

Aboard Sengo

May 2016

Revisiting Lady Musgrave Island

5,8

The only combined coral cay and lagoon arrangement on the Barrier Reef

Freshwater fishing on Friday 13th

7

Chasing the big one!

Close encounter at Lady Musgrave Island:
I could have touched this turtle.



The Middle Percy Hilton

14

A monument to all passing yachts

..almost up to where we left off..

May saw us sail from Wathumba Creek, Fraser Island to Airlie Beach, in the Whitsunday's., spending 10 days in Bundaberg (land-based activities) and revisiting Lady Musgrave Island (twice). Our first real isolated reef experience (Fitzroy Reef) saw us anchored, alone, in the middle of nowhere. At the end of May 2016 we are only 23 nautical miles short of last year's most northerly destination.

Wathumba, Fraser Island



Wathumba Lagoon

1 May 2016

This is what the cruising life is all about: long walks on isolated, almost unoccupied, beaches, titillating your toes in the very edge of the waves rolling in, sinking your feet into the not-so-soft sand and admiring the occasional animal that passes you by; stingray, crab, sea star. The afternoon walk was a reward for my morning of work; namely the clothes washing. The day had started out grey and dull but the sun had slowly revealed herself, scattering her light past the dull flat stratus and moulding it into all sorts of cumulus varieties.

The lagoon at the end of Wathumba Creek is as pretty as I remember it, although last time, a few years ago, we visited it from the other side, bumping down a rough and holey track via 4WD. The tide was coming in, so we walked south from where we landed the tinnie to the spit at the entrance of the lagoon, and back again, detouring across the sand in and out of the Lagoon area itself.

The outside beach was surprisingly sparse in crab occupation, with very few patches of sand balls on show, and these only at the incoming waters edge. By contrast, the beach to the lagoon was full of these patches, from water to scrub, and it felt like you were walking on soft, smooth, spongy silk. Many small fish scuttled from the edge of the lagoon as approached, and a couple of stingrays

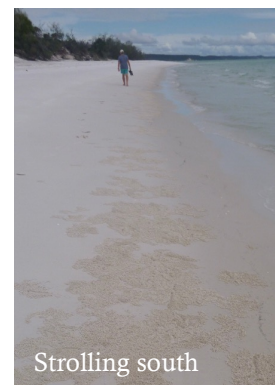
were seen. We didn't really take much notice of the bird life; a whistling kite was heard, a sea eagle, ibis', eastern curlews and pied oyster-catchers were spotted and small, honeyeater sounding birds were flittering in the trees. But for a two-hour walk, this was a small tally.

2nd May 2016

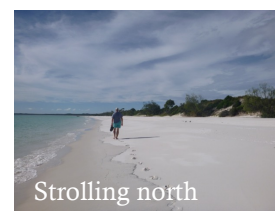
A 4pm walk on beach – north this time, pulling the tinnie up adjacent to a couple of pied oyster-catchers who were reluctant to get up as they'd been happily sitting on the warm sand. One indicated a limp and hobbled in front of us, with its partner, for a short time until they decided to alight.

Shortly after this we came across four red-capped plovers – not perturbed by our presence until we got quite close, when they too alighted and flew north. As they landed not that far in front of us I wonder if they thought we were stalking them. A couple of pied oyster-catchers were here as well but the birds looked like they were quite well so suspect it was not the same pair from before.

We gave ourselves a time limit as it was late in the day and the sun was setting when we finally got back to Sengo.



Strolling south



Strolling north



Sunset from shore outside Wathumba Lagoon

3rd May 2016

I have finally started to polish Sengo's port side. When I began, the sky was occupied with altocumulus and stratus clouds so there was no bright shining sun. However, slowly, she made her way through and she was quite hot – even at 0830 in the morning. So, deciding to get inside as quickly as possible, I spent the next 15 or so minutes buffing off the polish I had applied. By the time I'd finished this of course, the sun was shaded again. But I'd been at it an hour. I'll do the rest another time.

4th May 2016

Overnight had been particularly uncomfortable and whilst we knew that a slightly stronger wind would put us on a lee shore - we were a fair way out - I guess we had forgotten just how straining it can be trying to get to sleep with a combination of wind against tide and a side on swell with a big fetch. Add to that a persistent annoying sound, like the clicking of an old clock, as we rocked from side to side. Despite several frustrated investigations of the cockpit during the night we never did find its source

We had the anchor up at 0740 but it was a slow start. There were rain clouds coming according to bom.gov.au but by the time we checked that on our radar there was little in it. However Andrew pointed out that the cloud band, even if it

had no rain, might just provide a bit more wind. We had been sailing for about an hour and I was noting we hadn't really gone that far when the cloud band finally rolled over us and all of a sudden we were doing 8 knots! Andrew missed the change from dawdle to zoom; lack of sleep overnight had him snoozing in the cockpit not long after we set sail.

