

Aboard Sengo

November 2014



An eventful month

November has been an eventful month; full of occurrences that I would have preferred not to have happen but which have provided us with unexpected experiences and opportunities to learn and fix up some unexpected minor issues.

Port Jackson

A well-intentioned detour results in several days out of the water...

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Botany Bay

We came for one night and left five days later.....

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Port Hacking

Short but sweet stop over. May be back but we have limited options to explore..

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Port Jackson 1st-22nd November 2014

1st November 2014 – Saturday. It started off as a beautiful morning sail and the thought crossed my mind ‘I now know why people love sailing the harbour of Sydney’. However getting towards lunchtime when all the club racers came out for their practice runs, the big maxis came out to drill their crews, and the weekend mix of power boats, ferries, racing yachts and just about anything else you can name (no tankers, fortunately) surrounded us, I started to change my mind. None-the-less, we continued and sailed under Sydney Harbour Bridge before dropping our sails and motoring on to the marina we were booked in to. The weather was getting unpleasant and the gusts becoming quite strong and unpredictable - and one particular exceptional gust was of no help at all getting into the pen!

6th November 2014 – Manly. Lazy Day. Read a little, baked a little (muffins), cleaned a little and watched the world pass us by. Yesterday, having been moored at Athol Bay (great view to the Bridge) we went ashore and walked through ‘Angophora Walk’ to Bradleys Point (passing the HMAS Sydney Memorial (for all the navy ships that have been named HMAS Sydney) and the plaques commemorating the loss of other ships though battle)) before proceeding a little further toward Chowder Head. We didn’t quite get there before we turned back to historic Athol Hall for lunch. www.atholhall.com.au

Athol Hall is a fantastic spot with a great view (and the salad was divine). They do New Year’s Eve here (The restaurant has its own event or you can pay \$30 to the parks service to pick a spot on the lawn. Both have views across to the Harbour Bridge).

November 4th was interesting. I’d forgotten it was Melbourne Cup Day until a mobile venue barge-with a marquee, toilets (and a pool!)-arrived and anchored nearby. It was a warm day and I headed downstairs for a short afternoon snooze. When I got up (less than an hour later) it was as if we’d been burleying for sharks. All five moorings were taken and around 20 other boats were anchored as well. These consisted a small trailer sailor, several chartered catamarans, and some very nice (and very, very expensive) luxury super yachts. Most were gone by sunset. ‘Seems the race that stops a nation is a good excuse for a day on the harbour....and Athol Bay is clearly the place to be.



15th November.

I've decided I don't like Sydney boaties – as a group and as a stereotype (I will add that there are a few ok individuals). Last night I could have touched the nose of a 60'(ish) pleasure boat that had anchored (with a professional skipper, mind you) at a point where the wind change meant he was far too close for comfort. In fact it was extremely lucky that the craft had turned the opposite way to us in the wind change or there would have been major damage. And the skipper – where was he you ask whilst his guests were getting drunk out the back (but they at least were noticing how close we were getting) and we were heading for a potential collision – 'Oh, I'm sorry. I was downstairs doing the dishes.'

Today is Saturday and I was expecting the usual weekend crowd but it seems the weather forecast kept the boaties at bay (pun intended). There were only a few groups here at Store Bay (including one very loud group of boys (young men in their 20's) who spent the afternoon drinking, swimming and pissing off the side of the boat). Yesterday, in the mid thirties, was more popular and we were nearly skewered by a Johnson 55 – the boat eventually moved but not until it had essentially bullied a small sailing yacht from its place. The small boat was the second boat here. We were the first.



Three days ago we walked from The Spit Bridge to Manly – a lovely walk of between 9.5 and 12.5 kilometres, depending on whose brochure or website you read. (Apparently you can actually walk around the entire Sydney harbor).

As we were on a public mooring near The Spit Bridge the start was easy to get to (although we did ask one small marina if we could leave our tinnie there for ease and they had the cheek to ask for \$30).

