

Hall of Fame - Alan Martienssen

by Graham Cox

Alan Martienssen 1958 -

In the days of Slocum, Pidgeon and Gerbault, all small boat voyagers sailed without engines. By the middle of the 20th century, as engines became smaller, lighter and more reliable, sailing engineless became the rare mark of either a purist or an impoverished sailor. For Alan Martienssen, on *Zebedee*, the decision to sail without an engine began in the impoverished camp and has gone on, over one and a half circumnavigations, and as many decades, to be a matter of choice.

Alan is a pragmatic man, a veterinary surgeon who cheerfully admits he has no mystical or spiritual inclinations. When, beset by domestic tribulation in his native England, he decided to get a boat and sail over the horizon - despite little knowledge and less experience - he simply chose to follow precedent. A friend had given him a copy of Annie Hill's *Voyaging on a Small Income* and he decided to build an exact copy of *Badger*, stock it with the same type of food (dried beans etc) and head west.

If it worked for Annie, he reasoned, it should work for him. For many people this might have been a recipe for disaster, or at least disappointment, but for the largely unflappable Alan it worked like a charm. For those unfamiliar with *Badger*, this vessel is a plywood-hulled, timber-sparred, junk-rigged, dory-hulled schooner, 34ft on deck.

Zebedee, named after the jack in the box without a box in the BBC's *Magic Roundabout*, was built in Sidney, British Columbia, Canada, as the builder offered the most competitive quote. Alan, and a friend, Beccy, moved aboard the boat while it was still in the shed, before the decks were installed, and began helping with the construction. 6 weeks later, in July 2001, *Zebedee* was ready for launching.

The boat is extremely simple, with LED lights, a hand-held GPS and VHF, no engine, no long-distance communication systems and no refrigeration. Alan couldn't afford them initially and no longer wants them. He has come to value the freedom and ease of maintenance that comes from sailing such a basic boat. He has a yuloh that he can scull *Zebedee* with in smooth water and calm winds.

As Alan and Beccy were rigging the ship, the builder, Hugh, was still bolting gear to the decks, but the three of them eventually got away for a short commissioning sail. This was followed by a summer of cruising, first



Alan steering Zebedee

to the Gulf Islands, followed by the USA's San Juan Islands, before heading north to Desolation Sound, and then back to Teschum Harbour, Sidney, for another winter. *Zebedee* was once more laid up while Alan returned to work in England.

Given that Alan's previous sailing experience had been a short holiday on the sheltered waters of the Norfolk



Zebedee's interior

Broads, this first season's cruise was an ambitious undertaking, but his panache and humorous response to adversity carried him through. In the years and many thousands of ocean miles ahead, these qualities became invaluable. He learned to get the best out of *George*, his Aries windvane self-steering gear, and how to scull with his yuloh, after Prince Andrew passed on a few tips via a friend.



On passage



A hard-earned rest

The following year Alan set off singlehanded for the first time. Initially, sailing off the anchor or a dock alone proved to be somewhat challenging, but he quickly developed his solo techniques and began making night passages. Once, *Zebedee* hit a huge log, fortunately without serious damage, and on another occasion he almost sailed between a tug and its tow. *Zebedee* was reefed down to two panels at the time and couldn't tack. Alan gybed clear but it was a narrow escape. He sailed north again to Desolation Sound before heading south to Roche Harbour in the San Juan Islands, USA. At Tsechum Harbour, his mum, his kids, Katie and Tom, and girlfriend Beccy enjoyed a brief visit.

Zebedee departed for her first ocean passage on 15th August 2002, heading for San Francisco. Alan had

some difficulty getting out of the Straits of Juan de Fuca, due to fog and inadequate charts - at one stage he heard road traffic and the sound of breakers on the shore - but then the sun came out and *Zebedee* bowled along towards the open sea. The foremast began clunking in its step, parrel knots worked loose, and battens chafed the masts, but Alan was thrilled to be away at last on his great adventure.

He got lazy as the days went by, staying in his dressing gown and slippers. He began having his main meal at midday as the seas became rougher. 100 miles west of the Columbia River, *Zebedee* was surrounded by fishing boats, which required a careful lookout. *George*, the Aries self-steering gear, slipped in its brackets and fouled the rudder, requiring a repair with epoxy. While this was being completed, Alan lowered the mainsail and ran on under the foresail, but found that the ship rolled excessively in this configuration. Usually, following the advice of Annie Hill, he ran under squared-off mainsail, with the foresail sheeted in flat.

