



The wreck of the Barque Endeavour II off Parengarenga Harbour, New Zealand 22 February 1971

Cruising Division presentation given by David Salt on 24 November 2021



The *Endeavour II* (formerly *Monte Cristo*) a three-masted Barque, was launched in Vancouver in 1968 and sailed the east coast of North America doing mainly charter work. She worked her way southwards via San Francisco before leaving Ensenada, Mexico for the voyage to Sydney via Tahiti to re-enact the landing of Captain Cook in Botany Bay in April 1970. She was not an exact replica which was built much later in Western Australia. I joined the crew in May 1971 in Circular Quay as a 26 year old deckhand helping refit, repair rigging, steering, rudder and engine. We trained and learned how to handle a square rigger on the journey to Brisbane via Newcastle and Coffs Harbour. We weathered our first southerly buster which blew the ship well past Coffs Harbour.

We eventually left Brisbane with a crew of 15 on 28 January 1971 bound for Auckland with a brief stop at Lord Howe Island. We enjoyed some great sailing in the Tasman averaging more than six knots before we reached the top of New Zealand, when bad, squally weather hindered our passage around the North Cape. When the fore topgallant stay parted, and winds increased, we had difficulty weathering the NE tip of New Zealand. Tacking with our square sails was a complicated process which used most of our 179 ropes, however more often than not, we would 'wear ship' which was process of going round in a circle, keeping the wind on the stern; this required a lot of sea room.

Once past the North Cape, it was a south easterly passage to Auckland, but due to the strong North East winds, we could not weather the next Cape, KariKari. We were then embayed and unable to proceed forward or back, even using the last of our fuel to punch seaward was to no avail. At 2100 hrs we started our last tack northward, until at 0100 hrs the next day the keel hit the bottom and the jibboom lifted upwards, the *Endeavour II* slewed sideways and was pounded by heavy surf which crashed over the decks. Sails furled and anchors dropped, the vessel eventually stopped in calmer waters inside the reef.



When the tide started ebbing, we were washed back on to the reef, where the boat was pounded relentlessly by the rolling surf, with the keel bouncing on the reef. When at last the tide started flooding, it was time to abandon ship, which was breaking up. With one last twist of fate, our inflatable life raft bobbed up and floated away, leaving the lanyard attached to the quarter deck. Eventually we made it to shore on a large rubber life raft with no lives lost.





An extract from the written private log of David Salt

Written at the time and not altered or embellished, although there are plenty of other memories regarding the trip to be told.

