



LADY MUSGRAVE ISLAND

Aboard Sengo December 2015

Issue Date

Lady Musgrave Island

1st December 2015

Do you remember the wildlife documentaries on television where David Attenborough (or someone of similar ilk) sits on a rock amongst thousands of very noisy (and presumably very smelly) nesting birds? Now imagine those thousands of birds elevated so they are sitting on nests or roosting in trees. Welcome to Lady Musgrave Island.

It wasn't what I expected of a coral cay – I expected something quite flat, treeless and small. And whilst Lady Musgrave is flat-ish, it is certainly not treeless, and walking amongst the *Pisonia* trees that cover most of the island makes you feel like you are walking through a fairy land. We had just been discussing that thousands of years of bird guano would probably provide a good base for seeds in which to grow, and the thought of 'a few dead birds as well' crossed my mind, when we came across an interesting interpretation board. Indeed the island vegetation has probably evolved out of the carcasses of many dead birds as the sticky seeds of the *Pisonia* trees (in which some of the birds nest) can also be the death of the unfortunate few who get their wings stuck together with them. As if to prove the point, not 10 meters the other side of this board, on the ground at the edge of the path, was one such unfortunate Black (White capped) Noddy. It was a heartbreaking sight. But we are asked not to interfere.

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Many birds nest on Lady Musgrave Island during the year and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority wrote in 2006 that the Capricorn-Bunker Group (of which Lady Musgrave is one of 22 islands) has 73-75% of all Great Barrier Reef biomass of bird species.

We emerged on the south side of the island and followed the beach west and then northwards back to where we had started. This allowed us to pass the radio tower, where many terns were nesting at its base, and note the turtles lurking just below the water line. Turtle tracks were obvious from the previous evening's nesting and we saw that one had even nested on the path just in front of the camping ground. The campers, we understand from talking to a couple later, had a ringside view. I hope the eggs were buried far enough down to survive and won't be compacted.

We had a quick snorkel when we got back to the tinnie but the coral was plain and the fish few. On the way back to Sengo we ingratiated our way on to the other Leopard we had met the day before, as we had freshly made muffins and we knew they had a coffee machine. After that it was just a case of getting ready to head back to Pancake Creek before the expected wild southerly due.



*Underneath the *Pisonia* trees*



Black (White-capped) Noddy



Lady Musgrave Island

Pancake Creek to Bundaberg Port Marina

2nd to 8th December 2015

The sail from Lady Musgrave Island to Pancake Creek was a slower than expected trip - the predicted 10-15 knots nowhere to be seen, but the sporadic smattering of rain gave the decks a light wash. We made the creek in good light and set the anchor just inside the leads to the second anchorage. This was closer to the entrance than we'd anchored before. We were slightly on the west side of the channel and although we didn't drag we did find, due to the changing wind direction and time of tide, that at one spot we'd touched bottom. To alleviate this we pulled a bit of chain in but it happened again. Only at that wind angle. What are the chances? In the end we moved slightly toward the centre of the channel and one neighbor came over to ask if we'd dragged. It seemed he was having trouble getting a hold further upstream. So what does he do? He moves and attempts to anchor in front of us!!! Fortunately he worked out he couldn't get a holding there either and eventually moved back to his original spot.

We didn't really do anything exciting on this stint in Pancake Creek, although I did start polishing the boat; starting with the topsides of the gunwales and the side of the bridge-deck cabin.

As we were close to the sandbar we had a good view of the birds that landed there on a regular basis at low tide. One morning we couldn't initially work out what one, presumably large bird was in the distance, so we grabbed the binoculars for a better look. As it turned out, this dark lump wasn't a bird at all; it was a black bucket, one that looked suspiciously like the one we'd lost over the back of the boat north of Mackay. Although we were a long way south of Mackay we thought we should do the right thing and go and pick it up to make up for the one we'd couldn't get out of the drink earlier, but by the time we started to get the tinnie down, it had disappeared; no doubt to reappear somewhere further along the coast.

