

Trip to Great Barrier Island, departing Westhaven on the boat 'Robyn Gae'

Sunday 2nd January 1977 to Saturday 15th January 1977

The author of this log is unknown. If you have information about the people and/or boats mentioned please email me.
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GREAT BARRIER

1977

Sunday 2nd January

Left Westhaven for Kawau at 6.15 p.m. Lovely blue sky, light winds and slight sea. Sky began to cloud from the North-west at about 7.00p.m. Arrived at North Cove Kawau at 10.10 p.m. After some apple pie and cocoa we were in bed by 11.00 p.m.

Monday 3rd

Left North Cove Kawau at 4.00 a.m. for Great Barrier. Waves were beam on. "George" (the autopilot) was in command. George steered a compass course, which in some cases was not harmonious with the seas. The seas began to get bigger as we approached Little Barrier. In the lee of Little Barrier the waves were slightly smaller. Once out of the lee, we began to get the full force of the waves. The waves seem to be triangular due to reflected waves from Great Barrier, Little Barrier, and the effect of the wind against tide. Some waves were reaching 2 metres high. We switched off George and Louis steered by hand. To keep from heeling too much we had to steer a zig-zag course. When we had George on, Dad was catching the waves by moving the E.P.L. unit, he missed one. The boat crashed over on her starboard side throwing the tins of diesel across the saloon to smash against the starboard bunk drawers. Later when Louis was steering, he missed one. Robyn-Gae was tipped violently on her starboard side. The petrol generator on the floor of the bridge did a complete somersault, hit the starboard bunk, and broke a floor board, and landed on its feet. At times it was frightening. The waves seemed to tower above the boat. The two that rolled Robyn-Gae, broke against the port side of the boat. Finally, after what seemed like an age, we made it to Governor's Pass and into Wairiki Bay at 8.00 a.m. Mell had a look in the forward cabin and found under the basin, along the starboard wall, a line of black bilge-water. When Robyn-Gae had rolled the bilge-water had come up and soaked the carpet.

After cleaning up the bilge-water and putting back things that had shifted, we went to sleep. The Fentons in Shirley-Jean were also anchored in the bay so they came across to talk and stayed for about an hour and a half. Marty and Louis went for a row in the dingies. We slept and read all day. Dad talked to Cliff Betson on that Ham Radio at 9.15 p.m.

Tuesday 4th

Fentons left for Coromandel at about 9.30 a.m. We heard from them at 11.30 a.m. saying they were nearing Channel Island. Mum, Mell and I went ashore to stretch our legs. Moved out of Wairiki Bay at 2.00 p.m. and moseyed round to Wairahi Bay. Coming out of Wairahi Bay, Dad had the fish finder on. We saw two large fish signs, but by the time we had stopped and thrown lines over, the fish had gone. We quietly chugged along to Fitzroy. Marty, Mell, Louis and I went to the shop. On the wharf were two guys having a diving competition. The shop at Fitzroy, the "Last Resort", certainly is a last resort! They have no fuel and no food. The freezers are empty, they only sell sweets. As Mell and I were walking back to the dingy ramp from the shop we saw a woman in her 30's having a topless swim off the ramp. Marty was standing further along the road gazing in her direction. Although the woman was very brown, she had a saggy bum which didn't impress the boys. After visiting Fitzroy we wandered over to Kaiarara Bay and anchored on the northern part of the bay. A launch "Rangiora" came in and anchored near us. After dinner Brian Smith from "Rangiora" came over to visit. He stayed for an hour. Dad and he were reminiscing and discussing engine and experiences. Dad has another sked with Cliff Betson and another Ham. They yakked on the radio for an hour. Bed 11.30.

