronise. This isn't a social phenomenon, though: it's physical. When a

³ A quick course in yacht types might be handy. The most common is the sloop, of which *Zeke* is an example: a sloop has one main mast, with one sail on a boom behind it and one sail in front (the mainsail and jib, as explained elsewhere). If there's one mast and two sails in front of the mast, it's a cutter, like *Teba*. A schooner like *Jan van Gent* has two masts, with the front mast being smaller than the back. A ketch has two masts, but the other way round to a schooner – the front mast is taller than the back – and a yawl is a ketch whose rear boom hangs over the back of the boat (normally the boom is totally inside the lines of the boat). So now you've got enough info to hop on down to Great Yarmouth and sound knowledgeable... and interestingly, at one time there was at least one of each of these types present at Rikitea, something of a rare occurrence in such a remote spot as the Gambiers.

number of yachts are anchored in the same spot, they do the maritime equivalent of synchronised swimming; when the wind blows, yachts turn bow into the wind because of the way they're shaped, and to the casual observer it looks as if the yachts are obeying some cosmic law of conformity, all swinging in the same way like a ballroom dancing troupe. It's yet another way the community feeling gets strengthened in the harbour, albeit subliminally.

This is the feeling, then, of the real sub-tropics. Here there are no work pressures, no western stresses, no traffic jams, no worries about where to get food, no pollution (beyond the French nuclear legacy and the dodgy fish) and no similarity to city life that I can see. Now I've been here for a little while, it's become second nature to relax, procrastinate and live for the moment, with a healthy regard for doing those little jobs on the boat that still need to be done. It's a pleasant feeling, one made more enjoyable by the fact that after the first few days, when the sheer joy of reaching land had worn off, life became surprisingly mundane, the result of a come down from total ecstasy.

It's a weird concept, being morose in paradise, but it's understandable. Both Rob and I found that having got through the voyage from hell, and having Laurent jump ship, life suddenly took a turn, a change from constant stress, both physical and mental, to an

existence where all-night sleeping sessions were a reality, there were no watches to keep, the boat didn't roll and the food was fresh. The thrill of this was great for a few days – I would say incredible, in all fairness – but it hits everyone sooner or later: paradise complacency. It only lasts for a couple of days, but the feeling of being strangely unimpressed and, I dare say, a little depressed in the midst of heaven is interesting, to say the least. It's understandable as the psychological calm after the storm, but it's still an interesting phenomenon. Needless to say, we got over it pretty quickly.

That's just one more reason why the gentle serenity of this nocturnal harbour scene is so beautiful. We've not only arrived, we've begun to adjust, and now the cruising really starts. Roll on the Pacific Islands...

Tonight truly is the calm after the storm.

Gambier Islands (Southeast)

Written: 23 May 1997

Given the way we were all getting on together it was logical that we should go off exploring the Gambiers together with Joe and Janet on *Tegan* (unfortunately Peeyoo was about to leave for Tahiti on his yacht *Rammen*, so he was too busy to come with us). Leaving one spare day to get over our hangovers, the four of us

set off south towards a little sheltered spot off Île Akamaru, a reef-surrounded 246m-high peak just a short trip 7km southeast from Rikitea.

The Gambier lagoon is surrounded by a huge barrier reef (technically a large atoll) in the shape of a vertical diamond with points at north, south, east and west; this surrounds both the four main islands and the smaller islets dotted around. Île Mangareva, the northernmost island, is the largest and highest, and is home to almost all the people who live in the Gambiers (they mostly live in the town of Rikitea). The other islands are mostly uninhabited, and the only settlements you can see consist of one or two houses for workers on the pearl farms that form the basis for the islands' wealth. The anchorage we found near Île Akamaru proved to be pretty idyllic, with no houses in sight (except for a work hut on the beach that nobody lived in anyway) and coral reef everywhere. Akamaru is only inhabited occasionally, and is (in)famous for being the island where Laval and Caret celebrated their first mass in the Gambiers after they'd arrived in 1834.

Come to think of it, it's pretty damn hard for me to sit here on the deck of *Zeke* and describe how beautiful this paradise is, because however I rearrange phrases like 'stunning coral reef', 'striking volcanic peaks', 'palm-fringed beaches', 'deep turquoise water', 'sparkling sunshine', 'cloudless skies', 'gently lapping

water’, ‘cool sea breezes’, ‘sweet and succulent fruit’, ‘hot white sand’, ‘unspoilt and uninhabited’ and ‘refreshing swimming’, you’ll still not understand how amazing this paradise really is. The first step is to understand that paradise has nothing to do with what you see in the tourist brochures – cocktail bars, crowded beaches and only two weeks in which to cram a sun tan, three James Clavell novels and at least one cultural experience – so it’s not all bumming around on the beach. This is the real thing, and we’re not tourists, we’re living here.

This became really apparent when we went for the beach barbecue experience, an off-the-cuff decision that simply isn’t possible in places like Tahiti. In thanks for hosting the wonderful party the Saturday before, Rob and I invited Joe and Janet to join us for a genuine Aussie beach barbie, complete with real-fire barbecue and genuine good food. It turned into another amazing night.

Barbecue in Paradise

I spent most of the morning slaving over a hot oven, creating some wonderful fresh bread, a great creamy banana pudding and some pasta salad with homemade pesto. I did, however, manage to grab the dinghy and go exploring on my own for a couple of hours, one of the true pleasures of having your own transport and life-

support system in an island setting. I discovered a beautiful and tiny beach with a little reef just off it, and spent the afternoon snorkelling and reading a Graham Greene novel in the shade of a tropical tree. It set the scene perfectly for the barbecue itself.

For the barbie we had good old snags (sausages for those not used to Aussie English), sweet potatoes that wrapped in foil, chucked in the fire and ate with butter (and which tasted great, despite the purple colour of the insides, a shock to those of us who weren't prepared for it), and possibly the strangest experiment of all, a breadfruit. This staple of the Pacific grows on trees all over the place, and is about the size of a football with a tough and knobbly green skin that looks totally unappetising. Shove a breadfruit in a roaring fire for a couple of hours, turning it regularly, and you end up with something about the size of a football with a tough and knobbly *black* skin that looks totally unappetising. However, smash it open when it's ready, and you end up with a strange white doughy substance that's vaguely bread-like and not at all bad with salt and butter. I prefer the other two ways to cook it – slice it up very thinly and fry it like potato chips, or chop it up into chunks and roast it – but there's something fun about the whole breadfruit- in-the-fire experience, an essential part of Polynesian culture.

The cigars and rum made a welcome appearance

too, with the rum adding a great kick to a milk and fruit juice concoction I'd whipped up, and as the almost full moon lit up the coral off the beach and the fire crackled away, casting shadows on the coconut palms above our heads and along the beautiful beach we'd decided to call home for the evening, I felt about as far away from the crazy world of commuting and stress as I'd ever be. I'd gained another fantastic memory, and I'd gain a fair few more while cruising on *Zeke*: life can be very pleasant sometimes.

Under the Sea

On Wednesday 21st May we decided to stay in the anchorage for another day, and Joe made a fantastic Caesar salad for lunch, a thank-you for the night before. Real ground coffee made an appearance – wow! What a taste experience after our instant coffee with powdered milk – and after relaxing for some hours, Joe and I took the dinghy over to the main reef and snorkelled for some time, exploring the reef and the local wildlife. As my first proper snorkelling session on coral it was quite an experience: the surreal shapes of the coral and the sheer intensity of the colours of fish you see are overwhelming.

The next day Rob and I decided to do some more serious diving, so we set off further south to the southernmost corner of the barrier reef, beyond all the

islands. Here the coral looked promising for a Hookah dive, so we steamed out there and dropped anchor just before the seabed took a dive into the deep ol' Pacific.

A Hookah dive isn't scuba: with scuba you have everything in a self-contained unit, with an air tank strapped to your back and complete independence. A Hookah dive uses a compressor on the boat that feeds air down a long hose to a mouthpiece at the other end (hence the name, from the tobacco pipes that people always claim they never use for marijuana, officer): the techniques for breathing are similar to scuba, but you don't have a buoyancy jacket, and the air never runs out. The disadvantage, of course, is that you have to stay within 60m or so of the boat, but there is one big plus: there's nowhere in the Gambiers to refill scuba tanks, so once we'd emptied them, that would be the end of the diving until we found someone with a scuba compressor (unlikely until Tahiti). If your Hookah runs out of air, then it's a safe assumption that the rest of the planet has too.

The dive proved to be interesting, but probably not worth the few hours of travelling back into the wind we had to go through afterwards. Coupled with the fact that I managed to get my hose in an almighty tangle, it wasn't the best introduction to Hooker diving, but I couldn't complain: diving on coral was still a novelty for me, and even a mediocre reef is amazing at that

stage. The fish were pretty amazing, and the colours had to be seen to be believed; it truly is a different world on the bottom of the ocean.

Our return trip wasn't back to Île Akamaru, but to Île Agakaitai over on the western side of the group. The reason was mainly because Rob had a mission: to find the caves of the cannibal kings. The story goes that before Laval came and screwed up all the fun, the locals buried their dead kings in caves on Agakaitai. We'd heard that the introduction of goats had rather screwed things up, seeing as the caves on the island are no more than indents in the mountains, and goats are no great respecters of the dead, tending to turf anything out of a cave they fancy for a home. However, Rob wanted to explore the island anyway, just in case anything was left, so we decided to spend the day climbing and exploring Île Agakaitai.

