

Aboard Sengo

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March 2019

Gordon River

Not quite to plan!

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Kelly Basin

Relics of hope!

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Of Moody Blues... and Greens ...

.....and Greys!

Meanderings around
Macquarie Harbour



Birchs Inlet

A bit of an explore – but
we found ourselves up
the waterway without a.....

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Early Autumn in Tasmania.

We've been told that Tasmania's west coast gets more rain than any other area in the State. We've also been told it gets more wind. And with the weather we experienced this March we have no doubt that these comments are true. Officially Strahan had rain for 19 days in March. We experienced rain for 15 days (not including the days where we were just enshrouded with fog), and on each of those days I was silently grateful that we'd had our leaks fixed when we were on the slip in Queensland—otherwise we would have spent a significant amount of time this month with a sponge and bucket emptying the bilge. Wind was another matter, with Strahan gusting up to 55 knots during a 48-hour State-wide gale warning.

To be fair, the days that weren't raining were beautiful, mostly sunny, and mildly to comfortably warm (the day that was hot (29.2 in Strahan on the 2nd March) was clearly an anomaly). Frustratingly we found that some of these good days couldn't be spent exploring, or not in the areas we wanted – I was sick for a couple of them and we were waylaid in town for several more, spending around 22 days 'slightly, sort of, 'stuck' due to either weather conditions and/or boat maintenance. It was last April when we had issues with our Anchor Winch, and almost twelve months later we were having issues with it again – for completely different reasons this time.

At the start of the month we attempted to temporarily get out of the Gordon River to let a rally of boats enjoy it to their hearts content; the idea being we would revisit the river when the hoards had gone and the river was back to its quiet, almost silent, self. Things however didn't quite work that way and we became an unexpected feature of tourist photo albums, as the two big tourist boats passed us daily on their way to the rainforest walk at Heritage Landing, as



Sengo on the Gordon River. Photograph © Matt Heyma

well as the 47 rally boats doing the Van Diemen's Land Circumnavigation that put the Gordon River on their must visit list. One of the 'iconic' features of the Gordon River is its reflections – and we give a big thanks to MH who sent us a fabulous photo of Sengo (see above).

But time is marching on. At the end of March we were still in Strahan. The days were getting shorter and the nights were getting colder. Sometime soon a decision needed to be made as to whether we headed south to continue our Tasmanian circumnavigation (original idea) or north (towards Queensland and warmth) and leave the circumnavigation for another year.



Franklin River



Franklin River

Paddling the Franklin River... Backwards!



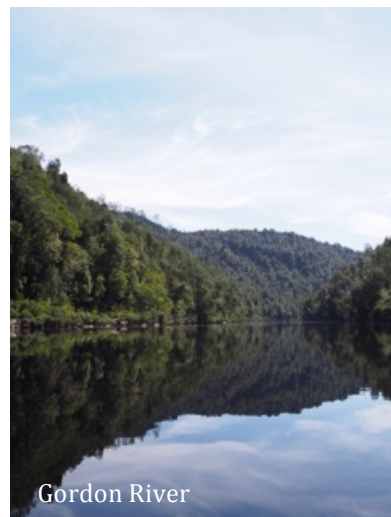
Franklin River – paddling backwards so we can chat to The Southern Cross. Photo © Catherine Kimber

1st March 2019. After returning from the St Johns Falls on 28th February, I had discussed the idea with Andrew of using our kayak today, having not done anything with it since Andrew repaired its holes on 30th November 2017! And the idea of kayaking on the Gordon River appealed. There was no swell to deal with and the atmosphere would be conducive to the transport, the only

thing we would have to consider was the current, which was reported to be around one knot heading downstream. However, with *The Southern Cross* now rafted up to our port side and being attached to Warner's Landing on our starboard side there was now no way of getting the kayak off the front deck.

However *The Southern Cross* suggested we travel in tandem up to the Franklin River via tender and we agreed. Some of the photos of this trip aren't brilliant as we were often on the sunny side of the waterway just to get warm (it was mighty cold in the gorges in the shade) and so in many shots I am either facing the sun or looking toward it. And of course we are moving – that never leads to a perfectly clear photo.

The Gordon River's flow was such that we were able to get past Big Eddie (we have heard of adventurers whose tenders have found this too rough and I suspect there would have been a lot more water coming down the river at the time) and we turned in to the Franklin River with ease, sunlight producing steam from the cold rocks that lined the edge of the waterway. An early lunch was had at the first shallow section of the Franklin River and apparently you can drag your tender over this and a subsequent

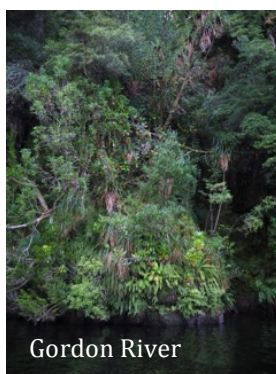


Gordon River

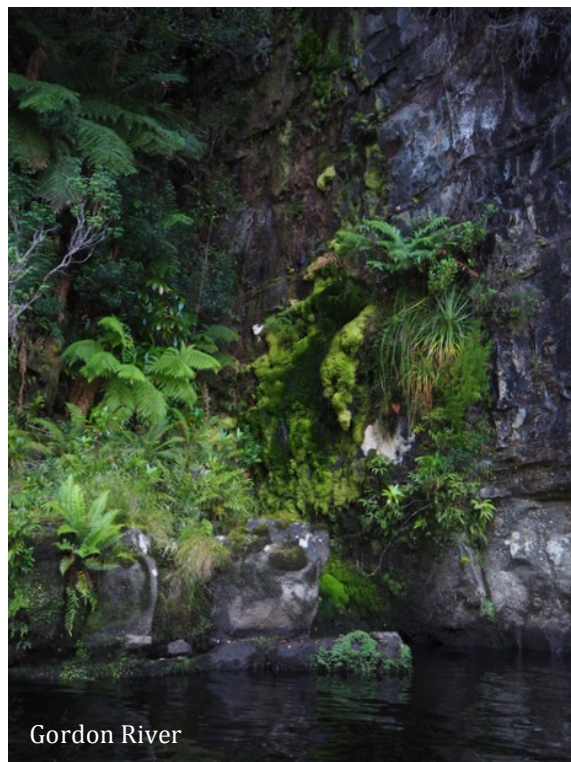
section upstream before finding some caves with aboriginal art. We didn't; we headed back down stream, ***The Southern Cross*** steaming ahead to walk to the hut above St John's Falls (they had track notes) and we travelled back at a more leisurely pace.

Some time after we'd both got back to our big boats, the rally boats started turning up. The first two temporarily attached themselves to St Johns Jetty before heading off in different directions to anchor. A third asked to raft up (actually he was a bit bullish but there was no current or wind and we had met the boat before and knew he had the means to pay for any repairs should there be any damage). However if I had known of the conversation that had occurred before I got on deck I would have told the boat where to go. The expectation it seems was that we should expect other boats to raft up to us. This arrogant attitude extended to the next day when the crew of four of this boat trampled across ***The Southern Cross*** and ***Sengo*** to get to shore (which was a quagmire - I wondered why my deck looked a bit dirty when we got back) without permission from either boat. This is why we don't do rallies!

We had dinner on ***The Southern Cross*** and planned the next day's activities. There was discussion of leaving on the morrow because we knew the rally mob was near and we didn't really want to be at the top of the river with the hoards.



Gordon River



Gordon River



Franklin River



Gordon River



Gordon River



Gordon River

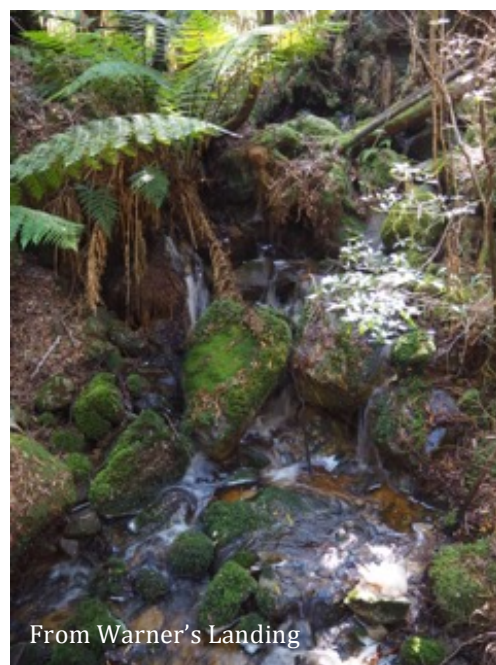
Lower Gordon River

'Trying to escape the Gordon River until the rally mob cleared.
But it didn't happen.

2nd March 2019. Andrew and I had started the day with long trousers and spats and together with ***The Southern Cross*** we stepped onto Warners Landing and into a quagmire for the start of an 'explore'. We were hoping to find a lake to the north west of the landing but the best we found was a small section of water, yet to be dried from a bog, and we dubbed it Patricia's Puddle as I saw it first. Warner's Landing is not big and was apparently the base of the Hydro teams both in the 1970's (when the Gordon Dam was built) and then 1982 when there were plans to dam the Gordon Below Franklin River. It was the scene of the protestors that made headlines around the world. Whilst the structure was put in by the HEC, Warner's Landing has actually been around since the 1920's and was one of the camps originally used by piners when logging Huon pine. Later piners apparently put railway tracks to the lake and apparently a road was built to the lake sometime later. We found none of this; we followed a track up to a clearing which I assume held the hydro buildings at one stage (the anchorage guide suggests there is little left of the hydro camp – we saw nothing but we may have been looking in the wrong place).

