

**WIN:** Vanuatu Rugby League Jersey, NRL Gear & so much more... April – June 2012

# BLACKBIRD

STORIAN BLONG YUMI

## THE UNKNOWN ISLANDER

SEARCHING THE PAST

ACT NOW

20 WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

VANUATU v FIJI

IN A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

The Aboriginal Connection

LOST DESCENDANTS & BOOMERANGS

BLACKBIRD ADVENTURES

FINDING HELENA & A SUNKEN HOSPITAL



# BLACKBIRD ADVENTURES



Ships in the harbour are safe, but that's not what ships were made for...

Sail on the South Seas, swim crystal waters, trek jungles & climb volcanoes, dive blackbirding shipwrecks, learn customs, produce documentaries, visit former recruiting locations, build schools, kindergartens & community buildings, help women and students, play a round of golf, dine & fine wine, horse riding on the beach, game fishing, a game of pool... and a day in the spa.

## What's Your ADVENTURE?



# Tall Ship BLACKBIRD

Wanted: 1 Tall Ship

Why: To help take the journey home...

Needed: \$ 1 Million

[info@blackbird.vu](mailto:info@blackbird.vu)



# WELKAM

BLACKBIRD  
Finding Family Blong Yumi

**I HAVE NEVER WATCHED** so much soccer in my entire life. What a treat! The Blackbird Soccer Challenge on Ambrym exceeded everyone's expectations... the challenges faced, money raised, the community spirit and the excitement. It is yet another moment I will never forget.

This edition we focus on Ambrym. A sunken hospital, volcano and football. Planning is already underway for the next **Blackbird Soccer Challenge** in West Ambrym with it expanding into other sporting, cultural and arts events. A canoe race, volleyball, boxing and Island dress competition will feature in what is to become one of West Ambrym's key sporting and cultural events each year. Keep December free!

The Blackbird Soccer Challenge has also started discussions on additional festivals including North Ambrym, Melekula and in Port Olry, Espiritu Santo that will include a bareback horse race on the beautiful sand beach.

Our **FINDING FAMILY BLONG YUMI™** program has taken a lot of twists and turns with the unexpected, the unheard and the unsaid. We meet families in Vanuatu seeking our assistance for their grand mother's family - of Aboriginal origin from Australia!

Our **UNKNOWN ISLANDER™** project aims to search for and record locations of lost South Sea Islanders, whether shipwrecked at sea, buried on a cane farm or sent to the wrong island.

**I TELL MY STORY.** Starting with Paramount Chief Willie Bongmatur, whom more than 10 years ago was instrumental in the search for my ancestors. A journey that takes my family back to no less than four different islands throughout Vanuatu. A story that shows just how small the world really can be.

Get your passport out and all geared up because we have an exciting new range of expeditions, adventures and events around the Pacific to get you out of your seat. The bid for Vanuatu's first rugby league competition heats up, as does the expansion of Blackbird Events with more sporting and cultural festivals on the drawing board.

This edition has plenty of ways for you to get involved and plenty of competitions. Send us your story, yarns, favourite picture, best recipe or a little bit about your team, family or community to be in the running for some great prizes.

You have been asking for it and we have set the ball in motion with the search for the top 24 songs from throughout Australia and the South Pacific about before time and blackbirding for our new **Blackbird Album** for release later this year.

Blackbird has also launched a new **Black Feather™** wine selection, with all profits going into our projects and some very collectable editions. We also want you to join Blackbird in the work we do, perhaps a member, supporter, volunteer or writer.

The aim of the recent Wontok conference in Bundaberg is to set up a National Representative Body for Australian South Sea Islanders. I look forward to this body's ongoing support for our programs and the expansion of our key project Finding Family Blong Yumi.

To date, Blackbird has not received a single dollar of government funding and whilst we think this has been hard work, we have to remind ourselves it was not as hard as the work our old people did!

**"How many lumps of HARD WORK would you like in your tea?"**

However, our expansion of the **Finding Family Blong Yumi** program requires funding from the government and private sector to enable us to provide the resources we need on the ground.

We are again seeking supporters for our **Tall Ship Campaign** and our ultimate goal of bringing our tall ship to fruition by the end of the year. So too, our historic Torres Strait pearling lugger **Antonia** desperately needs your help.

Please consider your involvement and support in our work, the work of your local organisation and in projects throughout the South Pacific. I would like to acknowledge all those who came before us and those who struggled for us to get our recognition.

We acknowledge those who continue to represent us so passionately, who work hard in our communities and keep our communities and families strong.

For all of us who have lost a loved one this year our thoughts, prayers and blessings are with you all.

Thankyou Tumas, Big Esso and Siba den Sonia Minniecon-Smith  
**Founder and Chairwomen**



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# STORIAN Blong Yu

## WIN! WITH YOUR STORIAN

Send your **STORY** or **PICTURE** via email at [info@blackbird.vu](mailto:info@blackbird.vu) for the chance to win a Blackbird Soccer Ball and the Blackbird Soccer Challenge DVD valued at \$40. Make sure to include your email, phone number, full name and address.



Dear Blackbird

**RE: Blackbird Soccer Challenge 2012**

I wish to congratulate you first of all for this new initiative, specially focusing at improving health welfare of local people on Ambrym and perhaps Malampa as a whole.

I have heard about this tournament on West Ambrym but it is good to relay the activities to the knowledge and awareness of Vanuatu Football, the football governing body in the country.

Being the President of Malampa Football as well, I am quite please with what you are carrying out on Ambrym in the field of sport and soccer promotion in particular.

I see such tournament as part of social development activities used as a tool of educating the youth and the community about health and social problems now faced by the country. So this is good if it is to be held annually.

Lambert Maltock  
President of Vanuatu Football Federation

Dear Blackbird International

**RE: Interest in South Pacific Voyage**

I am from Samoa and am very, very interested in this project. I would love to get any information on how I could be a part of this amazing voyage.

Hope to hear from you soon,

Sincerely, DN  
Samoa

To whom it may concern:

**RE: Finding Family**

I contacted Blackbird towards the end of 2011 and already they have been able to help our family re-connect with family in Vanuatu. They took great care with our personal family information by keeping us informed and involved at all times. Blackbird has been able to give us photographs, video interviews and even a custom story which has helped to confirm our own family stories and filled in some missing pieces. We now have some family connections in our homeland, something we have been trying to do for many years. Very exciting times ahead for our family, thanks to Blackbird.

Kind regards,  
JM, Queensland

**Ariel.** Brigantine, 133 tons, probably built at Whitehaven 1862 for T. Kelly. Under N.S.W. Licence 1877 to 1880. Owners 1890, Johnson, Gladstock and others. Gregg registered owner. (Lloyds Reg.). More probably built by J. Brodie, Sunderland, 1855, as Neill Brodie was master 1875-1880, when she mingled trading with recruiting. Ollivier master in 1880, 1886, 1890 and 1889. S. Finlay and Howie in 1883/84 when she brought 103 recruits to Cairns and discovered a new passage through the Barrier Reef abreast of Cape Grafton ("Queenslander," 29/12/83). Refitted in accordance with new Regulations August 1884. Masters were H. Scowcroft 1884, A. Turner, 1886, W. T. Wacon and Lewis 1888, Connell 1892, 93, 94. Damaged in Cyclone January 1887, returned to port ("Courier," 25/1/87). W. J. Murray (Government Agent) suffering from fever and excessive drinking committed suicide at sea June 1888. Government debarred Lewis (master) from further employment in the trade for permitting Government Agent to drink to excess. He was succeeded by W. T. Wacon ("Courier," 25/7/88). Dismasted Dec. 1889, Master (Ollivier) censured for condition of standing gear ("Courier," 8/1/90). Wrecked Bougainville April 1894 (Aust. Encyclopedia) no loss of life. Crew taken to Bundaberg by "Thistle" ("Courier" 18/6/94). Capt. Collin, Snr., in his book says "Ariel" was chartered by a son of Missionary Williams from Jas. Malcolm, Sydney, owner 1855, as an Island trader. See date of building.

Dear Blackbird

**RE: Slipping through the cracks!**

Thank you for your most informative and diligently produced Summer 2011 Blackbird Storian blong Yumi publication. Your research and articles were most fascinating and I'm continually surprised by how little the Blackbird tragedy is known overseas.

History seems to slip through the cracks so its great to hear you are both keeping it alive, connecting the dots and reuniting families with their pasts and with each other.

Operating scenic and charter flights in our seaplane, newly based in Santo, we are fortunate in being able to leisurely discuss with our passengers the history of these islands as we gently sail and soar past them. Everyone is fascinated with human stories and those who take them time to illuminate others. Thank you for providing us with both interesting and useful information to use and inspiration to help others. Keep up the great work!

Paul Dalley  
Chief Pilot  
"Discover paradise ~ Vanuatu Seaplanes!"

Dear Blackbird

**RE: Schooner Saucy Lass**

My interest is in the Schooner Saucy Lass, which was owned by my Great Grandfather William Callow and traded in New Zealand before being sold at it went to Australia. I am keen to collect any information you might have on the vessel so I can add it to its History.

AB

Dear Blackbird International

**RE: Schooner Elibank Castle**

Congratulations on such a wonderful website, and of the activities you are undertaking. I found you by researching a family member: Captain James Howie, of the Elibank Castle - killed 15 January 1885 at Point Benyetta, Solomon Islands. And also of his partner, Captain Augustus O Rouch, killed also at the same place (went back for revenge?). Vessel Ariel also connected to this pair.

Very best wishes to you all : LP, Adelaide SA.

**Elibank Castle.** Schooner, 100 tons. N.S.W. Licence. Thirteen lives lost and a vessel in a kidnapping raid was the obituary given this vessel by a northern newspaper. In November 1884 Howie, master, and a boat crew were killed in the Solomons ("Queenslander" 7/2/85). H. C. Banks, mate brought the vessel back to Port Douglas. Under A. O. W. Rouch, owner, she returned to the scene to be attacked again. Rouch and all but two of the crew were killed. These attempted to sail the vessel home but, in heavy weather one, Gildie, went overboard. The other, D. Brown, drifted 48 days before being picked up by a Danish brig which later transferred him to a British patrol vessel, taken to Singapore, and from there to Cooktown by "Kildare" ("Queenslander," 28/11/85). "Elibank Castle" abandoned and derelict.



# BLACKBIRD ADVENTURES Photographic Competition

## GET SHOOTING

Blackbird is looking for your best photo that depicts South Sea Islander culture, history, memories and life in 2012. Winning photos will be showcased in each edition of *Storian* and compiled for the 2013 Blackbird calendar and other publications to mark the 150 years commemoration of the first group of pacific islanders blackbirded to Queensland.

You can send in photos of your family, your island of origin, your grandparents, a place of significance, a piece of jewellery or clothing, your children, a totem, a tattoo, flower or plant, cultural item, artifact or object.

Make sure you send in your storian, date, location, camera used and the name of the photographer with your photograph. Winning photos will be required to be high-resolution images suitable for reproduction.

Entries will be accepted until closing on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October. Funds raised from the sales will go towards Blackbird community projects.

Entries submitted in April and May will go in June's edition of *Storian* with a winner picked to receive a beautiful pictorial of Papua New Guinea by renowned author and photographer David Kirkland. Email your entries to:

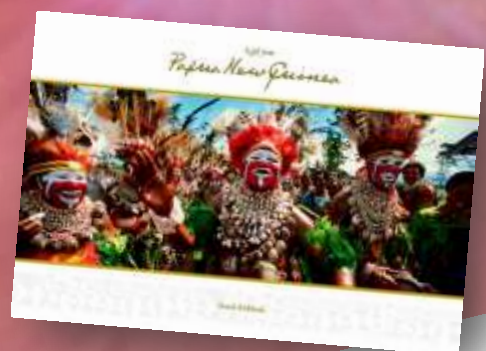
[family@blackbird.vu](mailto:family@blackbird.vu)



An amazing shot of a pod of dolphins taken from our vessel 300m from shore at Craig Cove.



Above: Michael engages warriors from the Gaua Custom Village. Or vice versa...







**My story. How it started with one paramount CHIEF and ended with another...**



The same is true for my Mother's family where I have used both our oral history and historical records to track down our ancestry. My mother's connection to Vanuatu goes back at least three generations. My grandmother was born in Queensland however her parents were not.

She had one sibling, who through circumstances that effected many families, was given a different surname due to a misunderstanding. Through strong oral history we have found that both great grandparents come from East Ambae (also know as Oba, Aoba Island).

My Grandfather was born on Gaua, his marriage certificate names a specific village which still exists today. Other information has also provided us a link to other families from the same village, whose own search is similar to my own. Going back later this year will provide more information.

I believe that many of our ancestors tried to maintain contact where possible with their fellow islanders. It is apparent that some may have tried to follow the same marriage traditions here in Queensland that they had on their islands of origin.

All of a sudden I am realising how I am related to someone or a certain family in Queensland yet these families are also connected back in the Islands. Our family ties are particularly strong in Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Mackay and Cairns and spread far and wide throughout the entire country.

Whilst my story had a sombre beginning I am happy to say that I have a very big extended family and in that I have those who I call and who I have a relationship with like I would an Auntie or Uncle. As well as having similar relationships with family in the wider Australian South Sea Islander, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

On Ambrym where our connection is strong, and where the relationship system is different to ours, I have others who I also call mother, father, Olfala and uncle and who care for me as such, and more uncles, aunties, sisters and brothers that I could ever want for. And that is the one of the greatest gifts you receive when searching for and finding family.

