

# Aboard Sengo

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May 2020

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South Stradbroke Island



South Stradbroke Island

**And we're off....**well, not quite. The 1<sup>st</sup> May is when most boat insurance cyclone restrictions are lifted and the usual flotilla of sailing and motor cruising vessels start the journey north to the tropics. Except those that have flouted the rules and headed north earlier!

This year with Covid-19 restrictions the 1<sup>st</sup> May didn't have quite the same freedoms attached to it, and technically cruisers in Queensland, where we were, had to stay, like everyone else, in a localised position so they minimised the chance of spreading the disease. Except those that flouted the rules and headed north earlier!

If you noted the MSQ (Marine Safety Queensland) directive for live-aboard cruising boats early in May you could see why there might be two opposite meanings read into the wording. Legally the interpretation could be made that either the location intent was to stay in or around a suburb (like land based individuals) or, you could 'read', that your principal place of residence was your boat and therefore wherever the boat was at the moment was okay. I can see arguments for both; if you were self-isolating does it really matter where you are? By the end of the month the restrictions for those in Queensland were easing, first 150-kilometre day trips were allowed for individuals, but no overnights, (which is irrelevant on a boat because by the time you'd got that far it was quite possible you had travelled overnight anyway), and on 31<sup>st</sup> May the announcement came that all cruisers were waiting for.....no further restrictions apply from 1200 on 1<sup>st</sup> June. The sailing season was about to begin. (In Queensland at least; with the border still closed those stuck in more southern States have to wait a bit longer to feel tropical breezes).

We took the MSQ instructions at their intent, not an advantageous interpretation. This meant we based our 'principle place of residence' at Paradise Point, heading in and out of the anchorage to pick up groceries, and on land we didn't travel much further. There was the odd walk down to Harbour Town in Labrador Park but we watched our distance from others, and of course, when away from 'civilisation' we tried to look after our health with beach and bush walks on South Stradbroke Island. We also started a daily dose of yoga; I won't call it a routine as firstly the line of poses might be different every day, and secondly, if we had had a big walk we were usually too tired for any subsequent 'exercise.'

May seemed like an extraordinarily long month to me and I don't know if that was just because we were waiting for some indication from the government that would allow us to finally start directing our focus to the rest of the year. In the mean time we were in a psychological eddy, not quite being able to think with clear direction for the future, before being pulled back to



Track near Tipplers, South Stradbroke Island

the current indecisive present. We did manage to determine one thing though; our mid-year northern hemisphere trip that we'd planned (booked and paid for) in January just wasn't going to happen, and we started the painful process of cancelling or postponing all our tour hosts and operators, hoping that they'd still be in businesses next year when we hoped we might be able to resume our plans. By the end of the month we had managed to reorganise most items on the itinerary, although some refunds hadn't come through, and return traffic from some Contact Centre's had been non-existent.

Looking a bit further forward, we had been planning a 'big journey' in New Zealand for 2021. With Covid-19 mucking up most overseas travel this year, it may just be we can bring our New Zealand adventure forward - Trans Tasman Bubble dependent, of course. So, with something to focus on, we continued in May to upgrade our hiking gear and walk as much as we could; albeit on fairly domestic and non-challenging paths.

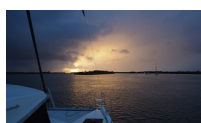


Descending sand dune at Jumpinpin





20 minutes  
difference

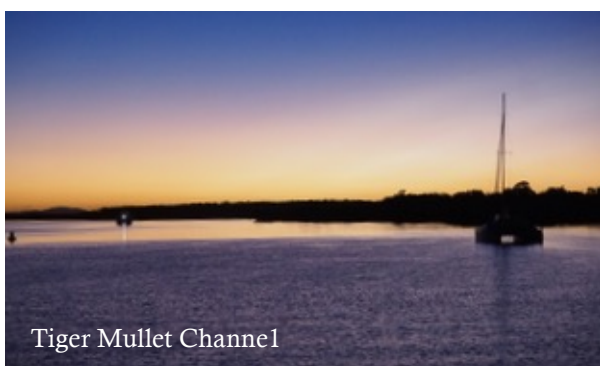


## Tiger Mullet Channel

1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020. We started the month in familiar Tiger Mullet Channel waiting out, as usual, weather. I spent the time doing a bit of boat polishing (not enough), the usual domestics, and starting to create the internal lounge area curtains. We took a couple of trips across to Jumpinpin in the tinnie for some exercise, and watched boats come and go and the area around Green Island filled up with the usual weekend crowd.



Tiger Mullet Channel



Tiger Mullet Channel



Tiger Mullet Channel

## Chinese laundries and smoking dens!

Surely Five years is better than 10!