The wind reached a maximum of 20 knots apparent and we travelled with a cruising speed of 10 knots speed over ground for quite some time, however the wind had died down to 1.2 knots as we approached the leads to the Burnett River. We found that the pen we had booked at Bundaberg Port Marina was available (we were a day early) and we were able to dock in calm winds. We had arrived at a time that would be considered 'a late lunch' but immediate guests who stayed for coffee and a chat meant we finally had a biscuit to keep the gremlins at bay at around 4.30pm. There was just enough time for a quick clean up before we headed to drinks at Cruisers Cove (the BBQ area) with *Reve* and *Osiris II*.

Bundaberg 5th – 15th May 2016

Not Happy Cats!

5th May 2016

Q. When do cats, who are already mildly stressed when taken to the vet to get their claws clipped, really get pissed off? A. When they are left at the practice for minor surgery (with general anesthetic) because of advanced gum disease. Tiger although classed now as elderly, came through the whole exercise pretty much as the vet expected. Cilla on the other hand, being older and with gums in worse shape (at 17 years old you can imagine how I was feeling putting her under a general), lost three teeth and has a very weak jaw. The vet says the bone will grow back (human bone doesn't grow back) and she should recover in a few weeks. The expectation that they wouldn't eat much after the exercise was pretty much thrown out the door. Cilla was ravenous when they got back...then again she was on painkiller drugs and you know what they say about druggies with the munchies...The vet kept her removed teeth to show us how bad they were...we didn't keep them and I didn't take photos.

Bert Hinkler Hall of Aviation

6th May 2016

I can't tell you what I liked best about the Bert Hinkler Hall Of Aviation (which is located, along with a few other museums, in the Bundaberg Botanic Gardens). I can tell you that I didn't spend enough time in it. Unfortunately touring with other people doesn't allow me to indulge in my habit of reading every bit of interpretation on display but I did try laying on the equivalent of an ironing board looking down onto film of the Mon Repos area (just like Bert Hinkler did when he built his first glider with his mum's ironing board and that was his position in it (except of course he was looing down on the real thing)). I also had fun with the computer simulation where you try to get an aircraft off the ground using a joystick (probably easy for those used to computer games but not so easy for those who aren't). The museum is full of the history of the aviator and his achievements, although a few of the interpretive devices weren't working. A copy of his beloved Aero G-EACQ plane is on display in the main gallery and you can organize to take a photo with it and get it sent to you via email. I think the idea is that you can climb into it – I didn't. The actual original plane is in a room of its own off the reception area of the museum.

Next to the modern museum building is Bert Hinkler's house when he lived in England: Mon Repos – named after the beach where he first took off, a beach about 15km east of Bundaberg, south of Burnett Heads. The building was relocated brick by brick from England to Bundaberg (sounds a bit like Cook's Cottage in Melbourne) and apparently is full of further information – however, I didn't get a chance to see this.



Bert Hinkler Hall of Aviation



Bert Hinkler's famous Avro— G-EACQ



Replica of Bert Hinkler's famous G-EACQ (The Baby)

The Lady Musgrave Experience : A 'touro trip'

7th May 2016

It wasn't our usual mode of travel but because we had guests with limited time, we elected to do the 'touro' thing and pay for a day's trip to Lady Musgrave Island on board *Main Event* - a large, fast catamaran that goes from Port of Bundaberg Marina to Lady Musgrave Lagoon in 2.5 hours. We paid the extra to sit up the top to avoid the 'hoi poloi' (and more importantly, get the cheese platter as afternoon tea on the way back). The Main Event caters for 126 people downstairs and 48 people upstairs and on the way over you get a briefing by the marine biologist. The briefing is from the very top open-air deck and you need to hold on if it is, as it was on our trip, a bit swelly. I suppose she is used to it, but the marine biologist, Jen, looked quite comical going through her notes and holding up the flapping laminated A3 sheets of what we might see on and around the island, clearly hoping they wouldn't blow overboard. Once anchored you get a quick walk of the island, an explanation of the bird life here and a glass bottom boat excursion around the reef on the way back to the ship. After a smorgasbord lunch (there was plenty of food....and they catered for my gluten free status) there is the opportunity to go snorkeling. In some respects it was a pity the time on the island was limited (as are the areas the operator has license to go with its guests) but it is a good way for those who can't get out to the island otherwise to experience it.