I have not yet completed my search and I imagine that I will uncover more information that will raise questions and I may even question my own findings at times. That's, I suppose what search for family is about.

**IT'S MIDNIGHT** and Paramount Chief Willie Bongmatur is waiting for me at the airport. He had heard of my existence. Well, he new of my grandfather's existence, the story of his disappearance, and had been waiting for a long time for this day to come. I on the other hand, didn't fully appreciate who this grand man was, what place he had in the Vanuatu society, let alone my own family, village and history. He was to set that right...

That was more than ten years ago. Since then this grand chief has passed on, leaving a legacy, writings, history and children who are now, as always were, a closely connected family to my grandfather on Ambrym. You see they come from Wakon village, a little more than an hour away by canoe and a small walk. Previously their village was Lonwolwol, from which Jif Willie's grandfather came from. For years before time they have married amongst my people in Fali and Tenak village, in West Ambrym.

If I had my time again all those years ago I would have asked him a thousand questions. I would have asked my own father two thousand more questions... my mother who is still alive seems to now relish in the fact that she is a constant sounding board and information portal for all things South Sea Islander, particularly the old days in Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia.

Some years later the Minniecon family farewelled the loss of a great woman, my aunty, the last of my father's sisters. On that day we lost an entire generation. This first generation Australian South Sea Islander family, my father and all 14 of his siblings had now passed.

It actually scares me to think that I have no paternal aunties or uncles left on this branch of my family tree an am now part of the oldest living generation. With this sense of realisation I developed an even stronger sense of finding out and sharing as much as I can about my family, how they lived and where we came from. Just as important, do we have living relatives back on the islands of our origin? I know there are many of us who share a similar story.

Blackbird has called 2012 the **Year for finding Family** so I would like to share with you what I've uncovered in my personal search. I hope that some of you would read this and it will encourage you to keep going in your search. You may find we could be connected and have different information to share.

I have been lucky that there have been some in my family who have begun the search for my ancestors and found out information that now could be lost. More than 20 years ago my dad's brother – my Uncle Rob - returned to Craig Cove, West Ambrym to find out about where his father (and my grandfather) came from.

I believe that through much discussion and conferring with chiefs and elders they found our connection. Now his family and many others in the wider Minniecon clan have gone back to reconnect.

My Mum's sister, when she was in her 80's travelled to Vanuatu to find our relatives as well as some older cousins on that branch of our ever growing tree. Many others have gone back and I hope many more go, as it is a life changing experience.

So what have I found? I like many of you have come across a web of connectivity that goes back one, two or three generations.

Through our family's oral and recorded history (Queensland Births, Deaths & Marriages records) it has shown my grandfather on my father's side is from Ambrym Island. His parents names link directly back to custom names on West Ambrym. Some of my dad's sisters also had custom names only found on West Ambrym, and nowhere else.

Queensland records show a name, the same as my great grandfather, listed on a register of Pacific Islanders arriving at Maryborough in the late 1800's. This recorded history of his movements throughout his life, matches our family oral history, his connection and our lineage match.

Records show he is from Pentecost Island. His name links him, still today, directly to a certain area of the Island.



TOMMY LEE JONES

MICHAEL O'KEEFE



# NATE AND HAYES

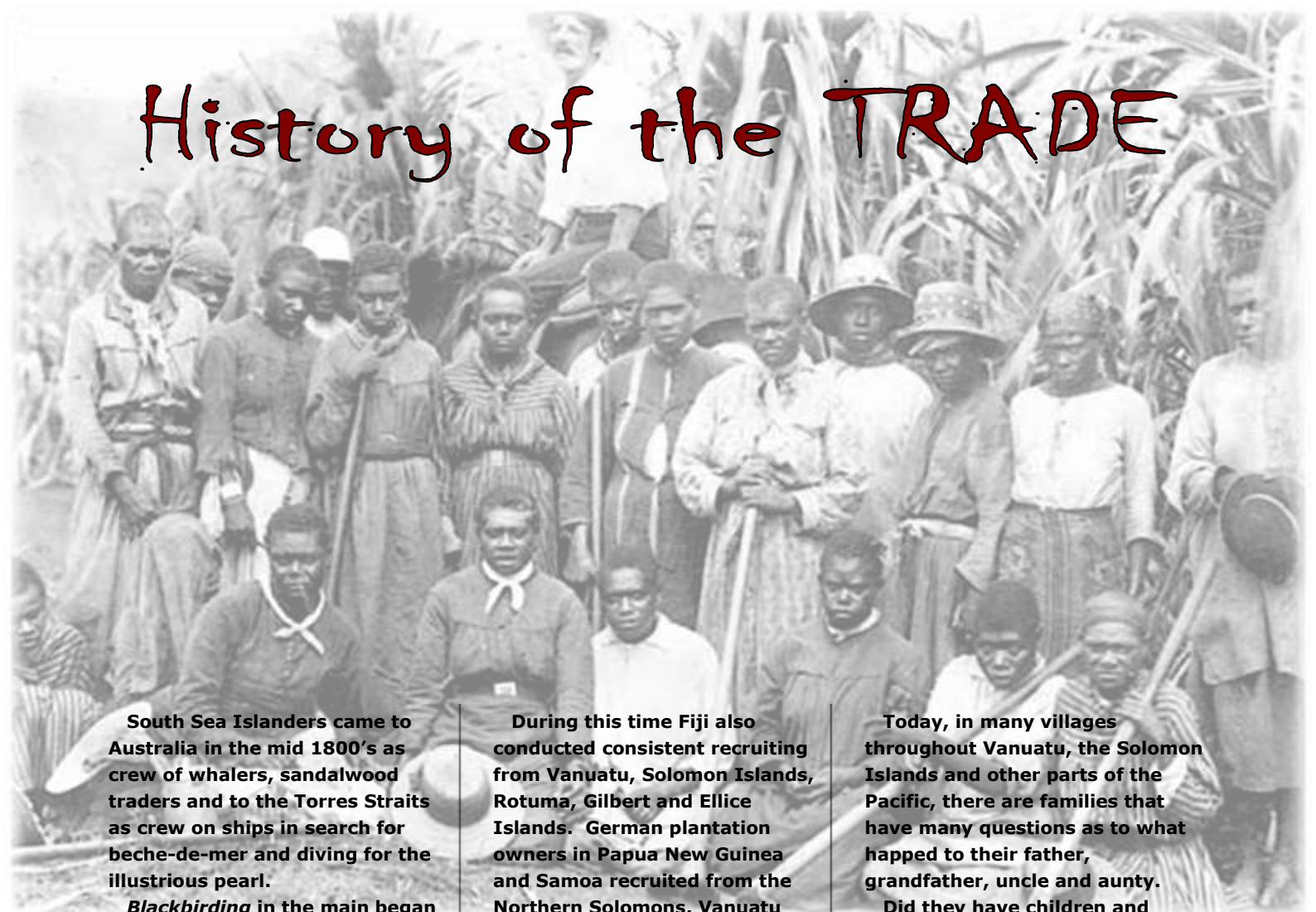


What does actor  
**TOMMY LEE JONES**  
have to do with Blackbird?  
**Find out next edition...**

Partners in Piracy. Rivals in Romance. Allies in Adventure.



# History of the TRADE



**South Sea Islanders came to Australia in the mid 1800's as crew of whalers, sandalwood traders and to the Torres Straits as crew on ships in search for beche-de-mer and diving for the illustrious pearl.**

**Blackbirding** in the main began in Australia with Sydney parliamentarian and merchant, Captain Robert Towns who imported South Sea Islanders coinciding with the birth of the sugar industry in the new colony of Queensland.

However, Captain Ben Boyd is the first acknowledged blackbirding bringing 183 men, 7 women and 2 boys in 1847 from the Loyalty Islands and New Hebrides on three separate voyages.

Recruiting in Australia ended following an Act of Parliament in 1904 but continued on for a number of years.

From 1863 to 1904 Queensland sugar and cotton plantations, farms, pearling and fishing vessels and domestic households were worked by South Sea Islanders who were recruited – or more accurately during the Blackbird “era” kidnapped – by men who were, and are still known today as Blackbirders.

62,000 Islanders were brought to Queensland from the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. A small number of labourers came from the Polynesian and Micronesian islands such as Tonga, Kiribati and Tuvalu.

**During this time Fiji also conducted consistent recruiting from Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Rotuma, Gilbert and Ellice Islands. German plantation owners in Papua New Guinea and Samoa recruited from the Northern Solomons, Vanuatu and other parts of the South Pacific as did plantation owners in New Caledonia.**

Peruvian blackbirders also conducted a series of devastating slave raids, which significantly depopulated Polynesian and Micronesian Islands in just two years between 1862 and 1863.

The recruiters themselves, including ships captains and their crew came from all over the world including France, Scotland, England, Australia, Spain, Germany and America. The ship owners were Australian businesses including CSR (Colonial Sugar Refinery), Burns Philp, politicians, plantation owners and even one Queensland Premier.

The fate of these Islanders is varied and many, from returning to their island after their term to having a successful life in their new country with many children and grandchildren.

Others being lost at sea, murdered or shipwrecked and completely unaccounted for. Either way, there are many that have not found their family, don't know where they ended up, nor know where they come from.

**Today, in many villages throughout Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and other parts of the Pacific, there are families that have many questions as to what happened to their father, grandfather, uncle and aunty.**

**Did they have children and grandchildren?** Did they make the journey? Where did they go? What happened to them?

Similarly in Queensland and Fiji, the descendants of those recruited may now have hundreds of family members from a single “recruit” who seek their own information about which Island or village their grandfather or grandmother came from and what the village is like today. Do they remember?

Australian South Sea Islanders seek to reunite with family members of those that remain in their original village and to take the journey home.

It is widely accepted that whilst the majority of Australian and Fijian South Sea Islanders have some very general knowledge of where their grandparents came from in a broader sense, (ie: somewhere in Vanuatu or Solomon Islands) in the majority of cases they don't know their true island, village, names and customs, their families and have had little or no contact.

Blackbird is operating the **Finding Family Blong Yumi** program in Australia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Fiji and New Caledonia as a free service and to date has still not received any government funding.



# Finding HELENA



Photo courtesy John Oxley Library

The labour schooner *Helena*, built in 1874 in New Zealand, recruited from the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands for Queensland sugar plantations for many years.

On 31<sup>st</sup> July 1899, *Helena* was wrecked on the Wide Bay Bar at the southern end of Fraser Island. She had been waiting for the weather to improve after leaving Maryborough on the 26<sup>th</sup> July with four returning labourers. The wind dropped as *Helena* attempted to cross the bar and she drifted onto the beach off the southern tip of Fraser Island.

A 1996 report in the *Courier Mail* stated that an anchor was caught in the net of a fishing trawler in February of that year. Comparisons were made between the anchor and the picture above and it is believed it belongs to the former recruiter.

**Blackbird Adventures** has been on the hunt for the final resting ground of this notorious recruiting schooner to provide evidence for the *Queensland Historic Shipwreck Survey* being undertaken by the Department of Environment and Resource Management.

Sonars of the area are going to be undertaken later in the year of the many wrecks scattered in the area. Blackbird is hoping a suitable match of the size of *Helena* is picked up by sonar, enabling investigative dives to gather information about the wreck and confirm her origin.

Any timbers that survive may provide a match to timbers that were used by the New Zealand ship builders to provide further evidence of her existence and resting place. No lives were lost. There is no treasure. There is however a past.

Blackbird is currently gathering photographs, records, crew and owner information, ports, recruits and any information the public may have in her history or final resting place. If your family is involved somehow, as an original recruit, owner, crew, agent or supercargo, we urge you to participate and provide your information for this valuable project.

Our **FINDING HELENA** project is not just about *Helena*. It is a 10 year project to document and record as many vessels involved in the recruiting trade. The aim is to provide detailed information on each vessel, the recruiting history, notable events and circumstances, owners and agents and as much information as possible about the final resting place of each ship.

**Blackbird Adventures** aims to locate shipwrecks from known sites throughout Queensland, Torres Straits, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The initial target sites are those locations that are recorded to have a loss of life from the wreck. These sites were and will always remain the final resting place, not just of the ship, but also lost members of the South Sea Islander community and crew that never made it.

Our **UNKNOWN ISLANDER** project aims to ensure that these **gravesites** are recorded and help us to learn the origin, history and names of the recruits lost to the sea so that some recognition can be given to their life.

We are also on the hunt to find if one last labour vessel still exists somewhere in the world today!

If you would like to become involved through research, dive expeditions or have information you can share about any labour vessel please contact us via email:

[adventures@blackbird.vu](mailto:adventures@blackbird.vu)

**Helena.** Schooner, 126 tons. Masters, McQuaker, 1882, Grahl 1883, A. Turner 1884, Connell 1888, W. R. Reynolds 1895-6, G. McArthur 1896, J. Doig, W. R. Reynolds 1897, W. R. Reynolds 1898, 99, 1891, 94, 95. J. Doig, 1892, 1895. Mate and several men killed Ambryn October 1888 (Pageant of Pacific). Withdrawn from trade October 1898, owners having decided to sell ("Courier," 24/8/97, 6/10/98). Wrecked Wide Bay, 31/7/99, on her 30th voyage, the only one, it is said, on which she was not insured. Reynolds, master, severely censured by Marine Board ("Courier," 6/9/99).



