

# Aboard Sengo

June 2016

## Hook Reef

Exploring an iconic reef structure

5



## Booby trapped!

Another bird for the 'been on the boat' list

11

View of Shag Islet and Gloucester Island from south of Gloucester Eco Resort

## Magnificent Maggie!

An accessible island paradise just off the Townsville coast

12

## New Horizons

In June we sailed from Airlie Beach to Magnetic Island, a distance of around 210 nautical miles. Our activities included visits to the reef, catching up with fellow cruisers (some possibly for the last time), hiding from the weather, and exploring tropical islands.

# Airlie Beach

1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2016

1<sup>st</sup> June 2016.

Andrew's birthday and I am happy to report the homemade tiramisu was a success; eaten slowly as it was very rich, around mid afternoon on board Sengo after a lunch at Hogs Breath Café with *Kerreru*. We were delighted to find that the birthday boy got his steak for free as he was dining on his actual birthday, so add this to the members discount and it was a pretty reasonable cost for a special meal. The tiramisu was so rich we didn't have dinner (or nibbles) but I guess the calories probably equated for three meals. [Of course, it wasn't all celebrations; on the way to lunch was when I lost the little lumix camera (of all the days)].

We spent the next week on various odd jobs: ordering a new spinnaker halyard and replacing that; ordering a new davit line and replacing that; waiting for mail; ordering cat food and waiting for that; sorting out our first-aid kit and buying bits for that; and finally, a big shop just before we left. Andrew also installed the new wheels on the tinnie (which hadn't been tested before we left); and bought the supplies for and created Mark II of our tinnie access steps. I also did a rust run and a washing run. Other maintenance jobs included a winch service, cleaning around the engine hatches, and a clean out of the chemical tub.

We also found time to visit the doctor, the dentist and I got my eyesight checked.

On the social front we caught up with *Free Spirit* (twice), *Arkaydes* (we have been trying to catch up with this boat since January 2014), *Wishful Thinking* (shared several anchorages last season but really only connected in Bundaberg in May 2016), and *Beez Neez* (met at Middle Percy Island in May 2016). The last two boats are about to leave the country so this was going to be our last opportunity to catch up with them for a while.

## Tooth Hurty!

A surprisingly pleasant experience!

Photo: from dentist's invoice



Airlie Beach Dental Surgery

The appointment was 2.40 actually, but close enough.

Our instructions were to go through the door, past the monkey and up the stairs. What! What do you mean past the monkey? I wasn't quite expecting the over excited chimpanzee, bold and confronting, and way over-sized, taking up the top half

of the front door. Clearly the dentist thought it had outlived its usefulness as well, as within 24 hours it'd been replaced with a more serene stylized yacht; probably a more appropriate symbol for Airlie Beach. It was the best visit to the dentist I think I have ever had. There was no lecture on the state of my teeth (although I think I've been looking after them better on the boat than the several decades previously) and the dentist asked if I was ok every couple of minutes (my last dentist just plowed on, no matter how uncomfortable it was). And, although I now know this isn't unique, there is a television screen on the roof showing documentaries of the Great Barrier Reef and its underwater life. Oh how serene. It is as if you are snorkeling whilst getting your teeth cleaned. Andrew didn't come out of the exercise as clean as me – he needed a filling replaced and had to go back the next day. From what I can gather we were lucky. We have since heard from several people with bad experiences from dentists in Airlie. Trusting a practitioner in a tourist place with a transient population can be risky.



# Airlie Beach Market



The Airlie Beach Market (Saturdays or when the Cruise Ships are in) is on the move; or so the local council wants it to be. The current stall holders are concerned that moving the market from its current location to an area on the eastern side of the Sailing Club car park will not only reduce the current number of stalls from a fluctuating 115 to a fixed 70 (with no room to expand) but the car parking available is going to reduce to 19 spaces only. A development proposal has been put before council. This change is apparently part of Stage 2 of the proposal. At the time of our visit Stage 3 had not been announced and current stallholders want to know what the agenda is. A petition is circulating. The times I have visited the market it has been a vibrant, thriving affair with a mix of novelties, gifts, clothing, second hand books, take-away food, entertainers, musicians and vegies. A couple of times a cruise ship has been in the bay and this means the throng was a little hard to get through. Going by these occasions only, restricting the size of the market grounds is going to be problematic. I support leaving the market where it is, or at least moving it to an alternate appropriately sized venue.