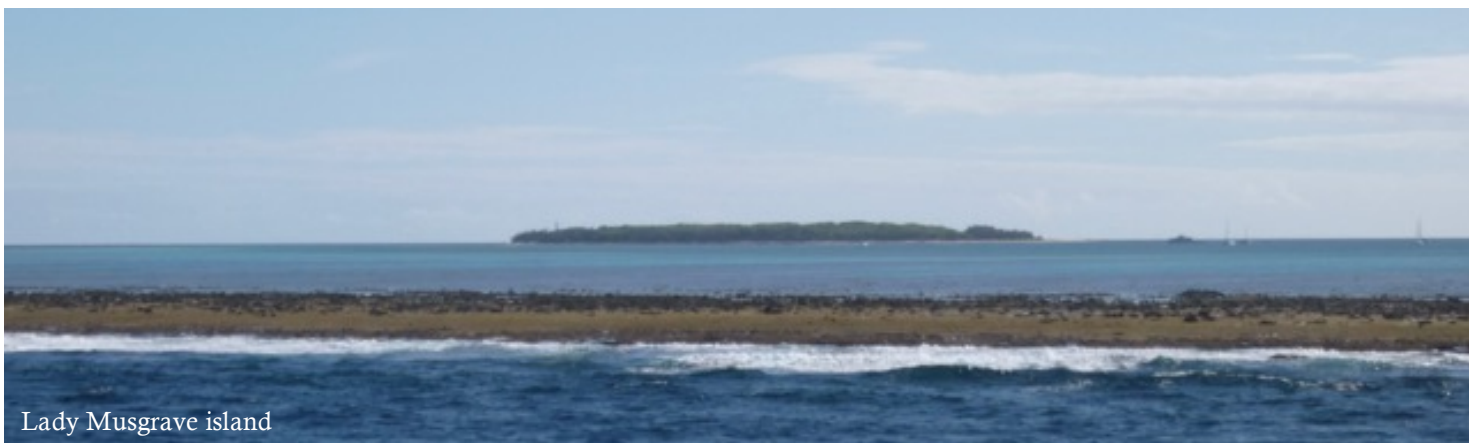
The Main Event from a snorkler's perspective



Noddy with chick



Shearwater in nest



Lady Musgrave island

Sharon Gorge

Gorges are not necessarily spectacular but they can be significant. I was expecting raw stone cliffs but instead found a somewhat understated erosion-created, forest-lined valley.

Sharon Gorge is a small area of subtropical rainforest protecting a section of the vulnerable vegetation grouping known as the Woongarra Vine Scrub (including the significant pant species - Wedge Leaf Tuckaroo) and lies between Bundaberg and Gin Gin on the Bundaberg-Gin Gin Road. The 900 meter walking track leads from the car park, through the campground (overnight is free and the facilities include toilets, picnic shelters and bbqs) and through the forest to the Burnett River; culminating at a lookout with seats.



The idea of the Sharon Gorge Trail and camping facilities was conceived in the early 1980's and a Bicentennial Grant helped fund the creation of the track and associated facilities, including the access track for parking vehicles.



Bundaberg's Natural Areas.

Bundaberg has 13 significant parks and reserves aimed at highlighting and protecting the area's significant plant and animal species (and in some cases, its geographic and cultural features as well). We visited 6 of these: Barolin Nature Reserve, Mon Repos Conservation Park, Baldwin Swamp Environmental Park, Pasturage Reserve, Sloping Hummock, and Sharon Gorge. During the ten days in Bundaberg, 98 different species of birds were seen



Barolin Nature Reserve



Biggest fish of the day: on the boat next to ours!



Darter nests



Darter nests: chicks hatched



Lake Monduran at peace

Freshwater fishing on Friday 13th

13th May 2016

A glorious day with a freezing start and while the black woollen long sleeve thermal kept the cold out in the morning, it was a little warm with the full sun beating down through the cloudless sky in the afternoon. Lake Monduran, approximately 20 kilometers north of Gin Gin, is a stocked dam; Barramundi being the main species. We were out with friends Robyn and Jamie and had a gorgeous day. Jamie just happens to run *Lake Monduran Barra Tours* so we couldn't be out on the water with anyone better. The biggest fish on the day however, was caught on the boat next to ours (you think the fickle fish could have taken one of our lures instead) and measured 98cm. (see photo). She was summarily tagged and released.

