

I know now how dogs came to be associated with humans! It's puppies! After the debacle with Girl and Sniper earlier in the year (Dog Tucker Sept 2011) we had vowed not to have anything more to do with dogs in Arawa.

Unfortunately the neighbours had a litter of puppies that never quite seemed to have enough food and they set off foraging in the neighbourhood. It is amazing how a hungry scrawny pooch with tufts of hair, waggy tail and cheeky disposition can wheedle its ways into a person's affection. You know how it goes – poor starving cute little thing – we have some scraps – giving them will help relieve its misery and can't do any harm – the next thing it's



smiling and wagging its tail outside your door (inside if given half a chance) and expecting to be fed a couple of times a day! Unfortunately it's going to be on its own from April when we leave – but I suppose we can help give him a reasonable start on life without doing too much harm!

Wash Programme in Poma

This week I went to the village of Poma inland from Arawa, which is preparing to install a water scheme with the assistance of Oxfam. With all the recent turmoils and staff changes we are again without a design and I went wandering the scheme with a hand held GPS unit taking measurements and noting salient features.

As with many of the other villages perched on the sides of steel hills static water pressures at the bottom end of the scheme are the major problem, especially as we are trying to avoid using special valves that require maintenance – chances are when they fail the entire scheme will fail too.

Unfortunately construction had been delayed by a sorcery suspicion that apparently had split the village – someone had died and the suspicion arose that someone with a grudge had cast an evil spell on him. The usual technique to find who is to blame is to station observers around the village and watch the actions of fireflies – if they are unusually interested in a particular house then that is deemed where the culprit is, and anyone inside would be lucky to get away with their life. It seems like the death and accusations had split the village and Oxfam was advised to steer clear of the village until the dust settled. That is now the case but someone during the dispute, in an act of spite, slashed the two 9000L polypropylene storage tanks that would form the basis of the scheme and they are a write-off. I can't see Oxfam and the EU financiers being too keen on replacing them without at least a sizeable contribution from the villagers, so we will see what develops.

Poma has a small hydroelectric power scheme to supply the village with plastic coated cables draped between trees to bring the power to various

houses in the village. At one point the cable drapes quite low over a footpath – about neck level. The cable had been cut (during the dispute?) and repaired – a simple reef knot with the exposed ends of the individual cables twisted together – directly over the path exactly in the position to catch an unwary walker in the face or chest! This seems to typify a common approach to risk in this part of the world – no doubt it would be the sorcery of another poor individual should someone stumble into the wires one dark evening and get electrocuted!

Coleus

Karikira village had a good selection of orchids – Poma had some quite spectacular coleus, some of which feature below.



Living Bridge

Another feature of the path up to Poma is the “Living Bridge” - a fig tree has spread itself over a river with a series of horizontal roots between the various stems on the banks and island, all at a reasonable convenient height for use as a bridge by travellers!



Living bridge- end on (L) and side on (R)

The area around the bridge has a distinctly “Lord of the Rings” feel about it and one half expects to see a hobbit or goblin scuttling off into the undergrowth!

Martyr’s Grave



Theodore Mirinung’s grave



Path to living bridge under fig tree

Also in the area is the grave of Theodore Mirinung, a hero and martyr of the Crisis. He was a trained lawyer and adviser to Francis Ono, the leader of the rebellion against the Panguna mine operations and subsequent war with PNG forces. He was deeply involved in developing a constitution for an independent Bougainville that I believe forms the basis of the present

constitution and was Premier of the interim government set up towards the end of the Crisis. He came from the Poma area and he and his family were visiting their village when PNG soldiers with some Bougainvilleans burst into their evening meal and shot him dead in cold blood in front of his family.

Apparently a local who was part of the pre-crisis administration had been given money by the PNG government to try to broker peace early in the Crisis. The Bougainville Resistance Army had captured and executed him and Mirinung had been implicated. The Bougainvilleans involved in Mirinung's murder with the PNG forces were apparently relatives of the earlier murder victim who had been harbouring a grudge for the duration of the Crisis and had seized upon the opportunity to take revenge..... Civil wars are very messy.

Mountain Refuge

One of my work colleagues grew up in the area and showed me the bush-covered hillside where he had fled with his parents and siblings to avoid the marauding PNG soldiers during the crisis. They had to stay there for seven years, living off their gardens and whatever they could catch in the bush.



Wilson's mountainside refuge (centre, background)

X-ray Vision

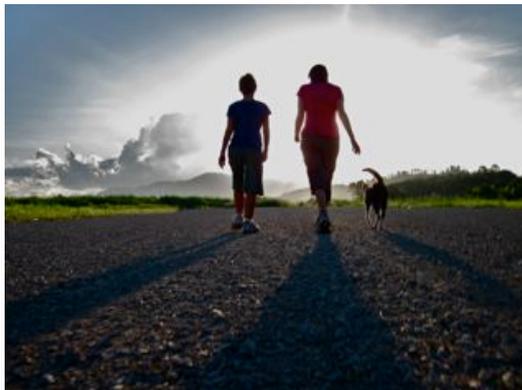
Rosie is continuing faithfully to see if she can help Arawa health centre get x-ray facilities established. She has sent feelers out all around New Zealand for redundant equipment that can be transported in the container with the materials for the Arawa library that will be leaving for Arawa in the next month or so. Most establishments in NZ have been upgrading to digital technology and the hope is old perfectly good film based units will be available for use in places like Arawa. It seems like she is not alone in this hope and it has proved frustrating how several of the organisations approached have not seen fit to respond to her request- presumably they are finding themselves inundated with such requests!

So if you have a spare smallish x-ray unit or desktop film processor- she would be very keen to hear from you!

Virginia

Finally a short tribute to one of our fellow volunteers – an accountant who came out to Arawa for a year to help Arawa Urban Council sort out its accounts. The Council is very pleased with the new reports and systems, and Thomas, who is responsible for the Council's finances, has enthusiastically absorbed every bit of learning he possibly could. Virginia has also helped with the finances of other organisations in Arawa, including Oxfam and the Urban Council in Buka – in fact she is coming back to Buka for an additional three months to complete the work there, after a short break back in New Zealand.

She has been living in the house across the street from us and has shared our lives quite closely for the best part of a year, sharing meals, early morning walks, learning and playing bridge (she is quite a fan now!), and other adventures. In situations like this one tends to get to know such people much more so than if living across the street in Auckland. She's a hard case and has giving me a hard time (and receive in like from me!). We will miss her! Goodbye and good luck Virginia!



P.S. This posting started with a creature inveigling its way into our affections – and it looks it ended the same way! :->)