

# Bilgewater

May 2020





## *Bilgewater May 2020*

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## *Commodore's Report*

As I write this we are still at level 3 lockdown across the country.

The government has indicated that by next week we may be dropping to level 2 but no one really knows exactly what that will look like.

Based on the level 3 restrictions allowing some water sports (fishing, swimming, kayaking) I'd like to think that Yachting and boating in general will be released at level 2.

There has been a lot of communication between the commodores of various yacht clubs and the biggest issue most are facing is the cost of insuring buildings and equipment while not being able to supplement their income by hiring out facilities during the lock down.

Your committee continues to operate behind the scenes using video conferencing which has been working quite well.

The key issues we're facing at the moment is how we can run an AGM and how to approach the election of officers for next year's team.

We also need to finalise the updated constitution and complete the new look handbook.

The other activity on the Calendar is the club prize giving dinner which is scheduled for the 13<sup>th</sup> of June. Obviously we cannot make any plans until after the Level two restrictions are announced so keep an eye out on Facebook and your email in-box for updates from us.

Even though we've 'lost' the end of our summer sailing events there's still plenty to look forward to with the Keelers always looking for crew for the Pine Harbour winter series.

And of course we should also look to support the BOPTYS club by participating in their winter series on Lake Rotoiti.

Take Care everyone and stay safe,

Paul.





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### *Man Overboard*

*I note the size of last month's Bilgewater and the call for contributions. I also note that Nigel has carried most of the load in recent months. So I have dug out some work not previously published that I did a while back for a presentation to another club.*

*Phil Plimmer  
Gingerbread Man*

#### **MAN OVERBOARD**

Some time back I attended a presentation by Neil Murray of Coastguard Boating Education. Neil was a skipper on one of the BT Global Challenge yachts. These are the around the world yachts that race in the wrong direction with amateur crew.

He started by showing chilling video of crews being washed around the decks in the Southern Ocean as the yachts lurched into the swells and were boarded by massive waves. This did not happen just once or twice - Neil showed several minutes of clips. One crew member who happened to be changing his tether location when a wave struck was lucky to be washed into the sail retaining net, and was able to re-secure before the next wave struck him.

Neil discussed many aspects of handling a man overboard situation. I have also made a contribution to what follows from my own sailing experience.

While the strategies will vary according to the circumstances, there are a number of common themes.

#### **Stay on board**

This strategy beats all others hands down, and is not difficult to execute. It is just a matter of a proper harness, tether, strong points and jack lines, and the discipline to stay clipped on at all times.

There is a school of thought that advocates having two tethers so that there is always one clipped on when changing. Others suggest this is an unnecessary complication to manage, and the effort is better put into making sure the jack lines allow the freedom to reach all parts of the boat.

Life expectancy after parting company with the boat in a sea is poor. There are a number of instances of people getting washed back on in the next wave. Others are not so lucky and are immediately facing the many ways you can die. You may die of injuries from striking objects as you are washed overboard. Or lines can get around your neck. You may drown, particularly if not wearing a lifejacket. Or you may succumb to hyperthermia if the water is cold. Your situation is going to be worse if you are not found promptly.

Your problems may not be over if you are found still alive. Even in benign conditions there is the possibility that the remaining crew will not be able to get you from the water, or if they do you could be seriously injured, or die of medical conditions known as cold shock and loss of hydrostatic support.

Most short-handed crews, often a couple, work as a team with dedicated responsibilities for sailing the yacht. Nether may be particularly competent in handling the boat alone in this kind of emergency when the



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situation is likely to be stressful and conditions difficult. And while it may have been discussed, getting a person out of the water usually has not been practiced. It doesn't get any easier when it has to be done by one person in bad conditions! Best stay tied on!

### **Immediate response**

What we have all been taught has the wisdom that comes from experience. Shout 'Man overboard!' Throw a float - a life-ring with danbuoy and drogue is best. Activate the MOB button on the nearest GPS. **These are three critical actions.**

One crew should keep throwing flotation, eg life rings, cushions, as markers. Another should point to the MOB for as long as possible. With just one other crew managing control of the yacht four people are now involved.

Most offshore cruising yachts have a rule that requires at least one other person to be on deck if a crew member has to go forward in heavy weather or at night so there is someone to raise the alarm in the event of the member forward going overboard, tethered or not.

