

WAVELENGTH 780

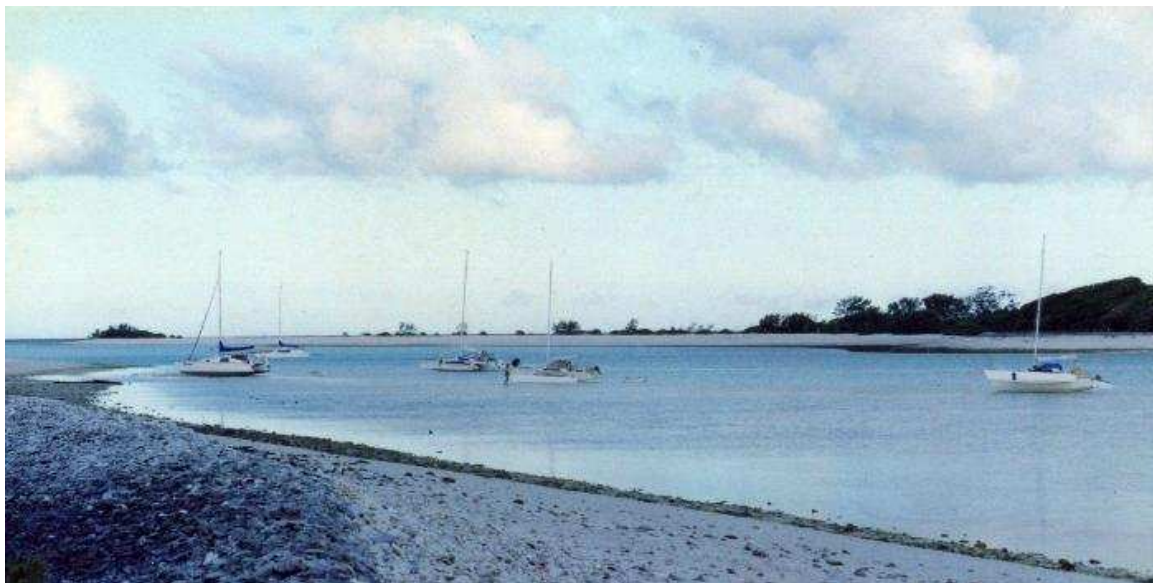
Newsletter - No. 11

April 2012

An occasional newsletter for interested followers of the Wavelength 780

Newsflash! *Discount on cost of plans continues until June 30th 2012. - Details below -*

I am pleased to be able to report in this newsletter that another Wavelength 780 is on the water and sailing. Neil Holzapfel has travelled a long road in building his boat and finally getting it to the launching ramp. I am sure all who are potential builders will be inspired by "Neil's Story," the major feature of this newsletter.



'Sandra' far left – 'Potboiler' far right

Neil's Story:

I first met Neil in unusual circumstances in 1992 about thirty miles off the Central Queensland coast on a deserted coral atoll, part of the Bunker Group. In my tri "Potboiler", I was one of a small fleet of Farrier Trailertris on a week long offshore sailing adventure to the Bunker

Group, including Lady Musgrave, Fairfax and Hoskyn Islands. We had spent a couple of days at Lady Musgrave before venturing further north to Fairfax Island before entering the lagoon at high tide. Here we encountered Neil aboard his thirty foot

(9m) Shawn Arber designed plywood catamaran “Sandra”.



Neil was then a novice cruiser, the trip out to the islands being his first venture offshore from the mainland after his initial trip along the coast from Brisbane. This was the start of a leisurely, but epic eighteen month single handed cruise along the Queensland coast, down through the Gulf of Carpentaria, across the Top to Darwin, then exploring the Kimberley Coast and eventually turning for home some distance south of Broome on the Western Australia coast. Neil documented this story in letters home to family as well as writing a couple of articles on his adventures for the then extant Qld Multihull Yacht Club magazine. An extract is included below to give you a taste of his adventure. I hope you will all enjoy it. (If you would like to hear more of Neil's cruise, let me know on the "contacts" page of the website. If there is sufficient interest, I will upload it to the 'Newsletter Archive' page of www.wavelengthmultihulls.com).

After Neil returned home, “Sandra” was sold and Neil moved on with his life and other interests.

