

Aboard Sengo

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June 2019

Exploring
Port Stephens

Always pleasant

3

The lower
Clarence River

Something new

11



Iluka Bay

Hanging out with the boys!

Stephen and Clarence:
Waterways of the NSW Coast



Iluka Bay



Sunset: Salamander Bay, Port Stephens

Hanging with the water boys at Stephen's Port and Clarence's River

Both Port Stephens (on the NSW central coast) and the Clarence River (on the NSW northern coast) have permanent water locals - and lots of visitors, although some are only in transit. Both water bodies have settlements along their shores where food supplies are easily (or relatively easily) obtained and both provide pleasant anchorages (albeit that civilisation is not that far away and can often be seen or heard). Whilst we have previously stopped at Port Stephens, the Clarence River was completely new to us.

Whilst some of our stay at both these locations was partially enforced, due to weather and visitors, they were locations we were actually looking forward to – revisiting Port Stephens was definitely not a chore and the Clarence was a new and a much looked forward to sojourn. Despite our initial plans, the end of the month saw us still in NSW and not the fabled Queensland tropics. But the weather wasn't *too* cold and we are in no *official* hurry. Sometimes it is better to enjoy the journey and appreciate the opportunities that come your way - rushing to fulfill Plan A, may mean you miss more enjoyable experiences.



Public Jetty: Harwood. Clarence River



1st June 2019. Winter – and it showed. Whilst the morning wasn't particularly cold, the forecast was for showers and although we had managed to move from Salamander Bay, across to a public mooring at Nelson Bay in mainly dry conditions, it started to pelt down rain just as I picked up the mooring. Subsequent to say, the bridle wasn't put on the mooring line until sometime later. The 1st June is Andrew's Birthday and whilst there are fancier restaurants in other townships around the waterway, we reasoned, given the weather, that access to Nelson Bay (the main town on Port Stephens) was going to be easiest. The French restaurant at Lemon Tree Passage is lovely but we didn't know if the public dock there was free (2 hour limit that we managed 4 days last time), and Bannisters (which has a Rick Stein Restaurant) was accessible via the Soldiers Point Jetty but a longer than preferred tinnie ride for a night time run from where we

were, and we didn't want to move Sengo to anchor amongst the moorings closer to this destination. If we were going to move, it would be to a place we could rely on in the short term to hold the boat with minimal distance to shore. We were lucky, one of the three public moorings outside the Nelson Bay township was free.

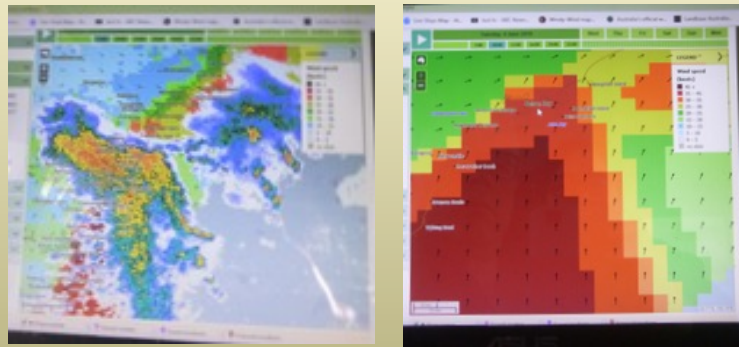
So after running in from the wet, we hunkered inside during the rest of the morning and early afternoon whilst the rain fell outside and the cold wind persisted; the plan was to head across to 'The Wharf' for an early dinner- and we were delighted when **Trade Runner** said they'd join us.

Rain during the day had been sporadic and when we started to get dressed for dinner it wasn't raining. None-the-less we pulled out our wet weather gear and piled the bright red protective clothing, plus our blue sea boots, over our 'going out' attire. And just as well. Just as we got into the tinnie it bucketed down; we were soaked on the outside and it was definitely not a pleasant trip to shore. Fortunately the public toilets near the jetty were open and after peeling off our now soaked outer layer we emerged like winter-borne butterflies in neater, dry clothing. The rain, which had dropped for all of around 10 minutes, now stopped – of course – giving us an opportunity to walk to the restaurant in the dry. The sky opened up with all its glory several times during the evening and we were grateful that **Trade Runner** gave us a lift back to the

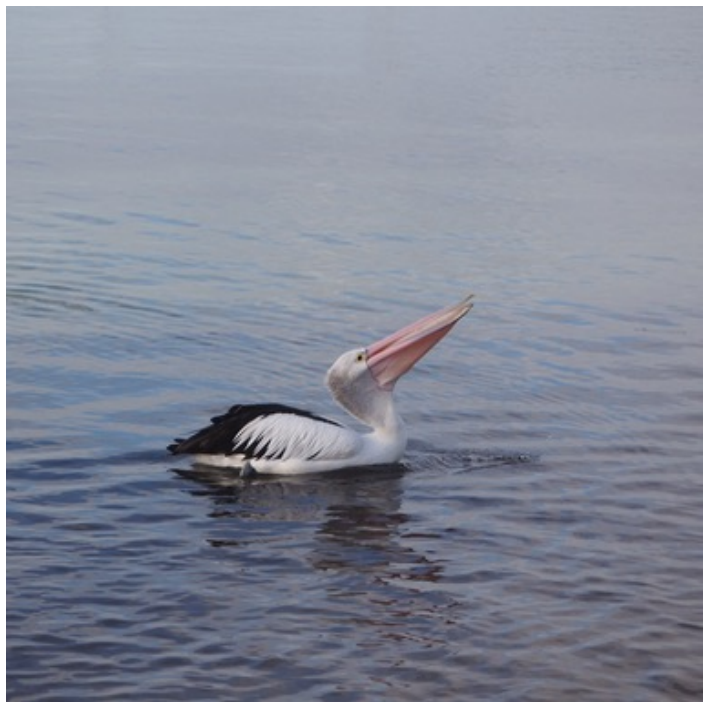


tinnie. The tinnie ride back to boat was dry but another bout of water fell from above just as we got home.

