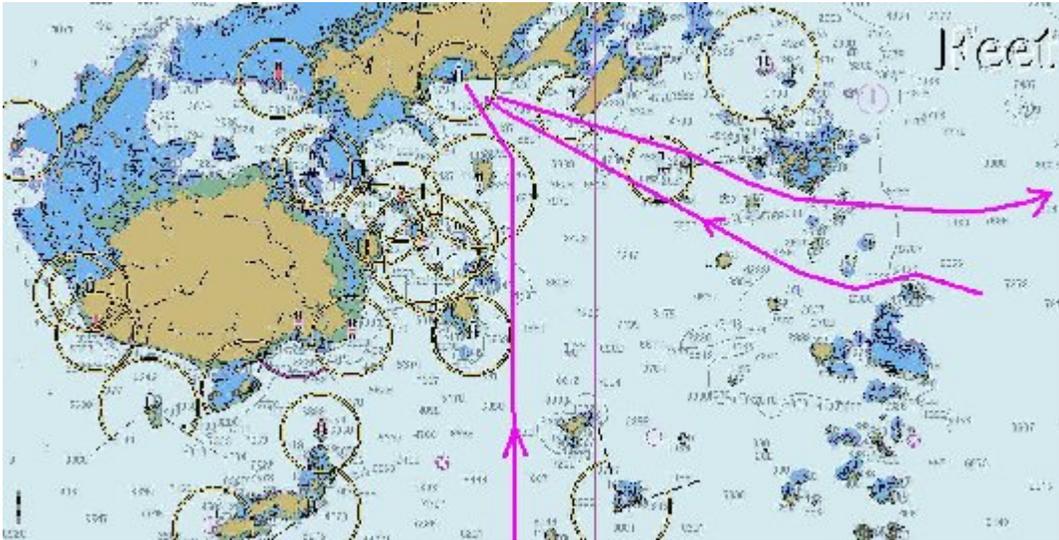




"Mr John"

in

FIJI



In 2010 we arrived in Savusavu twice, first from Minerva Reef and then from Tonga; after that we wandered westwards as many yachts do, trying to find the best bits of Fiji to see on the way. Here is the information on anchorages we acquired along the way and from previous visits. This is not a Pilot Book and I don't claim that it is of all my own invention.... for the sake of all those that follow I have 'lifted' and 'borrowed' what ever is useful and available already freely available on the internet.

All the information here is "as good as it gets"....you should not trust any of it!!!! Fiji has a huge collection of uncharted reefs and shoals, strong currents and (in many areas) murky, unreadable water; even in good light there are many dangers.

You should "navigate with caution" where ever you are going.

Don't make schedules, go when everything is in your favour

Grounding can really ruin your day

INDEX:

- 4 Regulations / Clearing**
- 5 Arriving Savusavu**
- 8 Cousteau Resort Anchorage**
- 9 Fawn Harbour / Nasasabu**
- 11 Benauiwai Narrows (inside to Viani Bay)**
- 13 Viani Bay**
- 14 Kaitoqa Point Anchorage – Viani Bay**
- 15 Viani Bay North and Somosomo Strait**
- 16 Somosomo Strait to Kioa**
- 17 Katherine Bay – Rambi**
- 21 Kioa to Katherine Bay Routes & WP's**
- 21 West Coast of Rambi to Albert Cove**
- 22 Albert Cove**
- 27 Northwest Taviuni**
- 28 Matangi – Horseshoe Bay**
- 29 Ngamea area**
- 32 Lesiaceva Point – Reef Point Anchorage**
- 34 Koro Island – Dere Bay**
- 35 Makongi Island**
- 39 Ovalau**
- 40 Hurricane Hole / Wainaloka Bay – Ovalau**
- 41 Suva Harbour**
- 45 Mbenga – Vanga Bay**
- 46 Vuna Niu Harbour**
- 47 Thuvu Harbour**
- 48 Momi Bay**
- 50 Port Denarau**
- 51 Lautoka**
- 52 Saweni Bay & Exit to Round Island Passage**
- 55 Rotuma**

Arriving and before.

At least 48 hrs BEFORE your intended arrival..... Send your pre – arrival notification.

You can download the forms on line then send them to:

yachtsreport@frca.org.fj **

In general, you will get an acknowledgement of receipt.

You do not have to send them exactly at 48hrs.... you can send the details a couple of weeks in advance.... not too far in advance or they may get lost in the system.... you give your best shot at the arrival time and date.

We left New Zealand for Tonga, however I had the foresight to send my pre-arrival details to Fiji before leaving..... we got stuck in Minerva and then couldn't make Tonga so we arrived in Savusavu about three weeks after the date I'd given..... This was not a problem, we were in the system and that's what counted.

(Not 'firca' you may notice....although this is the correct department name)**

You can clear in at:

Savusavu. Lautoka, Rotuma , Levuka, Suva.

In Savusavu it's dead easy and arranged by the Copra Shed.....

In Suva there may be charges for the taxi that the guys use to get to the RSYC but it's not bad and the RSYC is most helpful. There may be some waiting time whilst they get things coordinated.

In LevukaIt's said to be easy but I don't like it as the port is on a lee shore with a really poor anchorage.

Lautoka is not as bad as some say.... You can anchor close and all the officials are on the dock.... you could also get alongside to speed things up but get permission before doing so as the dock is well used.

Rotuma is a new addition to the list and its just fine so long as the wind remains in the E,
this is no place to be if the wind goes NW!!!!

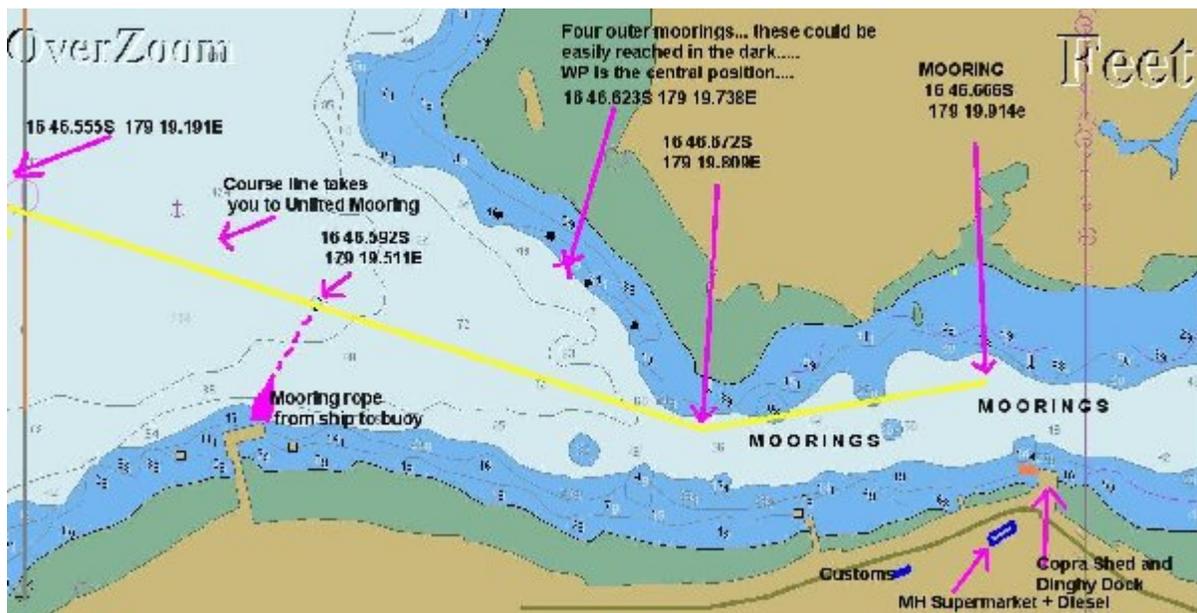
As for most Pacific Island groups... On arrival put your Q flag up and **DO NOT GO ASHORE OR LAUNCH A DINGHY....** Proceed to the Quarantine designated position and await the arrival of the officials.

Arrivals at weekends are becoming very expensive and officials everywhere are now looking for overtime where ever they can get it. They have patrol boats and the coastal bush telegraph, they check particularly at weekends.....

We arrived off Nakama Creek (SAVUSAVU) in the early hours of the morning, took the sails down and drifted in calm conditions till morning when we proceeded in to the moorings; that was the 9th August 2010.

We'd had a great trip across from Tonga in light conditions, there were the occasional frontal blows during this month but we were also getting some 4 – 6 day settled periods.

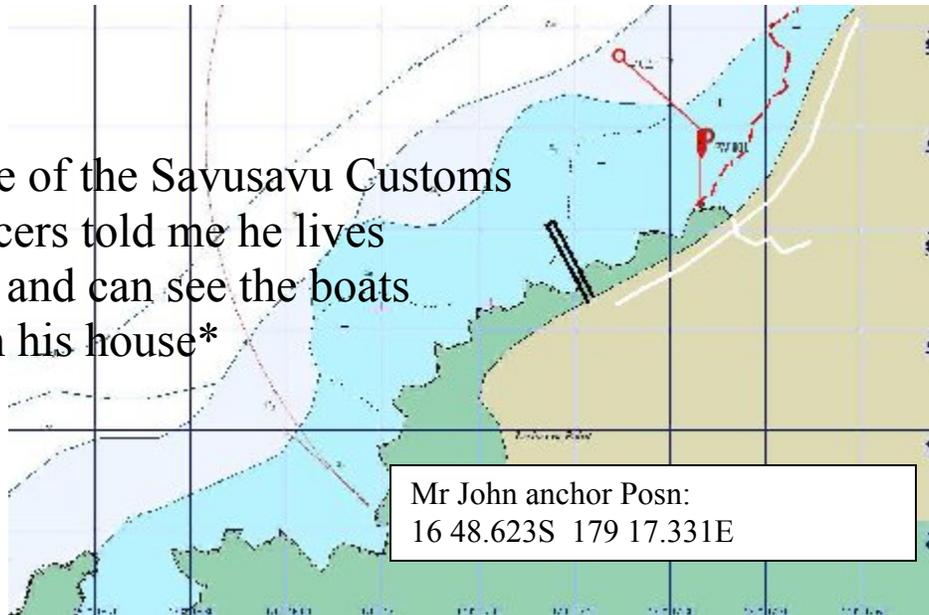
Savusavu is a great arrival spot for Fiji, especially when coming from the east; ‘clearing in’ is a breeze, there are most of the facilities required by transient yachties and the small town is both friendly and close to hand. We were quickly able to replenish supplies on board, fill an LPG bottle and take fuel (which was much cheaper than in Tonga). It was the first place we’d been for a long time that eating out was relatively inexpensive, so we treated ourselves to a couple of meals ashore; especially when this assisted in our hectic schedule of getting ‘things done’.



The weather, for some reason, was being most co-operative and we were determined to use this to our best advantage, hence, five days after arrival we secured a local (internal) clearance from Customs and departed for destinations in the North East of Vanua Levu.

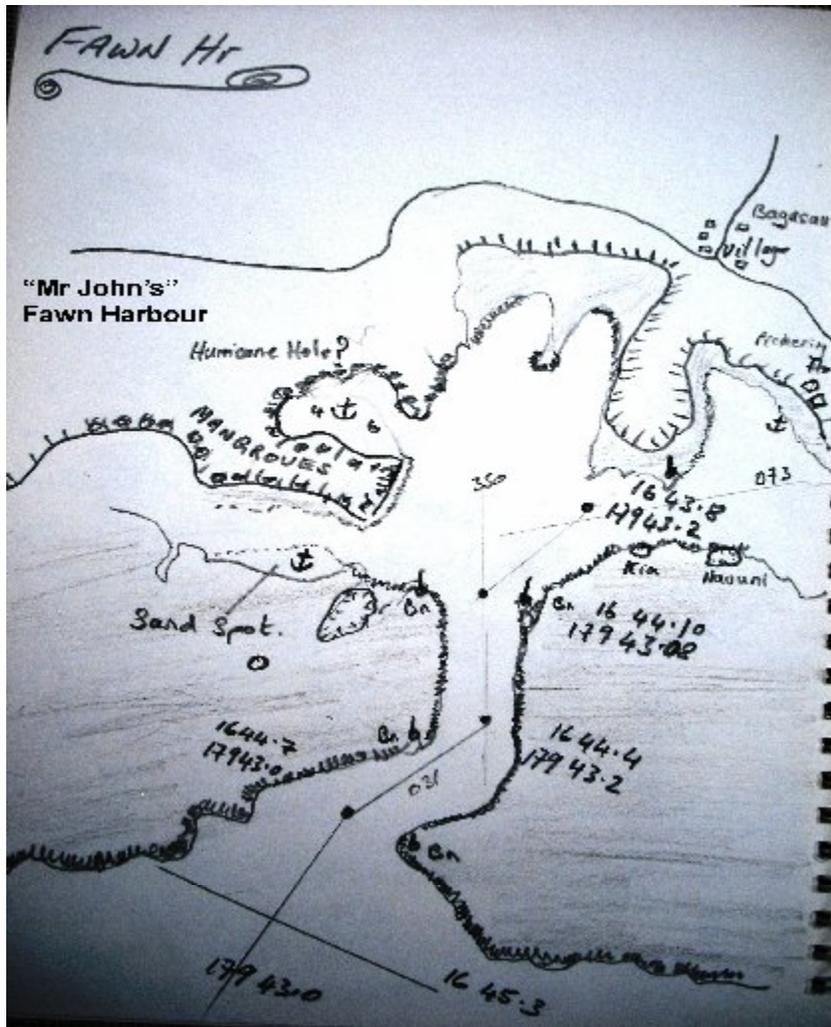
Our first stop was at the Cousteau Resort just an hour southwest of Savusavu, this anchorage is used as a get-away for boats that have been in town too long and there is supposed to be some good snorkelling, I wasn't that impressed and I'm never keen on anchorages with lots of coral for me to get my chain wrapped around.

One of the Savusavu Customs Officers told me he lives here and can see the boats from his house



Still, it is a pleasant and quiet stop-over, the Resort ashore is not unfriendly, especially if you wish to spend money there, however we heard that it was quite expensive to the extent that some yachties who visited complained that they felt short changed!

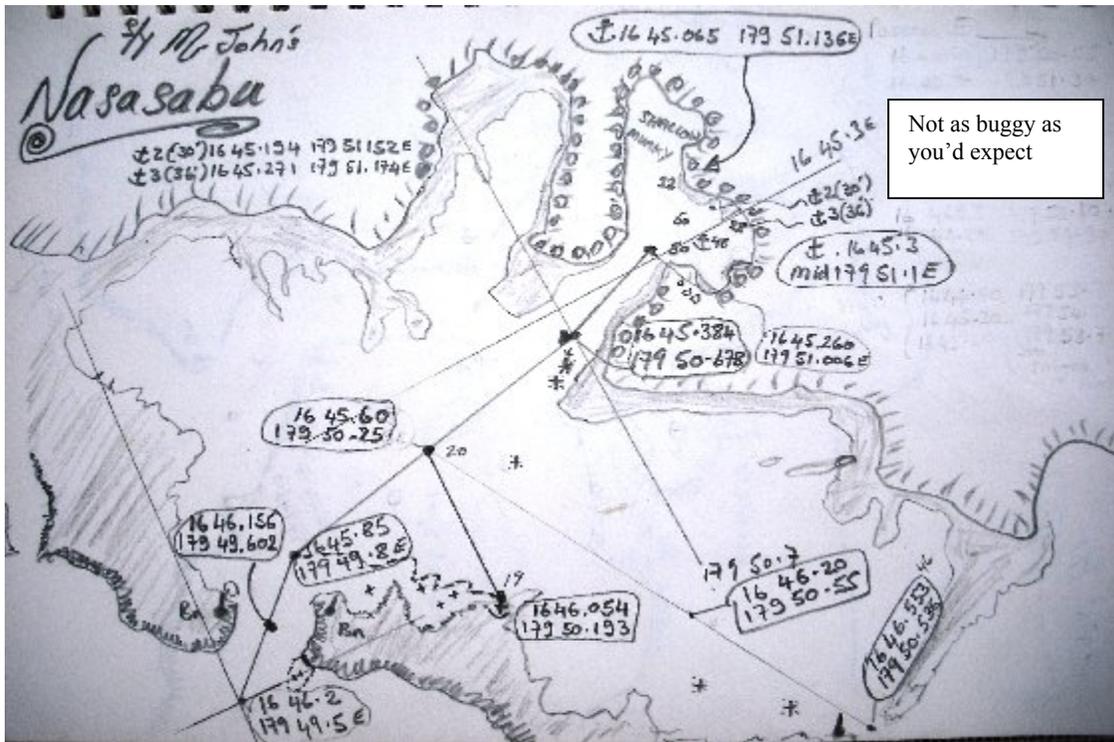
The next day we left early in the morning as we had been warned that the first couple of hours of this trip can be difficult, until the large bulk of Taveuni kills the trades and deflects the wind around to South and even Southwest, which can give some 'lift' on the route.



