



# the money trail

## Cairns to Gove

■ by LYNETTE HIGGS

Three months sitting out the wet season we were ready to set sail. We'd spent the time in Cairns enjoying the beautiful area from the coast to the hinterland, we relished the long hard rains that refreshed and revitalised the area – the greens so rich, the water was abundant, the rivers and falls so full – everything is so alive it's a great time to enjoy Cairns.

Our pockets also felt this abundance: so much to do, to see ... the restaurants, the shops, and the magnificent drives. I'd picked up a little work, but not enough to replenish our sadly depleting sailing fund. What next? We'd heard that there were plenty of well paying jobs to be had in Gove up in the Territory, so that was our plan to make our way across the gulf and see what it had to offer.

We set off with *Tiata* stocked to the gills and sitting deep in the water: a sure sign of adventures to come. Our first major stop was to Lizard Island for a

couple of weeks to slow down and get back into cruising mode – mandatory ... We headed off early and with a beautiful wind at our backs. We had a lovely spinnaker sail and got into Hope Island before sundown. Up early the next day, and we were putting down anchor early afternoon in an extremely quite and lush Watson's Bay.

The days idled away. It was lovely to reacquaint ourselves with this beautiful island. The wet season had been good to Lizard, transforming it from a beautiful but dry land to a lush green one, and so, so quiet. On previous visits during the high season, the bay had been full of cruising vessels but now we shared its beauty and serenity with only a couple of boats. The water, as always, was beautiful and inviting. We swam the stunning reefs and were lucky enough to witness a

family of huge Maori Wrasse, like a herd of elephants moving slowly in the hazy distance, they were breathtaking! We walked up Cooks Look and watched the sun rise over the bay; we strolled to the Blue lagoon and dreamed on deserted beaches: we chilled.

Feeling calm and relaxed, and with the winds looking favourable, we were about ready to head off. A couple more trips to the water pump was all we had to do, but what an encounter that was to be! We'd been assured there were no snakes on Lizard. I'm afraid we have first-hand evidence that this is not the case. On the third pump, the water turned silky black. Rudy and I had no idea what we were looking at, had we struck oil? Then we realised ... a metre long ominous looking snake slithered out from inside the pump. I don't know who was more scared: myself, Rudy, the snake or the green frogs he'd probably been after, but we all scattered in different directions. After we collected our wits, we headed back and were saved by friends, John and Annie on *Catalina*, who after hearing our tale kindly topped up our water.

### Heading north

We left early with the winds a perfect 15-20kts, our destination Flinders Island, an 86nm trip. We averaged eight plus knots and 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours later in time to

Sunset over Princess  
Charlotte Bay.

# Malcolm Tennant

## ARINA MA

■ by JOHN MACFARLANE

**M**ultihull enthusiasts around the world were saddened by the accidental death of New Zealand designer Malcolm Tennant on May 10, 2008. He was aged 69.

Tennant began sailing and racing multihulls in 1959. After designing and building International A Class, B Class and Olympic Tornado catamarans, Tennant designed his first cruising catamaran in 1972.

Over the next 36 years, Tennant designed many different multihulls – racing, cruising and power catamarans as well as racing trimarans. One of his innovations was developing a fuel-efficient, canoe sterned power catamaran.

His best-known design is the 8.5m cruiser/racer Great Barrier Express (GBE) catamaran, which he designed in 1973. The GBE was popular – over 300 were built worldwide – and is generally considered the archetypal aluminium beamed, open-decked racing catamaran. GBEs are still racing regularly on Auckland's Waitimata Harbour.

Highly intelligent and passionate about multihulls, Tennant was an early advocate of CAD yacht design. Well read, he was vitally interested in architecture, sculpture, arts and gardening.

Tennant worked from his home office overlooking the Manakau Harbour in the Auckland suburb of Titirangi. His accident occurred when he fell from a bank whilst gardening suffering head injuries; he died a few hours later in hospital. He's survived by his wife Justine, sons Andrew and Adam, and grandchild Jonathon.

catch the sunset – beautiful. While at Flinders we met a group of five who were planning to make the lengthy trip from Cooktown to Weipa in two tinnies, as research for Andrew Ettinghausen's fishing and adventure show, *Escape with ET*. When we came across them they had used more fuel than expected, and were worried they'd be caught short on the next leg. There was a communal sigh of relief when we informed them that the 'Sea Swift' fuel barges do a fortnightly run from Cairns to Cape York and back. They stopped at Flinders Island, and as it happened there was one arriving in the afternoon. It sounded like a very brave expedition ...