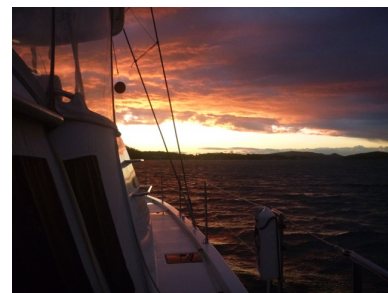
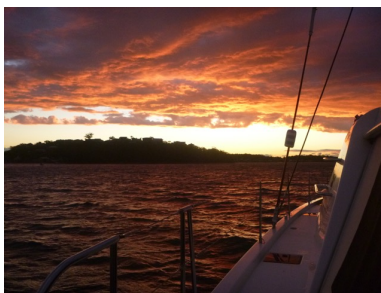
2nd June 2019. Public moorings usually have a 'restriction' of 24 hours but even if we had stayed (by metaphorically jumping moorings – the other two boats had departed by around 0800), a westerly wind was returning and it was time to shelter again. In fact, in a couple of days, a westerly 'tempest' was forecast, so we headed back to our original anchorage at Salamander Bay, and put 70 meters of chain out.

MetEye Predictions: 3rd and 4th June

3rd June 2019. Soldiers Point. The calm before the storm. Beautiful blue skies. Warm sunshine. Inviting conditions to get off boat. So we did. We could have made the excursion longer than it was but we took the easy option, tying the tinnie up at the Soldiers Point Jetty and walking to Soldiers Point proper, enjoying a cuppa at the Café on the dock of the marina before returning back to boat. A simple excursion that didn't explore new territory but gave us some welcome exercise on a sunny day



Dog man and Rabbit woman – sculptures at Soldier's Point Marina. There is another sculpture of them sitting down together at the café on the dock – from Chinese Astrology they are a symbolic representation of how very different people can be compatible and can live together and love one another



4th June 2019. Yesterday afternoon whilst we had been back at boat I noted the magnificent cumulous congestus to the south of us. Huge fluffy white clouds with the shining sun emphasising every cotton ball curve. Given their size, there were several lining the horizon, I guess they had something to with the rain that was falling off shore. We however, above us, had blue skies. By this morning however, the vista had changed. Instead of friendly looking oversized cotton balls we had grey smudges and smears and the www.bom.gov.au rain radar showed the current situation – heavy rain to both the north and south of us. By mid morning it was raining. At around 1140 there was also lightening and thunder but fortunately this didn't last long. The day only got greyer. And wetter. And colder. And at one stage we put the genset on the run the portable 240V heater. Activities involved reading. And reading. And reading.



Windy, wet and horrible!

5th June 2019. Whilst the tempest had really only lasted one day, there was still somewhat boisterous winds following it up the coast. It was decision time – do we move – where do we move to? We had been contemplating day hops and the coming winds would have given us a good run north. However, whilst going out in the 2-3 meter swell didn't particularly worry me (I prefer less) the sea state was due to get bigger and there was a predicted 3-5 meter swell coming north with the system. As it was coming up the coast fast enough over take us, it the decision was made to stay.

6th June 2019. Salamander Bay Shopping Centre has a Coles, 'Woolies', Aldi, specialty shops, small food court, Target, Kmart and a book nook near Gloria Jeans that is being replaced by a health food shop at the end of June (pity – it was full of books –we 'borrowed' some). Harvey Norman is nearby as well as a plethora of medical places, and if that doesn't work, a funeral parlour. Apparently there is a Bunnings nearby as well, which we would have seen if we'd taken the tinnie to the closest beach and walked. However we took the tinnie in the opposite direction and tied it off to the Soldiers Point jetty. Whilst this meant we had a bus ride, it also meant we weren't dragging two full trolleys, two full packs and an insulated bag back for over a kilometre and over the sand to reload 'the car'. The timing for our return trip wasn't brilliant – I had read the timetable incorrectly – we ended up on the school run and the bus was packed with a lot of noisy kids.

7th June 2019. There had been hope of seeing two free events at the Salamander Shopping Centre today but we only saw one – and that was a little underwhelming. Whilst this was a supermarket, and clearly the organisers weren't allowed to announce the item over the loud speaker, we were startled to find the demonstration of line dancing in the foyer outside k-mart so ho-hum. Granted the average age of the group was probably around 70 but it was a very slow affair – I was hoping for a bit more dash (I spoke to a participant in a store later and she assured me they do normally go a bit faster). But I suppose if I really wanted to get involved over the weekend there was going to be several line dancing events including an event at the Soldiers Point Bowling Club this evening, and at least one at Wests Hotel in Shoal Bay (where you could learn to dance for the cover charge of 10 or 12 dollars). The country music advertised for 1200 was nowhere to be heard – at least not to our ears (although I will admit that we did go for a free hearing test during this time where my hearing was not quite up to par). With only one of the two free on offer events seen we caught the bus back towards Soldiers Point, getting off at Wanda Wanda for a stroll back to the Soldiers Point Jetty –where we had left the tinnie.



Jess and Bear

(The Winners) cd's (before we got on boat), we knew most of them and could sing along. The performers voices were good and we felt sorry for the lack of audience. They would have been paid for the gig but as Andrew told them later 'they deserved a bigger audience.'

So pondering on the lack of numbers we wondered what the issue would be. Firstly it is a Saturday – in June – weekend kids activities might be a factor (footy and rugby come to mind although, despite the schools, the predominant demographic here is probably the retired set). It was a long weekend, so locals may have gone away to avoid the tourists, and the tourists may have been up here for other activities – fishing was a very popular past time on the Soldiers Point Jetty – to the point we had to jostle a few to get our tinnie out of the way and tied up. Advertising – We'd only initially seen the full program looking it up on the web, although it was distributed in the local paper (I think, there was the odd program amongst other junk mail left of the tables of the food court at the shopping centre). Posters for the event at the Salamander Bay Shopping Centre didn't cover the free events/gigs/performers. Of course add to that that whilst events were scattered across several venues across the Port Stephens townships, most of the activity was in Nelson Bay. *Jess and Bear* played from 12.30 to 1600 (with three breaks) and made a mighty effort.

