

# Aboard Sengo

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June 2021

## Gladstone

Reacquainting ourselves  
– and a Covid Jab

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## The Bowen Coal Basin

A week outback without  
a boat – well maybe just  
a small one!

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## Great Keppel Island

Doing the Keppel  
Shuffle - between  
Leekes and  
Fisherman's Beach'

From 28



Graham Creek, Curtis Island

To Gladstone...  
...and

The Tropics



Lake Maraboon



Blackdown Tableland National Park



Graham Creek, Curtis Island



Just on the side of the road



Lords Table National Park

Sengo spent half of June on a mooring at Gladstone Marina; however we weren't aboard her for that entire time. After getting to Gladstone on 1st June so we could go out for dinner for Andrew's Birthday, we stuck around, predominantly so we could get our first Covid jab on Friday the 4th. Given my platelet count issues and the current concern with Astrazeneca, I convinced Andrew to stay around land a bit longer...I didn't want to be offshore at some remote reef if all of a sudden we had to access medical help – no matter how good the local rescue chopper might be! So, to do something a bit different, we took a trip inland, driving and walking around the bottom section of the Bowen Coal Basin.

When we finally left Gladstone mid-month our aim was Great Keppel Island and a looked forward to rendezvous with *Anapa*. At the end of the month we were still at Great Keppel; our next jump delayed by weather...and insurance.

Oh, and Leopard finally paid us, after arguing, for our gas conversion!



Long Beach, Great Keppel Island



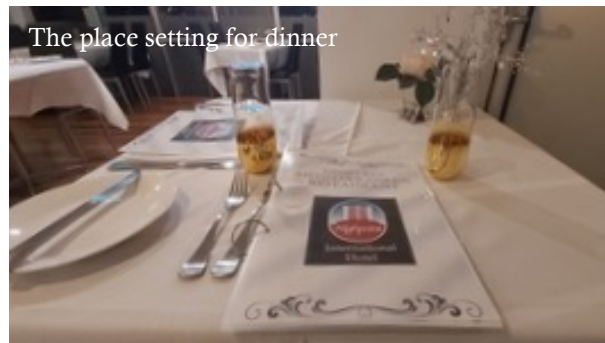
## Gladstone

1<sup>st</sup> June 2021. We were originally going to head into the Gladstone marina on Thursday (in two days time) but if we went in today we could go out for dinner for Andrew's birthday. As the weather forecast wasn't looking too bad, we had rung yesterday to see if they could fit us in.

The engines went on just after breakfast and we didn't put any sort of sail up until we got to the top end of Seven Mile Creek and out of Rodd Harbour. We turned north west-ish to make sure we got around most of the shallow area of Jenny Lind Banks – but I did steer the boat over a couple of shallow patches. When we turned toward the channel proper we were sailing on genoa only. We thought we heard a call to us and responded, knowing we might look a bit silly if we had misheard. We were instructed to keep out of the way of an oncoming vessel but when we checked on AIS this vessel was still basically at dock north of Auckland Creek and we were on the lesser channel heading in. Of course we would keep out of the way of an oncoming tanker/cargo ship or in this case a fuel carrier! So, thinking we'd responded incorrectly on behalf of another boat we called VTS to confirm. Getting through all that we got to the marina around 1030 picking up the only available (middle) mooring (we had called the marina earlier to see if a mooring was free this early in the morning – two were available at the time – clearly someone had come in just before us).

Logging in was easy, as usual; the Port staff is very welcoming and friendly. And then we waited for the car we'd organised. Budget does a pick-up service but we wondered why they were a few minutes late – the lass had temporarily gone to the Info Centre before she worked out we were at the marina – clearly they offer a pick up service to the Info Centre as well!

