



Finally inside the Great Barrier Reef, Restoration Island is dead ahead after 26 days at sea. This Island stopover saved the lives of many in Bligh's boat. For me, it nearly caused another crew mutiny!

BOUNTY BOAT MADNESS

Four strangers, 4000 miles, one open boat, limited rations and water, no charts, no modern nav gear, and no toilet paper. Welcome to Part I of **DON MCINTYRE'S** re-enactment of Capt William Bligh's 1789 journey from Tonga to Timor. Oh, and just for authenticity, through in a mutiny!

"April 28, 2010 Marks the 221st anniversary of the Mutiny on the *Bounty*, when Fletcher Christian cast William Bligh and 18 of his men adrift in a 23ft open boat, which marked the beginning of one of the greatest open boat voyages

in maritime history. During the following seven weeks, Bligh and his men sailed over 3700 nautical miles, in an overloaded boat, with little food or water and no charts, from Tonga to Kupang in Timor. On that same day, in the same place, at the same time, Australian adventurer Don McIntyre and three other crew will relive Bligh's

nightmare, by attempting to sail the same voyage under similar conditions, in an 18th century traditional open timber whale boat."

That's what the postcard said. I had 2000 printed to give away at the Tasmanian Wooden Boat Festival, where the boat was on public display for the first time.

I was looking for crew. They needed \$20,000 to help with the cost and more than just a sense of adventure.

Bligh's story is an epic of unbelievable proportions. The mutiny by Fletcher Christian and subsequent events are well documented and have drawn opinions and conjecture from many over the years, right to this day. In the past two years alone there have been another three books written on the subject. I remember reading about it as a kid and watched Mel Gibson bring it to life.

In 1983, I finished a three-year voyage into the Pacific onboard *Skye*, my Duncanson 29. Margie and I were living in Sydney and we had just formed the Short-handed Sailing Association of Australia — I was planning to do the next BOC Challenge Solo Around the World Yacht Race.

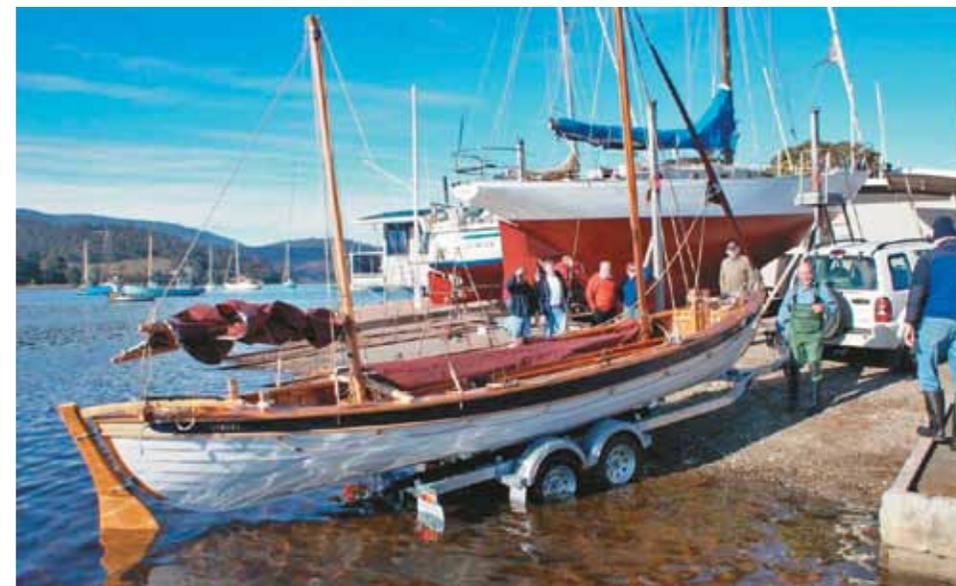
DO IT LIKE BLIGH

That same year, a direct descendant of William Bligh built a replica of his 23ft boat and with eight crew sailed the 4000 miles from Tonga to Kupang in West Timor. I followed the story and was hooked. What a grand adventure they had. More importantly, what a great idea! The boat was the same as Bligh's, but they took plenty of food and water and carried charts, plus all the navigation gear of the day. Unlike Bligh, they also broke the journey a few times and slept in beds ashore.