On the 9th day he noted in the log that he was enjoying the passage and was in no hurry to arrive. He sailed into Drake's Bay after 12 days, before going on to San Francisco, where he arrived on the day after his 44th birthday. Apart from the Aries bracket, the only damage was a broken yard-hauling parrel on the foresail, some chafe on the masts, and water under the double bunk in the forepeak. He bought some ascenders here and hoisted himself up the masts to sand them smooth, before fitting leather fendering to the yards and battens.

An 8 day passage to Santa Catalina Island brought light winds, fog, whales and a pod of over 100 dolphins. He had to *yuloh for England* to get clear of kelp beds on the way to San Diego. On arrival, he was forced to sail onto the Customs wharf and then off again, which he managed with some difficulty. Cruising solo without an engine is most challenging when entering or leaving anchorages and harbours. Beccy sailed with him from here to Ensenada. *Zebedee* was left on the hard at San Carlos while Alan returned to work in England.

Alan left San Carlos singlehanded on 23rd November 2003, heading south, scurrying fast before a fierce northerly wind and rough seas. He had a scare when he discovered water over the cabin sole, before noticing that the toilet porthole had been left open. To add to the fun, a container of paraffin (kerosene) burst open, and the bilges and his fresh vegetables were soaked in the oily solution. It was two days before the weather calmed enough for him to clean up the mess.

He sailed on to Costa Rica, via El Salvador. While tacking into Playa del Loco, with one panel reefed in each sail, *Zebedee* was stuck by a fierce squall that broke the foresail's upper sheeted batten. Unable to tack, the boat drifted towards the rocks, while Alan frantically

dropped the foresail, deeply reefed the mainsail, and yulohed to wear ship. They missed the rocks and drifted back out, where Alan tied the broken batten to the one below it, put four reefs in each sail and beat back in. He noted that it was very difficult to yuloh in a chop. He was later to say that, if you could stop the upper two battens from breaking, the rest of them should be OK, barring unusual circumstances (of which he's known a few).

He had intended to store *Zebedee* in Golfito, Costa Rica, but this proved impossible, so he returned to El Salvador, taking 8 days to sail the 500 miles in light but favourable winds and currents. He decommissioned the boat in a relaxed style, in between swimming and socialising. One day, after snorkelling under *Zebedee*, another yachtie pointed out to him a 3m crocodile lurking nearby. After that he stuck to the swimming pool!

In January 2005 he sailed for Panama, encountering strong winds, adverse currents and rough seas. It was hot below, with green water over the decks and the hatches shut. He holed up in his bunk, reading books and looking out for the increased shipping traffic every 30 minutes. He had to sail right over to the eastern side of the Gulf of Panama after rounding Punta Mala, looking for the favourable Humboldt Current off the coast of Columbia. He spent a few pleasant days at Rio Calcique, Las Perlas Islands, where he charmed the local pirates with glasses of *Chateau Zebedee*, his homemade wine. At Isla Chapera, he discovered an episode of *Survivor* being filmed, complete with lifejackets. They asked Alan to leave, possibly because they couldn't stand the competition.

After being robbed in Balboa, while out shopping with a cross-dressing yachtie friend, Alan set sail for Ecuador but ended up in the Galapagos Islands. These things happen when you sail without an engine. The wind calls the tune. From the Galapagos, *Zebedee* sailed to the Marquesas Islands, Tahiti, Nuie, Tonga and Fiji, then on to New Zealand for the summer.

In autumn 2007, *Zebedee* returned to Tahiti. Alan encountered a severe storm on this passage. The Aries mounting bracket broke, jamming the rudder. He couldn't lower the sails, as he did not have yard downhauls fitted at that time (he never sails without them now). He only had two panels up. Not sure whether lowering them was the best option, he let the sails feather. *Zebedee* was continuously buried by huge seas, both booms broke and the sails were shredded. Alan had water up to his knees at one point, but this was partly because of *Zebedee's* wide sole and shallow bilges (ie not that much water inside, but alarming at the time!). At one point, he heard an alarming crack up forward, and later discovered that the foremast had cracked at the partners, with the crack penetrating to about 50% of the spar's diameter.