We had booked a marina berth at Bundaberg Port Marina from the Wednesday night 9th December with the aim to anchor in the Burnett River on the Tuesday (8th December)

of our trip south from Pancake Creek. Because we are such a wide boat, the idea was to put us on a t-head. Traditionally berths aren't allocated until the morning of arrival but I rang up on the off chance our allocated berth had been assigned and no one was in it. Expecting an end berth I find that, because a 20 meter cat

The wind was minimal and Andrew, having looked at the pen decided we could comfortably back Sengo in. We were a bit shocked at the width though. When I had spoken to the girl on the phone she had said it was a 16m berth. As the topic at hand was how wide we were, I was expecting this to be a 16m



Pancake Creek

had come in, we had been allocated a pen instead. Fortunately it was at the end of Black Arm, facing out to the river heads, and it looked relatively easy to get into. The idea was to go past, assess it and if we were happy we would take the pen on the Tuesday night; rather than anchor and move across in the morning. The trip south took longer than expected, and the predicted 10-15 knots winds were again non-existent. As a result we had our motor on the last third of the trip and the sun went down before we got to the Burnett River entrance. The poles are lit, fortunately, (as ships go in to pick up sugar), and we turned our steaming lights on for the trip up the river (or so I thought).

wide berth. It turned out to be a 16m long berth and a 10m wide berth (we are 7.65m wide) so there wasn't a lot of room to move. A yacht two pens over had its cockpit lights on and I was hoping to attract the occupants' attention. As it turned out they saw us first, although I find out after we'd tied off and settled, that they'd seen us at the last minute because we didn't have our lights on and they came over to help because they thought we were in trouble. I am very grateful either way. (It seems when I turned the dial to steaming lights, I failed to put the switch on at the panel! Not a good practice – but at least one I will be forever conscious of).

Bundaberg

9th-15th December 2015

Our original intention was to stay three nights at Bundaberg Port Marina; this would give us two solid days to sort out food and washing requirements. Because we came in late the night before our expected arrival date we were required to pay for an extra night. The receptionist then informed us that if we added yet another night to this we got two nights free. This turned out to be fortuitous, as Andrew only informed me as we got into Port that his foot had been in pain for the past two weeks, and subsequently the first activity we needed to undertake was to get him to a doctor.

Finding a doctor in a 'foreign' city isn't that easy. I thought I would just ring up a convenient Medical Centre (my original choice was one at one of the major shopping centres) and book him in. It was only after we were informed by the Port receptionist that it may not be that easy that I found I had trouble. We were given a sheet with a web link to find a free practitioner and the names and addresses of some 'local' practices that may take new patients. It took me three phone calls to get an appointment for Andrew. As expected blood tests were taken (after waiting in the reception area for two hours!) and we had to come back in a couple of days' time. Thankfully, the marina had us in as an open booking.

Having found ourselves in Bundaberg we took the time to be social, meeting a couple of new boats at the marina and catching up with old friends.

Bundy Rum Distillery

It is 20 years since I visited the Rum Distillery. I can only remember the old timber building not the building that now has the 'museum' in it, and where you start your tour. Things have changed - no cameras are allowed now (due to health and safety rules) and all items with batteries must be left in lockers. Yes, we got to see the molasses tank, but where was the big round vat I have a photo of four of us standing around?



The museum is a disaster from an

experiential point of view. There are some cabinets near the front counter with some history displays in them but it is hard to concentrate, as from the speakers near the door to the museum proper (where you go once you've paid your \$\$) is a constant annoying voice (in an accent that sounds almost American) of 'Welcome to Bundaberg...!!?' I can't remember the rest but this welcome is not repeated, as I first suspected, as someone goes through the door, but every 20 seconds or so. It is insidious, loud and annoying. Once I'd given up trying to absorb anything in the foyer area and passed through the entrance - where I was dutifully welcomed every 20 seconds - I found the section just past this worse for the concentration. Not only do you have the annoying voice welcoming you, you have, from the next gallery, a very fast beating music invading your space. If there is one thing that is designed NOT to relax you or help you concentrate, it is fast beating music (reflect on what restaurants play when they want to close). So, the upshot is, I couldn't concentrate on much, I just wanted to get out of there - I can tell you the distillery burnt down in the 1930's - but other details are fuzzy. A pity really - there is so much potential there.

The guided tour was formulaic, and much as I remembered it in terms of information (minus anything that has happened in the last 20 years),

but I think we walked around quite a bit more back then-back to that vat I was talking about earlier.

Of course, we bought the obligatory bottle of rum - at prices above what you'd get from Dan Murphies - but when in Rome. The other purchase was a Bundy flag (which we've had to modify for our use). If you see us flying it (you won't miss it, it's bigger than anything else we've got) it will mean Sundowners is on!



