

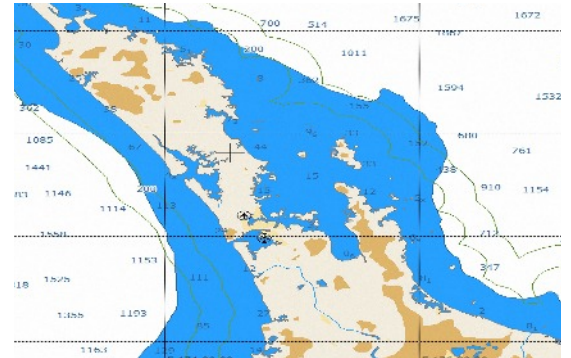


Doubling Cape Brett - Feb 2011





20th Jan

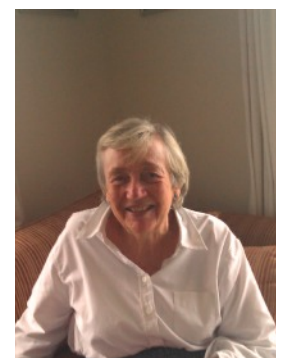


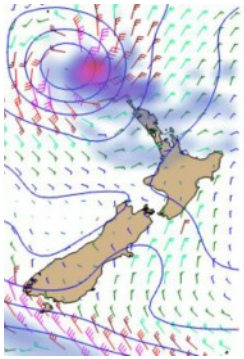
For the first time, we were able to fly Business Class. We had booked via Trailfinders, who had found a fairly good deal on Malaysian Airlines.

The ability to lay out almost flat meant we both got reasonably good sleep, and arrived in Auckland much less tired than flying economy.

There was a brief stopover at Kuala Lumpur, where we were able to use a premium lounge, and where we were met with a wheelchair for Dairne. The avoidance of long walks at the airports makes travelling much easier for her.

The banner at the top was hung across the living room when we arrived, and had been made by Harry and Alice, under Clare's guidance.



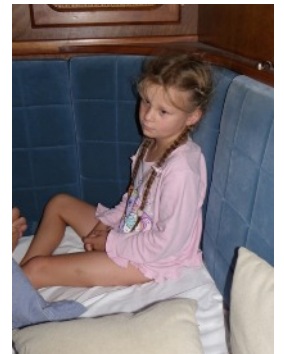


22nd Jan - a wild weekend

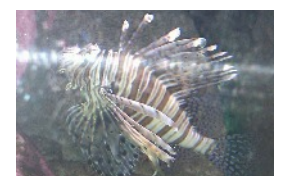
We went on board on the Fiday night. It was blowing very hard and there was an unusually high tide. The 'doughnuts' came off the top of several piles, and we watched ours anxiously. We motored down the river then reached over to Islington Bay under jib at better than 8kts!



The next day we reached back - again under jib at 8kts!



It was the last week of the holidays for Harry and Alice, so their 'treat' we to go to Kelly Tarltons aquarium and polar museum - one of their favourites





29th Jan Auckland Foundation weekend

This was another weekend of brisk breezes. But as it was a special weekend, being Auckland's Foundation Day, there would be a holiday on the Monday. So we made our way up to Kawau, about 25 miles north of Auckland. I had not got organised with recording tracks, so it is a good opportunity to present some pictures of *True*. Iain and Clare had replaced all the canvas work, and repainted the hull. The boat was looking very smart

We went out to Home Bay on the Thursday evening which gave us a pleasant 20 mile fetch through the Tiri Tiri channel and on toward Kawau. We got there a bit early, so went ashore on the mainland before motoring over to Bon Accord Harbour on Kawau for the night.

Sadly, I lost all the pictures I took during our stay on Kawau due to a bit of finger trouble (or was it jet lag?).

Even though there were 100 boats at Kawau because of the Anniversary Weekend, we had a relaxing weekend.





31st Jan Kawau-Auckland

The sail back to Auckland was a brisk reach, with *True* charging along at 8 kts or better.

Harry and Alice were enjoying themselves. Iain managed to catch a large Kahawhai as we approached the Rangitoto Channel. It fed all six of us easily when we got home.

It was the day of the Auckland Foundation regatta and we saw quite a few over-canvased boats racing round the bay as we made our way back to the mooring at Panmure.

Tiri Tiri light





Kawau

3rd Feb Panmure to Kawau 33 miles

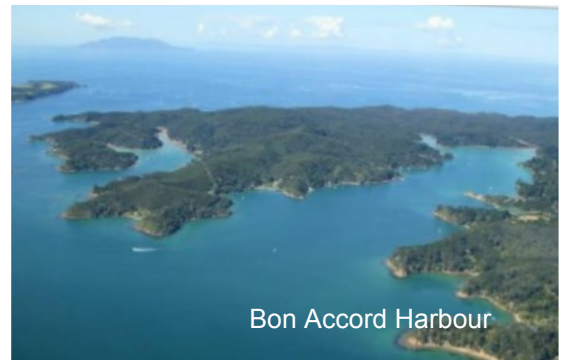
We were now on our own, Having boarded the night before, we were away on the tide motoring down the Tamaki River, leaving Brown's Island to port, and on through the Motohuie channel. As we came clear of Mototapu, it looked like we would be able to sail. A clearing tack to miss Rakino was needed, but after that we were able to lay through the Tiri Tiri channel and on past the islands until the sails were lowered off Bon Accord Harbour on Kawau where we anchored for the night near the yacht Club. We did not go ashore.



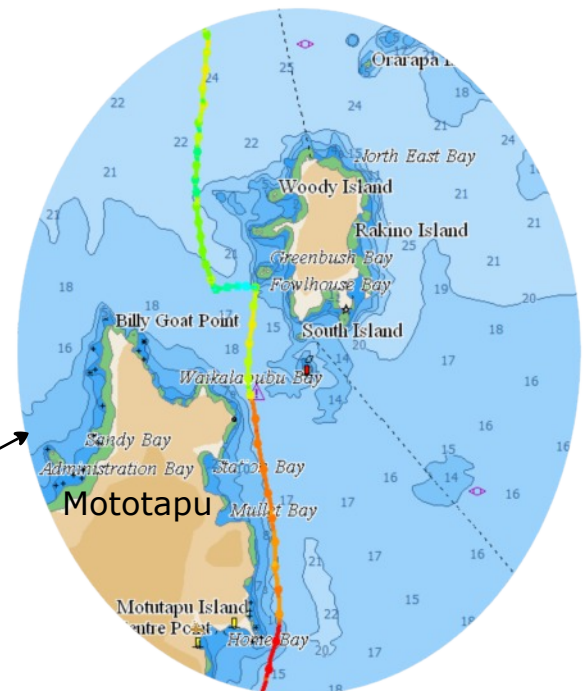
Mansion House Bay, Kawau



Mansion House



Bon Accord Harbour

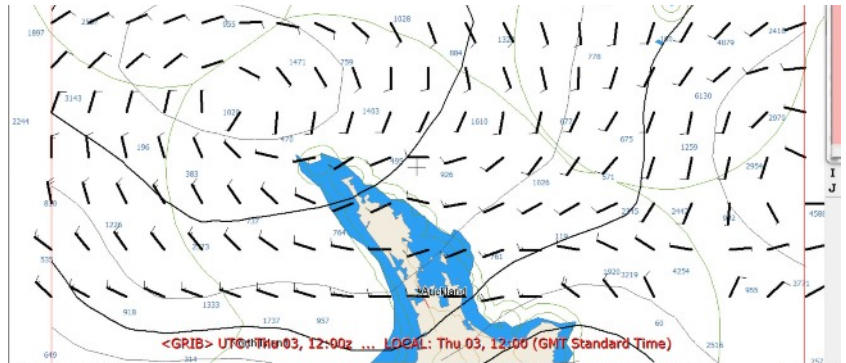




Taking Stock

Once anchored in Kawau, we could, for the first time, slow down and take stock after a hectic period since our arrival in New Zealand.

I had helped Iain fit the Aries self-steering which he had overhauled and rebuilt. We had had a problem installing it. Iain had rebuilt it according to the drawings, but it would not work unless we reversed the bevel gear. We reckoned at this stage that it would work either way. But on the trip up to Kawau, I had experimented, and realised that the instability that we had been experiencing was because the bevel gear was reversed. With the gear the right way round, a small deviation would twist the paddle in such a way as to damp out the error. With the bevel the wrong way round, an error was amplified, even though the rudder turned the right way if the wind vane was tilted. This was puzzling! But it explained the instability.



We knew *True* had been to Fiji and back, so the Aries must have worked then. Our only theory was that the swimming platform had been added *after* that trip. When the Aries fouled the swimming platform, Reg (the previous owner) must have reversed the bevel gear to make it fit. Typical Kiwi "should be right!" cavalier approach! It obviously had not worked properly for many years!

Sadly, putting the problem right would require a mod to the swimming platform, so Dairne and I were stuck with hand steering (or using the electric autopilot) for the rest of our cruise. I phoned Iain, and he agreed with my diagnosis.

Just before I left UK I had also taken an SSB Long Range radio course. Now I could start looking at the SSB set beside the chart table. Very quickly, I was able to receive many stations including local AM and FM stations and time signals from Hawaii. But I was having no luck with transmitting. I decided to wait till I could visit Russell Radio in the Bay of Islands.

Weather forecasts in New Zealand are excellent where you can receive VHF, and the 'nowcasting' service which continuously broadcasts a synthesised voice giving wind speed and direction at a number of stations in the Hauraki Gulf as far north as Tutukaka. Very useful!

By using the mobile phone as a modem, we could also download grib files (though I have since learned much more efficient ways of doing this). As can be seen from the charts above, we were experiencing moderate westerlys off the land, generated by a high pressure area north of the country, giving us flat water. This was likely to persist for only a few days, so we had to keep moving before the wind went into the expected northerly direction.



4th Feb Kawau to Tutukaka - 56 Miles

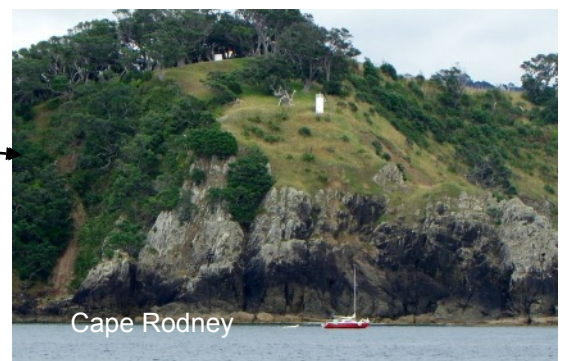
This day would remind us of two key features of New Zealand: The clarity of the air; and the sheer height of things. In particular, Little Barrier Island (in the top banner) is about 720m high and stayed with us throughout the day, being visible at distances in excess of 40 miles. That is rather like being able to see Suilven (which is the same height) from Stornoway.



It was a slow start, with little wind, so we were motoring out of the tricky north channel from Kawau, not setting sail till we were past Cape Rodney. Thereafter, we had a steady beam wind that drove us up past the fascinating Sail Rock, which changes shape depending on the angle of view.

Then, after passing inside Taranga Island, you come abeam of Bream Head. It does not look too impressive until you see tiny dots of fishing boats against it and realise it is 475 metres high. The temptation to go into Whangarei, a lovely town, has to be resisted because it is a very deep estuary and would add another full day (at least) to the passage north. Instead our

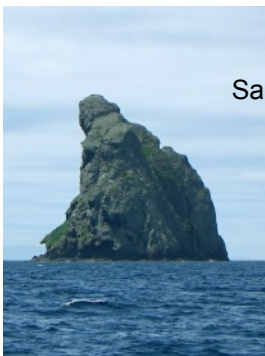
target was
Tutukaka.





The wind was fairly steady, so at times we were able to use the electric autopilot, which will steer a compass course, but most of the time we were hand steering to save power.

Gradually we reached the entrance to Tutukaka, which is interesting because there are offlying rocks. We were lucky on this occasion as there was no swell (because of the offshore wind).



Sail Rock



Tutukaka



Leading Marks

The chartlet above shows the harbour of Tutukaka, and just to the left of the launch in the picture above, the red and white leading mark posts are visible. Once these are identified, the entrance is easy.

True is a difficult boat to manoeuvre in a confined space, so we chose to anchor for the night, rather than going in to the marina where we understood the fingers were



narrow and short. However, we found it difficult to get the CQR to bite, and it was not until the fourth attempt that we were satisfied.



Tutukaka entrance (source C-Map)

But what a glorious anchorage! The entrance was flanked by high cliffs, and the banner above shows the view from the anchorage at dawn.