The bird list for the day included sea eagles, brahminy kites, egrets, herons, burdekin ducks, cormorants and darters. We motored past a tree with four darter nests in it (the birds disturb easily and were not sitting on the nests when we approached but were back soon after we'd gone past). A follow up photo (thanks Robyn) shows some chicks that have now hatched.

Burnett Heads to the islands

Lady Musgrave Island

15th May 2016

I know others leave the Burnett River at 4am to get to Lady Musgrave Island but we weren't quite so enthusiastic. Instead we had the anchor up at 5! The early start is necessary, depending on the wind (strength and angle) and your average travel speed, in order to enter the reef lagoon by the suggested latest time of 3.30pm. Any later than this and the sun is too low for you to accurately see any reef bommies that lay under the water; even with polaroids. The weather was such that we spent all but the first and last hour under spinnaker (the first being under motor to get out of the leads from the Burnett River, the last as the wind had changed direction enough that the spinnaker could not be used and we motor sailed with a the genoa instead). The trip was reasonable - we averaged around 6 knots - but the swell was such that my stomach was not its usual self. I didn't throw up however, and thankfully neither did Tiger nor Cilla. We arrived just as the Main Event was leaving and 'stood aside' to let it through. I had developed a headache through the day and was therefore not all that enthusiastic about a late afternoon snorkel or walk. We rested instead.

A foreshore walk around Lady Musgrave Island

16th May 2016

The day was hot and I was expecting to go for a swim either after our stroll around Lady Musgrave or somewhere along the way. But, my headache of the day before persisted and I struggled in the heat. We took a break and sat down in the shade to enjoy an apple on the beach; just where the Main Event brings its tourists. That was ok – we knew the drill and we managed a quick chat with Jen, the Main Event's marine biologist before moving on. The water adjacent the beach all the way around the island was delightfully clear (see photos to right)

Snorkeling: independence and resumption of the fish list.

17th May 2016

Today we gained our snorkeling independence! Whilst the pontoons have been on the tinnie to give it stability since January 2016, up until this morning there has been no way to get back into the tinnie if she was anchored with a couple of meters of water below her. But this morning Andrew fashioned some steps out of a couple of timber planks and some rope, and despite it being a bit of an effort we can now get back on board after any in-water activity. The piece of reef we chose for our inaugural independent snorkel wasn't brilliant but we saw several species of fish that I will have to relearn, a few I know I hadn't seen before (one in particular I couldn't get on camera) and significantly, provided me with a snorkeling



Foreshore walk: Lady Musgrave



Foreshore walk: Lady Musgrave



Foreshore walk: Lady Musgrave



Foreshore walk: Lady Musgrave



Foreshore walk: Lady Musgrave

experience that didn't involve me sticking my head up every few minutes in order to expel the water that had come through the gaps where my hair had allowed the water to leak in. This time, I actually took photos (instead of video), and these should allow the recommencement fish list. (although we haven't yet confirmed the species in the photos below).



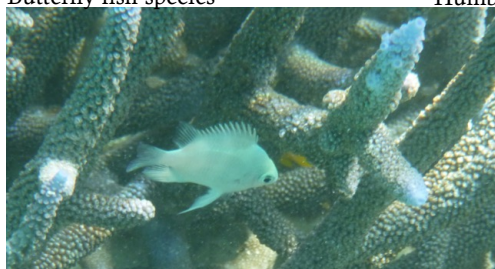
Butterfly fish species



Humbug species?



Cardinal fish species? (middle)



Green Puller (?)



Lemon/yellow Damsel? (?)

Lady Musgrave Island to Fitzroy Reef

18th May 2016

We left Lady Musgrave behind at around 0800 and tried a mixture of sails for the 22 nautical mile trip to Fitzroy Reef, first the main and genoa, then the main and spinnaker, and then back to main and genoa before motoring for the last couple of nautical miles. Fitzroy Reef is a lagoon reef, like Lady Musgrave, except it has no cay so it is not easily seen from sea level, unless of course you note the shoaling at low tide. There are quite a few reefs without cays in the Bunker Group area and a chart is essential. We came into the reef at low tide, and the entrance is tricky; we had been told it was just like Lady Musgrave, except that I think it is a tad thinner and has a dog-leg in it that must be obeyed. A quick nibble was had before we headed out for a snorkel to take advantage of the tide level. The sky was grey, it was raining in the distance and the wind was cold. So was the water! Enough to take your breath away and because of this it was, unfortunately, a short snorkel.

