

Chapter Three

2018 SUMMER CRUISE OF AVANTI

The 28th Voyage Dunedin to Nelson

Bill and Margaret McIndoe

Abbreviations and nautical terms:

nm, nautical mile = 1.82km:

kts = knots, speed, one nautical mile per hour (1kt =1.8 kph).

CQR = play on words - "secure", a type of anchor.

Rode = anchor, chain and rope which holds the boat to the seabed to stop it drifting.

ETA = Estimated Time of Arrival.

Sailed = moved the boat under wind or motor or both.

Sized crayfish = measured

Akaroa to Le Bons

It is often calm in the morning and to get away early is a good start to the day. Again we were up at 04:15, fortified with a cup of tea and away from the moorings by 06:00. The swell at Akaroa Heads was modest and even when turning to port to follow the great semi-circle of the coast of Banks Peninsula, the ship was steady and hardly rolled. The ebbing tide roiled a little as it met the incoming swell but was of no concern.

There was no wind and once again we had a deadline to meet. Another tropical depression was moving south down the North Island causing high winds and heavy rain. Slips in Gisborne were destructive and the high winds were expected to move south.

Day trip to Le Bons

We had departed Akaroa early in calm conditions and if we kept up a modest steady speed we could be anchored in Le Bons in 4.5 hours at 10:30. I unrolled the full mainsail but with the following 5kt southerly wind and our speed north through the water under power of 5kts we had no relative wind and the sails hung lifeless, giving no drive, occasionally managing a lethargic flap.

Flea Bay and the monolith of Pompeys Pillar slide by in the quiet seas. Higher than all the other headlands, Steep Head, at the entrance to Le Bons Bay, hove in sight. We entered and I anchored the boat in Yellow Buoy Bay close to, on the west side of the bays little point. Then I put out a second anchor to the south to restrict our swing if the wind came round to the sou'west and blew us back on to the shore. The best anchoring position I had done in this frequently used bay. We were in just the right position.

Gift of Crays

A smart 5m fizz-boat approached and laying off chatted for a while. He owned a crib hereabouts and over the years had often seen Avanti anchor in the bay for a one night stay, just as we had done on this occasion. It was he who owned the yellow buoy after which I named the bay. Worry not that this year the replacement buoy was pink, our name for it would remain.

"Have you got a bucket?" He shouted and when I produced one he asked "would we like a couple of crays?" To show our appreciation I immediately put the fenders over so he could bring his boat alongside without damaging our \$2000 new paint job on the hull. The transfer of two "sized crayfish" was duly made with our profuse thanks. Unfortunately when

departing he allowed the stern of his boat to swing round and give the paint work on the starboard quarter of Avanti a resounding crunch with his hard aluminium belting which not only disturbed the paintwork but also caused a distinct adverse reaction from the Skipper. Were two crayfish worth the stress and the damage? Lesson: Don't allow hard aluminium stink boats anywhere near your hull, even if they bring gifts of crayfish or frankincense.

Another early departure

The next morning we were again up early at 05:30 with different set of jobs than when departing from Akaroa. Weighing two anchors was best done at dawn rather than in the dark. With the motor running, so that 12v output from the alternator would supplement the battery load, the electric winch first weighed the 17kg CQR anchor with all chain rode. Although there were two twists around the remaining rope rode it untangled itself without further attention. The bottom must have been sand because although the anchor had a good grip on Mother New Zealand it, and the chain, came up clean.

Then using the surge drum on the winch I weighed the rope rode of the second anchor which also came up clean of mud. As I coiled the rope back into the anchor locker and secured the two anchors for sea Avanti drifted out into the middle of Le Bons Bay in the early morning light.

Who did what?

Avanti at 12 meters overall length and nine tons loaded is a fairly large yacht for an eighty nine year old sailor to handle virtually single handed. I do all the boat handling, navigation, communications, meteorology, engineering, electrics, sail setting and sail adjusting. It is necessary to handle the powerful sails with forethought and care and for me not to have my strength and stamina overwhelmed.

'Tween Decks

Margaret and Gae were essential to the success of the passage. They both stood watches which allowed us to have a three watch rota. When only Margaret and I are aboard we are in a two watch rota and we get little sleep standing watch and watch. With Gae aboard, on both our nights at sea, Margaret stood the First Watch (2000 to 2400), Gae stood the Middle (deadman's) Watch (0000 to 0400). This allowed me to sleep and then take the Morning Watch (0400 to 0800) to do the navigation to safely make landfalls.

When anchoring in a bay or berthing in a marina they make ready and handle the anchor gear or the mooring ropes and attended to all matters between decks including preparation and cooking of food and the laundry. The women also maintain a correct emotional balance with their cheerfulness and interest in our activities. And woe betide the Skipper who wants to meddle in their spheres of influence. Conversation without them would be barren indeed and humour was always present.

NZ Coastal Passage Making

When there is no wind the engine becomes the primary and only form of propulsion. In the two sections of the coastal voyage, Port Chalmers to Akaroa and Akaroa to Tory Channel there was little or no wind and deep and dangerous tropical depressions bearing down on us from the north on each occasion. I calculated that if we travelled fast we could do the voyage and be safely on a mooring in harbour before the bad weather arrived. If we dawdled the heavy winds in the depression would get us before we could seek shelter. Assessment of the weather, boat speed and determination were the secret of success in traversing the New Zealand coast.

End of Chapter Three
2018 Summer Cruise of Avanti,
Akaroa to Le Bons

Written by M M (Bill) McIndoe
15 January 2018

Aboard Yacht Avanti
at Picton