When we moved into our land-based property on Melbourne's rural fringe in 2004, the house was brand new, the chattels were yet to be added and I thought I would give myself a project and make the curtains. Whilst not the most thermally appropriate, we had decided on roman blinds and I tootled off to classes at Spotlight for instructions. For various reasons, most of which are probably not important, I never got around to finishing the curtains; even after ten years! It is one of life's psychological regrets. So, when it came to picking up a brand new boat that had no internal curtains inside the upstairs living, area the temptation was to just get them put in by the production company. Except they were so horrendously expensive! We also didn't know if we needed them. Within six months we invested in some outside mesh around the side windows and across the front of the front cockpit (and back of the back cockpit) and this has the effect of blocking out the sun somewhat and drastically reducing the heat inside (they were installed on a hot day in November in NSW and the effect was immediate), and if we were in the cockpits, holding the cold at bay when it is chilly outside as well. We hadn't envisaged being in colder climes but over the past couple of years we have been stuck for extended periods of time in Ceduna (SA), Strahan (TAS) and Port Phillip Bay (VIC) in very cold weather. It was time to reconsider internal curtains....and I finally, after five years of being on the boat, got the enthusiasm to give making them a go. I am always looking for opportunities and I had the option to compare curtain material at Spotlight in Hoppers Crossing, Victoria, with the goods available in a few second hand/op shops. I ended up with enough curtain material of a good 'colour' (varied a bit due to staining and sun fading) contained in four second-hand curtains for the grand total of \$60. I then had to work out how to start. In the freezing cold and rain, marooned in the Gordon River, Tasmania in March 2019 I made the first attempt at making patterns for the side window curtains. I went go

(cont. pg 4)

## Tiger Mullet to Jumpinpin

6<sup>th</sup> May 2020. What usually attracts one to move voluntarily from a calm anchorage to a slightly rockier one is the promise of better weather? Admittedly the wind strength wasn't predicted to stop today but it was predicted to turn more to the south east...eventually. Showers were still forecast for this morning - we'd had some overnight, and indeed we could see Jumpinpin was getting wet. (We often find that if Jumpinpin gets rain then our anchorage in Tiger Mullet Channel just a short distance away does not). So I was fully expecting to get wet putting down the anchor. I was however grateful that the southern point of rain was a few hundred meters to the north of us and it was a dry, if windy, setting of the pick. Now it was just a matter of ignoring the 'very' loud slapping of waves on the hull and waiting for winds to abate before we could get off boat.

It was high tide but we took Whalley Channel anyway (theoretically an all tide channel but it has a bit of a bar at the northern end), but we did notice a catamaran, who had anchored to the east of us overnight, had braved the eastern entrance of Tiger Mullet Channel over the shallower bit. They ended up using the tide to get into 'The Bedrooms', a much more protected anchorage, but as we know from our kayaking excursion in April, a very shallow one. The morning was cloudy and the rain radar on [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) had rain



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into what I tried but it just did not work, so frustrated, the project got dropped and I got distracted with other things. At the start of May 2020, in the process of sorting out other gear on the boat I moved, for the umpteenth time, the folded up second hand curtains. Perhaps it was time to reinvigorate my enthusiasm. We had some time – Covid 19 restrictions meant we weren't heading north yet, or indeed moving far from Paradise Point. I would start again. This time I didn't try to be fancy. I worked with basic rectangular shapes, making mock ups with folded calico to check the dimensions. And then I transferred the measurements across to the existing curtains.

Of course, before this I had washed a couple of the curtains. The water had activated an insidious smell. It was horrendous; the home these curtains had been in had been occupied by heavy smokers and the waste water from the washing ended up a thick ochre orange from the nicotine staining. It was disgusting. What was also disconcerting was the quality of the



backing material. Two of the curtains had reasonable quality backing. The other two had backing that had deteriorated and whilst wet it was fine but as it dried and touched itself it stuck, and getting it separated meant I was ripping the backing off. In the end I made the base curtains with the good curtains and the better pieces (i.e. those with no missing ripped off backing) of the poorer quality material, and by the end of the month I had also started to cut out sections of the left over material to act as a backing to the poorer quality pieces, so that essentially there was going to be 'front of curtain' material on both sides of the pieces and a guarantee that they wouldn't stick to each other when I put them away.

(cont. pg 5)



coming up from the south-east, and whilst some of it was 'opal'-coloured (heavy) most of it seemed to dissipate prior to getting to our area.

When I had got up I had sniffed the small curtain that I'd put bicarb on last night and couldn't really smell a thing. Either the stuff was working or I had such a small area to work with and it didn't smell much anyway. To test the theory further I pulled down the remaining curtain drying from our internal line (the rest of the curtains had been lain fiat (ish) on the table overnight), and dowsed that with some bicarb. It definitely had a smell to start with and it was originally a different curtain than the small one. This one had come from a better quality piece of material though; it was a pity it was more smoke smell affected.