Fitzroy Reef to North West Island

19th April 2016

Clearing the dog-leg of the entrance to Fitzroy Lagoon we, with hope, hoisted the sails, but it was a day of on and offs; the engine was on for an hour, the engine was off for an hour, and so it went. We made North West Island with a speed between 2.9 and 8 knots (the engine was put on only when the wind decided to be that fickle that it was blowing less than 3 knots apparent and doing 360's on the dial). Unlike the previous two trips, the timing was not so critical, and whilst we didn't want to hit the fringing reef of North West Island, we had no lagoon entrances to worry about. *Whiskers*, a 45-foot aluminium catamaran, was anchored when we arrived. We had seen this boat at Lady Musgrave but hadn't made contact. This time however, contact was made and we caught up with her crew for a late afternoon walk across the island; mistiming it a bit, walking through the cay's vegetation as the sun went down and only getting the last rays of sunset as we made our way back to the tinnie in a westerly direction.

North West Island to Great Keppel

20th May 2016

We headed across to the island for an early morning walk at 0700. On the way over I noticed a plane flying above us; white with a red tail. Andrew thought it might be customs/border control and we wondered whether they were calling us, having yet to have the pleasure. Of course we weren't going to answer, we weren't on board Sengo, and *Whiskers* we noticed had just started their tinnie ride across to us. Clearly, they weren't going to answer either. The plane circled a couple of times, getting lower and I waved. I found out later (from a fellow cruiser who had just been hailed at another island) that they had in fact tried to hail us, first asking for the two catamarans anchored off the island and then our names, having discerned these by their lower flight pass.

We repeated the walking track across the island that we had used the previous evening but this time turned east when we hit the beach and followed the coast back around to the tinnies on a slightly longer walk. Because it was so early, the light wasn't good for photographs when we started but the birdlife seen included a banded rail, sea eagles, pied oyster catchers, egrets, a white faced heron, several unidentified sandpipers, and a flock of gulls. We arrived back at the tinnie at 0830 and were back on board Sengo, and had the anchor up, by 0910.

The sail across to Great Keppel Island was lovely, and the wind not too fickle; coming in from our port hind-quarter between 120 and 150 degrees, with a strength that allowed us to average 8 knots. We slowed down briefly for Andrew to bring in a big mackerel, before we came under Barren Island and around the top of Great Keppel. *Kereru* were already here and we had them and *Whiskers* over for Sundowners. Once our guests had left we went to bed early; catching up on sleep after a couple of early morning starts.



North West Island

North West Island

North West Island is 105 hectares and the largest island in the Bunker Group. It is surrounded by reef and similarly to Lady Musgrave Island is a haven for breeding birds. Although all the Noddy terns had clearly gone and there was no sign of shearwaters in the burrows adjacent the pathway. (there were however a few unidentified 'peeps' at various times), we did see other birdlife. The banded rail is clearly stuck here (ground dwelling bird) but we were surprised by (or we surprised) 5 large juvenile white bellied sea eagles as we walked the eastern quarter of the beach. Egrets were in large numbers, pied oystercatchers patrolled each section of beach we walked and an unidentified group of sandpipers was seen.

North West Island has hosted several industries since the European occupation of Australia, ranging from a turtle cannery (1904 to 1928), beche de mere harvesting (banned in 1999) and guano mining in the 19th century.

In 1980 it was declared a national park and you can obtain a permit to camp here. Sea life spotted; turtles in the shallows and a 'huge' manta ray swimming past Sengo when we arrived.

Damn it - Davit

As we were coming into the anchorage at Great Keppel Island we tried to hail *Kereru* on the radio to no avail. I had sent a text message as well...also with no response. In order to get an invite for sundowners over to them (which should have been started the moment we got into the anchorage), we rushed to get the tinnie in the water so Andrew could hail them from the back of their boat. I was tidying the helm station up when I heard an almighty crash...the dynamex holding the davit system up had given way (chafed on the outside of the winch bar), dropping down with the tinnie and splashing it into the water from several feet. A minor panic ensued, trying to dislodge the tinnie and retrieve the davit arm (and tidy everything else around it) before guests arrived. The broken davit line meant that, until we got it fixed, we had to use an old spinnaker sheet, a couple of blocks and a winch in the helm station to lower and raise the tinnie, making the whole process of visiting anyone or anything quite an elaborate and more time consuming exercise.