**Fawn Harbour is a good alternative anchorage
(WP's Here are a guide only....not 100% tested)**

It turned out that the Trades were taking a break and it was basically calm for the whole passage, thus we motored to Nasasabu passing through Ndakunimba Boat Pass and finding a nice anchorage in a pretty, quiet and protected bay partly surrounded by mangroves. Whilst this would be a great place to just relax and catch up with boat work, there seemed to be little on offer other than 'beauty appreciation'. The next morning we headed out and found a sandy spot to anchor on the inside of the barrier reef but far

enough offshore to have clear water and to take a swim. There was some interesting coral and we took a few pictures, fish were in short supply but it certainly wasn't dead; it was an enjoyable stop and nice to anchor out on the reef.

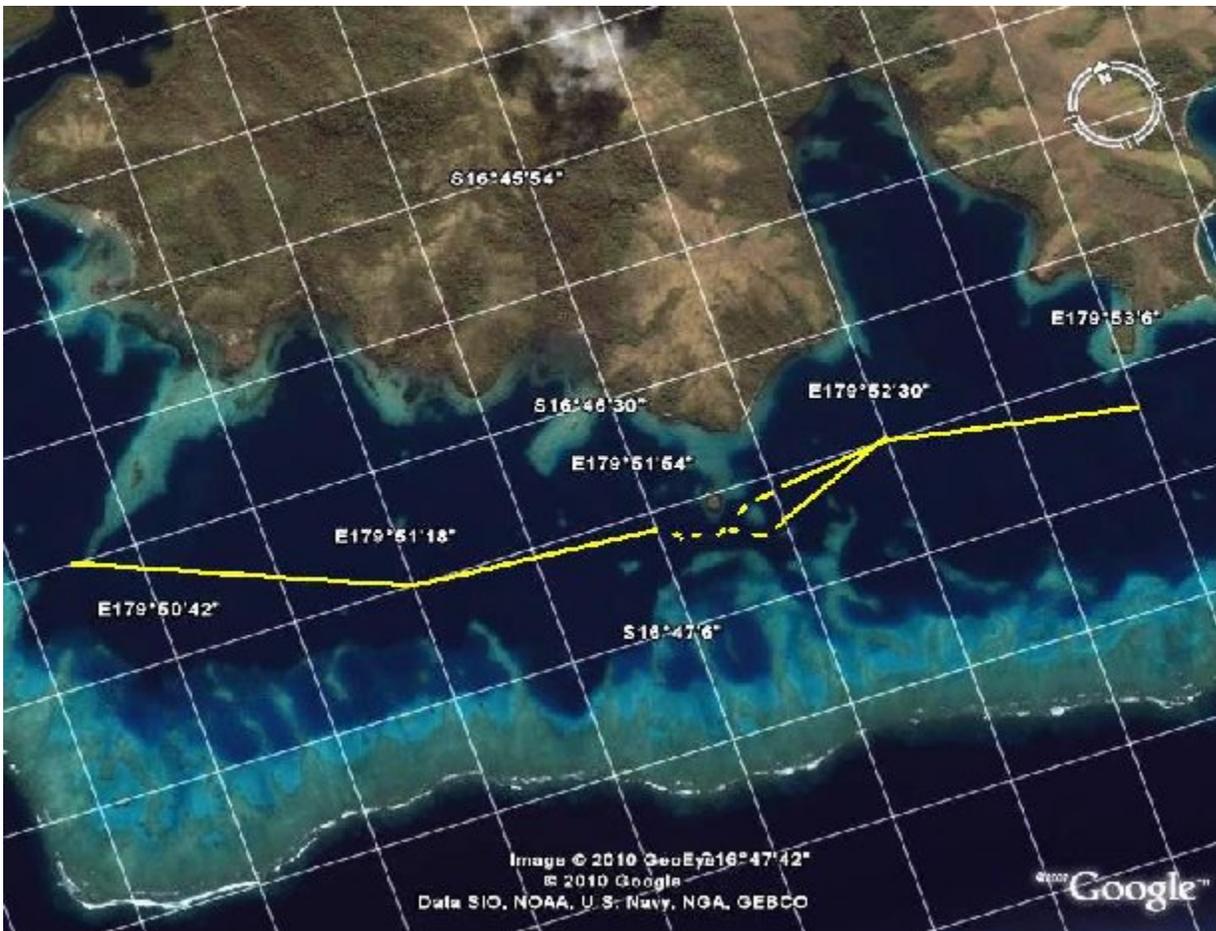


Mr John anchor Posn: 16 45.074S 179 51.137E with wind offshore and as indicated at the top with it onshore.....(difference is the swing). We found 12 feet in mud here but the bay shallows quickly as you go in and dries out half way down!

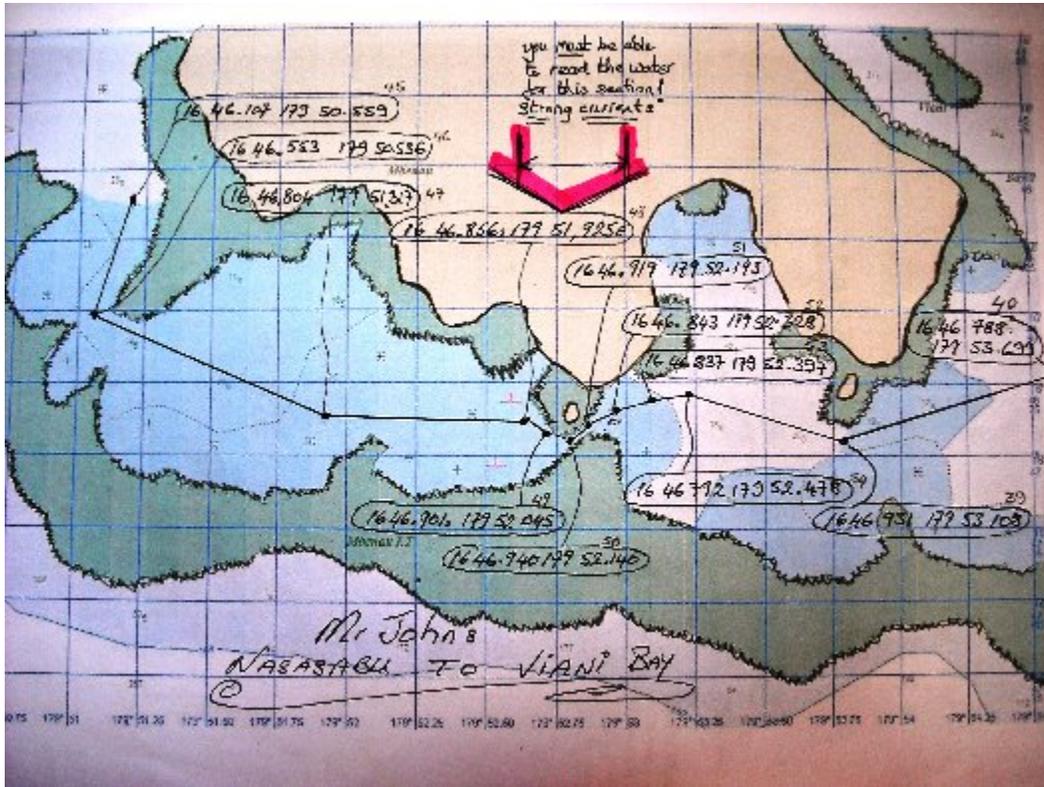
Around midday we pushed on, we needed to wait till then to let the sun come around so that it would be high and behind us as we were intent on taking the inside route to Viani Bay. There was a fair amount of information available from various old pilot books and I had done some

‘Google Earth’ on it so we were fairly confident, the sun co-operated and the coral heads were easily visible.

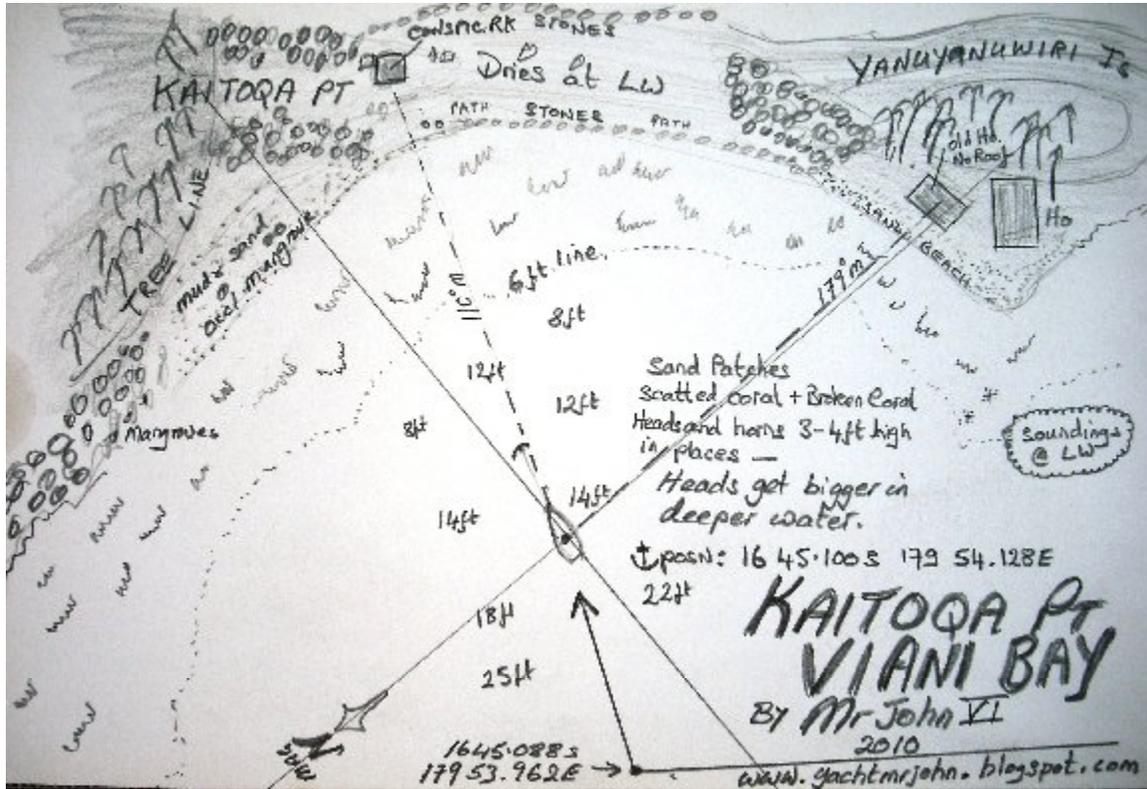
Just in the area of Benauiwai, where everything gets narrowed down, there was a little excitement as we were flushed through by some strong currents. Fortunately we are small and manoeuvrable, it could have been more difficult had we not been; I made a note in my log to check the state of the tide before doing this passage again.



The WP's on the plan will get you there but you must eyeball through the narrows so have the sun in the right place!



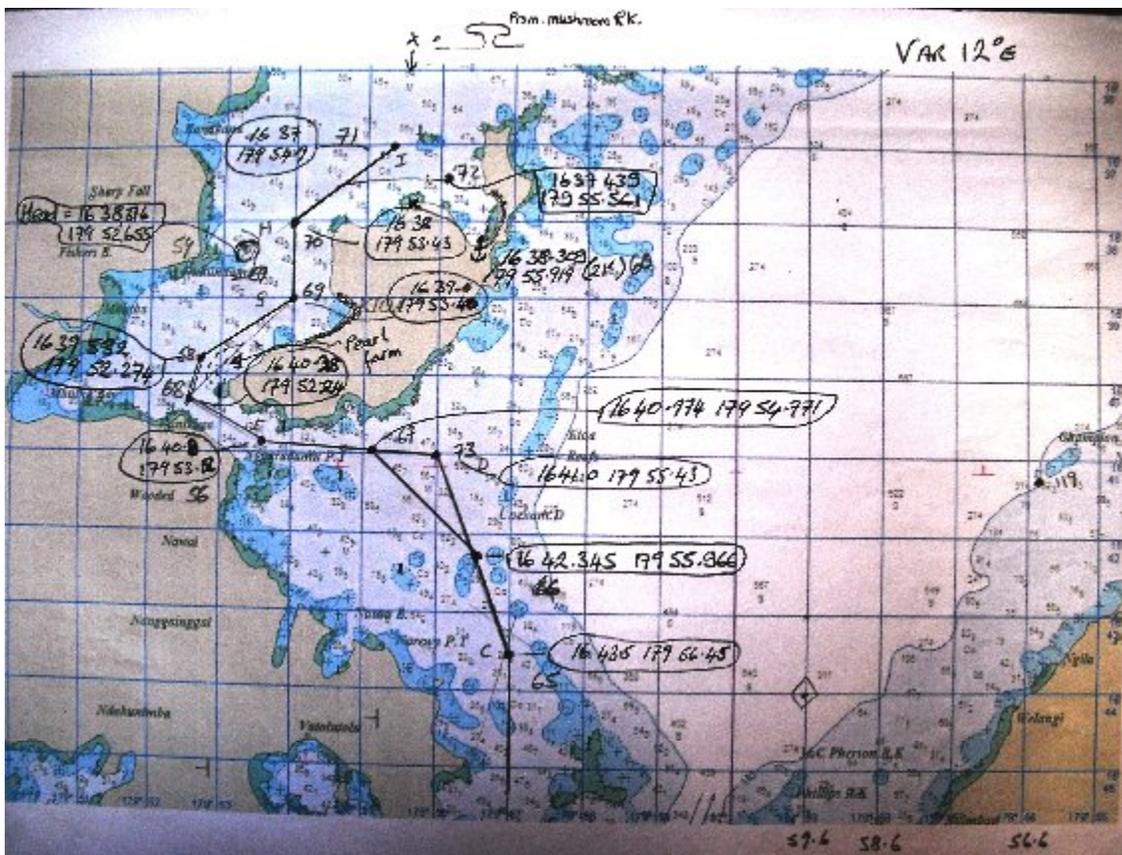
The rest of the trip was uneventful and we eventually found a nice spot to anchor in Viani Bay, unfortunately the bottom was full of coral but we were able to get into a depth of less than twenty feet; thus calming my fears over not being able to recover our anchor. It was a photogenic anchorage so we relaxed and took in the beauty of the place, the bay is quite large and there are several spots that the yachts use; we were off Kaitoqa Point and sheltered by a small island linked to the point by reef which dried at low water. At the head of the bay Jack Fisher has his home and two moorings,



Our preferred Viani Bay Anchorage.....
 Below as seen from the masthead.....