When the weather finally calmed down in the afternoon we took a casual afternoon walk to Horseshoe Bay



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I had wanted to have the entire job finished by the 31st May. Close...but no cigar (no that's not right, I am trying to get rid of the remnants of that sort of thing)! The main curtains were cut out and edged by 31<sup>st</sup> May. The backing pieces were cut out and pinned by 31<sup>st</sup> May and I had covered most of them with bicarb to get rid of the smell (for various times from several hours to overnight depending on the intensity of the aroma). The remaining task which would have to wait until June involved sewing the backs onto the fronts and the Velcro onto the curtains so I could attach them easily (and remove them easily) from the windows when we wanted to block out the sun, retain the heat, or on the rare occasion we went into a marina, to give us some privacy in the dark).





## And then there were two: Out to lunch at Tipplers

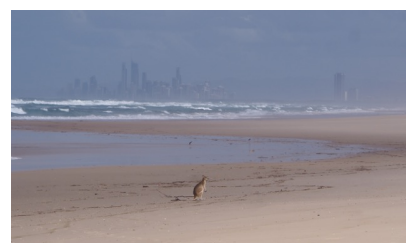
7<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Last time we went to Tipplers for lunch we paddled in – this time we walked. I specifically didn't take the camera out of its bag on the walk towards the Café at Tipplers this morning for two reasons; one) we'd done most of this section of walk before, and two) I just wanted to soak up the scenery – whilst grassed dunes may not seem all that exciting to most, sometimes the wildlife, and the scenery created by the weather, will surprise you. It was a relatively late start, around 1130, and we took our usual track out to South Stradbroke's eastern side and headed south. The sun was quite piercing and we were quite exposed, so when we reached the Dux Hut Track (SS1) with its patches of dappled shade from the coastal scrub lining the track, it was quite a pleasant experience. Turning left at the junction of this track with a used vehicular track, behind the Southport Yacht Club Facility (where we had turned right last time we were here to walk back to our anchorage) we entered an even more pleasant atmosphere, where dappled shade was around 70%-80% and the vegetation dominated by mature tall banksia species' with an undergrowth of bracken. The birdsong here was less than that in the coastal scrub but the raucous interaction of two drongos just off the track got our attention.

After ordering at the café we hovered in the main walkway area waiting for a couple who looked like they were about to vacate one of the three obvious council tables outside the café grounds (the café owned seating was not available due to Covid restrictions). They took longer than expected and we probably looked a bit desperate. We needn't have bothered. Since last time we were here, the green patch of ground south of the playground has acquired several portable picnic tables – the room for yoga practice (which I saw a couple doing here last time) has been much reduced.

Whilst our lunch was inspected and coveted by one kangaroo last time we were here, this time there were two macropods, both quite keen and both probably severely disappointed with us for not sharing our meal.

Heading back after lunch we took an easterly track, marked SS3, came out onto the eastern beach and just headed north and back via our usual access track just north of the stranded dock.

Birdlife along this eastern beach was minimal. Apart from the two drongos we saw the same three pairs of pied oyster catchers along the eastern stretch of beach that we'd seen on our last walk here, but no terns



this time. In the sky however, taking advantage of the thermals were three wedge tailed eagles and a whistling kite. By the time we got back to boat we had walked 14.2 kilometres.



8<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Andrew has decided on a grading system for 'using our legs.' Any distance under 4 kilometres is a 'stroll'. From 4 kilometres to 10 kilometres is considered a 'walk' and over 10 kilometres is to be deemed a 'hike.' This is so he is very sure what I mean when I say I want to go for a ...

This afternoon I would have been very happy to go for a 'stroll' – I think that covers the distance from where we land the tinnie on the beach (ish) to the top of the spit that contains Horseshoe Bay and back, but we ended up heading east to the outer beach, around to the point at Jumpinpin and then back down the middle of the dunes along where one of the old 4WD tracks used to be (calcified indentations can be seen in the sand along parts of this route).

Our one major 'interaction' was with long term local who has been fishing here for 40-odd years. He explained that the coast used to be at the base of the sand dune where we emerge from the bush, and that the subsequent extension of sand has been developing for some time. Apparently all the sand comes from down south and he mentioned he'd read somewhere that geologists had analysed some particles whose chemical composition indicates a correlation with substrate as far south as Sydney. As for the section of dock that is perched high and dry (mentioned in Aboard Sengo April 2020) – apparently that came from the Southport area in the floods the Gold Coast had 15 years ago. Wow. I can't even imagine how it got that high! But it is a convenient, if exposed, spot to sit if you want a break after a long beach walk before the final leg back to boat.

