

Aboard Sengo

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May 2019

Last explorations of Launceston

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Sunset: Nullica Bay, Eden

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Winter is Coming!

Heading north:
Tasmania to New South Wales



At Tamar River Cruises' jetty, Launceston:
photo © Vicki Johnson

Winter is coming!

..Is the popular catch-cry of the HBO television series *Game of Thrones* (based on George R.R. Martin's book series 'Of Fire and Ice') which of course aired the long awaited final episodes on screen this month. We however weren't focused on this fiction- we were more focused on the reality. Whilst we don't have to deal with the *Night King* and the *White Walker's*, Winter in the southern latitudes of Australia does mean we do have to deal with more unsettled weather, stronger winds, more rain, ...and colder temperatures. And, as we were chasing the warmth, Tasmania was not the place to be. So, looking for an appropriate weather window, we finally left Launceston, missed saying goodbye to ***Shebeen*** due to a communication mismatch, had a slow start that turned into a flying trip across Bass Strait, waited out weather in Eden (where we now discover our insurer won't cover us for any incidents relating to anchors or

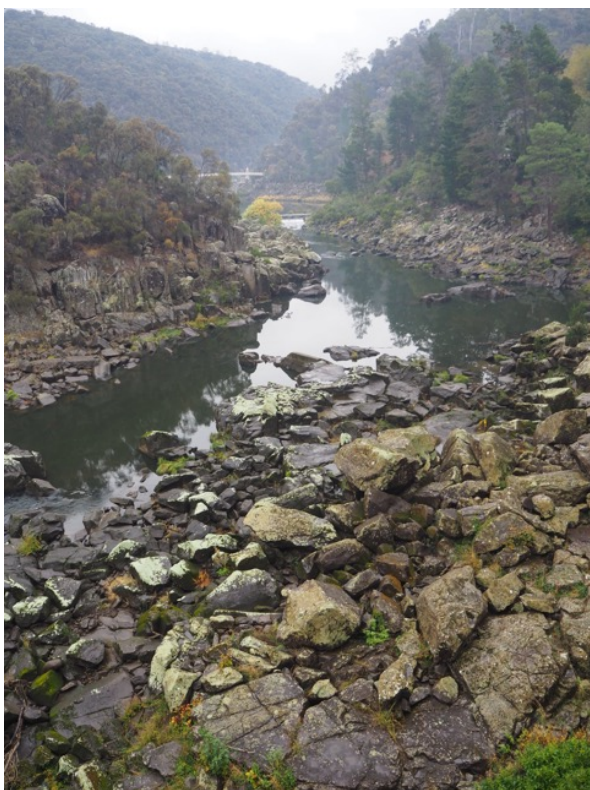
moorings regarding our boat or others) and 'motored' to Sydney, where beautiful exploring days were instead mostly taken up waiting to catch up with people, victualing, or chasing wild geese. There was at least a modicum of warmth here so the skipper wasn't too grumpy.

This month however seems to have dragged on a bit; Launceston, Tasmania seems so long ago! Some of that feeling might be due to weather, or distance, or more probably the fact we had to remotely fight with rogue operators in the building industry in Victoria. That last exercise has been an exercise in patience, mental and emotional exhaustion and, unfortunately, capitulation - sometimes you have to let the bullies win if you are to move on. Getting to warmer climes to enjoy our lifestyle is more important to us than fighting against recalcitrant contractors - even if it is going to cost a couple of thousand dollars to do so (this of course unfortunately also means a tighter reign on the budget for the next few months!)

On a happier note we can report that we have made some headway up the east coast of Australia and at the end of May we were in Port Stephens, along the central coast of New South Wales.

Socially, as well as catching up with several individuals in Launceston, we reconnected with ***CatchCry1, The Southern Cross, Two Up Together, Insatiable II, A Fine Line*** and ***Heart and Soul***.

1st May 2019. An exercise in 'running around'. Because we had two lots of visitors lined up for the afternoon we had to take the opportunity to get as much done as we could in the morning. So after taking Tiger to the vet to get his claws clipped we did a quick run to get cat food, Andrew nipped into Bunnings and we managed to end up in a temporary electoral office next to Petbarn to vote - which was perfect (although there were notes on our file with the AEC to cover if we didn't manage to get to a polling office). Hopefully next time we won't have to worry about being around civilisation when the country goes to the polls. After getting back to Sengo there was a bit of a panic to tidy up before the first visitors arrived at 2pm and the second visitors turned up at 3.30pm. Dinner was a delightful reunion with ***ex CatchCry 1***.



Cataract Gorge

2nd May 2019. The morning had a somewhat sombre feeling; 95 per cent predicted rain and although the www.bom.gov.au rain radar seemed to have the north-west of the state covered in heavy showers, any rain on the radar coming north to south from Bass Strait seemed to dissipate near the coast, and it seemed as if Launceston was going to escape the heaviest of it. The locals tell us not to entirely trust the forecast for rain in Launceston. The bom.gov.au forecast had been predicting rain for a

few days but apparently they've been predicting it for months. This morning however was the first morning that we'd been here that the skies had been significantly grey and the atmosphere misty.

Which was a pity because I wanted to go for a walk.

The first shower came down around 0830 and fortunately didn't last long. But the skies didn't clear. At around 1000 we headed out anyway, armed with our rain coats, which was just as well as we had them on within a few minutes, and we continued off into the drizzle.

After passing through Kings Park where we read about the Polish Settlers in Tasmania after WWII, and the 2/40th AIF Battalion's action in Timor in 1941, we made our way towards the Kings Bridge over the South Esk, but instead of crossing it to access the 'easy' walk to the Gorge we instead took the 'hard' rated Zig Zag Track to the Cataract Gorge basin. Andrew's bribe for this walk was coffee and cake but in order for me to get the extra walk around the back of the basin I had to concede lunch. Next time I want to walk to Duck Reach which is another six or so kilometres – I am not sure what that is going to cost me. We returned to the bridge down the other side of the gorge on the main, and much gentler track. Wildlife on the drizzle infused walk included four Tamar wallabies, two ravens, several peacocks near the cataract tourist area, and a grey fantail.