The rally boat had left the raft by the time we got back (it was later they told us they'd invaded our boat without permission) and the ***Southern Cross*** alighted soon after we returned. We had lunch first before de docking and heading downstream.

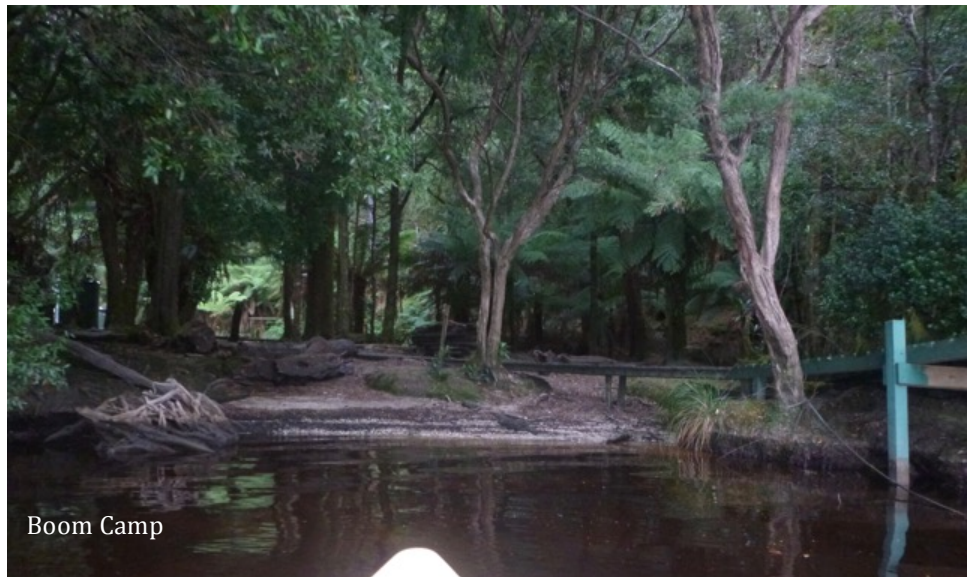
The only hiccup with this idea of course was the weather. It was a beautiful sunny day and it was hot. Very hot. There was also a Strong Wind Warning and as we headed down stream under motor hot 20 to 25 knot breezes accosted us head on in Limekiln Reach - which is approximately five nautical miles long and runs approximately north south. It was a very uncomfortable ride (if we had closed the front window to the helm station to block out the wind it would have been more uncomfortable – we would have melted in perspiration). Because we had been warned that the entrance of the Gordon River mouth can get quite boisterous (and possibly dangerous) in a strong northerly we were concerned about what we would do when we got there. In the end we were prudent, we almost went up to the river mouth but anchoring in the SW to NE reach there was not going to protect us from the north west winds for long, the evening forecast was for a south west change. In the end we turned around before hitting the Harbour and anchored just upstream from the Boom Camp (downstream from Heritage Landing).



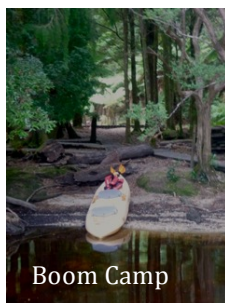
It was during our anchoring attempt that I was reminded of the issue with the anchor winch. First discovered when dropping the anchor at Geelong and then promptly forgotten about for a while and then noted at Ann Bay and Strahan, our anchor winch is having problems getting going. It is like it has a hang over; proceeding exceptionally slowly for a while and then shooting to normal speed after an extended period. We have a few ideas as to why this might be happening but need to talk to the professionals. However tomorrow was Sunday. Nobody was going to be able to help us on a Sunday so we decided to enjoy the morrow and head to town on Monday.

Boom Camp

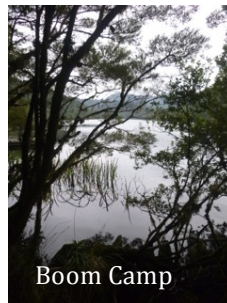
3rd March 2019. Sometimes it is an idea to follow the lead of the locals. The morning was cloudy and overcast. And slightly chilly. As we had decided to stay put, I thought a paddle might be nice but outside didn't look all that inviting. There had been a couple of small power boats at Boom Camp overnight, and early this morning, one individual from there had kayaked past us and around the corner (presumably to Heritage Landing) and returned. Whilst it wasn't raining during this time it was heavily overcast and threatening and I thought it prudent to wait for the day to clear up a bit more before we headed out. But for a very long time it didn't. The sky grew greyer and it



Boom Camp



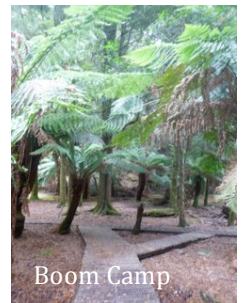
Boom Camp



Boom Camp



Boom Camp



Boom Camp

started to rain. And then it stopped briefly although there was mist in the air. And then it started to rain again. Perhaps after lunch? And then it started to rain again. The forecast for the day was south westerly turning north (north west and north easterly) and so I reasoned that perhaps the northerly would push the rain away. At one point I was thinking perhaps we should have gone early like the local to avoid the rain. It did eventually clear and whilst the sun hadn't come out (the sun didn't come out until 1945 - just before it set) it looked as though the rain had passed and the weather had settled by 1500. It was not actually cold anymore (whether one would argue it was warm was another story) and I convinced Andrew to come kayaking with me. So, we lowered the kayak to the water, put our paddles together and headed off to the now unoccupied Boom Camp to have a look around.

What a gorgeous little place. This was one of the camps the piners used in the extraction of Huon and other timber from the Gordon River area. The locals still use Boom Camp. The hut has bunk beds, an electric and wood stove (a generator is on site) a heater and a shower. There is crockery there as well. On site is also a drop toilet and a fish cleaning station. All in all, beautiful little grove by the river. A bridge over the camp's rivulet is no longer complete and a red and white striped bit of timber is probably indicating that it is in disrepair and you shouldn't venture further. The track that extended from here heads very steeply up the mountain and is currently blocked by a very big tree. There is a plaque to Reg Morrison at the site, one of the area's best known piners. The Morrison family still have the sawmill on the waterfront at Strahan.

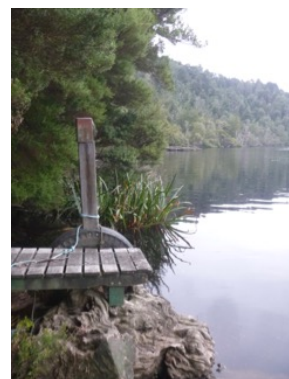
From the camp we (Andrew mainly – at his request) paddled upstream until we could see Heritage Landing in the distance, before we crossed the river and paddled back to boat. Rain threatened to get us but there were only a couple of drops falling from the

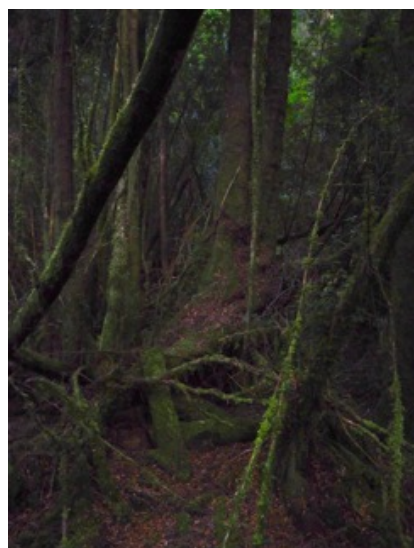
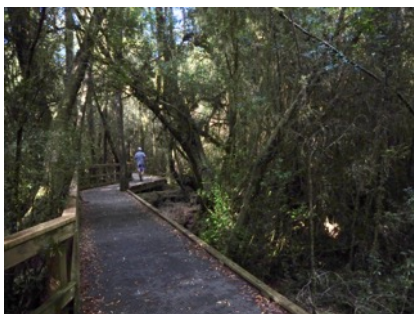


From Boom Camp towards Sengo

sky. We had timed the day well. We'd had some exercise and we'd visited some history that we'd both just read about. One frog jumped off a log at the side of the river (into the water!) but apart from that the only wildlife seen was avian; azure kingfisher, Bassian thrush (two at Boom Camp) and a couple of small cream and grey individuals not specifically identified (we didn't have our binoculars on the kayak for fear of getting them wet).

On our loop upstream we had made a brief stop at what we believe is Spring Creek. There was a pinner's camp apparently up this creek – with rail tracks to the Gordon. This was however many years ago. The creek was overgrown and not easily navigable very far at all. We did not get off kayak to explore by foot.