With recreational boating restrictions easing for Mothers Day the anchorage and surrounding nooks and crannies had been filled with not only the locals that hadn't given credence to the governments restrictions for the past few weeks, but with those that had done the right thing. I counted 70 boats in our area! Admittedly some of these were most definitely little day tinnies but one was a huge 'gin palace'. Social distancing seemed to be kept when we saw it on our walk, in the main, except for one group of three 4wdrives meeting on the east coast of the island (I suspect this was extended family), and there were several dogs that were allowed to run free disturbing the birdlife; particularly a magnificent Brahminy kite that was perched on a washed up stick that I really wanted to photograph, but didn't get close enough to before a 'white yapper' rattled past, and a black medium sized pooch running onto the dried up end of the boat infested rounded inlet up near Jumpinpin where two pied oystercatchers were 'trying' to rest.

Back at boat we got a dose of 'inferred' reality. The Federal Government was making announcements about the next

steps and it was highly unlikely we were going to get to our planned overseas holiday destination this year. We started the process of contacting our tourist providers and postponing or cancelling our bookings....

The 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> May were spent on boat doing domestics. I continued bicarb-ing the curtains, and 'spring' cleaning small, usually forgotten, areas of the boat. We also started to put our 'holiday' clothes away, now that there was no way we were going to get to the northern hemisphere for an adventure this year.

### A (very) short paddle.

12<sup>th</sup> May 2020. There is a certain skill attached to looking around on a paddle board and keeping your balance.....Andrew hasn't quite got it yet. I wasn't expecting Andrew to suggest a paddle board excursion here (we'd moved back to Tiger Mullet Channel), the current is usually quite strong but the conditions were calm enough to consider it. We got all the way to Green Island before the incident occurred. Admittedly Andrew was probably surprised by the hail of an adjacent boat (who were friendly enough to offer us a lift back once Andrew had gone into the drink) but having done this once before (in a canal south of Paradise Point) he was at least skilled enough not to have his head go under water this time. Unfortunately most of him was now soaking wet and with the wind picking up he was now freezing – so the fun had to end and we turned back, going with the tide but fighting the wind that was pushing us onto the shore. Being conscious of Andrew's first foray into the drink I now make very certain I am balanced (as much as I can be) when I turn around to check where Andrew is behind me. He was rewarded with a hot shower when he got back on board. I looked forward to a cup of tea. We had paddled 2.91 kilometers

Looking at our larder we were due for a food shop so we moved at high tide south to Brown's Gutter opposite the eastern end of the Coomera River. After some domestics we took the tinnie to town.

14<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> May 2020. After a couple of days around civilisation and filling the pantry we moved back to Tiger Mullet Channel; to a similar position to our last anchorage, west of the Whalley Channel and essentially on our own. As per usual the plan was to stay out for a fortnight before the next food shop was needed. However, we only lasted a week; the time filled in by curtains, holiday research, cleaning, cooking, and yoga.

Back early:Paradise Point.

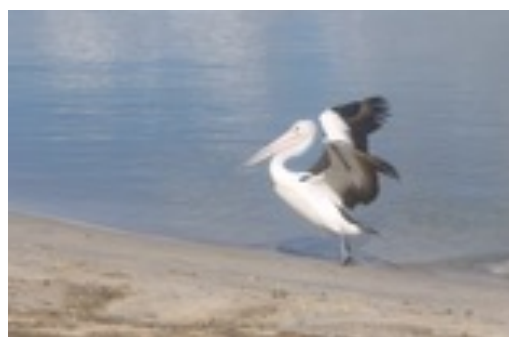
21<sup>st</sup> May 2020.We have been trying to restock food only every two weeks or so to minimise our contact with civilisation but today circumstances dictated otherwise. We moved early (high tide was at around 0700) because we had an appointment on Monday morning and if we didn't move today then we may not get a spot in the Paradise Point anchorage. The Anchorage was actually full on approach but a small, often abandoned yacht was making its way out so we nabbed that spot between two catamarans, noting the position of the crab pots toward shore and thankful that we were expecting westerly winds (easterly winds would definitely have us mingling with the crab pots); however we kept wary as we didn't quite know what the tide was going to do to our position.

Taking the advantage of the good weather (wind free but rain threatening) we totted off for a stroll - Paradise Point to Oxley Drive, then through the northern path of Pine Ridge Conservation Area and back to town. After picking up the mail we thought we'd spoil ourselves with lunch in town. This is the first time we have eaten out with the '10 person rule.' The cafe took note of our name, phone number and address (I gave them the website) for contact tracing issues. I suppose it is not much different to if you were actually reserving a table

by phone (apart from the provision of your address) but we wondered whether this was going to be 'the new norm.' The rain was predicted to be due late afternoon and whilst we'd had the very light drop or two on our walk it seriously came down early; around mid day – enough to ensure we had our Gore Tex's on the way back to the tinnie and the trip back to boat.