After lunch at Kingsbridge Bar and Restaurant (the old Penny Royal Mill moved to the current site in 1972) the afternoon entailed a trip to Macpac (Andrew got a new day pack – the old one had been disintegrating for some time), a Coles run, and returning the hire car before an evening catch up with a local. It was only a few minutes after we said goodbye to our guest that the rain finally started to come down heavily – at around 1930. An hour later, around 2030, thunder and lightening made the ground at the same time somewhere relatively close, ensuring both our hearts were in our mouths. The rain had settled in for the night.....



Views from the Zig Zag Track





Sengo on dock: Kings Bridge in background



Waves (and wind) from the north: we decided to stay one more night

What is the result of a high flow fuel pump and an old crack?

Diesel in the bilge! 3rd May 2019. And I spent an hour or so in the early morning cleaning it up from the top of the fuel tank and the first level bilge near the hot water heater. It had been perfect timing; the Tamar River Cruises were getting their fuel delivered by truck, so we negotiated with the driver to add an extra 150 litres to his tank. We had suspected something had gone awry when we got home on Tuesday night to the distinct smell of fuel in the boat. Poor Tiger, it must have overwhelmed his senses a bit. However, it was one of those – ‘I don’t really want to deal with this’ issues and having left it a couple of days I knew I had to remove the toys from off the bed and investigate the problem. And it had to be done before we left Launceston!

Having cleaned the fuel up I offered Andrew breakfast off boat as a final town treat, although he was a bit disappointed that where we ended up didn’t offer a full breakfast (his dish did include smoked salmon so he wasn’t too badly off). We had time and the sun was out and we took what we thought was a final stroll before departure; if all went to plan then we wouldn’t get any exercise for a few days. It was only going to take a few minutes to check out the other jetty in town (the one that is dry at low tide) but we found once we got near it that the expected 15-20 knot northerly wind had come in several hours early and was blowing down the river. This would create a very uncomfortable wind against tide situation (we’d seen photos of other boats in these conditions here and the image was akin to us bounding out of Shark Bay on the WA coast). We weren’t going to move in these conditions; the wind gusted to 27 knots during the afternoon. We decided to stay another night.

Heading north, down the Tamar 4th May 2019.

The ‘official’ boat said ‘Did you see the boats?’ Well, yes, one of them. ‘And you went straight through them anyway.’ Well, No. That’s not quite what happened.

Let us clarify that. The power boat we saw crossing the river was a great deal in front of us; akin to a fishing tinnie zipping across from one side of a river to the other. It had plenty of room. What we didn’t see were the small (kids?) power boats zipping across our bows, they were that quick, AND they turned around a mark and zipped back in front of the boat (we were travelling around 8 knots). Idiots. I exclaimed. They are kids, Andrew exclaimed. That is when I had a chat to the official boat and they had a go at US for going through the course!

Let us put this into further perspective. It was only a couple of days previously we had seen an A4 poster stuck to a wall near the Tamar River Cruises Office regarding a powerboat event at Rosevears. Andrew asked the Tamar River Cruises staff whether they had been given any information about the event as some of their cruises pass the noted location, and you would think the organisers of such an event would notify all interested parties. As Tamar River Cruises didn’t know anything about the

event we went looking for any relevant Notice to Mariners. And found nothing! I then went looking for a relevant website for information and the best I got on one (very basic) site was the date of the event. There was no indication of the actual specific location of the event or if they were going to block off the river. Another possible reference to the event was listed as the month before (6th April) so now we were totally confused. The reason we wanted to know the details: it would impact our departure from the Tamar River and our journey's timing across Bass Strait if we couldn't get to the top of the Tamar on Saturday evening.

So with no information found we started our journey as planned and headed north. As we approached Rosevears area the first sign we saw of anything happening was the placement of *big* marker buoys in the water. Then we noticed the crowds of cars on the river's edge. Then we noticed a small powerboat shooting across in front of us (with plenty of distance) and then we noticed the small boats that cut us off. It is usually adult idiots in fishing tinnies who do that to cause a stir and annoying bow wave. Without knowing the course (which having nearly run over some participants because they had shot across our bows was clearly across the middle of the deeper parts of the river) I suspect the kids were just following a line... however, you would think that having seen a boat coming they might stop their trials (or what ever they were doing).

The attitude of the officials was disappointing – having assumed we had kept going having seen the boats (we saw the boat way out in front of us (safe distance) but didn't expect small vessels to cut us off coming out of nowhere). These people don't own the river. If they want to set aside an area for their event, then by all means do so, but they need to make sure there is plenty of room for other boats to pass around it, and put out a Notice to Mariners so those travelling in the area can at least be aware of what is going on and where not to travel through! (We were motoring but I note we did have one sail up (from a distance you could argue we were sailing (but not close up) – we are also a big catamaran – we would have been obvious!).



Taking risks zipping in front of a moving boat (we were doing 8 knots) this competitor came out of nowhere zipped past our bows, rounded a mark and then zipped back in front of us – very dangerous!



The big orange letters spell 'Retriever'. Funnily enough had there been a collision they would have been retrieving injured (or worse) competitors. The occupants of this boat however were more concerned about telling us off for going through their course than the safety and common sense of their young competitors!

The morning had *started* on a less stressful note: the sun was out, the wind was from the south and we went for a final walk around town. This time we headed up the North Esk River crossing at the historic tramway, passing the University of Tasmania, The Museum, The UTAS Stadium and crossing land towards the Tamar, stopping for a cuppa and then spending some time watching a metal crushing operation on the banks of the river. We were a bit rushed to leave when we got back to boat, as the Lady Launceston was due back and I knew it was going to be easier to leave if she wasn't in front of us. We drove out as she drove in.

A communication mismatch meant we missed saying goodbye to ***Shebeen*** (which was a pity because they had been a delight), before we headed into West Arm around six nautical miles from the sea. We were close to low tide as we entered, the depth below us getting as low as 0.8 meters at one point around a lateral mark but there was plenty of depth further in in the middle of the Arm. We anchored in around 5 meters and had a lovely calm, but cold, final night in Tasmania. The evening was full of the calls of noisy sea birds.