Predictably we didn't find any cannibal kings, but we did get some wonderful views, and some interesting bush-bashing opportunities. The weather wasn't that flash, and as we headed back to the boat the rain came in and made the rest of the night somewhat bumpy and blowy; returning to Rikitea the next morning was a welcome move, as Rikitea is about as sheltered as anchorages get.

Back in Rikitea we found Joe and Janet and settled back into harbour life. Ah... harbour life. It's home

from home.

Gambier Islands (East)

Written: 15 June 1997

We made our last sortie from Rikitea on Thursday 5th June, accompanied by *Tegan* as per usual (though no other yachts joined us, as they seemed to be far less interested in exploring the lagoon and more interested in simply lazing around off Rikitea, probably the effect of visiting too many island paradises). Our mission: to head a couple of miles east towards the airport motu, Totegegie.

A motu has to be one of the most classic tropical formations – or, at least, an important part of one of the most classic tropical formations, the atoll – and Totegegie is a classic example. The sandy motu at Totegegie stretches for about five miles (with a couple of small breaks where you can dinghy through to the ocean), is about 100m wide at its widest point, and is smothered with coconut palms, firs and pandanus trees. It's also the site of the Gambier Islands' airport, a one-and-a-half mile sealed strip, presumably left over from the days of the military tests in the area, and which now hosts three planes a month. One thing's for sure: living under the flight path in the Gambiers doesn't bring the property prices down by much.

The motu stretches north-south along the eastern side of the Gambier atoll, and we anchored just inside the atoll, opposite sandy beaches and swaying trees, the Pacific Ocean peeping through gaps in the reef. The sound of the sea crashing against the outside of the reef was particularly soothing as we relaxed in the smooth waters of the lagoon: when there's a bloody great living coral reef between you and the swell, it takes one mother of a storm to spoil the tranquillity.

Rob and I explored the airport and terminal shacks – surprisingly modern considering the total lack of tourists who fly to the Gambiers – and plunged into the bush to the south of the airstrip to tackle the rough-looking road that would, we hoped, lead us to a collection of abandoned buildings we'd spotted from the boat. Sure enough, after wandering down the road for some time – avoiding the countless hermit crabs who were sunbathing right in our path and who would roll themselves into balls at our approach – we reached a group of old warehouses, relics from an earlier age when machinery was fixed on the motu, presumably for the military. The buildings were totally abandoned and crumbling, a hopeful sign that the French had finally pulled the stopper on the military activity and tests that have plagued the area for far too long.

The day was rounded off with Joe's homemade pizza, probably the best pizza I had ever tasted

anywhere (not surprisingly, given my lucid drams of pizza on the way to the Gambiers. Goodness knows how he did it – practice, he assured me – but his pizza dough was as good as any restaurant’s that I’d come across, and his jalapeno peppers really added zest to the experience. I might have been proud of my cooking on board, but some people are just born to the kitchen (or, rather, the galley).

Barbecues, Cigars and Scuba Diving

The next day was spent in preparation for another beach barbecue, this time on the motu. As per usual (per usual!) it went swimmingly, with my first attempt at a marinade going down a treat. The cigars made an appearance – José Llopis Churchills, maduros and naturals, just for the record – and we all spent a sizable portion of the evening scouring the outside of the reef, exposed at low tide, for crabs and lobsters, but failing to catch a glimpse of even one. Never mind, walking round an exposed reef by torchlight after a large barbecue is kind of different, anyway.

The conversation turned to cigars, naturally, but this time with more gusto than at the last barbie. The reason? A couple of days before I had borrowed a copy of an American magazine off Joe called *Cigar Aficionado*, a wonderful and decadent quarterly publication that pays unbridled homage to the cigar. It contains interviews

with famous people who smoke cigars, it discusses the latest Cuban harvest, it does taste tests on cigar types, it discusses anything to do with being a rich jetsetter... it was completely fascinating and surprisingly a rather good read, even if it shamelessly promoted an image of the incredibly rich that left a bad taste in the mouth. Still, I learnt a hell of a lot about cigars in one brief reading, and it helped to break up the afternoon of cooking, washing up and singing along to a Neil Diamond tape I discovered in the back of one of *Zeke's* draws (which just goes to show how tolerant one becomes after months in a yacht).

The next couple of days we lazed and snorkelled, fixing the odd thing on the boat, and on Monday 9th Rob and I decided to do a scuba dive, a momentous decision, for this was to be my first dive on coral with my new scuba equipment. It's all very well snorkelling and Hookah diving, but scuba is the only real way to explore, and explore we did. We ended up diving separately, one after the other – which you should never do, if you follow the rule book to the letter – because Rob wanted to go spearing fish, and with sharks in the water, it's a good idea to have someone in the dinghy ready to pick up any fish you might catch before the predators get in there. He didn't get any fish, but it meant that I got an hour of solo diving round the reef, exploring and just sitting there watching the sea life,

quite overwhelmed by the experience.

Diving round coral is hard to explain. The geography of the ocean floor – ‘bommies’ of coral pushing up from the sand, sheets of flat coral that you can poke your head under, valleys through coral that are great to swim down and thrilling to catch the ocean swell in, caves full of hiding fish – makes the exploring far more interesting than with a flat-bottomed sandy sea. On top of that there’s the life surrounding the coral: huge, brightly coloured fish in shoals that all turn to flee at the same time, like herds of swimming sheep; eels three metres long that hug the floor, slipping in and out of coral corridors; large, ugly grouper that look miserable but taste good; sharks that you basically try to avoid; coral trout hugging the bommies...

And on top of the fish and coral are the shellfish, from which I collected two spider conch and two trochus (the former proving to be delicious when smashed open, gutted and fried in a little flour and oil, a process that Richard from *Jan van Gent* showed us on our return to Rikitea). The whole dive, lasting an hour, was again an affirmation that despite the initial cost of scuba training and equipment, it’s worth every penny.

We returned to Rikitea through rain and high winds on Tuesday 10th, and spent the night watching videos on *Illusion* with Jim and Ami, and the *Tegan* crew. We spent the last few days before our departure from the

Gambiers living the harbour life, finalising preparations for the journey ahead, and cooking as many meals in advance as we could ready for freezing, to make things easier for me in my new role as ship's cook. Not that I was complaining: if you're in charge of the food, you never go hungry, though that wasn't much use as the seasickness returned for the trip to Amanu...

Heading for Tahiti

Man vs Cyclone Kelly

Written: 18 June 1997

We finally left the Gambier Islands on Sunday 15th June, at least as finally as is possible when your passage and plans depend on the weather. We had initially planned to leave on the Friday, but having checked out with the *gendarmes*, the other yachties pointed out that Friday was the 13th, and if there's one thing that sailors are, it's superstitious. Besides, we still had a few jobs to get done before leaving, so we spent Friday working on the boat and trying to get hold of the weather forecast for the area.

The next day we did a final check of everything – engine, rigging, below deck and so on – and discovered a large crack in one of the plates to which the lower starboard shrouds were attached (the shrouds being the thick steel cables that connect the mast to the boat, keeping it straight). We could have sailed with the crack, but there's no point in risking something that might give way in a storm, potentially taking the mast with it, so we delayed departure until Sunday while the Frères did a quick welding job for us. After a delightful steak and baked potato meal courtesy of *Tegan* on

Saturday night (a thank you to us for spending most of the afternoon trying to fix a leaky exhaust manifold on their engine), Sunday finally came, and we raised anchor and left Rikitea.

However, we didn't leave the Gambiers straight away, but anchored off the southern coast of Mangareva. The reason: Cyclone Kelly had been ripping Fiji to bits over the previous few days, a real shock in the non-cyclone season, and it was slowly heading towards the southeast. Although this wasn't straight for us, if it passed south of us the clockwise cyclonic winds would give us winds from the north or northeast, and seeing as we were planning to head north-northeast, that would have meant an unpleasant bash into the wind; so we weighed anchor to try to get better reception for the weather forecast broadcast from New Zealand, to see what the future held.

In the meantime, *Jan van Gent* and *Illusion*, who had both struck out northwest for Tahiti on Saturday while we were fixing the rigging, limped back into Rikitea, having studied the weather map and decided that it wasn't worth risking a confrontation with a cyclone, even if it had been reclassified as a tropical depression, a sign that the cyclone was slowly blowing itself out. Despite this worrying sign, the winds were still supposed to be coming from the north, so we figured we'd be safe enough on the south side of Mangareva

and stayed where we were, deciding to explore the beaches right next to us.

Beaches vary in much the same way gorges in Australia do: you might assume they're all the same, but each beach has its own character, just like cities, deserts, forests and mountains, and the southern Mangarevan beaches were particularly beautiful. Unfortunately the weather was overcast, but even so we explored the area for a while, discovering old walls from a previous settlement, an old shack inhabited by chickens, and some wonderful palm-tree vistas. Returning through the colourful coral, we reckoned that our decision to stay the night just off the south coast was a good one.

Whoops: bad call. During supper the weather began to pick up, with some serious gusts of wind bursting round the corner from the east, and a swell slowly began to build up, sloshing the boat around enough to make us feel a bit uneasy (even though we had the whole anchor chain laid out, and there was no way we were going anywhere). We turned in early, with Rob getting up at 12.30am to get the weather from New Zealand. That's when he noticed the dinghy.