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020. We didn't get much done today. I wanted to get to Bunnings to pick up some 3M sticky tabs. I thought we had some but couldn't find them. Bunnings however is past Harbour Town and whilst we walked our familiar route to Harbour Town we made a detour on the way back. All in all we walked 19.21 kilometres It was longer than I expected but clearly we are getting fitter; neither of us felt particularly sore or tired (just a bit weary) when we got back to boat.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> May was grey and overcast and we stayed on boat; reading, continuing curtains and surfing the web. The 24<sup>th</sup> was a complete contrast; sunny with blue skies. We walked 12 kilometres for our exercise, talked to the locals and I had a bit of a play with editing the wording of someone else's web survey for clarity; it is a long time since my brain has had a work out like this and it was a lot of fun.





## A day 'for Adventure'

25<sup>th</sup> May 2020. After Andrew had his computer fixed early April we discovered a few programs that wouldn't work properly anymore. This was mainly due to some parts of the software he was using being upgraded. One of these related to our computer log. This was important. This needed fixing. So having moved back to Paradise Point in order to meet the technician we found after his early morning visit that we had little to do by mid morning. Because the wind predictions were light the boat would be safe so we hired a car and headed south. Our destination was a camping shop. Having confirmed in April that whilst our existing hiking tent was still in reasonable condition (serviceable with one minor needed repair), it was no longer big enough for our needs, and we have been searching for a new, lighter one, since. Andrew had created a great spreadsheet to compare the final options and we'd been discussing and pondering over these listed models for some time. There were a couple of really good options from the US but we decided, at this point at least, that we wanted to see what we were buying so the cottage industry options got rejected (for now) and we went for a well known, and stocked, brand. (Also a US brand but mass-produced in China). In the end we ended up buying a slightly heavier tent than we'd chosen but it is also a slightly bigger one; if we get stuck in inclement weather we still have room to move and stretch out. It is bigger than our old tent but it is still over a kilogram lighter, and we will be splitting the load. The other items we bought today were new packs; again not the model (or indeed the brand) we went in to check out, but the packs we got were comfortable, again

heavier than we'd envisaged but lighter than our old packs. We spent an inordinate amount of time in this camping shop and there was little time left before sundown when we emerged. After unsuccessfully trying to find a coffee shop open late in the afternoon we then also found ourselves with an unsuccessful trip into Spotlight to look for the Velcro required for the curtains. Eventually we got back to Paradise Point and too tired to cook after an exhausting day we found we were the only sit ins for the local Indian restaurant. It was dark when we got back to Sengo.



The tent we thought we were going to buy...



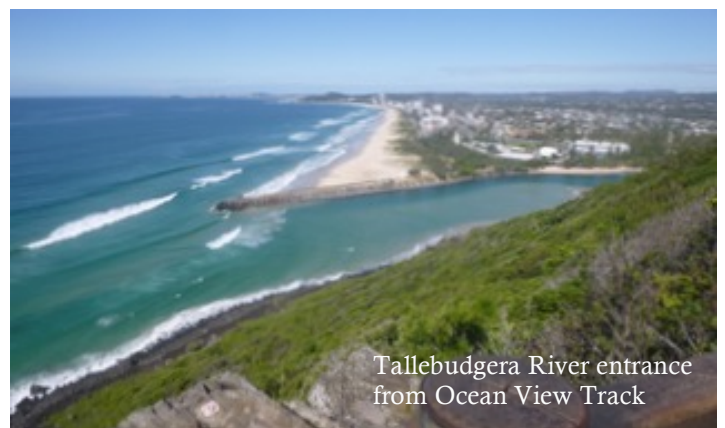
The tent we bought



26<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Having not done any exercise yesterday, we kept the car for another day and headed back down to Burleigh Heads (where the camping shop is). Our first task was to swap the tent we'd bought for the 'stealthier' 'olive' colour (the one I'd picked up yesterday had a red fly. If we want to stay anywhere for a couple of days I don't want to scare the wildlife away) before finally, between morning tea and lunch, wandering around Burleigh Heads National Park. This park is small and popular but I get the impression most visitors were here for their daily exercise rather than being genuine tourists (except perhaps for the young couple who headed down the 'forbidden area' of rock fall despite large signs forbidding access!) The vegetation ranges from exposed slopes with rock fall signs to lovely rainforest with great fig trees. I was hoping to see a 'noisy pitta' but there were too many 'noisy' people around.....



We dropped into Harbour Town on the way back to see if our the new rain jackets we had ordered had arrived but missed opening hours by about two minutes.