Winners and losers: May 2016

Winners:

- Bridle – Andrew spliced a new lead onto the bridle to replace the one snapped off in Runaway Bay (see Aboard Sengo-April 2016).
- Tinnie: boarding steps. The tinnie now has a rope-and-step ladder that we can use to get back into her after snorkeling. This is Mark I.

Losers

- Davit Winch Cable: breaks whilst lowering tinnie before Sundowners at Great Keppel Island.
- Andrew's 1986 Barra Rod: caught in the mix-up of the starboard spinnaker line whilst it was being used as an alternate davit raising and lowering tool. Unfortunately the rod has snapped in two and is unable to be repaired.



Andrew's catch on the way to Great Keppel!

A walk on Great Keppel Island

21st May 2016

In the morning, as usual it was domestics and a couple of loads of washing. In the afternoon, however, we went walking on Great Keppel Island

We had forgotten just how breaking the waves could be on Leekes Beach and having arrived just after low tide, we got swamped getting out of the tinnie. For some reason the bailer wasn't in the tinnie and Andrew took out the bung plug to drain the water. Unfortunately this meant, with an incoming tide, that I had to block the hole as the waves came in so more (sand ridden water) didn't get back in the boat (and subsequently I got even wetter!). Mostly drained we tried dragging the tinnie back up the beach but found pivoting it easier and moved it up close to the high tide mark just to make sure. It was 1520 when we started the walk and we weren't sure how long we were going to be. We had no navigation lights with us and we hadn't turned on Sengo's anchor light so the aim was to be back by dark. Heading inland on the track used for our Lighthouse Walk (see Aboard Sengo July 2015) we knew that we would come to a T-intersection with a notice board pointing to the Resort if we turned right (we had turned left last time) and followed the directions up the sandy track, up the steep rocky 4WD track, down the bituminised section past the island's generator (ignoring the rough foot track shortcut to the left) and through the back of the [Hideaway Resort](#) to the restaurant overlooking Putney Beach. We like this place. It isn't 5 star (although the prices are inflated) and the swallows are still nesting in the open-air building. The view however is gorgeous and we enjoyed an ice-cream and cold drink before heading back via Putney Beach across the headland and along Leakes Beach to our tinnie; which not only hadn't been swamped but was (safely) someway above the crashing tide. This meant of course that, we had to pivot the tinnie back into the water again, getting thoroughly drenched with the surf before getting back to Sengo. Farewell drinks with *Kereru* were postponed until the morning as the sun was just about to set and the wind had picked up to around 20 knots – conditions definitely not conducive to go visiting in the dark.



22nd May 2016

After a couple of early jobs on the boat we went for a final coffee with *Kereru*, who were heading off at midday for an overnight trip to Middle Percy...again, we are not sure whether we will see them again before they leave the country. The middle of the day was spent cooking – another batch of muffins for afternoon tea, and a chicken casserole in the thermal cooker for a few meals to be put aside for the future. At 1600 we visited *Karanoa*, a boat we had originally met at Mooloolaba in January. It was an early night for an early start the next morning.

Great Keppel to Pearl Bay

23rd May 2016

It was a glorious sail from Great Keppel Island to Pearl Bay, on the mainland in the Military Zone. The wind was off the starboard aft quarter and was steady enough for two thirds of the trip for the standard sail configuration of main and genoa, our speed sitting around the 7-8 knot range most of the way. When the wind changed however, to come from more behind us, and dropped so the apparent wind speed was only around 4 knots, we put up the spinnaker - for the third time ever. The breeze was fickle however and our speed range for the final third of the trip ranged from 4 to 6.5 knots. The anchor was down at 1530 and we went across to sundowners with *Free Spirit* and *Aquavista* at 1600.

Pearl Bay to Middle Percy Island

24th May 2016

Dawn was officially at 0604 but you wouldn't have known it - stratus clouds covered the sky blocking out the early morning light that usually wakes me up. It was a pity really, as Pearl Bay was a delightful anchorage and a photograph of it in early morning light would have been lovely. Instead, we motored out of a dull and overcast/shaded place after the anchor was up at 0615. The main and genoa went up within a few minutes of rounding the reef within Pearl



Bay and we enjoyed a whole 30 minutes of sailing! From then on it was the motor....all the way into Middle Percy Island – 55 nautical miles further on. There was the hint of wind, and occasionally when the wind gauge read around the 5 knot mark we gained up to a knot in speed (if I adjusted the sails properly) but mostly we were a steady projection via the motor.