Bluewater Country Music Festival

8th June 2019. We didn't even try to book to see the major names at this weekend's event – they would have been booked out weeks ago – but we decided the free events were worth investigating.

And given the event we were looking to attend was free we thought there might be a rush for seats, so we got to the Soldiers Pont Bowling Club early to ensure we could get a seat for lunch before the event. But the dining room was empty! And no one was milling around waiting for the kitchen to open. After a satisfying lunch (where Andrew can recommend the steak) we headed off to the room next door – the auditorium.

Surprisingly the auditorium when we got there was as good as empty as well – one table with women and children near the front (who I thought initially were rude not listening to the music) turned out to be family of the performers. There was a couple at the back near the windows (we took the window table next to them) who left at the first break, and there were various others who sat at the back at the other side of the seating area but none stayed throughout the performance. One man who seemed to be on his own sat halfway down a table and may have arrived during the first break so he may have lasted two sets. Apart from family we were the only people who stayed the full duration. Which was a pity because they were quite good. *Jess and Bear* hail from just out of Tamworth and the revue, apart from two of Joel McKay's (Bear's) originals, covered of a wide variety of mostly country songs, including American based classics and Australian country music hits, a good majority of which were past Tamworth winning tunes so, having been an avid collector of best of show

9th June 2019. Nelson Bay. We passed up the opportunity to see today's free event at the Soldiers Point Bowling Club despite half of the act being a golden guitar winner – the other half of the act was a fiddle and Andrew didn't think he could handle that. So, after cutting visiting hours short and chucking *Lioness* off our boat (with apologies) we headed across to the Soldiers Point Jetty – negotiated around some fishermen to tie the tinnie up, and walked up to the bus stop. And waited. And waited some more. To be truthful the bus wasn't that late but we were getting a tad concerned when we hadn't seen the bus go north and it was due south again. If this bus wasn't running then, being Sunday, it was another hour and a half before we could get the next one (in which case it would have been quicker to take the big boat over to Nelson Bay). In the end the vehicle came chortling up the road listed with No Service and appeared a few minutes later with the right route listed in the space above the window. The first thing the driver admitted was he was 'a bit late' and asked if we needed to get to Newcastle. We didn't but the next few passengers did so in a great show of cooperation, the Newcastle bus ended up waiting for our bus to come to the Salamander Bay Shopping Centre terminal before we headed into town (on a reciprocal note the Soldiers Point bus ended up waiting for the Newcastle Bus on the afternoon run). Despite being Sunday quite a few of Nelson Bay's shops were open (admittedly I don't know if they are normally open) and there were buskers in the street on the way down to the waterfront. Our first point of call, after looking at the bucking bull 'suitable for all ages' and deciding I wasn't appropriately dressed (I had actually thought about putting on my Mount Isa Rodeo shirt this morning) was to call into Marina Ice Creamery. One of the owners was responsible for getting Tiger and me to the vet in 2015 when Tiger took an unexpected dip in Port Stephens' (then dirty) waters after an overnight sail. We were remembered. Interestingly they haven't quite had any weather like that event since (it was an official East Coast Low after all – and bad enough that Pittwater was declared a disaster zone. Soldiers Point got to 74 knots that day), and they haven't lost power since, but they did admit to closing the shop before a couple of threatening storms.

There was a small stage at the front of the Marina square with music performers, the sun was out, and there were people everywhere. The Sacred Tree Market was on and we strolled along the promenade checking out the wares. We had pizza for lunch overlooking the marina, and *Bowen and Clare* were one of the free acts we'd come to see. I suspect it may have been because they were outside but the music wasn't projected as much as I'd like it to have been.

They sang covers and some songs I hadn't heard so I don't know if they were originals. Their sound was completely different to *Jess and Bear* – more a bluegrass twangy than a raw sound and the contrast was interesting having heard both performers sing *Johnny Cash's Folsom*



Prison Blues. (One of the blurbs for one of Bowen and Clare's gigs describes the music as – having celtic-gypsy roots, into a fusion of Aussie Country, Folk 'n Bluegrass). We left them for a while, wandered the shops around town, came back to the marina square to see the start of the next gig and then decided we wouldn't stay, getting the bus back an hour and a half earlier than we had originally planned....to find our tinnie wedged under the jetty. The main structure of the jetty had plenty of room, however the engine got stuck under one of the steps and it took Andrew a bit of grunt and the use of a fisho's gaff to push the engine out – the paint work didn't survive but we got the tinnie out (the scary thing is the high tide had been twenty cm higher and the engine could have been pushed close to being under... we were probably lucky it still started).



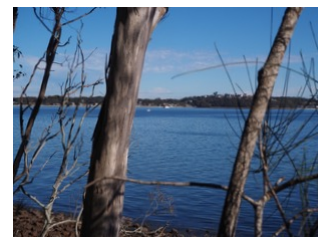
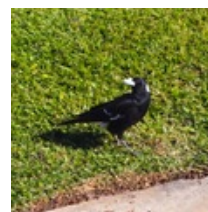


Corlette Headland

10th June 2019. Situated on a rock high on Corlette Headland at the start of track above the suburb the Corlette, is a plaque dedicated to the Green Reserve Team for the years of 2003 – 2005, noting the Port Stephens Council and Corlette Headland Committee's appreciation and thanking them for their outstanding efforts. The track beyond unfortunately is now mostly overgrown and I suspect has been minimally maintained since then but was once listed (and is indeed still on old interps boards along the foreshore) as a 'Fire Track' so we were expecting something more obvious. The top tracks are now difficult to find and unkempt; the bottom track around the headland however is a popular well-used, well maintained, and very pleasant walkway.

Whilst the original idea for today had been to be at the D'Albora Marina in Nelson Bay to watch the attempt at the longest line-dance, it was a long way to go just for that; moving the boat might have made sense if we knew that our mail was due on Tuesday but because the public moorings are officially for only 24 hours and northerly winds were due in the next day or so (even if they were only light), then perhaps other activities had more merit. We hadn't really been for a walk for a few days (and we don't class traipsing around concrete streets being relevant); perhaps it was time for some exploring.