# THE UNKNOWN ISLANDER™



Photo courtesy John Oxley Library

Labour Schooner *Peri*

More than 62,000 people were brought to Australia, many more to Fiji, New Caledonia, Samoa and Papua New Guinea. How many more were shipwrecked, killed, lost at sea, died of disease or never seen again?

The Peruvian slave raids were some of the most devastating of all. Between 1862 and 1864, 3,634 Polynesians were stolen from their Islands to work as slaves on the guano mines in Peru.

Less than four short years after the raid, only 257 of the recruited Islanders survived, with 3,215 dead as a direct result of the raids. To add further insult, the sickness and disease introduced by slavers resulted in the deaths of a further 2,950 people who had not even left their island. 6,000 dead in 6 years!

What happened to the memory of these Islanders who came from the Cook Islands, Easter Island, Niue, Samoa, Tuvalu and Kiribati?

What has happened to the Islanders buried on cane fields throughout Fiji and Samoa? Who knows of the location of graves on Queensland plantations?

Many oral histories and family stories tell of those lost before they landed; those lost before their time expired; those lost on the way home.

Blackbird's **Unknown Islander** program is designed to raise awareness of the many South Sea Islanders missing, lost and unaccounted for. Those lost at sea, resting on unidentified shipwrecks on reefs and atolls throughout the South Pacific.

The labour schooner *Peri* was one of many stories of loss of life at sea. The ships manifest and register of recruits is still yet to be identified but on one trip alone, only 13 of the 80 recruited Islanders made it ashore.

In February of 1871, Captain John Moresby, Commander of HMS *Basilisk*, was sailing inside the Great Barrier Reef on his way to undertake survey work in the seas surrounding New Guinea.

On 5<sup>th</sup> February, just off Cardwell, the masthead man reported '*Sail right ahead.*' Captain Moresby, strongly opposed to the trade, hoped she did not belong to a kidnapper.

The manner of sailing suggested to the trained mariner that all was not well. Getting no response from raising the ensign, she was boarded and the scene on board was one of extreme horror.

Her few living souls were "*living skeletons, creatures dazed with fear and mortal weakness... some were barely alive, and the sleeping figures were dead bodies, fast losing shape of humanity, on a deck foul with blood.*"

The name of the vessel had been whitewashed out, and only after much scrubbing were Captain Moresby's men able to read the letters across the stern - the labour schooner *Peri*.

It transpired that 3 months earlier the labour vessel *Nukulow* had brought a cargo of some 180 kidnapped Solomon Islanders to Rewa River, Fiji where 100 were sold by auction to planters from between £10 and £15 a head.

The remaining 80 were transferred to the schooner *Peri*, in the charge of three white men and a Fijian crew, to be taken to plantations on other islands in Fiji.

A dispute about food between the starved Islanders and the ill-tempered white cook led to him being thrown overboard. The remaining two whites and the Fijian crew were rushed and also met the same fate.

As the Islanders did not know how to sail such a large vessel, *Peri* drifted for four weeks over 1,800 miles and never touched bottom, all the way through the Great Barrier Reef. *Peri* had long run out of water, food and had suffered 67 deaths not counting the original crew when she was found. Many were buried at sea at unknown coordinates, at the mercy of tide and time.

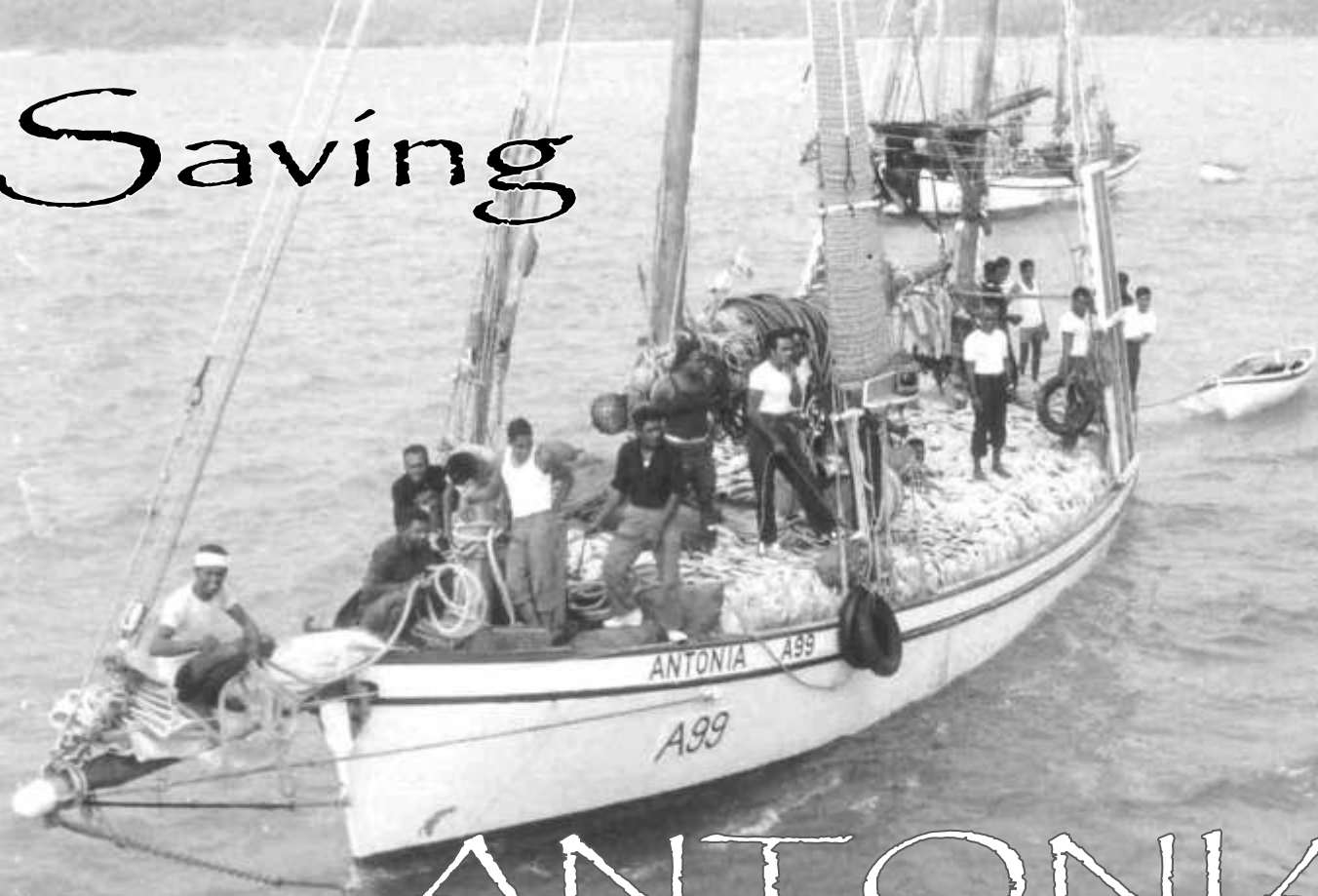
Captain Moresby took *Peri* to Moreton Bay and was preparing to take her to Sydney when the Queensland Government tried to intervene saying she was not a labour vessel but a Fijian prison ship and should be returned to the Fijian Government. *Peri* was eventually wrecked on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1877 near the Breaksea Spit.

Do you have an **UNKNOWN ISLANDER** story or know about a shipwreck that may have lost lives? Do you know of graves, historical or heritage sites that need to be protected and identified?

Contact the Unknown Islander project today at [info@blackbird.vu](mailto:info@blackbird.vu)



# Saving



# ANTONIA

Built in 1956 in Brisbane at renowned boat builders Norman Wright & Sons, *ANTONIA* A99 sailed into the final period of the Torres Straits pearling industry. She was not the last lugger built but she is certainly one of the most famous.

*ANTONIA* was built for Jack Zafer (trading as Whyalla Shell Company) who used the vessel for pearling operations around Torres Strait over a long period until the 1970s, along with a sister vessel built a year or so later named *ANNIKI*. *ANNIKI* A98 was recently made famous in the movie *Australia* starring Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman taking the children to Mission Island.

He commissioned *ANTONIA* as his first purpose-built pearl shelling boat. Jack and his friend Phil Rose, an engineer, discussed the type of vessel required with Ron Wright in Brisbane who then designed the *ANTONIA*. Jack chose Norman Wright's yard to build *ANTONIA* because of their reputation as builders of fine boats.

A sturdy Gardner engine was ordered for *ANTONIA* but the ship bringing it from England was grounded on the Arabian coast, and with the engine presumed lost, a replacement Gardner was bought from a local fishing vessel and put into *ANTONIA*. After the launching, Zafer, with Phil Rose, sailed and motored the boat north to Thursday Island to begin work.

The two sister-ships *ANTONIA* and *ANNIKI* then worked the pearling fields in the Torres Strait for almost two decades. *ANTONIA* was the fastest lugger to operate in the Torres Strait and was incorporated into Torres Strait Islander culture and history in traditional songs that survive to the present.

Between them, *ANTONIA* and *ANNIKI* brought in record quantities of pearl shell, both having skilled Torres Strait Islander skippers and crews who worked on them over many years.

*ANTONIA* was skippered by Frances Sabatino and holds the record for the most pearl shell collected in one trip - twenty-two tons (22 tonnes) - when the average for a whole season was around twenty tons.

The name *ANTONIA* is pronounced 'an-TON-EE-a' because of the family's Greek origins. Jack Zafer's father-in-law had been a Greek merchant seaman whose name was Antoni (pronounced an-TON-ee), or Anthony in English. However holding to the tradition of a female name for a boat, Antoni was changed to Antonia, the Greek feminized version.

*ANNIKI* was a combination of Anne and Nick, Jack's two older children, whilst the youngest child was named Anthony, so all the Zafer children are connected to their father's boats.

*ANTONIA* is one of the few surviving late-period Thursday Island Pearling Luggers, and is a craft designed and built by Norman Wright and Sons. It is closely connected to the final period of pearling operations in the Torres Strait area and represents the end of the evolution of the Thursday Island pearling lugger as a sail-rigged working craft.

*ANTONIA* was designed in 1956 by Ron Wright and built in Queensland by Norman R. Wright's firm of boat builders (later Norman Wright and Sons) at Bulimba, on the Brisbane River. It is wooden construction, gaff rigged as a ketch with an auxiliary motor and was used in the pearling industry, working out of Thursday Island for many years.

*ANTONIA* is a good example of the typical construction and layout of a pearling lugger and working craft of that period. The 60ft long carvel planked hull is laid out with internal bulkheads separating the holds and the accommodation aft. There is a small cabin and the internal ballast is made up of loosely packed river stones. Please contact us if you have the ability to save this historic vessel.



**PROJECT** Pearling Lugger *ANTONIA*

**DETAILS** Preservation & restoration of historic Torres Strait pearling lugger *Antonia*.

**WHO** Government programs, philanthropists, individuals, businesses, schools, non-profits, rotaries, councils.

**COST** From \$1 per person. Buy a bottle of **Pearl Diver** port and enjoy yourself. \$50,000 is even better.

**TARGET** \$500,000 give or take!

**DONATE** Anything you can. Government programs or relevant grants that may assist are most welcome. If you want something in return, contact us about sponsorship, wine packages, ceramics, model replicas, artworks & pearls for the better half.

**CONTACT** [adventures@blackbird.vu](mailto:adventures@blackbird.vu)





Geoff Hayes takes us on his journey to Fali Village, West Ambrym,



**An ocean swim just before dawn at Craig Cove down from the small village of Fali, must surely rate as one of the most simplistic, blissful and enjoyable experiences one could ever hope for.**

As I float I am energised by the occasional burst of hot water bubbling from the springs that permeate their way from the depths of the earth's crust. As the first rays of day peek above the high sombre hills to the east my eyes scan the jetty that once was. Now only a jumble of rocks and cement this platform served as a vital lifeline for south-west Ambrym. It is hard to imagine the power of sea and wind that could toss giant blocks of concrete around as though pebbles washed up by gentle waves. The rusting hulk of a cargo carrier wreck defines the futility of man's endeavours against the might of nature's outburst.

The warm springs serve as a reminder of the deep forces within the bowels of the earth that caused massive eruptions from volcanoes sitting not so many miles distant inland. The contrast of these violent forces and the love shown by the local Ni – Van families brings me to a state of both deep awe and humility. I meditate on the stark contrast that exists between man's cruelty and how this action serves as the origin of a powerful outpouring of love and emotion.

Family folklore is that one of my forefathers served as crew on a sailing ship that bought convicts to Australia. Could it be possible that one of my ancestors was partly responsible for the unimaginable horror of the slave trade that existed between New Hebrides and Australia and ultimately, the reason for my visit to this village? This village of Fali so delicately nestled between mountain and sea.

By subterfuge and callous acts young men and women were stolen from the bosom of their families and taken thousands of miles to Queensland and forced to labour on newly established sugar cane farms.

Now 150 years later, Sonia, a beautiful descendant of one this stolen generation is to be a bride in a privileged custom wedding ceremony being married to my affable nephew Michael.

Since the return of her uncle many years ago, the village of Fali has been a beacon to Sonia, drawing her back with an unquenchable desire to reconnect with the family of her ancestors, the essence of her being. With the invaluable assistance of Michael who shares similar values, this reconnection was the catalyst for a venture to reconcile the stolen generation with their true heritage.