We arrived at West Bay, Middle Percy, to find *Kereru* on their way over to the 'Percy Hilton' for sundowners; which had apparently started at 1600, half an hour previously. We secured the boat and headed across to meet fellow cruisers anchored for the night. At 2100 we headed back to Sengo for a late dinner and early to bed. It had been a long day.



Sunset from The Percy Hilton, West Bay, Middle Percy Island

Middle Percy Island

25th May 2016

We met *Skellum* on shore at 0800 for a walk up to the Homestead. There are two tracks to the homestead; one, a vehicular track, and one, a steeper walking track. We took the vehicular track up, after a short detour to check out the lagoon (where some people come in to anchor but it needs a high tide to get into it over a rock wall and you need to be able to dry out on the bottom). The road up to the Homestead winds itself through several vegetation communities, including a couple of rainforest sections, before passing the goat paddock leading up to the Homestead proper. The lessees make you quite welcome and are happy to provide a history of the island; old aerial photos on the wall show how much the place has changed. We took the steeper foot track back, on the opposite side of the gully. The vegetation types are quite different along this track, and include a savannah type landscape with spindly trees with a significant grass and sedge understory, and a beautiful rainforest gully area where you are surrounded by thousands of butterflies. You also have to cross through mangroves and over a saltpan (where apparently you may have to wade knee-high in salt water at high tide) before joining the original track back to the beach. Before heading back to Sengo we spent an hour or so under the shade of the Percy Hilton.

The Percy Hilton

The Percy Hilton is an A-Frame structure used as a gathering place for visiting boaties on the beach at West Bay. It is decorated with plaques and flotsam of all shapes and sizes donated by visiting yachts and boats. The expectation is that you leave something in the A Frame to signify that you've been here. We haven't yet, but I do know some yachts that have only left a token after their second or third trip. Plaques usually have the name of the boat on them, often the passenger names (but not always) and the year (or years) of the boat's visit. A small shed to the east of the current A-Frame has some of the earlier boat plaques; some from before I was born!



Middle Percy Island has had a mixed history. Early on coconuts and goats were established by the government to help travelling mariners, pastoral leases was issued (most notably to the White family who ran a sheep farm) and in 1964 Andy Martin leased the island in the hope to set up a sustainable lifestyle bartering goods and food with passing yachties. The lease ran out and after significant legal battle, in 2010 most of the island was designated national park. Relatives of Andy Martin now lease the area that was excised from the national park; this includes the homestead and the Percy Hilton and associated buildings, under a designated Conservation Park. The lessees are responsible for the public liability insurance for this area and any funds obtained from the purchase of preserves or honey, or becoming a member of the Percy Island Yacht Club, go to help pay the insurance bill and are greatly appreciated.

26th May 2016

The morning was taken up with boring domestic jobs: continuing the cleaning of the anchor well (and rust polishing), and the clean up of the two cupboards below the kitchen sink; the first because it was getting unmanageable and a real mess, the second because I was trying to find 4 forks which have mysteriously disappeared. (They are still missing).

Around lunchtime we headed to Whites Bay, skipping the option to closely check out the eagles nest (with a chick in it) in Rescue Bay because the radio chatter had several boats talking about heading to White's Bay to escape the northerly - and, we didn't want to be last in. As it was there were only four boats by sundown: *Skellum*, *MerSoleil* and *Amandla* (the last two being overseas boats) all enjoyed sundowners on Sengo. After everyone had retreated back to their vessels we spent some time on the tramp admiring the stars and trying to remember the constellations (learnt so long ago but now completely forgotten). When we got up to check the tinnie at 4am two other boats were in the bay. By 7am there were three. The wind was blowing northerly around 15 knots.

27th May 2016

It was a windy morning, but despite the rocking and rolling, six of us (from three boats) braved the bumpy ride to shore (and the shore breaking waves) for a walk. A mis-direction had us initially walking up the biggest, barest sand blow. The view from the top was great but getting down had us behaving like adventurous children. Some threw caution to the wind and ran down the extremely steep slope, one of us played it safe and slid down on her derriere and I did something completely out of character; I surfed down. Passing one obvious trail through to the valley behind the beach, we actually ended up following the track that starts at the rocky headland, scrambles up the side of a giant scree laden tor and continues uphill. A whip snake said hello to us on a large sun-facing rock-face where we had morning tea, and a trio of white-bellied sea eagles entertained us in the sky. Four of the six of us continued up to the homestead. Sundowners (dinner) was on *Amandla* before we all battled an extremely uncomfortable

night and a sharp, strong wind change where the beach became a lee shore and we appreciated the fact we were far enough out to allow for the anchor to reset.