That afternoon we moved around to Stokes Bay ready for the sail across Princess Charlotte Bay the following morning. After a leisurely breakfast we headed off, Morris Island our destination. The winds looked set for another spinnaker sail but alas, the breeze died out and our spinnaker was left flopping limply. A change of sail and a bit of motor power to push us along, we settled down and enjoyed the smooth clear waters – so different from our previous experience in

the area, when we had winds of 30+kts holding us here for weeks. As we sailed Rudy cooked up a delicious barbecue, and we enjoyed the beautiful weather and sights. A shark and a sea snake battled on the ocean surface – an amazing spectacle. We arrived at Morris Island late afternoon to our friends in the tinnies setting up camp on the beach. A lovely little island filled with a mass assortment of sea birds that filled the setting sky.

Our next key stop was Margaret Bay. We'd heard lots about this bay from many a passing sailor, but until you see the beautiful clear waters, the pristine mangroves and sparkling white sands first-hand, you cannot fully appreciate its true splendour. There were a couple of fishing trawlers when we arrived, but they all headed off shortly after dark, and all through the night we could see their lights sweeping the otherwise deserted star lit sky. We decided to stay put for a

■ Pondering the long haul back at Margaret Bay.





Hoopla, we made it ... Cape York. (above left)  
Exploring Margaret Bay at low tide. (above right)



few days for a bit of fishing. Our first night we flicked on the spot light and within minutes the fish and squid were teeming. It was our initial attempt at catching squid and what a laugh it was. There was ink and water going everywhere; we were literally pulling them in one after another. At the end of the session we looked like we'd been in an alien massacre ...

The following morning Rudy hit the mangroves and landed himself a lovely Mangrove Jack and a Giant Herring, the later of which was used for bait. With the

freezer packed full and the tide going way out we decided to pack the fishing gear away. We spent the afternoon exploring the isolated beach, where small sharks and stingrays coasted the shoreline and oodles of disappearing star fish left the sand covered in a pattern of stars.

Our final stop on the east coast was the Escape River. We arrived in the afternoon which was lucky as the pearl leases are prolific on both sides of the river. We made our way deep into the tributary, passing one very big croc lazing on the river banks; we were treated to a



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gorgeous pink sunset and had a lovely quiet night alone on the river.

### Leaving the east coast

The plan for the next day was up and over Cape York Peninsular, via the Albany Passage and on to Seisia. Rudy spent the evening looking over that state of the tides and currents. Being that they can run at up to six knots you definitely

I never appreciated just how close our northern cousins are.

After a lovely morning we raised the anchor and set sail. With the help of the currents and with only a snippet of headsail out, we were flying along on flat waters doing speeds of up to 11kts. We tucked inside Possession Island and reached Seisia well within a couple of hours – it was an awesome ride ...

navigators and know the waters well and can make their way across moonless nights using only the currents and waves to guide them to their destination.

We found Seisia to be very friendly and the locals just couldn't do enough for us. Our first afternoon we went ashore to get our bearings and a hamburger, (Rudy's favourite craving when we arrive anywhere with a shop ...) we made our



want to go with them and after some deliberation it was decided on an early 5.30am start.

We awoke in the wee hours and made our way slowly up the dark indistinct river arriving at the mouth just on day-break. There we were met by steep rolling seas and gloomy skies. This only abated as we entered Albany Passage. It was like a veil lifting, the waters smoothed, the sun came out and the skies cleared. We were treated to a beautiful current assisted sail. Stunning rain forests hugged the water's edge; immense orange termite mounds stood proudly atop mountain ridges, and on Albany Island solitary pearling shack stood encircled by palms on a deserted little beach. We passed inside York Island just metres away from the tip of Cape York, it was still early morning thus there was no one on 'terra firma' to cheer back at us. It was decided to anchor off Cape York to get a close up view of the northern most point of Australia. We got ashore just in time to meet up with the first of the daily visitors who pointed us in the right direction and we made our way this time on solid ground. The vista was spectacular with panoramic views down the Albany Passage sweeping around to the islands of the Torres Strait. Until I saw it for myself



### Seisia

Seisia is the coastal port for the Aboriginal/Islander community of Bamaga some six kilometres inland. As we sailed in we were faced with a beautiful tropical setting with palm trees lining a white sandy beach. It is a remarkable place. I'd like to call it man's world (though the ladies of the town are as much into fishing as the men). If you love to fish and hunt and fish and fish well, this is your type of place. Tinnies rule here and you see the locals, mostly who are Islanders jump into their tinnies and head out into the open seas. Zipping across to Thursday Island is a regular occurrence and habitual fishing trips take them further a field. They are excellent

A 'tender' car park ... Gove Beach. (top)

Looking towards Torres Strait. (above)

way to the Kiosk at the Seisia Camping ground where we were treated to the hugest burgers. We got talking to Allen aka 'Skinny' who along with his wife Velma had just taken over the kiosk. And well before we knew it Skinny had organised a couple of days of sightseeing for us.