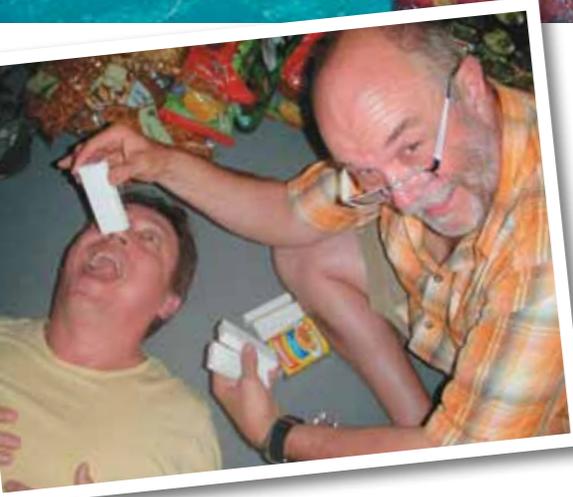
I tried to imagine myself in Bligh's position, with no charts, not enough food or water and thought; maybe, just maybe, one day, I should do that and try to experience similar privations and challenges to get close to the man himself. Then life got in the way.

In 2006, I was building my 15.2m motorsailer *ICE*, in China. In the preceding 23 years I had many boats and had endured some soul-searching challenges through adventure. The *Bounty* story had come to the fore again and I reckoned if I didn't do it now before *ICE* was finished I would run the risk of getting too old to do it at all! It was now or never. The timing was bad, I was short of time and money (nothing new for me?), but I made the decision. It was on!

The objective was simplicity itself. It was not to be a historically



Top down: Doug Campbell building a new mast one month into the conversion of *Bounty Boat* for serious voyaging. It would take nearly 2000 hours, and become a masterpiece; *Bounty Boat* launch day in Cygnet, Tasmania 2008; Don sails *Bounty Boat* past the Talisker distillery on the Isle of Skye. It was cold, wet, windy and a long way from the Pacific, but fun to be there!



correct recreation. It was simply to put myself in Bligh's shoes. To face the same challenges and deprivations, under the same conditions and sail the same route, at the same time, in the same way, without killing me or the crew. Could it be done? I didn't know, but if he did it, why not me?