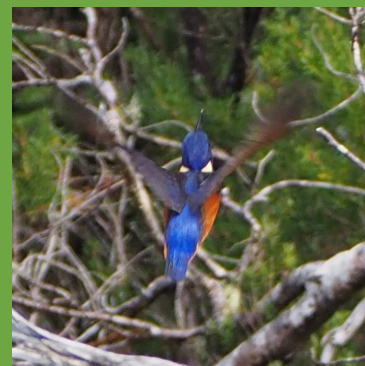
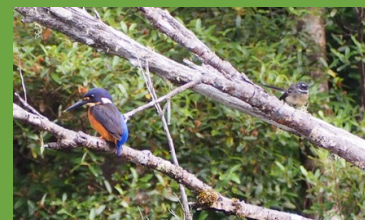


Revisiting Heritage Landing

4th March 2019. The forecast was for northerlies and rain but the sun was out in the morning and there was a significant amount of blue sky amongst the white and light grey cumulous. The atmosphere was cheery and I suggested a morning walk at Heritage Landing before the tourist boats turned up. We had the tinnie tied up at 0950 on the bottom pontoon and climbed the steps to the official walkway. There was certainly more light than had been during our previous visits but despite a fluttering in the tree near the small jetty as we arrived (by the time we'd pulled out the binoculars the bird was gone) we saw nothing. No birds. No animals. No sounds. It seemed a bit odd that you got more activity in less light. We were on our way back to Sengo in around 45 minutes and an hour after we landed at Heritage' the first tourist boat was approaching it. We left the tinnie in the water when we got back to Sengo just in case we were inspired for a later excursion but apart from a few minor clean up activities we were both ensconced in reading all day. The afternoon rain shower was light and the temperature remained mild most of the day, starting to drop to uncomfortable levels (i.e. we put more clothes on) in the late afternoon. The afternoon weather schedule from TasMaritime Indicated that the forthcoming southerly was now arriving tomorrow rather than Wednesday. A southerly is what we wanted to get up to Strahan, but Andrew was reluctant to leave until after the suggested rally BBQ – we hadn't heard whether it was going to be tomorrow or Wednesday. Essentially he was suggesting a Thursday departure to Strahan. I would have to think of other activities for this area for the next couple of days.



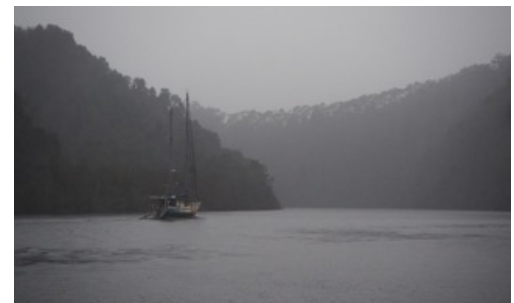
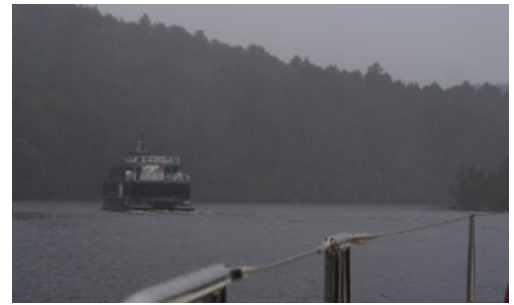
We had spotted the kingfisher and the fantail on the river banks the day before but the camera I had at the time was even more inadequate than this one. Photos are zoomed to max and taken from a tinnie – ie they are a bit fuzzy!



Well, this is 'Rainforest!' after all

5th March 2019. Anyone on a tourist trip today to Heritage Landing would have had the genuine rainforest experience. Like the last couple of days it started by raining on and off throughout the late morning, with slightly more frequency than before and the hoped for afternoon break with milder temperatures that we'd had for two days didn't happen. Whilst there was at one stage blue sky above thinning cloud directly above us, mist still hugged the tops of the hills above Boom Camp. Both tourist catamarans came up with minimal occupants outside on the way upstream and none outside on the way downstream, precipitation set in for both return journeys. Around 1930 **Stormbreaker** passed us, its guests fully enveloped in the wet of Tassie's wild west.

The opportunity for moving on was getting further away from us. Whilst tomorrow's morning winds were south-west, her afternoon winds were west and then north-west and the predicted strength of the forecast not at all inviting. We had thought Thursday might be an option but the northwest winds were going to persist and although the 25 to 30 plus winds coastal waters forecast may or may not quite get in to Macquarie Harbour, without the benefit of the internet we thought it best to be prudent. Fridays forecast was to start out with wild northerlies and then settle down to variables mid day. At this stage that was our projected departure from the Gordon - for the journey back to Strahan.



If you had a word for today it would be 'frustrating.' And it wasn't only due to the restrictions the weather put on our movements. ...

6th March 2019. Today's forecast (central west coast) was for south-west to west winds turning north. The predictions ranged from 15 – 25 to 30 knot winds in various directions and there was a 70% chance of rain with some hail and possible thunderstorms. Of course in the river we had less winds and that was why we were still staying put. Today, of the last few days happened to be the one with the most blue sky. But it was in patches. The sun would be shining, there would be lovely fluffy white cumulus superimposed on a beautiful blue which would invite my anticipation of an off boat excursion, only to be superseded within a matter of minutes with grey clouds, wind and rain. And so it repeated throughout the day. And yes, we did get hail. There may even have been a distant roll of thunder. But there was certainly no patch of weather nice enough and long enough for an excursion.

What I was really looking for was enough time to get to the site of a hut nearer to the mouth of the Gordon River. From what I had read it was not an original pinner's hut, but one constructed in the 1950's from the remains of an existing pinner's hut. Twenty years

ago there was not much of it left but the chimney but it was the next closest link to social history we had from this anchorage because it should be easily accessible by tinnie. Because we didn't wish to raise and lower Sengo's anchor more than necessary and had deemed excess movement with Sengo off limits until we got the anchor winch fixed, the exploration of other sites in the Gordon River would have to wait until we came back. I do hope however to have fully explored all that is accessible from the River by the time we leave Macquarie Harbour.

So we filled the day with reading and tidying up. Because this is a national park and part of the world heritage area we are very

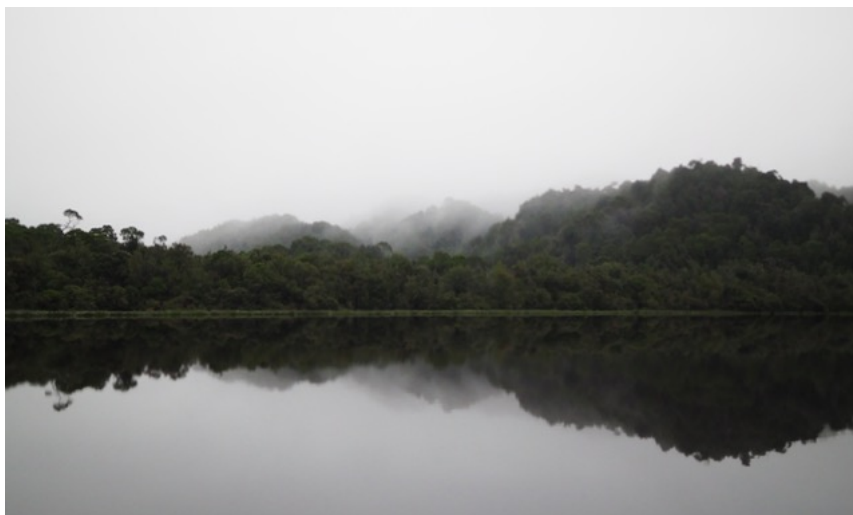
conscious of our impact on the environment. Hence not only is our black water being held in holding tanks on the river but our grey water as well. This means the dishes are washed in a bucket once a day and rinsed down the head. But today something went a little astray and the usual dulcet tones of rinsing waste down the system turned into a gravelly chatter with a slight scream. Clearly something wasn't quite right. Whilst just about every yachty has a story (or two) to tell about problems with the head, indeed as do we, the descriptions are not all encompassing. Our tales stem from mainly blocked pipes; this was the first time we have dismantled the unit. And of course not everything went to plan, we even managed to suck the joker unit up the vacuum cleaner before we had got very far. And then there was the macerator unit, which we found in the process of all this to be blocked by my hair (turned black because it had burnt), and mixed in with the nib of a grey supermarket bag. Getting each section of the toilet apart and investigated was

hard and frustrating and not obvious. Finally we found the culprit for our gravelly blockage; the bread tie and tag from a supermarket bunch of bok Choi! At the end of all this though the unit was put back together with no leaks first time – that has got to be a first for us...even if the exercise took us over three hours! It was just about dark when we finished and having had our hands in various stages of waste neither of us was willing to cook dinner.

7th March 2019. It seemed ironic that today's afternoon 'mild' time was warmer than the previous few days, seeing as though this morning was colder than the previous few days – so much so I slept in. Of course it rained most of the day until the (now expected) short afternoon break but as the break was around 1530 and the place still on the list to explore from this anchorage was going to take around thirty minutes to get to via tinnie, it was far too late, and would be too cold by the time we got back, to get any enjoyment of getting off boat.



8th March 2019. It is a pity we didn't make the call not to shift anchorages until after the afternoon scheds from Tas Maritime because the morning had been beautifully mild. Yesterday afternoon and this morning were under a strong wind to gale warning and indeed sometime in the middle of the night it blew reasonably ferociously here. I didn't bother getting up. I knew the anchor was holding and subconsciously I don't think I really wanted to know how strong it was. And of course if it was strong here, it was probably horrible in the Harbour. Andrew of course slept through it. The forecast had been for a change from north-west (ish) winds to south-west to south-east sometime this afternoon. I tidied up the helm in the morning ready for a departure, we retied the kayak back on the deck and the barge boards went into the front locker knowing we would have to pull them out again to dry properly. But the wind kept blowing north-west. North-west was the direction back to Strahan. We didn't want to be heading into it. So we settled inside and played scrabble for the rest of the afternoon, as the rain fell around us outside.



Back to Strahan

9th March 2019. It is such a lovely sight to see a convoy of ships following each other on a journey – particularly if they are heading away from you. The rally was leaving today and as we motored toward Risby Cove a procession of boats headed the other way. Not that we aren't social, and we did have a chat to a few as they passed us (generally boats we'd seen before) – we just like little groups – big groups don't interest us at all and big groups in places we wish to experience preferably or predominantly by 'ourselves' just don't work.