A cry of 'Quick! Get up Mark, the dinghy's flipped!' woke me up at a quarter to one. The wind was crazy, but mercifully it wasn't raining, so rushing onto deck I had to rely on the waves being blown over the sides to soak me to the skin. The dinghy, which we

normally towed behind the boat (except on ocean passages, when it got lashed to the deck) had been blown over by the wind, flipping the oars out into the ocean and immersing the outboard in salt water. This was not a good thing.

It took total immersion from Rob and spiritual guidance and helpful torch lighting from me for us to get the outboard off the flipped dinghy and up onto the deck. We then managed to right the dinghy and hang it off the back of *Zeke*, only to have it flipped back over by the first wave that hit it, so we shrugged it off and left the bugger to float upside down for the night. Saving the outboard was a higher priority.

When an outboard gets immersed in salt water, it gets water into the cylinder heads, and if you don't flush it out, that's one buggered motor (especially with salt water, a substance that makes concentrated acid look positively innocent). We spent until 3am disassembling, oiling, squirting and drying the outboard before finally turning in, and then we had to take it in turns to check our position every half hour through the night, to make sure we hadn't dragged the anchor towards the surrounding coral reef.

Monday morning saw us battle to drag the upturned dinghy onto the deck in extreme winds – gusts of up to 50 miles per hour – and to pull up the anchor, with me at the helm and Rob at the anchor winch. The relief as we

powered into the comparative shelter of Rikitea was huge, not dulled at all by the fact that we were supposed to have left for good. There was *Illusion*; there was *Jan van Gent*; next to them *Tegan*; it felt like a homecoming, and we counted ourselves lucky only to have lost a couple of oars. Boats have been lost on the reef in better conditions than that, and it drove home the message that sailing is sometimes a dangerous occupation, and people can get into trouble. That evening it was as if all the boats were nursing their wounds... dented pride for *Jan van Gent* and *Illusion*, who had had to turn back; engine headaches for *Tegan*, who had spent days fixing the bloody thing, only to have it still leaking and in need of an overhaul; and *Zeke*, happy to have fixed the outboard, but smarting from the loss of two oars (and wondering how to cope with only one spare oar on board). Such is the power of the weather.

Quite what a cyclone was doing cropping up in the middle of June, normally a totally cyclone-free month, was anybody's guess. It wasn't terribly sporting, having Kelly spoil our weather pattern, but I suppose I should have been glad that we weren't inside the cyclone itself; that *would* have been dangerous.

We *finally* left the Gambiers on Wednesday 18th June, this time for good. We left Rikitea with the sadness reserved for leaving home... over a month in the one area is long enough to build up a pleasant social

scene, and I looked back at the slowly disappearing Gambiers with great fondness.

Amanu

Written: 26 June 1997

The ocean passage from the Gambier Islands to the atoll of Amanu – some four days’ travel north-northwest to where the large atoll Hao dominates the map – was as uncomfortable as I thought it would be. I only lost one meal to the fish, and we didn’t get hit by any storms, but having already done one hugely unpleasant ocean passage (and a particularly long one too, judging by the reaction of the other yachties in Rikitea) I wasn’t exactly keen on doing any more.

At least this time the yacht didn’t pitch and roll as badly, and there were only two of us on board, which prevented overcrowding, but even though it was only a four-day trip to Amanu, I was desperate to hit land again. Memories of the trip from New Zealand flooded back – getting up at 3am while waves crashed over the side of the boat, the three of us desperately trying to reef the main sail while the wind whipped us to the bone for an hour; or having to put up with the sheer, exasperating boredom of 28 days on the sea – but while these feelings didn’t apply to four days ambling through the smooth, pleasant-weather sailing of the trade winds, I still had to

grit my teeth and persuade myself that *Zeke* was simply a means to an end, that end being the islands of incomparable beauty that we were exploring.

Eventually we got there on Sunday, 22nd June, after chalking up another 450 nautical miles. Let's not dwell on the trip and instead move swiftly on to the important part: the destination of Amanu.

Navigating the Pass

«*Non, la bas c'est la passe deuxième,*» said Marerenui, shaking his long-hair and looking for all the world like a Polynesian Shaggy temporarily without his Scooby Doo. «*Vous voulez la première: c'est deux kilometres au sud.*»

Squinting through the rain, I didn't quite know what to make of Amanu. Our progress through the Dangerous Archipelago (the old name for the Tuamotus) had proved that without a GPS – the electronic gizmo that gives your latitude and longitude from satellite fixes – life in the Tuamotus would not only be dangerous, it would be downright suicidal. The Tuamotu atolls are invisible until you're about five miles away, since they have no mountainous islands in the Tuamotus as they do in the Gambiers, and before you know it you can be run aground on a coral reef and sinking in the South Pacific with no means of escape. In the days before GPS, navigation by sextant would be petrifying in such an

area, especially if the weather was cloudy, as it had been for most of our passage. Even with GPS, it's no picnic.

Amanu is a classic atoll, an oval-shaped ring of coral scattered with coconut palms and breaking surf, and only three passes into the lagoon. The problem, however, lies in getting through the passes, because the whole atoll is hugely tidal: the sea rushes into the narrow gaps in the reef, creating huge, swirling currents that suck in unsuspecting boats, and six hours later the tide turns and Amanu disgorges itself of all the flotsam it's drawn in, like some huge sea monster's lung. We arrived at what we thought was the main pass, and all we could see was a torrent of foamy water, rushing out of the lagoon over sharp rocks, jutting reef and treacherous-looking sand bars. Coupled with the squalls that had decided to turn up to combine the delights of atrocious visibility with a cold shower, we were rapidly getting cold feet as to getting into the lagoon.

Our sketchy information and lack of good charts didn't help. Until the last couple of years the whole of the south Tuamotu archipelago was *interdit*, home to the French government's nuclear testing and secret military training: nobody, absolutely nobody got in, bar the locals and the *legionnaires*. Now the exclusion zone is limited to an area around Mururoa and Fangatuafa atolls, home to the last nuclear tests in 1995, and you can go anywhere else without hindrance... that is, if you

can get the information. All the guidebooks list the Tuamotus as a no-go area, there is no information on passes, no up-to-date charts of the area, and all the yachties we'd met had the same problem: *ils ne savent pas de tout*. The typical reaction of the unadventurous sailor is to go straight to Tahiti, leaving the Tuamotus to the east, but the captain and I had decided to explore the Forbidden Zone and had spent some time doing the detective work on places we could visit in the southern Dangerous Archipelago.

Our options were limited by only considering atolls with passes into the lagoons: anchoring off the outside of an atoll is normally impossible because the ocean floor drops off too steeply on the ocean side, and even if you can anchor, it's fatal if the wind turns and blows you onto the reef. The atolls in the southern Tuamotus that have passes are small in number: the Gambiers, where we'd already been; Mururoa, where we couldn't sail without going via the inside of a French prison cell; Hao, home to the main military base in the Tuamotus, and not too desirable for just that reason, with its jets and *legionnaires*; and Amanu, an intriguing spot if only because there was so little information on it anywhere. The other atolls were either impossible to get into or were privately owned by pearl farmers, and were therefore out of bounds.

Our research had thrown up just two facts about

Amanu: there were two passes into the lagoon (though we found out later there are actually three), and they were both ferociously tidal, far too swift at high or low tide for a yacht to motor through. In the books we also found a formula linking the time of moonrise and moonset to the best time to enter the passes, so we tried to measure the times of the moon's passage as we sailed from Mangareva without any success: it was far too cloudy. The electronic almanac I'd picked up off the Internet for my trusty palmtop turned out to be as trustworthy as a cockney trying to sell genuine Yves Saint Laurent perfume for five quid on Oxford Street, so we arrived with very little to go on. Looking at the boiling inferno that we were supposed to tackle we felt our resolve buckle, despite our four-day journey to get there. Dejected, we decided to scoot south down the coast of the atoll to see if we had possibly missed another entrance.

Marerenui to the Rescue

That's when the speedboat came planing over the surf, pounding along with three brown-skinned natives bouncing up and down in a synchronised dance that's instantly familiar to anyone who has witnessed insane driving on tropical islands. We flagged them down, and in broken French I asked them about the pass.

Marerenui, Angelo and Laurent were to turn into our

saviours.

‘That’s the second of the three passes you’ve been looking at,’ said Marerenui, in one phrase making the facts and figures we’d creamed about Amanu look as reliable as a chocolate fireguard. ‘You don’t want to go through that one unless you’ve been drinking too much champagne: the best pass is down there, by the village.’ And hopping onto *Zeke* with Angelo, leaving Laurent to motor off back home at breakneck speed, Marerenui pointed us south to the real pass. To be honest, it didn’t look that much more encouraging.

‘Give it an hour and a half,’ he said, ‘and then we can motor into the lagoon.’ The hour and a half was spent chatting in pidgin French, drinking coffee, listening to Bob Marley, and wondering quite what was going to happen to the apparent Niagara by two o’clock in the afternoon. But sure enough, after one and a half hours, the pass was as placid as a baby on methadone, and we set off, me at the wheel, responding to *gauche*, *droit* and *tout droit* with more confidence than the usual port and starboard, which I’d never really managed to get the hang of.