18/2/71

At 0001 we were sailing with jib, mizzen staysails and spanker and auxiliary with 15 knot winds, proceeded to pass Cape Reinga (NW Tip of New Zealand) at 0315 I and helmsman sighted a green flare, high up and bright on port bow at 0325 sighted Great Island light. When we awoke at daylight for the 0800 to 1400 hour watch a very fresh wind up to 30 knots was blowing with rain squalls and swells up to 8-10 feet and we put the jib boom well into the water several times. A couple of times just after Twinkle and I had tried to furl the flying jib. We did not make a very good job of it, in the middle of a squall, a 30 knot wind and the jib boom dipping from the water to somewhere like 30 feet up, which seemed more like the Eiffel Tower. One gets a rather nasty feeling as the jib boom reaches the height of its orbit and ones body continues to go up. Hang on tight. Our cat does not like this rocky roly weather and walks down the deck flicking its paws in the air looking thoroughly unhappy with life. 1020 came about onto port tack to head down towards the NE coast of New Zealand. The cook for the day Martin a Uni student from Brisbane just on the trip to Auckland during vacation is not too well, so I will cook lunch today, tinned ham, rice and soup. Late last night we caught two Bonito in quick succession which made a good wholesome breakfast with rice-riso. We still have a couple of Albatrosses with us. 1230 sighted land again on our first tack back towards the east coast of New Zealand, are hoping it's the Cape. If we get round this we are home and hosed, if not we will have to tack out to sea again, before our run down the coast to Whangerei. I have to turn to Bones (Jim Delaney) for pronunciation of all these Maori names. 1430 now off watch it appears we will not make it past the east side of North Cape on this tack as land is clear at 10 miles, Chris said "don't tell anyone he said so though". Cooking went down all right but definitely not as easy at sea. Started off as thick soup, rice ham and onion hash. The whole lot ended in the one pot and was well received. However it appears we will be eating it again with the two Tuna we have just caught in quick succession. It appears that now we are in coastal waters more fish predominate. We seemed to lose one for each three pulled aboard. The weather has cleared appreciably and the swell has calmed down a bit and the sun is shining, in fact there is more blue sky than cloud around and it is pretty warm. Winds 15-20 knots and we are still motor sailing under fore and aft sails on the port tack. It is good to see land again but a longer passage would be just as acceptable. This morning was the first time that I donned boots and my foul weather jacket. I never seem to get time for foul weather pants but the sun has dried the old jeans out which are now a blue and white salty colour. The old donk is a nuisance but I suppose better than tacking with the square sails against a foul wind. Our cat is definitely house trained, or boat, as she should be. Jim Delaney is still hanging around the old fishing lines although we have more than enough for today. Two fish meals in one day, but I suppose this is good as we have no fresh meat aboard. Going for shut-eye now. Sleeping not too easy this morning with the up and down motion in the f'c'stle, plus the creaking, plus it appears we have collected a cricket. Quite a few of these appeared on deck a few days ago, when well out to sea. 1530 just turned in after taking a few photos and total number of fish, bonito and tuna now five. Interesting to note that they have been eating small little shrimp like animals ½ inch or so. I understand we will be tacking in half an hour or so to head away from land. Roger the Pom turned out in a collar and tie, I think this might



have been for a joke as Chris turned out in his epaulettes, I think for the first time ever. We caught eight fish in all mixed Tuna and Bonito. At 1630 fore topgallant forestay stranded to one strand at the martingale, furling outer jib and temporary forestay rigged with a fisheye tackle. 1835 passed close by fishing vessel Triana from Whangerei. Winds during day up to 25 knots, a bit of a stormy day.

19/2/71

0215 wore ship to aim back to Eastern end of North Cape, it appears that we should weather it this time. However, and this was the second attempt at 0605 it appeared we would not, engineer went to start up the motor and drain plug trouble came back so no engines. All hands called to wear ship, when port tack was on deck the skipper said they were not needed. Unluckily winds became variable just near Cape, surf on rocks just a little too close for comfort. However, when Chris saw the situation smartly suggested that it was just a little bit late to do anything except prepare to land and so after hesitation on the skipper's part we wore ship. What a nice piece of rocky headland he tried to put us on. We headed away northwards. 0700 wind started to freshen up and weather deteriorate at 0730 took in the t'gallants, me again swaying around at the top of the mast, great fun hanging on up there with the ship ploughing and weaving about. 0830 port watch reefed spanker and furling main topsail which had a large rip. 1130 wore ship to course SEbS per compass. Observed inner jib bolt rope loose 4 feet in length. 1615 passed Union Steamship Bulk loader ahead of us. Only the tops of her mast were seen at times as she disappeared behind the swells. Heard on radio that an Orion had been out looking for us. The whole day winds gusting squally and up to 35 knots with big swells pounding, plenty of spray and water on deck and seas over the lee rail. A good day for free big dipper rides, estimated my bunk goes up and down 20 feet at least from time to time. Average speed 5.2 knots days run 124 miles. Total 2,316 miles with 326 under power. 1620 at last after third attempt weathered North Cape 6.5 miles to starboard. 1850 sighted Cape Kari Kari ½ point on port bow (NB we were travelling south so our line of travel was towards land!) so again wore ship to starboard tack course NbE.