27<sup>th</sup> May 2020. It was an early morning rush to drive back to Harbour Town – to find it a no go with the rain jackets, which weren't yet in, but Andrew did get his day pack replaced due to a faulty opening. We also tried the tip. This was also a 'no go' as, in order to restrict access in this Covid era, the Helensvale Transfer Centre is working on an odds and evens number plate entry; today was odd – our number plate was even. Not all was lost, we found a recycle bin on foreshore anyway and we were able to get rid of all the recycling stuff that has been building up in the cockpit. After dropping the car off and walking back to Paradise Point we picked up my new hiking quilt from the post office. I did try to finish sewing the backing to some curtains but the machine stopped and after a busy morning I was not in the mood to sort it out.





## Not one of my top ten Gold Coast Experiences!

28<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

Andrew put the alarm on and got up early to watch the Space X launch – he has become somewhat of a Space X junkie over the past month – and managed to pull himself out of bed despite not being an early morning person. However the weather wasn't conducive for the launch (apparently all weather has to be conducive around half the world) so it didn't happen. After a normal non-descript morning, we made our way to shore around 1000. The first priority was getting Andrew a hair cut because although I've been giving him a haircut for the majority of the past six years to save money, the back cockpit was full of the Chinese Laundry of the curtain project I am currently doing (theoretically also to save money) and there just wasn't any swinging room. Whilst he was in the Barber, I was waiting for a phone call from the doctor. I'd rung the clinic a couple of hours earlier to describe what I assumed were mild cold symptoms but having not managed to see a government health related press conference for a couple of weeks and having watched yesterday's, Paul Kelly, one of Australia's deputy health officers, was encouraging anyone with mild symptoms, even if they were mild cold like symptoms, to get checked. So, joining in on the country's (very understandable) paranoia I had rung the doctor.

We had always planned to go for a walk today. The new light weight (well semi lightweight) rain jackets we had purchased had arrived in store (about an hour after we'd left yesterday!), and whilst we were confident in the jackets we had resealed ourselves, they are 2 to 3 times the weight of the ones we were about to pick up. And for what we had planned later in the year, where we could comfortably drop weight we would. We won't be getting rid of our old jackets – they are fabulous Gore-Tex jackets – they just won't be added to long multi-day back-packing trips.

I think we shaved around 1.5 kilometres off our walk to Harbour Town going a different way today. When the doctor finally rang me back (an hour after we'd been standing outside the practice) we were three quarters of the way to the Harbour Town shopping centre, and on the main road; I struggled to hear the practitioner with the noise! But what I did hear was the conclusion; I was advised to get a Covid test! The closest test location to Paradise Point was Oxenford. 'Ahhh,' I exclaimed 'that's a big walk', thinking about where we were, and the fact we were supposed to leave the anchorage today. The doctor did say we could take a bus but I wasn't that keen in this day and age, although in the end we did get a bus ride back to Paradise Point. She did say that the other test location was the Gold Coast University Hospital but that was further away from Paradise Point – but seeing where we were at the time I took the phone call...it happened to be our closest option. So after picking up our jackets, taking a break for a takeaway cuppa (something I usually disagree with but there were no seats available in the cafe and we did want a break before embarking south) we headed south up the hill, and then the next one, or two, to the Gold Coast Health Fever Clinic.

It was an interesting process. You stand in line until you get to the entrance where a person asks you to sanitise your hands and gives you a mask to put on. You then get asked a series of questions: name, date of birth, symptoms, allergies etc. You are then passed on to another person with a different

computer system in front of them where name and date of birth are confirmed, and address is taken (that was interesting as they originally didn't want a post office box but I had to convince them I had no physical address). Medicare details are also taken (the address on our Medicare card is listed at a relative's location) and finally you are directed into an alcove and asked to take one of the orange plastic square seats (all appropriately separated of course).

I was concerned that if I was being tested then Andrew would need to be tested as well but he managed to get permission to miss this experience – I suspect he is very grateful for 'not being wanted.' He found a rock in the middle of the road partition to sit and wait for me.

In the 'waiting area' you are attended by two assistants. The first takes your temperature – I was beeped three times on the forehead. I am not sure if they normally check your temperature three times but my cap had to be removed and we'd just walked several kilometres so maybe my forehead may have been a bit hot. Then the old fashioned band appeared around the arm for taking the blood pressure and a peg went on my finger. I told the lass doing this that my blood pressure would be 'perfect'. It always is. Anytime I go to the doctor (which is usually only once a year when I go for an annual check up and bloods) the doctors never tell me what the blood pressure reading is, without fail they say 'perfect.' And so did this one. The next assistant came over armed with that information, and I assume a print out of all the other gumf, and the first thing she said was 'your blood pressure is perfect.' Go figure. I then got the explanation that I had to self-isolate straight after the test. No shopping, no public transport, no visiting etc. 'Great, I explained but we've just walked about 10 kilometres to get here and I don't know if I really want to walk back again.' She did give me permission to get the bus back.