5th Feb Tutukaka to Whangamumu 28M

Although we were faced with a much shorter leg on this day, we were away early to catch the benefit of the gentle north going tide. It promised to be a hot day, so we were soon glad of the Bimini -though this offered little protection against the low morning sun glittering off the Pacific to the east where we could see the Poor Knights Islands a dozen miles away. Whoever was helming needed plenty of sunblock.

Looking to the north, we could see a steep sided island just off the coast, but it was some time before we convinced ourselves that it really was Piercy Island off Cape

Brett some 30 miles away. We could still just see Little Barrier Island, nearly 40 miles astern. The air was incredibly clear, the sky a brilliant blue.

After motoring for an hour or two, we were able to sail in a light westerly breeze. Towards late morning the breeze faded, and again we had to motor for an hour until the sea breeze filled in from slightly north of east, as shown by the wind tails on the chart.

We were close hauled, and only just managed to clear shoals off Home Point without tacking

Gradually the new breeze freshened until we were bowling along at 6 kts as we approached Whangamumu Peninsula. As it was mid week, there were very few other boats about.

Luckily, there was no sign of a swell coming in from the Pacific (which we understood is the norm), which made the natural harbour of Whangamumu fascinating destination.

We entered slowly under power, and were able to pick an empty spot. It was very hot. We were in time for a late lunch, and a lazy afternoon.





Whangamumu



Whangamumu

The inner harbour is accessed via a relatively narrow passage, which must offer protection from most directions. The entrance is easy to identify once the green triangle (below centre) comes into view. After we had anchored, the wind shifted making us swing uncomfortably close to some rocks, so we re-anchored on the other side of the Bay.



I put the dinghy over the side so I could get some pictures of *True*.

There was a lot of coming and going and by dusk there were about 30 launches, fishing boats, and yachts anchored on the Bay.





6th Feb Whangamumu to Paradise Bay 18 miles approx

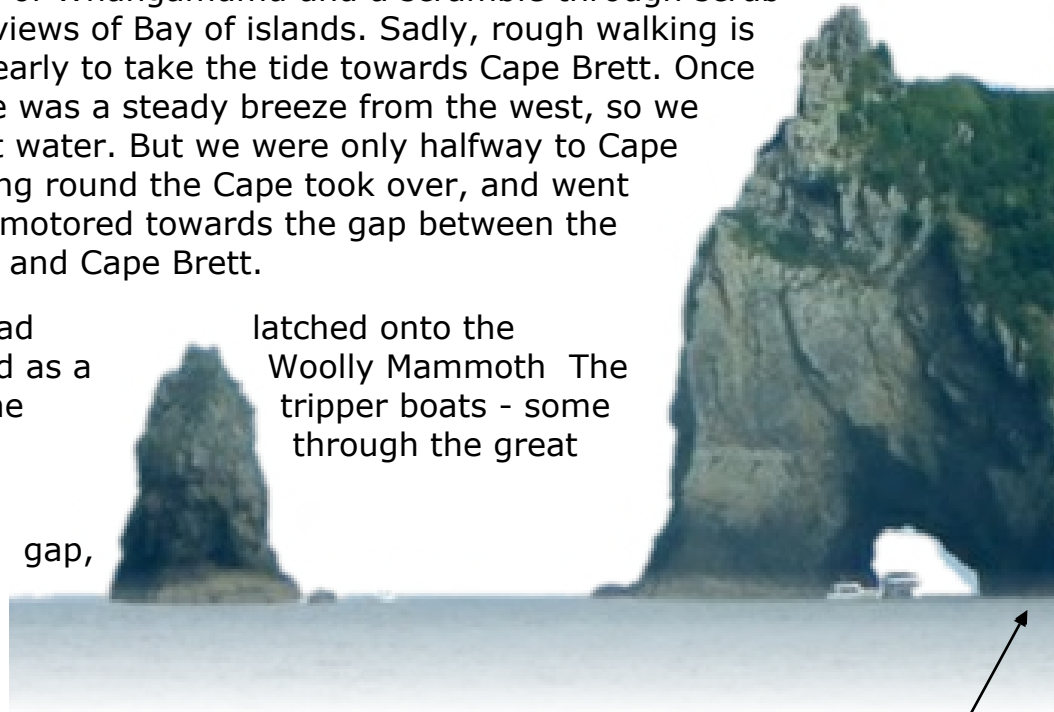
We were tantalisingly close to our objective, the Bay of Islands. A rugged walk up the green triangle at the head of Whangamumu and a scramble through scrub would have yielded good views of Bay of islands. Sadly, rough walking is beyond us. So we set off early to take the tide towards Cape Brett. Once clear of the harbour, there was a steady breeze from the west, so we reached northwards in flat water. But we were only halfway to Cape Brett when the wind coming round the Cape took over, and went right on the nose. So we motored towards the gap between the huge rock of Piercy Island and Cape Brett.

We could see why Harry had description of Piercy Island as a sheer scale is shown by the about 100 feet - charging natural arch.

latched onto the Woolly Mammoth The tripper boats - some through the great

As we headed towards the gap, the lighthouse on the Cape came into view. As ever in New Zealand , a small lighthouse on a very tall rock. The light

is 146 metres above sea level. No wonder we could see these features more than 30 miles away!



Albert Channel (Source: C-Map)

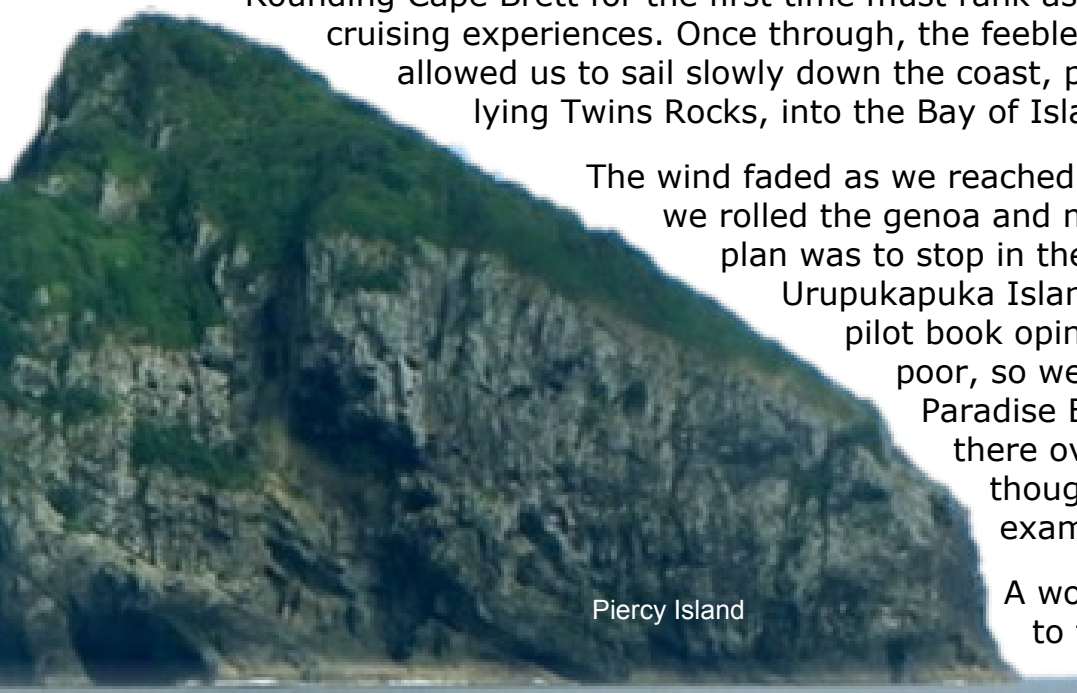


The Twins





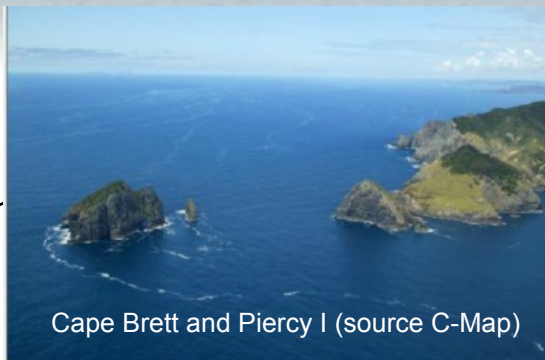
Rounding Cape Brett for the first time must rank as one of the great cruising experiences. Once through, the feeble westerly breeze allowed us to sail slowly down the coast, passing close to the low lying Twins Rocks, into the Bay of Islands.



Piercy Island

The wind faded as we reached the Albert Channel, so we rolled the genoa and motored. Our original plan was to stop in the first bay on Urupukapuka Island, but we confirmed the pilot book opinion that the holding is poor, so we proceeded on to Paradise Bay. Iain had spent time there over Christmas, and we thought we would follow his example.

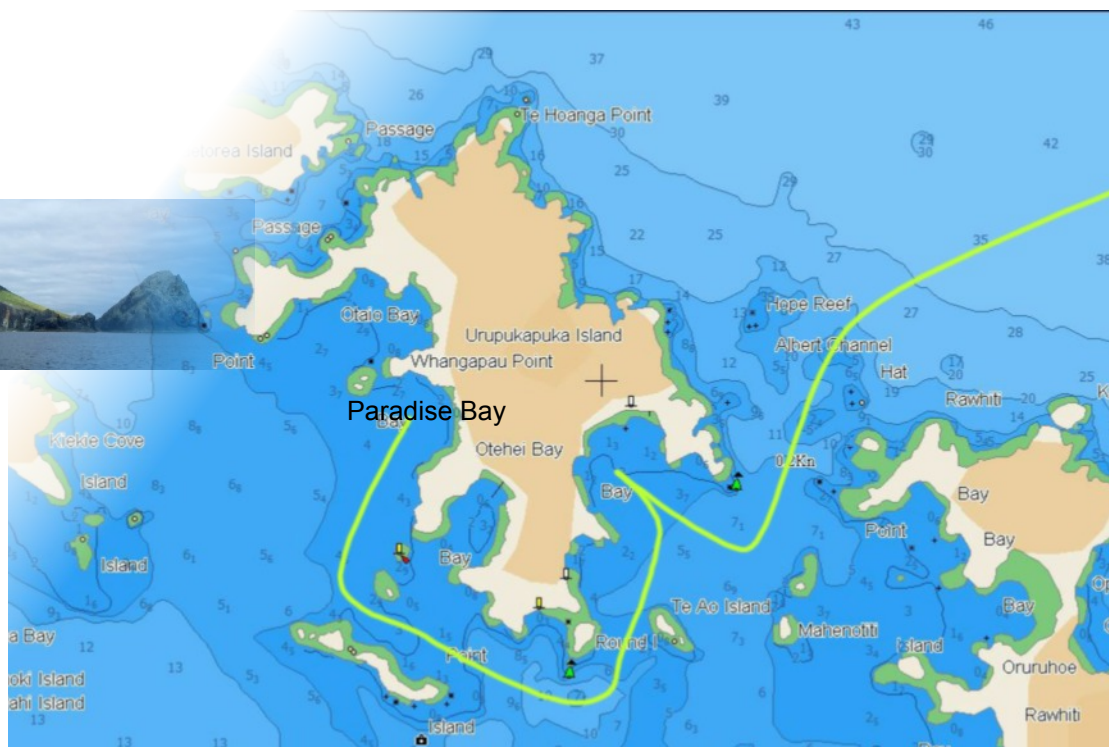
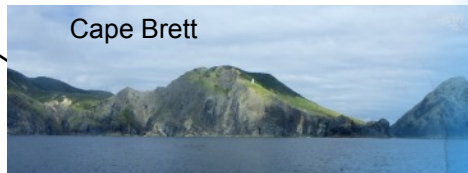
A wonderful spot. We went to the beach and played on the waters edge, but we had to be careful of the searing sun.



Cape Brett and Piercy I (source C-Map)



Cape Brett





Lion New Zealand anchored off Paradise Bay



Paradise Bay

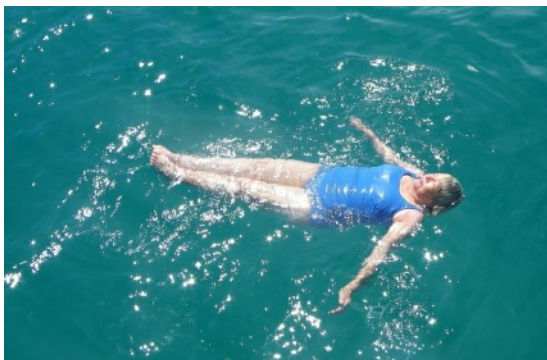
The sand was hot underfoot, so the shade from the Pohutakawa tree was essential.