A few years back when the prototype ‘Wavelength’ was under construction, Neil had heard on the grapevine about this new plywood tri being built in Brisbane and dropped in on me to check on progress. Neil was happy to talk about his sailing experiences, as well as discussing his cruising philosophy for single-handing. By today's cruising standards, Neil's vessel was a small cat at nine metres. Neil had concluded however, that provided the vessel was strong and seaworthy, a smaller multi is better suited for singlehanded coastal cruising. Besides the flexibility of being able to trail the boat to a chosen cruising area, the smaller vessel allows access to more secure anchorages, as well as the opportunity to ‘dry out’ close inshore on beaches, a favoured cruising strategy of Neil's.



The wavelength dries out on the flat centre hull

Neil was quick to appreciate my approach to designing ‘Wavelength’ as a strongly built cruising tri first and foremost, but also as a craft capable of a speedy passage for a multihull of this size, as has been amply documented on the website and in various earlier newsletters.

An early Wavelength plan buyer, who had previously cruised in a larger trimaran, reluctantly had to abandon his Wavelength building project due to ill health. Float and beam construction was part underway at the point where Neil took over this project. While I had a range of ply templates for all significant parts of the boat, the extensive Wavelength Building Manual was not then complete. Neil became the 'guinea pig' for testing the clarity of the manual as each section was finished.



Tractor power to move port half hull

Testing 'fit' of half hulls



Neil was not in a hurry to complete the boat, as his almost four year build time will attest. He is an independent minded and resourceful individual and has incorporated a number of ideas gained from his previous cruising experiences in his Wavelength 780. Besides taking time out from the project for extended trips away, Neil also took on the tasks of fabricating his own trailer and rig, adding to his build time.



Laminating the main hull

With two Wavelength 780s on the water in the Brisbane area, Neil was able to go for a few sails on these boats to help familiarise himself with the sailing characteristics of the boats. Neil's main concern was that the boats were too 'fast' for his needs! This has been corrected by designing a reduced rig for his boat.



The reduced rig

Included in this newsletter is a series of photos illustrating Neil's journey to the launch ramp. He is now looking forward to reaping the rewards of his hard work and writing a new chapter in his life afloat. In due course, I am sure we will hear some interesting and unusual stories from Neil and his new mistress, "**XD9**".

Other Building News:

In Western Australia, Paul is continuing with his project, currently building beams and folding system components after completing the floats. As mentioned in the last newsletter, Paul has commissioned Duck Flat Wooden Boats in South Australia to build the main hull. If you visit their website, you can see a collage of main hull construction images.

www.duckflatwoodenboats.com

/What's New

Meanwhile, Alan at Blackbutt, another builder downsizing from a larger

catamaran to a more manageable trailerable trimaran, is also system components. More detail on these projects will be covered in the next 'occasional' newsletter.

Wavelength 780 Plans:

Special Discount until 30th June 2012

For those of you who remain very interested in building a Wavelength 780, a special discount will be offered to new plan buyers until the end of the financial year. The significant costs of printing and postage of the plans will be waived, with a further discount of \$50.00 off the current cost of plans.

Your Price – Australian \$850.00

(This is effectively a 21% reduction on the previous cost of acquiring plans)

Payment by Bank Cheque or Money Transfer – Account details available on placement of Plan Order

The cost of the study package is deductible from the cost of the plans for clients who then go on to purchase a full set of plans. The cost of the study package remains the same as advertised on the website,

www.wavelengthmultihulls.com

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progressing with his project, also building his folding

The “Getting to know her” Cruise

Neil Holzapfel

With the weather forecast at 15 to 20 knots and showers, it was not ideal conditions for a first time sail in the new boat. All the last minute jobs were completed however and she was tied down to the trailer and ready to go, so on Tuesday 27th March 2012 I towed my Wavelength 780 down to the public boat ramp at Manly.

She started her life for me in February 2008 when I acquired the half made floats, timber and some resin from the previous builder who was unable to continue his project due to ill health. Now, four years down the track, she was ready to sail. She was first launched on 9th January 2012 without her rig to test out the trailer launching, float folding and motor performance. All went O.K.



First launch without rig

As for the name, I could not think of anything that suited me that I hadn't seen on another boat, so she is named “**XD9**”, which is the registered fire brand that I put on my cattle. At least nobody else can use the name!

(I am sure she won't be a 'cow' of a boat – Ed.)