Adopting the name applied to the slave trade *Blackbird*, Michael and Sonia began what I imagine will be a lifelong quest to help other families to be reconciled to their true heritage and long lost families. Finding families blong yumi. Making my way back to our guesthouse I could not help but wonder at the hospitality of the Fali village family.

Our 'guest house' was actually someone's real house made available to us for our visit. I could not really find out whose house it actually was however I suspected that the owners were the folk sleeping on matting outdoors and who unobtrusively swept the cottage during the day. This generosity was typical of kindness shown by the families.

The flight in a Y -12 aircraft from Port Villa to Craig Cove was an adventure in itself. The scenery of rugged mountains, dense vegetation and an intriguing coastline was breathtaking. In comparison Google earth presents only a sterile snapshot.

We landed on a narrow airstrip with ocean as a backdrop. Many of the local families had gathered and the atmosphere was electric with excitement and anticipation. For once in my life I could know the feeling of being truly treated like royalty. Even Prince Charles had not experienced this!

A short walk to Fali and we were greeted by hundreds of locals including many important guests and dignitaries. The ladies were truly beautiful in their bright island dresses.

Each wedding guest was presented with leis and a seven-piece string band played stirring lively music that had the power to make your feet move. Welcoming speeches followed with Pastor Bruno Taliban translating for those of us not fluent in Bislama. Following the main welkam ceremony we were escorted to Sonia's village. The clan leader, affectionately known as 'Old Fella' and the Paramount Chief of Fali Village welcomed us with a speech that was dignified and sincere. The sentiment was reinforced by a huge banner that read –

**WELCOME TO YOU ALL TENAK  
FAMILY FROM AUSTRALIA BACK TO  
YOUR ANCESTORS LAND. FEEL FREE  
– THIS IS YOUR HOME – THE  
PEOPLE ARE YOUR FAMILIES**

It takes very little time to fall into the village lifestyle. The desire for western luxuries diminishes replaced by a pace of life that infuses calm and an inner sense of wellbeing. Granted, we had been spared the hard work necessary to maintain a subsistence lifestyle. It is quite apparent that the serenity of village life needs to be seen in the light of the lack of health and educational facilities.

The generosity of the village was humbling. The evening before our departure everyone gathered in the long house for formal speeches of farewell and the presentation of carvings to each guest. In return, what more could be said to these wonderful people than sipaden, sipaden. Your family blong my family – my family blong your family.

At the airport next morning the local families lined up to farewell us as we made our way to the plane. Our sadness on leaving was more than matched by our new family's sadness to see us leave. The Old Fella took my hand in both of his. A man with the humility to publicly shed a tear - he was certainly not alone.



# Top 20 Ways To GET INVOLVED

Blackbird has put together our top 20 ways to get involved in projects throughout the South Pacific for individuals, families, Chiefs, Elders, businesses, governments, philanthropists, photojournalists, artists, musicians, students, schools, churches, community groups and volunteers.

# GIVE MONEY

1

**It buys things. Sheets of iron, finding family, paying staff, solar lights, medical supplies, birthing kits... Even donated goods cost money - storage, shipping containers, freight, insurance and getting on the ground where it is intended. See page 34 for more details.**



# SPONSOR A STUDENT

**School fees are one of the biggest challenges to education in the South Pacific. Sponsor a student in Vanuatu from \$2 per day. Annual school fees start at \$600AUD equivalent to 3 months wages. Eventual aim? Free education for all. See page 18 for more details.**

2



# Tall Ship BLACKBIRD

3

**Join our campaign to raise \$1 Million for the launch of Tall Ship Blackbird and take the journey home. Tall Ship Blackbird will travel throughout the South Pacific and Australian waters finding families, conducting expeditions, adventures and youth leadership programs.**



# BLACKBIRD EVENTS

**Participate in a Tropical Golf Challenge, Blackbird Soccer Challenge, Sports, Arts and Cultural Festival or help us organise events throughout Australia and the South Pacific.**

4



## WHAT'S YOUR ADVENTURE?

5

**Join Blackbird Adventures on a trip of a lifetime. Our existing adventures range from relaxed and easy to extreme and adventurous. Let Blackbird organise your very own finding family expedition back home to your Island in the South Pacific.**



# HELP BUILD A COMMUNITY HAOS

**Help us build community buildings that provide multiple functions for the local community including kindergarten, school, dining halls, churches and cyclone shelters. Can't join us? \$100 will buy a sheet of iron, bag of cement and a solar light. See page 23.**

6



# BUY SOMETHING

7

Buy a case of **BLACK FEATHER**™ wine, raffle ticket, soccer ball, supporter's gear or coffee cup. Whilst your shopping, buy a solar light, stationary or first aid supplies for one of our communities.



## DONATE GOODS & SUPPLIES

**Blackbird accepts donations of goods and supplies including medical supplies, first aid kits, stationary, solar lights, fishing and diving gear, generators, clothing, shipping containers, household items, mowers, bicycles and more. We also accept items for fundraising.**

8



THE UNKNOWN ISLANDER™

9

**Blackbird is supporting the work of local community organisations and heritage bodies to identify the locations of South Sea Islanders lost in the past. Shipwrecked, un-marked graves, missing... See page 11 for more details and how to get your Unknown Islander found.**







## WORK WITH US

Seeking expedition leaders, photojournalists, camera operators, web developers, researchers, professionals in medical, construction, business, engineering, marine, environment, diving and archaeology, shipwrights, sailors and event coordinators. Check out page 34!

10



11

## EXPEDITION VESSEL

Blackbird is looking for major corporate sponsors and supporters to complete our 64ft aluminium expedition yacht. Corporate packages are available including exclusive 5-day sailing, fishing and diving adventures for 10 guests or staff & exposure throughout the Pacific.



## FINDING HELENA

Pirates, Blackbirders, Missionaries and Shipwrecks. Join Blackbird Adventures in the hunt for shipwreck locations, ship information, photographs and to find out if one last vessel still exists somewhere in the world today. See page 10 for further details.

12

## BLACKBIRD - THE ALBUM

The top 24 songs from around the South Pacific will make it onto Blackbird's new album to be released at the end of the year. String Bands, Island Reggae, Hip Hop, R&B, Gospel, Custom, Country and acoustic... Who will make it onto the album? Head to page 16!



13



## WIN COMPETITIONS

Enter our competitions for the chance to win great prizes and get known. Photographic competitions, kai kai recipes, letters and yarns and our Bigfala raffle will get you in the winning mode.

14

## PEARLING LUGGER ANTONIA

Save ANTONIA, one of the last historic Torres Strait pearling luggers and restore her to her former glory. We need money! Contributions, donations, grants and programs that assist with materials, shipwrights, training and equipment are welcome. (See Page 12)



15



## REMEMBER BLACKBIRD

Next time you go shopping REMEMBER BLACKBIRD. Buy an extra pair of shoes, a solar light, exercise book, pack of band-aids, pencils, underwear, childrens clothes, sheets, towels and school back packs.

16

## CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

Becoming a corporate partner is easy with any or all of our projects, activities, events or fundraising campaigns. Exposure is provided throughout Australia and the South Pacific through this magazine, our website, our documentaries and event sponsorship.



17



## ADVERTISE WITH US

We have a ranges of advertising options through the magazine, website and events. Contact the editor today at [info@blackbird.vu](mailto:info@blackbird.vu)

18

## JOIN US

Membership and supporter packages are available for individuals and families. Support a particular project or campaign, receive discounts on merchandise and expeditions, get exclusive access to events and be first to find out what's happening on the ground.



19



## TELL 20 PEOPLE

Telling 20 of your friends, family and networks of our projects can sometimes be the biggest benefit of all. Forward STORIAN to your friends, share links to our website, Facebook and Youtube channel.

20



# UNTITLED... Album of the Year?

Calling all singers, songwriters, string bands, musicians, collaborators & producers...

## YOU'VE BEEN ASKING FOR IT

and the team and Blackbird are going to make it happen.

**BeforeTIME** Productions is looking for the top 24 songs from singers, songwriters, bands, musicians and collaborators from Australia and throughout the South Pacific for this year's release of the still untitled album for Blackbird.

No surprise the theme for this year's album is all about **Blackbirding** - the good, the bad and the unknown - and encompasses the days from before time through to the future.

We are also on the lookout for compilations to celebrate the new generations of South Sea Islanders throughout the Pacific, their cultures, customs and ultimately their life.



**TITLE:** BACKYARD BOOGIE

**NAME:** J BOOG

**COUNTRY:** Hawaii

**GENRE:** Reggae

**TRACK PICK:** *Take it Slow*

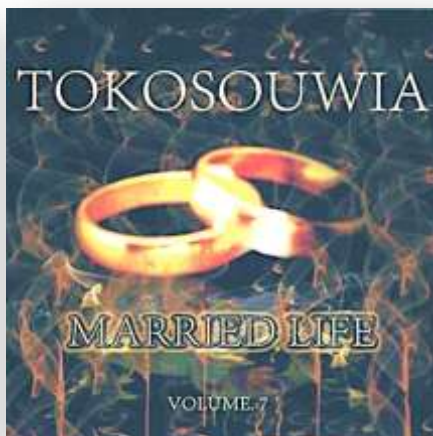
**WRAP:** Wow! You have got to get yourself onto the web and check this guy out. Island reggae at it's best. J Boog's new album, **Backyard Boogie**, continues adding to the artist's impressive list of accomplishments, now officially becoming the #1 Billboard Reggae Album, while also debuting at #18 on Billboard's Heatseekers Charts.

The album debuted last week at #1 on iTunes Digital Reggae Charts & #2 on Amazon Digital Reggae & World Charts. Check it out!

There are no rules on songs or compositions, whether hip hop, full instrumental, vocal, traditional, custom or Island Reggae. We are looking for some of the most outstanding composers of our time and we plan on taking the best from across the styles.

First time composers, previously recorded tracks and yet to be written masterpieces are all eligible for the new album as are first time singer songwriters.

Submissions will close in October this year for a release in early December. During the lead up we will be opening a competition for the album cover artwork design, album title and the song selection process, criteria and a request for judges.



**TITLE:** MARRIED LIFE

**NAME:** TOKOSOUWIA

**COUNTRY:** Vanuatu

**GENRE:** Island String Band

**TRACK PICK:** *Married Life*

**WRAP:** One of Vanuatu's best selling string bands now with the latest, Volume 7 album **Married Life**. This is the first time the young Tokosouwia sound makers have produced an album without some of their veteran members.

Songs from the album were played during the recent **Blackbird Soccer Challenge** and got the whole island grooving. Anticipation for their next album due the middle of the year will hopefully feature a new song about the Blackbird Soccer Challenge... ol ailan man!

## WHAT

Blackbird the ALBUM

## WHEN

Songs can be submitted until  
31<sup>st</sup> October 2012.

Set for a December release.

## WHY

To celebrate the South Seas  
& the survival of cultures leading  
up to the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## WHO

String band, hip hop, R&B,  
island reggae, custom village,  
gospel, country, instrumental...  
whatever! Singer-songwriters,  
new artists, old songs and those  
not yet penned!

## HOW

Email [info@blackbird.vu](mailto:info@blackbird.vu) for an  
information kit or to submit your  
track...

## Sibaden



# NEXT OF KIN

Fiercely proud of their culture and history, **THE LAST KINECTION** are extraordinary: uncompromising in their worldview, but with optimism and an outstretched hand.

From the self-assured **'Find A Way'** (*'Ngai Wudhim Marigurim Ngai Yirinbu: I am afraid but I'm still strong'*); to the commanding **'Together'** (*'If you could only spend a day in my shoes, maybe then we could talk, maybe then we could walk together'*), **NEXT OF KIN** is strikingly insightful.

Created in the aftermath of a horrific car accident in 2008 – where **Nay** was pronounced dead at the scene before her brother **Weno** noticed the blanket that covered her moved slightly. Ultimately the incident became the subject of a *Crash Scene Investigations* program. It is truly a tale of triumph over adversity: staring down the utterly devastating prospect of never walking or talking again, to making songs with such a prefect storm of power and melody.

Guests on the record include some of Australia's most lauded MCs, including **Trials (Funkoors)** and **Briggs** from the Golden Era label, **Ozi Batla** from **The Herd**, **Rival MC** from **Impossible Odds**, **Lotek** and **Omar Musa**. **Simone Stacey**, Nay's former partner in **Shakaya**, appears on the lead single **'Are We There Yet?'**



**TITLE:** NEXT OF KIN

**NAME:** THE LAST KINECTION

**COUNTRY:** Australia

**GENRE:** Hip Hop

**TRACK PICK:** *Are We There Yet?*

**WRAP:** **The Last Kinection** has created one of the most positively energetic records of 2011, **The Confronting, The Passionate, The Inspiring** NEXT OF KIN.

Took out Best Single and Best Band at the Australian 2011 Deadly Awards. TLK's recently released single **'Are We There Yet?'** brings the urgency of Indigenous survival into sharp focus with a collision of straight-shooting and infectious melody. **Make no mistake, this is an important record for 2012.**



## THE LAST KINECTION

N E X T O F K I N



**2011 DEADLY AWARD WINNERS**  
Band of the year  
Single of the year

Guests include Trials (Funkoors), Briggs, Simone Stacey (Shakaya), Lotek, Ozi Batla (The Herd)

THIS IS A RECORD OF DEFIANCE, LAUGHTER AND REFLECTION – BEAUTIFULLY ARTICULATE VOICES BRINGING AN INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE INTO SHARP FOCUS WITH A BLAZING SET OF BANGING HIP HOP

2011 "Next Big Things in Music" – THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD



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# Sponsor a Student Today!