A lazy day of swimming off *True* or sitting in the shade on board or on the beach.

Luxury!

Water so clear the bottom was clear in six metres.

The only problem was the gulls leaving their calling card on the dinghy!





8th-9th Feb Doves Bay 11 miles

In almost still condition, we motored slowly across the Bay of Islands to Te Puna inlet and the Doves Bay marina. Our track took us along the south side of a chain of islands, including Roberton Island. Then, rather than find our way round the Black Rocks, we opted to go south of Motorua Island and through the Kent Passage. Inevitably, there were some anxious moments passing under the cables that are strung across the Kent Passage.

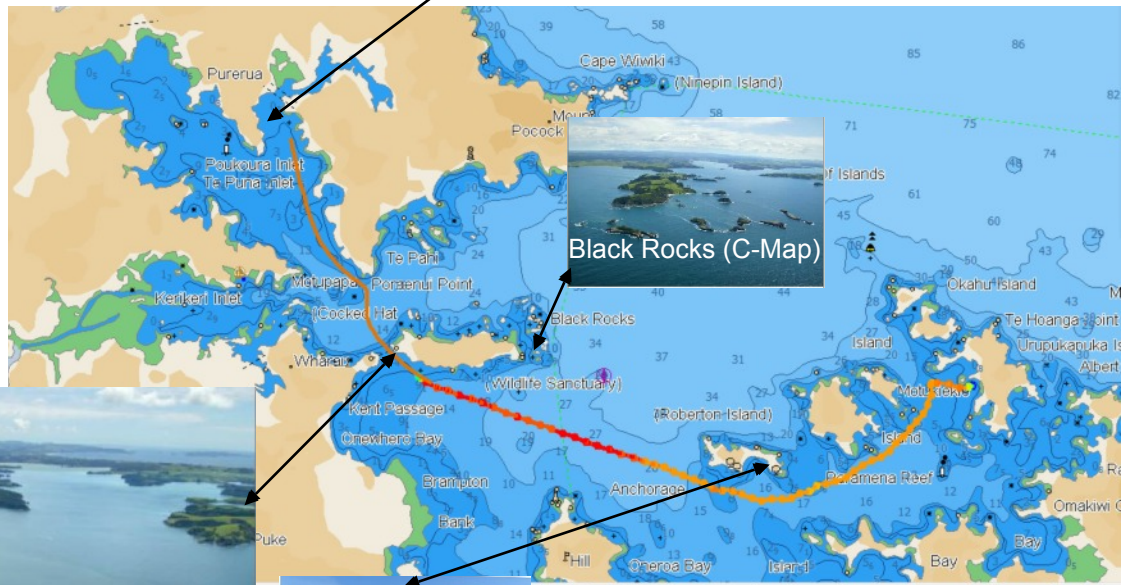
True does not manoeuvre well in marinas, so we moored on the outer breakwater till allocated a berth which happened to be adjacent to David Barker's launch *Feather*.

In addition to contacting David, we had phoned Zara, daughter of one of the founder members of Marchwood YC, now married and living at Keri Keri. We arranged for her to come aboard in the early evening.

David took us to his exciting house on a bluff overlooking the Doves Bay marina, and we had an enjoyable meal with him and Tania. Next morning, David took us into Keri Keri to do some shopping.



Doves Bay marina seen from David's deck



Black Rocks (C-Map)



Kent Passage (Source C-Map)



We had a good chat with Zara and her son Alex, and arranged that the following morning, Phil, her husband who frequently worked at the marina, would assist us to turn *True* round to make leaving the marina easier. That was a real help.



Zara and Alex on *True*

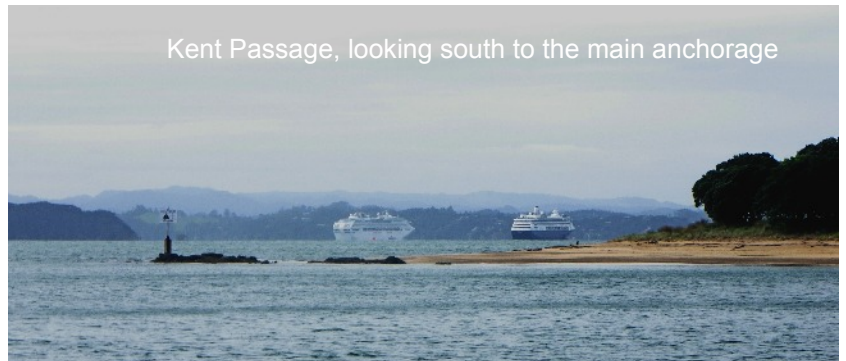


10th Feb Doves Bay to Opuia and Russell 15 miles approx

The time had come to talk to Russell radio about the single side band. We made our way under power through the Kent passage. There was a light breeze but it was from the south so we motored gently up towards Opuia. We had plenty of time so we decided to explore a little before running back towards Russell under Genoa only.

There were two cruise ships anchored in the bay, with small tenders and launches scurrying everywhere. Many of them were heading across to Paihia and the passengers were then taken by coach to Waitangi where the first treaty with the Maori had been signed.

We were anchored off Russell by lunchtime. In the afternoon we went ashore in the dinghy and quickly found that Russell radio had a small office right on waterfront. As luck would have it Stewart, the principal partner in Russell radio, was on duty. He was enthusiastically helpful and immediately offered to run a test broadcast immediately after the daily schedule.

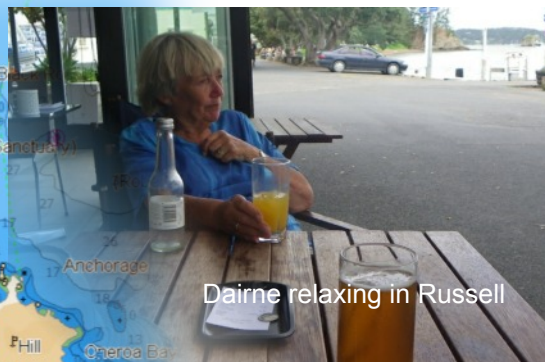
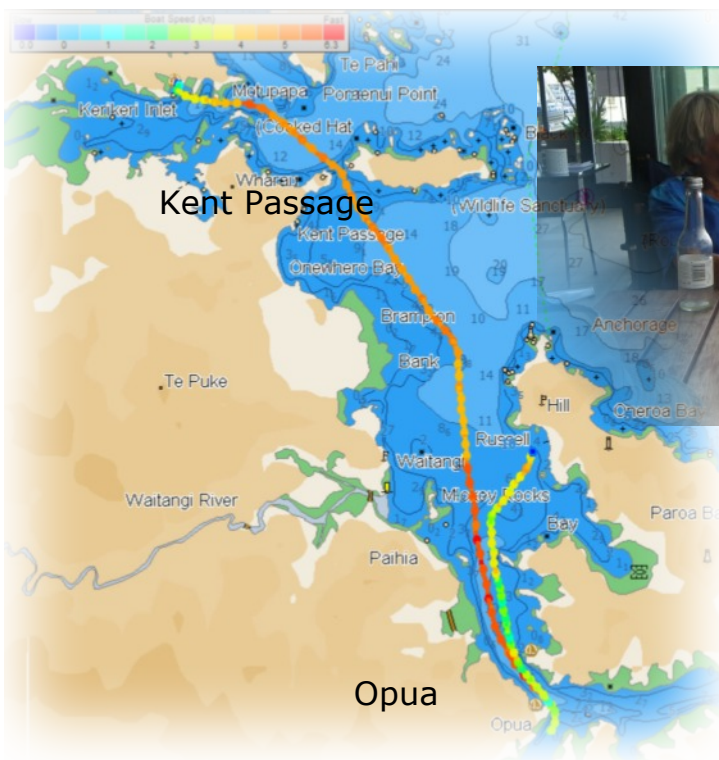


Kent Passage, looking south to the main anchorage

Stuart thought the transmission from *True* was OK, but could be improved. He recommended that we get the radio engineer to have a look at the aerial and give the set a thorough test. We promptly took his advice, and Stuart contacted a Dutch



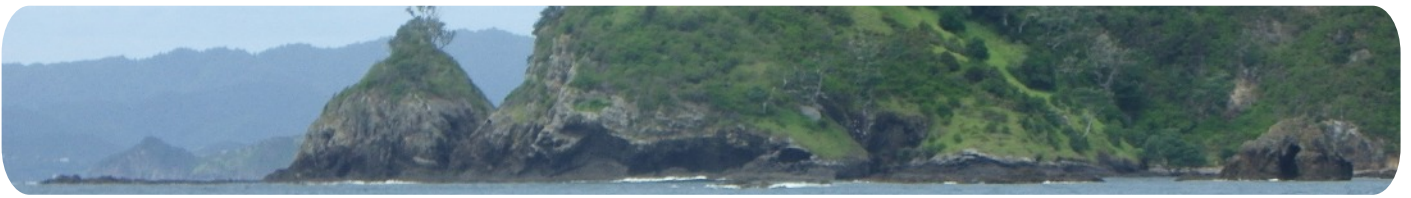
True off Russell



Dairne relaxing in Russell

engineer who agreed to visit *True* the couple of days later. We were starting to make progress.

We had visited Russell before, and found it a pleasant town with some interesting tourist shops, clearly aimed at the cruise ship market. Nevertheless we had a wander round and Dairne did manage to find the lightweight jacket that really suited her.



11 Feb Daysail from Russell 13 miles

Iain had rung to say that he and Harry would like to join us for the weekend. We agreed to pick them up at Opuia that evening. So we just had a gentle sail in light breezes around the Bay before reaching gently up the river, passing a beautiful brigantine and yet another cruise ship on the way.

Our earlier excursion through Opuia had warned us that the tide running through the marina could be a



Silver Spirit - one of the uglier cruise ships!



problem for *True*, so we arrived as close as possible to high water. We called the marina on vhf and they were helpful in allocating us a relatively easy berth.

The American who helped us berth had just scrapped a fancy rig on his large two masted yacht that he had sailed across the

Pacific, and had the boat re-rigged as a two masted junk. He had been helped and advised by Annie Hill who has written a lot about the rig. Unfortunately she had left a few days earlier. She would have been a fascinating person to meet.



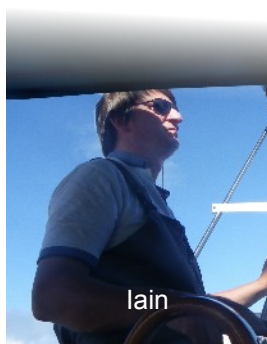


12 Feb Opuia to Paradise Bay

12 miles approx

We woke to find a light easterly breeze, which we expected to freshen later as the sea breeze filled in, so we decided that Paradise Bay would once again be the perfect spot.

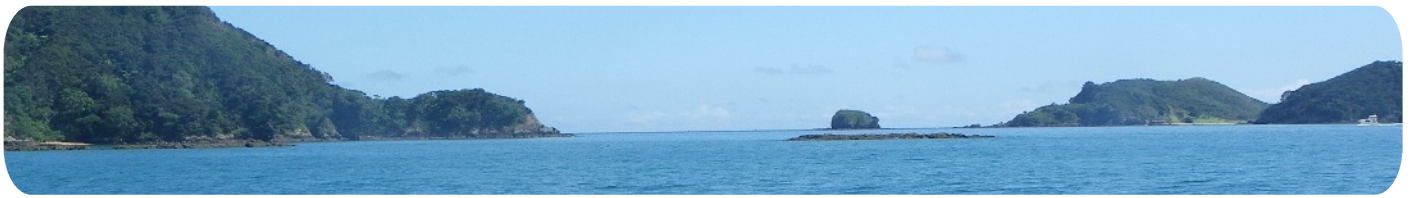
After an early breakfast, we got under way, reaching down river from Opuia and enjoying a gentle beat among the islands.



As we sailed between Roberton and Moturua Islands we had to short tack to avoid the Te Miko reef.

Once anchored in Paradise Bay by late morning, we all went ashore for a lot of beach fun. Harry had a wonderful time, and was great company.





