

Happy! We found this long-range bronze cannon 24m from the surface on our first wreck site. It will soon meet sunlight again and tell us a story. The excitement is growing!



More excitement as we find a pile of ballast stones, confirming another wreck site. More surveys, mapping, investigations and reports, but that first discovery is a special feeling hard to describe. By the time you read this, we should have started some preliminary sample dredging on this shallow site.

SHIVER ME TIMBERS!

At last, a dream becomes a reality for Don and co, searching Davey Jones' Locker for historical relics in the South Pacific

Dreams are born of the simplest things, but you have to believe. As a kid I used to love watching black-and-white movies of swashbuckling adventures about Blackbeard, Cap'n Kidd and Long John Silver, pirate battles with the flash-bang of black powder broadsides and treasure, me hearties... Arrr!

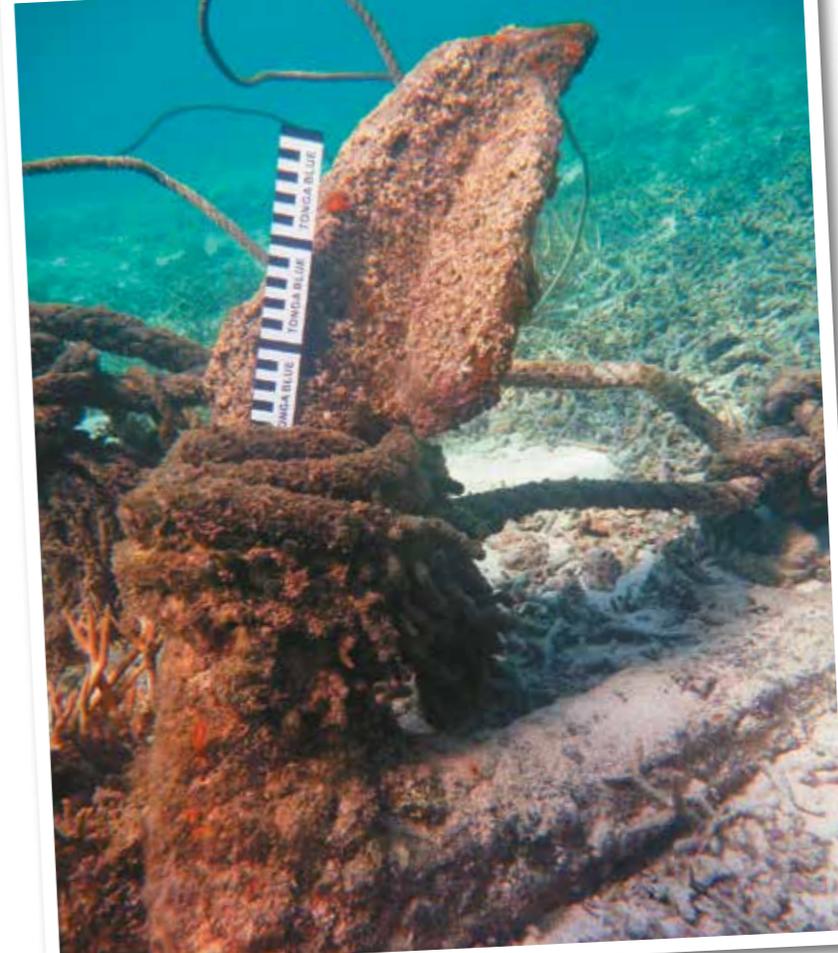
Any true-blue sailor, who has not had a few laughs or fun playing the pirate or flying the skull and crossbones, sounds a bit boring to me. Well, for whatever reason, over the past 30 years I have dreamed long and hard about owning a cannon; maybe even a pirate cannon! I considered buying one on eBay for a while but that just did not seem right.

In 1984, on my first visit to see real English castles, I found myself up close and personal with the actual fighting armour, swords and jousting poles used by knights of the realm. The experience sent me straight back to that time and place. I remember the shivers down my spine as it brought all those Robin Hood movies to life! Now, whenever I see a real nautical cannon (properly termed gun), all I wonder is what battles and stories it could tell... the sounds, the smoke, the crazy mayhem.

I am writing this in the pilothouse of *ICE*, anchored in front of Nomuka Iki, Tonga; the main island a mile astern. This is a famous and fabulous place. Around 200 years ago, Tongan history has 150 huge kalia canoes carrying 5000 fighting men and 2000 women assembling right here, ready to make war with other Tongans on Tongatapu, 65 miles south. It was a civil war, in an effort to create one ruling family and unite the kingdom.

The Spanish also came to this spot, starting in the 1600s to get water from an active spring. Captain Cook used Spanish charts to anchor here on each of his three voyages around the world. Looking out through my pilothouse windows I can see an active volcano on the island of Tofua (just 40 miles away) shoot steam high into the air. The Mutiny on the *Bounty*, when William Blich was cast adrift from HMS *Bounty* by Fletcher Christian, happened just 22 miles out from Tofua.

Today I am here with a team of divers looking for wrecks. Not an easy task as you can imagine, and yes I have questioned "why?" more



The Nomuka locals removed this huge 2.4m anchor from a wreck site to their harbour in the '60s for use as a boat cyclone mooring. We saw it last year and are now looking for the site it came from... a 17th century wreck perhaps! The anchor is in 3m of water.

than once. But I never shy away from a challenge so no matter what the outcome I know I am currently on top of another *Boys' Own* adventure you cannot make or set-up. This is real.

DREAM TEAM

Well here is the good news? Right at this moment I have a *huge* smile on my face. Another dream just came true! It was a big moment, following plenty of setbacks and impossible now to describe the high of that occasion when it happened.

I like to share all my adventures with those that want to follow them, but there is a real balancing act with this bluetreasure.me adventure. How much information can I share on my blog and here in this column? Some think I am crazy and this should all be kept top secret. My enthusiastic and hardworking (sometimes long suffering) crew are all locked-up in confidentiality agreements and code of conducts. There are obviously security issues too, but sometimes you just need to tell someone, right?

Well the very first wreck we

have located includes a beautiful, magnificent, fantastic, oh-so-cool bronze cannon – and you Trade-A-Boat are the first people to publicly hear this! Yes, I am happy.

I bet it could tell more than a few stories but for now I am just trying to imagine those last moments before this ship finally went down... the people, the panic, the survivors and those that did not.

It is an amazing sensation to discover something like this and know you are the first to set eyes on this gun since it slipped into the blue. Those pirate movies are that much more real now. I have been transported back to that time and place.

Already there are tantalising hints of a much bigger picture buried beneath the sand on this site. Currently we are completing the pre-disturbance surveys, mapping, photographing, drawing and measuring everything. It all takes time and my crew work hard. Soon this "gun" will see the light of day again and hopefully we will determine when it was made, maybe even where and by whom as