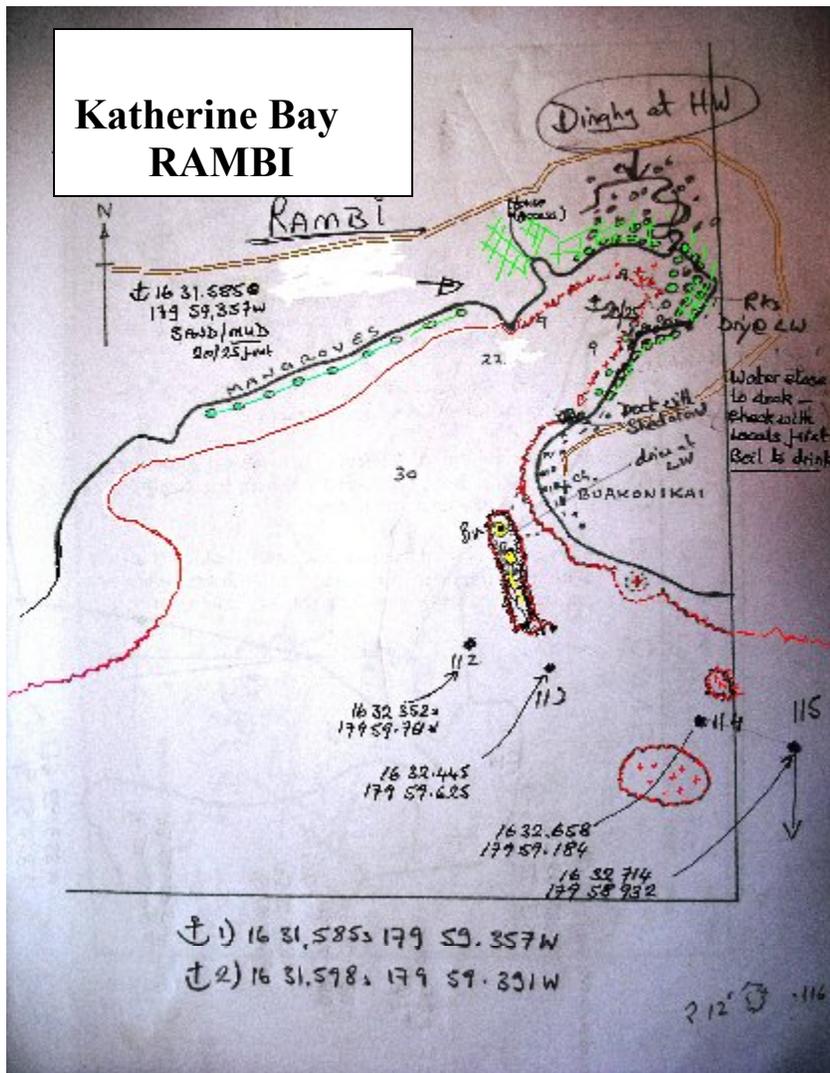
We hadn't gone far out of the bay before we had our first adrenaline rush, once we got it sorted out, our problem encounter had fifteen feet of water over it but on first approach, with the depth sounder going down fast and a barrier of broken water ahead of us; we were more than concerned. The broken water was caused by the strong current rushing over and around the shallow area, we were going to encounter a lot of this, sometimes in much deeper water, before we left the area; each time we had to take precautions and proceed with great care.



In this fashion we made our way around to Kioa, passing south of it then up the West coast to find anchorage in a large unnamed bay up on the Northwest of the island. It was generally deep but we found a shallow spot off a coral spit quite close in to shore; it was very sheltered, quiet and relaxing; apart from that there was not a lot to say for the place!

Next day we made the short passage up to Katherine Bay in Rambi Island. The GOOGLE EARTH shot was spot on and much better than using any chart.





Shortly after arrival we went ashore with our friends, for a walk and to check out the village; it wasn't long before we were surrounded by young children who seemed to regard us as the latest novelty to come into their lives.

We were impressed that none of them asked for anything, in many places the kids are the most direct in expecting handouts from 'those rich passing yachties'; here they just seemed pleased to be with us and when we occasioned to bump into their Mums, they were only too happy to chat with us. It was a nice atmosphere, relaxed and friendly.

Jack Fisher told us they have a lot of money up here, the ground is good for planting and they produce good harvests; Jack said they were wasteful and he'd bought several bits of equipment off them that they had broken and discarded but Jack was able to fix and get going again.....Such is the rivalry between the various groups, the villages and the 'clans'. Not much different from anywhere else really!

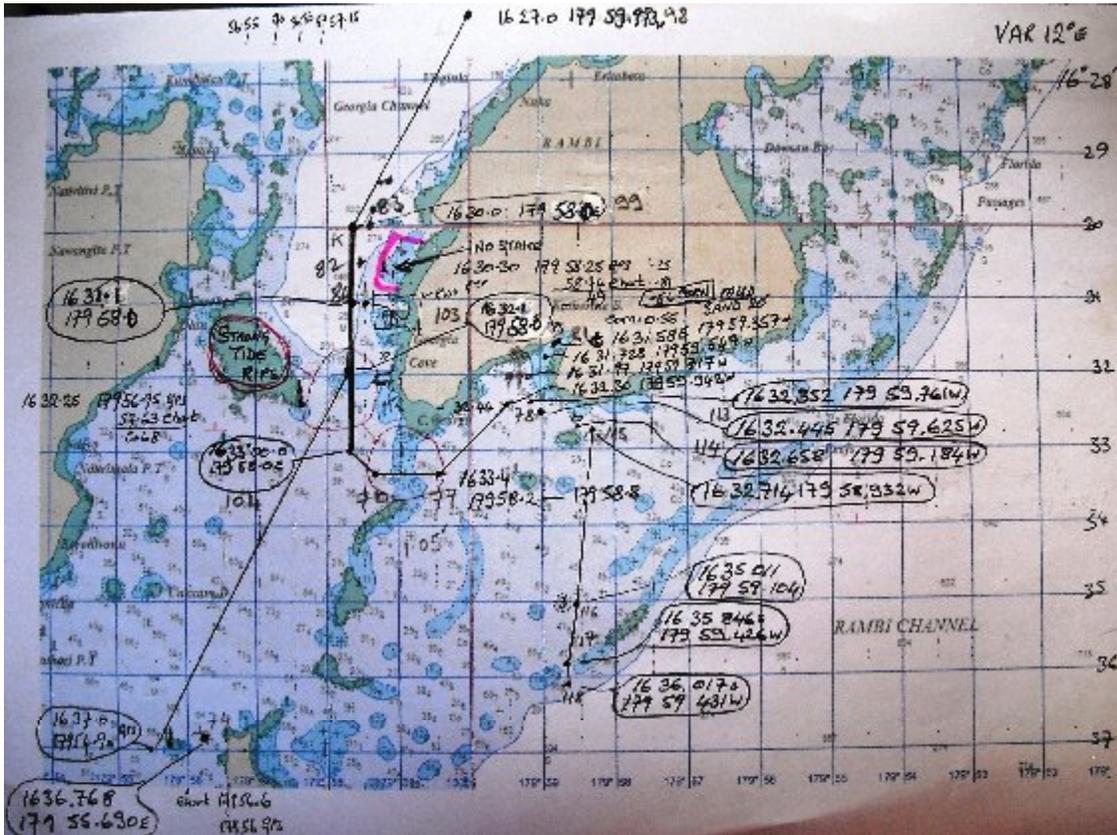
We visited the church, a magnificent building and a relic from a bygone era when there was a large plantation here, more people and more wealth. All things that have moved on now due to a 'globalization' which has been taking place not just in the last decade but over hundreds of years. Truth is, they had a product that was required, and then they didn't; it was over even more quickly than it had begun.

Cyclone Thomas had given Fiji a hard pasting during the last hurricane season and this area had been hardest hit, the church was a refuge to the local people during the storm and it must have been quite terrifying, as they all clung together whilst sections of roof slowly peeled off and were blown away, windows were blown out and glass splinters zipped by a two hundred miles an hour. They were in the process of rebuilding, a long and difficult process hampered by lack of funds, lack of experienced manpower and lack of materials. I don't know who, if anyone was contributing to this campaign but it looked like they could do with some help; I hope they get it all completed before

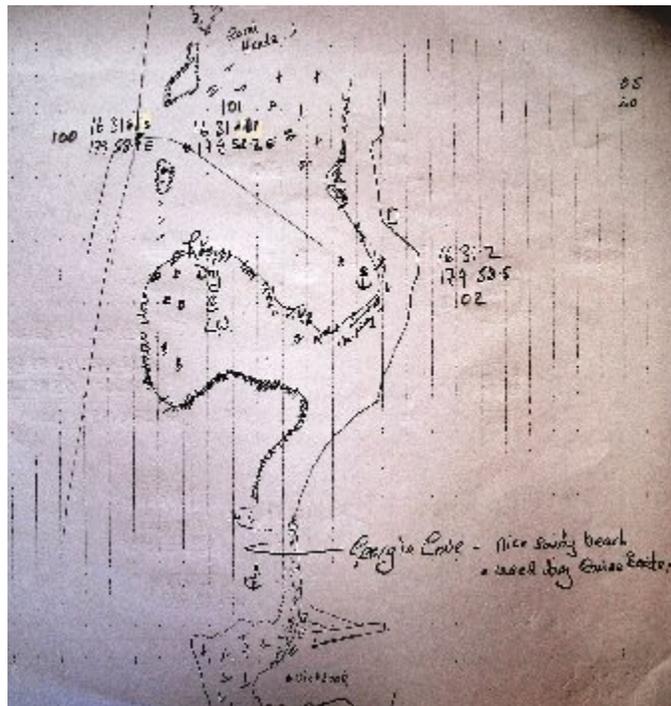
the next Hurricane season begins.....just two months from now!

We took a walk along the road and bumped into the Galloping Horseman, a farmer on his way home, he at least had a reliable mode of transport (Jack would never be getting his hands on this one!). Our farmer stopped for a short chat and we noticed that like many of the inhabitants here, he had a lot of teeth missing.....we had noticed that the children spent quite some time chewing on Sugar Cane and this may be the explanation for this big gap in dental hygiene. Soon after the galloping horseman had ridden off into the sunset a truck load of school children, on their way home, hurtled around the bend, all with big smiles, waving madly as they shot passed in a cloud of dust. Everyone, always seemed happy, it would be going a bit far to say “poverty is a state of mind” but I think you could say that “wealth is a relative term round here”

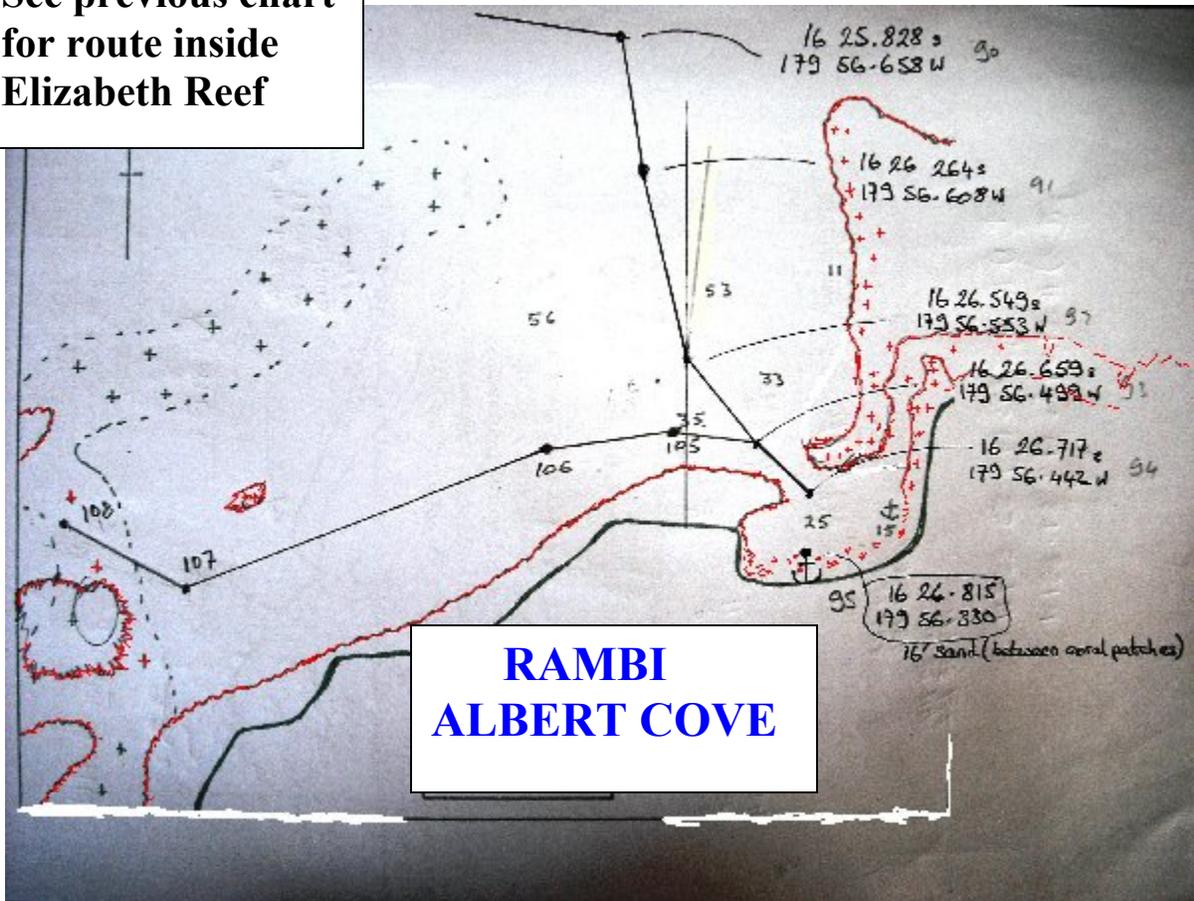
From Katherine Bay we went up the West coast of Rambi,



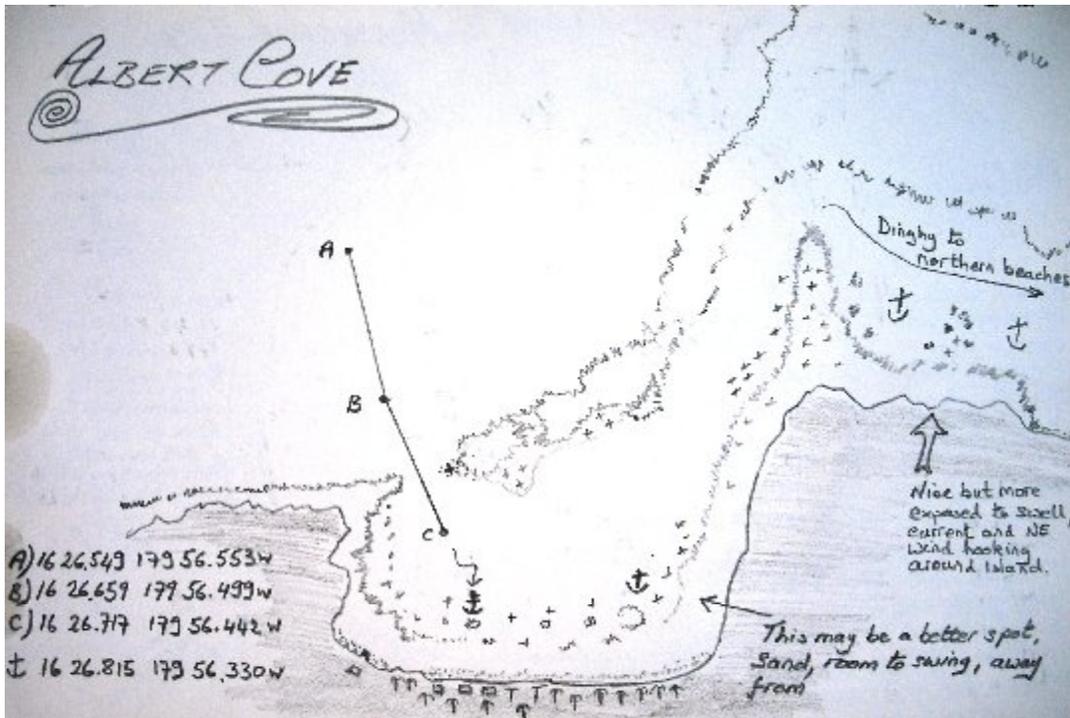
I had pinpointed a nice little cove I wanted to visit but one of the local cruise ships was in there so we pushed on north; there was another small cruise ship from the Blue Lagoon fleet laying off Nuke (Nuku), the main village of the island and the centre of administration.



See previous chart
for route inside
Elizabeth Reef



Albert Cove was a big hit with us, a lovely anchorage, beautiful beach, a handful of locals living in grass huts at one end and live coral with fish just a short swim from our boarding ladder..... Paradise Found! Great sunset, calm and peaceful night, beautiful sunrise.... A cruise ship arrives and anchors just outside the reef; Paradise Lost!



Fortunately, they were far enough away we didn't hear their generator; they had very few passengers and were gone the next day..... I did note that the crew members had little idea of how to handle their tenders around the coral or when beaching; if this was an indication to the shipboard standard of seamanship, I could only hope that the Catering Department (the 'Hotel Staff' as they are often referred to these days) was made of better stuff.

We snorkelled here and snorkelled there, took photos, introduced ourselves to the locals and were adopted by Malau and Acidy, a fine if rather elderly couple who were living in harmony with a little less than nothing that we would call 'material possessions' in a partially built grass hut a stones throw from the beach. We gave them a few things and they loaded us down with vegetables from their garden...for people that obviously had so little, their

generosity was overwhelming. They too had suffered in Cyclone Thomas, their house had been demolished and thus they were still rebuilding....Malau was proud of his garden, they were growing a great mixture of vegetables right outside their front door; apparently a whole range of fruits and vegetables grow wild on the island so he just transports them to his 'garden' where, with little help and little water; they produce copiously. From my perspective, his 'garden' was a sand pit in which nothing could possibly grow.....there must be some magic involved somewhere....maybe there is some correlation to my fishing abilities!