It had been calm when we got out of bed this morning but the mist was low on the adjacent hills. Of course by the time we'd waited for the weather sched to confirm the forecast it was mizzling and I got a tad wet lifting the anchor. The anchor winch was up to its old tricks although when Andrew checked the amperage when I had the winch going, they were all within specs.

We headed for Strahan and rang ahead as soon as we had phone coverage. We were looking to see if a mooring that had previously been offered to us was free and we were fortunate that it had been dropped this morning. It was still cloudy when we got to Strahan but there was blue sky and no rain although dark grey was threatening. The mooring was picked up around 1215 and after a cup of tea it was time for lunch. The afternoon would entail some investigative work.

A bit of a play with the anchor winch after lunch revealed our problem may be power. 'May'. A few other angles still needed to be investigated before we could say for sure. The afternoon was turning out to be quite nice and we took a quick trip to town in tandem with *The Southern Cross* for a walk and a grocery shop.

The evening was spent with *The Southern Cross* at a play – **The Ship That Never Was** – purported to be continuously playing for 20 years (in season). The performance portrays the building and theft of the last ship from the Sarah Island penal establishment. When we first anchored at Strahan we heard the commotion from this performance every night. There are only two official actors and there is some audience participation.... and despite preconceived ideas, it was actually a lot of fun.



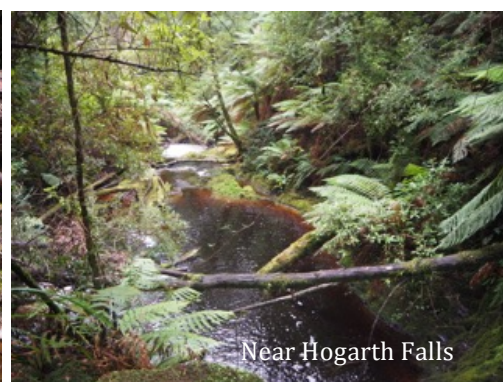
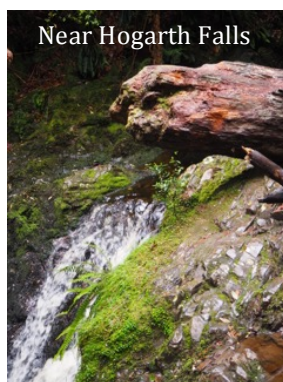
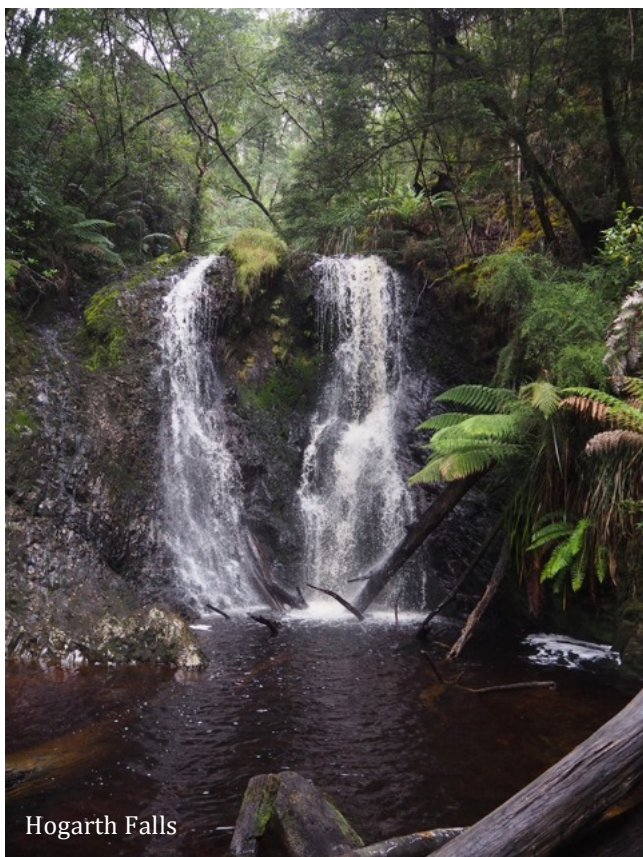
Andrew with the notorious Mr Barker; (Aka The Southern Cross) infamous gun smith and Sarah Island conspirator



C was a gun shot (paper bag) and I was a stormy wave (water bottle). Andrew was part of general full audience participation.



Returning home after a good afternoon's entertainment



From Risby Cove cafe

10th March 2019. It was a sunny morning and in *The Southern Cross*' words – 'probably the best of a bad lot' with relation to the predicted weather for the coming few days, so we took the opportunity to stretch the legs and go for a walk. We visited the lookout above town again, to get the heart going, and then after admiring the view descended and headed for Hogarth Falls and the Peoples Park near the end of Risby Cove. We have done the walk to Hogarth Falls before, fifteen years ago, and it was in the heat of mid summer. It is a pleasant walk and because of the mildness of weather and clearly the amount of rain the area has had it was greener than I remembered it. On the way we stopped to chat with another yacht and tourists we'd met the night before. We separated from *The Southern Cross* on the way back, they to return to boat and Andrew and I stopped to stop at the Risby Cove café for a light lunch. According to bom.gov.au the wind was due to pick up at 1400 and we made it back to boat around this time...just before the wind indeed did start to blow.

11th March 2019 (90% chance of showers). The morning presented us with no wind and a glass surface in Risby Cove and a short dry spell - that Andrew used for further fiddling with the anchor winch; dismantling and regreasing it and testing it again. He also looked at the electronic box associated with the winch, and discovering water on top of this box gave us a bit of a jolt. We then realised there was water in the entire locker including on the underside of the hatch and we concluded that perhaps condensation was our issue here. As a result, after Andrew had finished his ministrations with the electrics I had the lockers open between showers to try and dry them out. These activities took us a few hours so the hope of getting ashore in the morning before the predicted afternoon showers didn't happen. We did get to town for a short spell in mid afternoon - our priorities being the dropping off of rubbish and returning some history books that we had been lent. We went for a short walk around some of Risby Cove which led us to M (a local who had helped us out before) and returning to the tinnie there was a possibility of visiting the

cemetery at Regatta Point. The sun was out and the sky looked as though there was minimal chance of rain but because of the potential of being caught in another shower we started to take the tinnie across to Regatta Point instead of walking. There is a small gravely beach on the other side of the railway station that we could land on. However, it was at this point that the wind started to pick up again, and the waves started to break over the gunwales. A bit sloppy for our liking and when we both got wet we decided that perhaps we'd leave the exploration of the cemetery to another day. The action was prudent. The wind was changing direction more to the west (the landing beach was exposed to the west), and gusting to mid twenties when we got back to boat. The rest of the afternoon was spent inside with the rain coming down in batches, from light to solid (if you can describe rain as being 'solid'). At about 2315, just before we went to bed, Andrew went outside to release the bung plug in the tinnie. We looked across to **The Southern Cross** to discover they were at some distance away from us and facing the other way. At this point we thought they were grounded (we knew there was a sand patch over there). Until we looked at the boat on the opposite side of us. One, she had her stern to our stern, and two, she was fairly close. It wasn't **The Southern Cross** that was in the wrong position. It was us! We were on a mooring so we shouldn't be out of sync! Upon investigation we discovered the dilemma. Because this mooring belongs to a much bigger and heavier boat, we had put a bridle on the line rather than pulling the mooring up close under our A frame. That should have been fine. However, clearly wind and the little of the tide that there was, had conspired to move us over the mooring buoy so that it was now lodged so far under us between our hulls that forces were balanced and we weren't moving (which if you think about the physics - this was pretty clever!). My immediate thought was that we may have wrapped the line from the buoy to the bottom around either our prop or rudder but my concerns was unfounded. The buoy wasn't back quite that far (although it did take me half leaning over the front of the boat with the torch to just see the bright orange float). A bit of brawn by both of us pulled the buoy back out in front of our boat and after slowly turning around, Sengo took her rightful place between the other vessels.....

12th March 2019.

A beautiful morning!



Around five hours later....a horrible afternoon!





West Pillinger



West Pillinger



West Pillinger



West Pillinger

Kelly Basin

East & West Pillinger

From bad to worse and not quite fixed. Lucky it's not Friday!

13th March 2019. The forecast was for 30% chance of showers, but a much calmer day. Now that we thought we had sorted out the issue with the anchor winch, the idea had been to take advantage of the calmer weather and head to Kelly Basin to explore the Bird River Track. However, not all went to plan. Although I would have preferred to leave Strahan at 0600 (in order to get to the anchorage around 1000 based on a 5 knot journey), it was still dark at this time so we waited for a bit more light and dropped the borrowed mooring a little after 0700 instead. We journeyed south-east down Macquarie Harbour taking the opportunity to motor sail with the genoa for a spell, but an hour after we pulled the sail out it was furled away again. We reached Kelly Basin later than preferred and started to put the anchor down.



West Pillinger



West Pillinger

'Started' was the operative word. We had thought our anchor issue was power – or the lack of it regarding our battery bank (we have been guilty of not charging the batteries enough before). But - it was clearly not. Again the anchor started on an ever so slow descent but the breaker tripped before it had reached the bottom. So I flicked the switch, brought the anchor up and tried again. This time, painfully, the anchor went down far enough to hit bottom, we got some rode out and Andrew conducted his usual prudent hard pull back to set her. But it wasn't a completely solid hold and unfortunately Sengo was moving (just). The decision, based on the situation, was to try, in the first instance, to put more chain out. So I pressed the button. Nothing happened. Nada. Zip. And the breaker wasn't even tripped! So instead of spending the next hour having an early lunch and getting ready for a four-hour walk, Andrew spent the next hour with a multi meter in the front starboard hatch, trying to work out what was going on. There were sunny but cloudy skies above us and to our north. To our south however rain was threatening. Would he get his investigations done in time before he got wet? Fortunately the rain didn't quite reach us (you could see it was raining in the Harbour) but at the end of the exploratory exercise Andrew still didn't know what

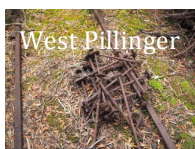


Cumulous and blue sky to the left; rain to the right!

the problem was. And we were too late to start a long walk. In

the end we hand pulled some extra chain out and gave up on the anchor issue for the day.