It might have looked passive, but our new-found friends’ conversation was nagging at the back of my mind. There had been two yachts run aground on the reef in recent years, resulting in one angry Frenchman who lost his boat after getting drunk and screwing up his

entry, and one even angrier German who had lost his life because he was playing his guitar in the cockpit and didn't realise the reef had sucked him in. The locals had to pull the latter's body from the wreckage and make sure it went through the right channels, something the owner of the body had quite obviously failed to do in the last moments of his life. Considering that Amanu gets about five or six yachts visiting it every year, that's quite a high fatality rate.

We managed to get through, though, relieved and somewhat thrilled by our quick introduction into the lives of the locals. We anchored, after politely declining the offer of tying up to a rusty steel buoy in the harbour which would have scratched the hell out of the boat had the wind blown us onto it, and thanked our saviours for their kindness. However, having spent the last four days in watch shifts of three hours – three on, three off for 24 hours a day, somewhat ruining the sleep pattern – we left the boys to go off and play their Sunday afternoon game of volleyball on the village green, and instead accepted a dinner invitation from Marerenui for that evening, by which time we'd be rested and clean.

Amanuan Hospitality

We showered and hit the sack for a couple of hours' rest, but I was rudely awoken after an hour by the arrival of another boat, this time heralding the other type of

native: the Gimme-Something. Most of the natives we'd met so far had been incredibly kind, handing out fruit and advice freely and not expecting anything in return. The Gimme-Something, however, equates 'yacht' with 'rich American' and pays a visit to see what he can get. The two Gimmes who turned up, with a young son in tow, enjoyed the tour of the boat I gave them in pidgin French, declined the offer of *une tasse du cafe*, and after some idle banter revealed their mission.

«*Avez-vous du bier?*» inquired the scrawny one with the moustache. «*Du vin? Du whisky?*»

«*Non,*» I replied, almost truthfully, and had to go through the same routine three times before they finally lost interest and went back to the village. I explained that we'd failed to stock up in New Zealand – a mistake, because rum is as valuable as gold in these islands – and that alcohol had been too expensive for us to buy in Rikitea. The reply was that you couldn't buy alcohol in Amanu for any price, and that you had to go to Hao to get it: all the natives had was tobacco and marijuana, which to me didn't sound like too bad a deal, but they wanted beer. Or wine. Or whisky. All I wanted was some sleep, and eventually they left me to grab some while I could.

The evening with Marerenui was quite, quite different: the family were extremely polite, extremely generous, and extremely patient with my stilted

communications and the captain's grammar-free string-of-vocabulary attempt at French⁴. We arrived, kicked off our shoes (as one should do when entering houses throughout Polynesia), and sat down at the kitchen table for a feast. It struck me as odd that there were only two places laid, and as we served ourselves portions of *ris*, *poulet*, raw *bonito* and some superb *poisson à soy*, drinking *jus de coconut*⁵ straight from the shell, we

⁴ My French was pretty poor and I understood only a little, though luckily Hinano, Marerenui's wife, spoke much clearer and simplistic French than the men, probably because she was used to talking to her kiddies. Still, the French that I did have was enough for basic communication, and with a few simple inventions I turned the language into my own communications tool.

The first rule was the 50:50 sex rule: learning the sex of nouns in French is probably the hardest vocabulary challenge to a speaker of a generally sexless language like English, so I made up the sex of each noun as I went along, using *le* for about half, and *la* for the rest. The second rule was to keep talking, and if I couldn't remember the word for something, I simply signed it, or just grunted in a Gallic shrug and tried to transmit what I meant psychically. Third, I kept trying to sound enthusiastic about simply being able to communicate, with choice phrases like: «*Le Bob Marley: il est la langue universale, eh!*» as reggae beats throbbed out into the jungle. This approach seemed to work most of the time.

On the other hand, the language barrier was sometimes just that. When I asked the boys what they did with their time, they replied «*Pechant, copra et la femme*», rhythmically pulling on imaginary female hips in much the same way as drunk package holidaymakers do in discos in Ibiza and Majorca in time to the latest Euro-pop one-hit-wonders. I initially assumed that this meant they had their way with loads of women but, of course, *femme* is not only the word for woman, it also means wife, and all the boys were saying was that they fished, made copra and spent a lot of quality time with their wives. I can think of worse ways to while away the days.

⁵ The coconut, staple product of Polynesia, deserves a footnote of its own. The coconut palm, the ubiquitous symbol of tropical paradise, grows just about everywhere: the coconuts themselves, if allowed to

realised that we were the only ones eating: the family looked on, making conversation and obviously pleased to see such healthy appetites. There were some slightly worrying moments as I realised I knew nothing about Polynesian manners: does one eat with one's hands, or does one eat everything with the one fork provided? And the coffee, served in a soup bowl: does one slurp it from the bowl like a parched desert nomad, or use the teaspoon to drink it like soup? And should one bring gifts to the house, as we had? And, as I recalled reading, should one make sure not to admire anything too much, because Polynesian custom dictates you must give that something to the visitor? Whatever, we scoffed, we

mature on the tree and fall off, will germinate, sending out roots from two of its three 'eyes', and a leafy stalk from the third. The nuts also float, and coconuts can be seen drifting through the ocean currents, eventually landing on other islands and populating them with coconut palms. The trees themselves are used for building material, making mats and other *objets d'art*, and for making clothes.

However the nut, which comes inside a fibrous husk (itself used for making rope) is the real source of wealth. After one year growing from a flower into a full coconut, the husk is greeny-brown and the nut drinkable: chop off the husk, smash off the top, and drink down that wonderfully sweet coconut juice, something that had tasted good in Mangareva, but which proved luxurious and as sweet as nectar in Amanu. As the coconut ripens further, the milk gets weaker and the flesh gets thicker, becoming the familiar white pulp that we know and love in the West. Eating flesh from a fresh coconut knocks the sterile western version into a cocked hat, and sliced and sautéed in teriaki sauce it makes a wonderful nibble for between meals.

So that's the coconut: it provides food, drink, shelter, body covering, ornamentation, copra and, possibly the most important contribution, it gives you somewhere to hang your hammock as you sip a rum and coconut juice. Ah, the tropics...

scoffed a second helping, and rounded it off with *un peu de glace* and *un cigarette*, stretching my knowledge of French superlatives to the utmost limit: how many times can you say *le repas est tres bon, magnifique, superbe* and so on?

We learned plenty from our hosts. Marerenui was a fisherman some of the time, and a copra farmer for the rest. Copra is dried coconut pulp, laid out in the island sun, and is exported from most of the islands in Polynesia; it is used to produce coconut oil, which is in turn used to make such varied items as soap, margarine and nitro-glycerine. It's a lucrative trade, and has provided the 200 Amanuans with a standard of living that isn't quite up to Mangarevan standards (where everyone has expensive four-wheel-drives due to the thriving pearl farming there), but which is pretty luxurious by normal desert island standards. Marerenui's house, perched by the breaking surf at the entrance to the pass, from which a soothing sound of pounding currents lilted all night, was about as well positioned as a house can be. If Amanu had been a tourist resort, Marerenui would have been a property tycoon.

We idled away the night, chatting in fifth-form *Français* about life on the island, the trials and tribulations of living on a yacht, and all of the other crap you talk when you don't know enough vocabulary to get

deep in discussion. We discovered how the locals swam in the pass when the current was flowing, using fins and masks to spear the fish as they struggled against the flow. We found out that the nuclear atoll Mururoa was apparently home to «*tout le merde de France*» and that the local policeman on Amanu, who took over from Marerenui's late father-in-law, was very strict. Then there was the supply ship, which arrived every two weeks, servicing Hao, Amanu and Mangareva among others, and from which everyone bought direct because it was cheaper than the prices on the atoll (a hand-sized piece of frozen beef cost about US\$30 from the local shop). The supply boat had arrived the day before, which explained the frozen chicken and ice cream we scoffed.

Then there were the flights to Tahiti, only a few hundred miles away but an extortionate US\$520 for a one-way flight (but the flight is free if it's a trip to the hospital there); the security blanket that one of the little kids was clutching throughout the night, proving that the world of the comforter transcends mere cultural barriers; and the wonderful cushion covers that Hinano spent her spare time on... 'twas an evening of interesting discoveries.

Soon enough the three little kids were starting to yawn and we thanked our guests using some Tahitian words they'd taught us during the evening, and got a lift

back to *Zeke* in Marerenui's boat, the same boat he used to zip across to Hao in one-and-a-quarter hours. The boats in the Tuamotus are interesting. Every one of them has a huge engine – and by huge I mean at least 40 horsepower, a meaty outboard if ever there was one – and every engine is brand spanking new. We assumed there was some special deal going on in the South Pacific with outboards, but nobody in Amanu has a car – there's one communal vehicle on the whole atoll – so the outboard is the equivalent of the family car. Still, these engines would cost a fair amount in the West, and the houses are pretty luxurious, so there's money round somewhere. Whatever the cost, the local skiffs have no trouble surging through the pass at any time of day, chopping through the waves like manic surfers⁶.

And all this in a village with one shop, two churches, 200 inhabitants and no other yachts to be seen. Compared to neighbouring Hao with its 1000 people, hundreds of military personnel, strings of shops and the noisy airstrip, Amanu is a beautiful, unspoilt haven.