It takes me a while to stand the fixed rig mast which is fitted with a Snapfurl 700 jib furling system. Although the foil is P.V.C., the forestay needs to be moved back down the mast and reattached for raising the mast. This takes a little extra work loosening ties and clambering up and down the boat trailer ladder.



Bob (the designer) came down to the ramp to join me for the first sail. We launched her and motored to the nearby pontoon. The floats were folded out and locked down before attaching the stays. Then the boom, sail-cover bag with lazy jacks and mainsail were hoisted out of the cabin and fitted to the mast. I make use of the permanent topping lift for this job.



The small jib of 10.8 sq. m. was hoisted up the foil and furled. After a few final checks, we motored out of the harbour. As I will not be racing her, Bob has designed a cruising rig for me that was a bit smaller than the standard rotating rig. Although it was a bit windy, we put up the full main together with the small jib. She handled the conditions quite comfortably. We spent some time tacking and reaching around in Waterloo Bay before heading over to the shelter of King Island for some lunch. I furled the jib. Then the main, which has batten cars, was dropped effortlessly into its boom cover sling, before dropping the anchor - job done.

We wanted to see how she handled the rougher conditions outside the islands in the main part of the Bay, so we put a reef in the main using the robust Cunningham system I have designed using turning blocks and a clutch fitted on the base of the mast. All the sail hoisting is managed from the mast, old cruising style.

The anchor was lifted, the jib unfurled and we were off again.

This time there was a bit more spray flying about, but with the reduced rig she felt fine and still showed a good turn of speed.



It was time to take Bob back to Manly so we headed back in. Going downwind and almost at the entrance leads, we were overtaken by a black rain squall. An

experimental downwind drop of the main with the free moving batten cars was less than successful in the conditions, so we did the traditional 'round up' to quickly douse the main. The jib on its furler was easy.

I think Bob was satisfied with the way she handled and so was I, with no nasty surprises!

I planned to stay out for a few more days to get to know her. After dropping off Bob, I headed out again with only the jib unfurled and sailed slowly over to the protection of St Helena Island anchorage. I put a CD on the new sound system, sorted out the galley and the bunk and relaxed in the cockpit watching the sun go down. In her cosy little cabin, it felt good to be back in cruising mode again! In the event, it was not a good overnight anchorage as the wind shifted to the south-south west during the night setting up a southerly chop that was a bit uncomfortable. I decided to head south towards Peel Island before sun up and enjoyed a good sail. With the approach of a passing squall, I put a reef in the main, then it was back to full main again as the wind came around to a light south easter. We travelled south along the western side of Peel Island before rounding it to the east and making for the Myora anchorage off Stradbroke Island. I arrived just as a strong south-easterly wind started to blow. Comfortably anchored, I settled in for the day reading, writing and getting the feel of simply being on my new boat.

The autohelm works well and I find it quite easy to reef the main while under way. She steers well on all points of sail and can even be tacked single handed without the autohelm engaged. Going to windward she will even steer herself for a short time with no one at the helm.

Early Thursday morning before the wind got up too much, I went for a sail up the Rainbow Channel. By the time we got to Amity, the squalls were rolling across from the island, so we turned around, doused the sails and headed back to the One Mile under motor, keeping close to the banks off Straddie. I did get a bit too close at one spot as the rudder hit bottom. This was not a problem as my 'spear gun rubber release system' worked well.



Neil's rudder release system

The boat has a Tohatsu 9.8 H.P. two stroke ultra long leg outboard with the prop as deep as the skeg. This pushed her along easily at five to six knots into strong headwinds with no sign of cavitation when I pushed her through a heavy wind against tide chop off Myora light.

That afternoon, as the tide came in, I nosed her up onto a firm sandy flat near the jetty, put a stern anchor out to hold her position and let her dry out.



I have applied a mixture of powdered copper and epoxy to the bottom to give a good hard protective coat for just these situations, as I like to sit on the bottom if I can. For me, this opens up a lot more opportunities to get into shelter with a small boat while cruising. When the tide dropped, she sat quite level and I was able to move around inside the cabin and get on and off the stern without her tipping on her side. She would lie over to one side if weight were put on that float. As I did not have a dinghy with me, this was the first time I was able to get off the boat since I left, but had not felt confined at all. I went for a walk around Dunwich in the afternoon and then when the tide came in and she floated again, I moved

her out to a deeper water anchorage for an early start in the morning.