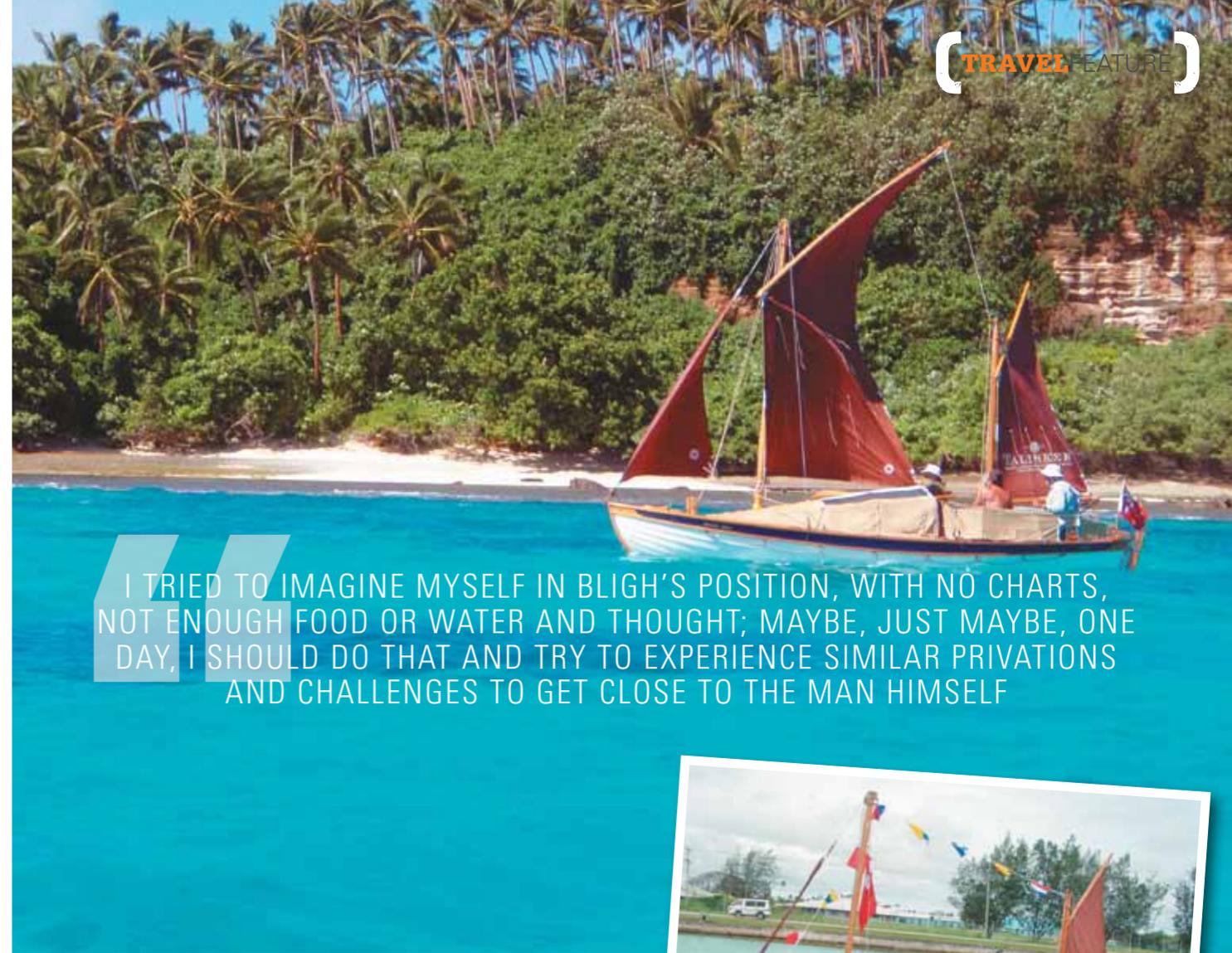
THE CREW

Crew applicants arrived from all over the world, about 50 all told. They were a heady mix of dreamers, serious adventurers and just plain Joes, all wanting to try themselves out. To apply, you had to answer 23 questions, like: "Do you think you will die on this expedition and if not, why not?" Another favourite was: "If you were asked to row for eight hours straight, while Don (me) sat back just steering, how would you feel and what would you do?" There was no right or wrong answer of course, but the responses would give me an insight into their character and reason for wanting to be there.

In the year leading up to the start of the expedition I began selecting, then offering crew positions. The results were amazing. After lengthy pre-selection work and phone conversations etc., I would choose a candidate, make the offer, and they would say "Great!" Yet some months later, they would withdraw! There was a different story for every occasion. This happened eight times. Maybe it was scarier than I thought. I started to wonder? Finally, I settled on three crew. I hoped they would be there at the end.

Pete Steer from America was a 46yo marathon man, who worked out every day. He was an engineer, incredibly fit and looked as if he had stepped straight off the set of *Survivor*. David Wilkinson was a 48yo Hong Kong businessman. He owned his own investment company, drove a Maserati and knew how to enjoy life. He was at the top of his world and usually told others what to do. Mike Perham was then the youngest person at 17 to sail solo around the world in his Open 50. We became strong friends during the time he lived with Margie and me for five weeks in Hobart while we repaired his boat, mid-challenge.

Top: After four weeks of training in Pittwater, we are an unlikely crew, (L-R) Mike Perham, me, Pete Steer, and Dave Wilkinson.
Above: Survival training with Offshore Maritime Training Centre — it was excellent!
Left: Packing food rations in Sydney — four biscuits, 85g of tinned beef and 50g of nuts and raisins a day. Dave was soooo happy.