We headed off early the next morning along with 'Gizmo' the dog, and what a



**Tiata** bathed in sunset. (above left)

**Termite mound** at Cape Tribulation. (above right)

day. Skinny has a mountain of local knowledge from the history of the area when it was an American base. As many as 30,000 troops were stationed all through the surrounding area. There are downed planes, rusting radar towers and loads and loads of miscellaneous bits and pieces left over from World War II scattered throughout the bush. He knows all of the local indigenous people and they all know him, he was able to recount to us all the different indigenous groups and where they were originally from. The people of Bamaga initially coming from the northern island of 'Saibai' after an exodus to the Australian mainland in 1947 after their own island homes began to sink into the ocean. He took us to the graves of the pioneering islanders deep in the bush at Muttee Heads. The terrain is the original land of the Injinoos but there is now about five Aborigine and Islander groups who moved from different areas that now live in individual settlements within the region. Skinny had organised a picnic lunch for us which we enjoyed on the coastline at Muttee Heads - the gorgeous beach front looks back to Seisia and over the Torres Strait Islands.

A couple of days later we were off again, this time we headed south to the Jardine River ferry crossing (which Skinny managed for six years before moving to the kiosk). After a long 4WD bash (and I mean bash, those grated roads shake your fillings out ...) we arrived to a warm welcome from his former staff still working at the crossing. It was fantastic to stop, have a chat and learn more about the people and area. After crossing the river we headed further south along the old telegraph road making our way to Fruit Bat Falls then back to Elliot and Twin Falls where the water was delicious, clear, and no crocs ... Rudy couldn't resist and climbed in for a cooling dip under the waterfall.

Another must whilst in Seisia is a trip to the fishing club on Friday nights. Situated on the beach it's a wonderful place to sit and have a drink, a burger and watch the sun go down while being entertained by the fantastic music of the local band. We stayed there well into the night, the place was rocking ...

#### **NT. Here we come ...**

The weather conditions were looking good. On advice from other yachties we made our way south for a day to get a better angle to cut across. As we headed down into the gulf the fish

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were jumping all around us. Rudy decided to get into the action with his heavy duty hand line but after losing two lures and having one huge tuna being taken by an equally huge shark Rudy wasn't going to be beaten ... Out came the serious overhead line and in a flash he was pulling in a beautiful big eye tuna – dinner done. We arrived at Jackson River late afternoon and decided that this was as good as any starting point for our leap across the gulf.

We headed off early the next morning with a beautiful spinnaker run but as the day wore to night the clouds ahead were looking a tad dubious. As luck would have it, about 15 minutes after pulling down the kite we were hit by a bank of squally weather which seemed to come from nowhere, and the wind – did she blow. That was it for the rest of the night; in hindsight it was good we took the extra day as the sea sat right on our back. We had two and a half metre swells and 25+kt winds all through the moonless night; with just a reefed headsail we averaged eight and a half knots. By the next morning it eased up a bit and our next 24 hours was much more relaxed, be it some what slower. Late morning on the third day, some 52 hours and 324nm we had conquered the gulf and reached the Northern Territory.

Sailing into Gove you are immediately faced with the smoke stacks of the huge refinery and wharf which fills the