Friday morning – time to head for home. I motored and sailed across to the Lazaret Gutter on the north side of Peel Island for breakfast and spent some time reading waiting for the tide to turn. I didn't want to be at the ramp at low water. I had plenty of time.

On the way back to Manly I was doing five knots under the jib alone in the fresh south wester, so that was good enough for me. I managed to dock the boat at the pontoon by myself in the freshening breeze. The sails were packed away and the floats folded. I then floated her from the pontoon to the nearby adjacent ramp using long lines to guide her onto the trailer before retrieving her from the water. The mast was lowered and the headsail furler secured to it. Finally we were ready to return home where the boat had a good wash down and went back into the shed. I have listed a few small jobs to do before we are back on the water again – soon!

BEYOND THE TIP - THE GULF AND THE TOP END

Neil Holzapfel

Just a bloke and his boat having a look at Australia from the outside

PART 1 – Mackay to Nhulunbuy via the Gulf



(These articles appeared in Multihull News, the magazine of QMYC, from August 1993 to March 1994)

Neil is encouraging us all to throw off those shackles and get out and "do it"..... To cruise far away places. His story evokes the names of previous voyagers to this little-cruised area: James Cook, Matthew Flinders, William Jansz. I have taken the liberty to add some footnotes re these early explorers. Ed.

“The following is an account of my cruise north to Darwin. We left Brisbane on 3rd June 1992; I had company aboard on and off until Cardwell; from then on we were on our own. When I say "we", I mean myself and SANDRA, my Sean Arber designed thirty foot plywood cruising cat.

The trip north to Cairns followed the usual course. Penrith Island out from Mackay, is a place where we spent some time. It has a good sheltered sand flat to dry out on and entry over the reef is possible if the tides are high enough. Bushy Island on Redbill reef is not much further out and is also worth a visit. We went up the Johnson River to Innisfail and found it a good place to provision for the trip north as the anchorage is near the centre of town and only a short walk to the shops.

After a three weeks stopover in Cairns, we went out to Green Island to scrub off the growth and then on to Cooktown. The country was so dry I decided to stop there until we had some rain. After cyclone NINA had given the Cape a good soaking in late January, we headed off again. I wanted to experience the Cape during the wet season. The adventure really starts when you leave Cooktown.

Although some people might disagree, I found "Cruising the Coral Coast" by Allan Lucas a great help to me all the way up the coast. We wandered amongst the reefs and islands and in and out bays and rivers, taking shelter when and where we found it. I never lost any days cooped up in the boat waiting for fine weather. I would put on my raincoat and go hiking ashore or along the beaches. The water in rivers and creeks is fresh right down to the sea at this time of year and the colour of dark tea. Even the crocodiles take on a dark stained appearance, and there is a lot of leaf litter and vegetation washed up on the beaches but the fishing is good. With the rain and the cloud, the weather was quite cool on days when Brisbane was having those high February temperatures.

It can be a lonely place that time of year, although there were a few people about at Portland Roads when I called in to telephone home. The sandflies were so bad and the anchorage so rough, that I headed off to the Pascoe River early next morning. The Forbes Islands out from there were a delight to visit, with some good sheltered bays for multihulls. Another island worth visiting in good weather, as there is no anchorage, is Raine Island on the outer Barrier Reef east north-east of Cape Grenville. The first navigation beacon to be built in Australian waters was constructed there by convicts in 1844.

Some of the reefs up the Cape have large chunks of coral up to two meters high washed up onto their outer edges by cyclones. It was one of these that I hit with the port centreboard coming into Bird Island. I was able to anchor over the sand flat with the starboard hull up the slope of the beach and the port hull resting on a piece of palm log. When the tide went out, I was able to dry the damaged area around the centreboard case with a gas torch and effected a temporary repair with silicon, which lasted for two months until Gove - but more about that later. We called into Milman Island and met a Uni student from USA and her two assistants doing a study on turtles and it sure was good to talk to someone again after forty days alone.

“It was good to talk to someone again after forty days alone!”

The weather south of the monsoonal trough is very changeable, but to the north of it, the pattern is North-Westerlies with Westerly squalls. This means a beat to windward in choppy seas, but the coast becomes a weather shore with plenty of places to shelter for the night. Access to the offshore islands is also possible with good shelter, by going over their reefs and anchoring on the sand flats on their southern sides. The damp atmosphere also produces a lot of black mildew inside the boat, especially where salt water has splashed about - a good mould killer is helpful.