13Feb Return to Opuia 14 miles

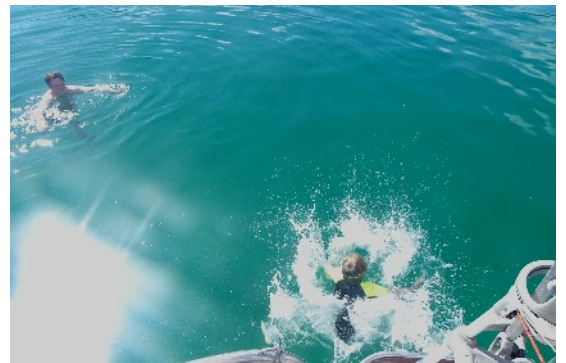
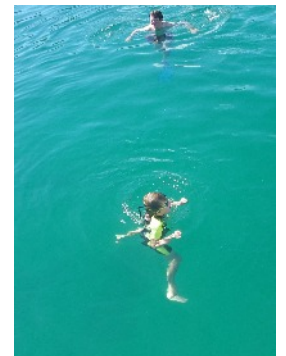
Harry had to choose between fishing and swimming - he chose the latter as these pictures show.

Iain and Harry had a four hour drive once we got back to Opuia. But there was still time for a lot of swimming off *True*. At midday we set off motoring as it was almost a dead run and a very light breeze.

Because of their timing, we motored all the way, and once again the marina found us an easy berth for the night.

It had been a very successful weekend, enjoyed by all. Iain and Harry had a fairly easy run home too.

We had arranged for Hans to come on board and check the SSB at Russell the next morning, so after seeing Iain and Harry safely on their way, we motored back to Russell to anchor for the night





14Feb Opua to Omakiwi Cove 15 miles approx

By 0900, we were alongside the wooden jetty at Russell waiting for an engineer to check the SSB radio. It is a very interesting wooden structure and steps made life easy. It is free to use if you have a reason to be there (but there is a charge if you were to stop overnight)



Hans arrived at 1000hrs and checked the system out in a businesslike way. His only doubt was the integrity of the earthing strip built into the hull (which Iain later repaired). Hans remade the aerial connection, and carried out local tests with Russell Radio. We discussed with Stewart and Bev (the other Russell radio operator) a schedule of tests as we went down towards Auckland to test the radio at various ranges.

However, before we left, Stewart contacted a friend in Kawau so that after the evening sched we could run test transmissions with him with reasonable success - a distance of about 80 miles with rough terrain in the way. Earlier tests had shown that the set was working, but left room for improvement. Russell radio staff had been incredibly helpful, and treated the whole exercise as an exercise for themselves

After a final visit to the supermarket, we were ready to leave at noon. There was a light SW breeze, so we made sail and drifted clear of Russell round the headland.

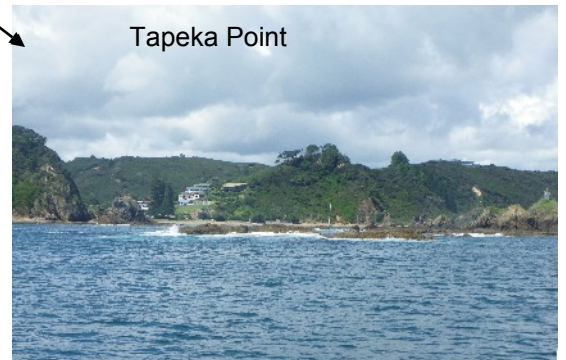
We were beginning our voyage South.



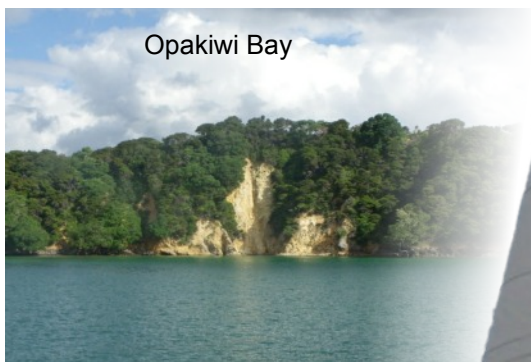


At first there was a gentle southerly breeze giving a run, then the wind died for a while until it was replaced by an easterly seabreeze, as the 'hedgehog' shows.

So we had a gentle beat to Omakiwi Bay, which offered us a secure anchorage for the night.

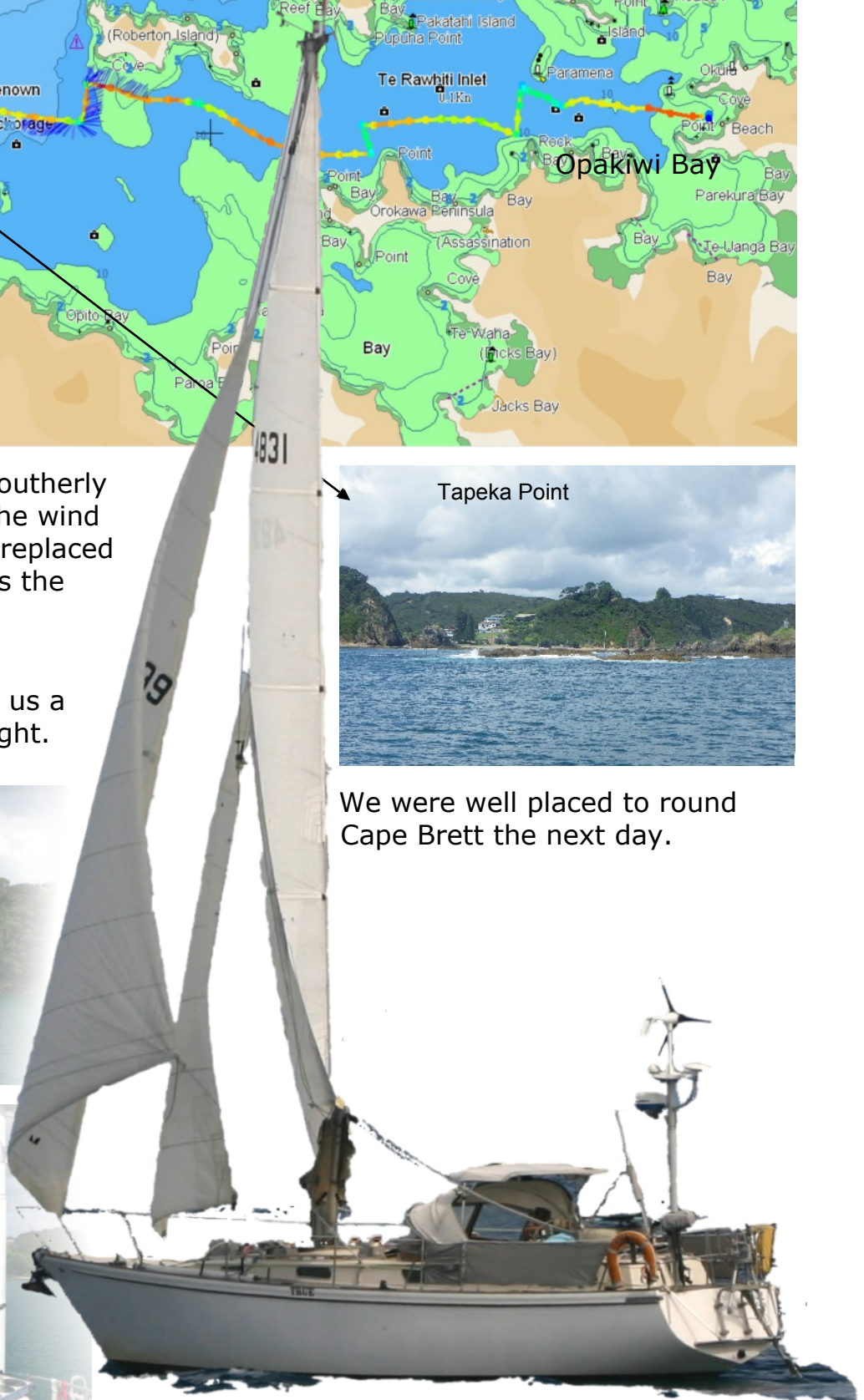


Tapeka Point



Opakiwi Bay

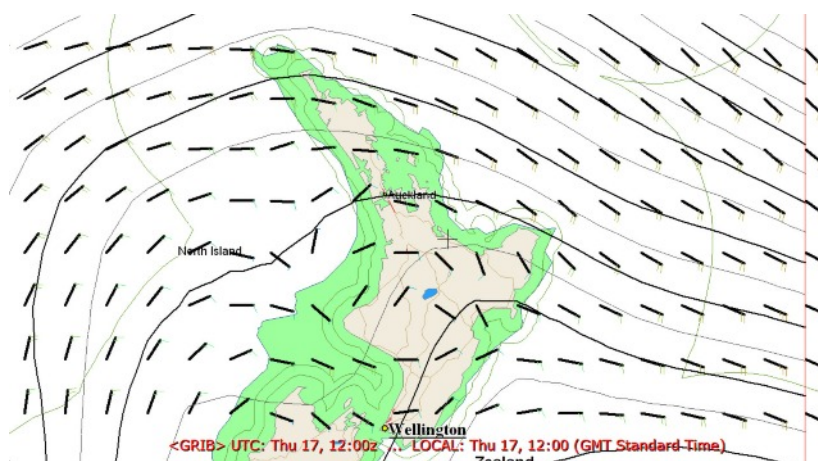
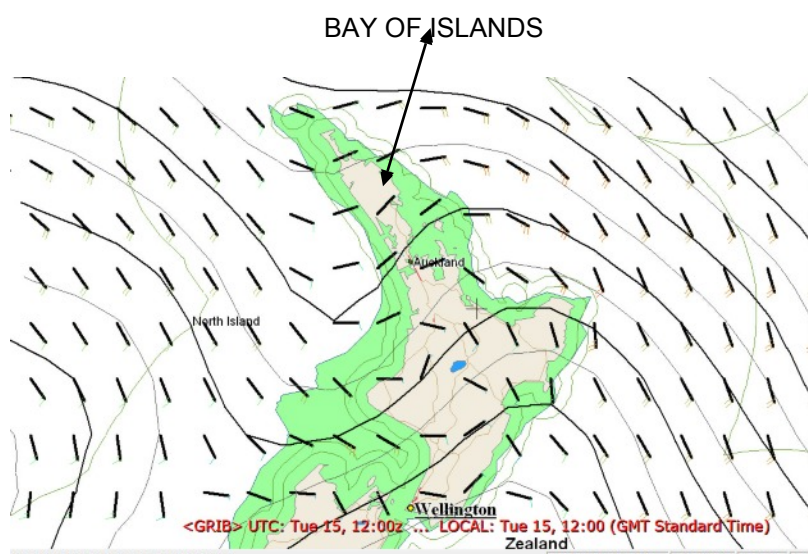
We were well placed to round Cape Brett the next day.





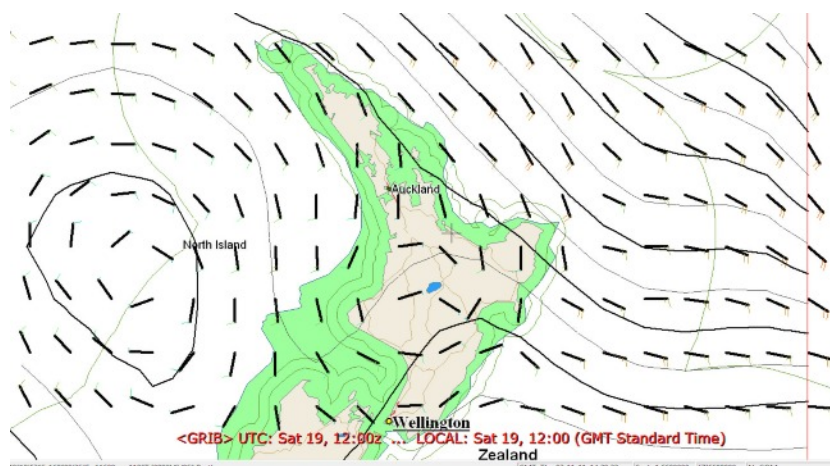
Passage Planning for the trip South

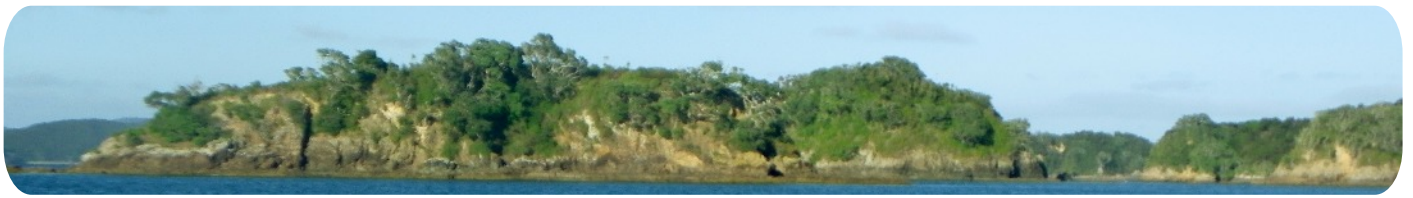
These three weather maps show the weather patterns for the day we departed, and 48 and 96 hours later. Clearly the sooner we could get south, the better. High pressure would persist to the west of North Island, but the winds would veer further into the south until by the following weekend, wind would be on the nose. At least no really strong winds were in prospect.