The walk east around Corlette Headland was pleasant and enjoyable, starting along the beach but joining the track just above the dunes when the sand ran out. White-faced Herons, silver gulls, white ibis and white morph reef herons graced the shoreline before the mangroves, and kookaburras and rainbow lorikeets sang in the beautifully mature tree lined space between the houses and the water. Once we'd entered the 'forest' though it was the calls of smaller passerines that filled the air. We only saw a couple of these birds, but they were too quick for identification. Taking the track around the





coast to the Anchorage Marina was very comfortable and had several seats available for a rest and a look - although I suspect most of these lookouts were clearer when the wood work was installed; now all views across the water are filtered with trees. Each seat has a name, and I suspect this may be related to the volunteers that originally spent time maintaining the area.

We stopped when we got to Anchorage Marina (the track continues to Nelson Bay and beyond) and checked out the access and price of the fuel dock. Thinking we were a bit underdressed for the resort location we forego a coffee at the on site eatery and we headed back to our starting point on the beach at Little Salamander Bay, this time taking the 'officially labelled' 'fire tracks' over the point rather than the coastal route. The high track is more open where vegetation has been destroyed and is suffering from an invasion of weed species. None the less the birdcalls were prolific for a late sunny morning. Two huts that were listed on the notes were not seen but I suspect these were buried under invasive plants, or destroyed, as is the seat to one of the lookouts in the same area - it is a pity that vandals have to ruin a nice location. We decided against taking the two tracks heading down the hill toward the coast, (very overgrown and 'jungley') and continued on the poorly maintained track that we were on, coming out above the houses and walking the suburban streets (where the birds seen were magpie, noisy miner and lapwing) until we found a reserve that linked us back to the beach. Before heading back to Sengo we enjoyed a cuppa on *Lioness*.

The afternoon was less exciting and involved the ubiquitous cleaning. The main job was a wipe down of the undercover (soft) storage spaces in the back cockpit - where a thin layer of mould had built up over the past couple of months. (I discovered these needed cleaning by accident as we were removing the back mesh to check the mainsheet joints: because these pieces of material didn't get a treatment of clove oil over the wet season in 2017 there is existing mould staining on them and it was hard to tell if there was any extra buildup.)

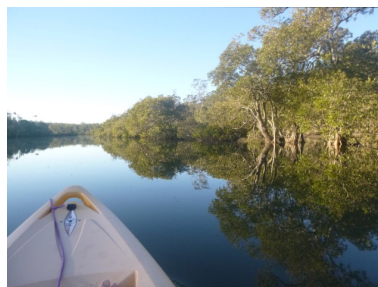


Fame Cove

11th June 2019. I am not sure what exactly Andrew had in mind when he asked, mid afternoon, if I wanted to 'do something'. The sun was out and it was wonderfully warm and we had been sitting in the front cockpit reading, but Andrew, perhaps spurred on by the tenders from both adjacent yachts that had been launched and had headed up the inlet, thought that maybe a bit of exploring was a good idea. However, when I suggested we go for 'a paddle' his enthusiasm was brought to a temporary halt. The paddle I was refereeing to was the kayak, not the paddle boards, as it is winter and the daylight from now until sunset limited, the depth of the inlet uncertain, (although we were around an hour off high tide), and apparently the prevalence for sharks in

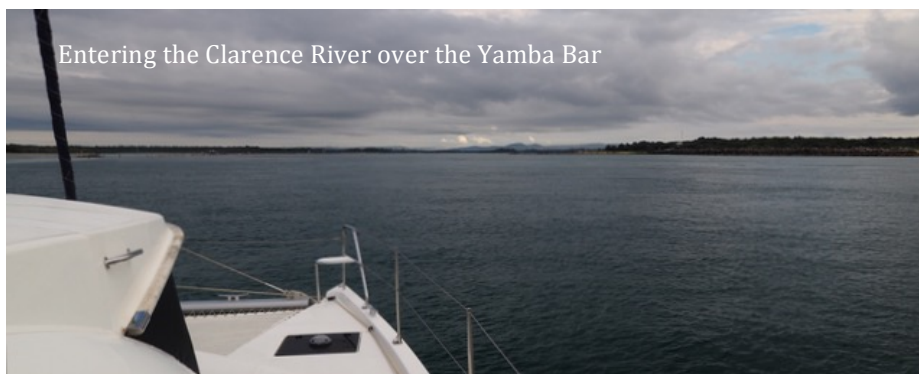
Port Stephens is common. After grumbling a bit I do believe he enjoyed himself – even if he complains he gets a wet seat every time we undertake this exercise. It took us an hour to paddle up to where we ran out of depth (at the ford) and back to boat. Birds seen at Fame Cove: white-bellied sea eagle, white faced heron, striated heron, pied cormorant, silver gull, raven (sp?), osprey, welcome swallow, azure kingfisher. Birds heard: numerous and not identified, eastern whip bird.

We had been at Fame Cove since the middle of the day, a lazy morning interjected with the usual half hour cleaning of the anchor and its chain as it emerged with thick slimy grey green mud. The motor over from Salamander Bay was flat and we followed another yacht in. Already in the cove was a small power boat which left soon after, and other transient visitors included a small powerboat and a monohull, both of which were gone by late afternoon. A third monohull arrived in the dark



12th June 2019. Everybody talks about Fame Cove and we've been here before for a night in transit at each of our previous visits to Port Stephens. I had enjoyed the bird calls on the afternoon of the 11th (ignoring the occasional jet going overhead) but apart from that it was pretty peaceful. This morning however I was attune to different sounds, and whilst the bird calls were still there, traffic interceded the serenity as well as someone using a chainsaw in close proximity at around 0900. After our 'exercise' yesterday it was decided we should spend the day relaxing although I did manage a partial rust run, unblocked a drain, wiped down the paddles, put the stuff back in the overhead lockers, did the dishes, and soaked some ropes