Thinking this was a 'bit stiff' we eventually tied the tinnie up under the bridge. The Spit Bridge lifts at certain times of the day and we had to wait for it before we could cross. The bus from Manly comes back over this bridge which suited us perfectly. The walk started amongst a small patch of what seemed like temperate rainforest, then proceeded behind civilisation, up through angophora lined cliffs and finally on the Dobroyd Head through coastal heathland. A couple we passed early in the walk told us about a café around 20 minutes before Manly (with directions as it was a couple of hundred meters off the track) and we had a delightful (late) lunch at Forty Beans (some stuff gluten free, sugar free, wheat free etc – perfect for me). <http://www.forty-beans.com.au/>

The final walk into Manly was hot and I was restless (I am not too fond of too much heat!). After a quick food shop we were lucky to time the bus perfectly and found our tinnie exactly where we had left her four hours earlier.

19th November 2014 – Woolwich Dock

It is not every day that you wake up looking out the window at the underside of a famous Sydney to Hobart Race Yacht, but that's what greeted me yesterday morning. Firstly, for the alarmists – no we hadn't sunk...quite the opposite. We are out of the water – courtesy of a little bump about three weeks ago and a minor kiss with a dock (thanks to that gust of wind!). It was only minor but none-the-less it is still expensive to have properly fixed. It gave us a chance however to check the antifoul on the hulls, one of which came up wanting.

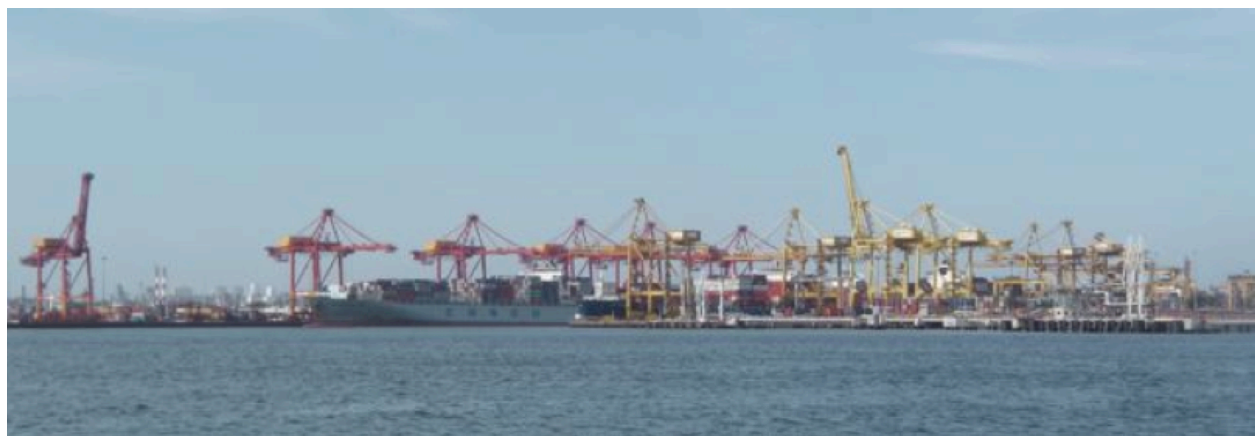


So yesterday morning I trundled off (on a very early bus) to Whitworths, Drummoyne, picked up two 4L cans of antifoul and took the two necessary bus routes back. Unfortunately this wasn't enough so I attempted to do the same thing again this morning, only to find there was not enough stock in the store. So a taxi ride to Crows Nest and back to Woolwich then ensued (and then after that another bus ride into Hunters Hill to do some normal shopping). I was exhausted! This afternoon we watched Southern Excellence II come in (the old Ichi Ban. There is a new improved one entered for this year's Sydney to Hobart') and tomorrow apparently Brindabella is coming in – it is all go here.

Botany Bay (Sydney) 22nd - 27th November 2104

22nd November 2014 Manly

6.40am. Well, that was interesting - the first sleep on water (as opposed to on the hard stand) for four days. Ahh someone else's bow waves...did I miss them? (not really). We are back at Quarantine Beach (<http://www.quarantinestation.com.au/>); our first and second choices to pick up a mooring yesterday morning (at the lovely hour of 0830 because we'd delayed our relaunch from the dock until first thing in the morning due to the winds the previous afternoon) were taken. As it turned out, particularly with the later winds yesterday we were probably in the right spot. But we were also in the right spot for swimming, snorkeling and paddling (all of which we could have done elsewhere but it is prettier here). It is calm now but it is early morning. The forecast winds for this morning are not conducive to sailing south - we are looking to head toward Botany Bay but the afternoon change should bring excellent conditions. Personally I prefer getting things done in the morning so I can relax in the afternoon but I am now on Nature's time and you can't argue with that. I think the cats are happy to be given full roam of the deck again. Cilla didn't come out in the yard at all and Tiger had to put up with the lead (and that was only in the front cockpit)