North Esk



North Esk



North Esk



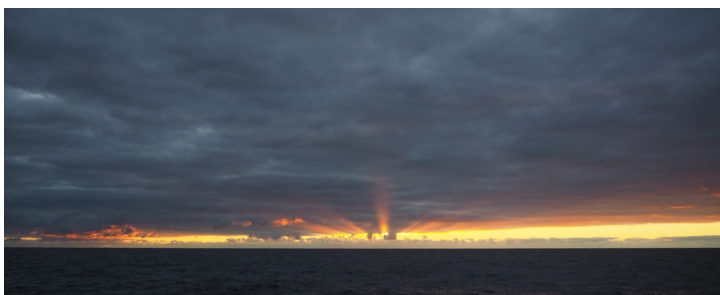
Tamar River



Going under the Bateman Bridge



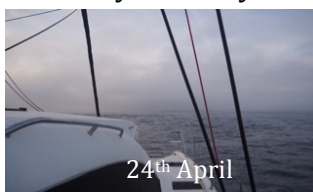
Leaving Launceston. Photo © Vicki Johnson



Heading for the 'Big Island'

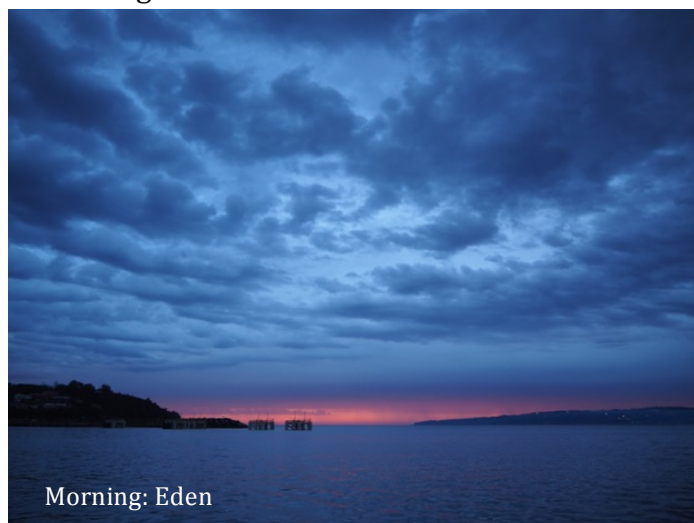
5th – 7th May 2019. Technically we could have pushed further up the east coast before the big blow if we had wanted to but we would have been motoring into northerlies. I'm not fond of motoring into any wind, even if it is light, and being light you feel the effect of the swell all that more. So, after 53 hours of a reasonable journey we anchored in Snug Cove, Two Fold Bay at Eden for a rest, being serenaded in by the expected ping of local bell miners.

We had been serenaded out of the Tamar River by a completely different sound. The fog horn from the Low Head lighthouse is demonstrated every Sunday at 1200 and when the first sound echoed across the waterway it made me jump. The only reason I realised what it was, was that I had overheard someone mention it on our very brief visit to the lighthouse the week before. Ironically this day was crystal clear and sunny, unlike when we entered on 24th April, when a fog horn would have been much more appropriate!



The mainsail was raised whilst we were still in the Tamar River, the initial idea of shaking the reef out dismissed, as surprisingly it was blowing around 20 knots. We motored out of the River and didn't put the genoa up until we were clear of shallow water north of the coast. But the motors didn't go off. We had somehow got ourselves into a windless patch, the gauge reading 0.00 at one stage and the surface of the ocean was glass. Unfortunately this lasted some time and when we had internet reception we could marry it up to the predicted white to light blue patch on the forecast. After a long twelve hours the motors went off and apart from a two hour stint in the middle of the journey, didn't go on again until around Green Cape, 15 nautical miles south of Eden.

Tiger managed to keep his stomach in control this trip, as did mother, but she felt a bit woozy on the second day; stronger winds combined with bigger seas and a side swell probably had something to do with this. None-the-less, it was (apart from one incident) a pretty benign Bass Strait crossing. Our path led us approximately north east to the eastern side of Deal Island (where we learnt to zoom in on our GoTo point as we had put it smack on Endeavour Reef and it wasn't obvious until you zoomed in **below** the 1 nautical mile scale) and then north through the oil field toward Lakes Entrance to avoid the stronger winds of a moving system, before turning east again close to the coast and riding the back of the weather. By this point the true winds were around the 15 to 20 knot mark with some occasional stints up to 24 plus knots. But the wind was mainly a comfortable 120 – 150 degrees off our bow (with the occasional 90 degree beam reach) so the speed was good and the ride was relatively smooth (7 to 11 knots – with the occasional surf down the waves reaching 14!). We knew the northerlies were coming in and 'effectively no wind' caught us short of Two Fold Bay with a drop in true wind speed giving us an apparent wind of 2 knots and less, before a wind change to north with a true wind speed of 5 knots. These conditions were obviously not suitable to sail in, the three meter swell (smooth rolling swell) from behind was giving us more speed than the air, so the sails were dropped and we motored in, timing it so we were blinded by the sun on the way to our anchorage! The anchor was set at 1645.



The difference a border makes. I was told by another boat that they couldn't believe the difference in weather when they passed the Victorian/NSW border – one minute it was depressing, the next it was warm and sunny. The comment may be seen as an exaggeration but we encountered the same thing. Approaching Gabo Island, which is a few nautical miles on the Victorian side of the border, there was a striking contrast; the front that we'd been traveling through was heading off to the Tasman Sea and just to our west. To our east were magnificent sunny skies. And yes, it was warm in the sun (out of the still slightly frigid wind of course).



BANG!

Somewhere between 0200 and 0300 was supposed to be the best time to see the Eta Aquarid Meteor Shower due to the break up of Halley's comet. I had 'sort of' been looking for some time but I saw nothing obvious. At 0245 however any thought of this astronomical event was forgotten completely when there was an almighty BANG!