## Whale Season

On 1<sup>st</sup> June the newspapers in Airlie Beach were awash with the headlines. Whale Season had officially begun. There were photos and stories and as per usual for us no sightings.

Whale Count for June: 0

## Winners and losers: June 2016

### Winners:

1. Davit winch gets a new line
2. Tinnie gets a more permanent set of removable snorkeling steps
3. Spinnaker halyard gets replaced
4. Tinnie gets a set of wheels so we can drag her up the beach
5. Lumix camera gets replaced (see below)
6. Canon camera somehow dislodges the suspected grain of sand that is stopping it from shutting down (and a \$40 camera bag suggested by the sales assistant in the camera shop to keep the sand out is rejected for a \$5 bag from cash converters)

### Losers:

1. Lumix camera gets lost somewhere between the public boat ramp and the slip yard at Airlie Beach
2. Terry the towel goes for a permanent holiday from Gloucester Passage



## Blue Pearl Bay



Sengo at Blue Pearl Bay

8<sup>th</sup> June 2016

We left at the leisurely hour of around 1000 and hoped the 5 to 7 knots the wind was blowing at Airlie Beach was going to hold for the entire trip across to Blue Pearl Bay on Hayman Island. It didn't. Whilst the trip wasn't very long and we had plenty of time, we eventually gave up on the extremely slow sail and put the motor on for the last couple of nautical miles. We managed to pick up a mooring, and the only other boat here when we arrived left soon after, so we had the place to ourselves for a while. We took the tinnie to the beach and snorkeled from there. The fish here included many species we'd seen before but also quite a few larger species, and in larger numbers; with schools of fish passing us in deliberate formation. Some individuals were extremely curious and I even had one cheeky *piscatorian* come up and nudge the camera; from the side or otherwise I would have had a photo. I have discovered that the people who named fish must be related somehow to Captain Cook – with names like six bar wrasse, and six bar parrotfish, I suspect their imagination gene wasn't active.



Sixbar wrasse



Bleekers parrotfish - female



Sixbarred parrotfish - female



Blue Fusilier



Blue tuskfish



## Bait, Barb, Hook, Line and Sinker. But no fishing!

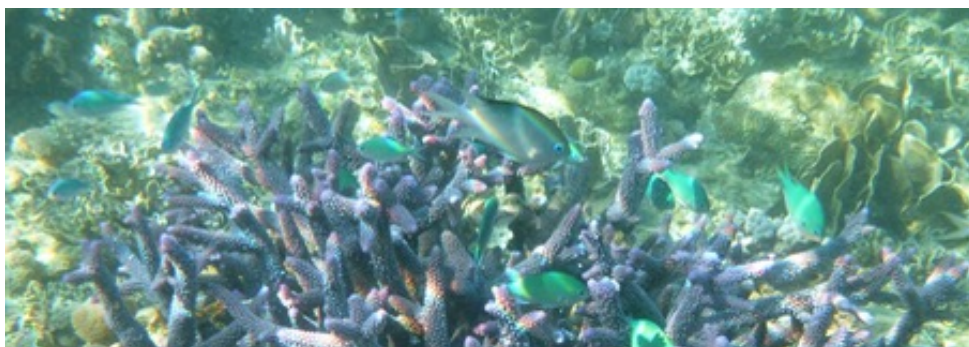
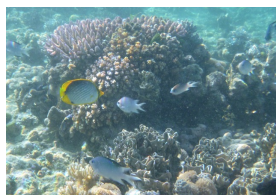
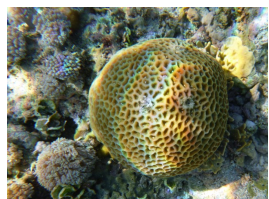
9<sup>th</sup> June 2016

About seventeen nautical miles from the top of Hook Island, in the Whitsunday's, lies Bait Reef, the southernmost point of a group of coral reefs that are popular with boaties, fishermen (and fisherwomen) and tourists to the Whitsunday's who pay companies for diving, snorkeling or aero-plane or helicopter sight-seeing trips.