Port Stephens to The Clarence River

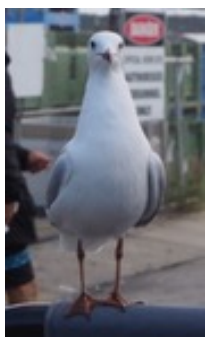
13th – 15th June 2019. Whilst it was not an early morning per se, we didn't laze around, and after a cuppa we dropped the mooring and headed out of Fame Cove toward Nelson Bay. The hope was that we could pick up one of the public moorings along the town beach, but using binoculars we could tell from a fair way out that all three moorings were occupied, and that there was a fourth boat (a cat) anchored inshore of these. So, instead of adding to the clutter we picked up the public mooring at Dutchman's Bay, the next little cove around to the west (and where Tiger went overboard in April 2015!). Of course as soon as we were ready to launch the tinnie I looked up to see two of the moorings at Nelson Bay were now free - but we weren't moving. We took the tinnie around to the public jetty in town, picked up the mail (which had indeed come in on Tuesday but we weren't to know), indulged ourselves with brunch off boat (where Andrew managed to find a location that served a full breakfast), did a final food shop at Woolies (this store has a small café inside the doors) before heading back to boat to prepare for departure. The favourable looking conditions that had been scheduled for midnight had now been brought forward to the 1900 spot in MetEye. We actually left at around 1630, early enough to be able to put the mainsail up in the daylight.

The exit out of Port Stephens was relatively smooth, although sometime over the next hour or so, whilst we were dealing with wind against tide and the fluky winds behind by Yacaaba Head, Tiger managed to lose his breakfast. For the first part of the journey, the wind hadn't quite swapped to south, so the westerly



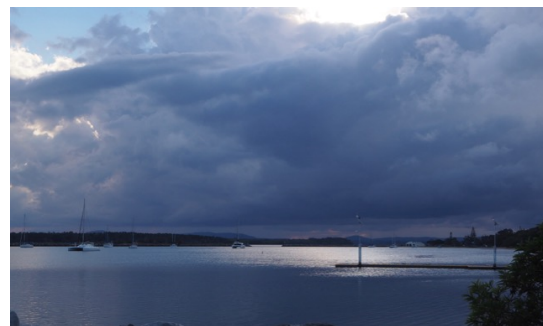
wind, once we'd started sailing north meant we had a beam reach to close haul on the port side. The wind speeds were however good and the seas smooth so the sail was pleasant. It was at the start of the second night that I started to get woozy (for no particular reason) and I developed a very strong head and neck ache. And as a result Andrew ended up doing an extra shift. In the middle of this the south westerly to south easterly winds that had given us enough across the deck for an 'average' sail ended up disappearing, so at midnight on Friday the engines went on for the rest of the trip. We did expect to lose the wind somewhere in the journey; it was a question of where, and stopping to sit them out had been one Plan B, but unless it was an open roadstead, I wasn't going to be stopping anywhere unknown in the dark. In the end, due to my deteriorating back, neck and head, the decision was made to head for Yamba/Iluka. These towns are on the entrance to the Clarence River but the bar, famous for several well publicised wipe-outs, was gloriously flat. Anchor was down at off Iluka 0945.

Rain had dogged us for the last few nautical miles towards the Clarence River but the weather cleared up just before we entered the waterway. Two whales shot out spouts and flippers behind us as we headed toward the rock wall leads (yes, we should have been looking forward not backward) but the sun was now making an appearance between the clouds. The afternoon warmed up and we got off boat for a short stroll around town, chatting to both locals and visitors before an early fish and chip dinner at the Fisherman's Coop (sweet potato



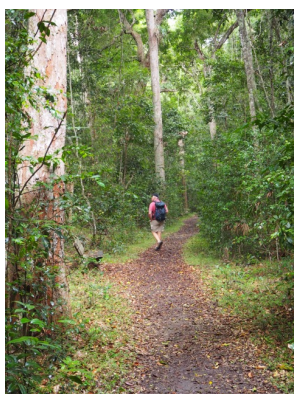
scallops (potato cakes)!). A quick chat to other boaties (and their pooches) was had on the floating dingy dock before returning to boat.

Wildlife seen on the trip wasn't prolific – two whales off Port Macquarie and only a few unidentified pelagic birds. Birdlife at Iluka: pelican, lapwing, mudlark, magpie, osprey, white bellied sea eagle, pied oystercatcher, silver gull, noisy minor, white ibis, tern. (sp?).



16th June 2019. The forecast was: Cloudy. Very high (near 100%) chance of showers in the north, high (80%) chance elsewhere, most likely in the afternoon and evening. The chance of a thunderstorm in the afternoon and early evening. Light winds. Overnight temperatures falling to between 11 and 14 with daytime temperatures reaching between 19 and 22.

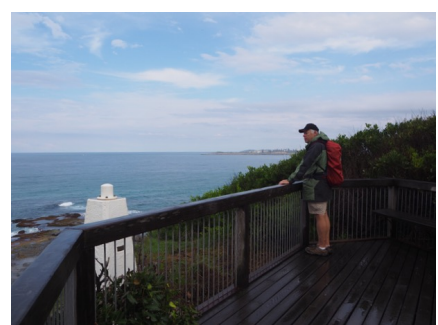
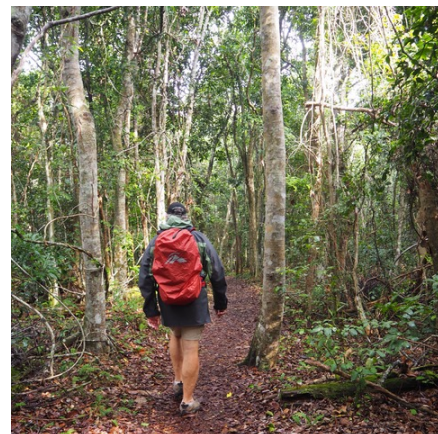
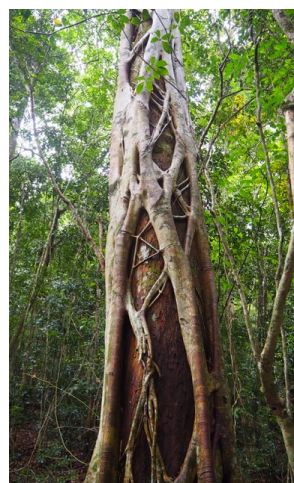
But it started to rain at 0330. It didn't last long but there was another shower around 0830. So much for 'most likely in the afternoon and evening'.