Bundaberg Rum Distillery



Bundaberg Rum Distillery

River Feast

After the Distillery tour, we checked out the inaugural River Feast. River Feast is being developed on the old Marine College site (on the river) at Bundaberg as a weekly Friday food, entertainment and market event. The inaugural event date has been a moving 'feast' whilst the organizer had to keep complying with further council regulations. We arrived not long after it opened so the crowd was relatively small. Apparently the place was packed later in the evening. River Feast is promoted as 'the newest and most unique culinary and entertainment experience Bundaberg has to offer....with the transformation of Bundaberg's old Marine College facility into an amazing array of international street food and crafts to wander through.' Essentially it is a Friday night market with entertainment. I hope it survives; talking to a few locals gives me the impression that Bundaberg isn't renowned for supporting this kind of activity.

Dinner on this night was had at a completely forgettable Italian restaurant and we were too tired to go to Carols by Candlelight near the airport.



Bundaberg Rum Distillery

Turtles at Mon Repos

'Imagine sitting on a beach at midnight – expecting an armoured invasion. All is quiet. You concentrate on the waves lapping the shore; you look for the slightest sign of movement. There it is. Something is coming out of the water.'

Or so I wrote in 2001 for *Challenge*, a magazine published for teenagers.

Mon Repos beach lies approximately half way between the townships of Burnett Heads at the Head of the Burnett River, and Bagara, about 17 kilometers east of Bundaberg. Every year from October through approximately December, female Loggerhead, Green and Flatback turtles arrive at night to lay their precious clutches of eggs in the warm dark sand. From January hatchlings start to emerge from the sand to start their treacherous life at sea.

Having found ourselves with the extra time in Bundaberg, it was natural that I wanted Andrew to see this wonderful phenomenon. When I first became a volunteer at Mon Repos, over 20 years ago, the set up was basic. A total of 15 volunteers (you applied for dates and where allocated a spot if it was available) would spend their nights (taking one of two shifts), spotting, documenting and providing information to the public on the turtles that arrived at Mon Repos beach.

The first year I drove up, and with a girlfriend, camped in my hot two-man tent. The second year we took public transport and found ourselves at the start of the season with three volunteers on the first night; and myself and my girlfriend the most experienced. Having had only one season behind us (and only two weeks of that season) we were split up. She took the first shift (dusk until midnight/1am) and I was due for the second shift (midnight/1am until dawn). The idea is that you try and get some sleep whilst you are not on shift. That is easier said than done when, on the first night, there was a massive thunderstorm, with masses of

rain, and as we had come north via planes and trains we were sleeping in the communal scout tent. I spent the first part of the night (when I was supposed to be sleeping) piling up the gear from the two other occupants (who were out on patrol) into the middle of the tent so the driving rain wouldn't soak it. Subsequently I got no sleep and by the time I went out on shift I was ready to drop. I do remember the spectacular lightening over the water though. I also remember it was a quiet night for tourists.

By the time we did our last stint at Mon Repos a couple of years later, things had changed somewhat. The public were now herded through a recently built interpretive centre. From a research assistant's point of view there are both advantages and disadvantages to this. The advantage is you are not bugged by tourists whilst waiting for turtles to come up the beach – the slightest movement can send them back into the water, and prior to the interps centre a research assistant spent half their time watching for turtles coming out of the water and half their time making sure there were no humans up the beach to disturb them. The disadvantage was that once the turtle was laying, the 'interpretive guides' (the research assistants having lost their interps value) would bring up to 70 people down at once to view the turtle.

The interpretation centre is still at Mon Repos and the public are required to book a spot for the night they wish to view the turtles. Anyone who hasn't booked will be put in the last group of the night. When you turn up you are allocated a group (which I think is based on a first in first served basis) and you wait. I must admit I didn't spend a lot of time reading the interps – having read it 20 years before, but I did note the photos of the staff that were involved and it brought back many great memories. We were in Group 3 this night and it was only an hour or so after dark that we were taken out to see a turtle. Looking



Loggerhead turtle laying eggs at Mon Repos

at it from a distance I can now see how this method of showing the public the turtles is advantageous. The public only gets to see one turtle so once their session is over, the researches have the night to themselves; no possible human disturbances from the beach. It was interesting being on the other side.

The Interpretation Centre is dedicated to Darryl Reimer, a Mon Repos turtle research staff member, who tragically died in a boat accident off the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1992. His body was never found. On that first night in late 1991 where I spent the first half of the night making sure my colleagues' sleeping gear wasn't soaked, I spent my shift (after 1am) walking the beaches with Darryl. We were the only two on duty and he was happy. He told me about how he had just found the girl he wanted to settle down with and had just found the house where they were going to live. Five months later he was no longer with us. Sometimes fate is so unfair.