In the typical two-person crew in a small cruising yacht situation the remaining crew member must take control of the yacht. The suggested response is do a 'crash tack' (see below) and go straight to the VHF and raise a 'Mayday' with the position, from the GPS.

Panic can lead to paralysis or stupid responses. Maintaining a sense of calm and control is invaluable.

### **Secondary actions**

The thing to do is stop sailing away from the MOB. Do a crash tack to a 'heave to' position, ie tack without releasing the headsail sheet – the headsail traveller will need to be locked on a self-tacker. If sailing upwind, the more likely situation, the yacht will then start drifting downwind in the general direction of the MOB. If you have practiced heaving to in various conditions you will manage this well. If sailing downwind heaving to is still helpful as it will greatly reduce the rate at which the yacht and MOB are separating.

There is a view that a crash tack can even be done with a spinnaker up (look at the spinnaker as a big headsail) and while loss of the spinnaker is probable and other complications possible this may still be a much better option than sailing away from the MOB at 8 knots until the spinnaker can be lowered. Always remember, the MOB's chances are greatly improved if they can be kept near, preferably in sight.

Return to the MOB is best done with the engine. There will likely to be more control, and it will be quicker. It is more important than usual to check for lines in the water, then start the engine, travel towards the MOB, and get the sails down if practical - halyards and sheets can be eased as an interim measure if the sails are interfering with control of the yacht.

Approach to the MOB is best made upwind for control, with the final approach being a beam-on drift, keeping the MOB on the preferred side (usually the one which has the engine controls). Those who prefer to berth at jetties on the upwind side, or pick up moorings, will be familiar with using the engine in reverse to stop the yacht, and then drifting down onto the target.

### **Recovery**

We now get into an area where circumstances and experience dictate the best action. I have drawn from experience gained by the English magazine 'Yachting World' who tested a number of recovery devices.



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Someone who has been in the water for a while is likely to be shocked and weak, and incapable of using a boarding ladder. Stern platforms and open transoms, while better than a ladder, may be moving too violently to be safely used. The MOB may not have the strength to get into a dinghy. Count on the MOB having used all their resources to stay afloat and get to the yacht, ie they will be virtually unable to help themselves.

The first thing is to get hold of the MOB. A length of thick rope such as a dock line, bent into a loop, is good. The MOB slips this over their head and under their arms if they are capable. At that point you have them 'captured' and can turn your attention to how you are going to get them out of the water. If the MOB is incapable of getting into the loop, hook their clothing with the boat hook - again just like picking up a mooring. It may even be necessary for a fit crew member (tied on of course) to go into the water to assist getting a line around them.

'Rescue slings' are proprietary devices consisting of a canvas or similar loop on the end of a length of throwing line. The tests carried out by Yachting World showed they did not work well. They were difficult to throw very far. The MOB found it hard to pick up the light line which often passed out of reach as it became taught. The boat had to be repositioned each time this happened. The rescue slings were hard to get into if a lifejacket was worn. And the MOB was always pulled face down as they were recovered, no matter how fit and able. Yachting World felt that the technique of going past the MOB so the line could be thrown to them was fundamentally flawed, and it was much better to position the boat alongside and secure them more directly.

Those who have tried 'triangles' (porous mesh cloths the size of a small sail, used like a storks sling by securing one side to the toe rail, and then lifting the free corner – 'Tri-buckle' is a brand) have generally had more favourable experiences. They have some subtle advantages such as better support allowing a horizontal MOB, the ability to lift an unconscious person, and reduction of lifting effort required. A small sail is not as good - it may be stiff, and not drain the water without flushing out the MOB as well. It may however have the great advantage of being available.

Lifting a person from the water using a halyard or the mainsheet on the end of the boom requires a good set-up, and a lot of power. There is the risk the MOB may be injured in the lift, and it is difficult to get them high enough to clear the top-sides, let alone the lifelines. But you have to lift with a line if more suitable equipment is not available.