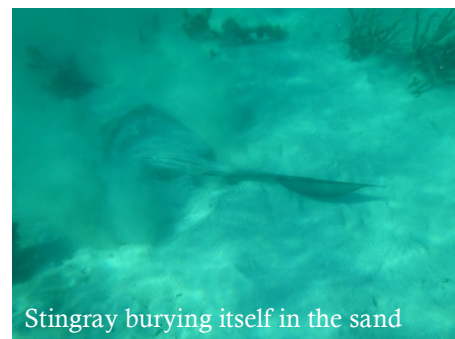
Bait Reef leads through to Barb Reef, Hook Reef, Line Reef and Sinker Reef. Adjacent to all these is Hardy Reef, location of the famous Heart Reef.

Bait Reef is perhaps the best known by the yachty community as there are several mooring buoys around a formation of pinnacle bommies called the Stepping Stones. You are not allowed to anchor here and the buoy use is officially only two hours but this is rarely adhered to – partially because it is so far to get back to the shelter of Hook Island after you have timed your visit to low tide.

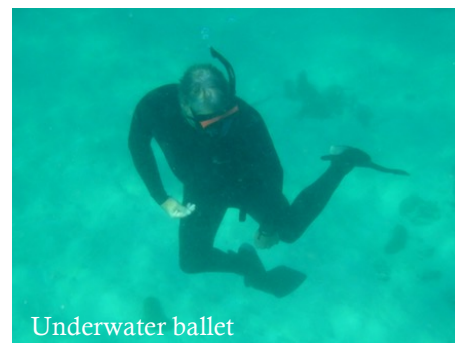
We had a leisurely start from Blue Pearl Bay, Hayman Island, dropping the mooring boy at around 0900 but there was absolutely no wind. We motored all the way to the reef system, going around Bait Reef to the west and then north and anchoring in the belly of the curved Hook Reef at high tide. After lunch, we had a quick test of the new step system Andrew has put on the back of the tinnie – Mark II – before heading out to the coral. Because the sea floor still looked a little deep to anchor we decided to drift snorkel, and with Andrew's propensity to duck dive, of course it was me tied onto the boat. The current was faster than we realised and I found it hard to focus on photographs because we were moving so quickly. Many fish species were seen – as was a moray eel (Andrew) and several stingrays.



At the end of the snorel



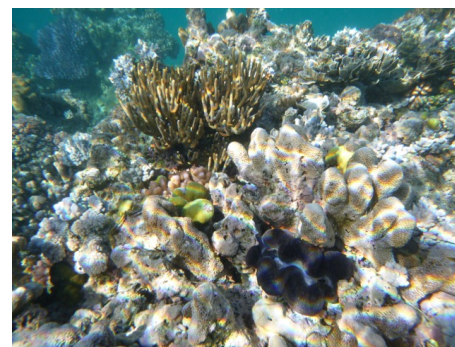
Stingray burying itself in the sand



Underwater ballet



Hook Reef looking to Hardy Reef







Inside the top section of Hardy Reef

10<sup>th</sup> June 2016

It was the short bursts of blue that caught my eye and swung my focus to beneath the boat; a school of tiny bright, sky-blue fish flitting around in the shade underneath our hull. Looking past these I realised I could see the bottom, over 9 meters below the water level, despite the minute colouring from the dust. The clarity of the water bode well for our morning's exercise, as it was around an hour before low tide and we had decided we would take advantage of the time and go snorkeling. Except this time we decided we would try the top of Hook Reef.

Our destination – the little reef section between the two cardinal marks marking the passage to the reef channel lay around six nautical miles away from Sengo and therefore there was likely to be a slightly lengthy ride in the tinnie. At that time in the morning the sun is not high enough to let you clearly see any reef or bommies until you are practically on top of them, particularly if you are looking into it, and we had several surprises as we suddenly found ourselves very close to large clusters of coral. Again we decided it was going to be more efficient if we drift snorkeled, and again I was the one hog-tied to

the tinnie. After a pleasant journey over this section of we decided to go and check out the structures on the channel.

The channel itself is around 60 meters

deep and we got distracted with the reef structure on the west side of the exposed edge of Hardy Reef, so didn't actually get a close look at where the tourists go. Three large groupers were fossicking the reef at low tide, and were prepared to expose their very fat dark backs to the air in order to get into the good scrounging spots. A white tipped reef shark was also patrolling this area and several Giant Trevallies were seen. The entrance into Hardy Reef was a drain against tide situation with eddies, and overflow and we fought against it. Whilst the tide had turned, the outflow from the reef had clearly not finished and we struggled to make headway. We did a quick inspection of the top end inside Hardy Reef deciding on a quick snorkel along the western edge of the inside exposed reef before getting back in the tinnie and heading home. Of course the thicker, and supposedly more spectacular reef was farther to the south of us. Our concern was getting stuck inside.