Saying Goodbye to Amanu

Our final day on Amanu was a perfect example of the

⁶ Talking of which, there's a mad teacher from Hao who comes over to Amanu every weekend to teach the kids, and who goes surfing on the outside of the reef every weekend too. Looking at the reef, that's a teacher with lot of nerve... surprising, considering he's an Englishman rather than a surf-mad Aussie or Californian.

extreme kindness of the Amanuans. Marerenui, finding out that it was our last day, invited us to dinner again, laying on a wonderful spread of *poisson cru* (raw bonito in vinegar, quite a delicacy), chicken, rice, pasta, coconut milk and entertainment.

We talked all night, with conversation returning to the same topics as covered in all my French chats: snorkelling, weather, excellence of food, kindness of hosts, etc, etc. We talked about our exploration of the island the day before, where we'd wandered through the copra fields, finding beautiful beaches with an incredible coral drop-off just off the shore; here we swam among sharks, coral cod, amazing parrot fish, and coral that had to be seen to be believed. We talked about fishing, copra making, pearls, the other islands we could visit, and before long the meal was over and the chess began.

Yes, out came the chess set, and Daniel, a friend of Marerenui's who had come to visit, proceeded to have two extremely close games with Rob, the result ending up at one game each. Then Marerenui and I sat down for a contest, but he must have been having a bad day, because I won both of them, and I'm no chess player. It was a thrill, though, being the centre of attention as other locals wandered in and out of the house, some staying to watch the game, some just passing through. It also meant we were communing without conversation, a

relief after the struggle of thinking in French all the time.

The final act of kindness came as we stood up to leave, some five minutes before the electricity was due to be killed. We had brought a little present – a half-bottle of *sake*, left over from Napoleon’s visit back in Mangareva – but we were unprepared for the wonderful shell necklaces Marerenui presented us with, garlanding our necks as if we were Olympic medal winners. We also got two beautiful spider conch shells – quite how they removed the inhabitants I don’t know, considering how we’d had to smash the hell out of the shells to eat them in Mangareva – and a couple of red papaya, as sweet and succulent as they come. We were escorted back to our dinghy, the end of another evening where I was struck dumb by the kindness and generosity of the island people.

Not surprisingly, I was loath to set off for the next atoll, Makemo, on June 26th; in retrospect I’d had good reason to worry.

Amanu Street Scene

Written: 26 June 1997

Picture the street scene...

There are dogs wandering about the streets, searching for food scraps and sex from the various

bitches around, whose reaction to the males' interest is to sit down violently, turn round and try to bite the male's neck, an effective prophylactic. The same dogs can be seen chasing a black pig down the main street – if 'street' is the right word for a dirt track that carries the one communal car – as the pig squeals and cries, unhappy as the dogs yelp and snap, acting in much the same way as cats do when cornering a wounded rabbit. The pig escapes back into its pen, where the owner shuts the gate and stops the canine invasion, much to the pig's relief. If only the pig knew what its owner is planning for it, it might not be so keen to go back home.

The main square in Amanu is not very large, but it's big enough to house a volleyball court, and this is where some 20 young people have gathered for the daily practice game. Angelo saunters up to ask for a cigarette – I have bought some tobacco as something to be able to offer to the islanders, and besides, it enables me to have the odd toke myself – and informs me that there is a training session every day, in preparation for August's competition in Hao, which lots of the islands attend (including Mangareva, Amanu, Makemo and other islands on our itinerary). The standard of volleyball is very good: with a hard, dust floor to the pitch there are none of the manic dives to save the ball that you see in beach volleyball in Miami or California, but the shots are accurate and bullet-fast, and the atmosphere friendly

rather than too competitive.

Around the volleyball, competing with the dogs and pigs, are the children. Polynesian children are as cute as cute can be – seeing the adults, it's sometimes hard to equate the children with the parents, with Polynesian women tending towards the large and the men tending towards the tattoo – and they have one love in life: the bicycle. In a world where television hasn't tightened its socially stifling grip, the Victorian child with his hoop and stick lives on in the form of the Polynesian child riding his bicycle along dusty motu streets. There are old bicycles with plastic bottles stuffed in the spokes to make a racket as the protagonist peddles past; bikes with flat tyres, that manage to grip perfectly well nonetheless; bikes with millions of kids balancing on top, making circus troupes look positively uncoordinated. It's a joy to behold, as well as making sure you keep your eyes peeled when crossing the main drag.

This is Amanu life: work starts at 7am, siesta starts at around 12 noon, and volleyball starts at 3pm. It's relaxing, healthy, and about as far from life in a London bedsit that you can get. After obtaining information on various islands in the area from the local mother's meeting on the corner, stretching my French to the limits in the process, I return to the boat, wondering at the simplicity of life on Pacific islands, and saddened to know that I would go out of my mind with boredom if I

had to live it. But a little bit of paradise is very, very good for the soul, especially on a remote paradise like Amanu, a far cry from Tahitian tourism.

Makemo

Written: 2 July 1997

The trip from Amanu to Makemo was another ocean passage, and this time surely the unkindest. The wind was good, the sea was calm and the seasickness relatively under control, but on the second day I was knocked down by another problem: food poisoning.

I threw up every fifteen minutes for about five hours, starting at 6am, and to add to the pleasure my guts decided to do a convincing impression of a milk shake maker. Both ends thus ruined, I survived on glasses of water and staying above deck, running over to the side to retch on an empty stomach, and shooting down below in that race-against-time otherwise known as Delhi-belly. The trip only took two days, but it dragged on for eternity as far as I was concerned. I spent most of the second day sleeping, with the captain masterfully sailing the boat himself. Finally we sighted Makemo and its large navigable pass. We entered the pass, and tied up to the pier (mainly because when we left Amanu the electric anchor winch fell to pieces, meaning we had to haul in the anchor by hand until it

could be fixed).

On the pier, though, there was precious little privacy, and every few minutes we'd hear a muted 'Hello? Bonjour?' down the hatch as we tried to snatch a little sleep on the now stationary boat. After a couple of hours' I gave up trying, and invited the locals on board.

The children, bless 'em, were as cute as cute can be, though Rob kept asking me to kick them off the boat, perhaps because he was as tired as I was worn out. Our visitors were Sebastian, to whom we'd talked to on the radio when trying to work out how to approach the pass and who turned out to be the local radio hack; John, who spoke English and therefore enabled the captain to ask his questions in his native language; Prospère, who lived up to his name by swanning over on his own little catamaran with his boom-box throbbing, a beer in his hand and wide boy written all over his face (he worked in the pearl industry, it transpired, not entirely to my surprise); and Simon, who had visited Los Angeles and Australia and as such was regarded with great awe by those around him. It was quite a party, and it was only when the wind blew up, forcing us to move the boat into the bay and drop anchor there, that the conversation dried up, which is more than could be said for the weather.

That night we went ashore to watch some Tahitian

dance practice (the village was preparing for a festival in a few days' time), and explored the village a little before returning back to the boat. It was here that I spotted a growing problem: I was beginning to get a bit blasé about the whole paradise thing. All my French conversations were exactly the same, all the islands felt the same, all the food was the same, and all the shops sold the same things... it's a terrible thing to say, I know, but I was in danger of getting bored in paradise. And that's not a good thing when you're travelling.

Escape from the Yacht

Written: 5 July 1997

The final ocean passage was notable for one good reason: it was the first leg of the whole journey on which I didn't throw up (although I still felt bloody awful for the two-and-a-half days it took to sail from Makemo to Tahiti). I'd chundered from Pahia to Whangarei, hurled from Whangarei to Mangareva, spewed from Mangareva to Amanu and vomited from Amanu to Makemo, but I held it down from Makemo to Tahiti. Despite this, sea legs are still things that happen to other people, and definitely not me.

I finally made the decision to leave *Zeke* when we were about to head off for Tahiti. Being a kind, considerate person, I told Rob just before we left

Makemo that I was considering leaving, and I didn't want to screw him around and leave him short of crew. He said it was a real shame and that I'd been an excellent crewmember, but he was glad I'd told him, and if I really decided to leave, he could probably find crew in Tahiti.

The real reason for my antipathy towards remaining on *Zeke* was that I'm simply never going to be at home on a boat. As we sailed off to Tahiti I realised that this was perfect sailing: constant, unchanging trade winds aft of the beam, not too much swell and only a little rolling, but I was still totally miserable. I just don't like sailing: I find it uninspiring, boring and a lot of effort for little return. Talking to other yachties it's almost universal that sailors find ocean passages a bore and that it's the landfalls that make yachting worthwhile, but this goes against much of what I've enjoyed about exploration: in Australia and New Zealand the journey was at least as important as the destination, if not more so, and on the way to Papeete I realised that I no longer wanted to travel in a way that reversed this emphasis, stressed me out and made me physically ill.

The other overwhelming reason for disembarking at Papeete was that I'd realised (not for the first time) that I like to travel alone. When you're alone, survival depends on your own actions, and this makes talking French, working out public transport, ordering food and

simply managing to exist quite a thrill: however, on a yacht you have a home from home, which removes a lot of the stress and fun of day to day living, there's a plan that isn't really that changeable, and there are always people around on the boat from whom you can't easily get away (and when Laurent and Ron were arguing, that's precisely what I wanted to do). So before I got to Papeete, my mind was made up: it was back to solid ground for me.