And then it rained as we were on the Iluka Rainforest Walk trail and continued as we got to Bluff Lookout car park. So we sat in the shelter reading the interps and eating apples. When the rain finally stopped we looked at the Bluff, admired Bluff Beach with the rain and thunder in the background and wandered back toward town (with a slight back track when I discovered my camera lens cap had fallen off).

Whilst the original idea had been a morning walk and back to boat by lunch, by the time we started, sat out the rain and returned to town it was after 1330. We let the pub provide our midday meal instead.

Noisy pittas are purported to be here (along with 130 other species) but we didn't see one. But to see a pitta you have to be extremely quiet and there were quite a few walkers on the track. We heard more birds than we saw.



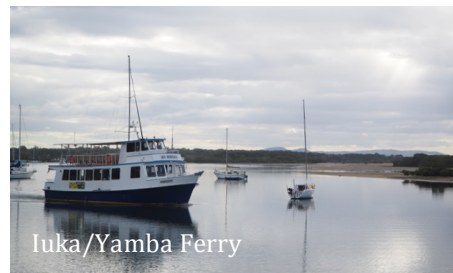
Bird list: magpie, long billed scrub wren?, pied butcher bird, wattle bird red?, white bellied sea eagle., pelican, silver gull, willy wagtail, drongo, regent bowerbird (male and female,) pigeon, swallows, noisy minors, white ibis, mud lark, terns (sp?), rainbow lorikeets, crested pigeon, (sp?) dove



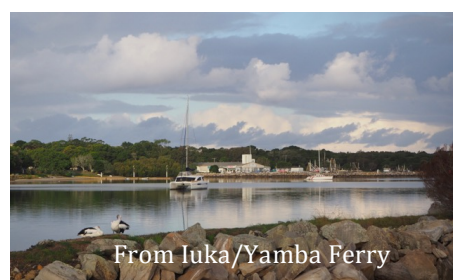
From Iuka/Yamba Ferry – crossing the Clarence



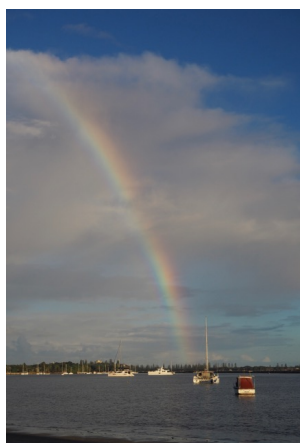
Iuka/Yamba Ferry



Iuka/Yamba Ferry



From Iuka/Yamba Ferry



item from the top mainsail car! We made our way to the marina to have lunch at their café– and fortunately it was undercover as the rain started to fall just as we got there. The rain had stopped when we headed back to the ferry wharf to catch the 1515 ferry, taking the waterfront path admiring kingfishers, (azure and sacred), ibis, pelicans and a couple of eastern kangaroos on the opposite side of the inlet.



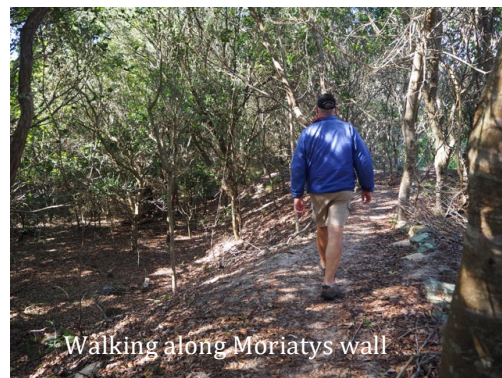
It is hard work at the chandlery!



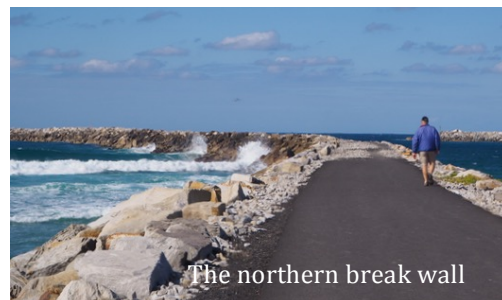
Overlooking Main Beach

19th June 2019. Since the 1860's (According to interpretation boards around the area) several schemes of rock training walls and other works have been responsible, in part, for the change in geomorphology of the Iluka/Yamba area and the access to the Clarence River. Settlements have come and been eaten up with sand dunes, inlets have filled in and vegetation change has, in some cases been significant (although some of this has been due to the introduction of (now weed) species in order to stabilise sand dunes (almost at one stage resulting in the loss of World Heritage Status for the Rainforest area)).

Several rock walls have been established in the river, and part of the walk from Iluka out to the Marine Rescue building is upon top of one of these old walls. We were hoping to say hello to the volunteers in the building but the sign said that visitors were by prior appointment only – pity – it wasn't a busy day and we always like to say hello to the marine volunteers. Moving on we headed for the northern entry wall and were almost blown away with the wind. It was too cold and windy to venture onto Main



Walking along Moriatis wall



The northern break wall



20th – 25th June 2019. For several days we had land-based visitors so activities revolved around exploration by car – which was just as well as some of those days were very windy and very wet. We briefly touched/visited the towns/locations of Maclean, Minnie Waters, Yamba, Angourie, Casino, Ballina, Woodburn, and Grafton.

The 26th and 27th June were windy and cold days. Apart from a visit from **Anapa**, and a run to the launderette at the caravan park we spent most of the time reading - staying inside and keeping warm.