Zebedee in the Marquesas



Zebedee reaching

For a while, Alan thought he might die. He says he tried to cry but couldn't, so broke out the chocolate and Cointreau. While consuming this comfort food he made a plan. Once the storm abated, he repaired his gear as best he could and sailed on to Tahiti, where *Zebedee* was hauled out and repaired, and then Alan sailed back to New Zealand for the summer.

In 2008, he took *Zebedee* out of the water for a major refit. His 50th birthday was celebrated in the yard. The masts, originally grown poles - Douglas fir trees costing about \$50 each - were removed and repaired. The shakes had been filled with putty and then painted, but rain water got under the putty and produced rot. It was at this time that he discovered the crack in the foremast. The rot was chiselled out and new wood scarfed in, then both masts sheathed in fibreglass, which was vacuumed on. There have been no serious problems since, although he has had to touch up chafe regularly, usually just using 2 pot paint, but sometimes epoxy bog.



Alan in the dinghy

The original keel bolts were galvanised iron. Some had rusted down to 50%! They were replaced with bronze. There was also some worm and rot in the keel, chiselled out and replaced with new wood, then sheathed in fibreglass. The antifouling had begun flaking off, so all old anti-foul was scraped off and a proper undercoat, (*Interprotect*) applied. A new LED masthead light was fitted. Alan also reinforced the top sheeted battens, which has greatly reduced frequency of breakages. The mounting frame of the Aries self-steering gear (George) was reinforced, plus dozens of smaller jobs.

Most of these things were really mistakes made when building, but Hugh (the builder) basically did a great job at a price Alan could afford, so he had no complaints. When *Zebedee* went back in the water she was in better shape than she had ever been, and Alan was ready for new adventures.

On 18th March 2009, *Zebedee* cleared Opuia for Coffs Harbour, Australia, en route to Borneo. Lord Howe Island was passed eight days later, after experiencing cold, strong, fair winds, giving good daily runs of well over 100 miles a day (128, 131, 140 etc). Alan spent most of the time down below, warm, dry and snug, just poking his head out of the *Jester* pramhood occasionally to adjust sails or self-steering, or to have a look around. Ten days out of Opuia, in strong winds and a big swell, he hove-to outside Coffs Harbour.

The local authorities suggested he anchor in the outer harbour, to avoid Sunday overtime charges, but he spent a sleepless night there, rolling heavily in deteriorating weather. On Monday, Customs were reluctant to come out to the boat in those conditions, so a tow into the marina was arranged. Before this could

be accomplished, however, the bow roller was severely damaged. Then, coming alongside the customs wharf, a bollard was ripped out of *Zebedee's* deck and the boat was bashed against the wharf in the rising gale. Eventually the boat was towed to a more sheltered marina pen where repairs were made.

It was a bit early to head north due to the possibility of a late cyclone, but Alan was keen to get out of the marina, so he decided to sail south for a few weeks. Another yacht towed *Zebedee* out (it is impossible to sail out of here) and Alan headed off into the teeth of 30-40 knot southerlies. Over the next two days he made good 52 then 83 miles, with the assistance of the strong, south-setting East Coast Current, before being becalmed and drifting past Broken Bay. He decided not to try and enter Sydney Harbour in these light conditions, with its heavy commercial traffic, so spent a very long day yulohing back to Broken Bay, arriving well after dark. He spent several pleasant days exploring these sheltered waters.

He departed for Cairns on 18th April 2009 with a forecast for gentle 10-15 knot southerlies. These soon developed into a 30 knot gale with steep seas (wind against a 2 knot current) that crashed aboard and snapped off the plywood windvane. *Zebedee* ran off under bare poles for a while. Despite heading 70 miles offshore in an attempt to avoid the worst of the adverse current, seas regularly filled the cockpit and came into the boat through dorade vents and the pramhood. The kettle flew off the stove three times, despite being clamped on. The noise was astonishing. There was a general roar, occasionally overwhelmed by a sound like an express train, followed by a tremendous crash as a wave slammed into the boat. Alan went to bed for the next four days.

Becalmed on the 5th day, Alan spoke to a tanker via VHF radio, who mentioned the possibility of a cyclone in the "Koro Sea". Alan thought the radio officer's strong accent was saying "Coral Sea", and was understandably anxious for the next few days, despite perfect weather, with slight seas, blue skies and moderate following winds. He arrived off Grafton Light at dawn, 14 days out of Broken Bay, and tacked through the reef pass into Trinity Inlet, Cairns.