After a relaxing cuppa we headed off to West Pillinger to have a look around. West Pillinger was 'the government town', and East Pillinger was the 'company town', established with the creation of the North Mount Lyell Copper Company in the late 1890's. When the owner of the company died in London in 1898 all his plans evaporated, the company merged with the Mount Lyell and Railway Company (for the copper mine in Queenstown) and to cut a long story short, the town(s) of Pillinger became obsolete (the Mount Lyell Company town of Strahan being the preferred port for export of goods). Most infrastructure was moved elsewhere. What is now left in West Pillinger is odds and sods of scraps of metal



scattered around through the bush, a train carriage with a tree growing through it, the remnants of an old jetty and a hut near the dilapidated wharf (a small walkway is serviceable and your boat can be tied up to its end. We tied the tinnie up here, the anchoring guide almost suggests you could tie a bigger boat up here but you wouldn't be attaching it to much). The old hut is still used by the locals. The anchorage guide also has mention of a walk from West Pillinger to East Pillinger via the old railway line (the bridge is in disrepair and overgrown). The West Pillinger end is a lovely walk. We stopped at the creek (Andrew River?).



When we visited East Pillinger in the afternoon (after a late lunch back on board Sengo) I thought we might see if we could backtrack to the creek (river) on the other side of the old line. I didn't realise that comments on the interps boards suggest the track is no longer traversable (Andrew had read these, I had missed them). We got someway but it was a struggle (although for the (very) intrepid there are orange and pink plastic tags along it) and clearly you are being discouraged from this activity. A pity as it is part of the European pioneering history here. East Pillinger has old boilers, brick kilns, a carriage and one remaining wall of the 'mess' building. Interps boards provide details.



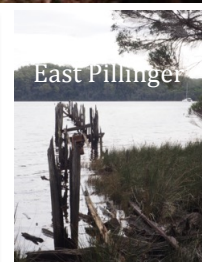
West Pillinger



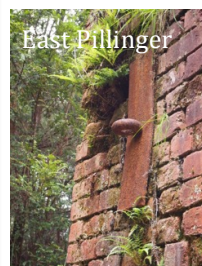
East Pillinger



East Pillinger. We found the rail track to West Pillinger; it is a little overgrown!



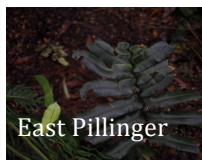
East Pillinger



East Pillinger



East Pillinger



East Pillinger



East Pillinger

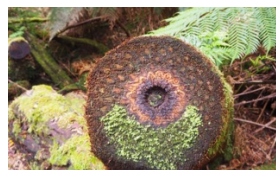


East Pillinger

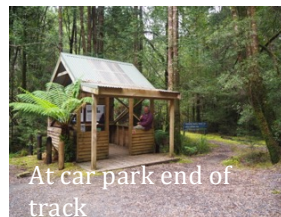


East Pillinger

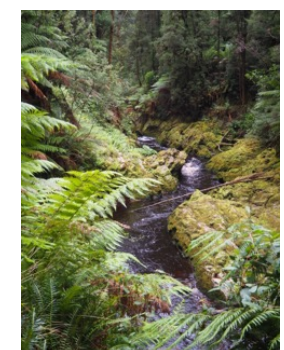
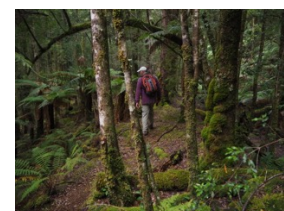
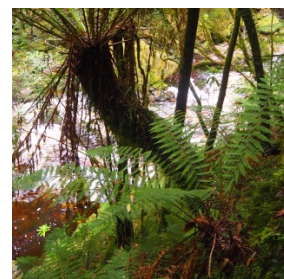
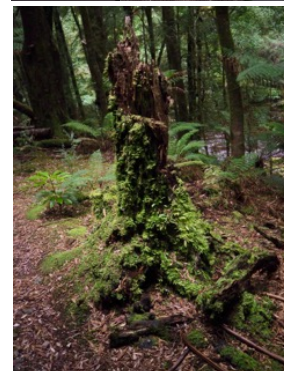
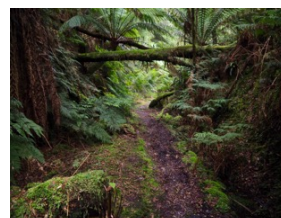
Trestle bridge over Bird River near car park. The bridge is built of Huon Pine and most of it is original. I note however it may not be as strong as it once was – they recommend only 5 people on it at a time



Jetty at East Pillinger

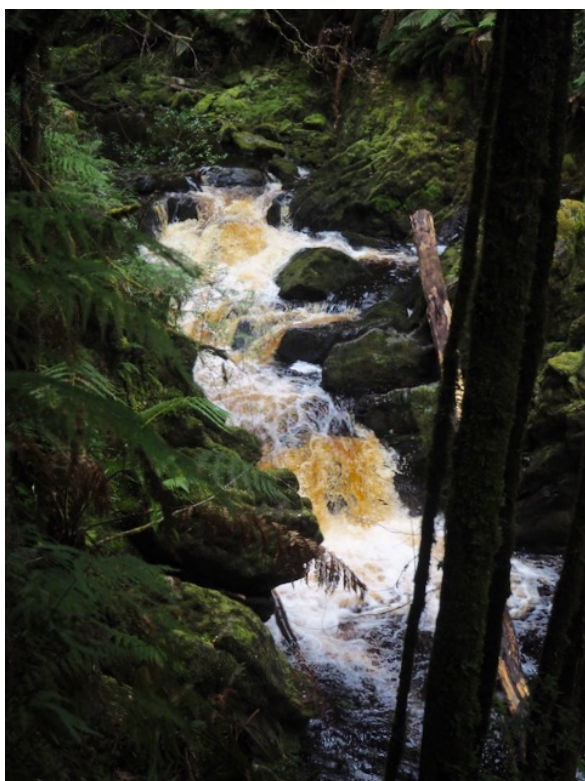


At car park end of track

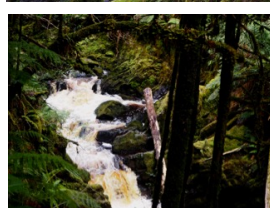
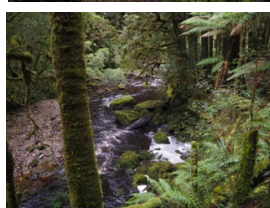
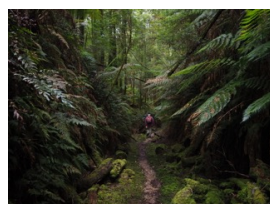
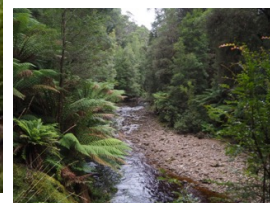
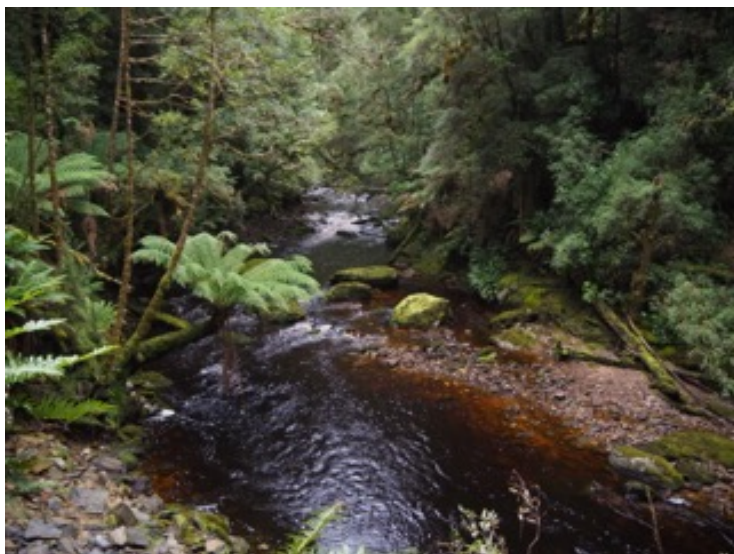


Bird River Track

14th March 2019. There is some dispute in the official literature as to exactly how long the Bird River Track (old railway line) is (5.4 or 7.5 kilometres one-way depending on what you read) but a consensus seems to indicate you should allow around 4 hours to complete the return walk. The weather forecast had originally been for 70% chance of rain but the Western Districts land forecast indicated the rain wasn't expected until this evening so despite an overcast, but not immediately threatening sky, I negotiated with Andrew to complete this walk today.