Approaching Tahiti was wonderful. I saw my final landfall, I smelt the city of Papeete (Pah-pay-eh-tay) from afar – the first real city smell since Auckland – and the lights glowed as we sailed into the harbour at 2am on Saturday 5th July. We dropped anchor and hit the sack, the elation of impending change quite tiring me out.

The next day was spent trying to squeeze the boat onto the overcrowded quay at Papeete, which we eventually managed to do after discovering that we'd dragged anchor while visiting the information centre in town (a scary experience, when you find the boat's moved considerable distance down the harbour, only being saved by other yachties leaping on board and dropping more chain). I had visions of us being stuck in the middle of the harbour for days, having to keep an anchor watch, but by Saturday afternoon we were tied up at the quay on the end of a line consisting of all kinds

of yachts, from mansions to mouse holes. Our neighbours were fun, and I sighed with relief as I realised that I would never have to do another ocean passage. I was a man set free.

Bushwalking in Tahiti

Written: 19 July 1997

On a whim, I decided to spend the afternoon of July 19th trying to get to the houses above Tahiti, from where I imagined the view would be something special; the only problem was the only map we had of Tahiti was over ten years old, and stopped short of what was obviously a relatively new housing development. This didn't deter me, and after striking out from Papeete towards the interior, I discovered a road that I assumed would take me into the mountains. Of course, it did nothing of the sort, and instead it led up a valley, following the River Tipaerui up the Vallée Tipaerui, heading towards the mountains of the interior rather than the hills of the coast.

The road passed a huge industrial estate and eventually came to a little housing development, a terrace of crappy little flats where a number of islanders lived in relatively poor surroundings, obviously a long way from prying tourists' eyes. I wandered along the road, which soon came across a little building full of

locals taking the opportunity of a sunny Saturday afternoon to play boules and get slaughtered on Hinano beer, the local brew. As I walked past, noticing that the road had by now petered away into a rough dirt track with a chain across to deter vehicles, a couple of the louder men yelled «*Attention!*» at me, gesturing up the road. When I asked them why I should be careful, they replied that a big serpent lived up that road, and that I should make sure it didn't eat me. It would have been quite effective, except for the fact that the alcohol meant they couldn't keep a straight face between them for more than five seconds, so I told them I'd watch out for the monster, and headed up the track.

At last, some real bushwalking. The track crossed the river a number of times, slowly becoming thinner and thinner and winding up an increasingly gorge-like valley, and I began to wonder where on earth it went. Right into the interior of Tahiti? Up Mt Aorai, the highest peak in Tahiti? Or did it go nowhere, just petering out?

After a fairly easy but humid walk, I reached the end at the bottom of a beautiful waterfall that had managed to carve an almost tubular niche in the valley wall, forming a deep pool at the bottom and a sheltered spot that would have been perfect for a picnic.

The only drawback was the immense population of

no-no flies⁷ that smelt me coming and flew over to make friends, so after naming the falls Sandfly Falls for want of a better name – it didn't even appear in the maps of the area – I ducked back down the track and headed downhill towards Papeete.

Passing the locals again, they asked me if I'd come across their serpent: one of them even did a fearsome impression of the monster said to inhabit the pool at the base of the waterfall, holding his arms up in the air, throwing back his head and roaring as his eyes rolled in his head. The performance was made all the more impressive by the fact that he had no front teeth, making his mouth look not unlike the fanged jaws of a monstrous snake.

I told them I'd managed to escape the clutches of their monster – at least, I think that's what I said in my rusty French – and they laughed as I ambled back down to Papeete, with me wondering if the monster had perhaps left the waterfall and was now lurking in the bottles of beer they were necking like water. Aboriginal, Maori, Polynesian... the Europeans might have invaded and screwed up these cultures, but it's alcohol that's continuing the effect. No wonder they hide it from the tourists up dead-end valleys with serpents guarding the waterfalls.

⁷ The rather colourful Tahitian name for sandflies.

Tahiti

Written: 22 July 1997

Papeete, the capital of French Polynesia, the biggest settlement on Tahiti and the only place in the territory that can be called a city (the population is around 150,000) is a mixed bag. I found the very idea of a population explosion delightful after such a long spell in the enforced hermitage of *Zeke*, and as we approached the city lights, the smell of thousands of bodies and their excretions drifted across the tide.

I instantly recognised it, a combination of exhaust, sewage and sweat, and realised that I've spent most of my life living in this smell, so much so that I've also spent most of my life not noticing it. Mangareva reminded me that healthy earth and trees smell; Papeete reminded me that humans smell too. I revelled in it.

But Papeete, despite my initial euphoria at encountering a city, wasn't that flash. It's an intriguing combination of French culture, Polynesian flair and tropical weather, but it's a pretty smelly and dirty place. As a place to visit it's interesting, but only that, and the landscape around the city – Tahiti with its high mountains and Moorea, the neighbouring island, with its jagged peaks – is picturesque but no great shakes after New Zealand, which has a similar ruggedness to it, but much more power.

The quay was an interesting place to observe the

oddities of Papeete, like the huge Club Med ships that frequent the Society Islands, full of ignorant holidaymakers who believe the huge sails on those boats actually push the things along (they're engine driven, with four huge gibs stuck out to make them look good when sailing).

Perhaps the most amusing and downright French spectacle was the pedestrian crossing just opposite the boat. In typical Parisian fashion, the cars have absolutely no intention of stopping for mere pedestrians, which produces a collection of bemused and critical Americans and English standing on the crossing and mumbling about how rude these French drivers are.

One fool Englishman walked out into the road, looking the wrong way (as they drive on the right, of course) and promptly got the shit scared out of him as a car slammed on the anchors and skidded to a halt inches from his knees. The Englishman launched into an angry tirade against the driver, shouting, 'Are you drunk?' in very loud English, which had the same effect on the driver as Belgian sitcoms would on the rest of us: he knew what the Pommy guy was going on about, but how relevant was it to him?

As the Tahitian casually drove off, thinking to himself that the world would be a better place if the tourists calmed down, the English guy raved on at his poor travelling companions, re-enacting Agincourt in all

but physical violence. There's no doubt, though, that Papeete is a pedestrian's nightmare, with blind corners coinciding with a disappearing pavement, drivers who think the whole world is Le Mans, scooters that treat the sidewalk as an extension of the road, and parking rules that were obviously made to be broken.

Tahitian Dancing

Still, we did see some local culture, mainly in the form of real Tahitian dancing. As part of the Bastille Day fête (Bastille Day being on 14th July, the excuse for a long celebration in Tahiti called the Heiva) there was a three-week long dancing contest, and for most of the nights we were in Papeete, you could watch the various teams strut their stuff in a makeshift stadium erected by the harbour. It was rather fun: the way those girls wiggle their hips is enough to make otherwise healthy men get palpitations, and even though the dancing we'd seen in Makemo had been more raw and powerful, the Tahitian programme of dance, choral ditties and instrumentals was certainly entertaining. Especially when the grass skirts and amazingly ornamental flower hats started to fall apart with the vigorous shaking they were getting...

There is one thing that bothers me about Tahitian music, though. They have the most powerful drummers that you're likely to see, but over the drumming they play – wait for it – the ukulele. Now quite what the

ukulele is doing here, I don't know; perhaps the Tahitians invented the bloody thing, but my appreciation of Polynesian rhythms is somewhat scarred by the fact that bits of it remind me of George Formby. That's not good, even if the drum sounds are second to none.

My visit to the Musée des Îles et de Tahiti confirmed what I dreaded: the stringed instruments used by the islanders were brought in by the Europeans, though quite why a nation of powerful music makers should embrace such a tinny instrument and include it in their every composition is beyond me. The native instruments on display were far more interesting: the *pahu* drum, a hollowed out tree trunk popular in eastern Polynesia; the *to'ere*, a split drum popular in western Polynesia; *triton* conch shells that make the most amazingly loud howl you've ever heard; bamboo nose flutes that you wouldn't want to play after someone else already has; reed pipes; and, from the Marquesas, a type of xylophone. That's more like it: instruments with attitude.

Wandering Round Tahiti

Another result of my visit to the Musée was my rediscovery of the joys of walking. Apart from a few stints in Mangareva and the odd beach walk in the Tuamotus, I hadn't been on any serious walks since Tongariro and I really missed it. So I took *le truck* to the

museum – *le truck* being the local bus, a wacky combination of bus and truck, and cheap to boot – but decided to walk back, it being a beautiful day. The 15km, three-hour jaunt wasn't exactly picturesque – it followed the dirty coast road back to Papeete – but it felt good, and woke up those walking muscles that just don't get any exercise on the sea.

The rediscovery of walking opened up Papeete like never before. I hadn't had the time or the inclination to do much exploring in the first week, as I had promised Rob I'd help him with the varnishing, a job that took a lot longer than anticipated, but when that was done, I declared myself a non-working guest on the boat and started to look around.