It was only a couple of minutes later when I was directed into a room, and the technician, his face behind a full-length window, introduced himself. I repeated his name but it was written on the top of his mask. His name was Earl. I didn't know if this was his actual name or supposed to be some kind of comical relief. You can imagine. 'Hi, My name is Earl.' I never watched the Tv program but the catch

cry was amusing. He did explain what he was going to do, which got a bit muddled in my brain so I warned him I was probably going to forget it. That was okay. I guess this whole situation overwhelms a lot of people, especially if they are worried they have Covid-19. I wasn't.

So the process: The chair you sit in is close to the wall. The process involves tilting your head back to touch the wall, opening your mouth and saying the obligatory 'AHHh'. A long thin probe is stuck down your throat and just as you think you are going to gag, it gets stuck down a bit further. When it is removed you are relieved but the 'best bit' is yet to come. The probe is then stuck into your nostril, past the sensitive skin in the nose (which might only be sensitive because you have a bug), which of course hurts, and then it keeps going down into your throat again, where you again have the sensation of gagging. Once the probe is pulled back out of here you take a big breath. Except the experience is not yet over. The last process happens again in the other nostril! Before this all starts the technician advises you to relax, or meditate, or... 'grab the bottom of the chair.' We have started regularly doing yoga this month, but I am rueing I didn't get into the meditation section of the same book earlier! It is hard to relax...I grabbed the bottom of the chair.....

After that little experience I really didn't want to walk back. It was now 1430. If we walked back it would be close to dark when we got back and we didn't have the anchor light on. There would also be no option to move anchorages in dropping light. We took the bus. I don't know what the bus driver was thinking when he picked us up, me with a mask on, from nearest bus stop opposite the Fever Clinic!

It still took us an hour to get back to boat. After the bus dropped us off, Andrew popped into the fruit shop and the Foodworks to pick up a couple of supplies (lemons being one of them) and I sat outside. The mask was interesting and I have no idea whether I was wearing it right but it might have looked funny to other boaties as we motored home. However, with a slightly sensitive shnoz I really was in no mood to move. I think the water police would understand if they questioned us. We would move tomorrow. I got the all clear around 2100.



## ‘Bums Bay’

29<sup>th</sup> May 2020. In 20 knots of wind we moved from Paradise Point down to ‘Bums Bay’ near Southport. Strong-ish winds were expected in the afternoon and evening but we didn’t see anything over 19 knots on the gauges. Bums Bay (Official name Marine Stadium) is the sheltered bit of water up the end of the spit, south of the Seaway. It is extremely popular with locals and visitors alike and is nearly always full; the two times we have anchored ‘in’ ‘Bum’s’ have been right up the northern end which has great protection but you are surround by derelict, and sometimes abandoned, boats. Because it is so squeezezy in this area you can only put a small amount of chain out; okay in slight winds but not good with a blow. Outside you can put more chain out, however you do suffer the consequences of the 40 knot speed limit, which, uncomfortable at the best of times, is particularly noticeable from large power boats and gin palaces speeding past. This visit has started out unusually quiet as the restrictions on social distancing have shut a few local businesses down, including the helicopters which normally almost make having permanent earplugs in in this anchorage a necessity.

Apart from the move the rest of the day was pretty non descript; we decanted commercial freeze dried food into zip lock bags to see if there was any weight reduction, and I fully loaded my pack to see if it was big enough for what we wanted (the camping store gives you 80 days for a refund/exchange provided you haven’t taken it outside or taken the tabs off). We managed a yoga session in the evening.

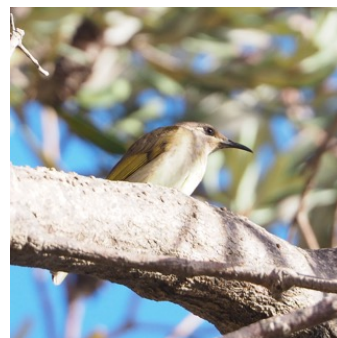
30<sup>th</sup> May 2020. This anchorage is a good acclimatiser for sailing. With the amount of traffic coming from the marinas at Southport, down the Nerang River and from the boat ramp adjacent here, it is a pretty rocky location. So much so that this morning I felt a bit ill and realised, with a bit of a shock, that it was probably ‘sea sickness’. ‘Better to

get used to that nauseating feeling here than when out on the sea-side of the Broadwater islands with no where to anchor for relief.

This morning was utilitarian – we went shopping. We also managed to book a restaurant for Andrew’s Birthday lunch. The original idea had been to book Cafe Catalina’s but by the time I rang both sittings were full, and whilst the rumour is that the premier might change the restrictions tomorrow, I didn’t want to take the chance of not having anywhere for a meal. So we grabbed hold of a staff member of a restaurant as we were passing on the way to Australia Fair. The main midday sitting for Monday was full but we took a spot at the later option. It was then a case of entering Australia Fair, and mingling with the crowds at Coles – this store of which I note supplies hand sanitiser at the entrance. Trolley and bags full we headed back to boat for lunch.