For northern hemisphere sailors, the reversal of circulation round weather systems in the southern hemisphere takes a lot of getting used to!

Mainly I downloaded weather grib files using email at Internet cafes when ashore, but we were starting to get proper results from the weatherfax via the SSB,



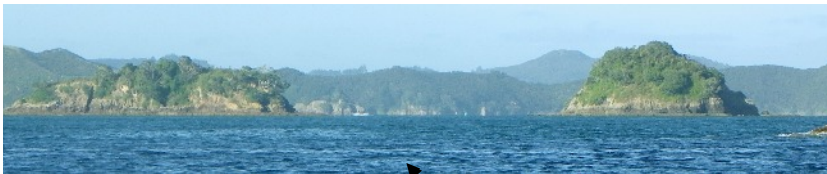


15 Feb Opakiwi to Mimiwhangata 28M

There was a light SSW breeze when we set off early in the morning. It was a dead run, a course where *True* does not perform well, so we motored.

Our course took us back through the Albert Channel, but this time we passed east of Hat Rock. The channel there is narrow, but deep enough and clearly marked.

It was not until we had passed between Cape Brett and Piercy Island that we were able to sail. It was pleasant enough, but there was only just sufficient breeze to drive *True* through a slight chop on the water



We tacked back inshore too early, and a windshift nearly wiped out all the gains we had made, but as we closed the shore, we got a lift.

Throughout the afternoon, the wind backed further. Eventually we were lifted enough to lay Mimiwhangata, a bay Dairne had visited some years earlier in cousin Tony's launch.



Looking towards Cape Brett from Mimiwhangata



Mimiwhangata



By the time we reached Mimiwhangata, the breeze had freshened more than expected. Even though the wind was easterly, the underlying Pacific swell was - if anything - slightly north of east, and was working in to the outer parts of the anchorage, so we had to creep into the NE corner as much as possible.

During the evening we spoke to Russell Radio on one of their scheduled frequencies, which was a real milestone. Although we were not far from Russell, there were high hills in the way, so it looked as though we were not using ground wave.

That evening the wind freshened through the night, and was well into the south east by morning. We decided not to go south, and considered going back to Whangaruru. In the end we stayed put as we did not like the idea of giving up 10-15 miles downwind, even if it may have been more comfortable. So we stayed put.



During the course of the day, several yachts and fishing vessels arrived in the Bay, so it was clear that experienced locals were also seeking shelter from the wind, which was still very fresh.

Altogether, we spent 3 nights in Mimiwhangata before deciding that we had to move on. By then the wind had moderated a little.



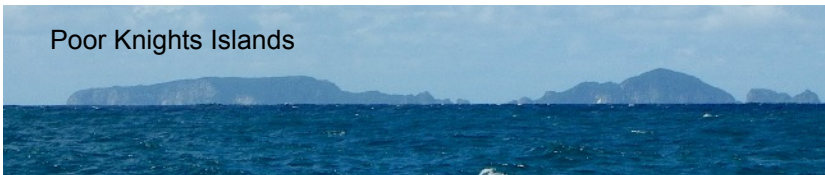


Tutukaka entrance

18th Feb Mimiwhangata to Tutukaka 18M

A glorious sailing day, but a dead beat to windward. We had a slight ambition to make the anchorage behind Bream Head near Whangarei, but the slight chop and moderate breeze soon dictated that we aimed for Tutukaka.

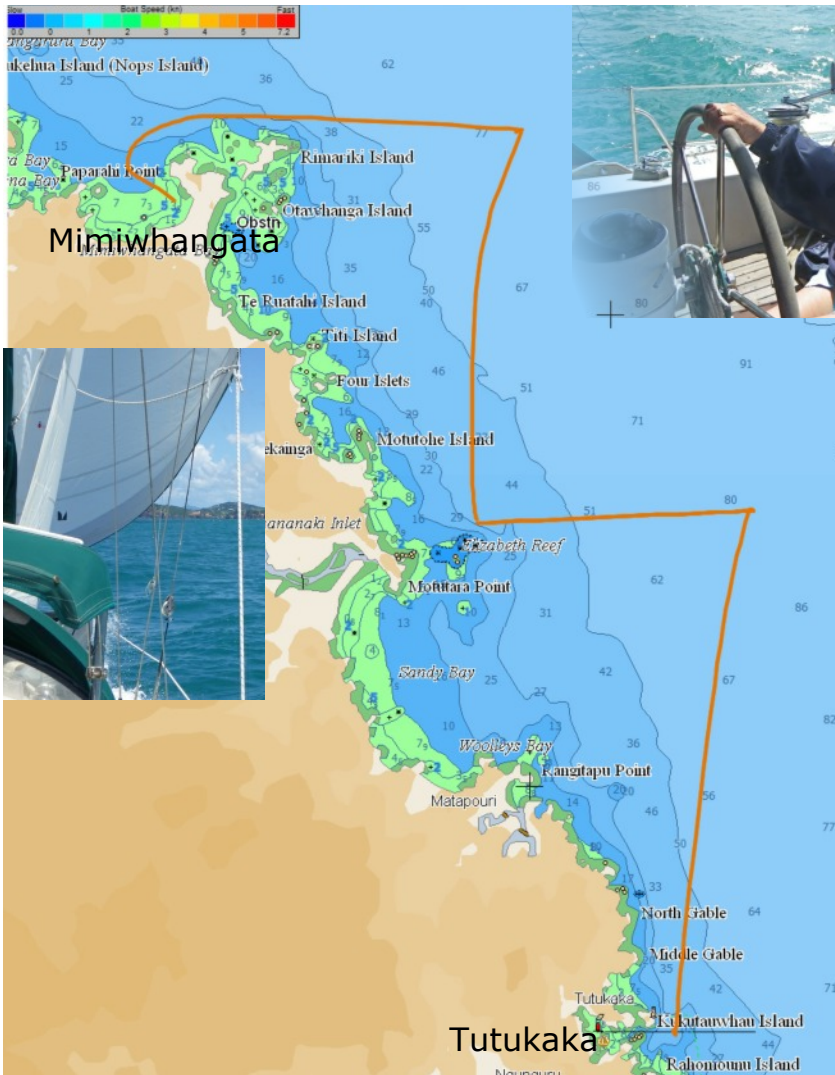
We made fairly long tacks going out towards the Poor Knights Islands, looking blue on the horizon.



Poor Knights Islands

Those islands look like a fascinating and challenging destination for a future cruise.

For a dead beat, we had no effective autopilot, so it was hand steering all the way quite tiring. The gables north of Tutukaka (with a lighthouse at 92m) appeared over the horizon, and gave us a target. There was about a metre of swell, so the approach



to Tutukaka through the natural rock breakwater was interesting. Once inside, we rounded up and dropped the sails before anchoring.



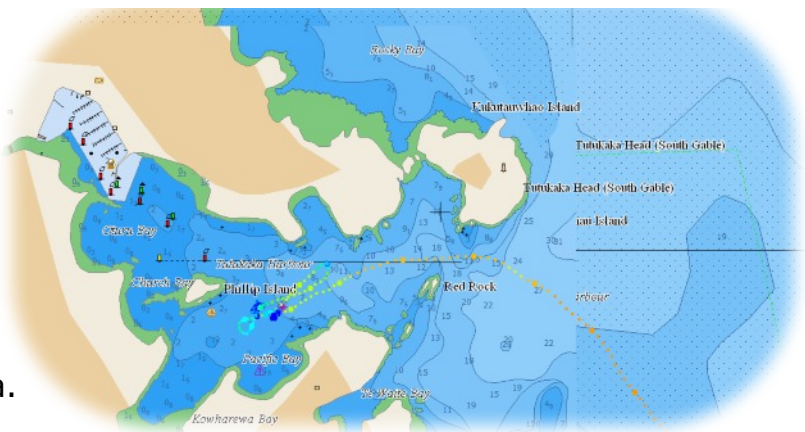
Tutukaka Light



Tutukaka

We were fed up with beating, and it looked as though waiting a day would give us an easier time over the next very long leg to Kawau. So we explored.

In the dinghy we cruised round the marina but found that the only practical place to land was at a small beach just outside the marina.



Tutukaka itself is basically a constructed holiday village. There is one really excellent restaurant where we had a rare meal ashore.. Then it was a long walk round to the supermarket.

We noted that, as we had been warned by Iain, the finger pontoons in the bulk of the marina were narrow and short. However, we also noted that there were some berths alongside pontoons well inside the marina, mainly used by large launches and fishing vessels. So on our way back to the dinghy, we called in to the marina office. There we learned that they would be more than willing to assist us if we called in on vhf and would put us on an alongside berth if available. More important, they were due to replace all the finger pontoons over the following winter. So next time we visit the harbour, things should be a lot easier.



There was more swell working into the harbour than during our previous visit, so in view of the rather dubious holding, I tended to keep an anchor watch from time to time. It was a glorious moonlit night. Conditions were moderating, so it was certain we would be able to move on the following day.

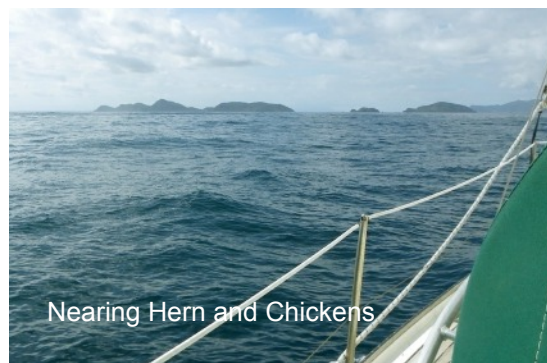


Little Barrier Island



20 Feb Tutukaka to Kawau 56 Miles

A long day with a lot of motor sailing. The weather had over -corrected! After leaving Tutukaka we could head straight towards Kawau, with a course that would take us close inside Hen and Chckens and Taranga, and very close to Sail Rock. But throughout the day we would be accompanied by the bulk of Little Barrier island many miles to seaward. On this day, unusually, it did not have a cloud cap.



Nearing Hen and Chickens

On the landward side, we could admire the sheer scale and ruggedness of Bream Head.

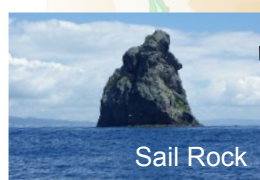
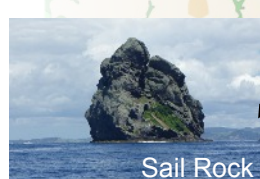
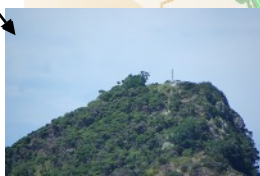
We passed quite close to Taranga, which is very steep sided. One wonders what effort was involved in building the little lighthouse on top of a high bluff surrounded by thick bush.

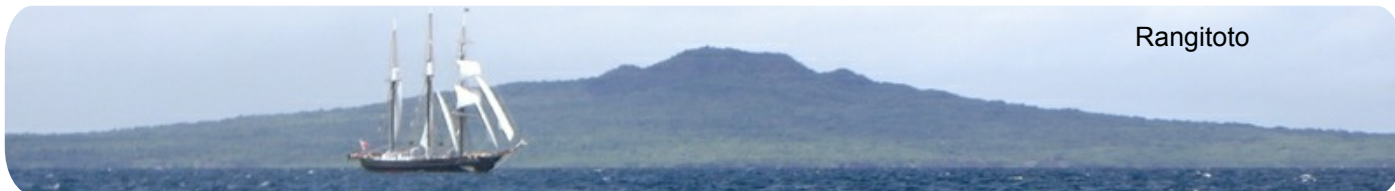


Taranga

Sail Rock never fails to amaze with its changing aspect as you pass.

Then there was a long and fairly tedious plug till we turned into North Channel and swung into Bon Accord Harbour in Kawau for the night. We were still able to talk to Russell Radio on the SSB, which was a relief as we had failed to make contact with them while in Tutukaka.