Essentially what had happened is that the top half of one of our mainsheet blocks (the newer (expensive) one!!!) broke away under pressure from its lower half, leaving us with debris on the deck and swinging sheets in the wind. The frustration of this happening at this hour and having to fix it in the dark was bad enough, but adding further frustration was that we had ordered a spare from a chandlery in Geelong (when we had been anchored there in February), who had lost the order and failed to tell us (we discovered this after two follow up calls) and meant that instead of fitting the spare block into its rightful place Andrew was now jury rigging a 'MacGyver' replacement using two spinnaker blocks instead. Not quite the activity you want to be doing on a moving boat across Bass Strait at three o'clock in the morning!

8th May 2019. What do you do when you are spotted with a marine hose hanging over the front of the boat and cleaning equipment (implements ranging from hammers to water hoses to a long piece of wire coat hanger) in your hands by the local tourist boat as it comes around from your port blind spot to buzz you on its tourist run? For those that don't know about cleaning pipes from marine heads, I am not going to elaborate. For those who do, you are probably laughing by now. It was a case of 'pull everything in, sit down on your behind, look like you are having an animated conversation and whatever you do, don't look at the tourist boat'. I wondered what the interps officer was going to say if asked by a tourist what we were doing. One of our boatie friends has suggested they probably don't have an answer for 'being cruel to hoses'.

9th May 2019. We tried to visit a neighbouring boat this morning before going to shore but their 'front' door was closed so we headed off to town for a walk and to go food shopping. We weren't away that long, heading back to boat before lunch and thinking we might go visiting after we'd eaten. However both vessels we'd intended to say hello to headed out around lunch time and didn't return to their respective boats until late afternoon, by which time I had Andrew in a stinger suit inspecting under the bottom of ours; the starboard prop of which had vibrated on reversing when anchoring when we arrived in Eden. Curiously, no obvious fault was found. After that shivering experience, funnily enough, Andrew wasn't inclined to visit anybody.



10th May 2019. The morning blue skies had turned grey by the time we got back to boat in the early afternoon. Rain was threatening in the distance, the wind was around ten knots, and the motor across to anchor off [The Seahorse Inn](#) was smooth although there was some challenge in setting the anchor against the northerly wind.

And at around 1830 the rain came down. Lightening had been flashing across the sky some distance to the north and we had heard thunder around 1800 but it wasn't close. Fortunately there was no hail. Our main weather concern however was not this northerly storm, it was the tempest we were expecting from the south!

We were anchored at Nullica Bay near 'Boyd Town' a bay open to the north but protected from the south. Other yachts that had been at Snug Cove had either left at midnight last night (there was a window of light winds to get someway up the coast) or had made their

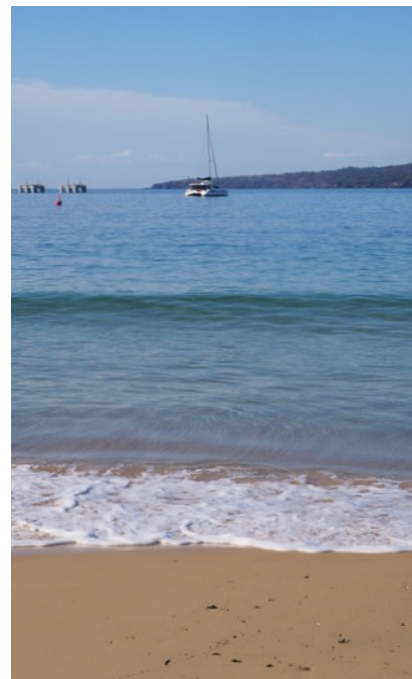
way across to East Boyd Bay, which according to one of the cruising guides offers a bit more protection and less potential swell. It is also a smaller anchorage and we have anchored there before in strong winds. In Nullica Bay if you happen to drag there is plenty of room – you are not going to hit anything. In East Boyd Bay if it is crowded you could potentially hit other boats (or they could hit you) and your backstop will be the jetty! There is no easy get out. With an impending gale we decided we were happy to put up with a bit of a swell and no crowds for safer emergency options.

The forecast for the day however had been calm. Perfect for a walk and I suggested that we explore the destination of the newish looking option off the main path at Warren's Walk (the patch of green reserve you take to walk uphill from the wharf to town). I was expecting a relatively easy track across to Cattle Bay; the path led past a lookout over the wharf area and then past houses before turning down Cattle Bay Road. A private marina project is going ahead at the site (which once loaded cattle, built ships and held a cannery) and the landing area for dinghies (that we sometimes use as the back access to get to Coles) has been grassed and new picnic tables have been installed. There are signs and fences stopping you from accessing the old wharf – the top of which looks like it has been re-layed - and the old buildings have been cleared. I had some notion that there was a path through the back of this site around to Cocora Beach (and indeed there was no discouraging sign on a small gate) but we ignored the fenced site altogether and climbed up a 4WD access track around the back of it instead. The bush we went through was great habitat and we were surrounded by bird calls as we made our way through it, choosing the easiest looking trail each time the track split, and ending up behind houses high on the hill over the northern end of Cocora Beach. This is where we discovered we may have