Our community service quota was achieved by some litter collection; an old, but still inflated, purple balloon and the bag around some mushy and rotten white bread – I let the fish have the bread.. although I suspect it wasn't all that healthy for them.



Entering the waterfall into Hardy Reef

## Hook Reef to Cape Gloucester

11<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Overnight was as expected; the 10-15 knot south-easterly had come up and it was a little lumpy, and somewhat uncomfortable. I awoke around 0600, as usual, to notice another yacht anchored in the area (toward the western end of Hook Reef) and wondered what in their right mind they were doing there – these were not the conditions to go snorkeling in or to start exploring a reef. He had not been there at 0300 in the morning when we had got up to check our position.

Frustratingly we were waiting for 0930– a time when the sun would be high enough to give us a better chance of seeing bommies below the water's surface. Also frustratingly this was about low tide, so not the best time to start heading out of a reef. As it was, any dark patches we went over were well and truly below the water's surface but by being prudent with the timing and visibility, it meant we were going to be later arriving at our intended destination and we were going to need a fairly good hull speed to arrive there before dark. Fortunately, the wind speed increased to 15-20 knots as predicted and we made very good speed over ground time, arriving at Gloucester a little after 1600.



Looking from our anchorage past Shag Islet to Gloucester Island

## Cape Gloucester

12<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Behind Cape Gloucester was our hunkering spot for a bit of wild weather, including a strong wind warning that lasted five days. We anchored very much where we had anchored during last year's SICYC Rendezvous and I still maintain this is one of the prettiest spots we've been to; moody weather enshrouding the hills in tones of blue can be just as enchanting as sunshine bringing out the bright greens on Shag Islet and Gloucester Island.

12<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Angled against the hill for best protection from the wind, didn't necessarily give us best protection from the swell. Which was fine except when the swell was directly beam on... This bay is touted as a great sail – protected and no swell – well not when you've got a strong south easterly that has been running for a couple of days. We were in direct line of a several nautical mile fetch.

13<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Overnight was mildly uncomfortable with a couple of instances of rolling so great I got up to rescue





Sengo from beach near Gloucester Eco Resort

anything that had made a noise. Never-the-less, we have had worse, and we were between these few times able to get some sleep. The cats weren't going to move - Cilla was wedged in her spot in the bookshelf in the port hull all night, and Tiger curled up tightly in his basket, only joining us for his usual early morning wake up call

15 June 2016

It was while reminiscing that it was here, at Gloucester Passage, that I was told how to put extra pegs on my washing to help them stay on the lifelines in windy weather, whilst Ironically I was watching a towel flap around in the fresh breeze that hadn't exactly eased as far as we expected it to, that I suddenly had the epiphany why there was a single peg, by itself, on the lifeline at my last inspection of the drying washing. The peg had actually been attached to something. That something was a towel. There had been five other pegs attached to that towel. And I did recall as I was pegging it that they don't make pegs like they used to, with three useful divits in the shank; and that these days there is usually only one useful divit, that being closest to the open end and therefore more prone to being knocked off – or, as in this case blown by a rogue gust of wind.

I imagine as these two or three layers of irony swept over me, that the towel in question was on its way across to Shag Islet, and I had a vague hope of perhaps seeing it in a while, as there had been talk of a trip to shore for a walk (we hadn't been off the boat in a week) but as the wind picked up (and I pulled the remaining drying clothes inside the cockpit to finish drying) the prospect of the walk faded to a possibility of the morrow.

The wind strength was supposed to have died down today – at least a bit – but the timing wasn't consistent, and perhaps, had I decided to do a quick load of washing later in the day, then I might still have the towel. However, I have discovered that one must take the opportunity to see things or get things done when it arises, or more importantly for the washing, when I am vaguely in the mood. I was struggling to fit all of our towels in the cupboard anyway.

16<sup>th</sup> June 2016

On Friday 16<sup>th</sup> June the weather was finally calm enough for us to get off Sengo and go for a walk. The sun was shining, it was warm and we headed initially east along the shoreline, around the corner where we noted the wind was still blowing up the coast. Montes Resort and Gloucester Eco Resort were just how I remembered them, quaint and charming and on the return stroll we spread our love around, indulging in a drink at Montes before lunching at Gloucester. On a final walk along the beach we ran into three Victorians; one from Eltham, the outer Melbourne Suburb twenty minutes away from where we used to live and where I did a my major food shopping. It is a small world. I felt a bit sad knowing that this would be my final stroll along this beach for a while. There was no sign of the towel.