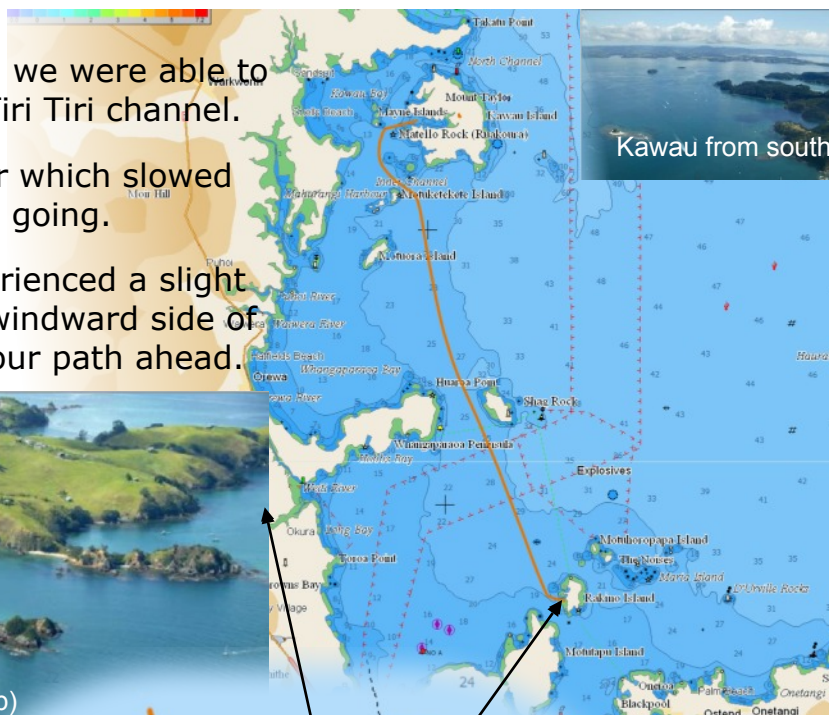


21 Feb Kawau to Rakino

Once we were well clear of Kawau, we were able to sail close hauled and just lay the Tiri Tiri channel.

There was a slight lop on the water which slowed us down, but we managed to keep going.

Luckily, once past Tiri Tiri we experienced a slight lift which enabled us to go to the windward side of Rangitoto which stretched across our path ahead.



Rakino (Source C-Map)

We did not need to get back so we opted instead to anchor in a bay on Rakino. We could only just get far enough in to avoid the swell.



Approaching Rakino

During the evening there was a great commotion from a shoal of fish, obviously being driven to the surface by predators. The birds took full advantage.....



Anchored Rakino



Shoal of fish under pressure from above and below



Musick Point



Rakino

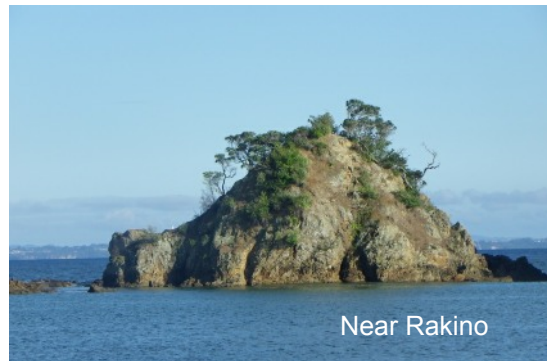
22nd Feb

Rakino to Panmure

It was a glorious morning with fluffy clouds. We made a leisurely start as we wanted to get to Panmure at high water to make it easier to pick up the mooring .

Rakino was at its best, the sun shining off steep sided rocks to which trees managed to cling somehow.

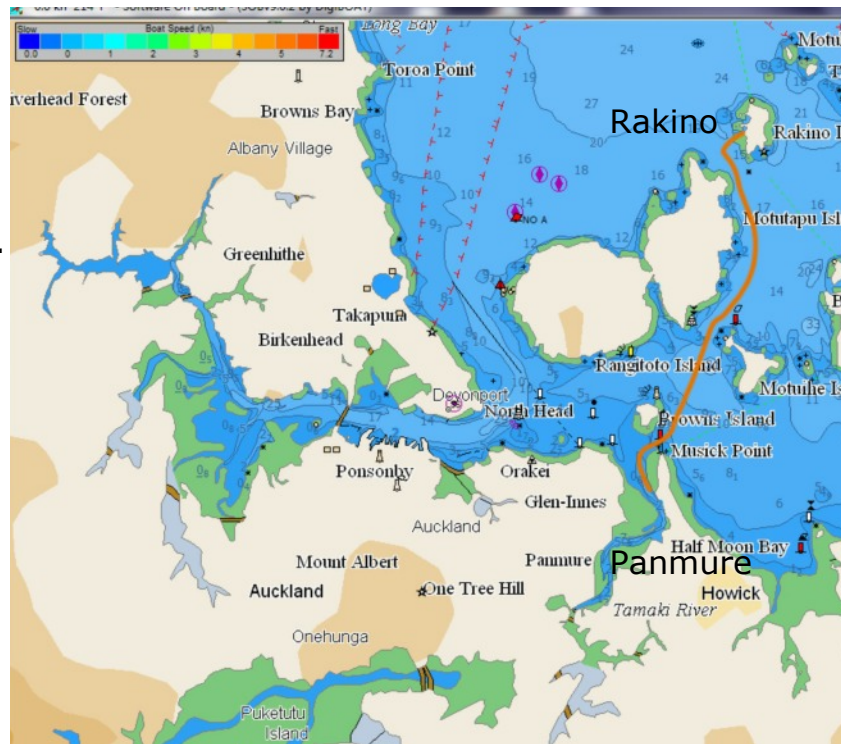
Once under way we worked our way through the Motohuie Channel before approaching Musick Point at the entrance of the Tamaki River.



Near Rakino

We made a successful pickup of the pile mooring and started to put the boat away. It was just after noon. The radio was on and we began to hear reports of a strong earthquake in Christchurch.

While it was unlikely to affect us I did listen in case there was a tsunami. On this occasion there was not.



Panmure

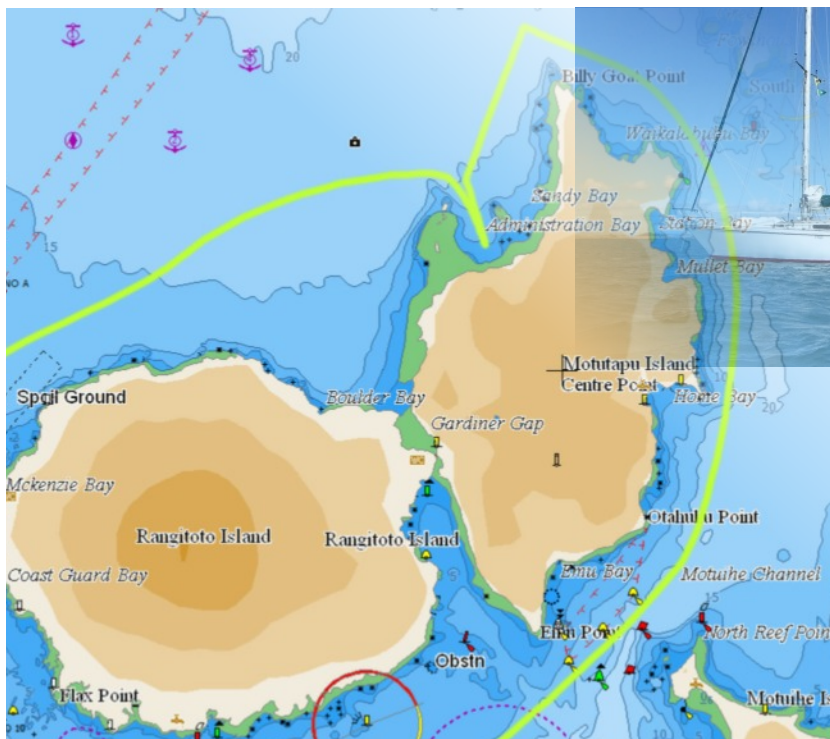


A Family Weekend

The family had been without *True* for 3 weeks, so on the next weekend, we all went for a fun weekend. Iain chose Sandy Bay on the north of Mototapu next to Rangitoto.

It was an easy sail there and we were able to anchor off the beach. Dairne and I stayed on board while Iain, Clare, Harry and Alice all went ashore.

Once back on board, there were games, fun and food.





The next morning I joined Iain and the kids on the beach for sand castle building



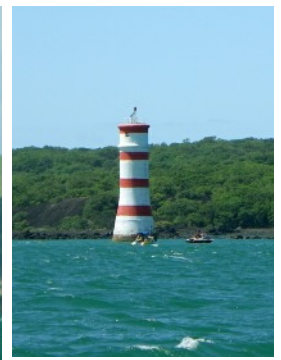
Iain caught a large Kahawai which again fed all six of us when we got back home!



Below centre: Prototype half-size America's Cup cat on its second day of trials. Seen at 1 mile.



Below: Rangitoto lighthouse which we passed on the way home



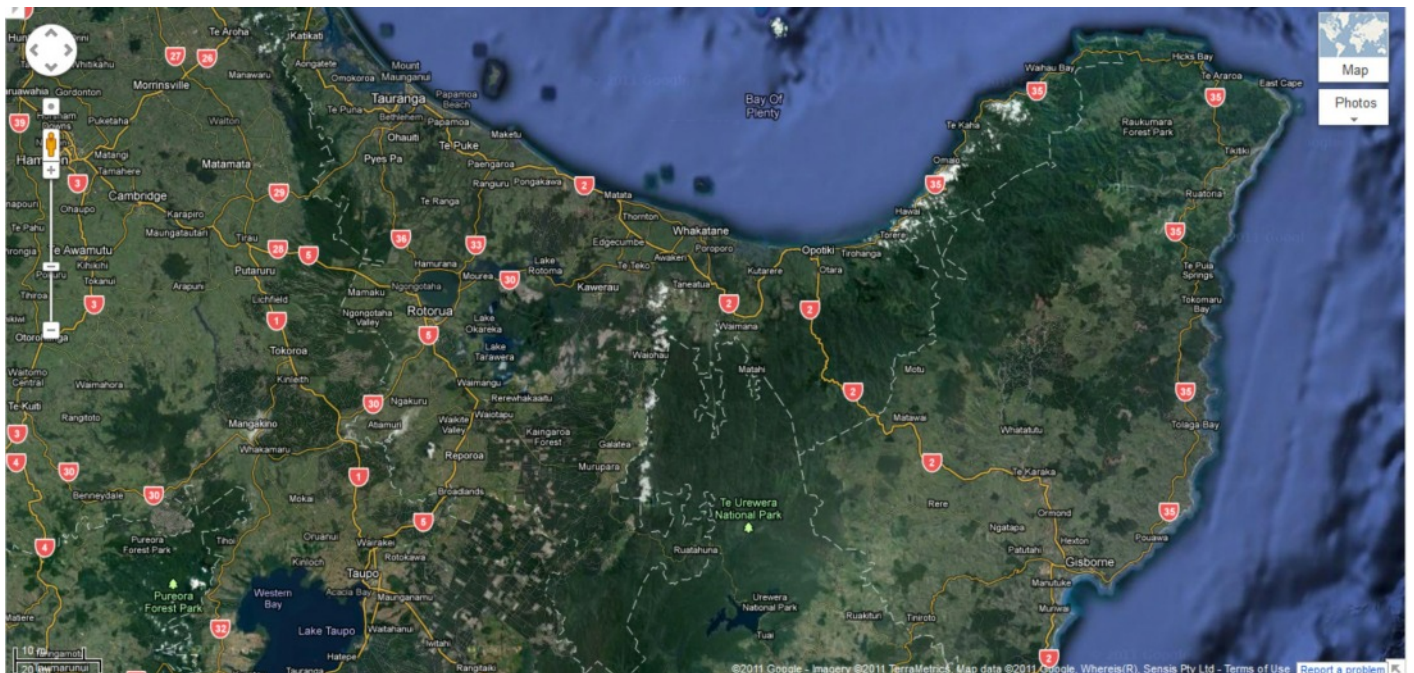
New Zealand Tours, 2011

East Cape Tour

There were two areas of New Zealand that we had not explored together, so we hired a car and set off on the first excursion. The plan was to do some 'touristy' things in the Rotarua area while visiting John and Kerry, then go out to East Cape, and back along the shore of the Bay of Plenty. Plans to visit Wendy and Perryn's farm south of Gisborne did not work out. So that is still on the 'to do' list.