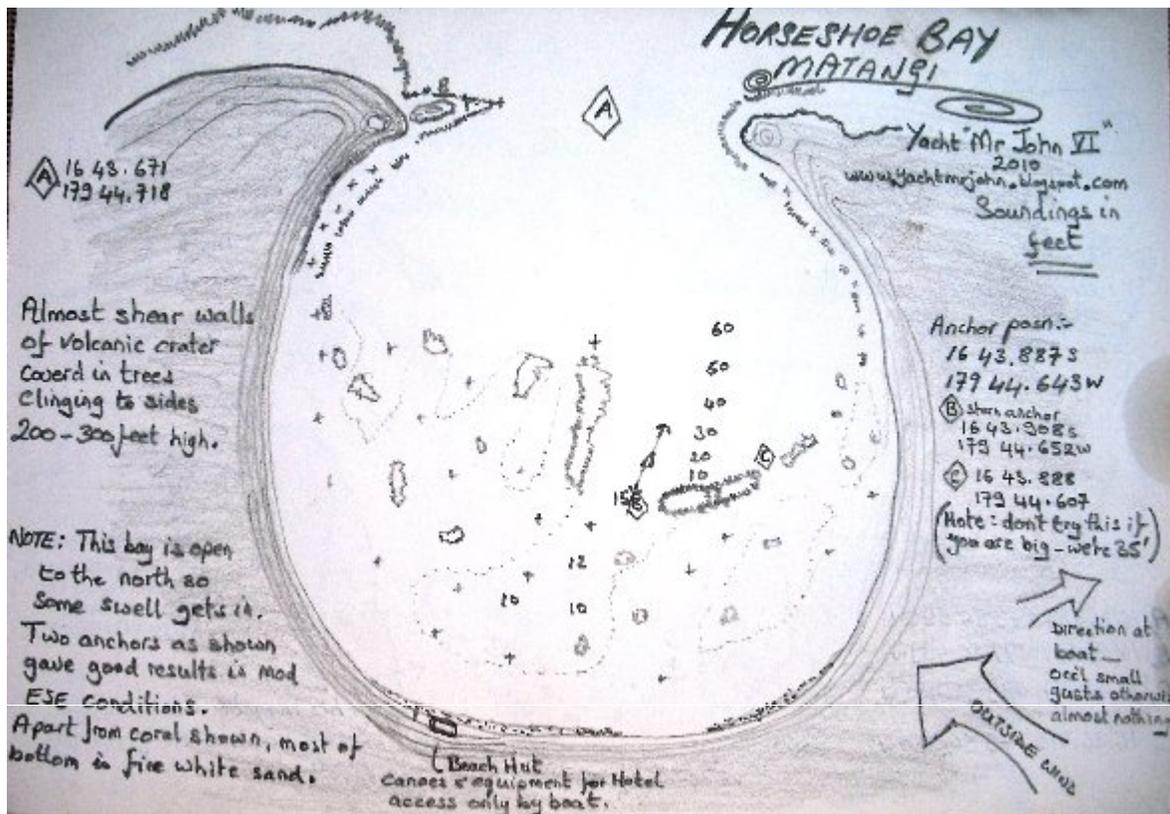


There was another elderly gentleman living alone in the hut next door, also as nice as could be.....His story, cut short, was that he'd had some problem that stopped him from walking and so as not to burden his relatives, he moved away from his village to this remote beach and nursed himself back to health by swimming every day.... he still had some problems walking but despite age, he seemed remarkably resilient. I always thought the old people were well cared for in the island communities so it came as a bit of a shock to me to find these people, in their twilight years, fending for themselves, with no possessions and totally cut off, even by island standards.

When we were about to depart, we went and said our farewell's and passed over a few more items we thought they could use; Acidy had made us some garlands and had woven a couple of baskets for us, it must have taken her quite some time and once again, we were touched by their generosity.

From Albert Cove we went south, inside of Elizabeth Reef, we could at last see where we were going and this made life much more pleasant and relaxing; we even managed to stop the motor and do some sailing. We returned to Katherine Bay for a night and took on some water from the village tap, supplies on board were dwindling and whilst I wasn't tempted to drink the village water or put it in my tank; it was most useful for showering and washing up the dishes. The next day we had a great sail across to Matangi; it was directly upwind so we had to tack but took the scenic route

steepness of the sides, over time, trees have grown; clinging on as best they can. Their root system is mainly exposed and angled to support the upper part; it's a freak of nature that needs to be seen to be believed. Many birds and large fruit bats reside in these trees so there is much chatter in the late evening and early mornings, its one of those places where beauty appreciation can take place from first light, well into the night; especially when there is a full moon, which lights up the white sand and gives a surreal experience.

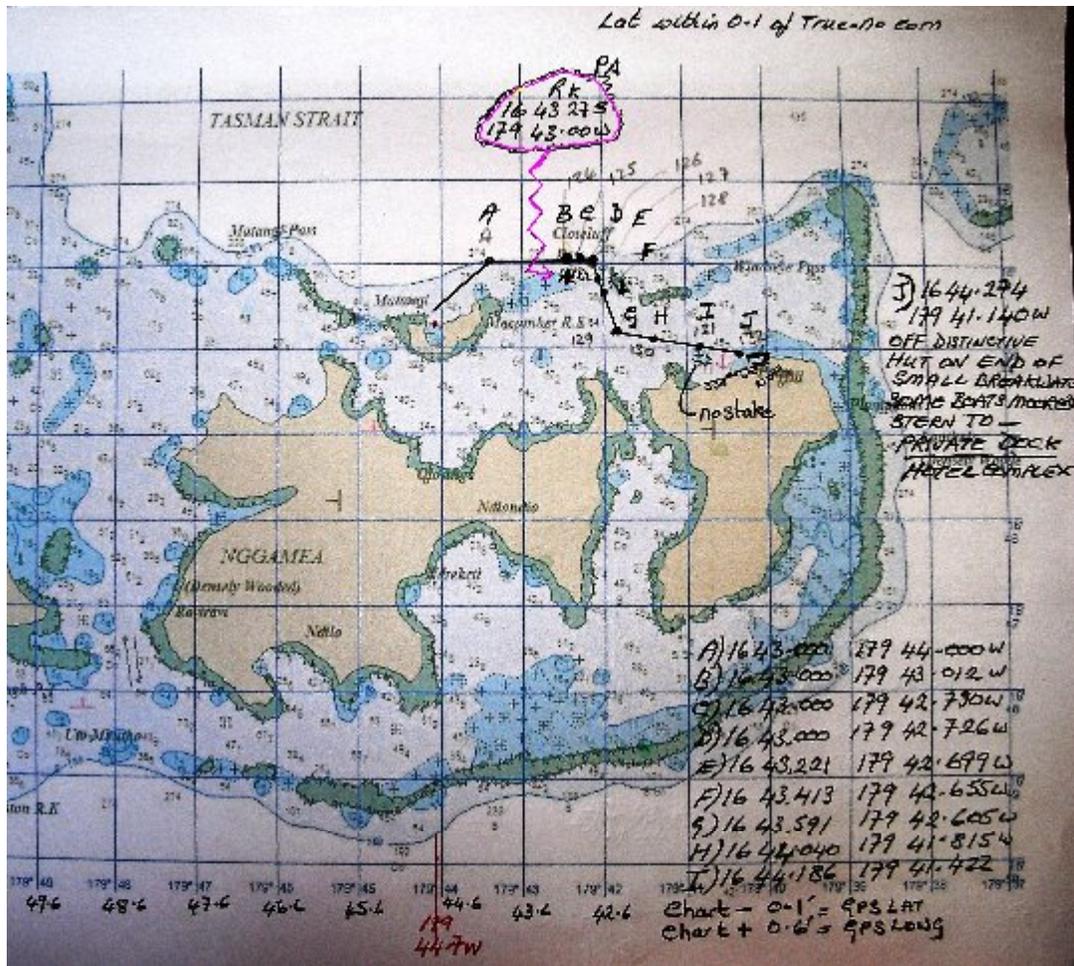


Due to being open from the north a small swell always gets into the bay, we are lucky, being small and manoeuvrable, that we can easily get a stern anchor out and this definitely enhanced the quality of our time spent here.

Although there was some colourful coral and quite a few fish, I was a little disappointed with the snorkelling, the fine white sand on the bottom was always being agitated by the swell and hanging in suspension, making visibility problematic (although I could see my anchor from the boat in thirty feet of water), it just wasn't anything like 'crystal' and thus the colours were subdued making underwater photography pointless. We did have a good swim though and the experience of being completely alone in such a place was brilliant! We only saw the resort boat twice when they brought over the cleaner for their cabin and they were a cheery bunch who waved and smiled as they went by.

My pilot book said that we should go to the Plantation in Lauthala and get permission to go up the top of Palm Hill where a magnificent view awaits, other than that we had little information on the island. Unfortunately we had a wasted trip, as we were intercepted by the Plantation Resort's Security and informed we could not anchor anywhere around the island, which was now private. They were quite nice about it and explained that they had guests, I guess they didn't want yachties cluttering up their view or detracting from the privacy of their beaches; I was 'kind of' sympathetic to that, having worked in the 'up market' cruise industry, I only wish we'd had more warning as we had to beat our retreat through a narrow reef passage right into the sun!

I guess there are other areas where you can go within this reef (shown below) but we were left with the distinct feeling that there wasn't..... You could check this out before going.



Time was moving on and whilst there was a lot more we hadn't even got close to in this area, we were running low on water, fuel and fresh supplies; we had to move off and return to Savusavu. Leaving Matangi we picked up a smart breeze which drove us back towards the northern end of Taveuni, there was also a very lumpy, short sea on top of a confused swell; we did some very exciting rolling and Paula, who was suffering from a little back ache (after trying to heave up the anchor whilst it was wrapped around a coral head), was not overwhelmingly impressed. Once round the north end of Taveuni we went to have a look at an anchorage I'd mapped out from 'Google' but unfortunately, our easterly wind was hooking around the

point and blowing fresh along the coast, now in a north-easterly direction. The anchorage was marginal and we were not impressed enough to want to stay..... So we continued back to Viani Bay in the hope that we may go on one of Jack's walks. The current was running so strong in the Somosomo Straits that we were going more sideways than forward and after we'd got swept past one reef a lot closer than I would normally have liked, we started the engine and put a bit more effort into navigation; deciding that this was no place for messing about!

Back in Viani Bay, we received another visit from Jack Fisher, we were discussing the walks and how we'd like to do one or two in the dry conditions when the heavens opened and we had a solid hour of torrential rain with squally winds out of the north and northeast. Jack was a prisoner on board until it let up but we kept him happy with coffee and cookies (the cookies were a big hit!), meanwhile we were enlightened as to all the 'goings on' in the area and one particular story about how he'd recently lost a good friend to a shark attack in the very anchorage that we'd been contemplating off NE Taveuni.....The short version say's never get into murky water....which is what happens when rain hits Taveuni and there is run-off into the bays; in this case, that was coupled with some beachside restaurants discharging food scraps (etc.) directly into the sea. Our rain certainly put a stop to all thoughts of 'bush walking' so we decided to leave the next day and return to Savusavu.

We did not however go directly, once around Lesiaceva Point we found a really nice anchorage on a shallow plateau of golden sand a little ways southwest of the Cousteau Resort. The rest of the day was spent exploring the reef and a couple of very photogenic islands off the point, we discovered some quite nice coral and lots of fish; this was another great spot which we hope to return to. We spent a night in this idyllic anchorage and moved off the next morning to find a mooring off the Copra Shed Marina.

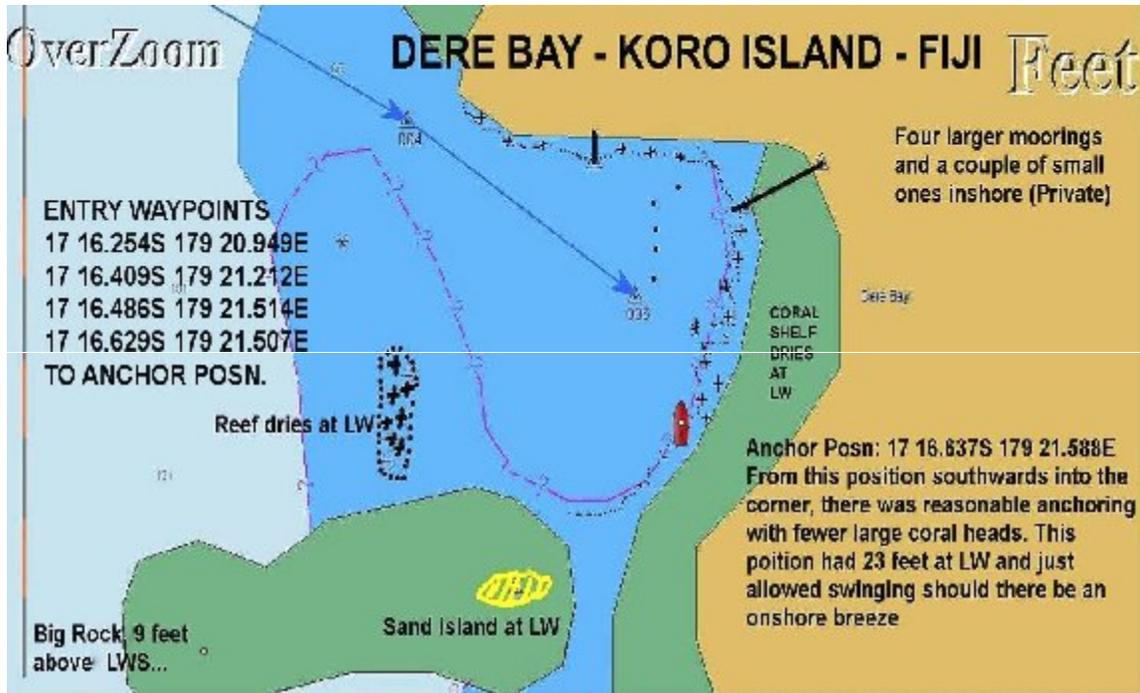


Anchorage position on plan Page:2

Whilst we had been away, our friends Ed and Ellen had arrived with “Entr’acte” and it was good to meet up with them again, we spent quite some time together around town and made plans to cruise together towards Suva as soon as the weather allowed. In the meantime, we had correspondence and boat-work a plenty to keep us occupied. Soon after our arrival a quasi-stationary front came and sat over Savusavu, the rains poured down, the humidity went through the roof, boat-work became difficult and all my joints started to ache.....I was really glad of those hot showers at the Marina!!!

We departed Savusavu on Thursday 9th September having taken a Clearance for Suva, this turned out to be a bit of a mistake as, in retrospect, we wished we’d taken a Clearance to Levuka on Ovalau but we did not, due to the possible problems of having to ‘Clear’ with Customs in what can be a windy, wet and exposed anchorage. This was not the first time we had been reduced to ‘head-banging’ over the state of ‘Clearance Requirements’ in Fiji and we were certainly not the only boat having these problems.

After a night anchored to the west of the Cousteau Resort, we departed early and headed for Koro, a large island about thirty miles almost to the south; we had a good sail down and eventually found a reasonably shallow spot (6mtrs) in Dere Bay where we anchored.



Most of the bay is deep and the anchoring difficult, however it shallows somewhat in the southern end; more of a problem was the visibility, which was reduced by cloud cover; always present due to the trade wind breeze passing over its lofty peaks. Those same lofty peaks were the cause of the rain showers, which seemed endless and the down-drafts that would have us tugging hard on our anchor chain as it ground around the coral heads.

