



Wow, there could be a 17th century bronze Spanish cannon underneath this rubble, but now I think not. The life of a treasure hunter... Below: Is this really the lost cannon in the harbour?

# MEGA TONGA

Still in Tonga, the crew on *Ice* are doing it tough — bodiless fish, castaway survival and missing treasure — but they wouldn't be anywhere else!

**H**o, hum... just another serene sunrise in paradise, as we cruise along, till Kylie screams, "Fish! Fish!" The reactions are spontaneous. Engine into neutral, Kylie makes the strike on the aft deck, I take over the rod acutely aware of the tail pounding 250m away, while she puts on the lap belt and goes down to the marina deck. I pass her the rod under great load, then organise gloves, knife, tail rope and gaff.

She is screaming, "I can't hold it!" I remind her of the drag with the

suggestion to "stop being a girl" as the rod bends double. She has the measure of it, but as it now drags on the surface I figure she has beaten a nice tuna, only to find a magnificent head, remnants of a shark strike. Bummer.

Kylie is pissed! Her second lost fish. The hook has been straightened, but I recover the lot and in the process, lose my glasses over the side, then head back up to the aft deck to reset the lure and... whack! Oops. That's right, I fitted a wind generator. The line and lure go free and I lose two ferrules from my rod as it connects



with the turbine blades, remnants screaming past my ear.

Resuming my position in the comfy helm chair to re-engage the gears, just 12 minutes had passed. All I could do was laugh — a lot! You just never know what is headed your way on a boat, which is all part of living adventure!

## CASTAWAY

We all dream about it, but could you/would you do it. Well my chief mate Amit kept falling asleep reading

books, even on beautiful days, so I decided he needed a solo adventure. I told him so and advised him to let me know when he was ready. He asked, "What?" I said, "Just decide yes or no, and I make the rules!" He put his hand up, silly boy.

I stopped the boat about 250m from a deserted island that I had never been on. With just the clothes he was wearing, I said get ready to swim for it, then gave him an old piece of boat cover, a knife, a machete, hand spear, two tins of baked beans, a cigarette lighter, 4lt of water, a pair of lap goggles (used for swim training), and I said, "Get off the boat. See you in a week."

All that stuff was quite heavy, so he had a tendency to sink. We watched a "head" struggling ashore. The rest of us set sail, smiling and wondering. We went diving with whales and sharks, a royal wedding and socialising, to return seven days later, holding our breath.

Was he still alive? Could he catch fish? I had scratched smiling faces on the lenses of the goggles, to increase the challenge. A real castaway would not have them, but they could have been washed up on the beach with sun crazed lenses? I had also hidden three fish hooks and some VB cord and fishing line in a rag in the old boat cover and thought he may not find them, unless he checked all his



resources arriving on the beach — the first rule of survival.

Some nights had been really cold with rain. The girls on my crew were worried?

We approached the beach looking and there was Amit with a huge grin! He had survived without using any of the water, or the baked beans.

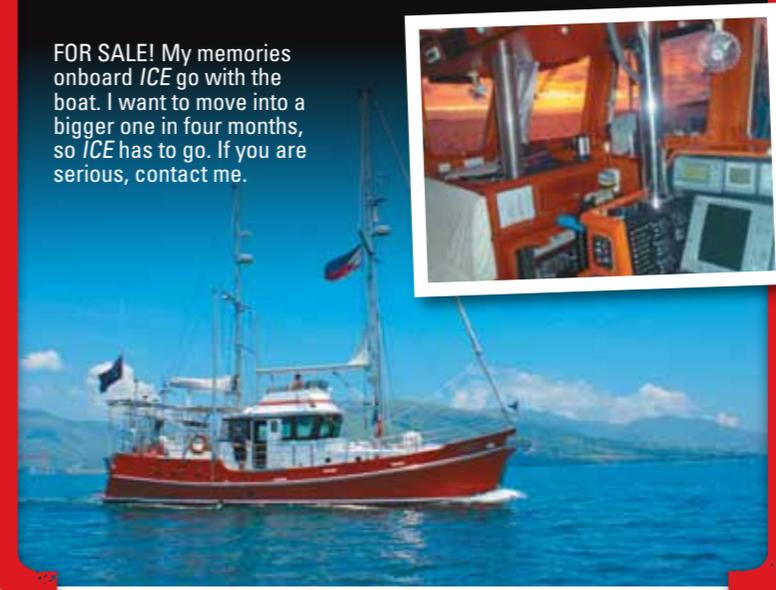
He ate a handful of small crabs each day that he had chased like a lunatic around the rocks and beach. He had also lost weight, was very weak and his feet were a mess.

It turned out he couldn't use the goggles, so didn't spear fish and never saw the fishing line and BV cord. They were lost. He picked and drank green coconuts, but only found two of them contained meat inside! After four months in the Pacific on

## [GUILTY!]

Yes I am! I did the one thing that you should never do when you own the best boat in the world. I looked at a bigger one currently for sale. If I can sell *ICE* in the next four months, I can get it! Wow! Tough call but I am going to try. (See [www.mcintyre50ms.com](http://www.mcintyre50ms.com) if you are after a life changing deal).

FOR SALE! My memories onboard *ICE* go with the boat. I want to move into a bigger one in four months, so *ICE* has to go. If you are serious, contact me.



Amit (top) is happy to see us after a week spent as a "castaway" on a deserted island, where we left him to fend for himself. Above: When you least expect it your day can turn to mud — first the shark, then the glasses, then the wind generator and then the rod... err!

Amit gets to swim with his first whale, something very special about being in Tonga.