He had the usual bun-fight here, with wind against tide, poor holding, and too many yachts vying for the limited space. He had to move berth once, which wasn't easy without an engine and resulted in a close encounter of the paint-scraping kind, but in the end, with good humour and assistance, things were sorted out. On a trip up the mainmast to replace his spare halyard, he also discovered signs of chafe on the mast.

This was no place to repair it, so on the 10th May he sailed for Gove, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, on Australia's northern shores. He was swept towards the reef while trying to sail out of Grafton Passage, so turned back and ran out of the more northerly-

trending Trinity Pass. He had no detailed chart of this latter passage but followed the telephone cable marked on his large-scale chart. Fresh SE trade winds gave *Zebedee* a rough but fast passage, averaging 125 miles a day, and three days later they entered Torres Strait through Pandora Passage, where *HMS Pandora*, carrying captured *HMS Bounty* mutineers, was wrecked in 1791.

There are few sheltered anchorages in the Torres Strait. Those that do exist are, at best, tenuous, with marginal shelter and poor holding in coral. The tidal streams are ferocious. The French singlehander, Toumelin, on his gaff cutter, *Kurun*, famously pricked his leg with a knife so that the pain would keep him awake during his passage through these waters. Alan planned to get through into open water in about 36 hours.

In his early days in the Pacific NW, before he perfected the knack of catnapping, Alan had once stayed awake for more than two days (with the help of some little green men and his late father). This time, he hoped he could get through without hallucinating.

Luckily, he managed to time the tides right, and had 6 hours of slack water in the crucial place, the narrow channels around Cape York, shooting through into the placid and turquoise waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria. He then set the windvane and retired for a good sleep. Apart from passing a bit too close to Veronica Island, he arrived in Gove 3 days later without incident.



Zebedee in New Caledonia

After touching up paint on the masts and topping up with water, Alan cleared for Borneo, following the old sailing ship route north of Timor. Peaceful days followed, as *Zebedee* sailed free across an easy sea, making 85, 90, 104 miles a day. Timor was sighted on 29th May. After being becalmed for a while, Alan worked the ship into the Banda Sea and headed north in search of more wind, eventually getting the daily average back up from 67 to 100. Once, while becalmed off the active volcano on Komba/Batu Tara, Alan



Alan quaffing

watched lava pouring out of the crater and rocks flying skywards in frequent explosions.

In the Java Sea he went over the side and scraped barnacles off *Zebedee's* bottom. It had needed doing in Cairns and Gove but the risk of crocodiles was too great. Here, the water was nice and clear but he was still leery of sharks, though he didn't see any. There were occasional squalls of 30 knots or more but the sea remained calm. A large waterspout formed one day, about a mile away, and Alan imagined *Zebedee* being sucked up into the sky, like the house in *The Wizard of Oz*.

At times there were a lot of fishing boats around, and once he had to take avoiding action to dodge a large ship. The equator was crossed on 14th June and a couple of days later *Zebedee* cast anchor at Sarawak, 24 days out of Gove. A couple of days later, after a struggle with light winds, tugs towing enormous barges, tangling with a fishing net and frantic yulohing, *Zebedee* made it into the Santubong River, 6500 miles from New Zealand.

Leaving the boat here, Alan went to work in England for a few months. When he returned, he was joined by a New Zealand friend, Pauline, for six months. They cruised up the Malacca Straits and back to Borneo. Having an adventurous and capable companion made cruising a lot more fun, and dodging the endless shipping was certainly easier. At the end of this period, Pauline returned home, to Alan's regret, but he

was delighted when she decided to let her house and return for an indefinite cruise.

Zebedee headed for NE Borneo, exploring the Kinebatang River with another yacht that towed them up the river. It was a memorable experience, with orangutans, proboscis monkeys etc., on the river banks, and where they were beset by rafts of fallen trees.

Alan and Pauline then sailed to Langkawi, from where they departed for Sri Lanka on 13th February 2011.



Zebedee and tender at sunset in Borneo

They were running a bit late for the season, due to unforeseen repairs, but therefore missed an out of season cyclone. Asia had proved to be a region of frustrating calms and squalls at times, a challenging place for an engineless boat, so they were delighted to find decent following winds on this passage, covering 1,180 miles in twelve days.