Looking across Stone Island to Gloucester Island (left) and Gloucester Passage (gap in the middle)

## Stone Island

19<sup>th</sup> June 2016

I couldn't see a thing this morning when I got up, and nearly couldn't hear anything either. The expected downpour had come, we were facing west, technically unprotected, after a northerly, change, also unprotected, that had blown up to 20 knots overnight. It was predicted 10 to 15 and after yesterday's 15 to 20 knot expectation was struggling to get to 5 knots I was quite surprised. There was no point moving for the southerly wind change until we could actually see anything and clearly I was going to need my wet weather gear. Within 30 minutes I could at least see Stone Island.

Yesterday was a milestone of sorts, officially sailing further north along the coast than we had done before, albeit extremely slowly, as when we lifted the anchor outside the Gloucester Eco Resort it was blowing 7 knots and, so I thought, as we were only going a short distance, that the genoa would do and a slightly longer serene sail would be nice. Well it was quite a bit longer, the wind died down and we got down to 2.5 knots boat speed for a while. We were however in no hurry; the trip was only around 10 nautical miles.

When we arrived at the anchorage there was already a boat here; anchored next to an interesting obstruction in the water. Upon closer inspection the obstruction was a 'not so happy

boat' (sunken) and the anchored vessel was in the process of removing it. There were two goes at it that we saw, salvaging bits to start with and then returning for the rest of the vessel. Their method was to pump air into big yellow balloons/pillows under wreck to lift it out of the water. They could have been at it all day.

Sunday morning is apparently market morning in Bowen, but as the wind was unpredictable we weren't going to try to get there. It would have been a pretty miserable experience in this rain anyway



Salvaging the wreck



Rain anyone?



Leaving Cape Upstart: approximately 9am

20<sup>th</sup> June 2016

Despite motoring into Grey's Bay, Bowen, yesterday with wind on the nose at 24 knots and the rain not far off settling down, and of course despite being in wet weather gear, getting mildly drenched, and everything in the in the starboard locker soaked, we had the flattest, most comfortable afternoon and evening that we've had for quite some time. Andrew even managed to get television signal to watch the Azerbaijan Grand Prix!

For our trip to Cape Upstart today we had the most magnificent spinnaker run from Bowen right up to the north east tip of the Cape, with the wind ranging from 180 degrees astern, to around 60-70 degrees from the bow; until of course the wind dropped out, did 360's and changed direction, all within a matter of a few minutes. In the tassel of getting Big O down and turning west we had the motor on for a few minutes but, eventually we were in a position, with a strengthening wind off the front bow, to sail the traditional way into anchorage just below The Bun.



Leaving Cape Upstart : approximately 11am

The landscape is magnificent here, peaked hills with prolific and prominent granitic tors popping out above the vegetation. The late afternoon sun on the hills is serene. I would have enjoyed the mid afternoon view as well, had I not been running around gathering up the wet and dirty towels, either used to protect our outside cushions from the dirt with the incoming downpour yesterday, or those that were already in the cockpits used as cat beds or foot wipers, and which had got thoroughly drenched. By sun down half of them were partially dry.



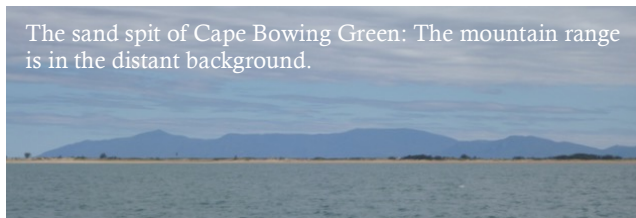


## Cape Upstart to Cape Bowling Green

21<sup>st</sup> June 2016

Cape Bowling Green is not the most awe-inspiring Cape on the coast; in fact I would argue it is the most boring one we've seen - an elongated sand spit jutting out into the sea. The most inspiring view coming toward the Cape was the prominence of the mountain range behind it. You need to pass around a west cardinal mark to come into the top anchorage, and here the depths are shallow, and anchoring not easy in the slimy, fine, ooze mud. Being only a day after the full moon, the moonrise was magnificent and the calm winds meant thankfully calm waters.