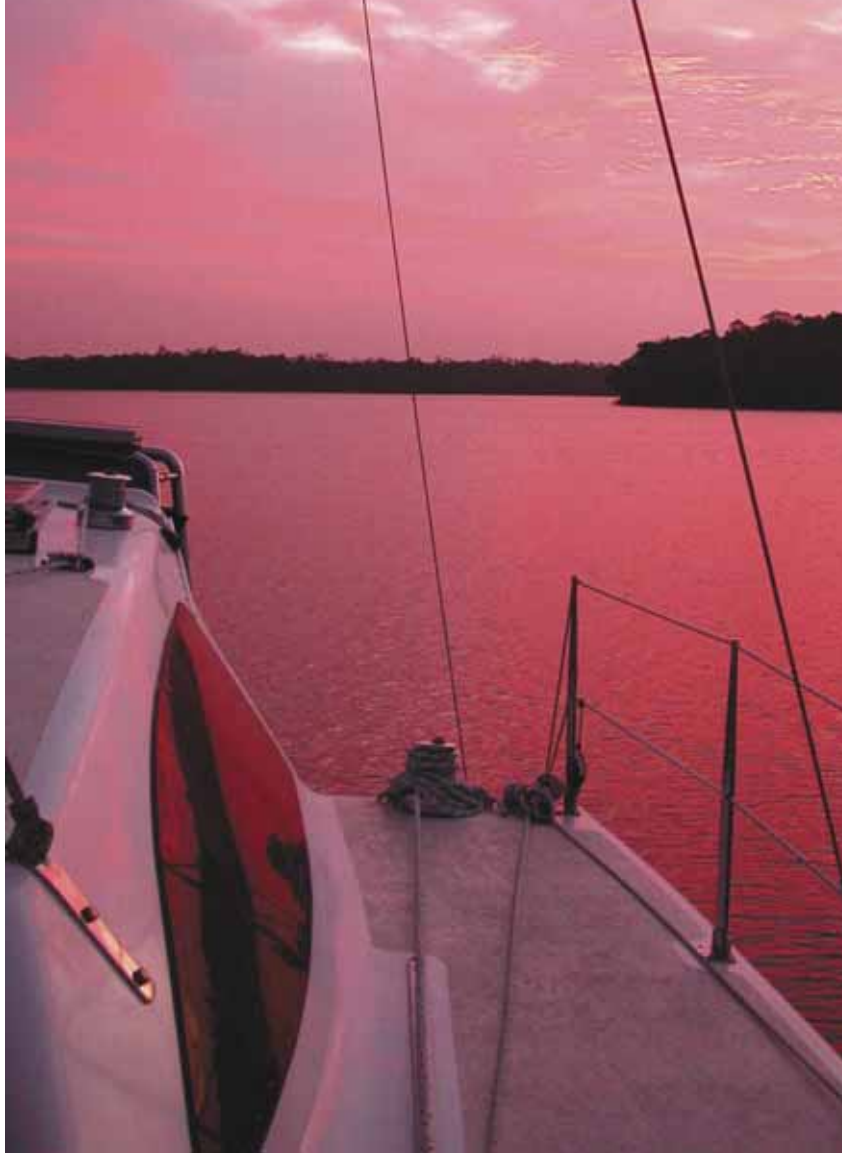
otherwise low spartan horizon; we motored past huge tankers making our way deep into the harbour and anchored up in front of the Gove sailing club. The sailing club's facilities are a bit tired but can accommodate all your needs, and the view out is beautiful even with the refinery. The town of Gove is about 10kms inland, too far and too hot to walk and taxis can set you back \$25-\$30 each way. We managed to get a lift from passing refinery traffic and were luckily to be lent a car for a couple more trips to town. Gove itself is very small but has all the necessities as well as a layer of red dust; everything is shipped in, so quite expensive and not exactly fresh. We had met up with John and Annie on *Catalina* who had arrived a couple of days prior and we decided a lunch to celebrate was in order. It just so happened to be Mother's Day and the Arnhem Club had a seafood buffet on offer. We enjoyed a fantastic lunch, the seafood was beautiful, fresh and abundant – well worth a visit.

The port of Gove is full of sailing vessels most of which have settled down to work. It's quite different from cruising lifestyle we had grown accustomed to on our travels up the east coast with regular afternoon sundowners on board each other's boats. Here it's work, work and more work. Many are on long 12 hour shifts and it's hot, dusty and hard. The club in the afternoons is full of orange shirted workers from the mines; there are lots of families though who have

**The squid catch.** (above left)  
**A refreshing dip at Twin Falls.**  
(above centre)  
**We were expecting crab.**  
(above right)

knuckled down to do some serious earning so there is a real community feel. We were fortunate enough to meet loads of wonderful people, many who had been there for the long term. Thus the club is the focal point for social gatherings.

We were informed that the fishing and crabbing was good just off the back of the boat. Never one to knock back an opportunity we baited the pot and tossed it out, envisioning tasty crab yummm ... We'd gone ashore and the afternoon stretched to night, the crab pot was long forgotten. Early the next morning Rudy went to haul it out but it refused to budge. Instead of pulling the pot towards the boat, the boat was moving towards the pot. Eventually it began to lift from the bottom but by now we were getting a bit nervous, what had we caught? We were thinking croc – not something you want to deal with before breakfast. Finally Rudy dragged it to surface and to our aghast we were looking at a six metre Hammerhead shark which had wedged itself steadfast. Its head bigger than the



trap itself and we were sitting in under two metres of water. Rudy tried to lift it but with no luck and we didn't want to leave it around the bay, so we jumped in the tender and very gingerly hauled it across to the next bay where a croc trap is permanently set up, a bit of croc bait? It's undoubtedly a diverse life we lead, it's not quite an early morning traffic jam we have to deal with, but we wouldn't have it any other way.

So this was it, time to buckle down and locate some employment. The staff at the bar were able to help us out with possible links but as we soon found out our time was up! The refinery was having a major wind down before starting up again in the next financial year which was still six to eight weeks away and with assets dwindling even further a decision was made. After two weeks we hoisted our anchor, our destination Darwin ... ❖

Shark coasting the shoreline. (above left)  
 Passing Cape Tribulation. (top left)  
 Sunset on Escape River. (above)



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