Wednesday 5th

Up at 10.00 a.m.. Had breakfast then Amelia and I went for a row. We took Mell's camera and took some shots of the boat in the bay and a very ambitious one looking into the water. At 11.30 a.m. we moved off. We were hailed by Bert Harmer in "Lady Luck" so we

talked to him for an hour. Dad has decided to go round the other side of Barrier because the weather is good. We have a slight swell, clear blue sky, and a very hot sun. The wind is expected to be North-west to South-west so the eastern side of Barrier will be ideal. By 12.10 p.m. we were outside Nagles cove and by 1.10p.m. we were approaching the Needles. There are lots of boats out here drift fishing. We're travelling by courtesy of George. Passed the Needles. It feels really strange out here. You feel as though it is the very end of the world. We are sixty miles away from New Zealand. Nestled against the rocks of the Needles was a commercial fishing boat. Round the Needles we motored happily on to Whangapoua Bay on the Eastern side of Great Barrier. The sea was a deep blue with a slight swell. We saw two flying fish. It felt strange out there, knowing that the swells coming in were coming from the Pacific ocean and the only thing to the east was South America. Anchored in the northern end of Whangapoua Bay in a little bay between Tapuwai and Waikaro headlands. There are two launches and two yachts in here, the launches are "Voyager" and "Adonis". Went ashore on a lovely white sandy beach and had a game of cricket. Later we piled into the dingys, Marty, Mell and Louis with the outboard towing Dad, Mum and me in the other dingy. We motored round Tapuwai Point and beached outboard and one dingy. Mum, Dad, and I went for a walk along the beach while the others took the other dingy to the surf to play surfskis. Just round Tapuwai Point are the graves of the people from the wreck of the Wairarapa. The graves are just two 3metre by 2 metre plots surrounded by a white picket fence. A sign above the graves has the date and "Wreck of the Wairarapa". Some people were camping near the graves and had their guylines tied to the picket fence and a store tent between the graves. Came back from our little excursion at 6.00 p.m. After dinner Mell and Louis went fishing, Mell caught a 14 inch snapper. Marty and I went for a row and ended up talking to a man and his son on the yacht "Bird of Dawning". The son told us he and some friends of the family were fishing just round from the Needles and caught 400 lbs of fish. We passed them on our way round from the Needles and

didn't think they were doing anything. The son is training to be a chef at A.T.I. so we talked of A.T.I. Warkworth and things in general. Bed at 11.15 p.m.

Thursday 6th

Motored out of Whangapoua Bay over to Rakitu (Arid Is) Went ashore at the landing at Rakitu Island. The landing bay is very small and shaped rather like a U. The sand is actually very small stones. On the northern side of the bay is a large cove that turns left and goes in about 100 yards. We rowed into it in both dingys. The cave has a very deep entrance at low water and is about 6 feet deep at low water, so would make an excellent hiding place for a small runabout, except for the surge. The sand on the bottom looks greenish-white. Dark kelp branches wave in the luminous green water. Dad took some photos of the cave from the inside looking out. At Rakitu landing we were talking to some people who were camping there. They told us about a blind alcoholic fisherman who used to live in a cave just off the beach. You can still see the remains of his bed. They also told us of a bay under the Pinnacles that has lovely rocks. So, Mum and I being rockhounds had to have a look. Anchored off the beach. Mum, Mell and I rowed ashore to denude the beach of rocks while the men fished. We found rocks that had pastel bands of pink, blue and mauve, green rocks, small black stones that when you held them up to the light showed translucent ginger colour, and red stones. By the time we had decided we had collected enough rocks, the men had caught some shapper, two rock cod. Marty and Louis then went ashore. They climbed on a huge flat rock that was about 200 feet long and 10 feet out of the water. The top of the rock was smooth white stone with black sides. On the Eastern side of Rakitu Island there are headlands of this black rock with a white weathered surface. Meanwhile Dad had caught a scorpion fish and what looked like a pink maumau and I had caught a kawhawai. When the boys came back from their rock (Marty had been standing on the rock yelling D,D,D, at the cliff face and listening to the echo. The rock is 20 feet from the shore.), we motored round the other side of Rakitu,