Platypus Bay, Fraser Island

15th – 22nd December 2015

For the briefest of moments we had the perfect winds for a straight run from the head of the Burnett River over to Rooney Point at the north-west corner of Fraser Island. This was after flailing around outside the channel markers outside the river entrance so Andrew could remove, clean and then replace the sumlog from the bottom of the hull. (We have been advised it is good practice to remove it when staying still for some time as it can get covered in algae and crustaceans when not moving. As we were originally going to only stay in the marina for three nights we didn't even think about it.) After the brief moment passed we started a very long day of zig-zaging and sharp angles, and it feels like we travelled at least double the required distance to get to our anchorage. Thirteen hours after we started, and in the dark, we put the anchor down (and that was with motoring the final 7 nautical miles or we would have been going for at least another two hours). We had of course changed our plans during the day, to try to fit in with the wind, and as a result, ended up around Arch Cliff, Platypus Bay – some 20 or so nautical miles south of our original destination.

Wednesday 16th December

Having put our anchor down in the dark the previous evening, and conscious of where two boats with anchor lights were on either side of us, we awoke to discover we were quite a bit out from shore. After breakfast we moved a bit closer in and then an hour before high tide headed to shore. Our aim was a long walk on the beach, as although we'd spent a week at the marina, we hadn't had any real exercise. A short diversion up a sand blow wore us out a bit – they are very steep – but we were rewarded with a view across the island. Back at the beach we walked to Woralie Creek and camping ground where the rangers were rearranging the furniture. They had pulled down the old fence and were replacing it with giant logs which had come from the camp area. The logs were

originally placed as the boundaries for the camping sites for camper trailers but it turns out the areas weren't large enough. Moving the logs to create a bigger space for campers and placing them as boundaries for the campground gives the area a much more natural feel. Birds seen; Whistling kite. Brahminy kite, Rainbow Bee-



Moving the 'furniture' Woralie Creek

eater. Wildlife; stingray, cane toad.

After noting a few nights previously that there hadn't been any obvious cane toads (we used to swerve across the road to squash them whilst travelling to other beaches when we were volunteering at Mon Repos), I was surprised to see one on the beach – fortunately it was dead, dried and desiccated.



Woralie Creek

Thursday 17th December

Today I finished off the couch covers for the downstairs couch – a full year after finishing the upstairs ones. It was a few months ago when I pulled myself out of my project stupor and had a go and completing the covers. I thought I remembered the formula for the measurements, and in some respects I did, but in other respects I didn't and being a bit cocky found I had made a couple of fundamental mistakes. However, with a bit of extra material (I was running out of this fast), I have managed to complete the task with minimal obvious flaws. I can now put the fire blankets away (thick pure wool is not conducive to sitting on in 30 odd degrees) and enjoy my couch!



Downstairs couch covers at last!

19th December 2015

We had a short walk this morning, choosing the opposite direction to our stroll a couple of days before. We started at the Bowarrady Creek and camping area and walked up to the next point and back. On the way we 'discovered' Spartan. This poor little boat is (was) registered at Mooloolaba. She has clearly been here for some time as she is significantly buried. Clearly, the Maheno isn't the only boat wrecked on Fraser Island's beaches!



Looking south to Woralie Creek



The wreck of Spartan



Bowrady Creek

20th December 2015

We spent the morning of the 20th December eagerly awaiting *Take It Easy*, friends we met on this sailing journey in January this year, and whom we haven't seen for some months. They are on their way back to Victoria and have a timeline but we were delighted they made the time to spend with us. Over two days we spent as much time as we could with *Take It Easy's* crew as it is likely to be at least 18 months before we see them again.



Take It Easy coming to visit us



Tiger waiting for *Take It Easy's* crew to arrive

Christmas to New Year's Eve 2015

Hervey Bay/Great Sandy Botanic Gardens

24th December 2015

What a find! I had no idea this little gem was here until pointed out as a possible place of interest by the marina manager. Access is easy (it is on the way to the supermarket from the Boat Harbour) and a small shaded carpark is opposite the end of Miller Street.