The Cape was rounded on 20th February and after a night behind Possession Island, we went into Thursday Island for a few days. T.I. is a noisy anchorage, with barges and ferries coming and going and the locals racing back and forth through the anchorage in their large tinnies equipped with 40 HP motors. By the way, we had only used about 20 litres of fuel for the 9.9 Yamaha outboard on SANDRA since leaving Lizard Island.

(Note: Quoting Captain Cook's Journal:- “ ..and on the Western side I can make no new discovery, the honour of which belongs to the Dutch navigators, but the Eastern Coast from the Lat 38S down to this place, I am confident, was never seen or Visited by any European before us: and notwithstanding I had in the name of His Majesty taken possession of several places upon this Coast, I now once more hoisted English Colours, and in the Name of His Majesty King George the Third took possession of the whole Eastern coast from the above Lat. down to this place by the Name of New Wales...” This ‘place’ Cook named Possession Island.)

Still too humid and wet to do any repair work on the boat so we headed off down into the Gulf. The first .afternoon out, a savage rain squall hit us but we found our way through the sandbars into the mouth of the Jardine river, where there is a good sheltered spot up against the western shore. After waiting another day, we continued south doing short day sails to Weipa. This is a lee shore with the North-West Monsoons and the only anchorages are in the mouths of creeks where the water is stirred up and dirty. The only way to find the channel, is to observe the waves breaking on the sandbars and on a rising tide, go between the white water, keeping an eye on the echo sounder, to anchor behind sand spit in calm water. Then, when the tide is low, one walks back to the entrance to find which route would have been best to enter and to find the best way out the next morning.

I like to get away as soon as there is enough light to see, as it is pleasant sailing at that time of morning and it gives me a full day if anything should go wrong. The anchorages I used going south were:- Crab Island (a large inlet north of Vrilya Point), MacDonald River (I shot a small pig, cut off the back legs and took them back to the boat for something different to chew on), Port Musgrave, and Pennefather River with its big crescent shaped sandbar swinging out from its southern shore, giving a beautifully protected lagoon at the mouth of the estuary. Then we rounded Duyfken* Point into Weipa and the anchorage near Evans Landing.

**(The “Duyfken” was the name of the ship of the Dutch explorer Jansz who first charted these waters in 1606)*

Weipa is a good spot to provision as there is a large Woolworth's shopping centre only five kilometres away and fuel and other services are available - and the people are friendly and helpful.

Continued from last month

Heading further south, the country becomes low and flat with the same coarse sandy beaches that go on for miles and miles and shallower water further offshore - in some places, you can be in only three metres of water four miles out. We were now getting light morning offshore breezes and afternoon sea breezes from the South-West which made it a beat south in the Gulf chop. I would sail in as close to shore as I could, mark off the creeks on the chart to keep a record of my position and to find an anchorage for the night. Apart from the entrances to Weipa and Karumba and on a few islands north of Groote Eylandt, there are no other lights or beacons, so you find your own way. On one evening only, an obvious overnight spot did not present itself. On this occasion, I just sailed out until there was four metres of water under the

boat and dropped anchor. It was a bit rough for a while, but it had been a long day's sail and I was soon asleep.

The anchorages on this leg were:- Norman Creek, Kirke River behind Cape Keer-weer, Nassau River, Van Dieman Inlet then out to sea to find the long, well -marked channel into Karumba to anchor across the Norman River from the town.

Most of the creeks and rivers in the Gulf have a barra fisherman's boat anchored in the mouth from which nets are worked along the beaches. These can be a hazard when entering some inlets. There is an all weather road to Karumba, so it is a busy place with fishing boats moving in and out, and barges supplying the numerous aboriginal communities up and down the coast. Provisions can be obtained from a small supermarket and the one pub in town, with fuel and water from a few places. Karumba could be a base to set out from, for anyone with a trailerable yacht or multihull to explore the Eastern Gulf in the dry season, when the water would be cleaner and the land a weather shore all the way to Thursday Island.