The priorities of the day were food shopping and going out to dinner for Andrew's Birthday. We chose a 'Mediterranean' restaurant, which is part of one of the hotels. Andrew enjoyed his meal – lamb. Mine was firstly undercooked and then tough – but I had beef. However, it was nice to dress up for dinner and go out (and I fitted into a dress I don't think I've been able to wear before without too many bumps sticking out in the wrong places. This was good for my psyche. It was however a short dress with no sleeve's and probably not suited to Gladstone's' slightly chilly evening on the official start of winter!)



The place setting for dinner



This is a magnified view of the Boyne Aluminum Smelter. We'd followed the road, on the site, to the lookout! However the official lookout infrastructure was blocked off because workmen were painting the balustrades. This also meant we had no access to the interps boards. The best view we got was over the trees from an adjacent picnic table.



## A warm up

2nd June 2021. Andrew has a term for me when I lose track fitness - he says I turn into a 'blancmange'. This is not only a physical reaction; it is a mental reaction as well. He comments that I would probably cope better if I just turned into a 'New York cheesecake' - soft but with some shape, but if I haven't done any exercise for a while I tend to lose most of what I had; fitness and shape. It only takes a couple of days. Based on what I've been reading this is probably due to the characteristics of my blood type, but none the less, given the fact that we hadn't had a good walk since we came off the Tasmanian Trail two months ago - strolls around Oxenford Lake and the Tallawal Circuit at Binna Burra don't really count in the workout stakes - I was totally out of form. So given that we wanted to climb Mount Larcom tomorrow, I thought a warm up walk would be in order.

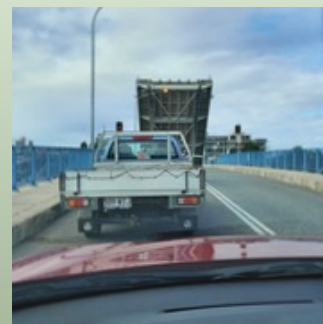
We managed three very short walks this morning - the first was the most elevated, and the most revealing. The circuit that traverses bush between Glenlyon Street and suburban houses is listed at the location as the Gladstone Family Fun and Fitness Circuit, and in the All Trails app as Happy Valley Park Loop, and I was shocked that I was puffing on this 1.6 kilometre loop up the side of a small hill. If I am puffing on this track - what am I going to be doing tomorrow? There were a few birds around; choughs in the open green areas near the car park, rainbow lorikeets flying overhead, a few honeyeaters flitting around but too quick to be identified, and a collared kingfisher who landed in a branch not far from us; seemingly determined to show off his plumage.

Our next little stroll was just across Glenlyon Street, around a small lake and interspersed with curious moorhens and demanding ducks - who wanted to be fed despite the 'no feeding' signs. Other birds here included ibis's and darters, and lone a willy wagtail.

Our third walk was going to be in the Botanic Gardens but that was abandoned as there were work men and work areas near the car park, and a lot of noise (probably for the upcoming eco festival on the weekend) so we instead found a path through a reserve in a housing estate - a lovely patch of bush that is probably only there because the developer wasn't allowed to build too close to the drainage line. The bird spot here was a juvenile scarlet honeyeater - his head plumage had matured (bright red) but his chest plumage had yet to come.

We had lunch back at boat and in the afternoon we organised a replacement for a broken hatch handle, rinsed the spinnaker lines in fresh water, and wiped down the salt from the front covers. Because it was late when we started our boat jobs, the lines weren't quite dry when I pulled them inside, however doing so would ensure they wouldn't get dirty in the atmosphere overnight, or get wetter with the dew. Andrew managed a partial organisation of his fishing gear.

This is the second time we have seen this bridge raised to let a boat through. You need to ring ahead if you want to take your boat up Auckland Creek.







Mount Larcom beckoning; magnified photo from Sengo

### Climbing Mount Larcom

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021. The Mount Larcom Climb is officially estimated to take 3 to 4 hours. Because our fitness was a bit lacking we took 5.5 – but that did include a good chat to other walkers up at the summit, two 10 minute or so nibble breaks, and several breaks to catch one's breath on the way up. The national park service lists it as a Grade 4 walk.