Around the southern side of Rakitu there are large caves and fantastic rock formations. The layers of rock are made of multicoloured bands of pastel colours. The whole island seems to have been heated, twisted, folded and then squashed because the bands of colour twist and fold across the cliff face. Of the southern side there are the scars of slips. You can tell the age of the slips by the amount of scrub covering the debris. Also on the southern side there are two pinnacles of rock sticking out of the water about quarter of a mile off the island. Four launches were anchored there fishing. Motored into Palmers Beach on the northern side of Kaitoke Beach. Marty, Louis, Mell went swimming. Mum and I walked along the beach. On the chart it shows three cables coming from the beach into the sea. As we were ambling along, I nearly tripped over them. The waves had uncovered the cables. (They look like black hoses). Moved across Kaitoke Beach to Medlands Bay. We anchored in a bay under Goat Hill. On the seaward arm of the bay there was a small reef. As each swell hit the reef it would spray over the rocks. There must have been an underwater plateau because the waves began to surf as they came nearer the cliff. All this wave activity was happening only a few feet from where we were anchored, and yet we didn't feel any roll at all. There was beautiful fish in batter for dinner.

Friday 7th

Mum and I went ashore for sand. A roll was coming in and raising a surf on the beach so we pulled the dingy up. While we were happily gathering rocks and sand a large wave had visited the beach and carried off the dingy. Mum and I gazed with horror at the dingy happily sailing away, then I dived in fully clothed and swam like mad, reached dingy, fell in, and rowed ashore. Marty, Mell and Louis had gone for a walk along Medland Beach and had climbed on a small islet called Memory Park. It had the graves of the Medlands on it and a Maori dugout dug into solid rock.

A south east wind started up so we moved round to Tryphena Harbour. On the way round Cape Barrier, the seas got bumpy due to reflected waves off the sheer

cliffs. Around the cliffs, between Rosalie Bay and Medlands Beach is the wreck of a steamer.

Anchored at Mullberry Grove, Tryphena Harbour. Went ashore to look at the new shop. It is very well stocked and has a wine shop. In the right weather the bay must look like Westhaven. We filled up our two five gallon water containers. The wind has become stronger and is more from the east and is whistling down the valleys into the harbour so Dad has put out another anchor. Also sharing the harbour are three seine fishing boats. Two of them are very big white boats, while the other looks like a Jaybel boat. At night the three boats are lit up like giant floating Christmas trees. Dad is trying to get Cliff Betson on the radio, but got through to a bloke outside Dunedin instead.

Saturday 8th

It rained and rained and rained. Every leak in the boat opened up. Some old original wiring in the for'ard cabin shorted and had to be replaced. Next to us is a catamaran with a girl crew. The girls became friendly with some boys from a small yacht. One of the girls, on board the yacht, was having a bath in the rain in her bikini pants. On looking at the cat. we saw one girl sitting naked on the deck in the rain. Marty and Louis grabbed the binocs. A roll was starting to come into the bay making things uncomfortable. The rain stopped suddenly. The air was completely still and the whole place seemed to have a greeny-yellow light to it. The clouds were rolling down the valleys like waterfalls of cotton wool. The whole thing had an eerie feel to it. We shifted over to Shoal Bay and anchored next to "Reklaw", a yacht we had met at Rakitu Island. The air was still and had a kind of heavy feel about it. Then the lightening started. There were a few rolls of thunder and some brilliant flashes of lightening. The boats were swinging in all directions with anchor warps slack. The fishing boats were lithup and you could hear the drone of their generators. Marty and Mell decided to have a swim and froze in the attempt.

Mell and I rowed over to "Reklaw" to talk to them about Rakitu Island, they invited us on board for a game of matchstick poker. Marty and Mell changed, then the three of us went over. We played poker with Mr Rod Walker, his wife Jean, and Lynn and Tim. We didn't finish till midnight. On our last round I had a really good hand and managed to win nearly all the matchsticks in one swoop.