Whilst Vanuatu is the happiest place on earth and one of the most beautiful places to live, today in 2011 there is still no running water, electricity, sewerage or infrastructure and no jobs on many of the Islands and villages in Vanuatu. Even in Vanuatu's capital of Port Vila you will see thatched huts opposite 5 star hotels without the basic needs of life.

Education is not free in Vanuatu. For families who can't afford to send all their children to school, the choice can be unbearable. Many villages do not have secondary schools and in some cases students need to travel to other parts of the Island or in the majority of cases having to attend boarding school on another Island away from their families and community.

School fees range from between 50,000VT to 90,000VT (\$500 - \$900AUD) per year - equivalent to between 2 and 5 months wages for a parent for one child's education for an entire year. Email [family@blackbird.vu](mailto:family@blackbird.vu) for your information kit.

## Boomerang Festival - Island Style

### WHO THREW THE FIRST BOOMERANG?

Australian Aborigines believe it's theirs. Ancient Egyptians, Eskimos and Indians had their own version, superseded by the bow and arrow. The oldest wooden boomerangs have been found in Australia, dated 8,000 years old. Arnhem Land rock paintings from 15,000 years ago also show the boomerang form.

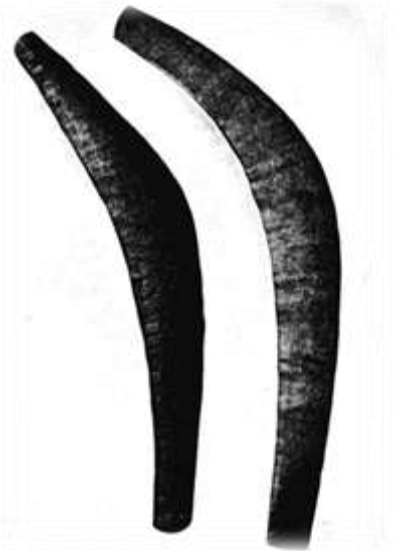
On the West coast of Espiritu Santo in Vanuatu, another boomerang is part of the long history of this strange aeronautical device.

No one can be sure of the boomerang's original birth-place. However, one thing for sure is that boomerangs were used on Espiritu Santo from before time and plans are in place for a revival - Island style.

**Blackbird Adventures** has teamed up with locals from Espiritu Santo, the descendants of the original makers of the New Hebrides boomerang, with the goal of holding an annual **Boomerang Festival** on the West Coast of Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu.

The usually plain item, organisers hope to add some colour after seeing the designs from Australian Aborigines and starting to put out their own designs. They have also put the invitation out for the main event - the boomerang throwing competition.

Still in early stages of planning, if you have an interest in boomerangs, want to be involved or just kept in the loop, email us at Blackbird Adventures: [adventures@blackbird.vu](mailto:adventures@blackbird.vu)



## Nambawan fun Seaplane blo Santo e tuff tumas!



**Air Santo**

**555-4200**

**Vanuatu**  
Sea Planes

call  
Seaplane  
Paul!





# BIGFALA RAFFLE

**BLACKBIRD International** has put together one BIGFALA raffle this month with a major focus on rugby league. A fantastic range of prizes of signed jerseys including **Vanuatu Rugby League**, **Indigenous All Stars**, **Welcome to Country**, **North Queensland Cowboys** (including a signed football) and supporters shirts from the mighty **Cherbourg Hornets**. A bigfala thankyou to **Sol Bellear** for his generous donation. Sipa.

Not to be outdone, there is also a new Blackbird Soccer Ball, DVD of the **2012 Blackbird Soccer Challenge** Men's Final, woven baskets from Gaua and more... Tickets are only \$2 each, or \$20 per book of 10 & available until 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012 or until sold out!

The highest ticket seller will also receive a brand new **Vanuatu Rugby League** supporters shirt. Yes you heard right, if you want to sell tickets and think you can sell plenty, or just want to give it a go for the chance to win the shirt email us at [family@blackbird.vu](mailto:family@blackbird.vu) for tickets to be sent out. Don't delay. Get selling or get buying, whatever... but do it fast!



A gift from  
*Papua New Guinea*



David Kirkland

*P*apua New Guinea is the  
world's last great frontier.

This new, 120-page souvenir book is a must have record of the colour, culture and life of Papua New Guinea.

Contact Blackbird for your copy fresh off the press.

On sale now... \$25



98 YEARS AGO a devastating eruption changed the Island of Ambrym forever. This photo taken prior to the eruption was the view from the Presbyterian hospital situated at Lonwolwol, Dip Point. Open space, large shady trees and the most beautiful black sand beach.

Only 10 years earlier this was still a prime location for a recruiter... everyone in the one place!

# The Sunken Hospital

"Shortly after 10 a.m. an explosive eruption blew the hospital and other buildings into the air!"

10am, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1913, Dip Point, Ambrym Island, New Hebrides

## REPORT OF ERUPTION IN AMBRYM ISLAND, NEW HEBRIDES, 7TH DECEMBER, 1913, BY DR. BOWIE.

On the 6th December, 1913, a little after 5 p.m. it was observed that Mount Benbow, Ambrym Island, was in active eruption to an exceptional degree. Gigantic columns of steam were seen to rise many thousands of feet in the air. After each explosion a fresh pillar could be made out, boring its way in a spiral fashion through the cloud which extended upwards from the mouth of the crater. The succeeding explosions followed each other in more and more rapid succession, as well as in added force, until within an hour the intervals between the explosions were reduced from about three minutes to under one minute, and ultimately there was apparently no interval at all.

(a.) Just before dark, dense columns of steam and smoke were observed rising somewhere in the western edge of the "Great Ash Plain," and as darkness fell we could easily see a great river of incandescent lava rushing towards Baulap; another was running towards Port Vato. We climbed the hill immediately behind the hospital at Dip Point, and watched the Baulap stream until it reached the sea, which it did a little after 9 p.m. Lava, however, continued to flow down that valley for at least a whole day after this.

(b.) About 11 p.m. a new lava-stream was sighted rushing down the hillside about three miles and a half north-east along the coast. It reached the sea immediately to the west of Krong Point at about 2 a.m.

(c.) Soon after the last stream reached the sea it became very apparent that another lava-flow was on its way to the sea. During the whole night the sky was brilliantly lit up, but now, though there were high hills between us and the various rivers of lava, the valley in which we were was so illuminated that we could discern objects hundreds of yards away. This stream reached the sea two miles to the north-east of the hospital about 2.30 a.m., 7th December.

(d.) Almost simultaneously with stream (c) another made its appearance back in the hills at the head of Lowea Valley. This stream, one could easily observe, was coming much nearer to us, and we calculated the speed of the flow at about five miles an hour. Certainly the incline was, on the whole, pretty steep, and at one place the lava poured over a precipice about 60 ft. or 70 ft. high. The sight was magnificent as well as awe-inspiring. The lava, which was quite incandescent, came quickly on, burning up great forest-trees, tossing them all aglow in the air. As they fell again into the torrent they rebounded high in the air, emitting sparks like a thousand catherine-wheels. Soon after 3 a.m. the lava plunged with a savage hiss and a mighty roar into the sea. The sight was then superb, and never to be forgotten.

The din as the lava flowed through the forest reminded one very much of the noise of a hurricane with the boom of the ocean and the crashing of great forest-trees.

The last stream mentioned reached the sea within three-quarters of a mile of the hospital compound, but the hospital was built in a valley surrounded by hills except on the sea side. The valley behind was about a mile and a half long by about a mile broad at its widest part, and narrow-

ing to within half a mile at the sea. The hills around ranged from 500 ft. to 1,245 ft., and we considered everything inside this barrier as being quite safe.

Just about the time, or shortly before, the last stream reached the sea we saw a dense volume of black smoke rising from the hilltop on the east side, near the entrance to the valley and overlooking the hospital. When day broke we discovered the top of the hill was being blown out, but as yet there was no appearance of fire; only some continuous explosive force was driving the hilltop out. There were no separate explosions observable. The force was continuous. Soon, however, fire appeared, and the force increased quickly, so that one could observe the hill steadily diminishing in height. The side of the hill looking west was acted upon, and decreased more quickly than the other sides, and about 10 a.m. on the 7th lava began to flow down the hillside into the valley and through part of the hospital compound.

(e.) The ground in the valley could be felt in motion—a kind of heave—not violently, but reminding one of a slight motion at sea. This motion was not continuous, but at very short intervals.

Shortly after 10 a.m. an explosive eruption blew the hospital and other buildings into the air. The force of this explosion was terrific. First a great sheet of what appeared to be electric flame flashed from the ground, and immediately following was a mighty roar and crash like myriad thunder-claps one piled on another. The heat, too, was intense. We could see for an instant only the corrugated iron spreading out like scintillating glass, and then it was gone. Explosion then followed explosion almost continuously for four days at least. Sometimes there would be a short interval, but the intervals did not last long.

(f.) We discovered at daylight that another lava-stream had flowed behind our hills towards Craig's Cove. This stream stopped on the plain about 500 yards from the beach. This stream was the biggest of all, being in some parts about three-quarters of a mile wide.

(g.) About 3 p.m. on the 7th a submarine volcano broke out about a mile from the shore off Lamb Point. Soon an island was formed, and within sixteen hours had joined the mainland. After four days the activity of this volcano ceased.

On Tuesday, the 9th December, a geyser suddenly broke out a few hundred yards inland from Craig Point. Water must have been forced to a considerable height, for we were drenched in a mud bath while over 500 yards from the shore. The geyser lasted for probably fifteen minutes or more. Immediately after the geyser ceased a roar like a rushing torrent was heard. Very soon a river extending in width from the trading-station at Craig Point to Malver tore its mad rush to the sea. For half an hour or so there was a great volume of water, which gradually diminished in volume, and apparently in speed. This river ran for at least six hours.

On Sunday, the 7th December, there were six distinct craters in the vicinity of Dip Point, West Ambrym. The whole district was undoubtedly a fairly recent volcanic area. In the valley behind the hospital, as well as at Craig's Cove, outcrops of lava could be seen at various points, and there was little evidence of weathering, the lava in many places appearing rugged, as it does soon after cooling.

Photo courtesy Dr Felix Speiser



# The 100<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

In December 2013, BLACKBIRD INTERNATIONAL in partnership with the community of West Ambrym, are planning to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the volcanic eruption that changed Ambrym's landscape forever. The hospital was not only a refuge for local islanders, it was a central hospital for the region that took patients from many surrounding islands, also housing white missionaries, traders and plantation owners for births, medical assistance, trading or as the missionaries, doctors and nurses.

Whilst the historical account recorded by Dr Bowie suggests a natural event, local custom and history tells of a man-made event, due to local conflict, that destroyed the hospital forever. In the next edition we follow the story told by Chief Willie Bongmatur, passed down to him by his father and grandfather who was the chief of Lonwolwol village at the time of the eruption.

Dip Point was a prime hunting ground for labour recruiters as there was always a guarantee of plenty of recruits hanging around the hospital. Many ship records of the day note *Dip Point* as the recruiting location. It would be true to say that some of those on the ship log, whilst picked up from Dip Point, would have come from another village on Ambrym or an entirely different Island altogether.

Whilst we still have 18 months to prepare, we do need people with a connection to Ambrym, the hospital and the eruption to become involved in the planning, information gathering and celebration in what will be a week-long event, both in Craig Cove, Wakon village, Lake Lonwolwol and Dip Point.

*Black sand beach, Dip Point, during visit to Wakon Village, 2011*

## Sams Bungalows

Imagine stepping off your small aircraft onto the grassy tarmac at Craig Cove Airfield on the volcanic island of Ambrym, Vanuatu. The air is sticky, and its wonderfully warm, the locals all smile and warmly welcome you to their home. You are warmly greeted by the smiling face of local Air Vanuatu agent. This is Sam, the owner of Sam's Bungalows!

Sam and Helena and their family run the unique and welcoming bungalows which are just a short walk from the airport, situated in the village of Enmila on West Ambrym. The beautiful tropical garden setting is quiet and gives you a real village feel.

You are in a rural village and whilst there is no electricity, Sam will run the generator for a few hours each night, although if you take a torch or better still a good solar light you can enjoy a book or just lay back and listen to the blissful quiet.

Just remember to take enough Vatu for your accommodation, and any transport you may need, especially if you are trekking to the Volcano. All money spent here, stays here and you will be making a real contribution to the community.

You may want to take some small snacks although the meals are generous, with freshly baked French loaves every day, yummy peanut butter, fresh fruit and a hot cup of tea or coffee is served for breakfast, and dinner could include lap lap, rice, chicken or fish.

Some basic first aid supplies will be handy too, and if it's been wet some repellent and a mossie net will be ideal. There is a local store in a village close by, and you can also visit the store at the Commercial Centre which stocks most of your basic supplies, including water.

Sam and Helena and the family make you feel like their home is your home, weather you are here to visit the village, swim and snorkel in the beautiful clear waters of Craig Cove or using it as a rest stop on your way to and returning back from the Volcano. It's a place where you can experience village life, relax and go with the Island flow. Nambawan!

## Sam's Bungalows West Ambrym, Vanuatu



## Diving the Hospital

The eruption in 1913 that destroyed the hospital and surrounding buildings left in its place a lake, now filled with a brackish water, a combination of fresh water, acid rain and salt water. *Lake Fanteng* now covers much of the site of the hospital and the old village of Lonwolwol, with the concrete remains of the front steps still visible.