I guess the time taken to complete the up and back walk depends on one's fitness but the graffiti on the notice at the entrance gate, crossing out the word 'rough' and replacing it with 'easy', is probably pushing it. We met five other hikers on today's traverse. The first was retuning downhill as we were going up – he'd left his car at 0730 and was clearly a lot fitter than us, as he was two thirds of the way down around 0930. A young Dutch couple passed us about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way up. They'd been walking 50 minutes – we'd been walking around two hours! I will point out however that they were about half our age and carrying half the weight we were, but it highlighted how much condition we'd lost in the past two months. The



fourth individual passed us just as we were reaching the summit. The fifth hiker was coming up as we were coming down. By this stage a small smattering of rain had descended upon us and the clouds were coming in. I do hope he ended up with a view.

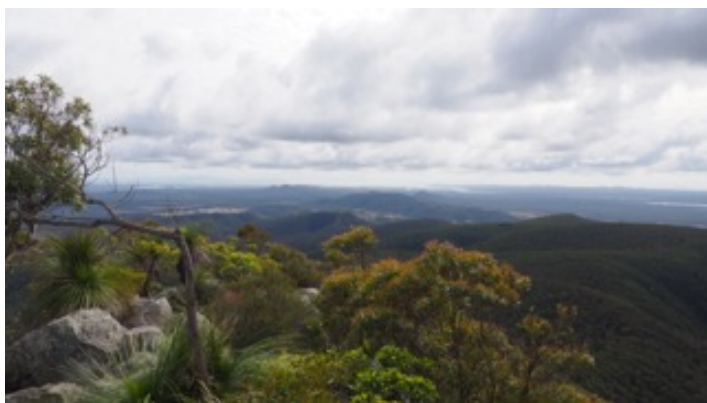
The view from the top of Mount Larcom was fabulous. We could see Sengo in the marina, we could see all the way up The Narrows, and we could see for miles inland to the west. The walk was definitely worth the view – and we had the added bonus of J, B and A at the top to chat to. Thanks B for being the photographer.



View from the top of Mount Larcom: Photo credit -B







The descent took around two hours – and the steepness meant we had to be prudent where we put our feet. Andrew traditionally has knee problems on down hill sections so he was taking it very carefully. By the time we got back to the car I was tired and there were a couple of hot spots on my left foot.

The vegetation at the bottom of the walk was a very open tropical savannah mix of species, and rather dry. Given this, I was surprised to find a small patch of rainforest in a little valley near the start of the walk, and indeed most birdcalls were heard in this rainforest section. As we ascended from here the bush understory changed and at times the undergrowth was dominated by xanthorias, or by cycads, and at one stage there was a thick mixture of both. Further up the mountain rock outcrops provided a great visual contrast to the vegetative track surrounds, and the filtered views across to the east just got better and better. We commented on the amount of greenery (patches of forest mainly) of the landscape; it didn't seem as dry as we'd expected (although we did have a chat to a local later in the afternoon who said they were crying out for rain).



Several species of butterfly were noted on the bottom slopes and birdlife occasionally crossed our path higher up. The track is marked mainly by blue and yellow painted dots or arrows, or bright yellow fluorescent markers nailed to trees. At one point we lost the trail and followed a smaller, more recent



path but it came back to the main track. There was also an alternate track on the All Trails app map but we only saw the bottom end of it – and didn't look for the top entrance.

Because we had taken longer than expected we had no food waiting for us in the car so headed off to Mount Larcom settlement for lunch where Andrew stated the homemade pies at the Cafe were the best he's had. We drove back to Gladstone via The Bruce Highway and the Calliope River Road.



## Vaccination Day

4<sup>th</sup> June 2021-The 4<sup>th</sup> June was the reason we were in Gladstone – our first Covid jab. This date took a bit of planning, but not as much as I had expected.