A southerly change came through, so I took advantage of the favourable wind and at 1.00am motored out the channel to put up the spinnaker for the run across to Swears Island. By dawn the wind was back into the north and freshening, so it was a beat to windward for the last few miles, arriving just before midday. (I did not venture into the very southern part of the Gulf as it is shallow mudflats and mangroves... not very attractive, and no place to be without local knowledge.) A few days were put in cruising from Swears to the Bountiful Islands then around the north coast of Mornington Island (a good place for muddies). These Islands are low with latterite headlands and sandy beaches; quite attractive sailing, but wherever this type of headland occurs, there are always reefs and submerged rocks well out from the shore, so a good lookout is required and definitely no night sailing close inshore.

The anchorage off the Mornington Island settlement is out from the canteen, which opens only from 5.00pm to 7.00pm, and they are only allowed ten cans per person per day. At \$2.50 per can, it is not hard to see where a lot of the welfare money goes. Needless to say it gets a little rowdy around sundown.

From here the coast runs north-west, is shallow well out and the inlets are difficult to enter, so I put in my one and only overnight sail so far. The wind was back to the north-west but not too strong so we tacked up the coast into a short, steep chop. During the night, under working jib and main with the sounder set to alarm at six metres, I tacked out for one and a half hours then tacked back until the sounder went off. We repeated this process, catching a little sleep between tacks, reaching the Robinson River at 3.30 pm the next day and went in for the night. My seven year old Autohelm 800 works tirelessly and has given me no trouble since new. The only time I hand steer is entering or leaving harbour.

The Sir Edward Pellew Group is another pleasant spot to cruise around, having a large area of sheltered water. Again, a trailerable yacht could be trailed to Boorooloola and launched at Black Rock Landing in the McArthur River then cruised around these islands. The country on them is dry sandstone ridges with spinifex and scrub. There is rugged hiking, but the scenery makes a change from the open gulf. Observation headland has an obelisk constructed in 1923 by the crew of HMAS GERANIUM. to honour Matthew Flinders who charted the area in

1802. Mt. Isa Mines has a weather station on Centre Island which is the site of a proposed loading facility for zinc, when the mine at McArthur River is developed.

It is a 78 mile hop to Maria Island, which is of a fair size, with a couple of sheltered anchorages, good reef fishing and some fresh water. Fresh water is scarce in this area during the dry season so should be used for drinking and cooking only. I met a couple of blokes here who had come over from the Roper River in their tinnies for a holiday break before the mustering started for the year.

The Limmen Bight and Roper Rivers are accessible, but I did not bother to go to that part of the coast as I had spent some time working with geologists in that area a couple of years ago.

I can recommend the cruising guide by John M. Knight called "NORTHERN TERRITORY COAST" which covers the waters from the Queensland to Western Australian borders.

Of course, now that the coast had turned northeast, the wind had also swung around to be on the nose for the trip to Groote Eylandt and all the rest of the way to Cape Arnhem, but it gave me a pleasant sail along the southern shore of Groote Eylandt with its rugged headlands and sheltered white sandy bays with blue waters. I took the opportunity to scrub SANDRA's bottom in the clear water of a shallow bay, keeping a good lookout for crocs which can be a problem in this area. We called into Bartalumba Bay and the wife of the caretaker of the now disused prawn fishing base offered me a lift across to the mining township of Alyongula. As I had not been in a motor vehicle for a few months, the feeling of speed as the car took off was quite frightening and took a little while to get used to.

To the north-west of Groote, we had a day sailing through the islands of Blue Mud Bay, anchoring behind Cape Shield in the late afternoon. As is my custom if I stop early enough, I went for a walk through the bush. I was investigating a track going off into the scrub when I came upon a bull buffalo. If there is one thing I know about staying alive in this part of the world, it's to make yourself scarce in a hurry when encountering buffalo in the bush! I had just enough time to cry, "Shit! A Buffalo!" and take two steps and a jump to a low branch before he had charged, head down, along the track, round a corner and away. It all happened so fast, that all I can remember was a giant set of shiny black horns. Another hazard of the Top End - and no time to snap a photo!

"Shit! A Buffalo!"

The charts of the area have some inaccuracies; with islands where reefs are marked, and some reefs and islands not marked at all. A good lookout is called for, and it's steady-as-she-goes all the way. Two more days to windward and it's around Cape Arnhem into Dalywoi Bay for the night.....finally out of the Gulf. Then the bliss...oh what bliss of a down wind run along the coast and around into Gove (*Nhulunbuy*) Harbour and the feeling of achievement to drop anchor amongst the other boats out from the Yacht Club. We had not seen another yacht sailing the whole time we were in the Gulf."