The gardens were established to highlight the plants of Wide Bay and the Great Sandy Straits area

The grounds hold a community centre as well as the Orchid House (holding a collection largely originally donated to the gardens) highlighting



orchids from around the world. The meagre charge of \$2.50 gets you entry to the Orchid House and a cuppa (of tea or instant coffee). The outdoor plantings of the Gardens include themed areas and the pond area is lovely. The majority of the 26 hectares of grounds is natural bush and we didn't have time to explore the paths in this section. There are picnic tables and



a bbq for those who want to make visiting the gardens a day out, and the Chinese themed garden is gorgeous. It was designed in Hervey Bay's sister city, Leshan, in Sichuan, China where there is a reciprocal



Australian themed garden. Entry to the Botanic Gardens is free.

Urangan Pier

25th December 2015

Hot, quiet. The Great Sandy Straits Marina was surprisingly devoid of noise, and it wasn't until we ventured out into Hervey Bay proper for a walk along the Urangan Pier that we saw anything like the expected Christmas holiday throng. The tide was out and even late in the afternoon, despite the temperature having cooled significantly, hearty souls were swimming some distance from the shore.

The pier is popular with tourists, a lovely 1.7 km return stroll to the end, but also popular with fisherman, both young and old, with the main catch seemingly baitfish; on single and multiple hooks. The council has set the pier up for this activity and dotted along its length are stainless steel fish cleaning tables for ease of cleaning the catch. Also dotted along the pier are public bench seats; respite for those with less stamina.

The Urangan pier was once 1124 meters long (approximately – I've read three sources of information, all with different total lengths) with a T junction at the end so ships could dock easily coming in with the prevailing south-easterly winds. The pier, (complete with railway line) was opened originally in 1917 (the railway having arrived in Urangan four years earlier) and was instrumental for exporting coal, sugar and timber (the line was extended from Pialba (now a suburb of the urban metropolis of Hervey Bay) to Urangan. The line's



Great Sandy Straits Marina

decline began in the 1960's and all exports stopped in 1985. The pier was finally closed in 1993. A public outcry when authorities started to demolish it lead to the council taking over management and then restoration of the remaining structure.

Howard

26th December 2015

One must try to remember what State one is in when trying to watch sporting events. Andrew didn't get to see the start of the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race last year so I tried to orchestrate it so he was able to do so this year. It was a horribly hot morning so the idea was to get a bit of retail therapy (with a few thousand others that we'd reluctantly put up with so we could revel in the air conditioning) before finding a 'pub' or equivalent that would have a screen where we could watch the start of the race.

The retail therapy over, we wandered down to the tavern adjacent Stocklands shopping centre, where the cricket was on one screen, the Sydney to Hobart on another and horseracing on a third (unfortunately as this was a betting establishment it was the horse racing that had the volume).

We took an extremely quick glance at the television screens before we went through the door to find a table for lunch. I envisaged that in 20 or so minutes we'd lose Andrew for about an hour. However, as Andrew was getting the drinks he wandered over to check out the coverage, and discovered all the excitement of the race start was over! QLD doesn't have daylight savings. Why, oh why, doesn't QLD fit in with the rest of the country? It would make things so much easier.

Having missed the excitement, we wondered over lunch what we were going to do with the rest of the afternoon. A list of things to do in the area in one of the tourist brochures had the usual; whale watching (season dependent); visit to Fraser Island (needs more planning), walk along the Urangan Pier (done it), Reef World (we weren't sure this was open). One of the suggestions was to visit historic Howard. This is an inland town, and meant a drive – what a pity - the car has air conditioning! The GPS had its own way of getting the last two kilometres (by not following the road signs) but eventually we found ourselves off the Bruce Hwy in Historic Howard. The town is indeed old, the drapery shop has 1884 listed on it. Other old shops have different businesses in them but were closed. It was Boxing Day after all. The pub would probably have been open but the view was uninspiring. I was impressed with the school though; it is the only one I've seen in the old Queenslander style – with full ground clearance underneath the buildings. Houses are old and dated and quite a few are for sale. Had it been another day, when it was not so hot, a public



The quiet main street of Howard

holiday, and had we arrived earlier in the day, it would have been worth exploring. An interps board suggests somewhere near there is a museum and an historical heritage trail.