We had been informed by another cruiser that they had ascertained the wait to get a Covid vaccination jab in Gladstone ranged, at least at the establishments that they had enquired at, from 7 to 15 days. It was prudent to book ahead. Booking ahead takes a bit of planning on a boat, mainly due to the weather. We wanted to be in the marina for a few days after the vaccination so we had to organise a marina possie. But we also want calm weather in order to get into a pen. Weather forecasts aren't usually all that accurate too far in advance.

So to hedge my bets, I waited until we were a day's sail from Burnett Heads, and therefore at least another two (in our case four because we waited for weather) to Gladstone. I was cross-referencing MetEye at bom.gov.au with windy.com (which tends to have a slightly longer forecast) and came up with a couple of days that looked calm enough to dock. As it was the over cautiousness wasn't needed as instead of getting into a pen we picked up a mooring. Now we had a 'marina' date, we had to find out if we could get in a Covid queue.

My first thought, and attempt, involved contacting the Gladstone Hospital. I figured if anything went wrong and I had to get rushed to hospital then if they had my details to start with in their system it would save a bit of time. But try getting though to the hospital! It was impossible. On the website it does list the hospital as one of the vaccination locations. So I rang. Like a Bank you get a menu – press 1 for Covid, 2 for heart problems etc. I pressed '1'. No-one answered the phone- it just rang... and rang... and rang. So I rang back and waited to be connected to an operator – and got a receptionist who didn't know anything but she would put me though to Community Service (where she's been forwarding all the other Covid calls). And I got an answering

machine! By this time I was a bit peeved, to put it politely. On this particular morning we had started early, crossed the Wide Bay Bar, motored past Boonlye Point and we were anchored off the bottom of Platypus Bay, Fraser Island. We were tired. I was getting frustrated. So giving up on the hospital idea I got back on the Government website to check out who else in the Gladstone area could help us. One establishment listed a 2-day wait – no good – we would not be in Gladstone for several days. A couple stated 'no appointment available' and a couple stated 'ring for an appointment'. So I did!

The process was, after all that preliminary hassle, surprisingly easy. There were no hard questions and no references to previous medical issues or records, as we had been warned by one boat's crew who were waiting for some interstate records to arrive. The only concern the receptionist had was that we were not within 15 days of our flu shot – if we booked in on Friday our flu shot would have been 18 days before. Appointments locked in – all we had to do was get there.

So at 1000 this morning we totted off to the medical practice, filled in a new client form as we'd not been there before, and waited to be called in to see a Doctor. This check was pretty rudimentary. Our vital signs were taken, notes of any allergies etc, and my platelet condition checked against government advice. Apparently I was at no greater risk of getting blood clots than most people. We then waited for the nurse.

In summary I got the nurse, Andrew got the nurse's assistant, and neither of us felt the jab. After some hours I had a slightly grumpy arm around the jab site (I get that for the flu shot) and had a slight headache in the evening. Andrew got no symptoms at all on this night.





'stretched' view from mooring

## An unexpected journey

5th June 2021. When I had started looking at options to occupy our time whilst we were in Gladstone I was delighted to find the Gladstone Show was going to be on over the weekend. Something a bit different – we haven't been to a general Show or Field Day for a couple of years (the last one a Camping Show in Geelong in 2019). However by the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June the show was officially cancelled – the reason I saw in the media was the inability to get the joy rides to site on time. So, the show was out. What else was there?

According to information websites there was a regular market on Boyne Island so we headed down there, but there seemed to be no activity in the area listed. I investigated the media further and discovered it was an afternoon market starting at 1600. What are we going to do until then?

It was at this point that Andrew mentioned that he that he would prefer a drive rather than a walk, so we took a feeder from Boyne Island and headed south. We've driven the major roads around the area so we thought we'd have a go at looking at the 'not so travelled' local terrain.