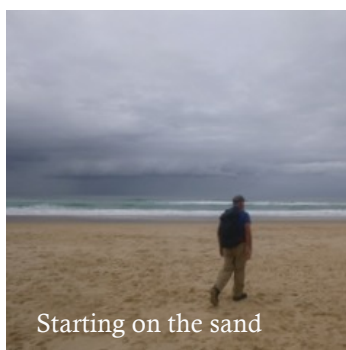
Andrew had offered me a walk but it wasn’t until after 1430 that we got to shore. However, it seemed the perfect time. The sun was still out and warm (when not in the wind) and the vegetation along the northern section of the Federation Track was full of bird calls, and whilst most birds were well hidden, we were entertained with the antics of brown honeyeaters, willy wagtails, and female wrens. We also saw masked wood swallows, brown boobies, silver gulls and pigeons. The Federation Walk itself was patronised sparsely; a few walkers and a few cyclists. There were however many crossing toward the beach and once we got to the Seaway the area south along the beach was full of people – and in some cases their over enthusiastic dogs. Despite the slightly chilly, and resistant, wind, it was a great day to be out. The walk distance was 4.71 kilometres, just under half of that along the beach.

In the evening I did a final test pack of my backpack to see if everything will fit in for overnight hikes (now I just need to lift it).





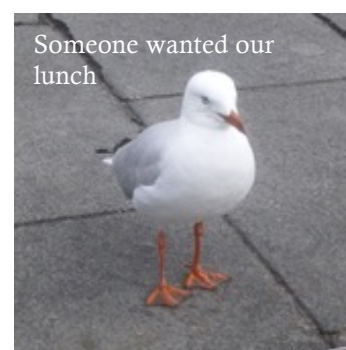
Free RayBans?



Starting on the sand



Offshore storm



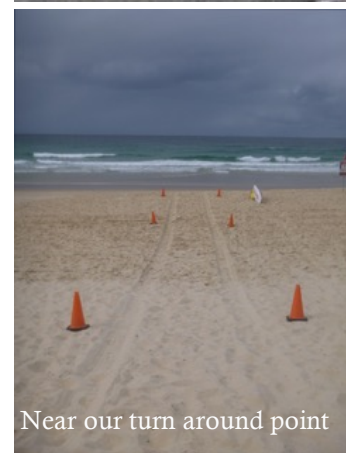
Someone wanted our lunch

## Using the leg muscles; beach walking

31<sup>st</sup> May 2020. Andrew had the alarm on and dragged himself out of bed at around 0500 to watch the next attempt of Space X to launch two astronauts into space. This time the weather was conducive and the launch was a success. Our weather forecast however wasn't all clear giving a 30% prediction of rain, and indeed, as the day got light there was rain over 'Bums Bay' coming our way. I hoped it would clear. In the mean time I tried another new recipe for breakfast (I have been experimenting with breakfast options for the past few months) and I found I needed to cook this pear loaf (a bit like banana bread) a bit longer than the recipe suggested. Using the oven is always a challenge on a rocking boat; the boat ramp had been busy since before 0500 and the parade of pre-dawn vessels included a group of around 9 jet skis heading out into the dark and the rain!

Andrew offered a 'walk'. But because we started around 1045, unless it was very short, lunch was going to be factored in, and I could justify a 'hike'. We ended up covering 16.47 kilometres, a good chunk of which was along the beach. Beach walking potentially uses more muscles and more energy but we need the practice. Because our original overseas trip this year has been cancelled due to Covid-19, next year's trip may be brought forward and that adventure 'starts' with 100 kilometres of walking along the beach!

Most of today held overcast skies— in fact blue sky really only made an appearance just before 1400 when we turned north after lunch to return to boat. The beaches weren't quite as full with people as yesterday, but there were plenty of walkers, surfers and a few swimmers, and despite the lifeguard towers being occupied the beach was lined with 'no swimming' signs and red flags. Bird life along this thoroughfare was of course minimal (a few silver gulls) but pet dogs were prolific, and after being used to dachshunds and small fluffy white things that dominate Paradise Point, today's pooches consisted of Belarusian Mountain Dogs, Dalmatians, French Poodles, Dobermans, Bull dogs, setters and cocker spaniels. Whilst I was stuck in a café getting a bottle of water (somehow I'd managed to forget mine) Andrew



Near our turn around point

watched two whales close to the beach; at least they get to head north!

We got back to boat around 1530 (ish) to find we had two new neighbours. We were facing an unusual direction so I hoped there are no issues with chain length overnight.



Afternoon Return; heading towards Southport