Medical opinion is that keeping a fatigued and hypothermic person horizontal is vitally important, from when they leave the water right through to when they have warmed up. This presents another set of problems with a shorthanded crew

### **After recovery from the water**

Patient care after recovery is critical, particularly if they are shocked, injured, or hypothermic – and they may be all of these. It can take up to a day for a hypothermic person to return to a full stable body temperature. There are potentially fatal risks in warming too quickly, and in warming the whole body – blood flows away from the core. Medical advice is best obtained if there is any suspicion that a person is hypothermic.

### **The last word**

It is probably obvious that a real MOB situation will be handled best when it has been rehearsed.



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The best experience, outside a real event, comes from controlled MOB simulations with a real subject (called training exercises by all emergency services). Schedule a practice MOB on a sailing weekend. And do repeat rehearsals using that hat that flew overboard, a fender, or the dinghy to add some real urgency to the exercise.

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A black rectangular advertisement for Alpha Electrical. The top line features the company name "Alpha Electrical" in a white, elegant script font, with the tagline "WHEN QUALITY COUNTS" in a smaller, red, sans-serif font below it. The middle section lists contact information for three locations: Hamilton (07 8480073), Te Awamutu (07 8701080), and Raglan (07 8256575). Below this, the email address "INFO@ALPHA ELECTRICAL.CO.NZ" and the website "WWW.ALPHA ELECTRICAL.CO.NZ" are provided. At the bottom, in small white capital letters, it states "AUTHORISED PANASONIC A/C CONDITIONING DEALER SERVICE CENTRE AND INSTALLERS."



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## *Northland on Passing Fancy; part 2*

By Nigel Lancaster

Marina activity, particularly in tourist spots such as the Opuia Marina, begins early as charter boats pack and depart for the day and maintenance on boats continues. Before we departed we had a coffee at the local café and made a couple of purchases at Cater Marine, a replacement foot pump for the dinghy and a replacement toilet pump, both essential to a good holiday. We bid farewell to the Opuia Marina and head down harbour to open water with a decision made to head into the TePuna inlet for the night, our route passing the Treaty House once more with less fanfare than a few days earlier, avoiding the Brampton Bank shallow area which states “breaks in a moderate swell” it must be shallow? through Kent Passage between the mainland and Moturoa island south-east of the Kerikeri Inlet and by late afternoon we are cruising in to Crowles Bay on our port hand noting as we relax the pleasant scene around the bay of native bush and the numerous houses from modern abodes to one old weatherboard house probably of the 40’s era. In fact the entire Te Puna inlet is a great collection of pleasant secure anchorages for most winds and none too deep. We dropped the pick in 3 or 4m of water in the company of a number of other boats and relaxed with a cold ale! We recalled sitting out a few days of strong winds and heavy rain on the Northern side on our last visit and filling our water tanks off the deck, none of that this cruise. We have another two weeks of this sublime cruising weather, oh what bliss!

The only issue in reality is keeping up with the changeable winds the Met Service talk about but nothing that would affect a good night’s sleep. I reflect sometimes how reliant we are on a good mobile phone signal to access the internet and the marine weather updates. During our early sailing days we simply relied on the radio station announcer to advise what sort of a day was in store probably having first looked out the studio window. That said the marine forecasting is accurate today so can be relied upon for good planning even a week out. More easterlies next day for a pleasant sail back to the big island of Urupukapuka with two lovely bays to choose from, Otaio Bay & next door Paradise Bay from where we enjoyed a good walk to take in the all-around views also a day later Moturua Island with some bush cover to provide some shade although both places showing signs of stressed bush the land here is so dry. The channel here between Moturua & Motukiekie islands is a popular overnight area in settled conditions and good access to the tracks on Moturua.





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*View east of Moturua Island*

The benefits of this locality we are never far from Russell & or Paihia so made plans for another visit to town for supplies the following day which also involved lunch at the Duke of Marlborough with numerous tourists and by mid-afternoon we hoist sails for a 2 hour sail out to Deep Water Cove in a moderate northerly. It is deep water and we need to anchor inside the small bay with 3 other yachts so careful anchoring called for but another pleasant evening in paradise.

Time to make a move and head south. We called into Whangamumu for a pit stop only, lunch and fill our water bottles and solar shower from the much depleted but still good clear stream water behind the whaling station and ended the day up in Whangaruru Harbour thinking about our planned excursion by dinghy in to the upper harbour estuary the next day.