We turned left off the Bruce Hwy onto the road that lead to Turkey Beach (a fishing settlement we had visited by boat last year), but before we got there we turned left again to head to a place called Foreshore. This settlement is at the bottom of Seven Mile Creek, the tidal waterway that we'd anchored in on 30<sup>th</sup> May.

There is nothing at Foreshore; it is a domicile settlement with lifestyle-sized properties, or that is all we saw. The road does lead to the waterway but access to water is via the dirt ramp and clearly (very) tidal. At one stage I suspect this was a popular picnic spot – there is a rusty, pedestal bbq in the middle of a turn-about at the end of the road, almost entirely obscured by overgrown grasses. I noticed sadly that there are a few prickly pear plants growing along the side of this road and wondered if the locals know about them, or indeed, if they care.



Access to Seven Mile Creek at Foreshore

As there was nothing to see here we started to head back to the main road. But just after we'd passed the main area of the hamlet.....

A large black dart shot from above diagonally down to the front of our hire car. Andrew slammed on the breaks but we both heard, and felt, the impact, and Andrew immediately edged the car off the road. Initially we assumed the bird was on the tarmac behind us and I sent Andrew out to do what needed to be done. It wasn't there. So he walked to the front of the vehicle and there on the front grill was the bird. I could see the grimace on Andrew's face as he came back to get me out of the car. 'I might need your help,' he said. With my history in trying to help birds hit by cars (or put them out of their misery) I wasn't looking forward to this, knowing that I might be a mental mess at the end of it. Within those ten or so seconds however the bird disappeared. He wasn't on the ground...where was he?

He was actually inside the grill! How did he get in there? The animal's eye was not blinking and the head not moving. One wing was definitely out of sorts as it was angled up the side of the animal's neck. I gently put my finger through the grill and



touched the bird on his cheek. There was no obvious movement. We didn't know if he was alive or dead.

Either way we couldn't leave the animal there. We had to try and pull the bottom grill off to get him out. Whilst I was pulling the plastic lugs out that attached the grill to the car, a local turned up to ask if we were okay. We asked if he had a box, because I thought if the bird needs a vet, we need something to transport him in - but there was none available. The local did however pull over off the road to help us, and the three of us tackled the issue together. But even with all the lugs out, the bottom grill just wouldn't budge. As it turned out this local used to be a motor mechanic so he suggested we have a look under the bonnet to see if we could access the bird from there. With the built in construction of modern cars these days however there was no room for that to happen. And then he hit on the idea that worked. There was a protection plate for the radiator under the car. The first attempt at pulling the edges of the grill and the radiator protection plate down simultaneously didn't work (the area was not large enough) but if I pulled all the lugs off from that as well perhaps the protection plate could be removed. I got the job of pulling most of the lugs off because I had the longest nails - but not at the end, my thumbnail had split down the middle to the top of the finger!

Just as we were getting close to pulling the last of the lugs out - there was movement, and the bird moved from one side to the other - at least he was no longer stunned. He was now also on my side (I was lying on my side on the reserve side of the road). We maneuvered the protection plate aside and I put my hand blindly up into the space. I knew I was



Clearly this lug didn't initially come from this spot - not enough dust!

going to get 'bitten' and was not disappointed. What I was surprised at though, as I blindly scooped the bird up, not knowing where I'd grabbed it, that before I got the bird to the ground it left my hand from below the car and flew away. I had warned the stranger that I would probably cry - but my initial comment was in relation to a potentially injured animal or one we had to euthanize. Instead I was crying with joy as we watched the animal disappear into a nearby tree.

I didn't get any photos of our impossibly caged bird - we still can't work out how he got himself into the grill- or how incredibly lucky he was to have entered a gap at speed that didn't break his neck, or his beak, or his back or shoulders, and being wedged by pulling himself into the gap inside. I was more worried about his welfare and wanted to get to him as quickly as possible; and taking photos of a bird who needed veterinary help or worse is edging on perverse cruelty.