Our air ticket had included some hotel accommodation, so we had arranged to stay one night in Gisborne and another at Taupo

So we set off from Auckland for the 4 hour drive down to Rotarua.





Cambridge

A very rural town, with many imported deciduous trees giving the town a very English feel.

The church had been converted into a museum, gift shop and cafe.





The Buried Village

We got down to Rotorua quite quickly and had time, so we visited the Buried Village, and started to learn the fascinating history of Mt Tarawera

In the late 19th century, the area had been a destination for international tourists. The whole area supported hotels, guides and so on. Expeditions were mounted to see the famous limestone steps on Lake



Rotomohana - a 2 day trek from the Buried Village.



Everything ended when Tarawera erupted explosively in 1886, and ash covered the area. We were to visit Tarawera a few days later.





Rotarua

We stayed overnight with John Barker, son of Dairne's cousin Tony. John and Kerryyn have a bubbly daughter Arwen.

After we got home, we learned in June that they had another daughter Leah.



Both John and Kerryyn are extremely active sports people, and we thoroughly enjoyed our visit.

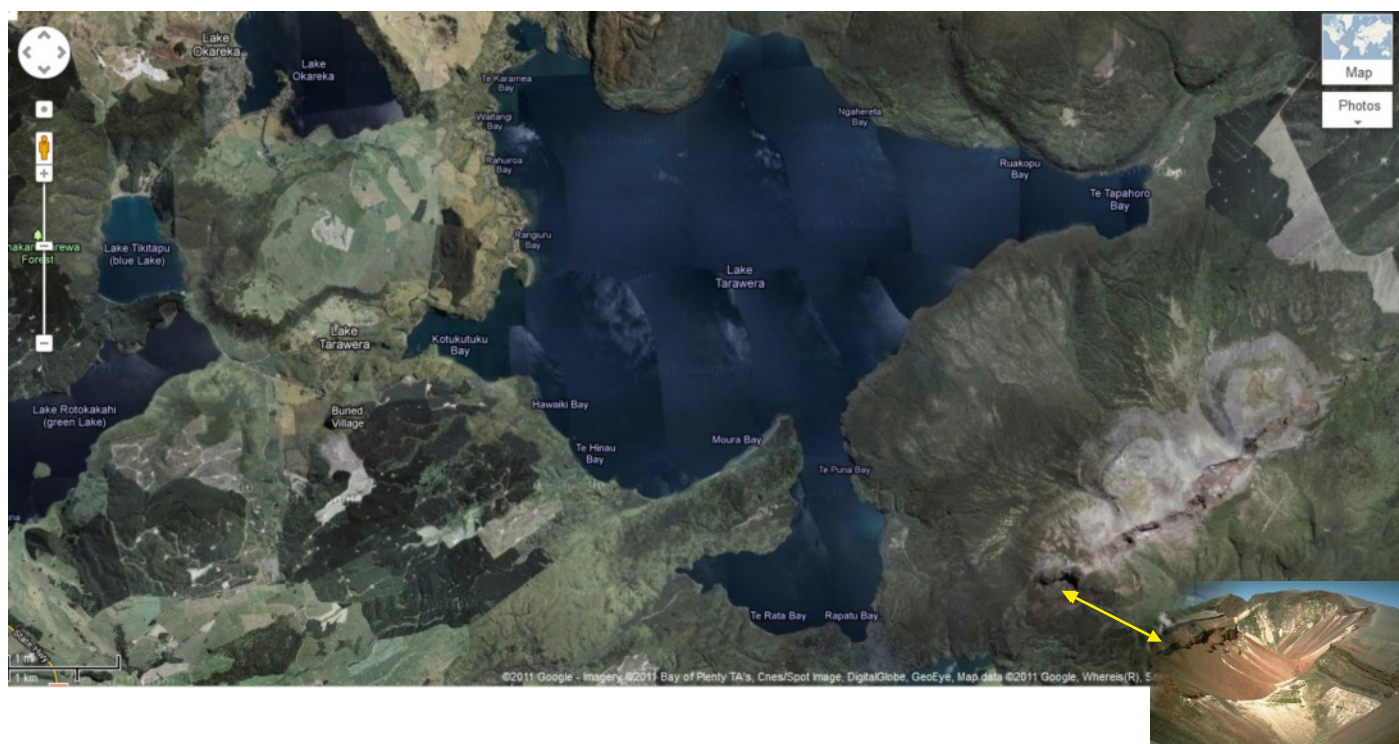
The amount of work that John has done on the house since we last visited is truly amazing, with a whole new extension, and a massive deck so the children can play safely in almost any weather.

But John is never short of projects, so it will look different next time we visit!



Unfortunately, John's invitation to join in the Wednesday evening yacht race on Lake Rotorua was called off because of a flat calm and heavy rain - definitely APD!





Lake Tarawera

This was a fascinating visit. From the Visitor Centre, a buggy takes you down the track to a small dock. Then there was a one hour boat trip including going into a tiny circular (a volcanic vent) the the NW corner of Lake Tarawera. Apart from fascinating vegetation and frequent signs of geothermal activity, we got an excellent view of the great gash in the side of Mount Tarawera where the side of the mountain had been blown off in 1886 eruption.



From Wikipedia, the following description is illuminating.

Shortly after midnight on the morning of 10 June 1886, a series of more than 30 increasingly strong earthquakes were felt in the Rotorua area and an unusual



sheet lightning display was observed from the direction of Tarawera. At around 2:00 am a larger earthquake was felt and followed by the sound of an explosion. By 2:30 am Mount Tarawera's three peaks had erupted, blasting three distinct columns of smoke and ash thousands of metres into the sky. At around 3.30 am, the largest phase of the eruption commenced; vents at Rotomahana produced a pyroclastic surge that destroyed several



villages within a 6 kilometre radius, and the Pink and White Terraces appeared to be obliterated.

The eruption was heard clearly as far away as Blenheim and the effects of the ash in the air were observed as far south as Christchurch, over 800 km south. Research by physicist Ron Keam identified 108 people killed by the eruption (including seven Europeans).



The eruption also buried many Māori villages, including Te Wairoa which has now become a tourist attraction, and the world famous Pink and White Terraces were lost. (A small portion of the Pink Terraces was rediscovered under Lake Rotomahana 125 years later.) Approximately 2 cubic kilometres of tephra was



erupted, more than Mount St. Helens ejected in 1980. Many of the lakes surrounding the mountain had their shapes and areas dramatically altered, especially the eventual enlargement of Lake Rotomahana, the largest crater involved in the eruption, as it re-filled with water. The rift created during the eruption extends 17 km across the mountain, Lake Rotomahana and through the Waimangu Volcanic Rift Valley.



The area is still geologically active.

The unusual black swans (far right) on the lake were brought from Australia





Waiteke Hot Springs

Our visit to Lake Tarawera was complete by the early afternoon. But not any miles away were the Waiteke Hot Springs that we had visited a few years earlier.

The water is naturally heated. The pools are generally controlled at



between 30 and 39 degrees centigrade. Too hot to swim - but after all the travelling, and the slightly sulphurous atmosphere round Rotorua, just lazing about in the warm water was relaxing and refreshing.



We returned to John and Kerry's house in Rotorua for the night.





Waioeka Gorge

Our target was Gisborne on the East Coast. Until the mid sixties when the Waioeka Gorge road was completed, the only way to get to Gisborne was a long detour by the coastal road, or on the Waioeka track, which - to say the least was rugged. It is amazing that such an important farming area had to rely mainly on coastal shipping connections until the second half of the twentieth century.

The road was officially opened in mid December 1962. The occasions marked the end of one of the most rugged road

reconstruction jobs in New Zealand - that of carving a full-width highway through the 25 miles of unstable, near vertical gorge which follows the tortuous path of the Waioeka River.

So we set off from Rotorua, driving through relatively flat rural areas until we reached the town of Opotiki on the shore of Bay of Plenty. From there we turned inland on Route 2 and into the Waioeka Valley. As the detail map of the road near the summit shows, the road is incredibly windy, with steep cliffs one side, and steep drops into the gorge on the other.

The descent into Gisborne is more gentle, reverting to a much more rural landscape quite quickly



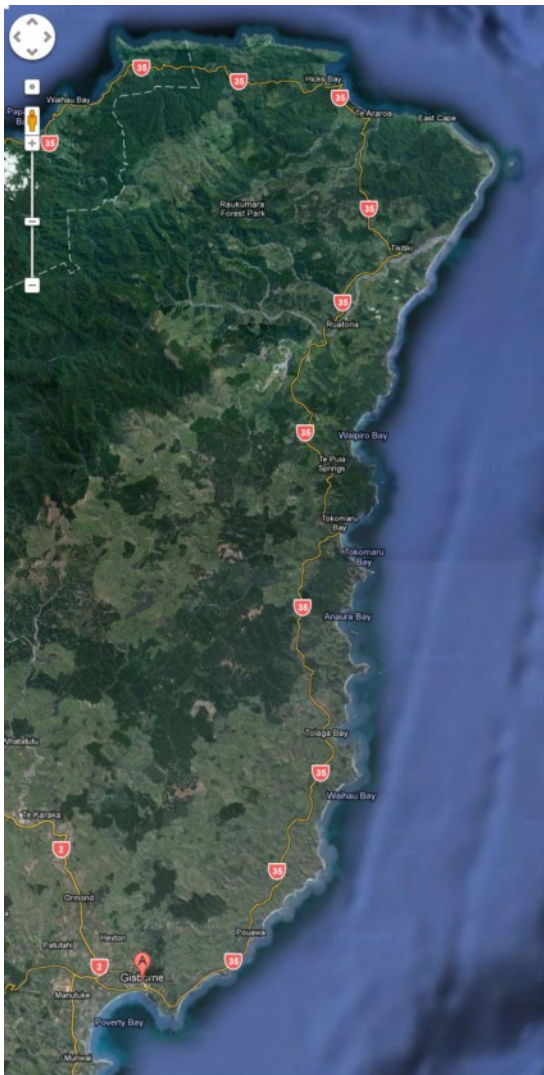


North from Gisborne

This turned out to be a fascinating day, which gave us an insight into the pioneering development of New Zealand.



Even before we left Gisborne we watched a ship being loaded with logs on a grand scale - clearly one of the main shipping exports from the area.

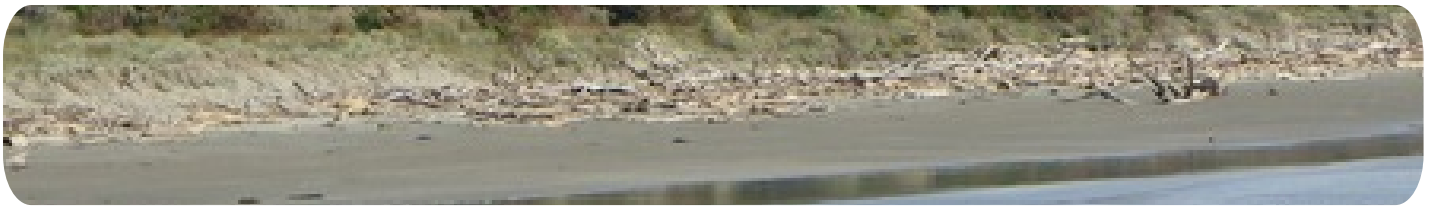


All day as we drove north we would come across massive log trucks heading for the port.

Heading north, our first stop was Tolaga Bay. It was almost a time capsule. Before good roads and reliable vehicles, produce had to be loaded out to ships in bays like this one. The jetty here was built in the 1920s and is 660 metres long. It seems likely that wool, timber, arable products and perhaps even live sheep were loaded into lighters that went out to big ships anchored in the bay outside the bar; or loaded into 'scows' not unlike Thames barges for transfer to other ports such as Auckland. This jetty was active till the mid 1960s. One wonders what sort of ships came here, how big, and where did they go?

Equally fascinating was the timber piled on the beach. Facing the open Pacific, one wonders where it came from!