I TRIED TO IMAGINE MYSELF IN BLIGH'S POSITION, WITH NO CHARTS, NOT ENOUGH FOOD OR WATER AND THOUGHT; MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, ONE DAY, I SHOULD DO THAT AND TRY TO EXPERIENCE SIMILAR PRIVATIONS AND CHALLENGES TO GET CLOSE TO THE MAN HIMSELF

THE BOAT

The hunt for a boat began in 2007. A replica would cost about \$150,000, money I did not have. I considered a traditional 25ft Drascombe Gig built of GRP in the UK, but in the end decided the best thing was to build a timber ply clinker boat in China. Then a small ad in the local paper caught my eye. It was for a whale boat.

In my navy days, we trained in 27ft whalers and I was sure it would be one of them, an old, heavy clunker, but I rang anyway. To my great surprise it turned out to be brand-new and used only once for a few days on an historic re-enactment of the first boat rowed around Tassie. It was a near replica of the *James Caird*, Shackleton's famous boat on which they raised the freeboard to sail from Elephant Island to South Georgia in the Antarctic! It was unbelievable. I now had a boat. Just a few years before I nearly bought a *James Caird* replica... to sail Shackleton's voyage!

Right: Our Tongan send-off. Behind the camera is the Prime Minister, most of the Tongan Government and about 70 VIPs. Bligh is an important part of their history and they made us feel the same. Tonga is deservedly referred to as the Friendly Isles. A unique kingdom and I plan to come back. Top: We are finally off, 4000 miles to go. *Adventures in Paradise or Nightmare on Bounty Boat*, only time will tell. I am totally relaxed and enjoying every minute unaware that in days to come, I will be more scared than I have ever been in my life!



It needed a lot of work to transform it for Bligh's 4000-mile voyage. Doug Campbell, a good friend, volunteered then spent the next nine months full-time, six days a week, doing just that. I gave him sketches on pieces of scrap paper of what I wanted and he transformed the boat into a seaworthy piece of furniture. It was a masterpiece. Margie christened her *Bounty Boat*. I would be forever grateful to Doug, especially on the many days our lives depended on that boat.

THE SPONSOR

The website was up and the voyage was attracting quite a bit of interest. I was chasing sponsors as my initial \$150,000 budget was blown wide open. Bligh is a bigger story in the UK than Australia, so after an approach to link with the Sheffield Institute Foundation (SIF-Motor Neurone Disease Research) charity in the UK, I decided to ship the boat there. We would launch the whole thing during the famous annual country fair at Chatsworth House, with the



THE HUNT FOR A BOAT BEGAN IN 2007. A REPLICA WOULD COST ABOUT \$150,000, MONEY I DID NOT HAVE

Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. It was truly an amazing British occasion. SIF adopted me warmly and helped me secure a sponsor. Together, we raised more than \$100,000 for SIF.

While the *Bounty Boat* was an exhibit at the Southampton Boat Show some days later, I had a visit from the marketing team for Talisker single malt scotch whiskey! It's made on the Isle of Skye, Scotland. Yes, I named my first boat after that place, due to my Scottish heritage, yet had never been there. The McIntyre family crest motto is *per Arduis* (through difficulties).

We did a deal and decided to sail *Talisker Bounty Boat* in the Isle of Skye, out the front of the Talisker distillery to launch the partnership. It was a three-day drive but a lot of fun. My budget had pushed through \$200,000.

THE MUTINY?

I was working solidly on risk minimisation and contingency planning, assembling safety gear, satellite communications, planning the documentary and filming, designing electrical systems and doing media commitments. Shipping the boat to and from different parts of the world was a nightmare. This led to a final four-week boat preparation and training session on Pittwater for all the crew in February of 2010.

Mike flew in from the UK and in the middle of the team survival training course we rushed him to hospital with appendicitis. Dave kept complaining about the lack of space as we're bunking together in a cabin at Big4 Sydney Lakeside caravan park — he is more akin to six star. He bought a tent and slept alone. He didn't want to antifoul the boat, it was menial work and thought we should pay a "boy". I explained it was team building!