We didn't get the name of our good Samaritan - he left after our unexpected guest left - but we were very grateful. And as karma comes around, it was not long after this that we had a chance to give back to the universe.

Just as we got back to the main road we slowed down when we were adjacent a 4WD with its bonnet up, and surrounded by four souls in various states of activity. As it turns out, the vehicle's oil light had come on a short way back up the road, and then so had just about every other light on the dashboard. Their day's outing to the Bundaberg Rum distillery was not going to happen today - and we hoped they'd be able to get a refund. None of the occupants were members of RACQ - I guess after today they will reflect that decision, and as I am no longer a member of RACV Auto/Total Care I couldn't get a tow truck for them. Instead, to give back the 'good Samaritan' love, we drove them down to the next town - around 10 kilometres away - so they could pick up some engine oil. We then drove them back again. New oil in the system didn't do the trick however, and not being able to help them more we had to leave them to it.

Heading south, we bypassed the hotel at Bororen for lunch and headed to



Kookaburra eater!

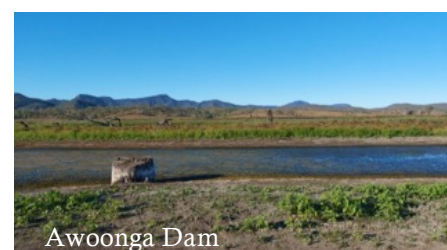
Miriam Vale instead, where the pub looked like something out of a fairy tale. It was a pub but it looked more like a pub full of bar patrons, with only a couple of tables for the bistro. So instead of having lunch there we had lunch at one of the Cafes along the main street. After lunch we continued south and took the dirt road from just south of Miriam Vale across to the Boyne Valley. I knew this road existed as the couple we'd chatted to at the Mungungo Hotel last year had come across this way. This road was mainly dirt and had a steep up and down over the range. It joined the Boyne Valley road with 76 kilometres to Monto and 86 kilometres to Gladstone. We turned to the right and followed a road we'd travelled once before, stopping off at the Boynedale Bush Camp to check it out. This camp was closed for Covid when we were based in Gladstone last year. It seems to be free, has a limit of 28 days in any one period, and I think is the only access to the Awoonga Dam on this side. The campsite looks comfortable if we wanted to use it in the future although dominated by caravans etc. - we didn't see any tents. Access to the dam is via dirt ramps and the birdlife was varied and plentiful.

Kookaburra  
Black kite  
Black Swan  
Richard's pipit  
Welcome swallow  
Lapwing  
Royal spoonbill  
Great egret  
Hoary headed grebe  
Little grebe  
Pacific black duck  
Darter  
Wood duck  
Finch???  
Black fronted plover  
Jacana  
Brown falcon  
Australian kestrel  
Magpie  
Crow  
Pied butcherbird  
Mudlark  
Pied heron  
White ibis  
Glossy ibis  
Fig bird

Blue face honeyeater  
House sparrow  
Cattle egret  
Intermediate egret  
Black faced cuckoo shrike  
Pied cormorant



I love the distance measure for Covid social distancing – emu or kangaroo







### Singing lessons

#### Boyne River Walk

6<sup>th</sup> June 2021. I had been looking for the coastal walk at Tannum Sands, the one I'd partially done before (last year), but when I searched All Trails (an app I use mainly because I had it downloaded with gpx files for the Tasmanian Trail (although it didn't accept them easily)) It came up with a different walk in the area - a 13.2 kilometre there-and-back walk on the opposite side of the Boyne River. We probably did the 13.2 distance – even though we did cut off half of the loop around the car park at the Boyne Smelter, but we did include a detour off track to get some lunch at the café near the Woolworths.