*Upper Whangaruru Harbour*



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Next morning we anchored just off the road end at Whangaruru an hour before hi tide noting as we dropped the pick an isolated danger buoy not far away from our chosen spot. Anyway fuel tank topped up we set off on our little expedition into the unknown depths of the Whangaruru mangrove forest after initially crossing the upper reaches of the harbour as the banks of the river closed in and the trees became larger.



### **Large Mangrove trees**

It was a forest of very large mangrove trees with massive trunks, for mangrove trees anyway and I wonder just how old some of these giants are. After another 30 minutes or so we were still in a 6-8m wide river but given our fuel reserves were limited and rowing back wasn't appealing we turned back. From google earth it appears that we still had some way to go in navigable water, albeit suitable for a dinghy only. On our return to *Passing Fancy* the bay had become a hive of activity as by now the Harbour Master or Whangaruru's equivalent was now at the previously observed isolated danger buoy and the crew were in the process of lifting from the depths of the harbour one 7m cabin boat. This was dragged 100m or so ashore where a short tow cable was attached between boat and 4WD truck and an attempt made to further extract the vessel from the sea but with limited results. Although the ebb tide will indeed reveal much of the boat we didn't need to remain and prepared for departure down harbour noting as I

detached motor from dinghy, that we were indeed down to the last cupful of fuel.

A good NW wind assisted in our progress out of the harbour and we anchored in Mimiwhangata Bay for the night noting on a visit to the marine weather web site the pending passage of the Tropical Cyclone brewing up near New Caledonia. In the next few days this came to not much other than fresher easterlies.

Nigel Lancaster

*"Passing Fancy"*



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*Old shooting MaiMai in upper reaches of the Whangaruru Harbour estuary*



*Urquharts Bay from the track to Busby Head*



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### The Submarine

By Simon Jenkins

First a warning.... This is not a model of nautical caution!

Forty years ago, I was a Volunteer Service Abroad teacher at Vonunu Secondary School the island of Vella La Vella in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands. (Kiwis were there in WW2



<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WH2IP-Gunn-t1-body1-d3.html> )

Across the lagoon from the school, there was the Liapari boat yard and plantation. Once a week I would paddle over and collect my mail and have lunch with the young Australian owners.

One weekend, knowing I was a keen sailor, when I went over they told me that they had discovered a sailing catamaran floating between our island and the next. We guessed it had floated over from Queensland.

It was a 14 foot Buffalo cat with a healthy growth of barnacles, indicating it must have been at sea for some time. The plywood rudders (non kick-up) were eaten away and the jib was completely rotted. Fortunately, the main had been rolled, and was easily repairable. I asked if I could buy it from them, but they said I could have it.

Several months later, I had received an old jib from NZ by post, and had made new rudders, re stitched the tramp and generally tidied it up.



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*Looking back across Liapari lagoon to Vonunu Secondary*

After a few test sails and being the school holidays, I decided that I would circumnavigate Vella La Vella as there were no roads to the north and western sides and so I would see it for the first time. ( I just looked now and it seems, if I had the course right, the whole journey was about 180 kms. The place names in brackets are the names on the map but not the names I know.)

I wore a very light tropical wetsuit, which while hot I knew would protect me from coral, the sun and other hazards. I also had an old life jacket and a floppy hat. I had managed to find a plastic flour bucket, which I tied to the trampoline with some clothes, food and money. I had no charts, and I guess no compass and definitely no radio or phone.

The first morning I set off north from Liapari, the wind was light and right on the nose. It stayed like that most of the day except when this tremendous squall came over from Kolombangara Island and I am guessing about 15 kilometres off shore. (I later climbed Kolombangara, but that is another story of poor preparation.) One minute I was becalmed, the next the wind blasted in, mincing up the formerly mirror sea. I dropped the jib and took off with the boat nearly capsizing or pitch polling several times. The wind gradually came around until I was on a broad reach and so I was flying along. Suddenly, right next to me some dolphins came up and raced me. They were so close I could almost touch them, but I had my hands full staying upright.