Sunday 9th

Rowed ashore to look at the Shoal Bay shop. It's a little shed run by a bloke called Bob Harrison. Mr Harrison is a real do-it-yourselfer, he is going to try to make a wood burning furnace to produce gas to run his generators. He has a lovely old house in the bay behind the shop. The house is an old style one with lead light windows and was transported to the Barrier. Mr Harrison knows Len Prager and most of the people of the Barrier. Later Marty and Louis went across to Mulberry Grove in the dingy and outboard. They talked to the girls in the shop and saw Avon. They also met a friend of theirs from the FHAB Camp. Their friend, Robert is deaf and dumb, but runs a movie every night in his parents garage. Tonights feature film was to be "Sabata", a cowboy movie. At 7.00 p.m. Marty, Louis, Mell and I, in both dingys and outboard went across to Mulberry Grove. As we approached the shore, the waves became more and more surfy. The boys cast us off and we surfed ashore. Unfortunately I happened to be surfing straight for a boulder bank, so had to row beam on to the surf until we came to the beach. Louis and I lifted the dingys onto the grassy verge near the road, then we all trooped up to Robert's place. The movie theatre is half a double garage, blocked in with hard-board, a projectionist box, screen, carpet and seating. Marty and Louis got in free, Mell and I paid 50 cents. The first film was one of an Otter named Flash and his adventures, the next was of Kuwait at the beginning of the oil boom, the next of a motor rally through England about 10 years ago. The feature film, "Sabata" started at 9.00 and finished at 11.30. Coming out of the movies the night was pitch black and the moon was just setting.

coming out from behind the clouds. We walked down to the beach and saw to our horror that the surf was three feet high and there were three lines of breakers. Marty and Mell got in one dingy and began to row out. Louis and I struggled into the other. We rowed through three lines of breakers. You couldn't tell where the sea ended and the sky started, it was so dark. The only way to tell was when the wave was on top of you and threatening to break. One wave was just beginning to curl over as Louis and I rowed through it, consequently, we were doused with cold sea water. Sometimes the dingy would seem to hover on the top of a wave, then nosedive down the back, and climb up the face of the next one. 300 yards later we were able to connect Mell and Marty to our dingy, start the outboard and motor to Shoal Bay. Even as we were towing with the outboard, the dingys, a wave length apart would disappear in the troughs and all that was visible was two heads. Back on board Robyn-Gae we all had a very welcome cup of coffee and were in bed by 12.30 a.m.

Monday 19th

Had a very lazy day sunbathing on deck. Mum told us that Dad had managed to contact Cliff Betson and he said that the whole of Auckland was having an electrical storm, heavy rain, thunder and lightning. Yesterday Marty had slipped in the dingy and cut his foot between the little toe and the next one. Dad cleaned it and bandaged it. Marty went to the movies with his foot in a plastic bag and wearing sandshoes. Marty, Mell and Louis motored to Mulberry Grove to get some milk. They returned with six sachets of milk. Later we all went ashore to witness the arrival of the "Ngaroma" to Shoal Bay wharf. People crowded the wharf. As many people disembarked from the "Ngaroma" and embarked. Dogs, stores, motorbikes, and a goat came off the boat, while dogs, stores, motorbikes and surfboards got on. After the Ngaroma had left we walked along the road to Bob Harrison's store. Dad, Mr Harrison and the boys talked until 9.00 p.m. We had an early night as we were leaving for Kawau in the morning.

Tuesday 11th

Left Shoal Bay Tryphena at 6.30 a.m. for Kawau. Sea was 3 - 4 feet and head on, so there was minimal rolling. Nearing Kawau we saw a tanker coming up on our port side. We were having a mind race to see who would cross who's bows first. The tanker passed ahead of us and a minute later we hit the wash. Near Vivian Bay we stopped to fish. There were plenty of fish signs on the recorder, but the fish weren't hungry. After half an hour of unsuccessfully trying to tempt the fish we moved round to Mansion House Bay. Blatting out of Mansion House was Pat Lovett in "Transit". We waved madly to each other. Pat slid to a halt and followed us into Mansion House. Bernard and Matthew came across to say hello. Mell and I went ashore to look at developments in Mansion House. The pub was almost empty and the store had no stocks on the shelves at all. We walked to Ladies Bay. A new track has been cut to the bay. After lunch Lovetts and us went to Sandspit, Louis wanted to see Jasper Waring at Sandspit and Pat wanted fuel. Tied "Robyn-Gae" and "Transit" to the Lees Bros wharf and fuelled up. While talking to the man on the fuelling jetty, we learned that Jasper had gone to Wellington. Lovetts went on to Whangaparaoa and we cruised over to Ta Kangaroo Is to visit the Clarksons. Stayed there for two hours. Motored to North Cove for the night. Dad talked to Tom Clarkson on the Ham Radio. Tom tried to contact Cliff Betson but couldn't.