We parked under the trees between the footy oval and the soccer oval opposite the Discovery Park Caravan Park and started the walk by traversing through their non-powered camping sites. What a lovely little patch of campground this is, dominated by tall trees right on the river. The walk progresses along roads opposite houses, though public parks, a couple with boat ramps, and finally moves into 'bushland' inland from the beach, some reminiscent of the paperback trail we did in April, and some

more scrubby, with a more obvious middle layer of vegetation - which happened to be mainly wattle. The wattle was in flower – normally a late winter or spring phenomenon for a Victorian, but we are not in Victoria anymore 'Dorothy'. I can't remember the last time I saw bush with wattle in flower.

The birds were prolific and just teasing me that I didn't have the good camera with me; I could have got some fabulous close up shots. The bird list is as follows.

Great egret  
Rainbow bee eater,  
Magpie  
Crow  
Pied butcherbirds (parents giving singing lessons to junior - with an encouraging noisy minor watching on)  
Kookaburra  
Pied cormorant  
Darter  
Mud lark  
Drongo  
Brown honeyeater  
Little friar bird

Sunset from mooring

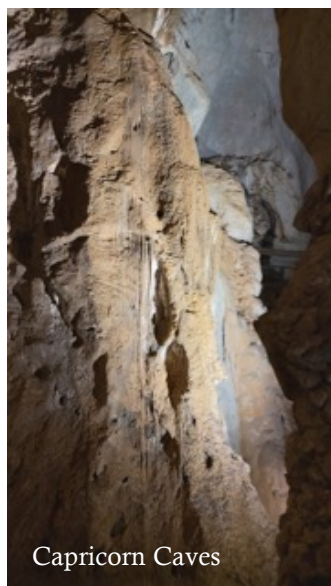




Capricorn Caves



Capricorn Caves



Capricorn Caves

## Going Caving...above ground?

7th June 2021. Our main reason for heading to Rockhampton today was to get to Clarke Rubber – a bit of a long trip (approx. 220km return) one might say to travel to a retail store, but Andrew thought it was worth it. We were looking at purchasing some memory foam, not unlike our bed mattress topper, in order to construct a cushion for our helm seat which would hopefully mean a much more comfortable ride on long sailing days.

I suggested that while we were in Rockhampton we could perhaps get to the Capricorn Caves, something we'd talked about last time we stayed at Gladstone, but never got around to doing?

We were never going to make the caves before lunch and a 1pm or 3pm tour was available. Andrew suggested the later tour but I extrapolated that that may get us back to boat close to being dark. I suggested the 1pm but that would mean, if we had a picnic in the grounds, that we'd need to get to the site at 1200, allow half an hour to get to site from Rocky - and so depart from Rocky at 1130. We also needed to get to Rocky –about 1.5 hours away from Gladstone, and do whatever shopping we needed.

In the end it was a slightly late start from Gladstone, a drive that was marred by a very long batch of road work (expected – they've been working on this part of the road since last year) and an hour spent in Clarke Rubber – much more time than we had expected. Because we didn't have time for a picnic lunch as hoped, we ended up with a couple of nori rolls from the local Woolworths shopping centre, and eating them in the car on the way to the caves. This stretch of road was also marred by road works but we got to the cave tour with 15 minutes to spare; where we waited around twiddling our thumbs.

The tour unfortunately had children on it so they were a bit noisy, but it was quite interesting – as most of this tour is in fact 'above ground'! After the tour we partook in accouterments from their café. I tried to have a

wander around their 'museum', a room to the side with old displays (not necessarily a problem except that the lighting wasn't right and most of the push buttons weren't working), and a room with interps posters that were almost all not straight – and these would have been easily fixed – they were on a gallery hanging system.

A television out the front was highlighting a documentary movie that had won awards and had links to this cave system – the film was on cave arachnids – and whilst it was being shown at a location just down the road, we wouldn't have had time to see it and get back to boat before dark.

On the way back to boat we stopped briefly at Battery World to get a battery for the remote for our back lights – now Andrew can bbq under any colour light he chooses!

Next time we go back to the Capricorn Caves, we will take the more adventurous tour and leave plenty of time to have a picnic in the adjacent Mount Etna Caves National Park.