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*View looking towards Kolombangara Island from Liapari*

About ten minutes later the wind died and I was be calmed again. The sky was black and I could hear and see lightning. Recognizing that sitting on a small boat with the aluminium mast pointing skyward.... now was a potentially electrifying moment, I dropped the sail and slid overboard to witness strike after strike. (Was that the right thing to do?) Fortunately, the boat was not struck and after the rain the rain came pouring down I got back on board and started sailing again. I must have tacked up the coast for another few hours but being worried I would get becalmed I tacked into Maravari village even though the wind had begun to pick up. (Marivari is only about 20km from Liapari as the crow flies!) On this side of the island there was a road and so I had been to this village before. However, people were surprised to see me coming in a small boat. The children rushed down to the beach and clearly wanted to go for a ride. There was a very old man sitting on a log and when I went and asked him if there was anywhere I could stay he invited me to stay at his house. However, he had a question. He said he had watched me tack in and he was surprised that I could sail into the wind and wanted to know how it was possible, beyond being "white mans' magic". I quickly explained the physics but said the best way to find out was come for a sail. (As the western Solomon Islands is out of the trades, for much of the year there is very little wind and so sailing was never traditionally developed as a technology other than holding up a frond in a dugout canoe. )

So out we went, the kids very envious as this old man and I did close reaches in front of the village with the windward hull regularly getting good high lifts in about 15 knots of wind.



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The next day I planned to sail to Paraso as one of my best students, Maeka lived there, and he had become a convert to sailing.

One Sunday about a month before I did this trip, when I had been testing the boat in Liapari Lagoon, I noticed a lone figure standing on the wharf. I sailed over and Maeka was standing there and yelled out, "Can I join your triangle religion?" At first I didn't get it... but he explained that while he was a good Christian he could not stay in church all day. I hesitantly said, "Ok, lets go for a blast, but don't tell anyone." as the conditions were perfect. So we blasted up and down, and of course people came down to see what was going on.

I later got a bit of a telling off from the Religious Studies teacher..... but he asked if he could come for a ride....

Anyway, back to the voyage.

The next morning I set off for Lambulambu (Sosolo) on the north easterly corner. I was keen to visit there not just because I had a student there, but also because there were stories of a Japanese soldier still in the jungle. I never saw him, but there were lots of bicycles and radios evidently given by the Japanese government.

After lunch I set off for Paraso. It was mostly downwind... and Maeka came down to the beach to meet me. He had always wanted me to come as they have an active geothermal field there, so we spend the rest of the exploring that and then taking his family for rides on the boat.

The next day I set off early as the north coast is reputedly a less safe one. The wind was strong and from the north east so by sailing hard on the wind I thought I could get past Dovellet Point (Varuasi). To be honest it was a bad decision as by the time I was close to the point the swells were too big to safely to tack and I had no room to gybe. I remember scooting over some coral heads with white water all around. A wind shift of 5 degrees would have had me on the reef.

But the luck of the Welsh saw me through and eased off and headed out to the Shortland Islands, which I could just see the tops off. The wind headed me and I gradually headed down the western side. I kept well off shore as I did not know the coast at all. Finally, as the day was getting late I pulled into Iringgila village where I did not know anyone. I don't remember much, but the people were welcoming as ever. I think I sailed about 50 kilometres that day.

The next day after taking people for rides, I set off South for Mundimundi. Usually, I stayed in people's houses but this time they wanted me to stay in the school. Where ever I went I tried to give people something in exchange for meals and accommodation, and I remember here I gave Watties tin peaches. I also remember that when I was eating my dinner all the kids came and watched me eat.

In the morning I set off for Serulando (Muki), where another of my students lived. Don't remember anything of the sail that day but I do remember being shown the skull houses.



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From there I sailed over to Mbava Island where an old Australian man had lived for seventy years, except during the war when he had been a coast watcher elsewhere. He was somewhat of a hoarder as inside his house he had kept every tin and glass he ever opened.

Given the south easterly wind direction I decided to sail to Ranongga Island, which I reached on one tack. I arrived in Koriovuku in the late afternoon as was astounded when an old man met me on the beach and had said they had all watched my approach and had decided until I crossed the fringing reef my vessel was a submarine. I guess the profile of the sail resembled the conning tower.

The next morning without submerging, I sailed with the wind behind me most of the way, back to Vonunu and back to the chalkboard.

Picture Credits:

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