But calm winds had meant a calm sail – at least whist we could sail. We had the spinnaker up for two and a half hours; then the motor on for two hours, and then finished it off with traditional running sails (main and genoa) for the final approach into the anchorage. We were clearly not going too fast as the welcoming committee (one) arrived casually on deck to greet us (see this page).



The sand spit of Cape Bowling Green: The mountain range is in the distant background.

## Cape Bowling Green to Horseshoe Bay

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2016

Having watched a yacht persevere with the sails the day before I was determined not to be shown-up today and persisted (for a while) in trying to sail all the way from Cape Bowling Green to Horseshoe Bay, Magnetic Island. It didn't work. Not only was the wind strength bordering on 'piddly' it was in the wrong direction, and not even a major change in direction for us (with the eventuality of having to tack our way up the coast) was going to get us to Magnetic Island in anywhere near comfort or before dark. After a couple of hours the motor went on and the only mildly exciting event was working out whether we had to change course to allow a tanker to pass.

## Greetings!

He looks like he is wondering why we are here.

Such a human face: or maybe something out of the Muppets?



A personal greeting to Cape Bowling Green! Chaperoned in – at least for a short while - this Brown Booby landed on the back steps of Sengo. At least this was a purposeful landing; unlike the Shy Albatross in March 2015 (see Aboard Sengo March 2015)



# Magnificent Maggie!

## Magnetic Island

Magnetic Island lies approximately five nautical miles north east off the coast from Townsville. The Island has four main settlements (Nelly Bay, Horseshoe Bay, Arcadia and Picnic Bay) and seventy percent of the island is national park. The island has an average population of 2500, and has 40 nautical miles of coastline that encompasses 23 beaches. It is situated inside the Great Barrier Reef National Park.

### Nelly Bay

Nelly Bay is the main commercial hub on Magnetic Island hosting two supermarkets, a hardware store, cafes, a bakery, Pharmacy, the Magnetic Island Post office, a fuel station and many home businesses. The ferry terminal transports visitors and locals to and from Townsville several times every day. Sealink has more ferry services but Fantasea has the car ferry.

### Arcadia

Arcadia lies on Geoffrey Bay on the south side of Magnetic Island. It has a variety of houses, some quite old; may still plain-sided asbestos cement dwellings. It is a tourist hub with a pub, launderette, cafes, general store (with fuel) and a pathology centre.



Horseshoe Bay

### Picnic Bay

Originally called Camoomilli, Picnic Bay lost the ferry drop off some years ago; the result of which seems to be a declining commercial hub in Picnic Bay where the local stores (with the exception of the pub) are closing down. Mumma Mia's, however, may just buck the trend and the Italian eatery is hoping to open in July 2016. I have been told that both owners are Italian and trained cooks. The 'township' however is home to many houses, the local tip, a golf cub and the island historical museum.

The foreshore here would provide a delightful picnic spot, the fringe shaded by lines of curtain figs. The jetty, although no longer in commercial use, was restored to historical guidelines in 2010. The structure however, would provide no tie off comfort for a visiting yacht.

### Horseshoe Bay

Horseshoe Bay is large bay on the northern side of the island and is a very popular spot for visiting yachts. The commercial hub (that has a big brick welcoming 'half gate' that says 'Horseshoe Bay' but I believe the township was originally called Bee-Ran) is derived mainly of restaurants and eateries, a couple of tourist shops, a jet ski tour shed, a real-estate agent and many holiday places to stay. Along the foreshore and beachfront you can also hire jet skis, kayaks, paddleboards and fishing boats. The tavern has reasonable specials several nights every week. (except note that it only serves coffee on Saturday mornings!).



## Maggie's Military History

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016

After a quick couple of morning jobs we headed across to step foot on Magnetic Island and to stretch our legs. It had been six days since stepping on dry land, and I was looking forward to some exercise. *Osiris II* had told us about the Fort Walk (yes, Magnetic Island has World War II history) and if you keep going, you can do a large loop circuit, taking in several bays (where it is possible to swim) and end up back into the eastern end of Horseshoe Bay.

We had awoken again to an overcast sky with the bases of some of the clouds that low they were obscuring the top of the nearby hills. The rain radar however showed nothing and there was no forecast of rain. But it was a hot day, and surprisingly muggy for a day with no expected precipitation. The walk to the fort from Horseshoe Bay follows the Horseshoe Bay road for a couple of kilometers before reaching the car park adjacent the start of the track. The walk up to the fort area is 4 km return (expected 2 hours but I expect that assumes reading all the interpretation boards).