Leading up to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, **Blackbird Adventures** and **Before TIME Productions** will work with the West Ambrym community, in particular Wakon village, to record information about the history of the volcano and the hospital, the eruption and the local custom stories of the cause of the event.

**Blackbird Adventures'** expeditions to West Ambrym over the next 12 months will include visits to Wakon village, Dip Point, Lake Fanteng and to the northern villages of Ranon and Magam and the volcano.

A number of dive expeditions will be conducted on *Lake Fanteng* where concrete remains of the hospital are underwater and to document any structure or object that can be identified. We hope to produce a series of publications that can be used to raise funds for the centenary celebrations in December 2013.

**WHO:** Blackbird Adventures

**WHAT:** 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

**WHEN:** December 2013

**WHERE:** West Ambrym

**DETAILS:** Expeditions run year-round starting at \$2,200 inclusive of all meals, transport, activities and accommodation. Return airfares from Brisbane start at \$550



## ISLAND ROCK CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

By Krishna Nahow

In January I received an email from the Island Rock Christian School Authority Pastor Godwyn Dingley looking for sponsors to help with school stationaries to start off the first Semester as the school will open it's doors on the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

On behalf of Island Rock Christian School, I would like to thank Blackbird team members Sonia, Michael and Pastor Bruno who jumped on board to help us without question and hand delivered stationary bought in Australia to Pastor Godwyn in Santo.

On January 27, 2012 we created the online fundraising campaign:

**HELP ISLAND ROCK SCHOOL RAISE  
A\$220 TO BUY STATIONARY  
BEFORE 13 FEBRUARY 2012.**

Special thanks for a major contribution from a Norfolk Island family who are descendants from the Banks Islands.



Sonia Minniecon & Pastor Godwyn,  
Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu

Although the target of \$220AUD was reached on 8 February the fundraising didn't stop. The Mwotlap community in Port Vila fundraised another 12,800Vatu. This money went towards the purchase of school uniforms. Island Rock Christian School is in constant need of donations and sponsorship. If you think you can help please contact Pastor Godwyn at godwyn\_d@yahoo.com Vewe Nek, Anton Newe,

**Krishna Nahow &  
Pastor Godwyn Dingley**



## Australian South Sea Islander Recognition 2012 - Rockhampton

Rockhampton group *Linking The Generations* (LTG) was formed in 2008 by four individuals: Marsha Corowa, Earl Harbin, Matthew Cooke and Fredreka Bickey. The four realised they all had one unique vision that is to keep the history, culture and knowledge of the Australian South Sea Islanders alive and strong for many more generations to come.

LTG identified that there was a communication and cultural knowledge gap between elders and youth in our different Australian South Sea Islander communities we also noticed the low number of young people actively participating in our Australian South Sea Islander organisations.

Since 2008 Rockhampton has held two Australian South Sea Islander Recognition dinners, both of which were extremely successful in attracting over 800 people for the two events. This year the team coordinating the **Australian South Sea Islander Recognition 2012** are Earl Harbin, Fredreka Bickey, Robbie Mann (Jnr), Trumaine Warcon, Alayias Wallace, Janine Mann, Deborah Warkill, Darren Warkill, Dealonna Bickey and Latoya Harbin. The elders advisors are: Debbie Bickey, Mae Mann & Robert Mann (Snr) and Kim Bickey.

You can follow progress on facebook: Rockhampton Australian South Sea Islander Recognition 2012.

**WHEN: Saturday, 25th August 2012**

**WHERE:** CQ University Community Sports Complex, Yaamba Road, North Rockhampton



The 11<sup>th</sup> Festival of Pacific Arts is a unique opportunity for Solomon Islands to showcase its cultural diversity to the Pacific region and the world. It will be a time of unification and celebration for Solomon Islands, creating much-needed opportunities in the field of arts and culture, and contributing to social and economic progress.

It will be the largest regional event ever hosted in Solomon Islands, with about 2,500 performers, artists and cultural practitioners from 27 countries and territories in the Pacific region, plus thousands of visitors who are keen to see and be part of the festival.

The 27 Pacific Island Countries and Territories expected at the festival are: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Easter Island, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji Islands, French Polynesia, Guam, Hawaii, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu & Wallis and Futuna.

[www.festivalofpacificarts.com](http://www.festivalofpacificarts.com)



The **2011 Moranbah Tropical Golf Challenge** was held in Moranbah on a warm and sunny spring afternoon. We had over 100 players from the community and one Vanuatu visitor who all fronted up in the best tropical attire although we were more than 2 hours from the closest salt water.

Our hosts, the Moranbah Golf Club's captain Noel Busk and club were instrumental in making our day a great success. Blackbird is now supported through BMA's **Matched Giving Program** and is proud to have this support. If you work for BMA and would like to support us through the **Matched Giving Program** contact us today.

**Blackbird Golf Challenges** are being organised throughout Australia and the South Pacific. Mackay, Rockhampton, Brisbane and Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu are next on the cards. Want to host a golf challenge?



# PacificAID

*Situated on the North East Coast of Espiritu Santo, Cape Quiros is a living postcard. Turquoise sea, perfect white sand, lush green untamed rainforest and small villages hidden. As we travel up the coast from Luganville, the capital of Espiritu Santo, cars and buses diminish and are replaced with people walking and picininnis on horseback led by their parents.*

*There are small villages spattered amongst the coastline and rainforest. Up here in this beautiful setting you have to be as resourceful and self-sufficient, as if living on one of the many islands of Vanuatu.*

*We are in this beautiful part of Espiritu Santo to visit the site of one of our PacificAID Projects...*

## Levteucoil Community Haos

**PASTOR CEDRIC** has invited us to visit his community in the hope we can help them raise the necessary funds to enable the community to grow, develop and nurture their young. The primary need for the community is a multi-purpose building that will function as a kindergarten, a church on Sundays and in case of a cyclone or disaster be a centre of refuge.

Our truck, without 4WD or air-conditioning, trundles and pushes its way through the rain-drenched tracks. The windows are down and warm air rushes through the cab. It's hot and sticky and so is the mud that we encounter on the way.

We meander our way through the rainforest, drive past towering ancient bamboo, fruit laden Breadfruit trees and aged and yellowing coconut palms that must be close to their time.

We pass through a stock fence and see some of the healthiest and happy free ranging cattle I have ever seen. They are quite relaxed as we drive by. The cleared block ahead of us is tidy and the grass green and lush. We spot a glorious thatched hut and other buildings at the end of the track. There's a garden behind the kitchen building abundant with all the plants and foods to sustain the community.

We are greeted by a cute little picinnini who is obviously delighted to see her father and just as happy to see visitors. A smaller boy demands his father's attention and will not settle until he is picked up.

This serene picture is the result of hard work and forced relocation following a devastating hurricane that wiped out their village some years ago.

Pastor Cedric (pictured) shows us around his new plot and explains that it takes the picinninis 4 hours to walk to Kindy school at Port Olry with their parents, and as such many do not do the journey. He points to a green patch behind the house, "*this is where the community haos will go*" he says.

His own church is but a few sheets of corrugated iron on local timbers tied together to provide some shelter from both sun and rain. No walls, no floor except "*the grass that god gave them*".

The plan is to build a building that can function as a church on Sundays and be used as a kindy school during the week. Perhaps in time, they can use it for teaching, however most important from a structural point of view is its use in the event of a cyclone or disaster.

We hand over much needed solar lights, some gifts and a Blackbird soccer ball as a thank you for the beautiful kai kai had in the afternoon breeze and head back for the hour journey to Luganville.

We want you, our supporters, to join us to help make Pastor Cedric's dream a reality. You can donate as little as \$100 or join an expedition to Espiritu Santo throughout the year and help build the foundations, make bricks, construct the roof and have an experience of a lifetime.



### SITE

**Levteucoil Village, Cape Quiros, Espiritu Santo,**

### DETAILS

A multi-purpose community building for a kindergarten, school and disaster shelter. Groups of between 8 & 20. From \$2,900 per person including all accommodation, meals, golf, extreme fishing, diving, sailing, spa treatments, paintball, horse riding and local attractions such as Champagne Beach and the Blue Holes & your own **Blackbird Adventures Survival Kit**.

### TARGET

A \$500 minimum fundraising target per person is required on top of expedition costs.

### DONATE

Can't make it? \$100 will buy 1 sheet of iron, 1 bag of cement & 1 solar light.

### CONTACT

[adventures@blackbird.vu](mailto:adventures@blackbird.vu)



# BLACKBIRD

Finding Family Blong Yumi

Blackbird helps to reunite descendants of South  
Sea Islanders sent to farms and plantations in  
Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, New  
Caledonia, Samoa & Peru

WHAT'S YOUR STORIAN?

family@blackbird.vu

famili@blackbird.vu





**Sonia Minniecon with Olfala woman Bernardet, the grand-daughter of an Australian Aboriginal brought to Vanuatu by her 'returned' husband.**

**It is early afternoon on Australia Day 2012** and we're travelling to visit a lady in small village in Espiritu Santo. We drive past the ruins of BP Burns, (named after a great fire that burnt a *Burns Philp* store to the ground) and my mind wanders back to the days of blackbirding.

We enter the village and I feel we've entered a tranquil retreat from the outside world. As we make our way to our journeys end, the local picinninis peak around the corner of houses and from behind the tropical foliage, chickens run across our path, and locals smile politely at us.

Then we are met by a beautiful smiling face of a woman with light skin, loose curly hair and a familiar face, this is the woman I am to meet. She hugs me closely and I can see in her eyes and feel in her embrace that she has a story to tell and it's going to be an emotional one.

We enter the house, it has such a sense of a home, there's an old wooden table in the corner and we all find a place to sit in the cosy room. Her husband joins us, a Ni-van, he is outgoing, friendly and despite of his aged look (from a hard working life), he like his wife has a strong presence.

We all sit down and find our places in this space that is so comforting and homely (I can imagine sitting here with my own parents, uncles, aunts or other elders).

Bruno who has already heard this lovely

She nods and as the afternoon rays of the sun push through the windows and fill the room with half-light, so too the room fills with emotion. She begins.

*"Mi wish mummy blong mi still alive so that I could ask her more about this storian to help trace back Aboriginal family blong mi.*

*I did not record her story or write anything down, now I lose my mother and I have forgotten everything. Mummy blong mi is half. Half blood, half Aboriginal,"* She pauses, clearly emotional.

Then the olfala man speaks, *"Three of my grandfathers were taken for the sugar cane",* he states, *"One went to Fiji, that's who I'm named after, they all came back. There's more too, Aboriginals that came back, to Santo, they have the same mark, same skin, different to ours".*

This has obviously sparked a happy memory, *"Yes and mummy blong mi had long, long hair",* then ends sadly, *"we had to cut it, before she died".* She adds.

She continues her story, *"the oldfala man returned when all islanders were being brought back, this woman, his wife, was a straight woman Aboriginal, she came with him. They returned to Moto Lava".*

They had one boy and one girl, her mother. From Motolava her mother moved to Santo and worked on Copra plantations. *"Years ago, my mother told me and my brother we were half half".* She states again.

***"Mummy blong mi is half.  
Half blood –  
Half ABORIGINAL..."***

*"Now I cry because I didn't find out more and I want to meet the family in Australia, I really want to meet the family".*

Bernadet's Aboriginal grandmother who was bought back to Vanuatu had the name of **Yamaki**. We do not have any further information regarding tribal group in Queensland but hope to find out more information in the coming months.

Many 'recruits' who came to Australia married local Aboriginal women, who, on completion of a contract, would go back with their husband back to their home in the South Pacific. Many Aboriginal women ended up in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and other countries this way. Their descendants, when made aware of their history, are now looking for their families back in Australia.

Blackbird is working with a large number of descendants of Aboriginal heritage who have only just begun to look for these families.

If you believe an Aboriginal member of your family went to the South Pacific and are tracing their history please contact Blackbird's **Finding Family Blong Yumi** team via email [family@blackbird.vu](mailto:family@blackbird.vu) or go to our website [www.blackbird.vu](http://www.blackbird.vu).



# BLACKBIRD SOCCER CHALLENGE

*Generates 2 MILLION Vatu in 10 days*



By Michael Smith

**Saturday night, 4<sup>th</sup> February, Port Vila** and we've flown from Santo straight over the island we've been trying to get to. The winds are now gusting between 50 to 60 knots, and even our bed for the night at *Moorings* doesn't seem immune to the weather.

Not the most comforting knowing we'll be airborne again within 12 hours. Our previous flights cancelled, this was our last chance to get to Ambrym before our own tournament was about to begin... with or without the hosts.

On Ambrym there was no chance of cancelling. Six months in the making, more than 150,000 vatu in prizes and a football championship at stake was not going to be stopped by a little bit of water or wind.

The weather hadn't finished with a new cyclone bearing down somewhere between Espiritu Santo and Ambrym and due smack bang in the middle of the tournament. Seas at 3 meters and wind at 60 plus knots, there was no way our teams from North Ambrym or Melekula would survive the usual transport by boat.

We however, arrived safely with the exceptional flying of local Air Vanuatu pilots and found out as soon as we landed that we were the last flight for four days until the cyclone passed. The Blackbird Soccer Challenge hosts were Craig Cove United FC who went on to take 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the finals.



Our initial disappointment that many teams would not be able to make the tournament was short lived when we got news that they were coming anyway. Across the ash plain, over the volcano and down again! Any way they could.