ICE, he still didn't realise that all the brown nuts on the ground were full of meat! Not to mention the wholesome uto from sprouting nuts.

Amit couldn't work out how to cook the abundant sea snails in the rocks, (as he did not have a pot), till I told him that you just put them upside down in the coals, (they cook in their shells) and he didn't think of eating the succulent vine shoots coming out of the sand all around his camp.

Instead of making a thatched shelter, he just put up a sheet of corrugated iron as a wind break yet his nights' were cold. He had not spoken a word for a week. The one thing he did do was really enjoy the experience. He loved it, thanked me for the opportunity and asked what's next. Food of course, back onboard ICE, with his newfound respect for the comforts of home.

**WHAT TREASURE?**

Over the last few months the focus of our attention has been in the south of Tonga on just two wrecks and a cannon. The cannon has involved numerous meetings with individuals and a committee, dives and lots of discovery. Discovery of the fact, that as expected, nothing is as it appears and in fact the lost cannon may not even be there, despite the credible reports of it being seen in the past few years. People like telling stories. It is part of the intrigue, but in amongst it, who knows? We may be hanging around Tonga for quite some time. It is as good a reason as any.

**TONGAN JOIE DE VIVRE**

Fiji is a cool cruising ground, but just like its sophisticated tourist industry, some of the island anchorages are "overseen" by entrepreneurial villages, happy to press cruising boats for their pound of flesh, which is fair enough. Yet Tonga is far removed from that reality.

With the King's custom of hereditary land grants of eight acres to firstborn sons — that are then passed down through the generations — there is this inherent sense of serenity prevailing over the people. They don't have to worry about a 25-year mortgage, as they know they will always have a piece of land in the Kingdom to grow their gardens and build a house. Fishing isn't bad either.

If you have food and a roof, then life can be okay. This friendly, laidback attitude leaves plenty of time for festivals (and there are many) and

Anchored off Big Mamas Yacht Club, near Capt Cook's first landing site in Tonga, is another megayacht that looks like she has gas turbine engines and can do 35kts!



makes for very friendly people.

Cruising yacht numbers are on the increase and so too are the megayachts. Why wouldn't they be, if you can head a few miles out in the lagoon and swim with whales nearly every day or just hang out in front of those quintessential deserted islands that are all to yourself. Sleepy Tonga is starting to wake up, but something tells me that even though the mega rich are coming, the people will remain the same, as this is Tonga and that is the Tongan way. I like it!

SLEEPY TONGA IS STARTING TO WAKE UP, BUT SOMETHING TELLS ME THAT EVEN THOUGH THE MEGA RICH ARE COMING, THE PEOPLE WILL REMAIN THE SAME, AS THIS IS TONGA AND THAT IS THE TONGAN WAY. I LIKE IT!

**PIG IN A BAG?**

Yes, I do have a crazy crew on ICE, but wow, when they bought some "cheap" rum fruit punch in unmarked bottles from an inconspicuous house in the back streets of Nuku Alofa, I was amazed. It could have contained anything and probably did, as they only drank half of one bottle with nasty side effects. What a business, selling colored water to suckers.

I was always taught never to buy a "pig in a bag" sight unseen, or pay out hard-earned money on someone else's assurance that all will be fine?

Yet you and I and everyone else in the world do it regularly. We are being taken as suckers every time we buy a small battery and no one seems to care? Adventurers (and kids — how appropriate) use lots of batteries, believe me, even though rechargeable AAAs and AAs are my preference.

As a boating person, you probably know all about amps, Volts and Watts for the power system on your boat. A 6W globe in a 12V system draws a 1/2amp — Watts divided by Volts gives amps — so a 50amp/h house battery will keep that 6W globe burning for 100

hours (theoretically).

You only buy house batteries to run a boat based on the stated amp-hour capacity. A 12V battery with a 100 amp/h capacity clearly tells you how much stored power capacity or usable electrical energy, (call it what you like), is in that battery you are buying. Well now look closely at your torch batteries, it says the Volts, sure, but there is nothing to say how much amp hours "power" or "energy" is in that battery... NOTHING!

You don't know what you just bought, you can buy a Gold one that will apparently last longer than a Silver one, that will apparently last longer than a Red one... but then there is the "other" brand. Now their Gold one is half the price of the previous brand's equivalent, but they say it lasts even longer than the opposition's. Throw in the Chinese Silver one at a tenth of the cost... WOW! And so it goes.

This is not an Irish joke, you are being conned - me too! You are buying the colour of the battery with no idea how long the battery will last. Whatever size batteries you buy — D, C, AA, AAA etc. — the differing brands are the same

size, but if they held water, instead of electrical energy, you would not know if they are full, half full, a quarter full or held just a few drops. Batteries of any description should show the capacity, in amps or fractions of (at least when they were manufactured).

In this age of over-regulation and consumer protection with mandatory labeling etc., this one seems to have missed the bus big time. What a business hey, selling coloured batteries to fools like you and me! Tell your mates and your Member of Parliament... I have. 🙄



That is cheap booze unlabeled in the bottles, not soft-drink, but what is in the batteries? That one big-brand battery cost more than 100 no-name AAA batteries from the Philippines below it. You never know what you get when buying batteries. Who's the fool?



Phocea arrived with a full crew in Tonga, but I immediately knew this was the 236ft boat that raced "solo" (yes, with one person only) across the Atlantic in the 1978 OSTAR (Observer Single-Handed Trans-Atlantic Race). After that race 60ft was set for the upper limit. Stop Press: The 75-metre long Phocea was seized last week amid speculation that it was running drugs, arms and was involved in money laundering.