Wednesday 12th

Rowed over to North Cove store. They have some pottery from Great Barrier for sale, some cute little stone people from Kawau and some macrame pot hangers, one's called Marianne and the other Juliana! Motored over to Mansion House for a shower. I had a lovely cold shower. The whole family went for a walk to Ladies Bay, the Coppermine Lookout, along the Redwood Track, to Two House Bay, then Mansion House. The Redwood Track has some Redwood trees and lots of beautiful bush. Some parts of the track have a wood bridge on the ground. The bridge is two long lengths of manuka with short pieces wired across, rather like railway tracks, but with the sleepers close together and on top of the rails. Back at Mansion House we stood on the wharf eyeing the

populous. A yacht called "Orlmeown" motored away from the wharf on the ferry side and promptly ran aground. Dad yelled to the skipper to row the main halyard over to the wharf. This done Dad, Marty, Louis, and other Samsons pulled. The yacht heeled and began to come off, but with the tide dropping, she stuck again. A trawler tied to the opposite side of the wharf agreed to winch the yacht off the hard. A heavy trawl line was passed from the berthed trawler to the yacht's stern cleat. The winch started and the yacht's motor put into reverse, slowly, with much groaning of the wharf, the yacht began to move backwards, then with a surge she slipped into deep water, heading backwards for the wharf and a berthed yacht. There was a panic as people tried to fend off "Orlmeown" from the wharf and to untangle her boom from the berthed yacht's backstay. The excitement over we wandered back to "Robyb-Gae", then on the North Cove for the night. Louis and Marty set the long line off the reef outside North Cove.

Thursday 13th

The wind is whistling into North Cove at about 20 knots. Louis and Dad retrieved the line - nothing. Fred Hilditch from "Gulf Star" came across in his little runabout for a talk. He uses the runabout because it saves rowing and he can leave the launch in a good possie while he goes visiting. Dad had the R/T on and we heard that "Penang" was having trouble on her way down from Whagnarei to Kawau, her engine revs kept dropping. We were copying the transmissions between her, "Carla" and Coast Guard. Three hours later we saw "Penang", preceded by "Carla", pass in front of North Cove Entrance. At 6.00 p.m. we moved round to Schoolhouse Bay and anchored near Penang. On talking with John Dole and family we learned that "Penang" had water up to the windows. She had been lying on her side while running, the waves had come up to the windows, run inside and put a considerable amount of water in the bilges. "Penang" is a hard chine boat so the water would tend to collect in one chine, holding that side of the boat down. We figured that the water was coming in because John Dole had been travelling too close to shore, and therefore the boat was travelling on the side of the waves.

He was too scared to go out further in case it became too rough, but he was travelling so close to Mangawhai Beach that he could see the Te Arai rocks, and was just outside the breaker line. So of course it was rough. As we were pulling away from "Penang" to anchor, a man rowed up and asked if that was John Turnwald on that boat. Dad looked at the bloke and remembered his name was Terry Fortune, Wendy's brother. Terry has a little green yacht called "Awa", with a dingy "Awa-iti". He came on board and talked for an hour, then all six of us went to "Awa" to see his wife Lorraine, and kids, ^{Perick} Warrick Murray and Roddy. Lorraine, Mum, Mell and I went back to "Robyn-Gae" and half an hour later Terry, Dad, Marty, and Louis arrived. Terry and Lorraine stayed until 11.30 p.m.