Anyone who knows Ambrym or knows what a volcano is like will realise it is not for the faint-hearted. Whilst Ambrym locals have lived with Mt Benbow and Mt Marum for hundreds of years, it doesn't make the trip any shorter. Original thoughts of 'taking the tourist route' and she'll be right were not the right sentiment.

11 hours of walking on the ash plain, on the crater's edge, less than two metres wide, with 60-knot winds weren't exactly easy. When asked, some of the old women just said, 'I was scared. So scared on my hands and knees that my husband had to come back and dig holes for my feet to hold on to.'

It's only soccer! Whilst we couldn't understand... we also did. The only injuries happened on the field, and fortunately there weren't many of those. In the end, North Ambrym were able to send both men's and women's teams, some of which made the final and made the trip all the more worth it.





# MAGAM FC

## Women's Champions

Teams from the neighbouring island of Melekula were not able to overcome the fury of the sea and had to sit out the tournament. However with the weather clearing towards the end of the week it didn't stop one boat-load of Melekula kava making the shores of Ambrym to keep the stalls alive.

Monday morning and the time had come for the start of the **2012 Blackbird Soccer Challenge**. Teams start assembling in their club strip from years gone by, getting ready for the parade, the opening and to see each other, some for the first time.

The weather has cleared a little, somewhat eerily, as there was no doubt a cyclone was lurking on the satellite image that had us in the direct path within three days.

The tournament lasted 8 days instead of 6 and was an outstanding success in terms of sport, community and funding raised. 13 men's and 6 women's teams made the tournament and put on a pretty good show of the talent in sport and the potential of the young players.

The men's final match was a showdown between tournament hosts Craig Cove United FC against the very strong Puma FC with Puma winning in extra time with the final score 2-1 and 50,000VT prize money. Craig Cove taking 2<sup>nd</sup> place received 25,000VT.

The community at Craig Cove went to extraordinary lengths to get the field ready. Without line markers, corner posts and other gear they did an exceptional job on making the field last the week.



2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Rangers Football Club

The women's match between Rangers FC and Magam FC, both from North Ambrym went down to the wire with full-time and extra-time scoreless taking these strong women's teams to a 5 shot penalty shootout. Magam won 3-2 taking out the final's match and 20,000VT prize money.

The women from Rangers FC walked 11 hours across the ash plain and volcano as the seas were too rough. It paid off taking 2<sup>nd</sup> place and 10,000 VT. Most challenging was the fact the women's teams played without boots for the entire week.

The presentations after the match ensured every team was rewarded. Each team getting a coveted Blackbird soccer ball with other prize winners including top goal scorer for both men's and women's, fair play team and player of the tournament.

The next **Blackbird Soccer Challenge** on Ambrym is scheduled for December this year. With only 7 months preparation time we would welcome all the support and assistance we can get.

A bigfala thanks must go to Sol Belleair for his generous donation for the tournament.



# ASIA-PACIFIC BEACH SOCCER CHAMPIONS



Photo courtesy John Batilabasi

**Vanuatu's beach soccer squad made history** this month winning the inaugural *Asia-Pacific Beach Soccer Championship* on Queensland's Gold Coast beating the Solomon Islands in a nail-biting final's match.

We caught up with the team heading home after their win. Team Manager Harry Atisson told of the pressure when the game ended 3-3 at the final whistle, forcing the match into extra time and to penalty shootout.

*"We thought we'd won when Robert Yelou scored taking us to 4-3 but the Solomons scored from a late penalty to 4-4."*

A penalty showdown showed Vanuatu's accuracy for all four shots inside the net.

The game was won when the Solomon Islands last shot missed the mark making history for the Vanuatu squad.

*"We have played Solomon Islands in the Oceania Football Confederation finals three times, losing to them every time, so this win was very big for us."*

The Vanuatu squad has played the OFC tournament a number of times but were disappointed last year when a cyclone stopped them boarding a plane for Tahiti.

The squad will return again next year for the Asia-Pacific competition and looking forward to the *OFC Beach Soccer Championship* in Tahiti.

**vanuafoot.vu**  
OFFICIAL SITE OF VANUATU FOOTBALL FEDERATION



Aspiring talent Kimiah Alberts hopes to raise awareness and support for Women's soccer.



Soccer mad 23 year old Kimiah Alberts has put up her hand for the **Blackbird Soccer Challenge** later this year and hoping to attract support from fellow players for soccer boots, funding and support and maybe more women players to join her.

Having played soccer for various teams in Queensland and the ACT, highlights include playing in Los Angeles against university teams and captaining an Indigenous team against Canberra politicians last year.

Kimiah is hoping to play in the Espiritu Santo challenge prior to gearing up for *A-League Trials* at the end of the year that will exclude her from playing in the Ambrym tournament.

Ultimate goals include playing for Australian women's team *Matildas* and would love to play in the Olympics and World Cup Competitions.

Kimiah's family is descendant from East Ambae, Espiritu Santo, Tanna and the Solomon Islands as well as being of Australian Aboriginal heritage.

Favorite teams include Canberra United (Women's), Brisbane Roar, Liverpool and Manchester United. Favorite player is Brazilian superstar Ronaldinho.

If you also want to get involved in women's soccer, hold a fundraising night, collect unused soccer boots or put your name down to play, contact [info@blackbird.vu](mailto:info@blackbird.vu).



2012 Blackbird Soccer Challenge champions signed match ball.



Rising talent, Craig Cove's Silva Worwor is skillful mid-field & excellent with the long-range shot.



**TITLE:** BLACKBIRD Soccer Challenge

**NAME:** 2012 Men's Final

**COUNTRY:** Vanuatu

**GENRE:** Full Game Highlights

**WRAP:** The Blackbird Soccer Challenge was an 8-day extravaganza of soccer, community spirit and determination. 13 men's and 6 women's teams played through cyclonic winds, hot sunny days and pouring rain to achieve one goal - to get to the finals.

Having to cross the ash plain and volcano summit just to get to the tournament was one thing... getting to the women's final match, barefooted was another.

Various DVD productions are available include the full Men's and Women's Final matches, a one hour documentary and promotional videos. From only \$10!

Email: [family@blackbird.vu](mailto:family@blackbird.vu)



# BLACKBIRD SOCCER CHALLENGE

Sports, Arts & Cultural Festivals



The Blackbird Soccer Challenge was so successful that we are expanding the event to become annual sports, arts and cultural festivals with soccer as the central sport. Future events will include volleyball, boxing, canoe races, Island dress competitions, arts and cultural events, string bands, kai kai and kava stalls and a bareback horse race.

Planned events are Craig Cove, West Ambrym in December, Port Olry, Espiritu Santo in August and North Ambrym early next year. Other requests have been received from throughout Vanuatu and also the Solomon Islands so if you are soccer mad, love a good experience or have the travel bug and can volunteer your time, resources or expertise please let us know.

We are accepting donations of goods and sponsorship at any time to assist in the preparations of the tournament. The locals would love to see spectators from Australia visit and see their wonderful island, enjoy the events and even climb the volcano.

We are taking nominations from interested players and teams that want to go to our tournaments and already have 2 boy's teams from Australia getting ready to fundraise and train. Places for teams and individuals are limited so get in touch with us as soon as possible if you want to secure a place.

## WHAT

Blackbird Soccer Challenge,  
Sports, Arts & Culture Festival

## EVENTS

Soccer, volleyball, canoe race, Island dress competition, boxing, kai kai & kava stalls, arts and cultural events, string band and much more.

## WHEN WHERE WHO

Early December each year  
Craig Cove, West Ambrym  
Men & women, under 16 boys & girls, stall volunteers, officials, players, spectators and visitors.

## JOIN US

Contact Blackbird Adventures to get you and your gear there. Fly to Port Vila or Santo and we'll get you to Ambrym by ship or plane.

## DONATE

Can't join us? Donate soccer boots, shin guards, equipment, volleyball gear, sewing machines, sponsor a team jersey, water bottles, hold a fundraiser or sell some raffle tickets for us.

## CONTACT

[adventures@blackbird.vu](mailto:adventures@blackbird.vu)

## GEAR WANTED

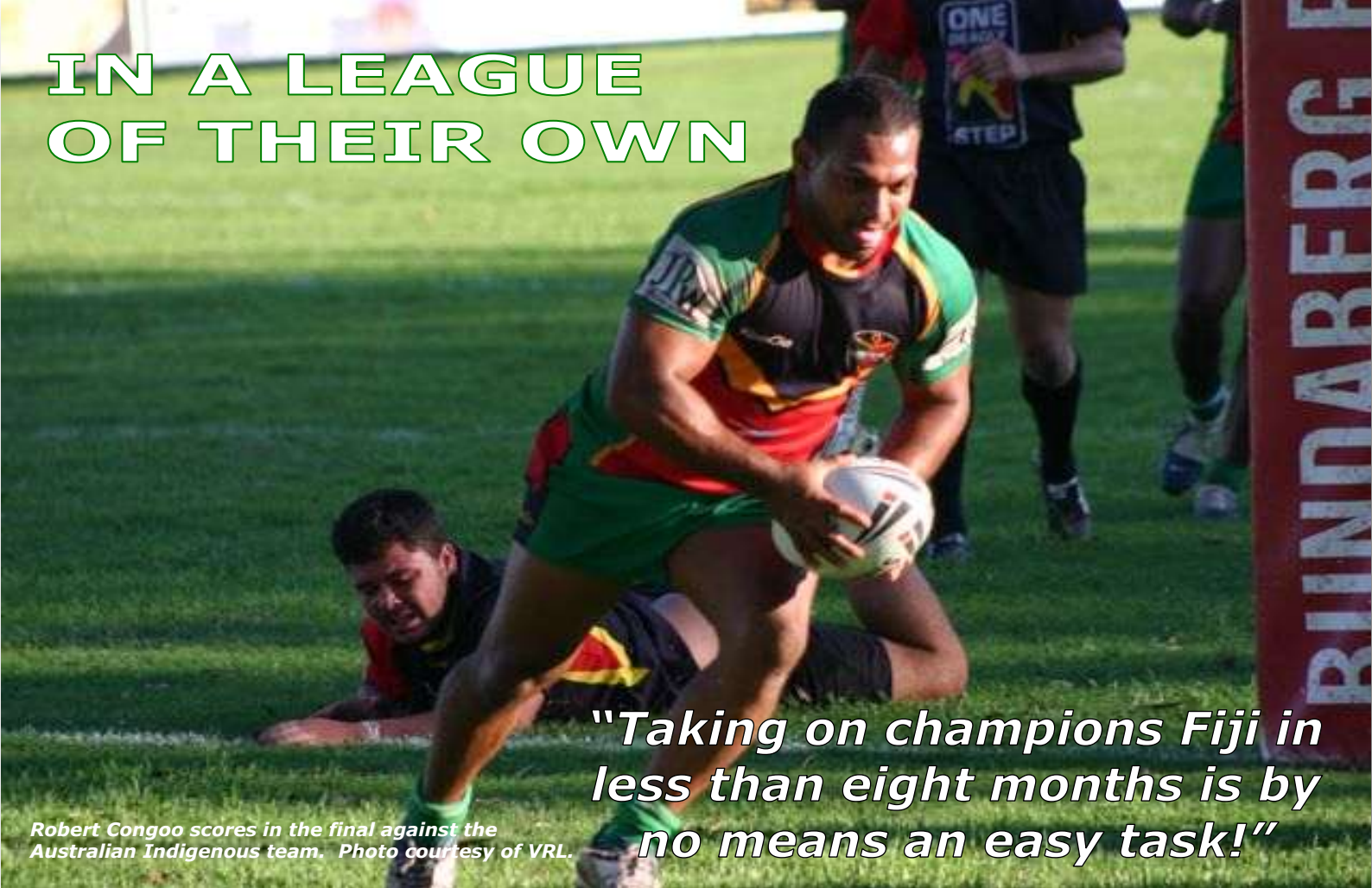
Soccer boots  
Shin pads and socks  
Line markers  
Soccer nets  
Volleyball nets  
Sewing machines  
Whistles, flags  
Stopwatches

## SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Prize Money  
Team Jerseys  
Referee Jerseys  
Water bottles  
Raffle Prizes  
Supporter Merchandise  
Event Sponsors  
Stall Sponsors



# IN A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN



Robert Congoo scores in the final against the Australian Indigenous team. Photo courtesy of VRL.

*"Taking on champions Fiji in less than eight months is by no means an easy task!"*

**IT TAKES A BRAVE EFFORT TO introduce a new sport in a country dominated by the 'other football' but a determined group of individuals have set their eyes on a much bigger prize.**

Not only are they establishing Vanuatu's first ever domestic rugby league competition, they plan on going head to head with Pacific neighbours **Fiji Bati** in under eight months in front of a Port Vila home crowd.

Dominated by the round ball, Vanuatu has a long history in the Pacific sporting arena through soccer and more recently with the success of the women's beach volleyball team defeating the Aussie girls at their own.

Blackbird's soccer challenge on Ambrym saw the lengths that teams, families and villages go through to be part of something exciting and the role sport plays in their lives.

**Vanuatu Rugby League** founder Dane Campbell, who has previous involvement with the game in Fiji, PNG, Hawaii and Jamaica, can't understand why Vanuatu isn't involved in rugby league given it's proximity to Australia and with the number of South Sea Islanders playing the game in Australia.