20/2/71

0001 sailing full and by starboard tack in 30 knot winds under inner jib, forecourse, f'topsail, mizzen staysail and reefed spanker, rain showers, swells from NE, pumping bilges regularly every hour. 0655 had to replace gasket on deck pump. This morning skipper stated that we would pass Cape Brett at about 0400 hours next morning. This really worried me as I did not like this creeping down the coast, trying to weather these nasty rocky points, all day a nasty stormy day. 1815 preventer rigged to weather sheet fore topsail. 2330 sighted Kari Kari light on port bow about 2 miles away. All day we had rain, heavy seas, poor visibility and plenty of water and rain, I think everyone has wet bunks by now. Depending on which tack we were on I swapped from port bottom bunk to starboard for comfort. The starboard always seems a little drier but both were plagued by that consistent dripping and a cold wet patch of water always developed. The main salon was starting to look like a battlefield, with part of the other watch asleep and bits of gear every where and of course water sloshing in the bilges and occasionally over the floor. At least in this storm the portholes and mast boots do not leak or we would be at the pumps 24 hours a day. When the motor is going we use the pump geared to that but otherwise it must be the deck pump. On sighting light again all hands were called to weather ship. This was the second attempt to weather Cape Kari Kari



and we did not seem to have got any further to weather. According to the skipper we should have passed this point well out to sea leaving it on the starboard beam, but winds and leeway had put us on the land side of this headland. Very poor reckoning by the skipper, considering we are on the lee shore with poor visibility and adverse winds (DS Note-we should have kept well out to sea to weather the storm not rock hopping in a square rigger) **At first the skipper did not believe it was still Cape Kari Kari, I think he likes to presume we are where he thinks we should be.** Not the best habit on this shore as it is not like driving up a motorway to say the least.

21/2/71

Sunday, and our fourth day of stormy grey high seas and speculation as to exactly where we are and when we will get anywhere as we seem to have been boxed in (embayed) between Kari Kari and North Cape with a dead foul wind. Oh for a schooner, lucky it is a fairly big bay and we still have a bit of room to move in. Anyway it is not raining and the weather has cleared up a bit, at 0830 the fore topmast backstay parted which puts fore topsail out of action and jeopardises the fore mast. Crew went aloft to furl and reported plates at the fore top doubling broken. Situation rather serious as this leaves fore topmast a little shaky. Preventer rigged for backstay but not the complete answer. I had to stop writing here for the rest of the day as it was all hands on deck until I now have a chance to write again being 0330 Monday now sitting on the hard. Having had no sleep since 0400 on Sunday it was now decided to try weathering Cape Kari Kari and get into Doubtless Bay to anchor. We were delayed for some time more due to fuel trouble again. At this time our fuel was getting pretty low, tank situation was stupid, full of foreign bodies and no way to drain the sludge except as fuel rolled in tank, stirred up sludge and brought mixture out through fuel outlet. We had reckoned our position by surrounding headlands and started to motor against the wind and head swells making an average of 1.7 knots or so with lookout aloft, a cold wet vigil as I found out for myself. Winds 20-30 knots or so, it seemed a very long slow labour as we slowly edged our way to the point, which so slowly seemed to get larger and larger as we started to punch our way around the Cape. I stood in the lee of the forward deck cabin watching the waves crashing into the foot of the cliffs sending spray shooting upwards, and as the sun slowly disappeared and it got darker I still stood there hoping that our fuel would last, until again the motor started to fade, pick up and slowly splutter into dead silence. What a position to be in we were very close to that rocky headland and I was seriously worried. It was 2100 hours we came about and steered NW by the compass with inner jib, forecourse and mizzen staysail, we started to battle trying to stay as close to the wind as possible, every foot might count. Back across the bight. At 2200 hours normal watches were resumed and our watch was told to go below, but I stayed in the galley to be ready at hand if required. Raining wet and windy, a bad, black night. Our watch came back on deck at midnight and I clawed my way aft to the chartroom to see what was happening. Chris Scott 1st Mate advised skipper of our course, speed and direction and had this on chart as per dead reckoning.