Only a few miles further north there was another loading jetty at Tokomaru Bay. A slightly more sheltered pier than Tolaga Bay, but another little 20th century port for loading produce to ships anchored off. This port, however, boasted a substantial wool shed (right) and an imposing New Zealand Shipping Company office, now boarded up (lower right)



Whereas a trust has been formed to preserve the jetty at Tolaga Bay, the one in Tokomaru Bay is beginning to crumble. One could see a small bogie, which looks as though it could have been used to trundle bales of wool out to barges for transfer to ships at anchor (below left)

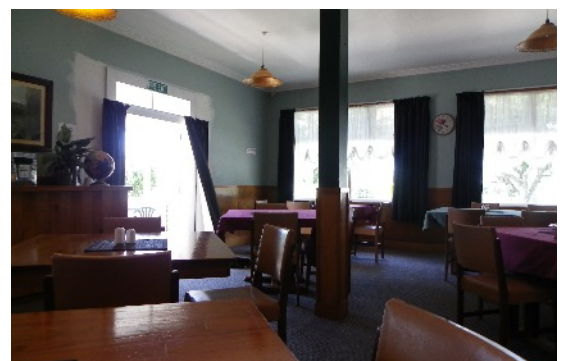


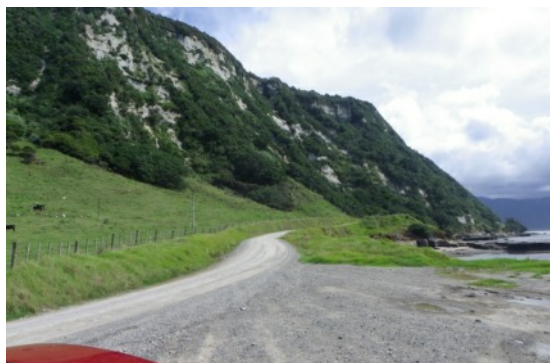
On previous visits to NZ, the Maori in wellies (usually holding a stop-go board) had been a common sight. But the picture centre top was the only sighting that we had of this phenomenon throughout this visit to New Zealand.



I was also surprised to see a tsunami warning sign on the beach (bottom left). Two weeks later we would learn how relevant that was!

From Tokomaru Bay we carried on northward, stopping at an interesting roadside cafe for lunch





East Head

It is 17km from the main road to East Head, more than half being on 'unsealed' (i.e. gravel) roads.

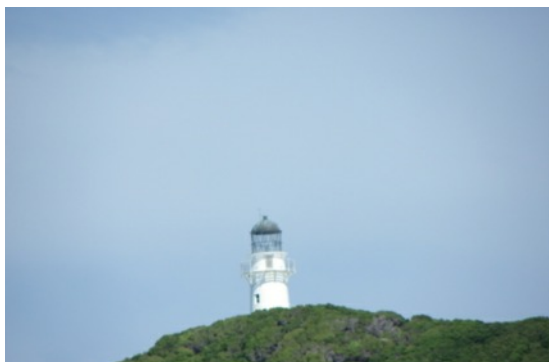
The lighthouse is invisible from the car park. It is a 25 minute walk involving 670 stairs to walk to the lighthouse. Dairne chose to stay in the car! As usual, in New Zealand photos, the ultra violet is so strong that you have to reduce the blue level a lot to get a realistic

colour balance.

The lighthouse is 154m above sea level and has a range of 25 miles. East Island, a mile or so offshore is plainly visible. The light itself is at $37^{\circ} 41'.42''$ S $178^{\circ} 33'.03''$ E, almost diametrically opposite Greenwich in Longitude.



Fl 10s 150m
25M



Below:
East Cape Light
(Source: C-Map)





Along the coast

Just after we had made the 17km trek back to the main road, we stopped to admire what is claimed to be the largest Pohutekawa tree in New Zealand. It certainly is a monster!

Then we went a bit further along the coast to Hicks Bay where we found an

attractive motel.
The meal was excellent.

It rained very hard during the night



The next morning we drove along the shore of the Bay of Plenty, admiring the historic church at Raukokore which is stuck out on a low headland.





I wanted to see Whakatane, where *True* had been built. It turned out to be an attractive town, but there was no sign of any yacht building yard, nor any obvious sign of any company operated by Mick Orchard, *True's* designer and builder.

The harbour is long and narrow, with a very narrow and tricky entrance - see the banner above.

Thereafter, we made our way across country to a



country club hotel near Taupo. It was very close to the home of our friend Jan, who we went to see. As ever, a bubbly person! She took us to an artistic glassworks, where we had lunch

In the afternoon we drove back to Auckland, where Harry had just received delivery of his new drum kit. Did he have fun!



We stayed in Auckland for a couple of days before setting off northwards to visit David and tour onwards to North Cape.

North Island Tour

North Island has a long narrow neck stretching NE from Auckland. In places, the country is only a few yards wide. Once again, we used a hire car, and drove up to our base at Keri Keri where we had a luxurious pre-booked motel.

Dairne was keen that I should see 90 Mile Beach and I was also keen to visit Cape Reinga. We decided that the best way to do this would be to take a bus tour which round trips the route to the Cape and back to Keri Keri in a day.

So we set off early from Auckland, stopping for lunch at Whangarei where a lot of ocean capable yachts are kept.



After lunch we carried on driving towards Keri Keri, and eventually found our motel tucked in a small valley, well away from the main road.

The approach road (bottom left) went winding down the hill into the valley.





Keri Keri

We had been booked in to the Avalon motel in Keri Keri. It was certainly one of the most luxurious motels we had ever used, with a large kitchen, pleasant living room, a large deck, and a four poster bed!



On arrival we looked for the options for a tour of 90 mile beach, and found we could save a lot by starting from Kaitaia, although that would mean an early start the next morning.

We contacted David and Tania and they recommended a restaurant called Phare



Puke for the following evening. Having nothing better to do we tried it out on the first night as well. Excellent!

Altogether we would be three nights in the motel. It proved to be a very satisfactory base.



Left, Right and below
Phare Puke





Kauri Kingdom

We had to leave at first light to drive to Kaitaia to catch the coach trip to Cape Reinga and 90 Mile Beach. The morning mist and flat sunlight produced some interesting views.

I was struck by the many attractive churches in Northland.



Our first stop was at the Kauri Kingdom which is a museum/ shop just north of Kaitaia in Northland. The ancient Kauri forests were destroyed



thousands of years ago. Theories as to why proliferate, though our guide favoured the theory that the trees were destroyed by a tsunami 20,000 years ago. They are still digging up these rare trees that make beautiful furniture. However, the cost would make you go pale. A table and six chairs might cost \$18,000 NZ!



The Kauri Kingdom museum/shop is built round tree stump that was dug up and brought to the site weighting 50 tonnes. The staircase is carved through the middle of the tree, and the rest of the museum/shop was built round it.



Along the North East coast

On this day, the trip ran anticlockwise, going up the east coast to the Cape. Our first 'comfort break' stop was at Hohoura. The bus stopped briefly here. It is a lovely harbour, and probably the most northerly practical harbour for a yacht like *True*, so it was interesting to see.



In the upper harbour there were large flocks of birds. It is said Godwits gather here before migrating to Siberia.



A little further up the coast we diverted to Rarawa beach. The fine silica sand seems to be generated between the tectonic plates that meet just off the coast here. It is fine and glaringly white. It reflects the light so well that you can sunburn under your arms.



It was on the next sector that the bus was stopped for 15 minutes while a large flock of sheep was shepherded across the road (top banner)





Parengarenga Harbour

Driving north we got a view of this harbour. There is a fierce bar at the entrance to this bay, and it is quite tricky to enter. Worse, once in the harbour, a wind shift can make it dangerous to leave



Picnic

We were now nearing Cape Reinga, but the plan was to divert onto a small, green bay with a beach where we could have our picnic lunch (which was probably the only disappointment of the day).

When Dairne had done this trip with her mother some years previously, all the roads were unsealed (gravel), but the route had been completed all the way to the Cape within the last eighteen months.



After lunch, the coach climbed up the winding road and made its way along the narrow spit of high land that leads to Cape Reinga. The Three King Islands (next page banner), some 36km away were visible high above the horizon. They must be very high! Seeing them was the big suprise of visiting Cape Reinga





Cape Reinga

As we approached Cape Reinga we could see islands lying off to the west side of the Cape. The largest of these is Motupao (above). This is the site of the original lighthouse built in 1847, and not replaced by the Cape Reinga light until 1941. The remains of the old light are visible.

It is an easy walk *down* to the lighthouse, which is perched on a

high cliff (typical NZ). We were there on a calm day at high tide. Normally the two oceans crash together here. Look up Cape Reinga on Wikipedia for a good picture. The C-Map Photo (right) gives an impression of the overfalls, but they were much more severe when Dairne was here last with her mother, Betty.



Fl12s 165m
10M



North Cape (below) is in fact slightly further north than Cape Reinga, but has no lighthouse, and is less accessible.

36° 34.25 S
172° 40.29 E

(Faro in southern Spain is at the same latitude N approx)





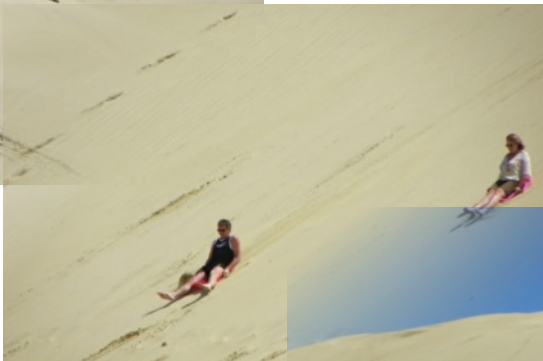
90 Mile Beach

It takes about 45 minutes for the coach to get from Cape Reinga to 90 mile beach. On the way we passed quite a few fields with bog kauri logs. These will await collection by the various kauri workshops as and when they need new timber. It is more like mining than forestry!



At the north end, access to 90 Mile Beach is where the Te Paki stream breaks through the huge sand dunes that have built up down this part of the west coast. These natural dunes are about 50-70m high.

Great sandboarding if you can face the wearing climb in soft sand! We stayed in the bus.



Once on 90 Mile Beach we started the long plug along the sand. Each year several cars are caught by the tide, so normal insurance will not cover you. We stopped on the beach where we had a good view of Motupia Island



with its natural rock arch.

The name Ninety Mile Beach is a misnomer because it is actually 55 miles (88 km) long. Several theories have been advanced for the name, the most common stemming from the days when missionaries travelled on horse back when on average a horse could travel 30 miles (50 km) in a day before needing to be rested. The beach took

three days to travel therefore earning its name, but the missionaries did not take into account the slower pace of the horses walking in the sand, thus thinking they had travelled 90 miles (140 km) when in fact they had only travelled 55.





Back to Auckland

We collected the car from Kaitaia and worked our way down the east coast, calling at Mangonui for fish and chips. Once again we found that their claim to be the best in the world was (even if true) marred by tiny portion sizes.



We returned to the motel in Keri Keri for the night. Next day, we started off by going over the ferry from Opua and visiting Russell. Then, once south of Whangarei, we worked our way down the west coast, marvelling at the huge useless harbours (see the banner at the top of this page). The dangerous bars just make them largely inaccessible.



We had glimpses of Kaipara Harbour. It is huge, and it took more than an hour and half to drive past it. But The entrance can be very dangerous.



It had been a fascinating trip, and we had seen parts of New Zealand that we had not seen before.





Tsunami!

Having got back to Auckland, we took over the family while Iain and Clare boarded *True* for a well deserved weekend alone. But it was not that simple. We heard news of the Japanese earthquake on 11th March, and soon realised that the tsunami would eventually reach New Zealand.

We monitored the TV and Internet, and kept Iain and Clare informed by mobile phone. In the event, the wave was only half a metre as it passed North Cape, and in the Tamaki River, the only noticeable effect was that the tide continued going out for half an hour after low water. So Iain and Clare went sailing, and we took Harry and Alice for a morning to MOTAT (top banner) and then a day out to the Glenbrook Railway. There is a video of that trip on You Tube that can be seen by visiting



http://www.ariadnetrue.co.uk/utube_nx.html

After that, the 26 hour flight home was a trivial matter!



Coda

After we had been on our tour of North Island by car, we agreed to look after Harry and Alice while Iain and Clare had the boat to themselves. But in the early morning I had to ring Iain to tell him that there was a tsunami warning for Auckland following the major Japanese earthquake.

It was forecast to be 1.5m high when it passed the northern tip of New Zealand (after crossing several thousand miles of ocean). It eventually reached Auckland, but the effect was severely attenuated. The tide went on going out for an our after low water.

Once that was passed Iain and Clare sailed over to Waiheke for the weekend, and said that they experienced some odd currents around Motohuie but otherwise there was no noticeable effect.



Acknowledgements

Chart cartography: C-Map by Jeppesen

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DTP Software: Serif PagePlus X5

Photo Archive: Serif AlbumPlus X3

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Edited by: Graham Rabbitts