It was a busy and fun time. Our full-time cameraman from the UK, Stuart Kershaw was filming everything and was



Top: Dave Price, on watch and poised for action, takes it all in his stride. A great shipmate and true friend.

Above: I tried using a 200-year-old octant bought at auction in England, but it was hopeless. Bligh also had a sextant, but mine was plastic, noon sights only as there was no almanac. Accuracy seemed about 30 miles?

Left: Rules were to eat the fish guts before the sushimi — Bligh ate the lot! The Daves said, "No way." Chris and I did, once! I ate an eye, too.



Above: When birds landed on the boat, Bligh ate them. We would get a tin of lamb tongues as an extra bonus, instead of killing them. This booby wanted to land but the mast was rocking. I told Chris to put his arm out. He did and it landed on him, he was blown away. His first mass dolphin experience on the bow brought him to tears!

PETE FLEW HOME WONDERING IF THE BOAT WAS SAFE? MIKE FLEW OUT STILL LOOKING SICK. DAVE SAW THE SERIOUS SIDE NOW, WAS COMMITTED AND A VERY LIKEABLE GUY. I WAS JUST BUSY

very much part of that team. Pete finally cracked on the last weekend when, after 36 hours with little food and water while sailing the boat off Pittwater, he collapsed, seasick, trembling and hyperglycaemic. It shook him to the core and he did not say much after this.

I wanted to push them. It worked. They could all see it was not going to be easy. We loaded the boat in a container and shipped it to Tonga.

Pete flew home wondering if the boat was safe? Mike flew out still looking sick. Dave saw the serious side now, was committed and a very likeable guy. I was just busy.

Everyone was to fly back into Sydney on April 8 for the final media send-off. Just two weeks before that critical date Mike pulled out citing health issues. Pete then also dropped out

declaring it was all too dangerous. Oh well, "*per Arduis*".

I went through all the previous applicants and contacted a few. We hit the press again in the UK looking for crew. I even opened it up to women. About 10 serious applicants applied within a week. One was 18-year-old Chris Wilde from a small English country village of 300 people. He had NEVER been on a boat before in his life. He was a part-time lifeguard at the local swimming pool and wanted to go! I figured if we were upside down in the boat, at least Chris could swim. I like helping young people follow dreams.

I knew Chris could do it and show people what passion is all about, but Dave Wilkins was not a strong sailor. My best mate Dave Pryce was more experienced than me and wanted to be part of this

adventure for years. I always said no, as I wanted new blood! Now if he came I covered for Chris's inexperience. Dave said yes immediately. Chris had just 36 hours to pack his bags and head to Sydney.

Talisker thought I had gone mad and told me so. They were worried. I told them to trust me. They did and never regretted it.

IT BEGINS

The budget rushed through \$250,000. I wondered what Bligh would think?

In Tonga, Chris had his first boat ride in a runabout as we headed out to our island base. We had challenges getting *Talisker Bounty Boat* out of the container and lost a few vital days. We could not get the satellite comms working and a volcano eruption effecting Europe had blown our sponsor's plans



with cancelled flights. Our support camera boat was late arriving from New Zealand.

The Tongan people were awesome. We met with his Excellency the King of Tonga, who wished us well. The Prime Minister and most of the cabinet, together with all the High Commissioners from various nations represented in Tonga, gave us a special farewell, with traditional dancers. We were off!

I am happy to tell you we did survive and in next month's *Trade-a-Boat* you can read all about it through the eyes of Dave Wilkinson in Part II. He was a good shipmate, but caused me plenty of grief during the voyage. My hunch about Chris was correct. It was exciting to watch him grow in so many ways during the months we spent together. Sailing with me and the two Daves on a little boat, his eyes were opened to a whole new world.

Our sundowners onboard each afternoon, between 1600 to 1800 hours were a highlight. No drinks, just the four of us in verbal intercourse. Dave Wilkinson had lived a very interesting life and as an actor in theatrical productions, could tell great stories. We laughed freely. Dave Pryce had interesting opinions and attitudes to everything. I just talked about the rich colour of life! In those two months Chris absorbed it all and was a changed person.