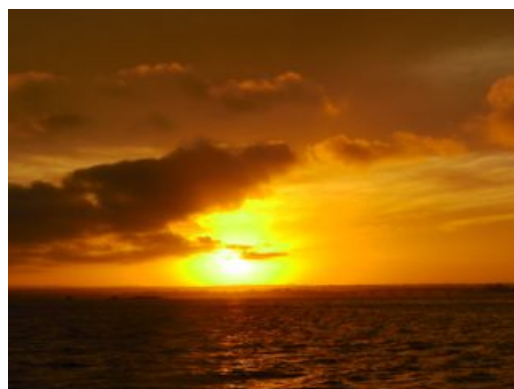


pm. Well - it is about time. We've actually had a decent sail and actually got somewhere. Of course it was not without drama - we've broken a batten, a cleat and a string on the mainsail but we are now in Botany Bay having averaged somewhere around the 7 knot mark (our highest reading was 8.3 knots but we still haven't got our equipment calibrated so I can't guarantee this is entirely accurate). We are on a mooring at Towra Point Nature Reserve (<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/NationalParks/parkHome.aspx?id=N0551>) a Ramsar Convention listed bird Sanctuary. New bird for the day - pied oyster catcher

23rd November 2014

am. Went for an explore in the tinnie this morning. The temperature was expected to reach the mid to high 30's but we didn't leave until 10ish. This was predominantly because we wanted to check out the shoreline of the reserve and as the sea level is extremely low here we timed our departure around high tide. The new bird for today was an eastern curlew (a hundred plus of them) on one of the exposed spits. Across the water a bit we motored through the moorings in Wooleware Bay where boats consisted mainly of mooring holders (at least I think they were mooring holders), rusting, dying boats that are clearly there as stop gaps until the owner replaces them with their real yacht. It was very reminiscent of what we saw at Brooklyn on the Hawkesbury. There was one obviously occupied boat – an ex navy catamaran – huge and dominant (and in my opinion, rather ugly). Heading under the Captain Cook bridge (which is far too low for Sengo to get under) we came across the St George Motor Boat Club and the marina office was quite happy for us to leave our tinnie tied up whilst we went to their cafe for a coffee. A bit further up and we found the Botany Bay Yacht Club and some advertising for a sailmaker. We'll call him tomorrow morning to see if he can help us with a batten. Back at Sengo and the water surrounding us is full of boats – this is clearly a popular beach. People here seem to respect space a bit more than Sydney Harbour as the space between vessels seems reasonable. It is disappointing that someone has a dog on shore. The clouds are building south of us over the suburbs.

pm. Unfortunately, a relaxing morning predicates a working afternoon -you know-the yin and the yang – and I got around to a couple of small jobs that needed doing - getting water out of the port bilge (6 days overdue as Andrew had taken out the transducer prior to going on the hard) and cleaning of the bottom of several pairs of shoes (2 days overdue - to get rid of all the dirt and grime that came off the work area at Woolwich).



24th November 2014

Apparently you can see the entirety of Towra Reserve from up the top of the mast. Or so Andrew said as he admired the scene whilst being suspended in the bosuns chair via the spinnaker halyard. The spinnaker halyard has become a versatile line for us as it has done everything from manoeuvre the kayak off and on Sengo, put scuba gear on board and regularly hoist our daytime anchoring symbol (we note that we are one of a very few number of boats that do this (the others being professionally chartered super yachts).

And why was Andrew in the bosuns chair at the top of the mast you may ask. He was retrieving the car that was stuck up there. We'd spent this morning getting the batten out (and in the process losing bits of it in amongst the folds of the sails), and raising the sail (but not attaching anything to the car (as it was detached from the sail in order to get the broken batten free). Upshot, great view, car retrieved, broken batten taken to sail maker and a new one ordered (as well as the new cleat and line to replace those broken yesterday). Finally after all this, we took a walk on the beach only to be turned around with leaden skies and lightening heading our way – we got back to the boat just as she started to pour. New bird – bar tailed godwit.