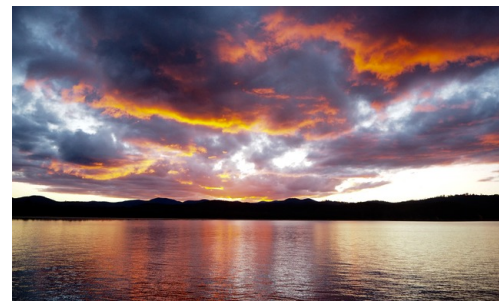
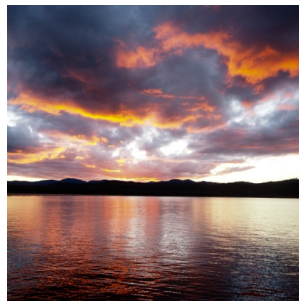
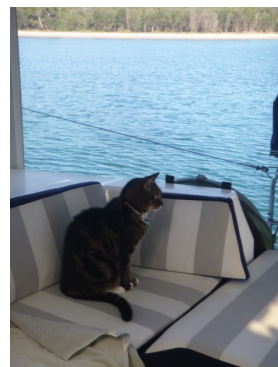
been walking through some private land, now for sale, with 8 by 3 bedroom residences already approved in concept stage. The aerial photo on the 'For Sale' board shows all bush. It is a pity that the destruction of good bird habitat will be the result of some greedy developer. We did find our way from here down to Cocora Beach, walked along the beach, took a bush track to Cocora Point and continued on the ridge to Budginbro Lookout. Clearly we were walking on an unofficial old track; the official one stopped at the lookout (from the other direction!). The official walking track apparently continues to Quarantine Bay, however by this stage we had been walking for over an hour and it would probably take that long to get back to town. And we still had to move Sengo. The rest of the track will have to be explored next time!

Bird list – silver eye, white faced heron, darter, little pied cormorant, silver gull, black cormorant, eastern rosella, magpie, pied currawong, sparrows, black birds, red wattle bird, lapwing, superb fairy wren, welcome swallow, bell miners.



11th May 2019. We awoke to another boat anchored adjacent us. We had no idea when they arrived overnight but this boat had been on the jetty at Eden so perhaps the conditions were a bit too rough over there. The expected southerly gale blustered through, but the highest wind speed we had seen on the gauges was 35.6 knots. The wind finally died down and the grey clouds of the sky did revert to blues with white cumulus, eventually with an enthusiastic sun finally making an appearance.

It was sunny enough to wash the cushions – well some of them anyway. It was lunch time by the time I'd finished the first batch and the wind strength was low enough that I could leave them out on the tramp to dry (or try to dry). I didn't want to overload the tramp – we have discovered a small split in it. And the front deck was not clean enough to put washed cushions on it. So whilst I achieved a cushion wash, I didn't finish the job. They weren't all perfectly clean either – for various reasons it had been a long time since I undertook this task and the easily dislodged dirt particles may have been removed but there some staining remained from some persistent sand storms. None the less they looked better - and I felt better.



12 May 2019. There was a tiny window to head north overnight on the 11th. We did contemplate the move but I had a headache which didn't help with decision making. We stayed put

Eden to Pittwater

Unfortunately, for a couple of days, we temporarily became a power boat!

13th – 15th May 2019. The anchor was up around 1130 and we were escorted out of Two Fold Bay by a pod of dolphins. The main didn't go up because we were expecting very light winds and Andrew, understandably, didn't want it flopping around; we would put it up if and when the conditions were suitable. The genoa didn't go out immediately either, but when it did it oscillated between being effective and 'completely useless'. The expected 10-15 knot wind did eventually turn up, but being from immediately behind us, our apparent wind speed was less than 7 knots, not enough for us to effectively sail in, especially when we were fighting the east coast current. Andrew argues that I have a problem with the using the spinnaker – not so in the right conditions when I am prepared for it, but even if I had been okay with putting the spinnaker up on this run (and down over nights) we couldn't have done it: because of the incident across Bass Strait, the spinnaker blocks were being used on the main sheet!

The east coast current however wasn't too strong and at one stage we were actually getting a push north. Given this, at one point I turned the throttle

down, not wanting to end up arriving in Pittwater in the dark. I should have known better because a shift later we were only tracking at three knots – we had avoided the current most of the trip but crossing it around

Botany Bay held its challenges, as well as the avoidance of the big ships going out and into the Bay.

Just as I handed over shift around 0400 the wind came up, and a beautiful westerly wind shot our speed up from 3-4 knots to 6-7 knots. This made up for lost time and in the morning sunshine and in a symbolic topping and tailing of the journey we were escorted into Pittwater by a pod of dolphins. After rejecting a mooring that someone had kindly offered us (one out of the three adjacent boats was going to be far too close) we anchored back at our usual Pittwater spot, Towlers Bay with the glorious cracks of the eastern whipbird in the background.

Apart from dolphins wildlife seen on this leg were seals, penguins, gannets and whales(?) (spouts)!

After a couple of hours' recovery (sleep for Andrew) lunch was a delightful catch up with **The Southern Cross** in Newport before heading back to boat. After our broken sleep during the journey, it was an early night!

16th May 2019. The first thing I noticed when I walked outside this morning was there was no jellyfish, the water was clear, although the odd one did appear as the day got hotter. It was a gorgeous blue sky day but it was not for exploring. Instead, it was washing day: the rest of back cockpit cushions were cleaned, the port side of cockpit was wiped down and clothes were washed. I also had a chat to our insurance agency regarding new rules that it now no longer insures us for claims based on anchor or mooring issues at three places in Aus – two of which are of major concern to us.

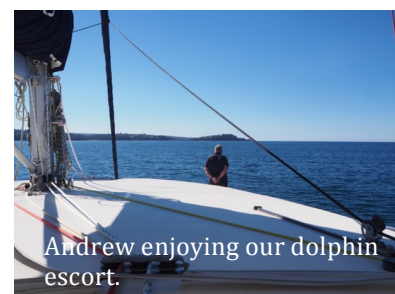
On the 17th we stretched our legs with a walk from the Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club to Newport Beach and back, and on the 18th lunch was on **Two Up Together** who had come across to Towlers Bay to visit us.



Morning: from Nullica Bay



The tourist boat!



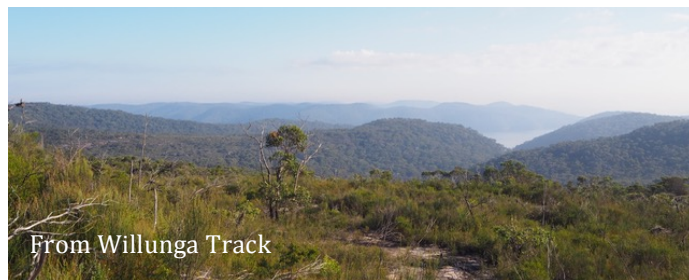
Andrew enjoying our dolphin escort.