The fort area at Magnetic Island was built in 1942 to help protect the mainland from the Japanese threat. Japanese bombers did attack Townsville, but that was before the fort was built (although after it had been surveyed), and interestingly the only shot fired in 'anger' from the fort when it was operational was at a US warship. Tracks lead off to various sites (concrete bases of buildings the only remains) including the latrines where the interps board

for the ladies ablution block reads *'Off duty, a young woman may have peered in the mirror here wishing for lipstick while pinning her hair and buttoning up a clean uniform in readiness for a dance at the Arcadia Guest House. Imagine the bedtime chatter after an evening spent with attentive US Army Servicemen'*. I mean – really! I am sure a male wrote the interps and didn't get it approved. Whist I don't mind the style that tries to put you into the place and the time - I think that this comment was just a bit too... bah.

The signal station actually has a large more informative interps board inside it, however the cursive text is a little too curly in my opinion, making it not particularly easy to read. Here the interps goes one step further than the boards though and you can press a button and hear individuals recollect their time either building the road up to the fort or their experiences in the service.



Instead of continuing on the circuit walk of the beaches, we headed back toward Horseshoe Bay for lunch, having decided a few almonds was not quite enough to keep us going, and managed to get a lift down the road (in a 'topless' convertible) by a delightful Victorian couple (non-boaties) we'd met earlier on the track. An early dinner at the tavern was had with *Osiris II*.



View from the Signal Station

Like on Raymond Island in Victoria (see Aboard Sengo January 2015) koalas were introduced to Magnetic Island; starting with 16 individuals in the early 1930's. But unlike Raymond Island they don't seem to have taken over; the current population quite content to sit about the trees. I couldn't find any literature that says they are having an adverse impact on the vegetation of the island; a 2011 study (McGregor et al; James Cook University; 2013) estimated their numbers to be around the 800 to 900 individuals over several habitat types (koalas were found in 10 of the 18 habitat types sampled in the study). koalas were originally introduced to islands as a sanctuary population for potential decline in other areas. They may yet live up



to their purpose. There were quite a few koalas lazing about in trees along the track to the fort area. This couple was very cute. Mother just wanted to relax and got herself in a position where she was hanging all four limbs loosely down below her. This of course left junior a bit unprotected and his antics at climbing over his mother's back had us gasping in horror; at one point he was hanging on only with his teeth from his mother's ear.

## A trip into 'Town'

24<sup>th</sup> June 2016

The daily bus pass for Magnetic Island was not the cheapest ticket available, except that at the time of purchase, I didn't know there was anything else. The daily \$7 fare allows you all-day travel from Horseshoe Bay to Picnic Point; all we really needed however was a return ticket (or two one way tickets) to the ferry terminal at Nelly Bay.

Likewise, the SeaLink Ferry was not the cheapest way to get to Townsville. Because we had to travel to Townsville twice (due to my glasses prescription) it was cheaper to get a multi

pass (10 trips), than four day passes. The FantaSea Ferry is slightly cheaper for a standard day ticket, and the cheapest option still would have been to sail (or motor) over and anchor in 'the duck pond' outside the marina. But that would have meant the evenings were full of city and port lights and noise; not the silent calm of Horseshoe Bay. All good things come at a cost.

The day was a twelve-hour event, and we were a bit footsore at the end of it. In actual fact it should have been a thirteen-hour event, but the alarm clock failed to go off and we awoke with only 15 minutes to get up, have breakfast, feed the cats and get the tinnie into the water to head across to the bus

stop. We made the 0720 bus; which thankfully married in nicely with the 0750 Townsville ferry.

The SeaLink ferries run from 0620 to 2300 almost every day, and the clientele on the 0750 service ranged from business men, business women, parents taking their children across to school (playing UNO), high school students (in uniform and in casual wear) and holiday makers. One couple had a small child who spilt some coffee in the walkway between the seats. They didn't bother to clean it up; and didn't search out for assistance from the staff, and so, in order to remove the sipping hazard, I found a serviette



buried in my pocket and cleaned up the mess myself. There was no 'thank you' involved here. They looked as if they thought they were above it. I just don't get some people.

The reason for our early morning start was that we had booked into the 0930 free walking history tour of Townsville. The tour runs Wednesdays and Fridays and is made possible by a grant from the government as part of Townsville's 150 year celebrations. There is no decision yet as to whether it will continue after the celebrations finish.