NRL greats like Mal Meninga and Rhys Wesser are two examples of ASSI talent that has been seen in Australian NRL with a hundred players following in their footsteps.

Taking on champions **Fiji Bati** in less than eight months is by no means an easy task. Without a domestic competition there is a lack of equipment, coaches and match officials, let alone players with game experience for such a battle.

The VRL established an interim steering committee and has already run a development clinic with 40 players in December last year.

Plans are in place to commence Level 1 Coaching and Match Official training in Vanuatu throughout April, yet this will only provide the foundations of professionalism to local matches and the development of the teams, not provide an internationally competitive side in less than eight months time.

VRL's aim to introduce league to the Vanuatu Nation will put them on the field with strong Pacific Island teams including Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Cook Islands, Tonga and Samoa with the hope of getting to the Pacific Cup, Four Nations tournaments and perhaps open up opportunities for Ni-Vanuatu players to enter the Australian NRL scene.

Six teams have already showed interest in the local competition expected to kick off in June and it seems they won't be alone.

The VRL are on the hunt for eligible players to form the national side with Australian and Fijian South Sea Islanders tracing their heritage to Vanuatu firmly in their sights.

Under rugby league international rules, a Vanuatu team may field players with Vanuatu heritage outside the country as long as certain criteria are met.

To be eligible to represent Vanuatu in international competition players need to have been born in Vanuatu, have one of their biological parents or grandparents born in Vanuatu or have been residing there permanently for more than 3 years.

Most South Sea Islanders with Ni-Vanuatu decent reside in Australia and Fiji as a result of the former recruiting days and as such many are third and fourth generation descendants, not the second-generation limit required under international rules.

The VRL has stated they will be eligible through agreement between the VRL and the international rugby league governing body.





Vanuatu Rugby League founder Dane Campbell (left) with local player Kunro Kalo and Sandy Morango from Tongoa.



Having access to talented Australian players will provide an opportunity for a Vanuatu National team to step on the field with significant depth.

Whilst this is all going on, it is the lead-up that is getting everyone pumped. September will see Mackay play host to a South Sea Islander Rugby League carnival where teams are expected from throughout Australia.

The big news is that scouts will be there to find new talent, perhaps for the **Vanuatu-Australian** team that will go head to head against the new **Vanuatu Resident's** team in October in Vanuatu's capital Port Vila and for the Super 9's competitions in Australia.

The even bigger news is that selectors will have the task of choosing a Vanuatu National squad from between the two sides for a week-long training and promotional camp in the lead-up to a proposed match against Fiji on the 27<sup>th</sup> October in Port Vila.

If you are a South Sea Islander with Vanuatu heritage in Australia, Fiji or other country and can provide evidence through birth certificate, residency or family history please contact the VRL and put your name down on the database of eligible players.

If you want assistance on tracing your family history or connecting with your Vanuatu heritage you can contact Blackbird's *Finding Family Blong Yumi* program via **family@blackbird.vu**.

### Key Dates

Get yourself to Mackay, Queensland, Australia in September for the South Sea Islander carnival to kick it all off. October is the month to get out the passport and watch a new era in Vanuatu sport.

Stay for a few weeks and see the Vanuatu International side take on Fiji Bati in Vanuatu's capital Port Vila. Air Vanuatu and Virgin Australia fly directly into Port Vila. Just ask **Blackbird Adventures** to get you there and be part of the front row action, unless you bring your boots!

### Get Involved

Players, sponsors, supporters or administrators that would like to assist or would just like to offer moral support contact the VRL via email or Facebook. Type in 'Vanuatu Rugby League'

### Register

If you're a South Sea Islander league player with Vanuatu heritage in Australia or Fiji you should register with the Vanuatu Rugby League by contacting them via:  
**Email: vanuaturugbyleague@gmail.com**



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# BLACK™

## Feather

### Wine Selection

Enjoy our very special series of BLACK FEATHER™ collector-edition wines from leading Australian and New Zealand vineyards. Profits from each bottle contribute funds directly to Blackbird projects in Australia and the South Pacific. Enjoy responsibly knowing you have helped Blackbird find another family, send another child to school, build another community building or host another event. Email [info@blackbird.vu](mailto:info@blackbird.vu) for your order form or go to [www.blackbird.vu](http://www.blackbird.vu) to order online.



#### 'The Return'

##### 2009 Cabernet Merlot

Mornington Peninsula

This is a magnificent blend with aromas of sweet blackcurrant fruit. It has generous earthy characters with hints of blackberry and white pepper. A medium to full bodied style with a smooth soft oak finish.

**Price \$13**



#### 'Before Time'

##### 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon

Coonawarra

This wine is a great example of Coonawarra. It has deep rich colour, with intense blackcurrant aroma and flavours, showing hints of ripe berry fruits, along with a good dollop of mouth filling oak to back it up.

**Price \$14**



#### 'The Trader'

##### 2010 Reserve Shiraz

McLaren Vale

Grown on the limestone slopes of McLaren Vale. Typical varietal spice and ripe red fruits enhanced by fine oak tannins. Smooth well balanced and a great food wine. Too good and well priced to put in the cellar...

**Price \$16**



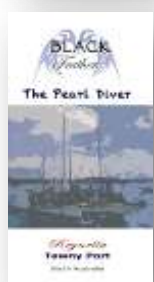
#### 'Private Island'

##### 2011 Sauvignon Blanc

Marlborough, NZ

Bright, energetic and alive! This wine has all the aromas you expect from a classy Marlborough with a delightful balance of cut grass and fresh tropical fruit. It has delicate berry flavours and a crisp well balanced dry finish.

**Price \$14**



#### 'The Pearl Diver'

##### Tawny Port

Reynella

This tawny port was produced from a blend of premium grapes grown around the Reynella region of South Australia and aged in oak for an average age of 5 years to produce a superb rich style. A beautiful drop in time for winter.

**Price \$14**



#### 'Crystal'

##### 2010 Chardonnay

Mornington Peninsula

**Price \$14**

The grapes for this wine are sourced mainly from the Red Hill area of Mornington Peninsula. It has a delicate perfumed bouquet, with hints of fresh fruit and light oak. An elegant well balanced wine with a persistent fine palate, generous flavours and integrated subtle nutty oak.



#### 'Two Fish'

##### Sparkling Pinot Noir Brut

King Valley, Victoria

**Price \$15**

Made from fruit grown in the King Valley cool climate region of northern Victoria, this sparkling is delicate and smooth with a creamy long lasting bubble and a dry finish. Celebrate your special occasion.







### Tropical Duo of Fresh Local Lobster & Santo Beef accompanied with a fragrant Curry Sauce (Serves 4)

#### Ingredients

2 whole fresh Santo Lobster (approximately 6-700gm each)  
4 x 120grm Santo Eye Fillet  
2 medium brown onions (chopped finely)  
4 cloves of garlic (chopped finely)  
3 cups of fresh coconut cream (grated fresh coconut boiled in cream and strained) (also available in cans if fresh coconut unavailable)  
3 teaspoons of Korma curry paste  
2 cups of fresh pineapple juice  
1 cup of cooking cream  
Salt and Pepper to taste  
Pure Virgin coconut oil (40ml)

#### Sauce Method

Sautee onion, garlic and curry paste in virgin coconut oil until onions are transparent. Add coconut cream, pineapple juice and cream and cook until this starts to thicken. Then season with salt and pepper to taste.

#### Method

Portion and prepare beef to desired liking. Remove tail only from Lobster and cut lengthways in half. Grill flesh side down in frying pan (about 4-6 minutes) then finish in oven (5-7 minutes).

In this dish I have served steamed Jasmine rice with Santo market green beans and carrot (julienned)

Garnish with toasted coconut, serve with **Black Feather** Sauvignon Blanc or Reserve Shiraz

Cameron Feldman, Chef  
**Moyyan – House by the Sea**  
**Espiritu Santo, Vanuatu**

# KAI KAI COMPETITION

Send in your NAMBAWAN South Pacific recipe for the chance to win a beautiful set of steak knives (RRP \$129) from TABLE DIRECT, exclusive importer & distributor to Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific Islands. Top 4 recipes will be chosen, cooked & judged by Blackbird special guests & go into future editions of Storian Blong Yumi & the Blackbird Cook Book later in 2012.

table direct



### Helena's Salad Fish (Poulet)

#### Ingredients

About 500g of white fish  
Enough lime juice to cover fish  
A quarter of an onion  
A clove of garlic  
Fresh coconut milk

#### Method

Slice the fish and put it in a bowl. Cover with lime juice and leave to sit until it turns white. Squeeze handfuls of the fish over another bowl removing excess juice leaving a small amount in the bottom of the bowl. Add onion, garlic and season with salt. Squeeze over fresh coconut milk.

Serve with steaming rice. You can also add fresh chilli, julienned carrots, capsicum and shallots.

Helena David, Host & Co-Owner  
**Sam's Bungalows**  
**West Ambrym, Vanuatu**



### Kai Kai Long Santo

The best place to enjoy fresh kai kai as well as spend time with the locals and enjoy the views to Aore Island is to visit the kai kai markets at the end of Unity Park on the waters edge in Luganville.

Our favourite stall is easy for you to find, it's the last store in the blue buildings.

Serving up fresh, tasty and very filling meals, you'll have a choice of bullock, fish, egg or chicken cooked in a tasty sauce with vegetables, on a bed of freshly cooked steaming rice. All this for around \$4 (AUD) for a gloriously mouth-watering meal, a cold drink and you'll feel like you're sitting in the kitchen of a close friend or family.

Don't forget to send in your ultimate South Pacific recipe to be cooked by great chefs at some great places, have the chance to join the long table dinner or win our great prizes each edition thanks to Table Direct.



# Your Turn!

## OPPORTUNITIES

Blackbird International has a number of opportunities available in Australia and throughout the South Pacific. The majority are volunteer engagements with the opportunity to gain experience in your field, turn it into a paid position and get involved in worthwhile projects.

- ✎ **Adventurers & Expedition Leaders**
- ✎ **Documentary makers**
- ✎ **Camera operators (trainees)**
- ✎ **Web developers & graphic artists**
- ✎ **Researchers & genealogists**
- ✎ **Shipwrights & boat-builders**
- ✎ **Sailors, divers, archaeologists**
- ✎ **Fundraisers & raffle ticket sellers**
- ✎ **Event volunteers, officials**
- ✎ **PacificAID professionals in health, construction and business**



Interested parties should contact Blackbird for further information on relevant positions or to submit an expression of interest.

Email: [info@blackbird.vu](mailto:info@blackbird.vu)

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## ADVERTISING

**Blackbird's Storian Blong Yumi** is now read throughout Australia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and New Caledonia. Get your resort, business or idea out in the Pacific.

Our magazine is both electronic and printed and will soon be available by subscription internationally.

Advertising packages available include this mag, our other publications, websites and events. Want to get maximum exposure? Contact:

**Editor** Michael Smith  
**Email** [michael@blackbird.vu](mailto:michael@blackbird.vu)

## Storian Magazine

Blackbird needs more photojournalists, photographers and writers for regular articles for our magazine.

- ✎ **Photojournalists & photographers**
- ✎ **Guest and regular contributors in music, entertainment, fashion, food, before time, environment, community development, arts, culture, tourism, travel, sports, adventures and events.**
- ✎ **Indigenous cultures of the South Pacific including Australian Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders, Polynesians, Melanesians and Micronesians...**

Interested parties should contact Blackbird:

Email: [info@blackbird.vu](mailto:info@blackbird.vu)

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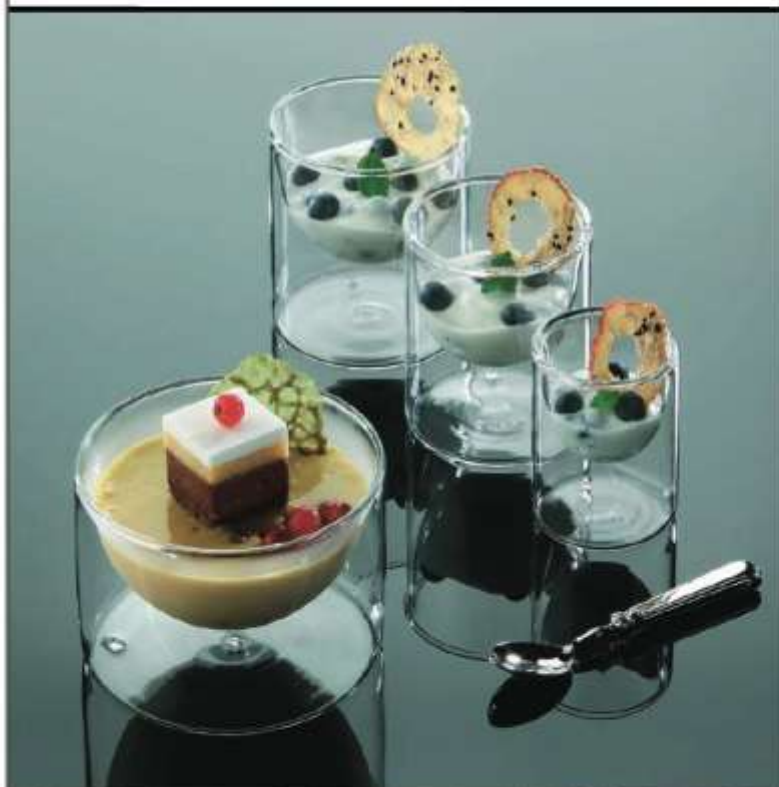


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