Middle Percy Is to Scawfell Island

28th May 2016

In August 2015 I commiserated that I hadn't taken a photo of the sunset when we had come in to anchor at Refuge Bay, Scawfell Island as I was too busy trying to get the anchor down. At that time we took three attempts to anchor after a long and frustrating day. Today I also found myself anchoring whilst the sun went down in Refuge Bay, Scawfell Island after a similarly long day but this time, fortunately, it took only one go for the anchor to set (different anchor). We had started this morning at around the same time as we did last year, 0610 vs 0615, although last night's anchorage was 5nm north of last year's (White's Bay, Middle Percy Island vs Rocky Shelf Bay, South Percy Island) and it was an equally slow day. Whilst the forecast was for 10 – 15 knot south-eastlies dropping to 10 knots variable (after dropping from its 20 plus knots overnight), we found the 'variable' had come in earlier than expected and whilst we had a brief sail at 8 knots we very soon found ourselves with sporadic light winds that were unpredictable. For the first hour or so, I had the engine on, then off, then on, then off but in the end the wind strength wasn't strong enough to sail efficiently (to get to Scawfell Island before dark) and the angle on the wind dial often threw itself around in 360's. It was only for the last couple of hours we found the wind settled down enough to have any impact on the sails at all, but just to add to the speed of our progress. We had kept the sails up all day, somewhat hopefully (the genoa being pulled in tightly rather than being packed away when there was no wind) as it was providing shade for the front cockpit, the location of which seemed to be the coolest place to enjoy the trip.

Once anchored we settled for a g& t on the front tramp, appreciating the pink after-hew of

the sunset, listening to the loveliest dusk bird song we've heard for ages, and watching the baby blue of the sky shade down through light greys to black as isolated stars came out to play. I was listening carefully for kookaburra's as I knew that once they had stopped calling it was time for the owls. I didn't hear anything like a kookaburra call until after the familiar sound of the southern boobook owl, sounded from various points on the island. By this time it was dark and the Southern Cross was prominent above us.

Scawfell Island to Shaw Island

29th May 2016

We planned a reasonably early start and gratefully the wind had come up for a decent sail from Scawfell Island to Shaw Island. We averaged around 7 knots and came into Shaw for a late lunch. There was no walks to esoteric art works though (see Aboard Sengo-August 2015) as our aim was Airlie Beach. Early to bed for an early start the next day.

Shaw Island to Airlie Beach.

30th May 2016

Having been caught last year travelling against the tide into Airlie Beach we decided this year we would work with the tide instead, which meant a 0700 start. As we cleared the end of Burning Point, Shaw Island we put the spinnaker up...and kept it up all the way into Pioneer Bay, Airlie Beach. We are still learning to operate our spinnaker (Wingaker) and managed to give it a few challenges on the way in. A couple of jibes, avoidance of a couple of ferries, adjustments due to a couple of wind changes and at times running the sail with wind at 90 degrees apparent (with minimal issues) was pretty impressive, especially as I have had absolutely no personal spinnaker experience prior to this. Big O, you've done us proud.

Sundowners was on Sengo with *Kereru* who anchored adjacent us on the Cannonvale side of the marina. *Kereru* normally have to anchor a fair way out due to the length of their keel; we had to anchor a fair way out due to the exceptionally low tide expected overnight.

Airlie Beach.

31st May 2016

We booked the 'Shaggers' car for the morning and did a post office run and a big shop to restock general produce and dry goods. One of the main reasons the shop had to be today was Andrew had requested tiramisu for his birthday and I'd never made it before. Logically, I'd made a list of ingredients on my phone before we went shopping. Illogically I hadn't listed quantities and discovered when I got back to Sengo at lunchtime I didn't have enough marscapone. So an afternoon trip saw us passing by the chandlery before heading into the local Woolworths for the extra cheese.

Whale Season

Whilst the whale migration hasn't officially started the Coast Guard and VMR stations are announcing the potential presence of whales in the southern part of the state. As mentioned last year, we seem to be a whale repellent. Whale Count for May: 0