Moss is predominant amongst myrtle-like leaf litter (small leaves) on the root strewn ground, at least for the first half of the track. The substrate changes around where the Bird River starts to run alongside track, the leaf litter changing to a predominantly eucalypt-like shape (large half-moonish) and the track being mainly clear of live vegetative interference. Where there is little drainage, due to angle or 'tunnel,' the track is muddy (or puddly) and alternate paths have been 'worn' over adjacent vegetation so one does not get their feet too wet. We were fairly conservative today but that didn't stop Andrew sinking his foot into a puddle at the end of the careful traverse of a 'lake' or me from slipping backwards down a muddy



embankment and almost into the waterway I was trying to cross. Some landslide areas (recent and otherwise) have to be negotiated but essentially the track is reasonably easy, with a subtle uphill trajectory heading inland (and therefore a downhill trajectory heading back to the coast). Apparently if you are lucky you can see tiger quolls on this track. We weren't quiet enough. We did notice one pademelon hopping away from us, bigger macropod prints in the mud, scat of various sizes on the track (we didn't speculate on the animals that produced them) and positively identified forest ravens, grey fantails (there were lots of these guys along the track and they weren't afraid to be close to us), a brush bronze wing (possible) and green rosellas. Yellow tailed black cockatoos were heard in the area and possibly one lyrebird (otherwise there was someone in the bush with a hammer hitting nails).

We were tired when we got back to boat but we had managed to survive reasonably intact. It is a very pretty walk.





Kelly Basin



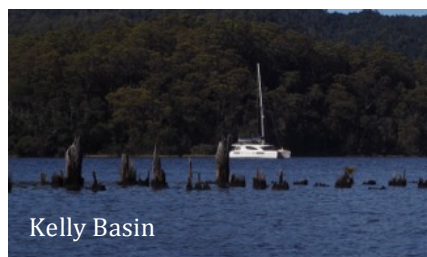
Kelly Basin



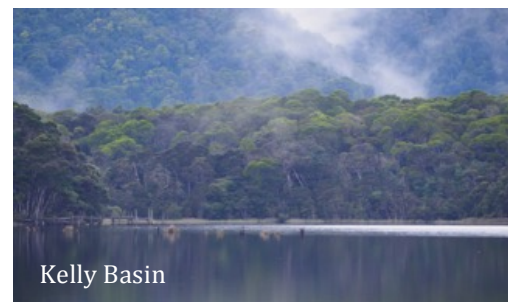
Kelly Basin

15th March 2019. It was an overcast morning and we slept in a little. I didn't frighten Andrew too much with the suggested day's activities – there would be no walking involved. After a relaxing morning, a disaster bread-making session (see page 24) and a pleasant lunch we headed out in the tinnie for an exploratory session by boat. We had a go at heading up both the Bird and Andrew Rivers but didn't get far – both were too overgrown to be able to go anywhere. There was a memorial notice on one beach but we didn't land anywhere to go exploring.

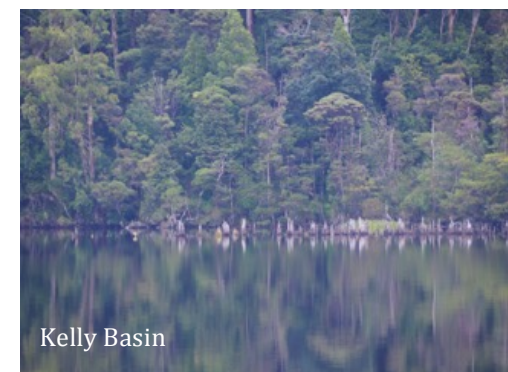
Kelly's Basin bird list for our time at anchor here: black faced cormorant, pied cormorant black swan, silvereye, grey fantail, pacific black duck. Green rosella.



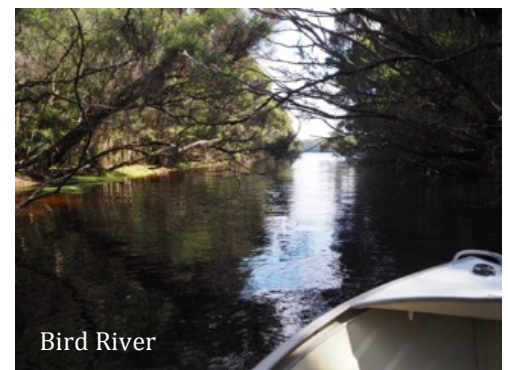
Kelly Basin



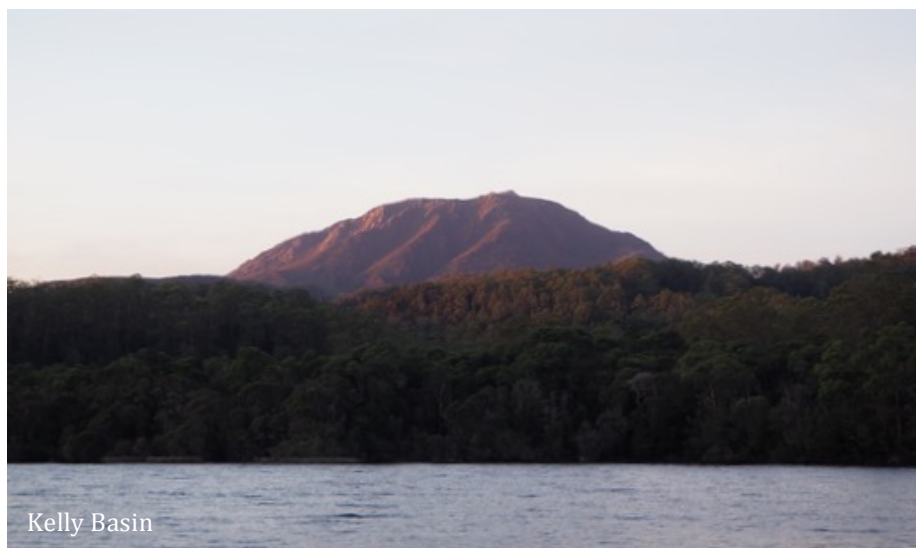
Kelly Basin



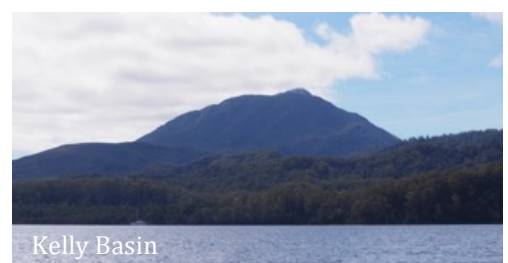
Kelly Basin



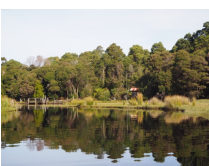
Bird River



Kelly Basin



Kelly Basin



Kelly Basin



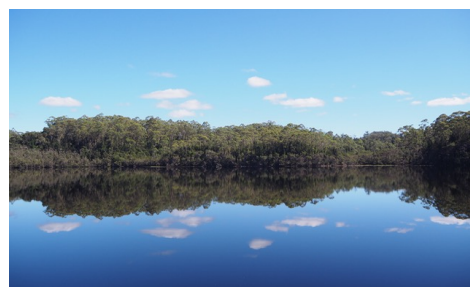
Birchs Inlet

16th March 2019. The morning was magnificent, the forecast was for calm (mostly) and we prepared for our plans to be changed. We expected to have to hand haul the anchor in and indeed that is what we started to do. Based on this experience we fully expected to be heading back to Strahan. However, I remembered that in our last experimentation of the winch in Strahan we had had the generator going as well as the engine, so we tried this. And low and behold, the anchor came up electronically! So, assuming this was going to work we headed south-west instead of north-west (which meant Andrew was going to miss watching the Melbourne F1 Grand Prix which would have been his compensation for coming back to town)!

So, in delightfully flat conditions we motored across to Birch's Inlet and headed toward the southern end. There was less than two meters below us when we started to put the anchor down. Just. I managed to get the anchor a short way down and it stopped. Having tripped the fuse, I readjusted the switch and kept going. And it stopped again. This time the fuse wasn't tripped. We put the generator on and nothing. We waited a while and tried again. Nothing. We

waited further. There was some movement but it stopped again. We ended up realigning the anchor winch back to manual mode and let out the chain that way. Solidly anchored we took a deep breath and headed inside for lunch (Ryvita bruschetta).

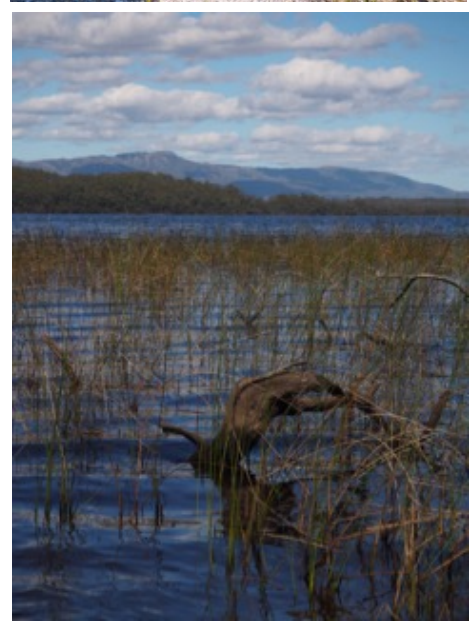
After lunch we did a little exploring. Based on our timing I thought perhaps a visit to BHP Camp and a look at the two nearby ruined jetties would be a nice short afternoon exercise. The TAG coordinates are one degree out but the camp was not far from us. The poor hut at this site is dilapidated and forgotten, mouldy and broken. Half the back wall is off, as is the front door, and the front window is in ruins. The hut is elevated with a view of heath, trees and the distant 'hills' over the inlet. From what I've read I think this was a mining base, the once cleared ground is grown over and the existing flat bit of square concrete away from the dilapidated 'hut' we suspect was once a building.