They stayed a month, despite corrupt officials demanding gifts, and a lively mooring between two pontoons. *Zebedee* lost one bollard but they tore 6 out of the pontoon. They eventually set up slack nylon warps that just kept the boat from colliding with the pontoons and had enough stretch to absorb the loads. They explored the interior of this fascinating and troubled country before heading south towards the Chagos Archipelago.

After a difficult departure, tacking and yulohing through the narrow harbour entrance (not to mention the compulsory agent and his reams of paperwork), *Zebedee* found himself hard on the wind, trying to go SW in a westerly wind and being set down by the adverse Equatorial Counter Current.

By Tuesday, 29th March 2011, they'd been forced off their charts. On 4th April they turned back towards Malaysia, but Alan was unhappy at being forced to give up an objective for the first time in his sailing career, so he turned south again. He decided he would just keep going, no matter how far east he was set, until he met the SE tradewinds. It was still the tail end of cyclone season but they are rare in this part of the ocean.

Finally, after being becalmed for a day on 11th April, the wind came in from the south and they were able to lay the course. A week later they sailed into Salomon Atoll, anchoring off Ile Boddam after conning their way through the coral. A friend, Tony from *Real Time II*, brought over a couple of cold beers which were much appreciated aboard the engineless, unrefrigerated *Zebedee*.



On the beaches at Ile Boddam, Salomon Atoll, Chagos



A month was spent in this paradise, snorkelling over the pristine coral, admiring the stunning beauty of the place with its turquoise waters, sunrises and sunsets, and socialising on the beach with the voyaging community, who are the only people in residence.

Many voyagers turned back from here, afraid of the Somalian pirates further west who had recently been very active against yachts, with some tragic results. The alternatives to sailing up the Red Sea include a passage hard on the wind to Mauritius, or around the northern tip of Madagascar and then south down the Mozambique Channel. Both routes converge as they approach the South African coast, en route to the Cape of Good Hope. The pirates had not been reported as far south as Madagascar, so Alan and Pauline decided to sail via that island.

The ensuing passage was *Zebedee's* best ever. They averaged 150 miles a day for many days, covering 1034 miles in seven days. They swept around Cape Ambre, at the northern tip of Madagascar, a mere 75 metres off, in order to avoid the adverse currents and heavy seas north of this cape, and came to anchor in Nosy Bè, 12 days and 1,660 miles out of Chagos.

Four months were spent in Madagascar. *Zebedee* celebrated her 10th birthday here. She was quite at home, yulohing alongside the engineless dhows and

other local workboats. Alan's brother and sister-in-law came to visit and Alan was attributed with magical powers by the locals, after he saved a dog that had been poisoned with strychnine by robbers (a common local trick). They explored the countryside, seeing lemurs and giant Baobab trees.

They set sail for South Africa on 18th October 2011 and from here *Zebedee* sailed to Trinidad, where Alan decided to build a set of cambered sails, intrigued by the promise of improved windward performance and tacking. Even though *Zebedee* had largely sailed the tradewind routes, with their predominant following winds, working in and out of port and through coastal waters often requires a lot of windward work. He chose to make his new sails using Arne Kverneland's methods for incorporating camber and simplified construction, using black *Odyssey III* material.

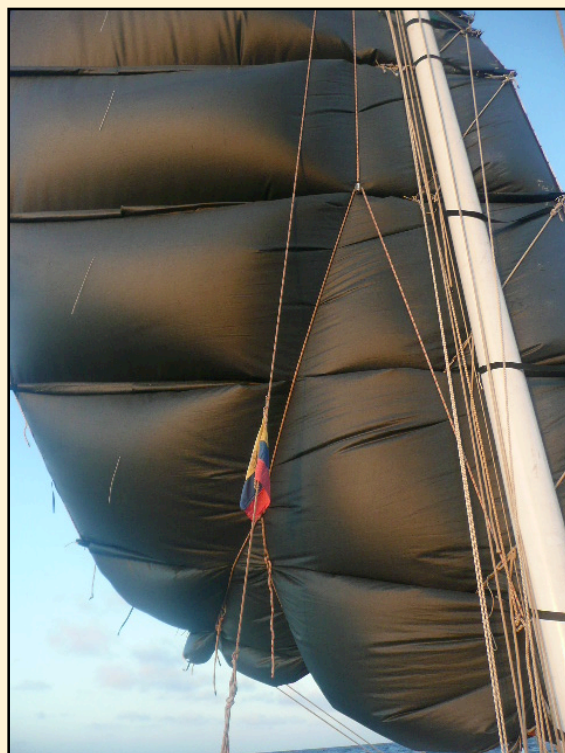
The sails were built with Pauline's assistance at the property of one of her uncles who lives there. The sails had 10% camber in the lower panels, reducing to 1.5% at the peak. The mainsail was later reduced to 6%. In keeping with Arne's advice, the clews and booms were shortened by 250mm to aid batten stagger. There are no eyelets in the sail, all sail attachments being via pockets and stitching to the bolt ropes.