Jellyfish invasion!



Overlooking Morning Bay/Towlers Bay: **Two-Up Together (centre)** and **Sengo** in background



From Willunga Track

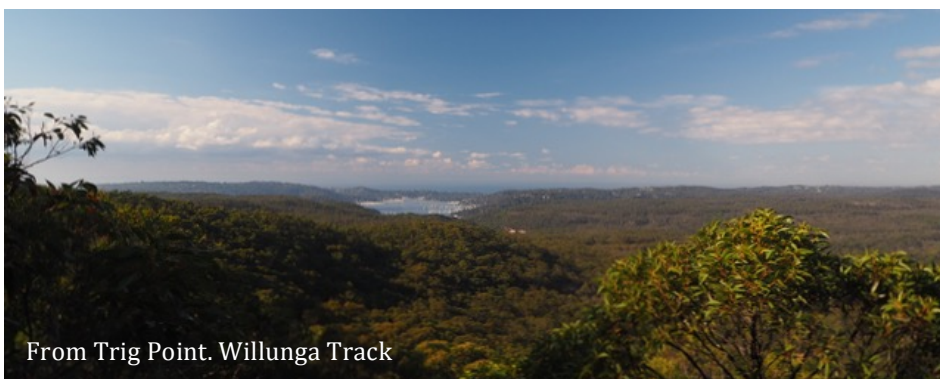
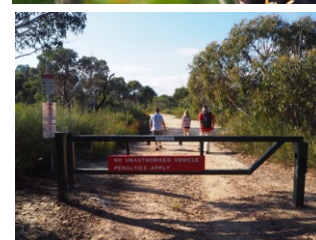


From Trig Point. Willunga Track

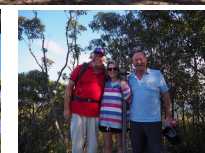
If you want views you must go...UP

19th May 2019. It was going to be an early (ish) start – and the boy grumbled. Andrew is not a great early riser under preferred circumstances, but it wasn't too difficult to get him up – I just had to make sure the alarm was on early enough so he could 'ease' into the day. **Two-Up Together** picked us up at 0730 and the dingy was left near the Morning Bay Wharf. Following the fire track up the hill from the wharf we passed the track to the left we had taken on our last explore of this area several years ago (see Aboard Sengo May 2015) and continued upward into Ku Ring Gai Chase National Park. The fire track is typical; dirt, stones, occasionally slippery – and mostly up. I had the impression we were stopping where we could look over the bays and see our boats (which we did for a moment) but the journey continued, up to and over the West Head Road, extending the walk out of the semi tropical looking forest near sea level into a somewhat scrubby heath and eucalypt habitat. There were more bird calls at the lower elevations, but there was more shade as well. We completed the 750

meter Willunga Track (one way) to the trig point; the view from which was extensive; south east to Pittwater and across to Sydney behind the local hills. A less extensive, but still delightful, view was taken a few hundred meters prior to the trig point; overlooking Ku Ring Gai Chase NP and the Hawkesbury River. It was a good walk with delightful company and we had definitely had our daily (weekly!!) exercise by the time we were dropped back to boat - three hours later!



From Trig Point. Willunga Track



20th -21st May 2019. Having been notified that our new headsets had arrived at the Newport Beach Post Office we made our way over the hill to collect them (via bus because we were a tad exhausted from the walk on the 19th May). After a quick lunch at a completely forgettable takeaway premises we got back on the bus and got off at Mona Vale, did a quick shop and whilst we were the wrong day of the week to get the flu shot at the pharmacist, managed to get the local medical centre to give us the proverbial jab in the arm. Andrew survived this quite well. However the morning of the 21st May was a bit of a right off for me and whilst I wasn't completely under the weather, movement around the boat was slow and my brain wasn't working with its usual 50 mile per hour aplomb! We spent the afternoon of the 21st May on general clean up duties, and once I'd got rid of the headache, trying to find the leak on the top of the diesel tank under the bed in the port aft cabin.



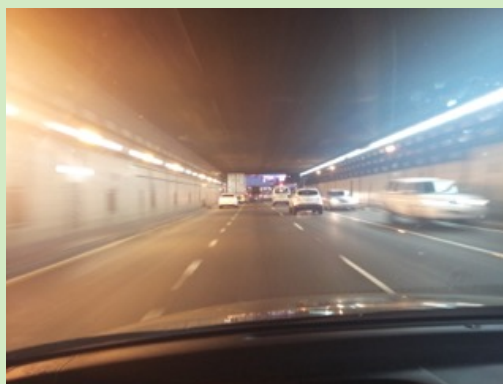
Royal Motor Yacht Club.

22 – 25th May 2019. We booked a berth on the Visitor's Jetty at Royal Motor Yacht Club for a few days; the predominant reason being so we could borrow a car for a *very* early start to get to a manufacturer who could supposedly create a replacement spring for our mainsheet rig. The extra nights would cover convenience of any provisioning we decided we needed and access to marina facilities (some larger laundry items needed washing that were a bit too big for my usual bucket). During our stay on dock we also managed to head out on ***Two Up Together*** for the Friday race (which turned out to be a drift), partially wash the deck, and catch up with ***A Fine Line***, and ***Heart and Soul***. We left the RMYC dock mid afternoon on Saturday 24th May and put the anchor back down in Towlers Bay on the other side of the waterway.

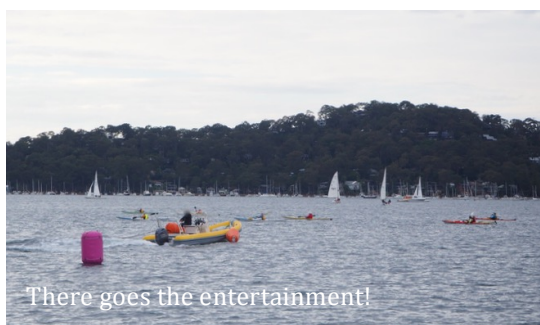
23 May 2019. Was it the early start (0530)? Was it driving from north side of Sydney to the south side of Sydney in the dark avoiding roadwork and heading down the 'Tunnel' in peak hour traffic? Was it the fact that when we arrived we were told (despite what we had been led to believe) it wasn't a simple job after all and the mould for the task at hand was going to cost half (plus GST) of the cost we were trying to avoid, let alone (hand) producing the item as well? Was it the fact we had gone into a marina just for this task in the hope to save some money (and some waste to landfill) or was it the fact that that all came to naught and we had to fork out around \$200 dollars for the spring complex anyway? (the actual spring costs a lot less but it was an eight week wait from England!). To call it a frustrating morning was probably an understatement!