22/2/71

At 0001 our position was six miles off the beach and we were averaging over 5 knots, Skipper did not want to change course. Commenced helm and bow watches and advised bow watch to keep extra good lookout for lights, it was a black murky night. At 0030 Twinkle came on helm watch and Jim Delaney went on bow watch. At approx. 0050 he went past



me as I was pumping the bilges-stroke 450 and had seen light on port bow, reported to skipper and went back on watch. I completed 600 strokes and went up to bow to look at lights. Went back to skipper and asked what action should be taken. I went into chartroom and skipper said no action until the lights were abeam. How I wished I had looked at the chart, as it was obvious from looking at it later that we were so close we would be scraping the scales off a flounder.. Whilst discussing problem of our position with the skipper approx. 0100 hours Delaney reports for the second time, he stated categorically that the lights appear very very close. At last the skipper decides to have a look for himself, he never liked to leave the comparative warmth of the charthouse, his radio or book, and started to leave the charthouse. At that time we lifted up on a wave and bounced on the sand for a couple of times. It is difficult to record what went on in the next couple of hours as work was more essential than the time but as I leapt out of the charthouse I was more than a little worried realising that this was really it. Shipwreck or would we be saved. The lights of Parengarenga looked close enough for comfort but the water all around us was frothing, breaking and boiling in all directions. Waves were crashing into us sending water and spray everywhere. All hands were called and I worked my way along the decks forward and we worked in the eerie darkness, lit by the mast head and white reflection of the spray coming over the bow. The light had been left on as this illuminated the main course and the helmsman could see just as it started to luff. We had luckily during the day set up bow anchor starboard side and a kedge anchor port amidships. We got starboard anchor away first for the full length of the galvanised chain, shackle to nylon rope seemed to jam so made line fast to Samson Post. It appeared we were dragging so Bryson and I heaved the 300lb Danforth over the side and the long length of poly line snaked at an alarming rate right to the end which was attached to the main mast and then it began to stretch and it held. We were brought broadside onto the surf. Unfortunately it did not lead fair, it broke off two backstays and it pulled out the shrouds making them look like violin strings-5/8" wire rope which had already been set up tight. Anchor rope at this time parted at this point. The forces exerted must have been extraordinary. Hands were working on clewing up the foresail and then setting up other end of nylon rope to our quarter ton port anchor, this was then dropped, line sped out rapidly, when it stopped we managed to get three turns around to hold it. This again started to stretch abnormally. Skipper tried to free the turns around the Samson post, this suddenly freed and started snaking out again. Skipper jumped back with suspected break to arm. Ship at last seemed to be anchored in relatively calm water. As we came across the bar I thought we had really had it, being tossed around by big surf with spray coming over the ship. Everyone behaved with a remarkable sense of calm and no-one seemed to upset or showed it. Although at times I thought we would never make it at all, a very frightening thought, but luckily while it was all happening there was not much time to dwell on the subject.. I am now standing in the chart room with life jacket on and feeling like a drowned rat. I had torn my foul weather pants off as Chris had said they are not too good to swim in. It appears we are still watertight and heading is NE by compass.. Spent rest of night securely wrapping ships logs in polythene just in case and listening to the radio. Listening to Mrs Lily Walker of Radio Awanui who was in communication with us and three tugs which had started to come to our assistance, having been called the previous evening to help us. Pause for reflection on accident is mainly due to the skipper but of course also caused by adverse winds which boxed us in the bay. 1st mate went off watch at midnight had plotted DR at hourly intervals and advised skipper we were six miles off beach and heading for it. **Skipper seems at times not to believe the leeway the ship makes or rather thinks we are where he wants us to be.** In fact it seems to me to be hopeless to tack virtually going back on course just traversed. See charts of Tasman Sea crossing. This sort of dangerous coast hopping is not for square riggers.



Did Cook do it? No he went out to sea if a storm approached. For similar incidents see trip Sydney to Brisbane at Yamba, also off North Cape and first attempt to weather Kari Kari were all far too hairy. Chris had advised going out to sea and he had had experience sailing on NZ coast. He also advised not going inside Three Kings Isles. When skipper knew lights were off port bow he still waited for them to come abeam, by that time it was too late and we were on the sand an hour after first mates warning. Interesting to note that on trip from Brisbane Port watch got called out three times all hands on deck to help Starboard watch out of predicaments. Kari Kari incident was at night if not reported. Chris said he would wear ship on midnight to four watch whatever happened to get us off port tack, SE direction however we suddenly came upon Kari Kari light and had to wear ship hurriedly. Previously skipper had said that evening or following morning we should with luck weather Cape Brett. At 1130 several hours before we wore ship with Kari Kari light off our bow, see 20/2/71. Me no like coastal hopping with skipper. Incidentally I don't think I have remarked yet that 90% of smokers on board are now rolling pipe tobacco in various sorts of paper. 0535 just seen a little of our surroundings and it appears that we have actually got into the channel to the harbour and are anchored in 6 fathoms of water. What a lucky escape for everyone.