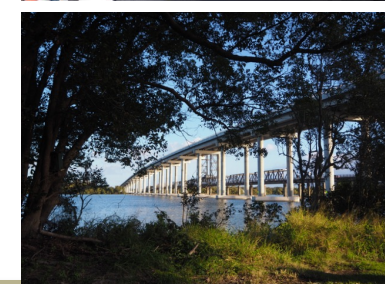
Harwood

28th June 2019. We thought we had started early enough to have plenty of time to spare, but by the time we got the anchor up (after the winch decided it would unwind during the pulling up of the last 10 meters or so), got ourselves adjacent the fuel bowser at the Iluka-Yamba ferry dock, transferred fuel from starboard to port because the line from the pump wasn't long enough to get to the outside inlet, helped a smaller tinnie rearrange his boat, fueled-up and extricated ourselves back into the main part of the river (around the shallow bits), we were going to be pushing to get the 9 nautical miles upstream to the Harwood Bridge by 1130 – the time we'd arranged to have the bridge raised.

Our 2014 version of *Cruising the NSW Coast* explains the need to organise the lifting of the Harwood Bridge, at Harwood on the Clarence River. The traffic must be stopped – the main highway of Australia comes to a standstill at red lights to let the masted yachts go through. The guide warns of plans to build a new bridge over the river and there was talk amongst the yachting community at the time to hurry up and 'do the Clarence' before the new bridge is built and the access blocked off. We didn't get up the River in 2014 or 2015 and in 2016 we were told by other yachties not to worry – the new bridge is being built – but – it is about 30 meters high so the feared restrictions were not going to be applicable. However, they are not removing the old bridge (using it for local traffic) so 'raising the bridge' must still be arranged. What we did not expect when we arrived here was that the new bridge, whilst having been up a while, is not yet being used due to its connection with the multi billion dollar upgrade of the Pacific Hwy (this section from Woolgoolga to Ballina). So, whilst the structure is still there, the traffic of the Pacific Hwy is still using the 1966 Steel Truss Bridge and traffic on the national highway still needs to come to a standstill each time a yachtie wants to go up river.'



Harwood Sugar Mill





With a combination of two engines on higher than usual revs we did manage to make it on time, passing under the raised bridge a few minutes past 1130 before tying up at the public jetty at Harwood, (me embarrassingly bombarding the ears of the gentleman fishing at the other end of the pontoon with a lot of colourful language (I hate coming into dock and this was my second time in two hours!)). We had a quick chat to a few boatie locals before heading to the Harwood Hotel (known locally as the Harwood Hilton) for a delightful lunch.

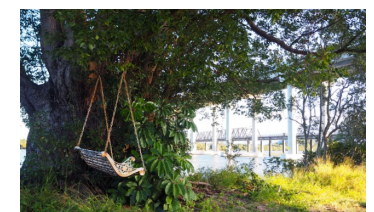
The idea had been to go for a walk after our meal but it didn't immediately happen. When we had docked the sun had been out, the wind low and it had been for 'all intents and purposes', hot. I had changed into shorts (the first time in quite a while) and a t-shirt, but by the time we had finished our meal at the hotel, the blue sky was disappearing and rain was coming in from the south. The first drops fell just as we got back to boat and for the next hour and a half we

waited out the rain. At around 1500 however the grey sky had returned to blue and we stretched our legs. Harwood isn't big. Apart from the hotel, there is an antiques shop, a general store cum hardware store cum rural supplies store, a primary school (which opens its playground up to the public in school holidays and provides three big bags for recycling by the fence), and a tractor/machinery shop. Other buildings in the community consist of a mixture of house styles, all old (two of which look like they were once churches) and its biggest employer, the sugar mill.

On our walk we noted the old jetty, the war obelisk and saved the life of an un-collared, unrestrained puppy who came bounding out of his yard across the road to greet us (we held him down whilst several trucks and a couple of cars came passing through). When we knocked on the door of the house where the pup had escaped from the young girl seemed a little ungrateful for our intervention -he would have been a flat pup if we hadn't have been there!

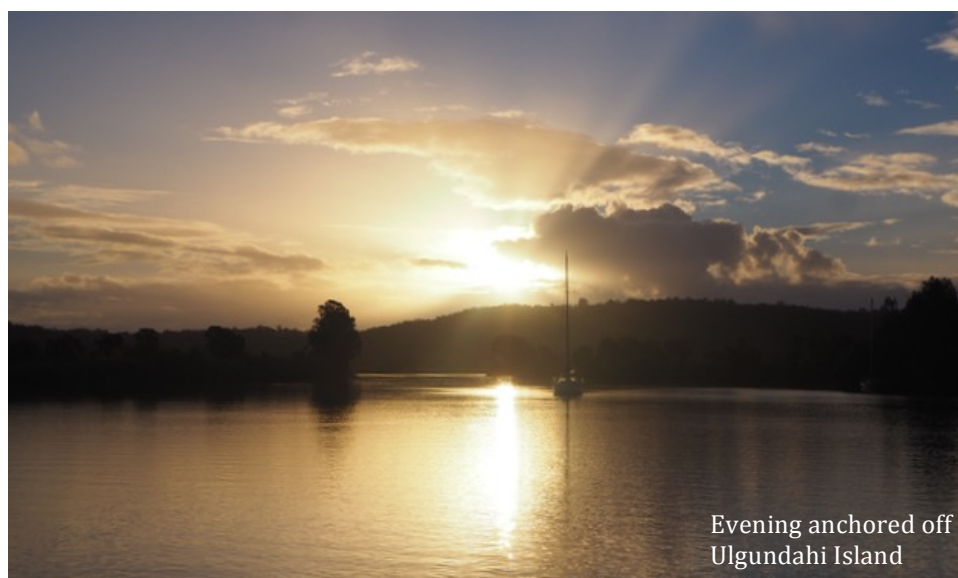


We had also taken the opportunity to walk across the Harwood Bridge (well half of it anyway, admiring its engineering before turning around at the lifting section).