Port Hacking (Sydney) 27th-29th November 2014

27th November 2014. You wouldn't say that a drizzly, grey day with a 20 knot south-easter blowing straight at you was the ideal situation to motor out into. In fact, we were originally going to sit though the day and wait for finer weather as we still had to check the nuts holding the batten in (having put all the pieces together in less than ideal windy conditions yesterday). However, a much more important issue raised itself - we seemed to have a blocked black water holding tank (the other holding tank already full) and the way we fixed this last time was to dump it. Dumping in Sydney's bays is not encouraged so we headed out to the sea – of course by the time we got there we were practically half way to Port Hacking (where we'd aimed to be 4 days ago anyway) so we kept going. Clearly it wasn't bad sailing weather (we passed two catamarans sailing north) but as we hadn't checked our bolts we motored down – a bit rougher – and a bit harder on the cats. I'll give Tiger credit though – it only took a couple of minutes for him to emerge once we'd stopped.

There are two public mooring boys at Jibbon Beach One was already taken with another catamaran so we grabbed the one closer to the beach. However, we were on a dropping tide and the tide table indicated it would be particularly low; combined with the chart (which is only representative, I know) but the mooring we were on was within the 0.6m line and we thought it prudent to move a bit further out. We are probably further out than necessary and exposed to the swell but no longer concerned about the sea grass (which seemed to be getting closer on each inspection on mooring). There is a west cardinal mark nearby that seems not to be lit at night – this is a little concerning – considering another yacht has arrived in the dark and has anchored on this side of it - I hope he's seen it.

28th November 2014

Jibbon Beach. A glorious day. After a casual long breakfast we decided to go for a walk and there is a Bundeena to Jibbons Point Walk that I'd seen on the internet. We didn't start at Bundeena but at the beach at which we'd anchored and did the end loop. We then motored around to Bundeena for lunch before returning to Sengo for a lazy afternoon....



Port Jackson (Sydney) 29th-30th November 2014

29th November 2014 – Manly

Penguins! To finally see them is delightful, although their silhouetted bodies were hardly noticeable in the late twilight. Sheltered back at Store Beach –though out a bit because it is Saturday and it is always busy on Saturday (We'd popped in here because I just wanted to get out of the wind (we were motoring into it and it was very uncomfortable)). We'd started from Jibbon Beach in light winds, the idea being to sail out a bit and then angle in when the NE wind came in. Unfortunately we were still fixing/adjusting the sail after the batten replacement and as a loose line was wrapping around the topper we thought it more prudent to drop the sail and fix it. Unfortunately the wind changed whilst doing this and conditions were no longer appropriate for maintenance so the engines went on and we had a rough, cold ride to Sydney. We need to get to Pittwater but it looks like conditions won't be conducive for three days. But this is the weather – and it is fickle

30th November 2014

Up before dawn. 5.15am .(Only one other yachty on his deck that I could see). 'Not used to this (although to be fair the cats have started to get into the habit of asking me for breakfast at 5.30am – I usually ignore them). This time however, it was time for work. This was the only opportunity in the day where the winds were forecast to be light so we went outside, raised the sail, tied the line on that had come undone, dropped the sail (back nicely into the bag this time) and went back to bed. It was 6am. The usual Sunday crowd came in but were gone by evening. And the rafts of penguins again delighted us in the twilight.

The Naked Truth

I know Sydney has the Sydney Skinny (<http://www.thesydneyskinny.com.au/about/sydney-skinny-ocean-swim-event.htm>) but I am amazed to note how many people out there are happy to flaunt their birthday suit in everyday life. The first time we saw this was at Halletts Beach, Cowan Creek. The occupants of the only other boat on a mooring were on the beach. As we approached our mooring the man on the beach raced for his dingy (I wasn't really taking much notice of this as I was concentrating on driving Sengo to the right spot so Andrew could pick up the rope) but when I shut the engines off I noticed she was wearing nothing and realized he'd run to protect his dignity. Down at Jibbon Beach however, one yachty was sailing away wearing nothing (he had a full body tan – at least that what it looked like from the side) and another couple were on the public beach, nothing on, playing with their dog. Not a care in the world!