Howard was one of the major towns for the Burrum Coal Field which was the second coal mining field to open in Queensland (in 1863) and the mining industry here spanned 130 years. The Howard Power Station, which operated from 1951 to 1980 supplied the entire region with its power from the local supply. Other industries that have existed in the area include timber, citrus, agriculture, washing powder and cordial production. Two prominent politicians are also from this area: Dame Annabelle Rankin, Queensland's first female senator (and Australia's first female Cabinet Minister); and Andrew Fisher, Australia's first Labour Prime Minister (who worked in the Burrum Coalfields before getting into politics). Had we read the tourist brochures a bit more carefully we would have discovered that the restored Rankin family home, Brooklyn House, is open 7 days and provides Devonshire tea. Not knowing this we headed for the little seaside hamlet of Toogoom for afternoon refreshment overlooking the sea.

A little night walk

27th December 2015

Having said farewell to both our Christmas and Sundowners guests, we found ourselves with a beautiful evening; the clear skies only blocked by the thousands of fruit bats that make their daily dusk pilgrimage across to Fraser Island.

Our pen is relatively close to the land side of the entrance of Urangan Boat Harbour and the end of the sea-side rock wall is opposite. Along the rock wall lined up in rafted twos and threes, often in matching makes if not colours, is the local fishing fleet; vessels lit up brightly at night. Clearly, the owners are passionate about their fleets, or the workers desperate in timelines because there were several people working maintenance on this fleet over the holidays; and two on Christmas day.

The rock wall is popular with fisherman and we saw many car lights travel up the length of it in the time we were here. At the end of the rock wall is a statue; a monument, lit up in a blue glow at night. We hadn't had a chance to visit this statue up until now and with the calm, inviting evening we went for a walk. Although, as the crow flies, the statue is probably only a couple of hundred meters away, if



Monument to fishermen lost at sea



Fishing fleet lined up in rows

that, the distance to walk to it around the harbour is a couple of kilometres, and once past the restaurants, and land-based boat yards and services, we lost the artificial light and entered the world of night. I did think about grabbing a torch but didn't and the first really dark patch was through a patch of trees where a cacophony of fruit bats (clearly the ones that hadn't flown to Fraser Island) made their presence known as they roosted above us. We also disturbed a cane toad; as noted before, a rare sighting. Past the seafood coop there are no lights on the break wall, and motorists are asked to keep an eye out for pedestrians. For the start of its length the road is comfortably only just over one vehicle wide at the top (two at a pinch) and if you lose your footing jumping off the road to get out of the way of traffic you may fall down the rock wall.

Several fisherman were at various spots along the wall and when I asked what they were hoping to catch I had comments from 'we will be feeding the fish' to 'who knows.' One more hopeful lad said 'if it's edible well keep it; if not, we'll throw it back'.

Stating the obvious really. The monument, now standing as a blurred beacon in the dark, was to all the fishermen lost at sea in the local areas. A poignant reminder really.

28th – 31st December 2015

Originally we were going to leave the marina on the 28th December, but fortunately made the decision to stay on. The predictions of strong winds starting at around 5am were pretty close and it was blowing 20 to 25 knots at 6am (when we would normally consider leaving). The sky was grey, it had been raining and as we were in a position to see outside the boat harbour entrance, I could see the waves outside had large whitecaps.

Being hopeful that we might go out for New Year's Eve, we decided we would extend our booking until the 2nd January 2016 (in theory giving us a day to recover from any wild activity we might partake in at the end of 2015.)

For the next few days the grey skies persisted, the wind persisted and the biggest casualty was our SICYC flag whose yellow tails got whipped to being severely frayed.

The weather was not inspiring, was windy, and oscillated between being extremely hot when the sun came out to being overcast and rainy. The highlight of the 30th December was being asked to dinner by Bamboozle (38' Northshore). The table was set up with red linen and highlighted with golden baubles. It is the most Christmassy table setting I've been to in years. The delightful evening was of course complete with crackers!

New Year's Eve started out by blowing a gale; and ended by blowing a gale. Having dismissed the idea of the masquerade party at the local club, we thought we might walk up and watch the fireworks at the Urangan Pier (I would have liked to attend the night markets at Torquay as well but that would have added an extra 7 kilometers walking to the evening). However, strong wind seems to play with my mind and I wasn't walking anywhere in 25 knots. So we sat down for a couple of quiet gin and tonic's, had dinner, watched a movie, entertained friends who popped in for a short time around 10pm and had another gin and tonic, watched another movie and wished each other Happy New Year when my phone read 00.00. We didn't even open the half bottle of champagne that we'd bought with the pier fireworks in mind. So, although I planned (potentially) a little bit of entertainment this year, the night was much quieter than 12 months before.