On the plus side we had had an adventure, 'done' the Sydney 'tunnel' and Andrew actually enjoyed sitting in peak hour traffic (so he tells me - really??). It was a novel experience and something he hasn't done for quite some time.

The afternoon, once we had got back to boat and had a well-deserved cuppa, was spent washing clothes and reading. Dinner was with ***Two Up Together***



Evoking memories of the movie *Die Hard 4*, in this section of the 'tunnel' there are no barriers between opposing lanes of traffic!



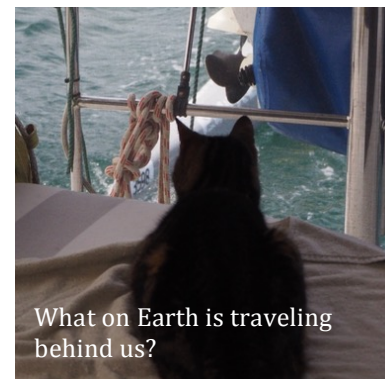
25th May 2019. The sound of a motor boat close by peeked my curiosity as we were having breakfast. Boats had been quietly leaving all around us from the mooring field to our west but this sound was loud and not far from our stern. When I got up to investigate I was surprised but delighted to see two racing turning marks not far from the back of Sengo. There were quite a few yachts milling on the other side of the waterway and clearly it was race day for this group of sailors. It was however remarkably early for this kind of activity, around 0800 but that didn't worry me – we were in prime position to see some action. I wouldn't need the zoom lens for this race, the vessels would be almost on top of us! I was however a tad disappointed when a large inflatable arrived a short time later to move the marks – the wind had changed, so therefore did the course. The original placement of the marks had softened my rush to move to more serene surrounds, the race would be fun to watch, but having had the entertainment move, I was now keen to get out of the busy Pittwater, so we finished our breakfast, tidied the boat (and I started cleaning the engine bilge) and prepared to leave.

According to predictions there were going to be almost ideal conditions to get to Port Stephens, even with the 15-20 knot beam reach expected in the late afternoon. However, having

checked the forecast Port Stephens was not really the place to be in the forthcoming strong westerly to north westerly winds. Anchoring in Salamander Bay is a possibility – we have done this before, but based on a travel journey of 5 knots it would have been a 15 hour trip just to get to the entrance (I note we have usually taken 12 hours from Broken Bay) and we were not going to make the entrance until dark; getting through the leads and putting the anchor down off the moorings in the dark at Shoal Bay is one thing (having done it at 0200 on 11th December 2018), navigating the shallow channel the west side of Nelson Bay for another 3 nautical miles in those conditions is another (and by that time probably into the wind). This morning, looking at the weather further we decided that Newcastle might be a better option in the expected winds, if we make our way up the river, but we had left the decision too late. Had we only thought of (closer) Newcastle in our previous night deliberations!

Having decided to let this window pass we then thought about where we'd like to spend the next day and a half; we had a few phone calls to make on Monday and being in a reception area might be useful. We could stay where we were but I was looking forward to some time in Ku Ring Gai Chase National Park. So we got the Hawkesbury Cruising Guide out and considered our options. We had to choose a bay that would, if the stronger weather reached us, be protected from the west and north. We skipped the first option, which would probably have had reception but was also more exposed to passing traffic, and settled on Stingray Bay on Smiths Creek instead. Two of the three moorings were occupied. But just as we picked up the third and outer most mooring the boat on the inner most, and more protected mooring left. We moved to the more protected spot and relaxed to the crack of the eastern whipbirds.

Our trip up Pittwater had been uneventful, under motor, with the genoa coming out to assist half way up the waterway. The wind had been at a sharp angle off the bow so gains were minimal. At least for us. Andrew had noted a paddler in a canoe with an outrigger trail the wake of a monohull heading south but the next time he turned around the paddler had turned around and was heading our way. And to give him credit he not only caught up (according to our gauges we were travelling at around and above 5 knots) he rode the back of our stern for around half the time he was heading north. A mighty big



effort – and a complete mystery to Tiger who was, as usual, at his post on sentry duty in the back cockpit. We did get a bit of pure sailing in when we turned the corner up into the Hawkesbury River and Cowan Creek area but the wind angle and strength didn't stay consistent.

A fourth boat turned up in Sting Ray Bay and we wondered if they were going to stay. We were surprised to see two orange floats in the water but then noticed these were attached to 'divers'. I am not sure what they were looking at, one diver heading to and along each side of the bay. This boat only stayed around an hour.



Attached to a diver!

27th May 2019. Windy! Strangely, for some time, the wind came at us from a non expected angle so we were exposed a bit more than we'd expected to be, but were still fairly sheltered. We were not far from Cottage Point but we had no internet access so could not see if the predictions had changed. Unlike Tasmania where TasMaritime broadcasts the weather three times a day clearly to the 'ends of the earth', the Sydney VTS broadcasts were hard to hear and more frustratingly, all the pertinent information was blocked out; not on their end, it was just that interference seemed to pause out the voice just as the predicted wind speed

was read out, or the strength of the wind at observation

points. So in reality we got something like – 'Synoptic situation' (blank),

(blank) 'west, north west', (blank) 'knots from the south'.....How frustrating! We did hear one observation of 40 knots and we were glad we were in more protected waters but we didn't know which observation point they were referring too. The highest wind speed we saw on our gauges was over 29 knots. This morning had started out with blue sky but grey cloud finally took over and it was particularly windy around lunch time when Andrew saw one of the blue rubber kayak stands dislodge itself (we had moved the kayak so the blue wedge wasn't in its usual space tightly under the vessel) and start to somersault its way down the deck. He yelled at me to rescue it as he was in the middle of cooking lunch and I dived to catch the foam support. And missed! (My right knee is not happy). I watched the wedge go tumbling over the side into the waterway and start making its way toward the ocean. In a frustrating panic in windy conditions it was then a rush to launch the tinnie in order to rescue it – we knew it wasn't going to sink. Of course, at just this point in time, it started to rain. Andrew was cold, wet and grumpy by the time he got back to the boat, rescued wedge in hand. Cooking was abandoned and we had a salad for lunch instead!



