



The expedition cargo from China about to be loaded on *ICE* for the rolling trip to Tonga and there is another 11m³ waiting for us there, making 2.3 tonnes in total. *ICE* is a big boat.



ICE all fuelled-up and ready to go after three years of planning and preparation. Will we find the end of the rainbow?

LIFE IS A GAMBLE!

Don is packed and off to Tonga for a new chapter in his life's adventure

ICE is on the road again following a seven-month layover at Vuda Point Marina, Fiji. It has been a blur of logistics, with lists and dollars trying to beat each other to the top. It is always the same when I say, "I could do that." So here we go again. This one is different, yet strangely the same

as all my past adventures. There are huge financial risks and serious physical challenges ahead, under the water, rather than on top.

In just days I hope to descend into another world, an unwritten story that will trigger a series of events that may consume the next 10 years of my life. I cannot control all of it, just parts of it, yet it has the

power to take control of me. Human nature being what it is there are storms ahead for sure and I am not referring to the ones at sea. When you are involved in a heady mix of shipwrecks and treasure, in any form, sparks are sure to fly. Could be fun, hey!

The scene is set for our bluetreasure.me expedition in

Tonga to transform into a whole new level of commitment.

My mum was always happy that I never drank alcohol, didn't smoke and never gambled, let alone buy lottery tickets. Hmm... This one so far is a \$300,000 gamble, a big one and I like that. If you know what is coming tomorrow, you may be going nowhere! Let the *adventure* begin... and really, how could you say no to a potential opportunity like this, no matter what the outcome?

CHECK, THEN CHECK AGAIN!

ICE set sail with full fuel and 8m³ of expedition cargo onboard, bound for Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga, just 550 miles to the southeast of Fiji. The forecast suggested no headwinds, no more than 15 to 20kts and one to 2m seas.

The open space of the flybridge was just too tempting not to fill



The tanks are all empty but there is still about 450kg of cargo on the flybridge... hmm? At the Easter Show, some people would pay for a ride like we had for days.

with some of that cargo, so we did. Our G/Z stability curves and moments of inertia were effected, but not in an unsafe way. We just rolled and rolled a bit more, lost some crew lunch over the side and when the wind climbed through 30kts from the north, with a short 3m beam sea, it all became quite *special*.

From the beginning, a new little "squeak" appeared in the aft cabin that I thought was our new RIB moving in the davits, so more lashings were set. I was sleeping in the pilothouse to keep an eye on the new crew, so could not hear it, but on watch I noticed the autopilot seemed to be working hard with rapid port/starboard movements. I talked myself into believing it was all okay and just my imagination. When the little squeak came up for discussion next day, I decided it was some of the new cargo stowed

down below rubbing against something and three days of that would be okay.

Twenty-four hours later, Jane said she really thinks the squeak is something in the steering gear and it is "loud". I shot off to the aft cabin where I had not been for some time and WOW it was screaming every few seconds. I ripped the bed apart and removed all the gear from the locker beneath, then opened the steering hatch expecting the worst.

The four hydraulic steering-ram mounting bolts were lifting high every time it came on load, so instead of turning the rudder the back of the ram was lifting in the air 5cm, shifting back 2cm and then rubbing against a bulkhead before the rudder would move. Not a disaster but not good.

If the backside of the shaft was scratched it could blow the seals,

[OUR YOUNG EXPLORER]

The hunt to sponsor a young explorer through this column was really interesting. It confirmed that mums are all looking to put their children out there. Quite a few wrote to me suggesting their kids would be perfect for this special adventure, but their young ones never followed up. One mum even suggested that while her son was over the age bracket, he needed to do this, so would I consider him, but in the end it was the girls who are the ones that appear to have the drive for adventure.

We selected just one, who in her own words described her dilemma in life as a 20-year-old trying to decide the next direction to take. Aimee has spent the past 12 years traveling the world on her parents' boat, so is not new to having a go. Let's see what she thinks after spending 10 weeks with 10 other crazy, inspiring, enthusiastic people on a tropical island, doing what many would think is something quite silly... looking for old things underwater. Could be an interesting story.



Twenty-year-old Aimee-Rose Burns from Gladstone, QLD, is a girl on the move and up in the air about being sponsored to join our blutreasure.me expedition. She is another graduate of home-schooling on a boat, traveling the world, and which often develops big horizons and a passion for living.



IN JUST DAYS I HOPE TO DESCEND INTO ANOTHER WORLD, AN UNWRITTEN STORY THAT WILL TRIGGER A SERIES OF EVENTS THAT MAY CONSUME THE NEXT 10 YEARS OF MY LIFE

Want to cruise on the 85m Lurssen motoryacht *Pacific*, then you need to be friends of the owner. They cruised over to *ICE* and the crew were taking pictures of us as we crossed paths.

losing all hydraulic pressure. I quickly engaged the backup autopilot on a separate ram to take the pressure off. Then I discovered *all* the backing nuts had worked loose, one dropping right off. An easy fix and all over in about 20 minutes, while we rolled and rolled! No damage, so let the rolling continue.

I have a list of pre-sail checks I make on *ICE*. It includes all the obvious things, including the steering gear and associated hoses,



The starboard main steering ram has the backend of the shaft moving through a hole in the bulkhead. When the four mounting bolts released, the ram would lift and the rod rubbed making a bigger hole! This ram has a connected autopilot. My second independent portside ram is only connected to a second autopilot, acting as my first emergency steering if needed. I also have an emergency tiller setup.

nuts and bolts, but you know what? For some silly reason, even though I had checked the steering gear just a week before, I never did check those bolts and I do not know why! I checked everything else and yet I cannot even remember when I last checked those bolts – it could be years.

It's sort of like when I printed the business cards for *ICE*. We designed them, had three different people check them, including all the phone numbers, spelling, email addresses, call sign etc. and all was fine. As soon as they were printed, I opened the packet and yep... I forgot to put my name on them! I guess we are all human.

Sometimes when you check things you make the same mistake every time, so it can be an idea to let someone else check sometimes; they may miss some of the things you check but they may also

discover others you do. I should have seen the problem with the steering when the autopilot was having challenges, not just brush it off as nothing and convince myself all is fine. Life is a learning curve.

Three-and-a-half days after setting out we arrived all smiles but a little confused as to where we will put the next 11m³ and 1.5 tonnes of expedition gear yet to arrive from China and Australia. At least we only have to travel 65 miles to the island of Nomuka Iki to set-up Blue Base. 🚩



More and more cruising trawlers are heading for the Pacific. *Contraband* is a modern 16m steel beauty from New Zealand and pulled up beside us in Tonga and is very cool. A forestay on the mast to complement the steadying little mainsail would be good? Note the rigid stabilisers stored on the pilothouse roof. The same hull is used for fishing trawlers too.