In a vain attempt to find some aspect of Tahiti that wasn't entirely spoiled by exposure to the West, I spent one day visiting a craft fair, which turned out to be an intriguing combination of craft shops (selling, mostly, tourist-friendly junk, but pleasant junk nonetheless) and a little arena in which all sorts of competitions and displays took place. I spent the best part of a day watching a basket-weaving contest, in which a group of large Tahitian women⁸ sat around nattering and moving

⁸ This is a confusing issue. Many older women in Polynesia are huge, and wear these awful Mother Hubbard dresses that the missionaries brought in to cover up the previously naked natives. I had been told that Polynesian men like their women on the large side, and that being fat is regarded as a good thing, not the social stigma it is in the fat-free consciousness of the western world: I thought this was a particularly

their hands in well-practised combinations to produce intricate baskets and hats. There was also a race to create these strange traditional shapes out of big, flat, round leaves; a fashion show, in which three lovelies from the Tuamotus showed us various ways of tying a *pareo* (the Tahitian equivalent of the sarong or saree); dancing, which interestingly featured some of the dancers I'd seen practising in Amanu; and a kids' dancing competition which managed to show up the fundamental differences between male dancing and female dancing.

Male dancing and female dancing are quite different to each other, although they often dance at the same time. The males tend to leap around in a more violent manner, with their mainstay being to crouch down and knock their knees together very quickly; the females waggle their hips from side to side incredibly fast, while keeping their shoulders absolutely still. It's quite a sight when there are about 100 dancers on the stage, the girls all wobbling hips in time, and the boys all knocking knees together, with serious drums smashing in the background, and the tinny lilt of a ukulele sounding like a lost little girl at a footy match. And as for the

healthy attitude. There's only one odd thing: Miss Tahiti is a gorgeous, slim girl, whom I was lucky enough to watch dancing at the craft show, and the girls who shake their hips at the dance contests are hardly what one would call overweight. Somewhere between young girl and old woman there occurs a metabolic change of immense proportions, literally, and it's weird.

costumes... well, the coconut bra might not be the most comfortable accoutrement in the world, but it does wonders for a man's libido when he's been cooped up in a 36 ft yacht for so long.

Le Retro

The ice creams at Le Retro, the cafe over the road from the yacht quay, are hard to beat. Not only were there some 30 flavours to choose from, but it became quite a social spot for the yachties: 'Fancy an ice cream?' became a byword for 'Stop trying to fix that and take a break.' Many a tale of derring-do was relayed over *une glace du chocolat* at Le Retro, I can tell you.

Indeed, the social life on the quay was hard to beat. On one side of us were Dave and Dorothy in *Kabloona III*, and on the other Merl (known to his mates as Claw), his wife Mary (who had the most delightful Irish accent) and their daughter, eight-year-old Crystal, a vivacious American-accented energy cell. Then there were all the other boats around, some of whom we had met in the Gambiers, and some of whom we met through others. Hearing stories from other yachties of awful passages, sea sickness, wonderful anchorages and the ups and downs that form the fabric of cruising made me feel that at least I wasn't alone in feeling ill at ease on the sea.

We never got to see *Illusion*, who'd set off for Tahiti soon after us, but *Jan van Gent* did pull into the

quay on the day before I flew out, having spent a couple of weeks over in Moorea, Tahiti's sister island. It was genuinely great to see Richard and Gail again; such good friendships are forged on the ocean.

Real Food!

Food and drink, so long a subject of fantasies and restrictions, was initially a wonderful experience, and gradually normality again. Drinking beer; eating baguettes and the most amazing French contribution to international cuisine, the *pain au chocolat*; ice cream; real coffee; real milk... these things transformed my life more than I would have anticipated.

I rediscovered alcohol after four months of abstinence, spending one night guzzling over nine pints of Hinano beer in a slightly worryingly self-destructive solo beer session, the product of internal stress over having to wait for my escape to Brisbane and a general disappointment at Papeete: the next day's hangover served me right, and proved that getting drunk on a boat is sometimes no fun at all.

The Reality of Yachting

Papeete quay showed me once and for all the ugly side of cruising – in fact, whoever adopted the word 'cruising' for the task of getting a yacht round the world obviously hadn't done it themselves (one deadly

accurate yachtie described ‘cruising’ as ‘fixing your boat in exotic locations’, a deadly accurate observation). It’s the constant battle to keep your yacht shipshape, a considerable challenge when the sea is constantly doing its best to bugger up your pride and joy.

Dave and Dorothy had their engine die on them, and by the time I left Tahiti the problem had graduated from a possible electrical fault in the inverter to a burnt-out alternator. Rob had to fix the broken anchor winch, a thankless task that required a whole day’s hacking around to botch a solution. Claw and Mary had to survive without their wind generator after it broke down, requiring a courier to take it to Hawaii to be mended. All along the quay were yachts having to stay longer than originally hoped due to ripped sails, dents in the hull, damaged equipment and, in one case, a badly broken leg. At least two yachts I saw had decided enough was enough, and were trying to sell their floating homes, with little success.

So next time you look at those beautiful pictures of yachts sitting in blue coral lagoons, think of the effort involved. A sailing holiday? Sounds like an oxymoron to me. I heard of an outfit that charged US\$4000 for two weeks’ sailing experience, where you went out on a yacht and learned about sailing by actually doing it – all of it. The quaysiders’ view was that anyone who paid US\$4000 for two weeks of having to wash up, cook,

reef the main in high winds and pump out the bilges must be completely insane. I didn't tell them that I considered anyone who would pay US\$100,000 for a yacht in the first place completely insane too.

Flowers

San Francisco might have flowers in its hair, but Tahiti has them in its hair, round its neck, on its clothes... everywhere. Never have I seen a people so happily obsessed with flowers, to the point of it being strange to see someone without a flower somewhere on their body. It makes a welcome change from drab pinstripe suits.

Leaving Zeke and Polynesia

Due to my unexpected departure Rob had to find more crew, so *Zeke* became an interview zone for prospective sailors who had replied to the advert tacked on the bow (an advert noticed by plenty of people as we were tied to the yacht quay). Some were idiots, some were potentially good, and some were good choices, but every interview made me feel a little sad to be leaving as Rob reeled off the plans for the trip, and the places he was going on to visit: Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, the Cook Islands, Vanuatu and the rest of the Polynesian pantheon. But it didn't take much to realise that leaving the boat was probably the best thing I'd done on the whole trip; sometimes you just have to accept that you

don't have sea legs and are never going to get them. One thing I'll never forget was the feeling of euphoria when I shook Rob's hand and finally stepped off *Zeke* for the last time. No more swell! No more seasickness! No more sailing to contend with! I said goodbye to my newfound friends on the quay and hopped onto the airport bus: back on my own two feet again, with nobody to answer to or worry about, I felt unshackled. As Tom Wolfe once wrote, you're either on the bus or off the bus, and I was well and truly back on the bus.

THE END

Further Reading

This story is continued in another of my books, *The Back of Beyond: Travels in Australia* (also available for free from www.moxon.net). If you enjoyed this book, you might like to know that there's a whole series of free books like this available from www.moxon.net, covering 16 countries and five continents:

- *The Back of Beyond: Travels in Australia*
- *God's Own Country: Travels in New Zealand*
- *Paradise Has Teeth: Travels in French Polynesia*
- *Hello Paul, What's Your Name? Travels in Indonesia*
- *Serious Fun: Travels in Singapore*
- *The Muddy Confluence: Travels in Malaysia*
- *Melted Meccano: Travels in Thailand*
- *Many Ways to Change Your Mind: Travels in India*
- *Roof of the World: Travels in Nepal*
- *Snaking Patterns of Sand: Travels in Morocco*
- *Snow on the Sun Loungers: Travels in Cyprus*
- *The Head and the Heart: Travels in Senegal*
- *A Million Mosquitoes Can't Be Wrong: Travels in the Gambia*

- *The Lapping of the Dunes: Travels in Mali*
- *A Town Full of Nothing to Do: Travels in Burkina Faso*
- *The Road to Jesus: Travels in Ghana*

If you know someone who might like any of my books, please pass them on; I make no money from this, but I do enjoy the thought of people reading my books and recommending them to their friends. If you've enjoyed reading my writing (or even if you haven't) I'd be delighted if you could sign my Guestbook at **www.moxon.net** – after all, it's the feedback that makes it all worthwhile.

Happy travels!

Mark Moxon, September 2004

www.moxon.net

Copyright Notice



Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0

CREATIVE COMMONS CORPORATION IS NOT A LAW FIRM AND DOES NOT PROVIDE LEGAL SERVICES. DISTRIBUTION OF THIS LICENSE DOES NOT CREATE AN ATTORNEY-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP. CREATIVE COMMONS PROVIDES THIS INFORMATION ON AN “AS-IS” BASIS. CREATIVE COMMONS MAKES NO WARRANTIES REGARDING THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, AND DISCLAIMS LIABILITY FOR DAMAGES RESULTING FROM ITS USE.

License

THE WORK (AS DEFINED BELOW) IS PROVIDED UNDER THE TERMS OF THIS CREATIVE COMMONS PUBLIC LICENSE (“CCPL” OR “LICENSE”). THE WORK IS PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT AND/OR OTHER APPLICABLE LAW. ANY USE OF THE WORK OTHER THAN AS AUTHORIZED UNDER THIS LICENSE OR COPYRIGHT LAW IS PROHIBITED.

BY EXERCISING ANY RIGHTS TO THE WORK PROVIDED HERE, YOU ACCEPT AND AGREE TO BE BOUND BY THE TERMS OF THIS LICENSE. THE LICENSOR GRANTS YOU THE RIGHTS CONTAINED HERE IN CONSIDERATION OF YOUR ACCEPTANCE OF SUCH TERMS AND CONDITIONS.