Retrieving the blue wedge

28th May 2019. The morning presented us with clear skies, but it was decidedly chilly. The wind had subsided dramatically overnight and we needed to move; there was some imperative business we needed to attend to and we needed internet access. We dropped the mooring in Sting Ray Bay and picked up one of two public moorings at Cottage Point. The internet is reasonably strong at Cottage Point, although phone reception was a bit sporadic depending on which way the wind had us swinging. We watched what we thought was a fishing

boat circle us for some time, then stopped on a jetty before circling us again, but we found out later they were probably in a holding pattern. Whilst we had a cuppa at the kiosk at Cottage Point, (the journey to shore we took as an opportunity to get off boat, rather than an opportunity to exercise (which we didn't get)), the 'fishing' boat was tied up at the kiosk jetty waiting for passengers. It was a Yamaha Boat. They were doing a Yamaha Branding shoot and the models had already been motor biking, (on Yamaha bikes), golfing (in Yamaha carts) and were now going boating (in a Yamaha boat, with Yamaha branded lifejackets, shirts etc etc). Ahhh the life of a model.

The ease in wind was not predicted to last however and when we got back to Sengo we moved to Little Jerusalem Bay. The bonus in this location is that it was protected from all three directions in which we were expecting wind, despite it being quite open to the waterway and....we got internet access – but only if we were swinging in the right direction.



29th May 2019. Blue skies and minimal wind in the early morning but that was expected. Our two neighbours disappeared early but we had yet to work out our sailing plan so we weren't moving yet. As predicted the wind did pick up but our light green prediction area 15-20 knots was gusting close to 30 knots. Sporadic internet reception proved frustrating in sorting out some issues in Victoria but I persisted. However the exercise took me all day rather than just a couple of hours! By the time evening came we had worked out our next move north. Early to bed gave us a few hours sleep before departure.

Washing day!

30th May 2019. At thirty minutes past midnight, in almost pitch black because the moon wasn't yet up, we dropped the mooring and headed out toward the sea. Being the closest mooring into the pointy bit of the bay we had to not only extricate ourselves from the mooring we were on, but turn around and avoid the two outer moorings on exit; neither of which was occupied. In

order to see them I had to shine a powerful torch, and fortunately they were blaringly obvious in the light – fluorescent yellow orbs bobbing in the water. I did a double take looking at one however – whilst we are used to cormorants, darters and silver gulls sitting on top of these facilities, I was initially confused at the lump on top of the northern most mooring; it was about the same size and volume as the mooring buoy itself and my brain eventually registered recognition; sitting on top of the mooring balancing in the dark wasa Pelican!

The wind strength when we had first turned the engines on was only around 6 knots but within half an hour it was blowing a good 20 knots and the engines went off. I really didn't want to put the main up in the dark so we only unfurled the genoa. And that was all that was needed. Even with the wind directly behind us as we exited Broken Bay we were travelling at around 7 knots. With the wind gusting to 29 knots however, and the necessity to turn into it (or we'd end up in New Zealand) we ended up putting a double reef in our headsail for the journey north.

As the forecast got updated overnight, the predicted wind strengths got greater. We did hear one proponent on Sydney VTS tell a vessel that the forecast seemed to have an over estimated wind strength. Maybe for Fort Dennison in Port Jackson – at that time the true wind speed where we were was blowing ten knots *over* predictions. We managed to turn into the wind under controlled conditions and we only lost the wind twice, which meant a couple of stints of engine time totalling about one hour in the twelve hours of travel between Little Jerusalem Bay and outskirts of Port Stephens. By the time we got to the Port's entrance it was still blowing west north west, the genoa was furled and we motored our way to Salamander Bay. If we didn't move from here this location should give us some protection from the west-north-west and the south-west that was due in the next day or so, having not made up our mind when we were going to continue our journey north.

Originally the idea had been to head to Port Stephens on Friday 31st May – the winds would be an almost perfect south-west – and in the 15-20 knot range so a nice consistent apparent wind speed across the deck until we looked at the swell. The direction of the swell was comfortable – it was the size I was having kittens with; 3-5 meters. Looking at a journey from Thursday night to Friday morning was a possibility but as time went on the swell predictions were getting larger earlier. So, in order to arrive on Thursday in the light – because the wind when we expected to arrive was going to be on our nose and the preferred anchoring spot was around 6 nautical miles in from

the Port's entrance, we had to leave just after midnight Wednesday. That meant we had to grin and bear the potential 20-25 knots as we came out of Broken Bay and hope that the close adjacent predicted 25-30 knot winds were non-existent or had receded further from the Sydney coast

We made Port Stephens safely – in just over twelve hours. It wasn't the most comfortable sail – the description of 'washing machine' comes to mind. The predicted swell had two directions, both of equal strength, and perpendicular to each other. Add to that the wind coming from a third direction.... And we were very grateful get to the anchor set in mud off Wanda Wanda Point, Salamander Bay by mid afternoon

Overhead visitor: Salamander Bay, Port Stephens



31st May 2019. Recovery. Whilst the wind didn't blow as hard as we expected it to, and our anchorage was quite comfortable, we didn't have much energy to do anything, despite the inviting blue and sunny skies. I, in particular, am effected by sails that have a modicum of 'overnight' in them and find it difficult to recover if the journey has been less than two days. The day, in the main, was spent reading.