All in all it was not a relaxing experience, although 'ashore' seemed nice enough, there was a nice dock and plenty of 'Holiday Villas' scattered around the bay climbing the steep sides of the island; this area had a substantial amount of freehold land available and 'foreigners' had been buying it up to build dream homes in paradise. We had seen quite a few of these dream homes

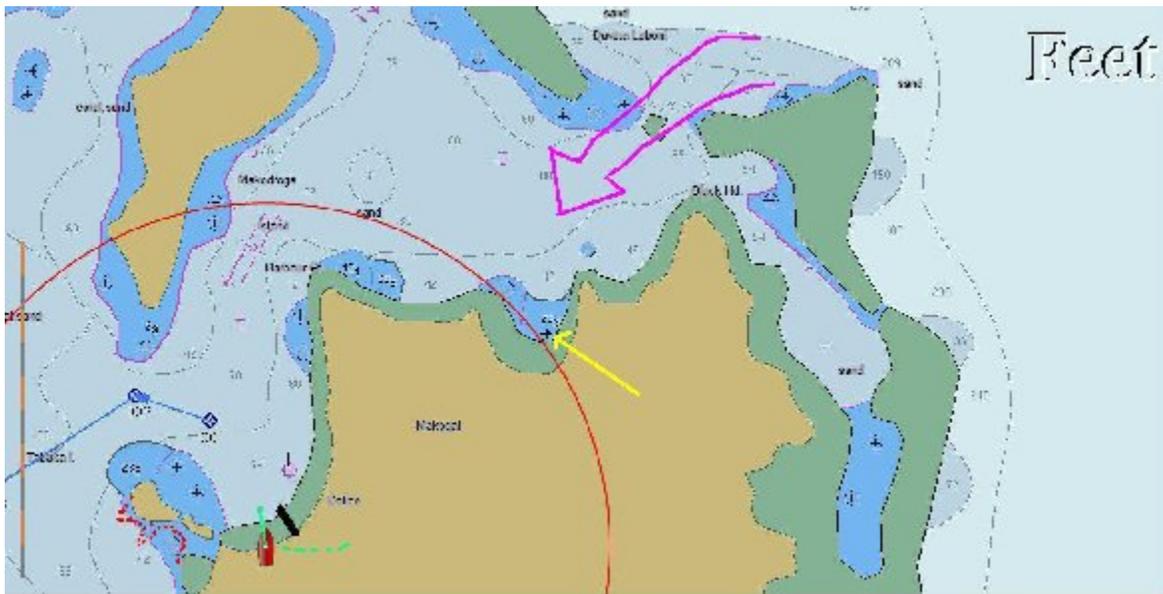
‘For Sale’ on the Real Estate Boards around Savusavu, they seemed over-priced for a bit of rather wet mountainside, cut off from normal services and communications; maybe the reality of being there is a little different from the dream! We were advised that there were some good walks and that the bird life was quite spectacular, we would most certainly have tried it had our anchorage been more tenable; as it was we left early the next morning and had a spanking sail down to Makongai about twenty-five miles to the west.



Outside Pass:	17 26.753S	178 54.227E
Mid Pass :	17 26.845S	178 54.614E
Inside Pass:	17 26.899S	178 55.100E

We didn't really feel like anchoring off the village and doing Sevusevu (the customary greeting in Fiji, where the visitor hands over a gift of Kava, a root which is made into a drink, and everyone sits around for an informal chat), we were a little worn from our sail; so we found another bay a short distance beyond the village which we called Sandy Bay as it was unnamed on the chart.

Anchor Posn: 17 26.033S 178 57.961E



It was a nice spot and it was good to be anchored in clear water over sand, however there was a swell hooking around the point and this made it somewhat uncomfortable even with a stern anchor out. We settled down for a night of peace and quiet but were surprised when, just after dark, a fishing boat from the village came over to welcome us and get our Kava..... I was not impressed but maybe they thought we were going to leave the next morning without paying our dues!

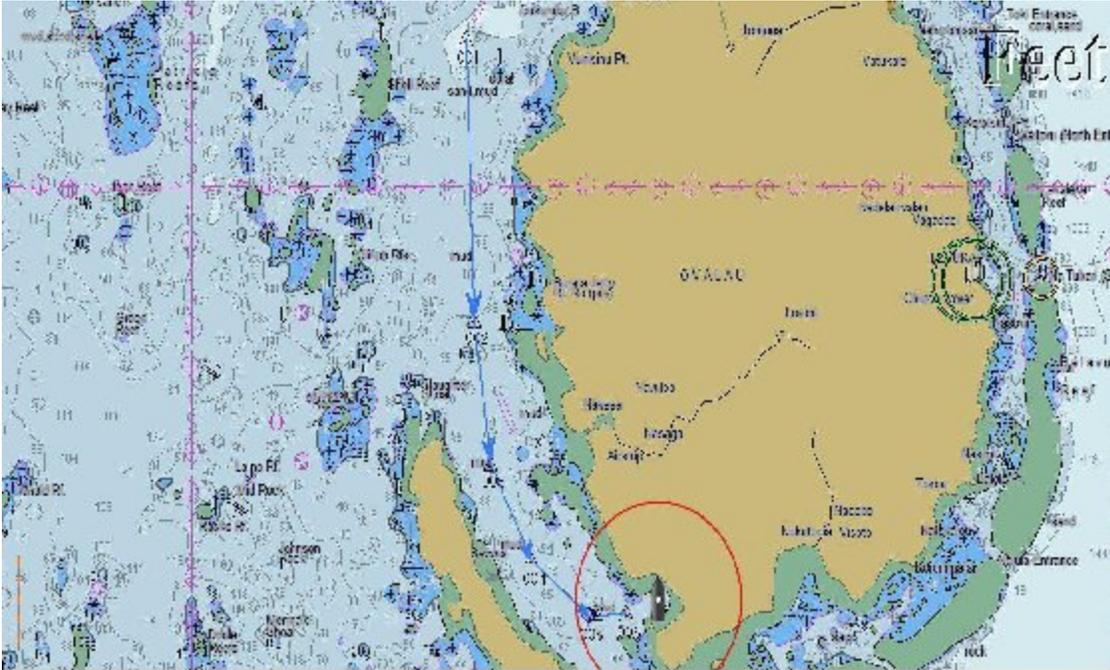
When morning did come, we were ready to try another anchorage and were quite certain that the bay in front of the village could not be any worse than where we were; so moved off in that direction.

Sure enough it turned out to be calmer, although we did have to anchor quite close to the shore due to the depth further out (anchored WNW of the dock at Dalice at Posn: 17 26.567S 178 57.153E); we all went ashore right away to pay our respects to the Chief of the village and to explain our absence the previous evening.



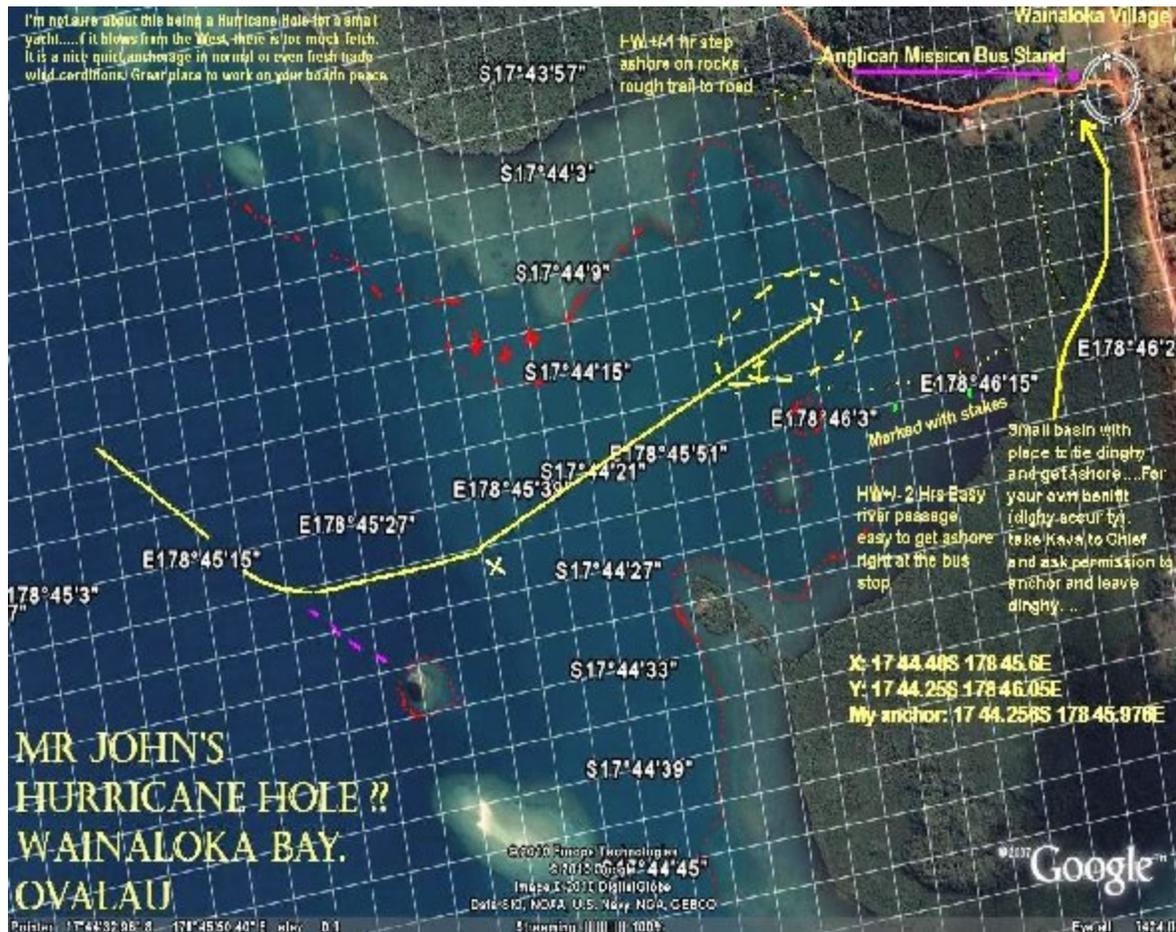
The Chief made us most welcome and showed us around the village, we were introduced to the whale watching station and were shown some of the pictures they had been taking of whales quite close to the island. As part of this effort they had set up an observation point on a peak overlooking the bay which was always manned during daylight hours; there were three volunteer watchers up there when we arrived, puffing, and panting after the uphill bash. Two young Australians and a Canadian were monitoring the horizon but hadn't seen anything all day, in fact the only thing they had seen in a couple of days, was our arrival! There are however, whales which pass through this area and this study will enlighten us all of just how many and for how long they stay in these waters. Back in the village we were brought up to speed on the growing program for Giant Clams, for which they have numerous tanks where these clams are bred and raised to a certain size before they are put back into the sea on the reefs around the island. There was also a turtle swimming in one of the tanks, he had been brought in with some injuries and having been 'doctored' will be released when considered fit enough to fend for himself.

Departing Makongai we had some weather considerations and we didn't want to be sailing around these reef areas at night unless we had to, there were a couple of islands further south and we had been interested in these however the nearest one Wakaya, was privately owned and even though anchoring is apparently permitted, getting ashore was questionable.



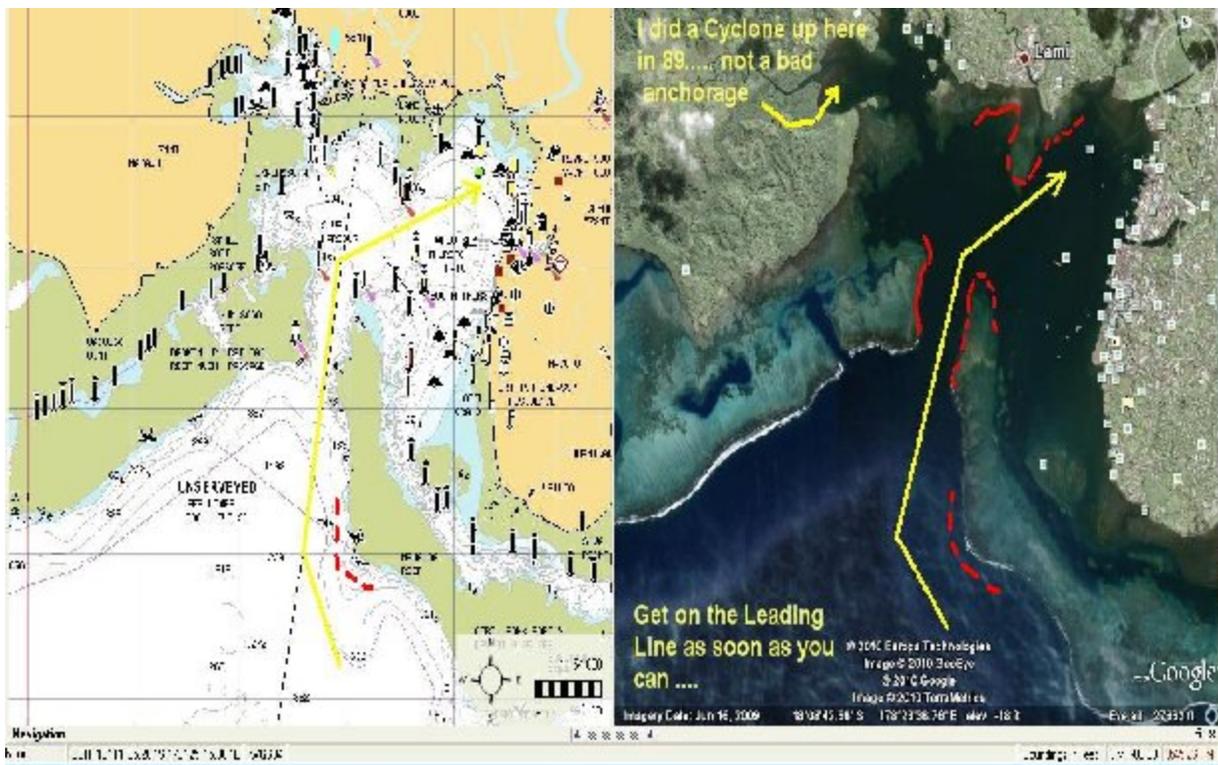
The next island down was out of range for what we could hope to do in a day so we decided to head across to Ovalau and examine a few anchorages on its western side. It was a nice down-wind sail and only twelve miles to the reef entrance so it won my vote despite not being on our clearance document. The first place we looked at was Rukuruku, which is a bay on the northwest coast that has a resort (of sorts) in it. We were not too struck on what we saw, the resort and surrounding area looked a little run down, and the water in the bay was far from clear; we also felt it was a bit exposed to the west should there be an offshore breeze or should a thunderstorm go through. Thus we moved on down the coast until we reached a bay known as Hurricane Hole although the true name is Wainaloka Bay; here we found a very nice, flat, peaceful, and secluded anchorage. The only drawback was that the water was a

little murky and did not encourage swimming, the whole bay was fronted by mangroves, and there was no beach anywhere to be seen. I did however discover that a dinghy could be taken to shore in the northeast corner of the bay, where a small river gave way to a channel through the mangroves. This channel was accessible about three hours either side of High Water and its inner end provided a couple of good spots to leave a dinghy near the village of Wainaloka and right next to the main road. If we had been in possession of a clearance for this island, it would have been a great place to go exploring from. As it was, we did not and thus maintained a low profile out in the bay, which was none the less, quite pleasant.



A couple of days later we had a great weather window to make a break and move around to Suva so we took the opportunity and managed to do the sixty-three miles in daylight, coming to anchor off the Royal Suva Yacht Club on the 17th September.

Twenty years since we had last been here with ‘Mr John IV’, twenty years since Paula started sailing with me and twenty years since Paula started her Circumnavigation; it was certainly cause for a small celebration and congratulations were very much in order for Paula!



We remained in Suva for two weeks and actually enjoyed it very much, the Yacht Club was most welcoming, and everyone in town seemed to be most friendly. We did have a few jobs to do and it was the Liferaft service that took up most of the time. We got it ashore to RFD right after we arrived but when we laid the raft out for inspection, before inflating, we found that a valve in the lower tube was broken and by the look of things it had been broken since the raft was built.....This was the first time that the raft had come out of the original shrink wrap bag that it had been placed in before dispatch from the factory. there was no way it could have been 'damaged' the way it was wrapped, the valve fell apart as soon as we took it from the bag.....

