

A "Tough Life" in the Bay of Islands. March 2010.

Roger and Ruth Pennock

When we received the invitation for RSrNYC members to join the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron on a cruise of the Bay of Islands, we thought it would be an ideal excuse to visit the southern hemisphere and to sail in one of the most beautiful parts of the world.

There were 11 yachts in total with crews from Canada, Australia, Norway, New Zealand and GB. We were accompanied on the cruise by 16 international sailors on the beautiful tall ship, "Soren Larsen", which featured in the Onedin Line and served as the mother ship for the flotilla.

We joined Angus and Annette Newton and Maggie Widdop on an Elan 43.4 called "Tough Life". Other club members flying the RSrNYC pennant were Bill and Anita Perrin and George and Pat Lines.

The boats were boarded in Opuia and after a short sail we anchored at Russell to be welcomed by a traditional Maori greeting and a Hangi dinner at the Russell Boating Club.

During the next few days we discovered magical sandy coves, dramatic headlands and tranquil lagoons. The hills and beaches provided excellent walks with stunning views. There was an abundance of beautiful anchorages on unpronounceable islands as they are still known by their Maori names. We were privileged to visit several private homes and gardens of local residents who gave interesting talks on the history of the area and the arrival of Captain Cook.

Mid way through the week we visited the Waitangi Treaty grounds, the site of the historical agreement, signed in 1840, between the British government and the Maori tribes. This stop enabled thirsty and hungry crews to replenish stores at one of the few shops in the Bay of Islands.

We were fortunate with the weather throughout with clear blue skies, good sailing winds and warmish water for the few who braved the Pacific. Those who visited Rangihoua Bay were not only treated to superb views but were then lucky enough to watch a brown kiwi feeding close to the beach.

On the final evening there was a supper on Robertson Island with fresh oysters, mussels and a hog roast supper, where each crew provided a short sketch. This demonstrated the diversity of the crews and provided a light hearted ending to an extremely successful and enjoyable cruise.