Friday 14th

A beautiful day, hardly a breath of wind. Last night we had put out a stern anchor to hold us in our possie. After breakfast I rowed over to "Awa" and brought back to "Robyn-Gae" the three Fortune boys. ^{Perick} Warrick is very interested in electronics so was really intrigued with Dad's Ham Radio gear and George. Dad and ^{Perick} Warrick made a mains plug for the fluorescent light. Murray and Roddy played "Captains" in the steering chair. Terry came over and yakked, then after another hour, took his boys back to "Awa". Marty, Louis, Mell and I decided to walk from Schoolhouse Bay to Mansion House. Dad dropped us off on the wharf and we began our trek. I diverted to look at the graves. There are four graves. One of a three month baby is surrounded by a picket fence. The other three are moss covered headstones. The oldest person is 94 years old. Mell and I decided to take the Wallaby Walk to Mansion House, but with the boys letting off "D's" and throwing pine cones, we didn't see any wallabys. There was nothing exciting at Mansion House, except that Mell and I walked through the guests lounge, sunk a few balls on the pool table, then sauntered out through the dining room. The 'royal yacht' "Robyn-Gae" was tied to the wharf, so we just stepped on and drove off. Had a look in a Martins Bay - too rolly, so on to Maharangi Harbour. Anchored at Maharangi West and set the set line again. Marty, Mell, Louis and I, in both

dingys and the outboard, ripped around the harbour, then collected the set-line, nothing! While at Schoolhouse Bay we were listening to Coast Guard. A launch "Alanna" was in trouble between Tiri and Rangitoto. A dingy davit had pulled and sprung the bottom plank on the stern. "Carla" and "Penang" went to the rescue. Water was coming in rapidly but was able to be checked by "Alanna's" pump. There was a great fuss about chlorine gas from the batteries being deadly and "Alanna" was advised to throw her batteries over the side. Considering the batteries were in the bilge, this was nearly impossible. But "Carla", "Penang" and helpers managed to get "Alanna" to Half Moon Bay and onto the travel-lift with losing anything.

Saturday 15th

Took "Robyn-Gae" over to Scott's Landing. Dad said that the shallow part begins between these two points. Lo and behold we ran aground. Fortunately we were only going slow and Marty was swinging the lead-line, he said "6 feet", then Whoops! Dad shoved the boat into reverse and we backed off leaving a trail of mud and sand. Anchored in the deep part and rowed what seemed like half a mile to shore. The outside of Scott's House has not changed much since we were there last (2 years ago). Dad and Mell took photos of the House. Last time we were here Marty carved his initials in a kowhai tree on Casnell Island. So we went over to see if his tree was still standing. We found the clearing alright, but not the tree. Poor Marty searched high and low, climbing every tree, but could not find the right one. To get back to "Robyn-Gae" we had to push the dingys because it was too shallow to row. The water was knee deep for about 300 yards, the bottom was hard sand. I saw my dinner swim away from me across the sand. It was a lovely plump flounder. Back on board we cruised down the coast passing Wenderholm, Wairewa, Orewa, and on to Red Beach, where we hoped to see Lovetts. Lovetts had gone home, but we picked up a ski and saw Des Abocrombie and his wife in their paper tiger sailing, or rather drifting round the bay. The weather was so fine and the sea so calm that we decided to visit Tiri Tiri Matangi Island. We anchored at a beautiful beach to the west of the

landing. The water was a beautiful deep blue and clear. The sand is made up of fine white shell particles. Even though the water is 18 feet deep you can see the anchor sitting on the bottom. It very deceptive when you are swimming off the beach because the beach shelves quickly, but when you look through the water to the sea bed it doesn't seem deep, till you try to stand up and promptly sink. Dad helped repair the motor of a small fizz boat near us. After collecting sand specimens and adding to our suntans, we headed reluctantly for home. Arrived home about 6.00 p.m. But arrived at Green Bay at 9.00 p.m.