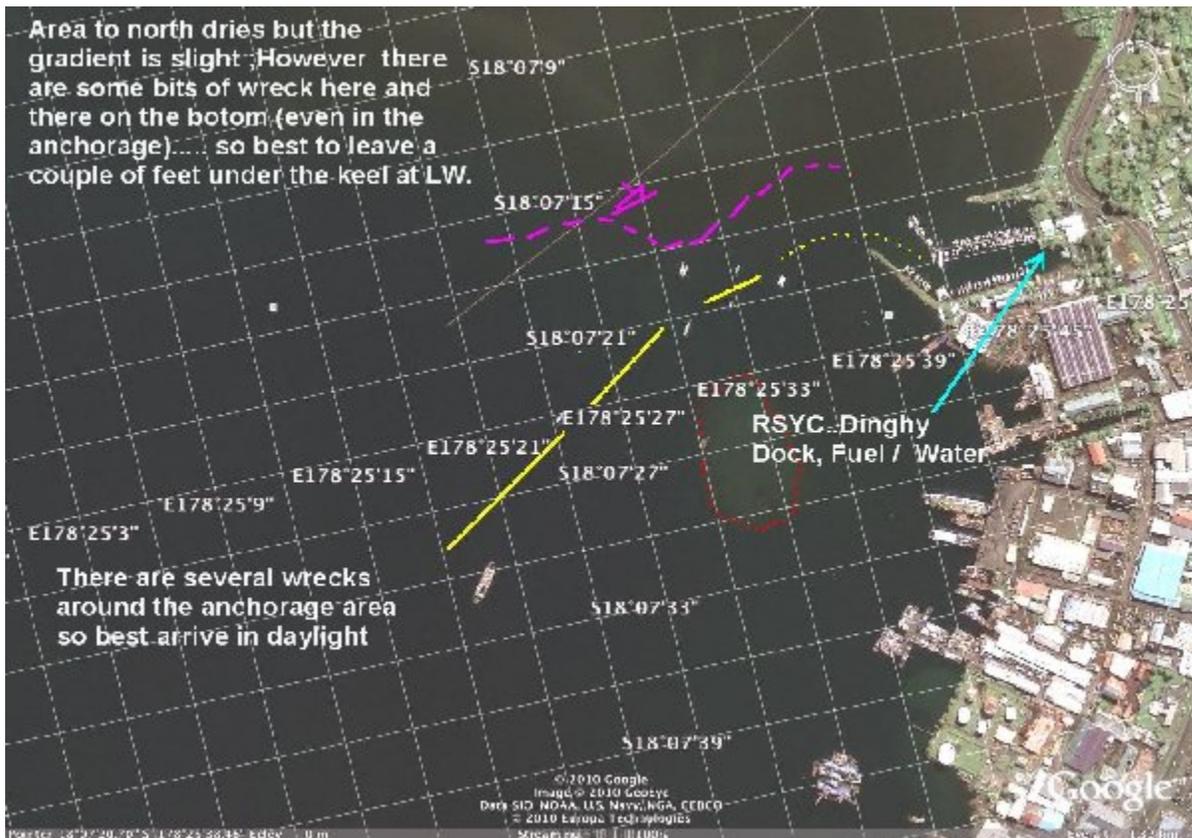
The situation was not made any better by the service people telling me that this was a 'well known' problem with this type of valve and they had seen many other failures the same. Not only but also..... The replacement valve (which had to be secured from New Zealand) is exactly the same as what failed.....I was rather expecting that they would have modified this critical part of the Liferaft during the intervening years!

It took the RFD agent over a week to get the replacement part (from N.Z.)..... I really would have thought that a main RFD agent in the hub of the Western Pacific, would have carried spares for all the rafts that RFD sells....especially parts that are known to be defective. This whole thing was a real confidence boosting exercise!

Some friends of ours took their Plastimo Liferaft in for a service at the same depot, their raft was eight years old and had never been serviced; Plastimo is supposed to be an inferior raft and RFD is supposed to be a Rolls Royce Raft. Our friends were all done in four days, no problems and raft returned 'shrink-wrapped' which it was not apparently possible for ours.....we had to use the old bag, suck the air out and then do some botch up seal job on the end.

We had also wanted to do a 'Hydro' test on the bottle but this also wasn't possible as they didn't carry the replacement part for the automatic valve operation which would need replacing if the bottle were Hydro'd.....

RFD.... what can I say???????



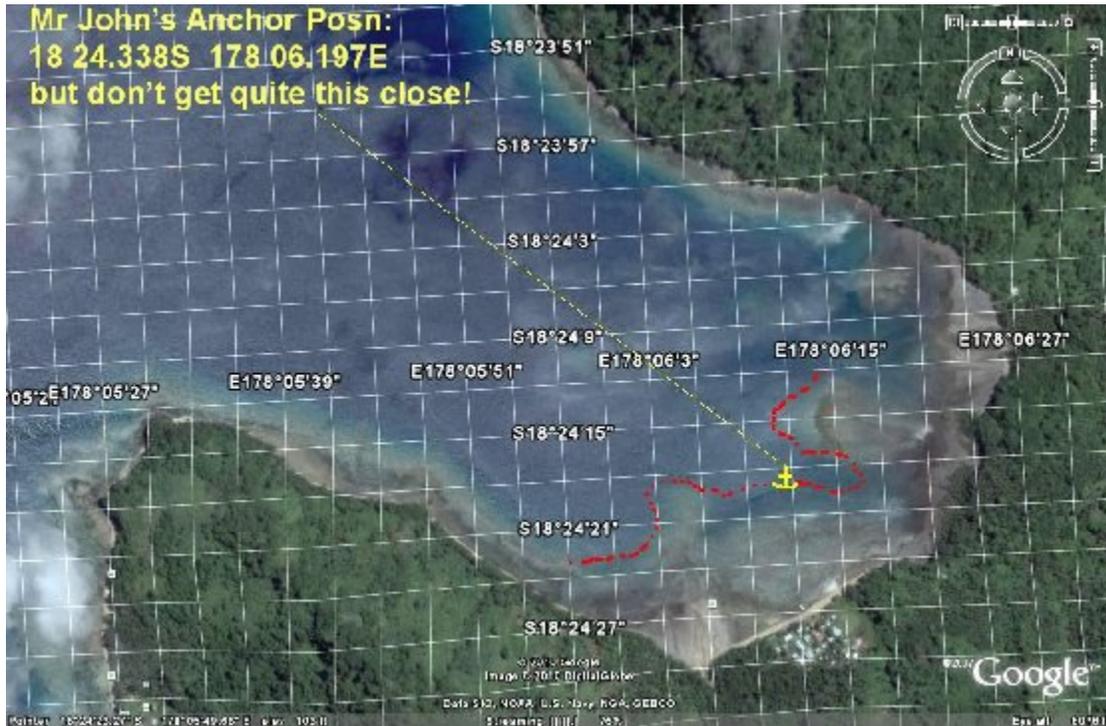
“Mr John” anchorage position : 18 07.317S 178 25.530E

Suva did provide us with plenty of things to do and we found each day had a full schedule, we were also able to spend time with our good friends Ed and Ellen, sometimes eating ashore where we found excellent value-for-money restaurants and good places to just 'hang out' together; it was a fun time and for us it was a luxury to be able to socialize with friends.

We finally managed to leave Suva on 2nd Oct, once our life-raft was 'fixed'; bad weather was approaching, the SPCZ had slipped down to our area giving us lots of heavy rain..... Time to move out!

Unfortunately, once clear of the reef, we found the seas were much bigger than expected and the wind in 'not quite the right direction', we sadly had to give up on trying to get to Kandavu Island and the Astrolabe Reef. Hence, we changed course and ran down wind to Mbengga Island, dropping anchor in Vanga Bay. This was not one our favorite spots, we just managed to anchor when we were hit with a 20 + knot down draft that lasted for several minutes, then died down to nothing giving us a nice calm anchorage only to be repeated every fifteen minutes or so. This wouldn't have been so bad had these bullets of wind all been coming from the same direction but no such luck! I wasn't all that happy with the anchorage either, it certainly wasn't a relaxing place so the next morning, as soon as it was light enough, we departed rather rapidly.

Vanga Bay Mbenga



Our next anchorage was Vuna Niu Harbour, four hours away on the mainland of Viti Levu, here we managed to find a really nice bay tucked inside the reef, which gave us safe and secure anchoring conditions. The sailing to get there was somewhat lively at times especially when we surfed down 12ft waves at over 7 knots otherwise they were round 6 -9 ft. and the boat handled it well.

Using Open CPN we had no difficulty finding the entrance, it is clear where the reef is, even in poor light....

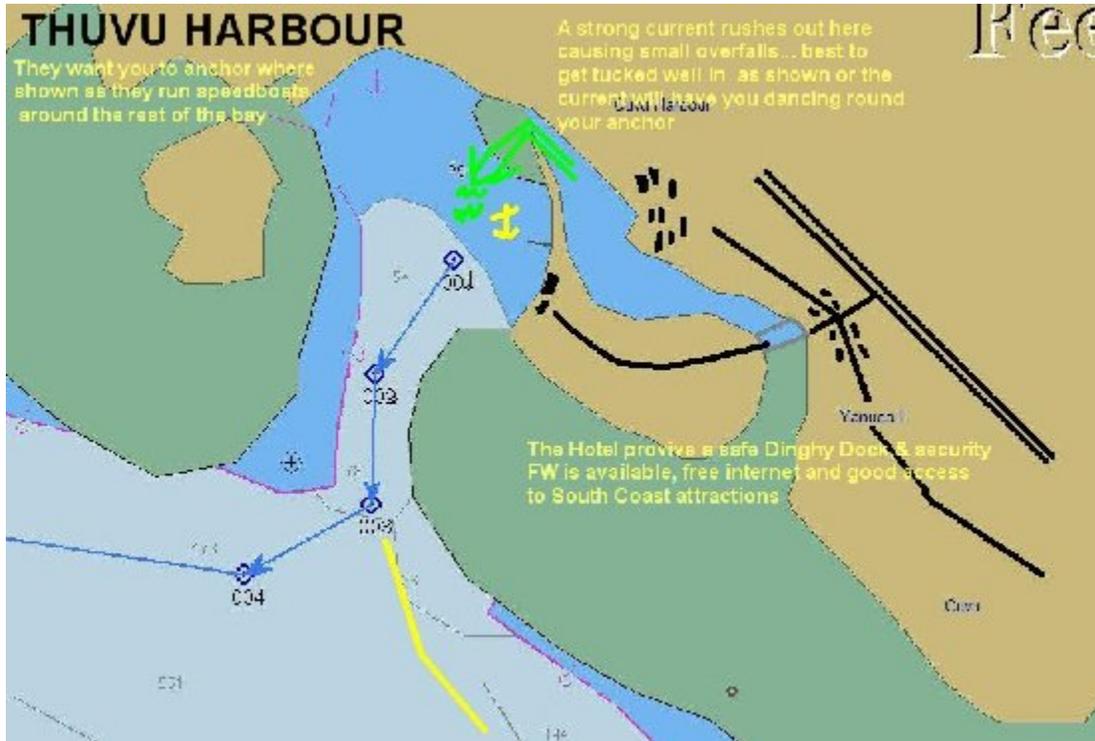


Anchor Position: 18 15.739S 177 52.169E

We spent several days here as our friends Ed & Ellen had an oil leak on their engine, which turned out to be a pin prick hole in one of their oil line; this was an especially good anchorage for them as they were forced to sail in and were happy to find that they could do so without too much effort.

A few days later we moved down the coast to Thuvu Harbour about five hours from Vanga Bay but unfortunately, this turned out to be a bit of a mistake. We anchored off the Fijian Resort and on arrival had to go ashore to fill out a few forms and pay 40 fijians dollars (\$20 each) for the privilege of using the facilities in the hotel. It was a nice hotel and not such a bad deal for the price as we got water, free internet and a safe place to leave the dinghy whilst ashore. A real bonus was to meet up with a Fijian local 'David' who was really the descendent of the

old Chief for the island on which the resort now stands; he was a mine of information and was a really good singer /guitar player so we had some great entertainment.....

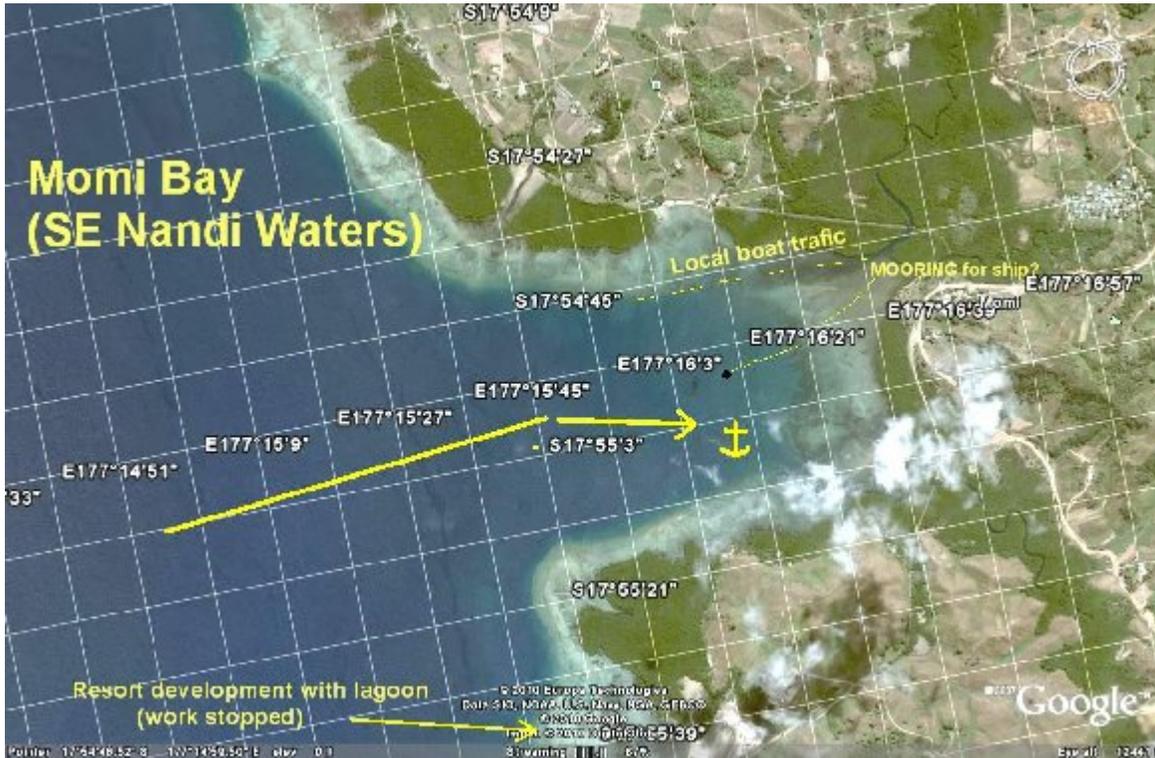


Next day, with our friends, we decided to take a tour into the interior to the Eco Park where we found lots of birds to keep us busy for a few hours.....

The anchorage was not great to start with and was getting more lumpy as time progressed.... there was a big swell outside and it hooked into the bay... on top of that there were Para-gliders and Banana Boats full of screeching kids getting towed around the anchorage most of the day....not much fun for us though, so we spent most of our time ashore.

In the end, it all got a bit much and the weather threatened to get worse so, after a very bad night of rolling and

pitching, we were up early and heading for our next anchorage three hours away at Momi Bay in Nandi Waters; this was another rollicking sail, surfing down big rollers along the south coast of Viti Levu.



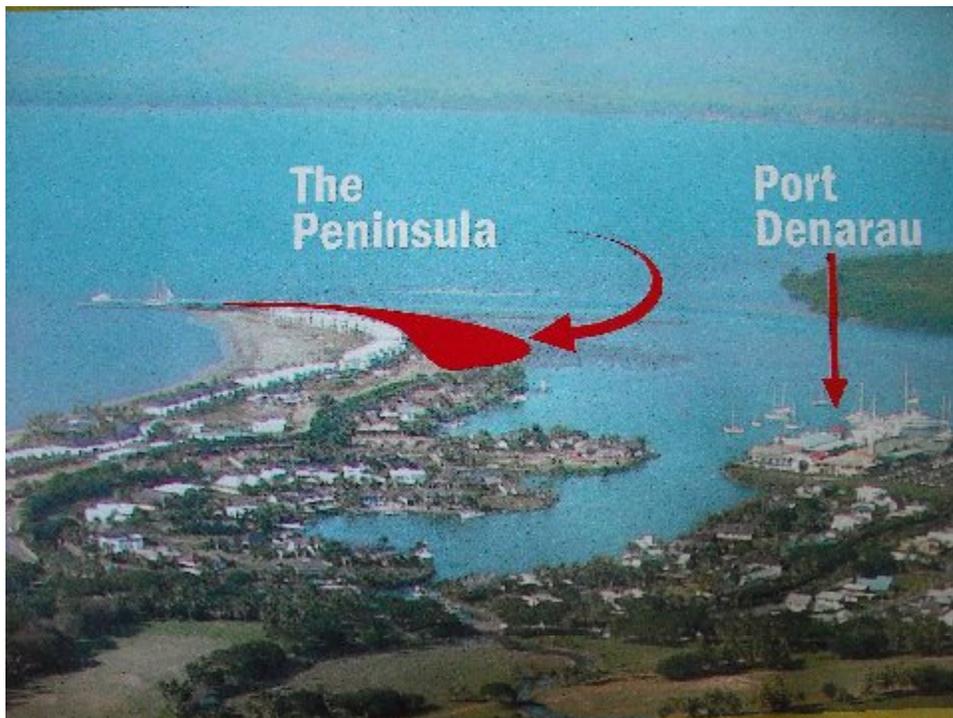
Mr John's anchor Position: 17 55.044S 177 16.118E

Momi Bay however, was paradise, a nice calm anchorage with enough breezes to keep the power up for our laptops; it was really good to get tucked in behind the main island and behind a substantial reef system that took away the swell. Although the forecast was for heavy rain and thunderstorms, we had been exceptionally lucky in missing most of it. We could see from our anchorage that inland, in central Fiji, they were having a bad time with Rain and HAIL! We only got a few sprinkles; Suva was very badly hit, they had 280 ml of rain fall within 24hrs, causing

flooding, closures of schools and businesses and blocked roads but here in 'Nandi waters,' where they needed the rain desperately, they had very little. We stayed in Momi Bay for three days doing odd jobs round the boat and working on our lap tops, seeing as there was no good place to get ashore.