BHP Camp 'jetty'



BHP Camp hut



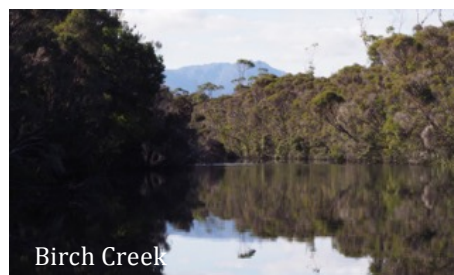
There is not much left of the two jetties in the inlet near here; one on the west and one on the east side. We didn't get out to explore; the wind had picked up so we headed back to boat.

We were up until this stage the only boat in the inlet. That all changed at around 1630 when another turned up and anchored south of us. They then totted off to the BHP camp for the rest of the afternoon.

'Bird list for Birch's Inlet today; Wedged tailed eagle (delightful to see and from what we read might have been a real treat – having been a persecuted animal there are minimal pairs left in the wild in Tassie), white faced heron, pied cormorant, black swan, pacific black duck, little black cormorant, hoary headed grebe.



Amongst the heath looking for birds. Andrew is on a raised walkway.



Birch's Creek and Frog Lodge

17th March 2019. Of course the middle of the day is not the best time to be searching for birds but had we left Sengo at the preferred time, ninety minutes before our actual departure, we would have seen nothing; the pea soup that surrounded us when we awoke was well and truly present until well after 0800. So, we waited for the mist to rise and the sun to show itself, the adjacent boat to emerge from the white and a clear path ahead. We motored south toward the end of Birch's Inlet and into the mouth of Birch's Creek, noting the 5 knot sign at a slight angle on its eastern shore. There was more birdlife along the eastern bank but trying to find it by looking into the gloom of shade with the sun peering down above us was not going to work.

A yellow-throated honeyeater was noted, yellow wattlebirds (possible) and an azure kingfisher briefly flitted within our sights. We ignored the first landing (where the waterway split) choosing instead to paddle the tinnie along the now severely narrower waterway to the south east up until the second, much smaller landing where we alighted, took note of the notice regarding the closure of the track to Low Rocky Point and continued along woodwork to the Frog Lodge.



I am not sure of its age but Frog Lodge was used as a base for the breeding program of the Orange Bellied Parrot in the 1990's, briefly trialed for several years to help reintroduce the OBP back into this area. The trial was not a success (they believe due to there being no existing wild birds in the area to teach the youngsters how to survive here) and concentrated efforts for captive breeding are back at the original base in Melaleuca in Bathurst Harbour. The visitor book has entries from 1996 with beautiful descriptions of visits but the number of visitors and their experiences teeters out in the last few pages (three pages covering visitors from three years – one lot repeated three times). The hut we assume is still sound. It felt sheltered inside when we had lunch. There are four bunks, some benches, a couple of tables, and a couple of cupboards. Newspapers laying around either line shelves, or were perhaps once used for fires - the Wilderness Zone is now a camp stove only area. One double spread of the 2014 Hawthorn AFL premiership clings to the wall by one corner near the sink. On the side of one cupboard there is a list and description of frog species, one wall has a promotional poster from Birds Australia in 2001 with an appeal to save our threatened bird species, and the poster with the most non faded colour is a weather chart for bushwalkers. In 2005 Debbie Searle left a handwritten ode on the wall in the meter (rhyme) of Lewis Carroll's 1871 poem, *Jabberwocky* entitled 'Parrotwocky'. It is a delightful piece of writing and record of her time there. There is a drop toilet a little further down the path, the door of which has been dislodged but as it overlooks an area that is likely to hold birds, 'perhaps one can do a spot of research whilst sitting down!'

We didn't continue much past the Frog Lodge, the track notice of course announcing it officially closed due to bush fire. The notice is dated January 2019 but I suspect the threat no longer relevant (although comments of visitors three weeks prior to our visit did note smoke on their trip out – these were repeat visitors and I suspect they had a permit). We paddled back down the waterway (admiring a kingfisher on the way) to the first landing where we alighted. This is



supposedly where 4WD quad bikes once headed toward Low Rocky Point on adventure. An interps board covers history and permit requirements. We noted red tape on bushes to the side of this overgrown track but no



notice, until I found it upside down in the mud, partially hidden under the boards. I suspect the locals didn't take too much to being kept out of the area. This track however has not been used for some time, trees growing through and over vehicular duck boards and we wondered why the notice had been interfered with at all.

We soon found the reason. Clearly ATV's are still used here, they just access land a little further down the south western split of the waterway where we found a cleared area and evidence (boards and nudges in the bank) of activity. This arm also has some evidence of clearing along its sides, the vegetation not quite cut back to the bank, but back enough to allow a good width boat. Just after this the waterway thins remarkably, no pruning evident and whilst we still had 0700mm below it was strewn with underlying hazards, and the way ahead was blocked with overlying branches restricting the movement of a vessel of our tinny's size. With a kayak we would have got further. We paddled back down this branch admired a different kingfisher on the trees just above the water and returned to Birch's Inlet under motor when we hit the main section of the Creek.



Sorrell River

18th March 2019. Today was a day of surprises; of miss-planning and of slight disappointments. We weren't equipped with many supplies when we headed south in our tinnie to explore the Sorrell River; a few nuts and a bottle of water. Having been turned back less than one hundred meters into two previous 'river' explorations, we did not expect to be away from Sengo that long, and in fact I had expected to explore the river to its navigable conclusion and to have explored an adjacent beach all before lunch. However, things didn't exactly go to plan and after paddling the tinnie over the very shallow eastern confluence of the Sorrell River we found ourselves with over two meters of water under the keel.

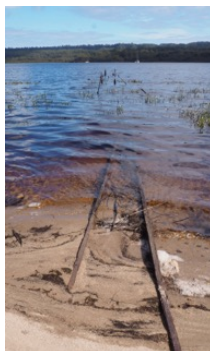
We had started this 'adventure' mid morning and there were still plenty of bird calls in the trees; like yesterday the eastern 'shore' enshrouded in shade and the western shore in sunshine, although any avian silhouette seen flying across the sky from one side of the river to the other was too quick to be identified and none landed where we could get a good look at them. Some were tantalisingly close to the water, our ears trying to pin point their calls and slight movement of the vocals achieved seemingly without fluttering of wings or movement of branches. At times we turned the engines off and paddled but this didn't help either, the birds did not change their behaviour pattern and remained

elusive. There was a short misdirection when we took the left hand branch of the waterway to be stopped some way up its length with 700m below us and branches and debris impossible to pass. Finding ourselves back on the main section of river we travelled for some distance before tuning around, finding time had got away from us and it could now officially be deemed lunch time. We headed back to Sengo with the aim of having lunch before the second part of the day's explorations. On the way we disturbed a white-faced heron, the only positively identified bird on this river and we followed him down to the Inlet. We didn't even see any kingfishers!

At 1400 we headed out for the second part of the day, landing on the beach to the east of us and having a closer look at the decrepit remains of the jetty and what is left of the rail lines that extended unto it. There were no obvious human tracks inland and we followed several animal tracks until we could move no more, and the bush had closed in on what was clearly an old settlement. Remains of some sheds were seen (corrugated iron and timbers laying on the ground) and piles of bricks, but having adventure sandals on and not walking shoes and spats we ventured only so far, and got only so scratched before we gave up and decided we'd had enough. There was however one achievement today; I got my first leech!

It was around 1530 when we returned to boat and we thought we would try to lift the anchor and move a short distance north to Hawks Nest. This time we didn't dally around with trying to move the anchor with the batteries only – we put the generator on before we started. It didn't make a difference. The electric box was clicking – but there was no movement of the chain, up or down. That unfortunately meant that when we did pick up the anchor on the morrow we would be heading for Strahan

again. Hawks Nest and our revisit to the Gordon River would have to wait.



Back to Strahan (again)

19th March 2019. We awoke to clear skies but just as we were preparing to leave a thick fog came in. This didn't stop the adjacent boat heading off – but we assume they are locals. The fog didn't last long and we started to lift the anchor around 0900. With a combination of grunt and hand pulling and then with the use of the spinnaker halyard Andrew finally got the anchor and chain aboard - at 1045!

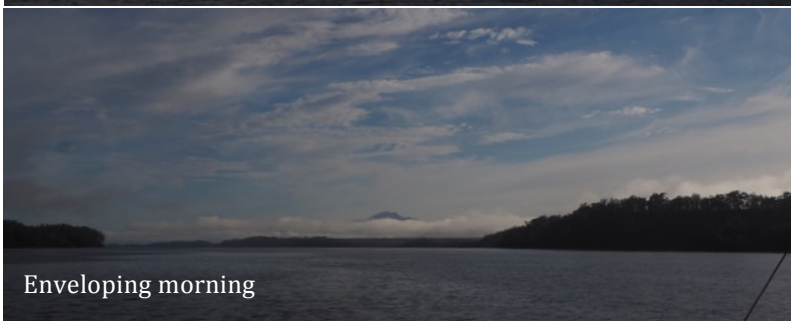
It was such a beautiful day now, blue skies, sunshine, warm temperatures (predicted to be 22!). And instead of going out and enjoying it we were heading back to a base for repairs..... We were very fortunate, and very grateful, that the commercial mooring that we'd used previously was still free in Strahan and several hours after leaving Birch's Inlet, with permission, we picked it up.

