

**Mr Pip back in town**

This last week and most of the previous one have been frantic for Rosie with a crew from the soon-to-be-released Mr Pip movie arriving in two vehicles, the first late Friday afternoon and the second quite late on Saturday evening. They have come to fill in some sound gaps they had, armed with microphones, recorders and computers and an ever-changing list of tasks to do. Those on the Saturday evening trip received a bit of a fright when the vehicle was stopped and surrounded by 30 plainly quite hostile men half way to Arawa. Fortunately the hostility was not directed towards the crew, but the driver had to do some listening and fast-talking before they were allowed to proceed – apparently it was all about another unresolved dispute for which the driver was expected to be a messenger.

Anyway Rosemary had been roped into helping to organise the trip from the Arawa end, on the strength of the assistance she provided when they were last here, and had been fielding phone-calls and emails for weeks preceding the trip rising to a crescendo in the final week with plans made and changed- and then changed again – and then changed back to the original – and often changed again- at the last minute! Talk about adrenalin fuelled artistic temperament! Anyway she can tell you more about her adventures herself.



*Singers in the choir for the Mr Pip movie*

**Oxfam and WASH and Arawa Urban Council Business**

For my part I has been continuing to sort out problems with and refining Oxfam's 15 odd WASH (water and sanitation hygiene) projects in the area. My major problem with getting extra fittings from Lae have hopefully been resolved with Pauline travelling down from Goroka on Monday to Plumtrade where she will stand with the salesman, select the items from my lists, tick them off and pack them in boxes ready for despatch. A couple of the boxes will be air-freighted to give us a head start, while the others are sea freighted to the local port, Kieta. So I might even see a few of the systems completed and fully operational before we leave in only SEVEN weeks time- something I had been hoping to do to make sure the field crew understood completely what has to be done.

On the Arawa Urban Council scene I have managed to steer the crate of fire hydrant valves through customs in Lae at somewhat less cost than I had anticipated, with the kind assistance of agents Freight Express, and it should

shortly be en route to Kieta. So the Arawa plumbing crew should soon be able to start dealing with some of the worse leaks in the town's water mains.

Another problem I am having is that Plumtrade sent the wrong hydrant standpipe to fit the valves, despite my clearly specifying it and sending a photo downloaded from the internet- now they refuse to do anything about it, and I keep getting referred to "Bill" who is never in when I call and who never returns my phone calls. I am beginning to suspect that he doesn't really exist and the hope is that I will get tired of hassling them and the problem will go away!



*Orchid? The leaves seem wrong....*

Unfortunately for them I now have Pauline on the case in Lae and hopefully she can put a flea in someone's ear and get some action!

### **New Volunteers**

We have just welcomed four new VSA volunteers to Arawa; Gerard on a three month assignment with World Vision in helping set up business ventures; Libby for a year to help a local NGO: and David and Pam of teaching backgrounds to help with teaching at the local schools. They are here for two years. It's interesting to watch them having to come to terms with the weather, shops, food in market, etc. and reminds me of when we first arrived nearly two years ago! Rather them than us!

Gerard has moved in across the road where Virginia was and has already been roped in to make up the Bridge foursome. He's bravely stepping in where some angels fear to tread, but seems to be enjoying the experience so far and says he wants to keep going! Another potential convert – hallelujah!

### **Sorcery**

One of the sadder and darker sides of Bougainville unfortunately reared its head again in Arawa this last week. A local man died last weekend. Another was reportedly seen picking up pieces of off-cuts of wood from his coffin while it was being made and was apparently considered to have behaved somewhat strangely at the funeral. A few days later he sought protective custody with the local police and was locked in a cell for his own safety- he had learnt that he was being accused of sorcery and the deceased's "wantok" were after his blood.

A group of men later rolled up at the police station demanding he be released to them. The police refused and they left- to return a while later heavily armed with assault rifles to reinforce their demands. The unarmed local police were not in a position to stop them. The men shot out the lock of the cell and dragged the man away. The three NZ police on training and support roles at

the station witnessed it all and would have found the whole exercise pretty traumatic, especially as they were unable to do anything to prevent this man being hauled away to an almost certain death- which we understand was his fate.

The armed men then sought out the alleged sorcerer's family in his village, leaving the father barely alive with three bullet holes in him; his sister injured but hiding in the jungle to which she had managed to escape; and his three brothers in hiding, reportedly also armed.

The ambulance despatched to attend to the injured was turned back. No-one else dares provide any help for fear of being implicated in the sorcery, so the old man and sister are on their own- either dead or likely to end up that way. The three brothers also face an uncertain future and probably can never return home –if they manage to escape the district and find refuge somewhere.

Meanwhile the rest of the community and police have to ignore the whole proceedings, helpless in the face of being implicated in the sorcery by showing sympathy or support, and a heavily armed group of angry men on a witch-hunt.

Before getting too hot under the collar with righteous anger, it's probably well to be reminded that, for those of us with a European heritage, it wasn't that many generations ago that our ancestors were burning witches at the stake and performing a whole range of other equally barbarous acts for similar reasons!

Nevertheless I find it sad that these sorts of things still happening in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially in a country where Christianity feature so strongly. The old dark ways seem to still be lurking not too far down there among some in the community!

### **Barbara**

Our friend Ludwig (of bridge playing fame) was fortunate to have his wife Barbara visit him from the States for a week. She is clearly a woman of many talents- including having been a concert pianist in her youth, a professional singer in the sixties (Barbara Lamont) broadcaster, and she is still running her own business when many people are happy to put up their feet and play with their grandchildren! She speaks a multiplicity of languages and on the strength of her genes says she



*Ludwig and Barbara*

expects to live to 110+! I believe her! There is not that much difference in years between her and her husband but she sure carries her years well. Arawa was a new experience for her but she seemed to have coped very well with the adversities, which I suppose is hardly surprising! After all she has had to cope with Ludwig flitting all over the world most days of the year, attending

to his various business interests, from Lesotho to Rumania, Sri Lanka and a whole lot more. Ludwig too shows no signs of slowing down!

### At the Market



This is a picture of a middle-aged (?- she looks it!) local woman bringing in her bags of kaukau (sweet potato) from her village to sell at the Arawa market. She may well have walked an hour or more with at least 40kg on her back.

Below are smoked fish and frozen flavoured ice blocks for sale and Dave with a little boy (photo Tim Prebble)



Take care!

Dave