After the peace and tranquility of Momi Bay, we sailed up to Denarau Island, the hub of the tourist trade for Nandi Waters; it is packed with Hotels, a large residential development for up-market waterfront properties and a small Marina complex. We did one night anchored off the Hotels but the next day found space to anchor off the Marina where we were sheltered by a breakwater and had all around protection; this was a relaxing position and was convenient to take local transport into Nandi, the main town for this area. They have just laid Moorings here, so no more anchoring; there is a charge for Mooring but this includes the Marina facilities which we made good use of during our visit. Whilst it is a tourist area and prices are marked up accordingly, with a little care, we managed to find some good bargains ashore. One of which was the Free Entertainment, (usually Friday and Saturday night 1900 to 2000)..... where we at last got to see some Fijian Dancing including a 'Meke'; unfortunately the music was 'canned' but overall, it was a very good performance.

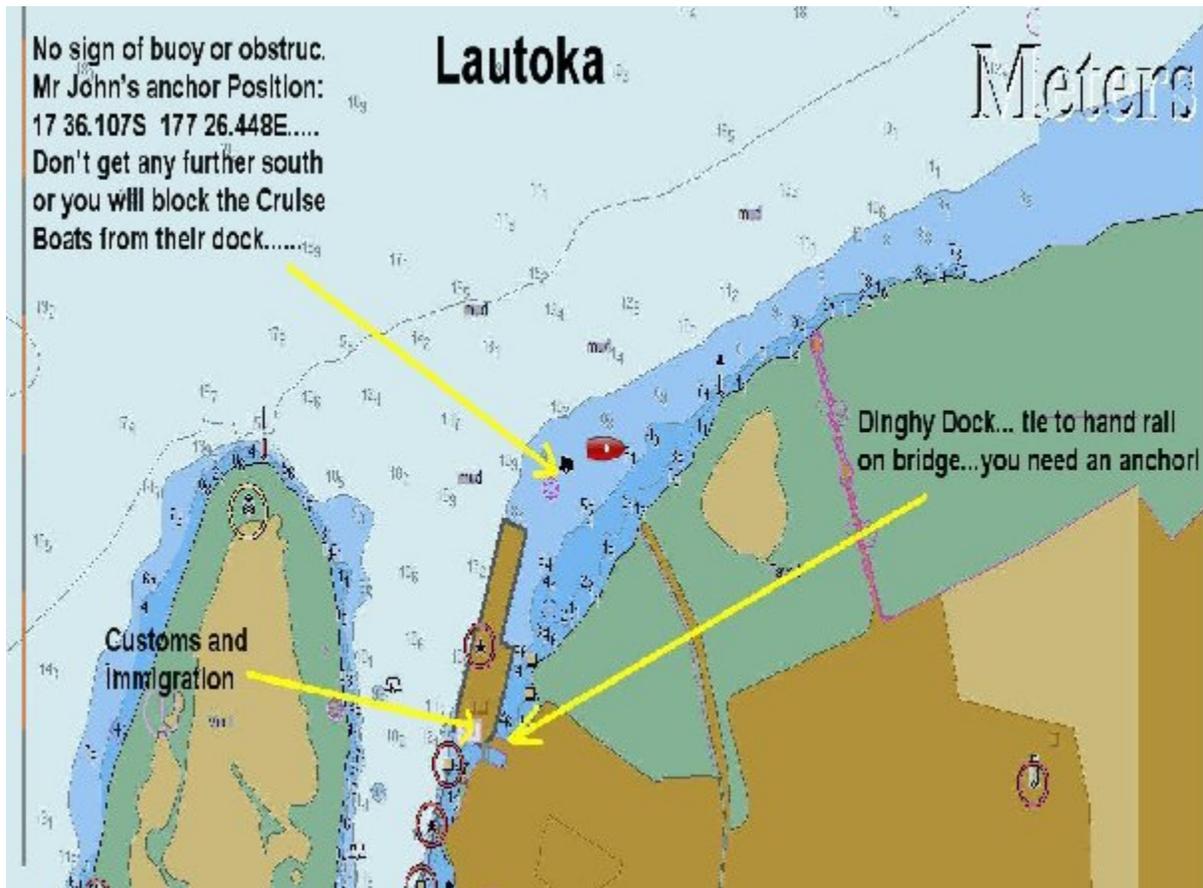
I can recommend the Mama's Pizza with a beer and front seats for the performance.....

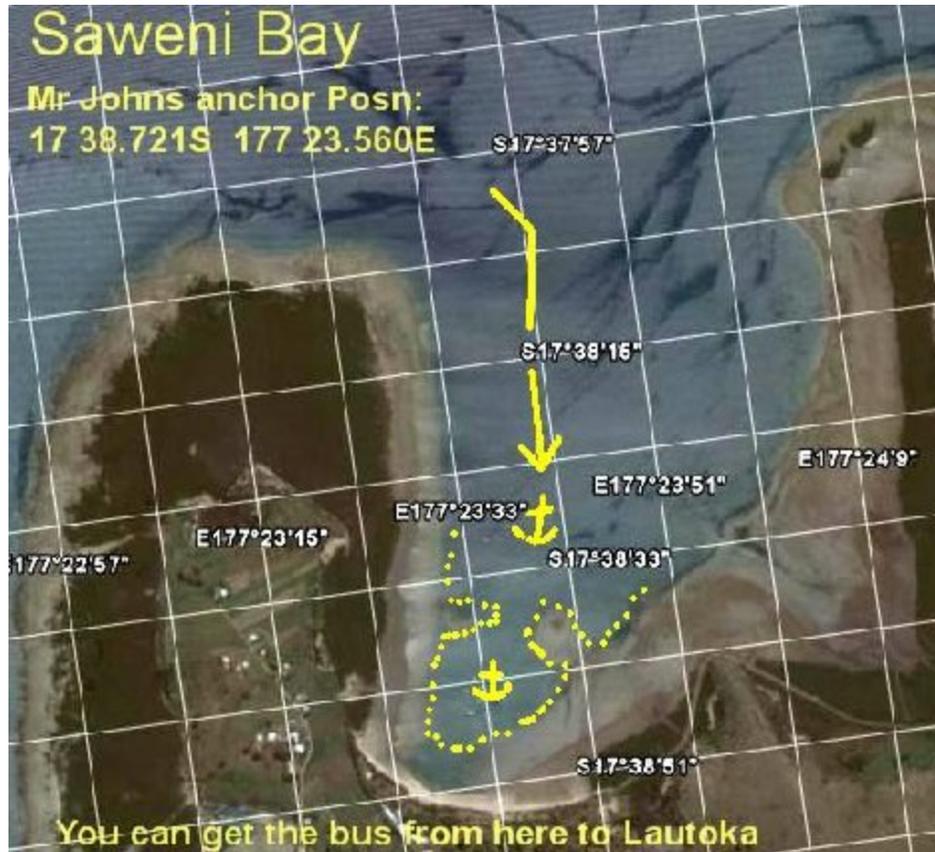


We spent some time in this area, between Denarau, Lautoka and Saweni Bay; a little further north, Lautoka anchorage was not a great place to hang about but we had to go there to get our clearance. Saweni Bay was a much nicer anchorage and was only a short bus ride away from Lautoka which is Fiji's second largest city.

There is a good market here and quite good shopping in general.

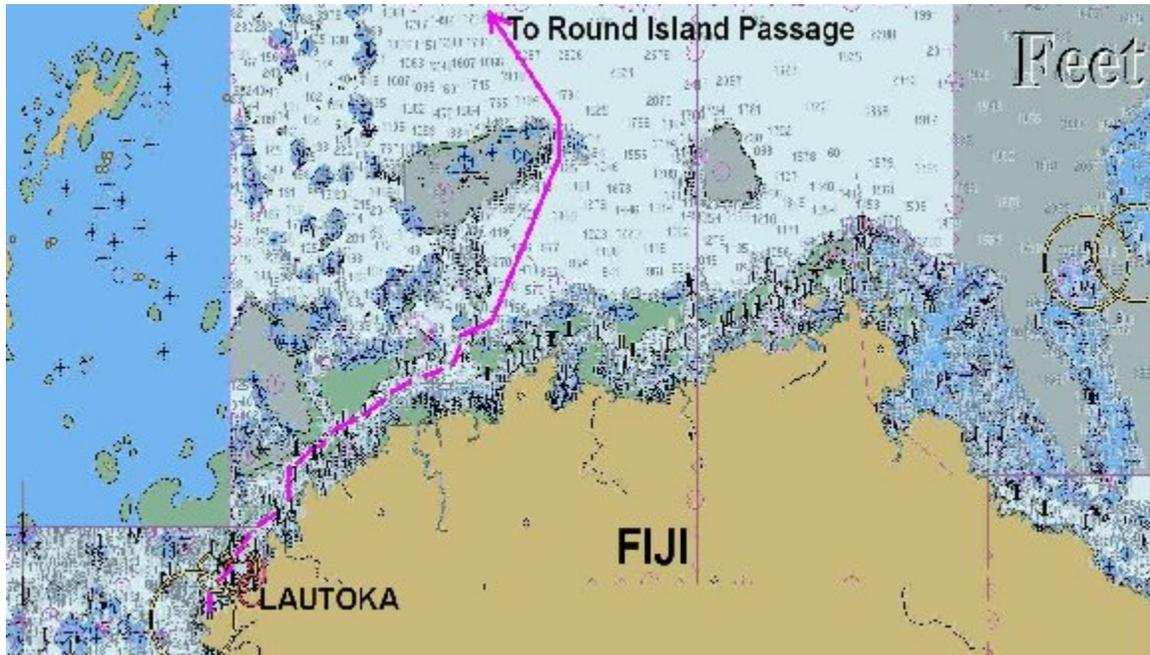
Going ashore at the Port, you MAY have to get a gate pass from Customs but generally they let you through. Best to have a photo ID with you.





Whilst in this area we were busy storing the boat for our next passage and I had appointments with both Doctor and Dentist. Ed and Ellen were in the final phase of getting ready to 'Haul Out' their boat at Vuda Point Marina, where they intended to leave it for the Hurricane Season whilst we went north. We were all very conscious that our time together was coming to an end and that the dreaded 'Wet Season' was moving in, to be rapidly followed by the threat of Hurricanes, of which Fiji gets its fair share. We had thought to cruise the Yasawa's before leaving however, time went too quickly and as the wet season moved in, cloud and rain made for difficult navigation in these poorly charted and coral strewn waters so we were inclined to leave it till 'next time'.

On the 28th October we departed Saweni Bay and headed north via Round Island Passage.....



Saweni Bay to Round Island Passage

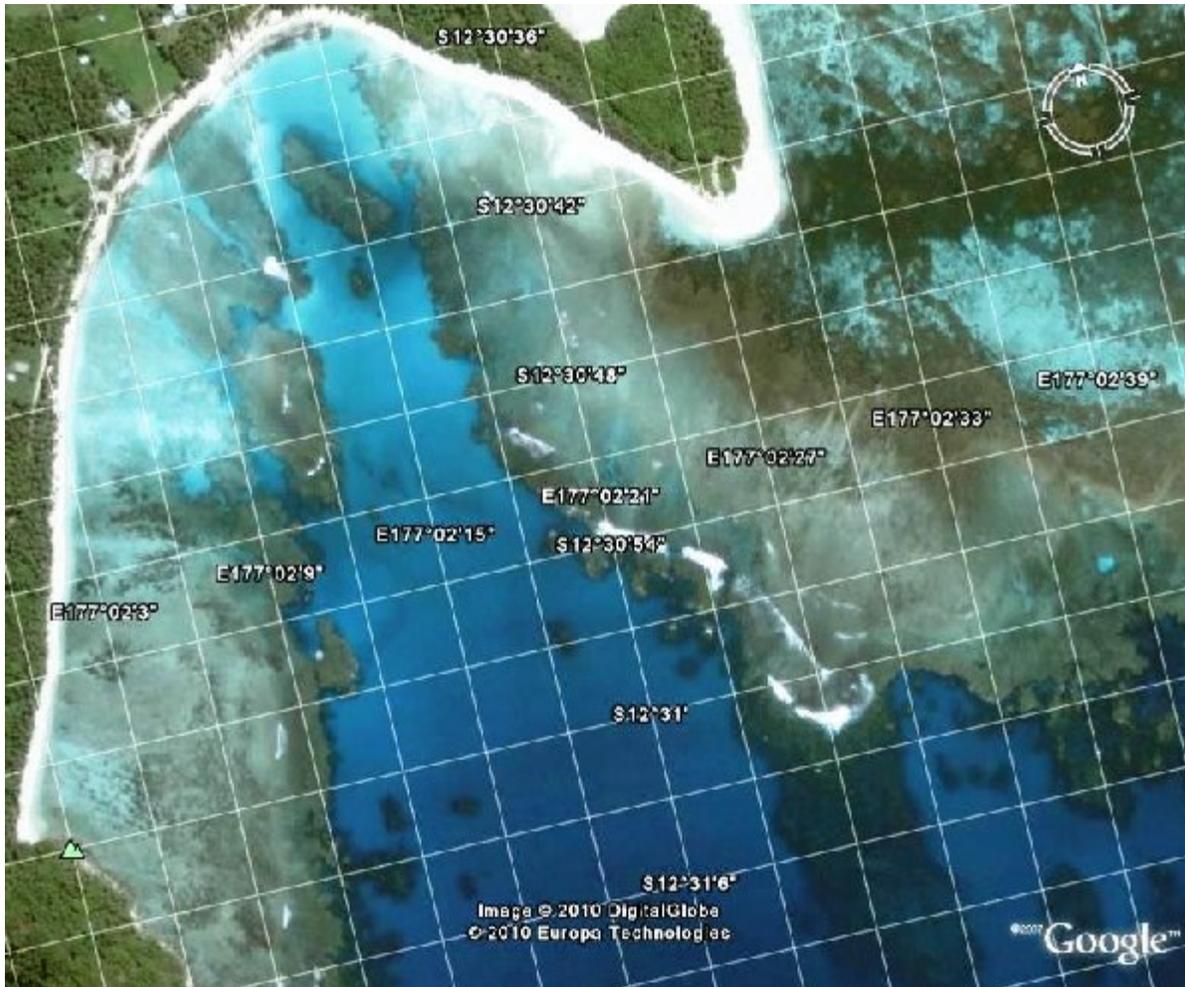
	Directions/Name	Distance	Log Length	Log Time	Total Time	Course	Position
1.	001	0 ft			0:00:00		S17 38.301 E177 23.733
2.	002	0.5 mi	0.5 mi		0:00:00	16° true	S17 37.863 E177 23.862
3.	003	4.4 mi	3.9 mi		0:00:00	33° true	S17 35.022 E177 25.770
4.	004	7.7 mi	3.2 mi		0:00:00	55° true	S17 33.391 E177 28.180
5.	005	8.4 mi	0.7 mi		0:00:00	55° true	S17 33.045 E177 28.700
6.	006	13.7 mi	5.3 mi		0:00:00	30° true	S17 29.027 E177 31.087
7.	007	16.3 mi	2.6 mi		0:00:00	47° true	S17 27.454 E177 32.826
8.	008	17.7 mi	1.4 mi		0:00:00	70° true	S17 27.047 E177 33.991
9.	009	19.9 mi	2.2 mi		0:00:00	52° true	S17 25.850 E177 35.595
10.	010	26.8 mi	6.9 mi		0:00:00	61° true	S17 22.906 E177 41.079
11.	011	29.1 mi	2.2 mi		0:00:00	48° true	S17 21.610 E177 42.593
12.	012	33.3 mi	4.2 mi		0:00:00	58° true	S17 19.665 E177 45.807
13.	013	45.2 mi	11.9 mi		0:00:00	23° true	S17 10.104 E177 50.024
14.	014	47.9 mi	2.7 mi		0:00:00	356° true	S17 07.730 E177 49.843
15.	015	67.2 mi	19.3 mi		0:00:00	340° true	S16 51.946 E177 43.841
16.	016	75.3 mi	8.1 mi		0:00:00	335° true	S16 45.606 E177 40.711
17.	017	94.4 mi	19.1 mi		0:00:00	359° true	S16 28.923 E177 40.477



ROTUMA



Two days sail to the north of Round Island Passage is Rotuma, a little jewel of an island which is now a ‘Clearance Port’ for Fiji. We tried to get there on our way north but the wind came around to the NW and that made the only real anchorage on the island very exposed and untenable. Thus we had to wait till we were south bound from Kiribati to get acquainted with this beautiful island.