Dave Pryce took the voyage in his stride, never letting me down once. I loved every single minute of the expedition. The serenity of simple open-boat cruising also hit me. Not what I expected to get from the *Bounty* voyage, but nonetheless it happened. Simple, uncomplicated is good!

It is a story too big to tell here, as there were big highlights and lowlights to this expedition. Did I get close to Bligh? In a word YES! He was sailing beside me every day in rich colour, not in the black and white we tend to think of for

Top left: A wide-angle lens between my legs gives us more room to move. Life was very close onboard, but a routine developed — Chris is on the bow, and the two Daves off watch.

Middle left: Kupang, four friends, 4000 miles, 48 days, and 18kg less. I lived in the same shirt and shorts, without a shave for the entire time! That's living darl!

Left: Our first real meal. I'm onto my second hamburger and my eyes say it all. No one spoke, we just ate and ate, and ate...

BLIGH IS A BIGGER STORY IN THE UK THAN AUSTRALIA, SO AFTER AN APPROACH TO LINK WITH THE SHEFFIELD INSTITUTE FOUNDATION CHARITY IN THE UK, I DECIDED TO SHIP THE BOAT THERE



▶ 1. Don McIntyre suffered two kidney stone attacks in two days. Both stones passed okay, one was 3.5mm — this was a lucky break says Don, who adds he was more frightened than he has ever been in his life.

▶ 2. Tuesday, April 28, 1789: Fletcher Christian mutinies on HMS *Bounty* and sets sail for Pitcairn Island. Bligh and 18 men are abandoned into a long boat with just 150lb of ships biscuits, 16 2lb pieces of pork, six quarts of rum, six bottles of wine and 28 gallons of water. Their overcrowded boat has just 8in of freeboard. They sail for Tofua one day away. (Don has just 40cm of freeboard, the top two planks).

▶ 3. Sunday, May 3, on Tofua: One man is killed by natives. Bligh sails away heading for Australia and finds Fiji. (Don and crew were very nearly wrecked, with only one minute from crashing onto reef).

▶ 4. Thursday, May 7: Bligh sails through the Fiji Islands chased by hostile natives in canoes, so cannot stop and sails on. (Don suffers first knockdown and stops for repairs on deserted island).

▶ 5. Thursday, May 14: Bligh passes through the New Hebrides but decides not to stop fearing attack. (Don is running out of water and thinks about stopping, but it rains. He carries on).

▶ 6. Crossing the Coral Sea, Bligh and crew face constant storms and gales bailing to stay afloat 24 hours a day, desperately short of food and water. (Don and crew are losing lots of weight).

▶ 7. Thursday, May 28: First sight of New Holland and the Great Barrier Reef. Next day, after 26 days at sea, Bligh and crew land on Restoration Island half dead, but all alive. They eat oysters, berries, birds and fish.

▶ 8. Friday, June 12: Timor is sighted and on June 14, Bligh and his men arrive in Kupang, 48 days and 4000 miles after the mutiny. It's one of the greatest open boat voyages in maritime history. (Don arrives just three hours after them!).

historical events. The same sea and sky, the same challenges. I read Bligh's log on the same days and the same things would happen. I thought a lot about his men onboard that boat, too, and what they were thinking.

Just days from Tonga at the beginning of our voyage, we were only minutes away from a disaster that would have left us no chance of survival, even with all our safety gear. Again on the last night before Kupang, we nearly came to grief! So did Bligh. We probably would have been picked up within 12 hours on that occasion. Bligh and his men would have simply disappeared and no one would ever have known about their story.

We were volunteers, Bligh and his men were not. We chased Bligh all the way across the Pacific and in the morning of the last day, I thought we may beat him in. It felt disrespectful? As it turned out, we were headed by the breeze and he beat us by just three hours into Kupang. The first two hamburgers and chips were special. When I walked past a mirror I was shocked. I had lost 18kg!

The book *Chasing Bligh* should be released in time for Christmas 2012. For more, log on www.taliskerbountyboat.com