29th June 2019. We had a good solid sleep, the only interruption to which (apart from Tiger getting me up before dawn before breakfast) was the insistent banging on the hull due to a not so ideally placed fender and the slapping around of it with the waves in a clearly wind against tide scenario. Once the sun was up, we had a casual breakfast, I off-loaded the recycling, I went for a short walk along Martins Point Road and after a cuppa we watched two catamarans exit through the bridge. It was interesting to see the process from a different angle. When we did get off dock we didn't travel far, and instead of heading to the 'next dock' at the township of Maclean, we anchored around Ulgundahi Island about one nautical mile upstream from Harwood. A houseboat anchored to the south of us (and moved twice closer to us!!!) and a monohull came in around 1700, anchoring to our western side. Whist Andrew had originally thought about fishing in the afternoon, sporadic rain showers put a dampener on his enthusiasm for the task.



Evening anchored off
Ulgundahi Island





Along North Arm



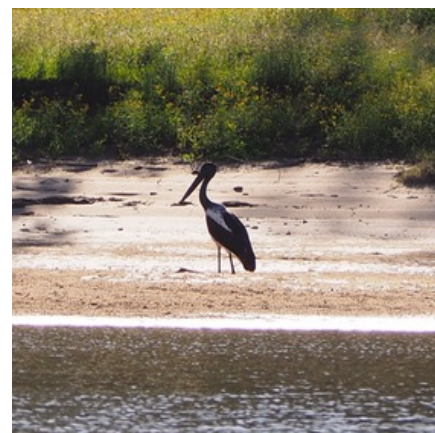
From Chatsworth foreshore

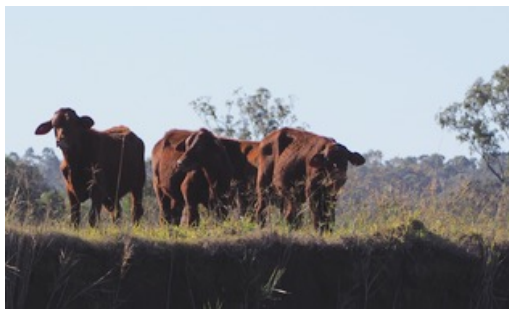
Chatsworth

The 30th June was all that you could want the last day of June to be. A third of the way through 'winter' the sun was out (after the morning fog lifted), the temperature reached somewhere close to mid 20's and there was little wind. Although it was warm enough for t-shirts and shorts we did end up wearing long sleeves and trousers – expected exposure for several hours may have otherwise given us more than we had hoped for.

The early morning had been a white out -- and waiting for the fog to rise we got lost in the other distractions of reading and catching up on the news. By the time we did get ourselves organised to head off boat it was coming on to 1100 so the idea of packing lunch as well as nibblies was on the agenda. In the end we packed some muesli bars and some fruit and headed off into the North Arm for a bit of an explore. Originally Andrew had suggested trolling for fish but he dismissed this idea before we departed, leaving room for binoculars and cameras rather than rods, lines and lures.

The channels off the main Clarence River depart and merge in a mosaic around small, medium and large islands, some of which have various forms of infrastructure; jetties, houses, roads, bridges. We had no particular journey plan in mind and when Andrew asked at our first junction which channel to take I suggested keeping to the right. The 'town' of Chatsworth was marked on the charts we had and I was curious to see what was there. Although there was no information on Chatsworth in the cruising guide, and I hadn't looked the location up on the internet before our sojourn, I was wondering whether it might have something like a general store we could at least get out and look at. Or lunch perhaps? However, when we started to see houses along the river bank but the only official looking building was a school, my hopes began to fade. Our first attempt at exploration on shore was abandoned; what was clearly once a public landing spot was now a crumbing jumble of bricks and stones and after running our pontoons into it Andrew decided we'd done enough damage to our craft to continue the effort. However, a little further downstream, I spotted another similar old piece of infrastructure,



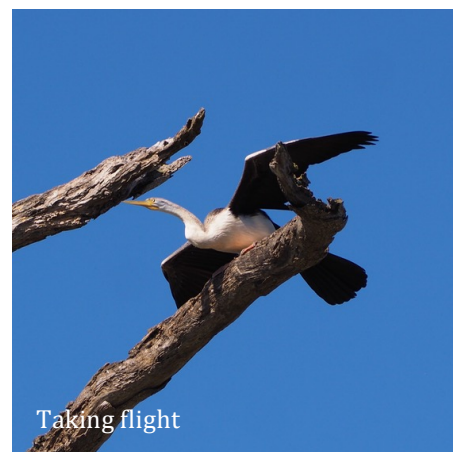


with room to land on one side of it, absent of debris. And looking beyond the picnic tables and old trees along the water's edge, was a beacon labeled the Chatsworth General Store. We didn't get our feet too muddy in the attempt to get to shore, and there was no swearing to upset the locals (both picnic tables overlooking our landing spot were occupied). The general store was welcoming, and offered all you would expect it too (lunch, basic supplies, cakes, papers, a section for alcohol and it even had an old sit down computer game). Lunch was good value and we ate burgers and salad under the verandah overlooking the waterway. A short walk up the main street revealed houses of varying styles, a church, hall, cane fields, war memorial and plaques commemorating the 100 year anniversary of the sugar mill that used to be on site (the bricks for the structure were actually from an old sugar mill 27 kilometres up river).

We continued our journey down the North Arm, taking the Middle Channel to arrive back on the main branch of the Clarence River. On the upstream corner of this junction we noticed a 'wreck'. And then we noticed the rest. For several hundred meters along the middle channel and the Clarence River lies the rusting hulls of many an obsolete sugar barge. So sad. And a tad eerie. We arrived back at boat around 1530, four and half hours after we had departed.

Birds seen: darter (male and female), white bellied sea eagle (with catch), ospreys, royal spoonbills, sacred kingfisher, white ibis, tern (?sp), lapwings, silver gulls, pied currawong, pied butcherbird, domestic ducks, Muscovy ducks, domestic geese, grey fantail, willy wagtail, blue-faced honeyeater, raven, jabiru, pacific black ducks, whistling kite, little black cormorant, little pied cormorant, pelican, white faced heron

Mammals seen -cows, eastern kangaroos



Taking flight



Taking flight



Obsolete discarded equipment