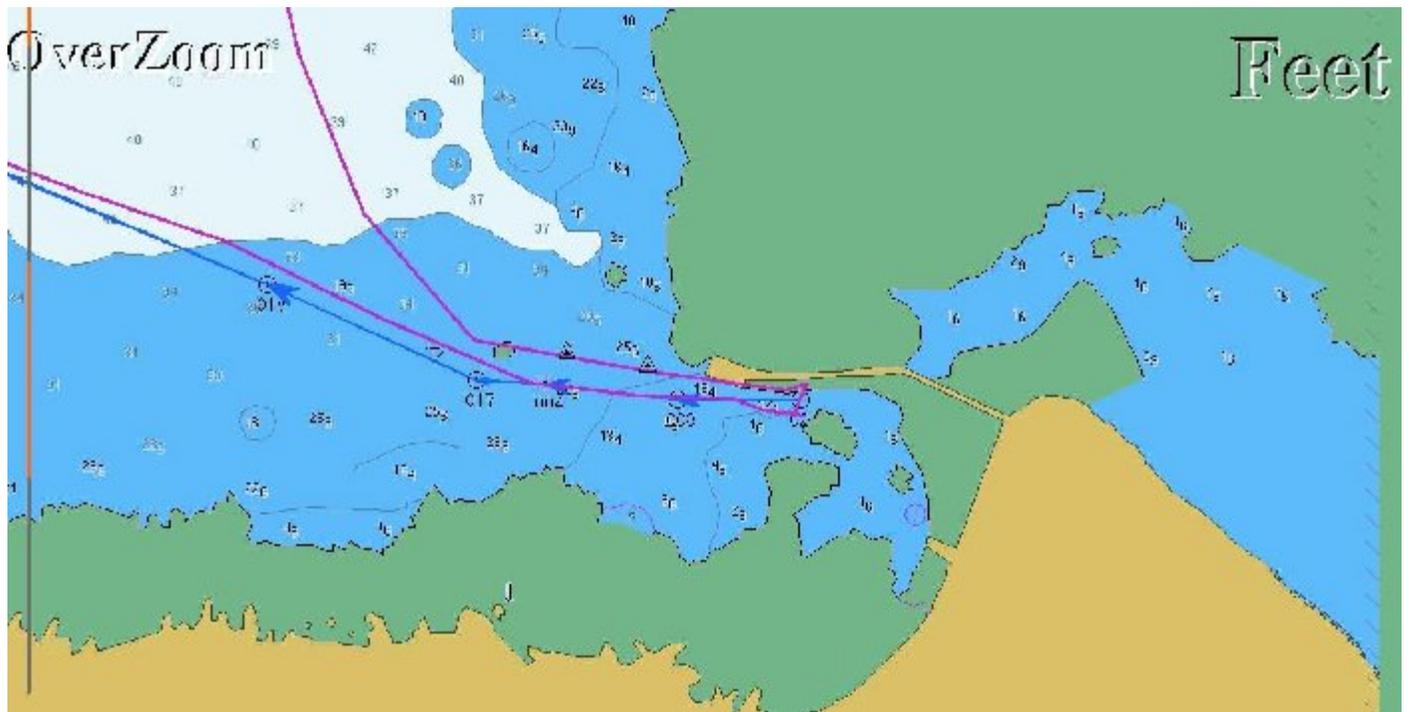
The Southwest anchorage was recommended to us by the locals for when there are northerly conditions. We had a NE wind and a fairly big swell running whilst in the NE anchorage, thus we were rolling heavily at times..... So we thought about moving around here however others had warned that the southwest anchorage was very 'tight' and if the wind swung back to the SE (where it most often is) then we'd be in a right mess as the swell builds up very quickly.



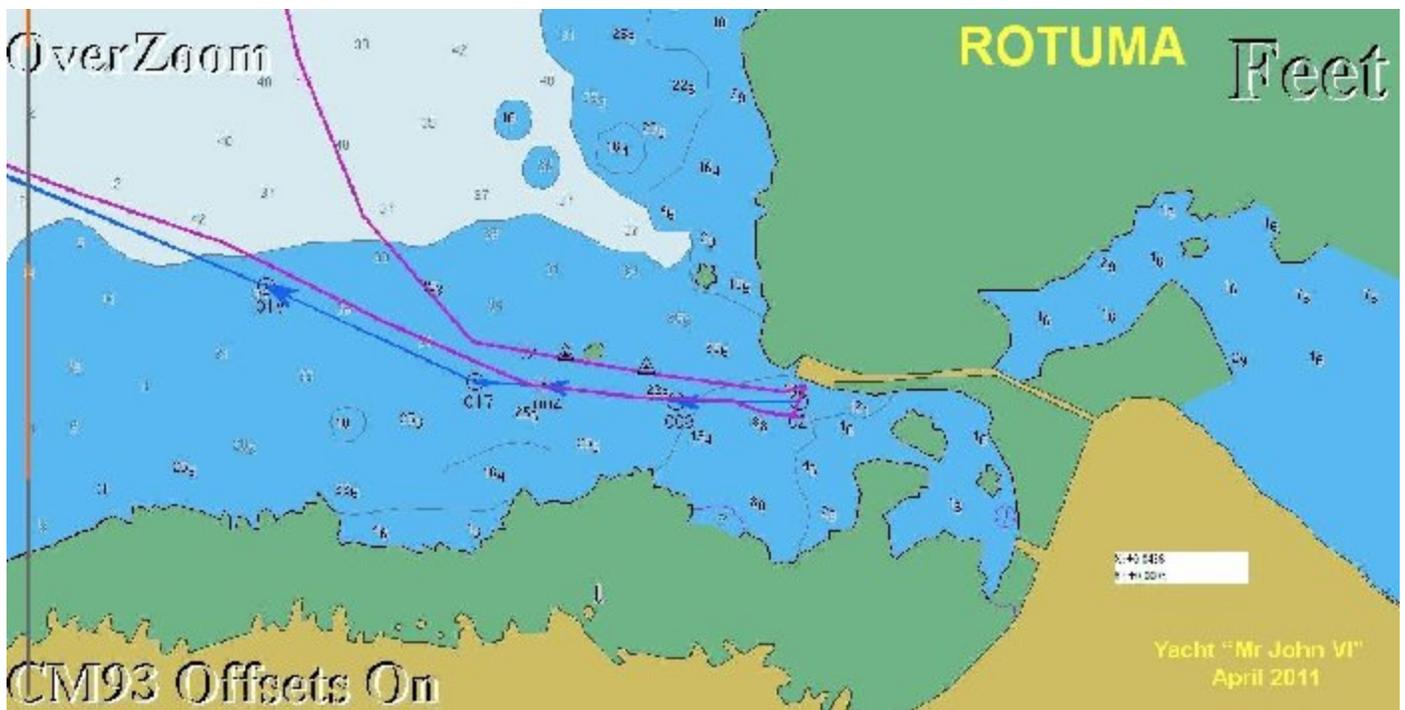
We did not do all the route shown, which is from the anchorage to Round Island Passage.... You can see our entry route from the North and exit out to the east of the island. Incidentally, there are overfalls off the SE tip and it gets lumpy even in settled conditions.

	Directions/Name	Distance	Leg Length	Leg Time	Total Time	Course	Position
1.	0211 /021	0 ft			0:00:00		S12 29.250 E177 07.275
2.	0031 /003	352 ft	352 ft		0:00:00	270° true	S12 29.250 E177 07.216
3.	0041 /004	0.1 mi	378 ft		0:00:00	277° true	S12 29.242 E177 07.153
4.	0171 /017	0.2 mi	195 ft		0:00:00	273° true	S12 29.240 E177 07.120
5.	0181 /018	0.3 mi	0.1 mi		0:00:00	294° true	S12 29.196 E177 07.020
6.	006	0.6 mi	0.3 mi		0:00:00	293° true	S12 29.103 E177 06.794
7.	007	1.0 mi	0.4 mi		0:00:00	293° true	S12 28.965 E177 06.460
8.	008	2.0 mi	1.0 mi		0:00:00	299° true	S12 28.539 E177 05.681
9.	009	3.2 mi	1.2 mi		0:00:00	289° true	S12 28.212 E177 04.696
10.	010	4.6 mi	1.5 mi		0:00:00	263° true	S12 28.376 E177 03.401
11.	0111	8.6 mi	3.9 mi		0:00:00	251° true	S12 29.517 E177 00.094
12.	012	10.3 mi	1.7 mi		0:00:00	181° true	S12 31.009 E177 00.069
13.	0022	293 mi	282 mi		0:00:00	171° true	S16 34.167 E177 40.890

You can reverse these way-points if coming up from the mainland but the quickest way in would be to pass east of the island and then drop into the anchorage.



Note that above is Open CPN without Offset and below is with offset applied. My entry track is more or less on the Route whilst the exit track tends more easterly. On exit I passed the isolated reef patch close to starboard dropping waypoints as I went by.

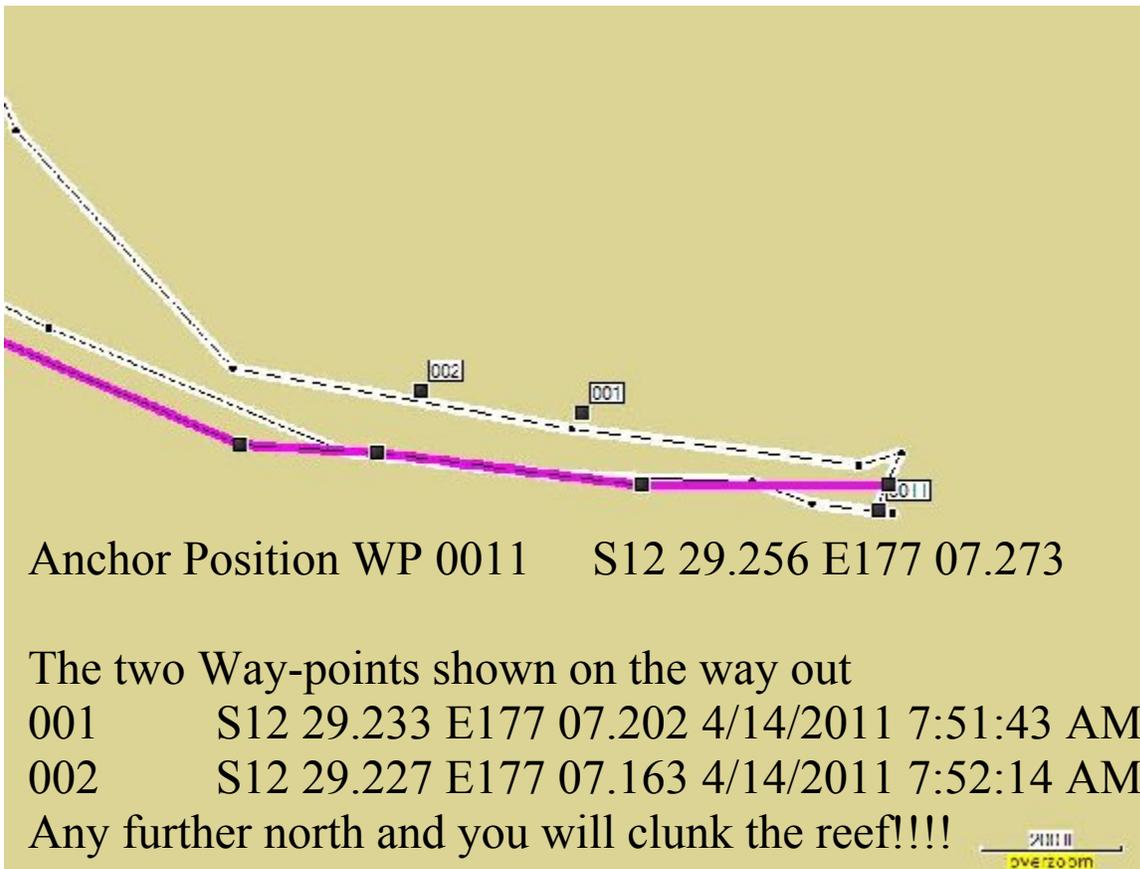


Regarding the Offset on the chart above:

X: 0.0436+

Y: 0.0003+

Note: The ferry, when it comes, follows the same path indicated but once past the reef she swings to port, hard round to the north. Then she drops an anchor and backs down to the end of the dock and drops her ramp (it's a RoRo). If you anchor right off the dock you may have to move.....



We conveniently arrived in Rotuma on Monday the 11th April at 1100hrs, convenient because we were clear of any weekend overtime charges and we had plenty of day time remaining to get 'cleared in' with the officials. The rough weather conditions to the north was sending some swell down and the anchorage was quite sloppy, we moved well in alongside the small jetty, probably further than most other yachts (with more than our four foot draft) would want to go but still we were rolling heavily. When the Customs, Health and Immigration authorities arrived on the jetty, they tooted to make their presence known and I went ashore in the dinghy to pick them up; this is always a tricky operation as most of the officials in the Pacific tend to be a little bigger than most of us yachties and our dinghy is very low in freeboard. The swell didn't make anything any easier and I was more than happy when I delivered them ashore again without any of them getting wet. Rotuma has only recently become a Clearance Port and the main reason for this change is to allow the Rotumans to export some of the fresh produce that they grow on the Island, they have a ready market in Tuvalu and even Kiribati.

The Official's were very welcoming and friendly so we were quickly cleared, however during the clearance procedure we discovered that the local bus service is no more and unlikely to be resurrected as the bus broke down and was sold off island to an Indian gentleman in Nandi. On top of that the Island was short on fuel and supplies, the monthly ferry was due soon but until then, there would be little transportation on the move. Whilst the Customs were aboard we made arrangements to get our coastal clearance

for Lautoka on the Wednesday afternoon with the intention of a Thursday morning departure. As we had no means of getting in touch with the customs other than somehow getting to the government station, we felt it best to have a fixed departure / clearance time in advance; as it turned out, this was a very good move!

On the Tuesday we had a go at walking to the Government Station, which is the closest thing they have here to a town. A couple of stores, a Post Office with internet on occasions but not this time as the computer had failed and was in Nandi for repair (that we also discovered from the Customs, who did very kindly say we could use theirs if we were stuck!). From the dock they say it's nine kilometres to the Government Station, we walked quite some distance before we found the '9KM' sign but in the end it didn't matter as it was just to far.

Without knowing that you are going to have some form of transport, Rotuma is limited as a place to visit... True, you can walk and you can get lifts (sometimes)....

Rotuma has a Web Page.... maybe, through that, you could make some arrangements before visiting??????

It is a really beautiful spot!!!!



Mr John VI off the dock in Rotuma

Whilst we had enjoyed much of Fiji we felt we'd either missed a lot or there were 'limitations' to what we could do; certainly our time in the water had been limited, most of the anchorages had been murky and the water was not appealing. Few of the anchorages were 'relaxing' and the system of clearing between ports was, at times, aggravating; although the officials were, in all cases, quite pleasant. We had of course missed many of Fiji's gems but

we had seen most of them when we passed through this area in the late 80's.....For some of those places we still had very fond memories and preferred to remember them the way they were.

Good Luck and Good Sailing
John & Paula Wolstenholme
British Yacht "Mr John VI" 1st June 2011

www.yachtmrjohn.blogspot.com
yachtmrjohn@gmail.com