The wind had been almost non-existent this morning (hence the condition for fog) and didn't arrive until around two nautical miles from town. If we had been further from our destination, Andrew had not been inside on the phone discussing our anchor winch

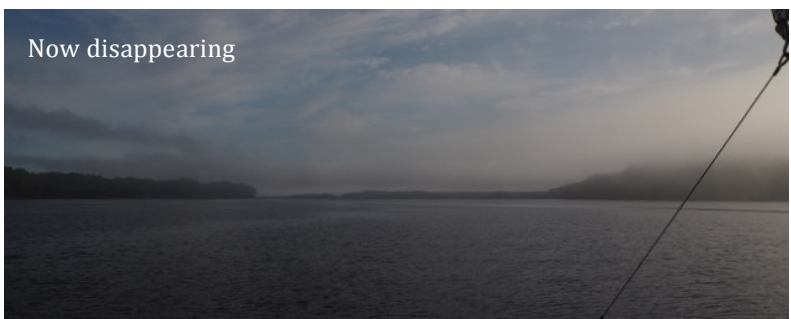
Mount Sorrell



The evening before



Enveloping morning



Now disappearing

options, and the Harbour Master (boat) was not coming up (very) fast from behind us I would have put the genoa out; there was a beautiful beam reach available with 9-13 knots!

Now gone



As runny as.....



Having been given a lovely jar of home produced honey from friends, I thought the way to best enjoy it would be to have some on hot buttery bread. We don't normally have bread so I admit I procured a packet mix. I also admit I put two yeast sachets in the mix instead of measuring out the amount of yeast (I know I was 2 grams over) and I admit to not keeping an eye on the rising process (it was cold so we did this in a warm oven). We lost half the bread in the froth but we had a lovely honey and butter topped pull-apart!



Piners punt: Strahan

Hanging around for parts!

Some people argue that cruising is all about 'fixing things in beautiful places'. I am sure there are those that would add 'non-beautiful places' to the list, but Strahan is a pretty place, mainly full of tourists, but to visitors very friendly. Of course it only has basic services and a chandlery isn't one of them; (although the current owner of the Australia Post franchise, having been in the marine business, can probably provide some assistance). We however didn't need him for this exercise. We had been in direct contact with the Australian distributor for our brand of winch and he was arranging to send a new motor down by courier. There were two issues: one, it would probably take a week to arrive (!?), and two, the courier doesn't deliver to Australia Post locations. So having imposed on a local for access to his address we settled down to wait.

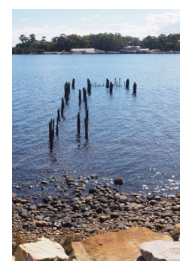
Stretching the legs

22nd March 2019. The 20th and 21st March could be mostly considered as a right off. On the morning of the 20th we did a washing run to the Laundromat, checked in at the post office for some cat food and headed back to boat after a quick lunch at The Coffee Shack. The idea was a walk in the afternoon but I came down with an unknown affliction that knocked me out for the next day and a half so our next foray into town wasn't until the morning of the 22nd. The first priority was a food shop as we were getting pretty low: our vegie stocks consisted of five onions, one chilli that was close to being beyond it and three sweet potatoes. The meat department was getting boring – whilst we had meat in the freezer – it was all chicken. 'Larder satisfied we got home for an early lunch.

I managed to convince Andrew to stretch his legs after lunch. It was a compromise. I had been told the walk to the miners' cottages in Lettes Bay were worth seeing but I got the skipper to agree to a walk only as far as the cemetery. The cemetery is on the hill above Regatta Point so we walked the foreshore path around to the train station and headed inside for a cuppa before proceeding. If I had only known the timetable I would have stayed outside for a few more minutes; the steam engine came home with its carriages and it would have been a great photo with it coming into station. (see <https://www.wcwr.com.au>)

The oldest graves in the cemetery that are recognizable are from the 1890's and having read The *'Huon Pine Story'* by Garry Kerr and Harry McDermott we recognized some of the names from well known pining families and the history of the area. Some headstones are on wood (assume Huon Pine) but some on stone are unreadable.

The weather had been beautiful all day. At lunch time there were no clouds in the sky however by the time we headed back to Sengo in the afternoon large white cumulus were developing.



Strahan Cemetery with view across Macquarie Harbour



23rd March 2019. 95% chance of rain. And it started around 0930. Grey and overcast we had been reluctant to get up and Andrew only dragged himself out of bed twenty or so minutes before I did. There was a patter of rain and we knew it would get heavier. The cloud front was coming over. There was lightening. There was distant thunder and although not a great deal of it,

when it got close the electronics were temporarily assigned to the oven. What a contrast to yesterday. Fortunately the winds at Strahan were minimal, as was predicted. It was Monday's winds we were bracing ourselves for.

'Tis a bit windy!

25th March 2019. With 90% chance of rain on Sunday 24th March I didn't expect the day we got - which was a pity because after an early morning drizzle the sun came out and the wind died down (for a short while the water was like glass) and I got inspired for a sewing project. Had I realised I could have got to town and back in good weather I would have had the material prewashed and ready for cutting, however I will now have to wait. I did however manage to clean around the outside of the starboard hatches, which had missed the de-epoxying, metal polishing and fiberglass polishing in Geelong - the polishing is yet to be done, but all jobs on this boat get done in small steps (otherwise it would be overwhelming).

Apart from a short wild burst around lunch-time, the predicted 'horrible' wind didn't really start coming in until the late evening. Just after dark we heard thunder but it was to the west of us. As it got closer we saw lightening. Still to the west of us. And then eventually it started to rain.

Winds were predicted to be Gale Force for about 48 hours and we were conscious of our position. Under normal circumstances we wouldn't be on a mooring - in fact we don't know of any public mooring that would be rated for us for those conditions. However, being on a commercial mooring rated for a boat which is much heavier gave us some peace of mind, even if Andrew did stay up until past 0200 to make sure all was okay. Strahan Airport gusted to 55 knots at around this time. Maatsuyker Island in the south west of the state was gusting higher and I hoped the boats sitting in Bathurst Harbour were well protected - there were at least two vessels

we knew who were sheltering there. It seems illogical but by the morning of the 25th March, 20 knots felt 'almost' calm.

It rained for almost all of the day (rain prediction was 95%), It blew for almost all of the day, and at times short noisier bursts against the hull signified hail (some you could hear coming - and the commonly described sound of a 'freight train' isn't far off). It was getting cold - I came to the conclusion at 1130 when I needed to put an internal light on to read that perhaps tracksuit pants weren't doing the job anymore and I needed to break out the thermals.

The two tourist catamarans were not at dock when I got up (late) and I highly suspect that they wouldn't be going out Hell's Gate today - it truly would feel like they were lost and in 'hell'. In the Gordon River however would be fairly sheltered, and probably where we would be had circumstances been otherwise.

Gearing up for frustration.

27th March 2019. The 26th March continued to blow. The rain was less, the wind was 'eventually' less and the hail non-existent. By 2100 true wind speeds were below 10 knots – the rage of the previous 48 hours had petered out and by 2300 when we went to bed, the water in the bay almost glass.

Despite the forecast for 50% light drizzle, the morning of the 27th March showed promise. There were patches of light grey cloud that 'rained' a small amount of precipitation down on us, but between these there was lovely blue sky and sunshine. We headed to town and whilst Andrew headed up the hill to get a gas bottle filled, do a quick food shop and get a hair cut, I stayed at sea level, visiting the laundry, the post office and the shower block. (In one of Strahan's public toilet blocks there is a free shower. It is powerful and it is hot!)

We were back at boat for lunch and shortly after we got a phone call. Our anchor winch motor had been delivered! So the afternoon consisted, after a cuppa, of Andrew removing the old anchor winch motor, in order to install the new one. Until of course we discovered the original anchor winch motor was actually working! In the process of removing the old anchor winch motor, a load of oil had dribbled out of the gear box.....hence it is the gearbox we actually need to replace. Ah well! Another week of hanging on the mooring (hopefully the owner doesn't want it back just yet) and a chance to further explore around Strahan. Just as well we aren't in a hurry!



Removing the motor.....only to discover we needed to.....



... remove the gear box – an even tighter operation.



At least it turned into a gorgeous afternoon.....

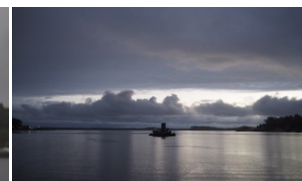


28th March 2019. Despite 60% chance of rain I was determined to get off boat, as the next few days were predicting 90% plus chance of rain. We had been predominantly boat bound for four days, two of which had been moderately stressful so we needed some exercise, from both a mental and physical perspective. Whilst we had our rain coats with us we fortunately didn't need them and took a gentle stroll along the foreshore to the point south of the boat ramp in Mill Bay, through a lovely little tea tree/paperbark lined walkway (which seemed to come out in somebody's back yard!) and took the roads around to the top of Mill bay, passing the op shop (only open two days a week and so far those particular days have been inconvenient (usually weather) for us to get to), two saw millers (generations of the original European pioneers) and the water treatment plant. We had a chat to a couple of boats on dock at the Mill Bay apex and headed back to town. Lunch was a burger at Molly's (part of the café/liquor store/Big 4 caravan park set of shops (and for sale)) and we got back to boat early afternoon. Whilst you wouldn't call it excessive exercise, at least it was something

29th March 2019. Near 100-percent chance of rain and after lunch it came down. Of course the notification of the delivery of cat food at the Post Office came after lunch so that the



opportunity of getting it easily had gone, and as this was Friday I was going to have to make do for Tiger until next week. On a day like this one there was not much to do. Tiger slept most of it, Andrew read and I completed two canvas hatch covers.



The 30th and 31st March were wet (the 30th recording March's highest rainfall at 22.8 mm). We stayed inside