Early morning fishing - Crater Bay, Madagascar



A Dhow, Madagascar



The new cambered sails

Alan was delighted with the result. For the first time, *Zebedee* could tack at sea and made the 80NM passage from Trinidad to Grenada in two days, tacking into a F 5 tradewind and boisterous seas. Pauline then went home to NZ and Alan headed for Panama, singlehanded once again. In a F 8-9 off the Colombian

coast, he broke 4 battens, a record, but only one of them was through sheeting loads. One was an upper, unsheeted batten that failed at a glue line, and two were in the reefed bundle that snagged a cleat.

He has not had any further problems with breaking battens, but nonetheless, it has become apparent that the cambered sails put more load on the sails' extremities and he spent some time reinforcing the sail at the batten ends over the following 10,000 miles.



Alan in the jungle

Zebedee reached the San Blas Islands on 5th February 2013, 9 days out of Grenada. From there, she headed for the Panama Canal. Alan had hoped for a tow through the locks but had to fashion a temporary bracket and borrow an outboard motor for the transit. At the Miraflores Locks they were late but the staff reopened the gates, an unheard of consideration, then cheered *Zebedee* as she entered, having been told that the boat had sailed around the world without an engine. Alan arrived in Balboa on 19th February 2013, 8 years after departing that port for points west.

Heading west once again, *Zebedee* arrived in the Marquesas Islands after a 26 day passage from the Galapagos Islands, during which no gear broke, the skipper slept and ate well, caught four Dorado, and harvested 20 squid from the decks. One night, a large flying fish flew in through a porthole, though it missed

the frying pan. At Nuku Hiva, Alan had the unique experience of meeting one of *Zebedee's* sisterships, *Wild Fox*, also engaged in a singlehanded circumnavigation. He noted that *Wild Fox* had a bit more equipment aboard, but he preferred *Zebedee's* simplicity.

This meeting, and Alan's conclusion, bear a striking parallel to the meeting of the second and third solo circumnavigators, Harry Pidgeon and Alain Gerbault, in Panama in 1925, where each examined the other's ship before declaring that they preferred their own. Voyagers become fiercely loyal to their ships.

Tahiti was reached after a stormy 5 days, close-reaching in F8 winds with 3-4 reefs in the sails. In 2005 this passage had taken eleven days and was far pleasanter. More like a sedate waltz instead of a frantic jitterbug, Alan noted. Ironically, *Zebedee* was then becalmed off Point Venus, taking four hours to sail the last three miles, before making a difficult traverse through the pass into Papeete Harbour. Like all coral lagoons, the pass has a current running continuously out of it due to waves breaking over the windward reefs, merely being somewhat easier during slack water.

He was becalmed again off the airport, in restricted airspace, which agitated the harbour officials, so he was forced to turn tail and exit the pass again, sailing south to Port Phaeton. This is arguably a better anchorage anyway, being peaceful and swell free. Alan left *Zebedee* here and flew back to work in England for a few months, where his son, Tom, hatched a plan to join him for a trip to Palmerston Island and make a BBC documentary of that remote and legendary community.

Returning to Port Phaeton, Alan scrubbed the mould from *Zebedee's* cabin and set sail for his favourite anchorage on the nearby island of Moorea, Baie Opinaho. Eric Hiscock called Moorea the most beautiful island in the world, and he'd seen a few. Departing Port Phaeton was a bit of a challenge. The nearest pass opened out into a bay where it was possible to get embayed, so Alan headed down to the SE pass, past the naval base, but still had an anxious moment when he was becalmed in the middle of the pass.