For an hour we followed the guide around some of the streets of Townsville learning predominantly about its past, which has included, in some instances, the origins of current well-known businesses. Some things to note include:

- The old Post Office has now been converted into a boutique brewery.
- Eddie Mabo was once the gardener for James Cook University but went on to hold several significant posts on his way to being a champion for Native Title
- Townsville is a port for the export of minerals, sugar and beef
- There is a cross of demographics living in some of the oldest, most attractive buildings in the city
- It is said that Robert Towns actually only visited the town that was named after him once; upon the declaration of the naming of Townsville.

There are quite a few unoccupied historic sites; the local council is hoping to convert them into public spaces.

There exist also three self-guided walks around town and brochures for these can be picked up at both the Community and Information Centres.



The old customs house: now a private residence

The old Queens Hotel: opposite Anzac Park. This building is currently empty.



## Townsville

Officially named in 1866 Townsville is a large country town with a population of around 200,000. It has unfortunately got the current honour (June 2016) of having the second highest unemployment rate in Australia. Our day included trips to several (or past several) shopping centre areas and there is a large Stockland shopping precinct about 5 kilometers from the city centre.

At 286 meters, the city's prominent monolith, Castle Hill, the locals like to tell you, is almost a mountain (in the US the unofficial height of a mountain is 300 meters whilst in the UK it is 610 meters) and around 300 species of birds have been spotted in the local area. Townsville boasts an Army Museum, a Maritime Museum, the Museum of Tropical Queensland, several other historic museums and a reef aquarium. Quite a few of its old buildings (and some of its not so old buildings) are for sale or lease and in some ways, with high unemployment and low occupancy, the city reminds me of Maryborough (see Aboard Sengo - January 2016). However, Townsville is much larger than Maryborough and despite some empty buildings, much more vibrant; with people in the streets early until late. The recent closure of the nickel mine may have some impact, but the town is a large rural hub, and ironically, with a growing population, should survive.

## The Horseshoe Bay Market

Going on recent visits to markets, the Horseshoe Bay market is quite small. It has the usual gift and jewelry stalls, a fundraiser for St Vincent's and the local koala hospital, a local fruit stall and the usual odds and ends of second hand books, people giving massages etc. Andrew's attention was taken with the outdoor beanbag store – which was the first stall we actually came across. There was also a band playing, but I am not sure that is a usual occurrence and may have only been there because it was the first weekend of the school holidays. Apparently the market is held on the last Sunday of every month and on school holidays.



For a man who doesn't really like beanbags, Andrew is looking mighty comfortable!

## The last days of June.

The last days of June were surprisingly cold; although nowhere near as cold as further down the east Australian coast. Nevertheless, this really wasn't any comfort when waiting for an on-line groceries order to be delivered to the boat ramp at 0800 at Horseshoe Bay; a decidedly uncomfortable two-hour wait had with cold southerly winds rushing down the hill and no public seating in the sun. Apart from one short afternoon excursion to a local beach (where the remains of previous settlement is surrounded by yellow triangular asbestos warning signs) we did very little, staying inside where it was warmer. Socially we caught up with *Vanagi*, *Arkaydes*, *Silver Cloud* (sans boat), *Rene*, and dinner on the last day of the month with *Osiris II* at the \$15 'parmy' night at the Marlin Bar Tavern.

## Horseshoe Lagoon.

Even some of the locals don't know really where this is but the lagoon is accessed from several points. We entered the area via a barely noticeable track off Horseshoe Bay Road, the only indication of activity being a sign extolling the work volunteers do on behalf of the national parks service. The track was sandy and through scruffy looking vegetation. It was mid morning, so not the best time for birdlife but we had half a chance as the sky was quite overcast. I believe the track continues to the western end of Horseshoe Bay beach but we turned south crossing the lagoon via the boardwalk and coming out in the middle of a developing housing estate. Here Bush Thick-knees and lapwings were quite prominent, as well as one female wallaby with young in her pouch. It was disturbing to see that quite a few of the new houses had fences around them. Bush Thick-knees are found in habitat described as 'open areas.' if these 'open areas' become inaccessible due to development their populations may decline or disappear. The housing estate is designated in the flatter 'open areas' of the valley. The rocky, hilly surrounds may not provide suitable homes for these birds.



Horseshoe lagoon



Horseshoe lagoon



Horseshoe lagoon