Luckily I parcelled this book up in polythene and it was thrown overboard before abandoning ship so I am able to finish the story.

To continue from 0535 we started to clean up the ship and survey the damage and the chaos. Also getting a bridle ready for the topline although the tugs were having quite a battle in the bad seas trying to rescue us. And then around 0800 hours we noticed that the tide was slowly turning the ship around and we were slowly being forced back by an ever speeding outgoing tide towards the bar. It appeared when turning our main anchor line fouled the rudder and we began to drag anchor. As we started to eat up our last meal aboard Jim told everyone to eat up quick before we lost everything off our plates, bangers beans and potato salad. It now appeared that we were going to drag our way back to the bar. The spanker was set and we tried too hold our own but the ship was like a large fish struggling on the end of a line. We were eventually back amidst the surf and at 1000 hours we were on the bar and heavy surf began to pound the ship and as she was being driven further onto the bar we heeled over onto the starboard side. Large surf started to hit under the counter shaking the whole stern of the ship and sending spray over us. By this time the whole crew assembled on the poop deck and we started to lash ourselves together with life lines. No one wanted to venture too far forward as the foremast was shaking badly due to the damage previously described and everyone was aware of the danger of falling spars. Everyone was very calm but awaiting what now seemed inevitable-To Abandon Ship. The waves kept pounding the ship and one broke off part of the Taff rail throwing crewmembers across the now steeply sloping poop deck into a heap on the starboard side. A sort of impromptu conference was held as to what to do and it was generally agreed to abandon ship. There was already a party of Land Rovers on the beach. Our main life raft was already on the poop deck, canister type for ten men, this was then thrown overboard and then dragged under the ship. It did not inflate and a heavy tug on the lanyard brought up just a frayed end. This had been checked and repacked in Sydney. The inflated raft appeared 200 yards away and was blown empty towards the beach. A rather discouraging start. Our next life raft an open type oval in shape was made ready although the bottom had somehow been ripped. A line was attached to this and then thrown overboard, the grommets in the raft broke loose and it drifted free, luckily catching on some rigging hanging into the water. Two crewmen unlash themselves and retrieved. The line was attached around the ring



and thrown into the water again. At 1100 hours at the turn of the tide we threw a life jacket or two overboard and watched them drift towards the shore, so one by one we went over the side and hung around the raft. We all had self inflating US Coastguard life jackets. As I went over I had definite misgivings, to be leaving a relatively solid object and entering the sea. We had waited to 1100 hours as this was the change to an incoming tide. Over the side I went clothed in jeans T-shirt, sweater and camera, my only possession saved but ruined by the sea water, and was swept to the raft where I awaited the rest of the crew. I found that when the swell was down I could stand on the bottom, an encouraging start. The last man over cut the line and we were swept down the side of the ship then caught the waves for the slow drift to shore. We all clung around the raft and one wave knocked super-helmsman Bryson under and inside the raft and inside he climbed and stayed giving it stability. For about an hour we slowly drifted ashore through the surf with the ship gradually getting smaller and smaller and the sand hills progressively larger. We could see the Land Rovers ashore and whilst being pounded on the bar the owner Ron Craig tried to reach us with fuel in vain in a small fishing boat from inside the harbour. They were unsuccessful in fact having a lot of trouble themselves in the surf. Eventually we reached the beach to be greeted by several locals who helped us out of the surf. Vicki suffered a bit from exhaustion and had to be helped from the surf at the end. Thank goodness it was all over and we reached eagerly for bottles of whiskey which appeared rapidly. We all stood around talking and cadging cigarettes which went soggy in our wet hands and we looked back through the surf and spray to our still proud and noble ship which still lay on the bar.