Departing Cook's Bay, Moorea, a few days later, with Tom aboard, proved equally challenging. Immigration had insisted they leave before midnight or sail back to Tahiti to clear again. It was almost nightfall when they approached the pass, with the wind against them. A lucky windshift allowed them to squeak through but then they were becalmed in the open ocean, still uncomfortably close to the reef, where they remained all night, before light, variable winds carried them clear at dawn.

The wind eventually came in from the SE and they started making 4 knots, covering 100 miles a day

comfortably. Then the wind died again, before a howling NW wind and torrential rain struck suddenly, with Alan scrambling to adjust the sails and windvane. In the midst of the squall, the tiller broke, but Alan was able to make a joke of it, knowing he had a spare that had already been trial-fitted.

They arrived at Palmerston Island 8 days later, relieved to find the mooring buoys on the western side of the island were in calm water. This is a very open roadstead with marginal protection. Boats have been lost here. It was still tricky picking up the buoy under sail, as it was unnervingly close to the reef. Alan missed it the first time, which made him swear. This did not impress Tom, who was filming it for the BBC! Alan noted that it was weird being admonished for your language by your children! Luckily, *Zebedee* drifted away from the coral and Bob, the mayor, roared up in his outboard-powered skiff and passed them a mooring line.

After a few days of successful filming, the weather changed and put *Zebedee* on a lee shore, so they had to depart in a hurry, sailing off the mooring with some difficulty, tacking away from the reef in building seas. Soon they were running west in a F 8-9 wind, bouncing along with just two panels set. twenty-four hours later they were under full sail.

They were heading for Tonga to get Tom a flight back to England, but when Niue hove into sight the wind was good for the moorings at Alofi, so they made an unscheduled stop. Once again, Alan missed the mooring buoy (it is very hard to sail onto a mooring) but this time Tom managed to grab it, although he dropped the boathook overboard in the process. Knowing that he'd need it to pick up the mooring in Tonga, Alan had a minor panic attack, which he says rather ruined the studied nonchalance he'd exhibited when the tiller broke. Tom saved the day, and made Alan feel a bit sheepish, by jumping into the water and retrieving the boathook in a couple of seconds.

Tom flew home from here and Alan continued alone to New Zealand. He has since spent a winter in New Caledonia, participated in the Tall Ships Regatta in the Bay of Islands, returned to England for the inevitable working spell, and then in late winter 2016, sailed on to Tonga. He arrived without too many problems, despite a couple of windy patches. The foresail ripped luff to leach, but Alan tied two battens together and carried on, making a very fast passage.

He caught a large tuna which provided fish for 3 days. Once, a humpback calf breached 100 metres away, with its mother lying on her back nearby. It was pouring with rain and howling when he arrived in Neiafu. Tacking in was a bit exciting but it all worked out fine. The next day dawned warm and sunny and Alan settled in to a pleasant time visiting with other cruising yachts, meeting locals and swimming with the

humpback whales. Winter in New Zealand seemed far away.

In early summer, he sailed back to NZ. Leaving Tonga was very slow. He had to yuloh for several miles. At one stage he heard a booming sound. In the distance he saw a humpback whale's tail (a calf, he thinks) slapping the water continuously, for quite some time. It would stop to take a breath, and then start again. He was just thinking it looked a bit like waving, when a full grown Humpback whale surfaced next to *Zebedee* and swam rapidly towards the slapping tail. Alan wondered if what he'd witnessed was the calf's alarm signal.

He made excellent progress over the next 5 days, but then got becalmed for a couple of days, before encountering head winds up to F8, which was a bit of a pain. Then *Zebedee* was becalmed again. Finally a favourable wind sprang up but that died out too!



Alan yulohing

On the last day, he got a decent wind, and *Zebedee* hummed along at 6.5 knots; before the wind got up to 35 knots and the sea got a bit lumpy. It was perhaps too much of a good thing, but it was all good in the end. By the time *Zebedee* arrived, there were about 10 new holes in the sails. Alan notes that the Odyssey cloth is completely worn out, which is disappointing after only four years, but the reinforcing strips he added in Tonga seemed to prevent the rips getting too big.

Apart from some sail repairs, *Zebedee* is looking as good as ever after 15 years of constant voyaging. Alan is now a veteran sailor who has joined the ranks of legendary voyagers, but he remains as modest, unassuming and unflappable (most of the time) as ever, quietly planning his next ocean passage.