1. Definitions

- a) **“Collective Work”** means a work, such as a periodical issue, anthology or encyclopedia, in which the Work in its entirety in unmodified form, along with a

number of other contributions, constituting separate and independent works in themselves, are assembled into a collective whole. A work that constitutes a Collective Work will not be considered a Derivative Work (as defined below) for the purposes of this License.

- b) “Derivative Work” means a work based upon the Work or upon the Work and other pre-existing works, such as a translation, musical arrangement, dramatization, fictionalization, motion picture version, sound recording, art reproduction, abridgment, condensation, or any other form in which the Work may be recast, transformed, or adapted, except that a work that constitutes a Collective Work will not be considered a Derivative Work for the purpose of this License. For the avoidance of doubt, where the Work is a musical composition or sound recording, the synchronization of the Work in timed-relation with a moving image (“synching”) will be considered a Derivative Work for the purpose of this License.
- c) “Licensor” means the individual or entity that offers the Work under the terms of this License.
- d) “Original Author” means the individual or entity who created the Work.
- e) “Work” means the copyrightable work of authorship offered under the terms of this License.
- f) “You” means an individual or entity exercising rights under this License who has not previously violated the terms of this License with respect to the Work, or who has received express permission from the Licensor to exercise rights under this License despite a previous violation.

2. Fair Use Rights. Nothing in this license is intended to reduce, limit, or restrict any rights arising from fair use, first sale or other limitations on the exclusive rights of the copyright owner under copyright law or other applicable laws.

3. License Grant. Subject to the terms and conditions of this License, Licensor hereby grants You a worldwide, royalty-free, non-exclusive, perpetual (for the duration of the applicable copyright) license to exercise the rights in the Work as stated below:

- a) to reproduce the Work, to incorporate the Work into one or more Collective Works, and to reproduce the Work as incorporated in the Collective Works;
- b) to distribute copies or phonorecords of, display publicly, perform publicly, and perform publicly by means of a digital audio transmission the Work including as incorporated in Collective Works;

The above rights may be exercised in all media and formats whether now known or hereafter devised. The above rights include the right to make such modifications as are technically necessary to exercise the rights in other media and formats, but otherwise you have no rights to make Derivative Works. All rights not expressly granted by Licensor are hereby reserved, including but not limited to the rights set forth in Sections 4(d) and 4(e).

4. Restrictions. The license granted in Section 3 above is expressly made subject to and limited by the following restrictions:

- a) You may distribute, publicly display, publicly perform, or publicly digitally perform the Work only under the terms of this License, and You must include a copy of, or the

Uniform Resource Identifier for, this License with every copy or phonorecord of the Work You distribute, publicly display, publicly perform, or publicly digitally perform. You may not offer or impose any terms on the Work that alter or restrict the terms of this License or the recipients' exercise of the rights granted hereunder. You may not sublicense the Work. You must keep intact all notices that refer to this License and to the disclaimer of warranties. You may not distribute, publicly display, publicly perform, or publicly digitally perform the Work with any technological measures that control access or use of the Work in a manner inconsistent with the terms of this License Agreement. The above applies to the Work as incorporated in a Collective Work, but this does not require the Collective Work apart from the Work itself to be made subject to the terms of this License. If You create a Collective Work, upon notice from any Licensor You must, to the extent practicable, remove from the Collective Work any reference to such Licensor or the Original Author, as requested.

- b) You may not exercise any of the rights granted to You in Section 3 above in any manner that is primarily intended for or directed toward commercial advantage or private monetary compensation. The exchange of the Work for other copyrighted works by means of digital file-sharing or otherwise shall not be considered to be intended for or directed toward commercial advantage or private monetary compensation, provided there is no payment of any monetary compensation in connection with the exchange of copyrighted works.
- c) If you distribute, publicly display, publicly perform, or publicly digitally perform the Work, You must keep intact all copyright notices for the Work and give the Original Author credit reasonable to the medium or means You are utilizing by conveying the name (or pseudonym if applicable) of the Original Author if supplied; the title of the Work if supplied; and to the extent reasonably practicable, the Uniform Resource Identifier, if any, that Licensor specifies to be associated with the Work, unless such URI does not refer to the copyright notice or licensing information for the Work. Such credit may be implemented in any reasonable manner; provided, however, that in the case of a Collective Work, at a minimum such credit will appear where any other comparable authorship credit appears and in a manner at least as prominent as such other comparable authorship credit.
- d) For the avoidance of doubt, where the Work is a musical composition:
 - i. **Performance Royalties Under Blanket Licenses.** Licensor reserves the exclusive right to collect, whether individually or via a performance rights society (e.g. ASCAP, BMI, SESAC), royalties for the public performance or public digital performance (e.g. webcast) of the Work if that performance is primarily intended for or directed toward commercial advantage or private monetary compensation.
 - ii. **Mechanical Rights and Statutory Royalties.** Licensor reserves the exclusive right to collect, whether individually or via a music rights agency or designated agent (e.g. Harry Fox Agency), royalties for any phonorecord You create from the Work ("cover version") and distribute, subject to the compulsory license created by 17 USC Section 115 of the US Copyright Act (or the equivalent in other jurisdictions), if Your distribution of such cover version is primarily intended for or directed toward commercial advantage or private monetary compensation.

- e) **Webcasting Rights and Statutory Royalties.** For the avoidance of doubt, where the Work is a sound recording, Licensor reserves the exclusive right to collect, whether individually or via a performance-rights society (e.g. SoundExchange), royalties for the public digital performance (e.g. webcast) of the Work, subject to the compulsory license created by 17 USC Section 114 of the US Copyright Act (or the equivalent in other jurisdictions), if Your public digital performance is primarily intended for or directed toward commercial advantage or private monetary compensation.

5. Representations, Warranties and Disclaimer

UNLESS OTHERWISE MUTUALLY AGREED BY THE PARTIES IN WRITING, LICENSOR OFFERS THE WORK AS-IS AND MAKES NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND CONCERNING THE WORK, EXPRESS, IMPLIED, STATUTORY OR OTHERWISE, INCLUDING, WITHOUT LIMITATION, WARRANTIES OF TITLE, MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, NONINFRINGEMENT, OR THE ABSENCE OF LATENT OR OTHER DEFECTS, ACCURACY, OR THE PRESENCE OF ABSENCE OF ERRORS, WHETHER OR NOT DISCOVERABLE. SOME JURISDICTIONS DO NOT ALLOW THE EXCLUSION OF IMPLIED WARRANTIES, SO SUCH EXCLUSION MAY NOT APPLY TO YOU.

6. Limitation on Liability. EXCEPT TO THE EXTENT REQUIRED BY APPLICABLE LAW, IN NO EVENT WILL LICENSOR BE LIABLE TO YOU ON ANY LEGAL THEORY FOR ANY SPECIAL, INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR EXEMPLARY DAMAGES ARISING OUT OF THIS LICENSE OR THE USE OF THE WORK, EVEN IF LICENSOR HAS BEEN ADVISED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES.

7. Termination

- a) This License and the rights granted hereunder will terminate automatically upon any breach by You of the terms of this License. Individuals or entities who have received Collective Works from You under this License, however, will not have their licenses terminated provided such individuals or entities remain in full compliance with those licenses. Sections 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 8 will survive any termination of this License.
- b) Subject to the above terms and conditions, the license granted here is perpetual (for the duration of the applicable copyright in the Work). Notwithstanding the above, Licensor reserves the right to release the Work under different license terms or to stop distributing the Work at any time; provided, however that any such election will not serve to withdraw this License (or any other license that has been, or is required to be, granted under the terms of this License), and this License will continue in full force and effect unless terminated as stated above.

8. Miscellaneous

- a) Each time You distribute or publicly digitally perform the Work or a Collective Work, the Licensor offers to the recipient a license to the Work on the same terms and conditions as the license granted to You under this License.
- b) If any provision of this License is invalid or unenforceable under applicable law, it shall not affect the validity or enforceability of the remainder of the terms of this License, and without further action by the parties to this agreement, such provision shall be reformed to the minimum extent necessary to make such provision valid and

enforceable.

- c) No term or provision of this License shall be deemed waived and no breach consented to unless such waiver or consent shall be in writing and signed by the party to be charged with such waiver or consent.
- d) This License constitutes the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the Work licensed here. There are no understandings, agreements or representations with respect to the Work not specified here. Licensor shall not be bound by any additional provisions that may appear in any communication from You. This License may not be modified without the mutual written agreement of the Licensor and You.

Creative Commons is not a party to this License, and makes no warranty whatsoever in connection with the Work. Creative Commons will not be liable to You or any party on any legal theory for any damages whatsoever, including without limitation any general, special, incidental or consequential damages arising in connection to this license. Notwithstanding the foregoing two (2) sentences, if Creative Commons has expressly identified itself as the Licensor hereunder, it shall have all rights and obligations of Licensor.

Except for the limited purpose of indicating to the public that the Work is licensed under the CCPL, neither party will use the trademark "Creative Commons" or any related trademark or logo of Creative Commons without the prior written consent of Creative Commons. Any permitted use will be in compliance with Creative Commons' then-current trademark usage guidelines, as may be published on its website or otherwise made available upon request from time to time.

Creative Commons may be contacted at <http://creativecommons.org/>