8<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The skies of the past few mornings have been a delightful bright blue and resulted in welcoming sunny days. This morning however we woke to a majority grey sky, stratus mainly, as the only rain we got was a few patters just after lunch. After spending last evening trying to work out where we wanted to go for the next few days we settled today on Blackwater – a coal-mining town east of Emerald. Perhaps not as close to the marina as our original idea of the southern end of the Banana Shire, but we could at least book a reasonable looking hotel at Blackwater (we were struggling in the other area)– there was no self-contained accommodation available.

Today was a lazy day. After booking our accommodation, we extended the marina stay, and the car, and then proceeded to pack for the next few days. Our first challenge was the kayak. We had decided we were taking it with us, but despite it being inflatable, the deflated package was still too big to fit across the back of the boot of the car – we solved this by putting the back seats of the vehicle down and loading the kayak in length ways.

A miss communication last week meant that the toilet parts are still in Coomera (will we ever get them?), but other mail sent from our post office box arrived safely today – just as well. I had assumed it was all junk mail from the bank but it turns out to be my bankcard! We didn't feel like exploring much today but did end up checking a family owned camping shop, as opposed to one of the big franchises, and I ended up buying some standard Injinjin socks – the current version that I have are liners with outers. We were back on boat around 1600. It was a very grey and un-enthusiastic day.

Still grey – clouds receding leaving Gladstone



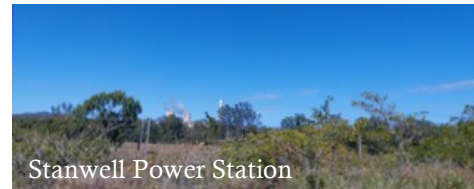
## The Bowen Coal Basin Gladstone to Blackwater

9<sup>th</sup> June 2021. We awoke to rain. This situation wasn't useful, or desired, as we still had to transport some gear across to the car. Fortunately, by the time we were ready to leave, and after final packing, checking, breakfast and doing the dishes, the rain had stopped. But the skies were still grey.

After a small misunderstanding with the marina, we left our tinnie tied up to the dock, (and a key with management just in case they wanted to move it), and drove away, heading to Rockhampton about 10 minutes later than preferred. There are road works on the way to Rockhampton, a good 20 kilometres or so of them (a guess), and there are three sets of lights to get through along with reduced speeds. Fortunately we managed to only have to wait for one set which meant our arrival at the cafe where we were to catch up with Andrew's former skipper was only five minutes late. Like our catch-up with friends in Hobart, Tasmania, on 10<sup>th</sup> April (as at 9<sup>th</sup> June that section of our Tassie Trip has not been written up) this catch-up was just a coincidence; Andrew's skipper giving us a call to see where we were (he is based in Victoria) just as both he and we were going to be in Rockhampton the next morning.

After a bit of a gossip it was time for us to head off. We still had around 200 kilometres to drive and didn't really want to drag the day out too much...we had got out of bed early. The section of the Capricorn Highway between Rockhampton to Emerald is completely new to us so I made sure I concentrated on the scenery. The land is very dry. And in some cases has minimal trees where the farmers have flattened them (one paddock full of these dead grey sentinels all lined up facing the way they'd fallen). When you leave Rockhampton the land is generally flat, seemingly the wide base of a valley edged by occasional large sandstone mounts. But as you travel west the land starts to subtly undulate, enough by Stanwell that I got a partially obscured view of the Stanwell Power Station as we passed. Eventually, you realise that you are increasing in elevation and find yourself in the 'Central Highlands'. Last time we were in somewhere called the 'Central Highlands' (in February) we were in Tassie. And going by the overnight forecast, it might just about be as cold. With the Arctic blast coming up overnight temperatures tonight were forecast to be around 3 degrees! But surely that can't be correct, this is Queensland!

The country here however is quite different to Tassie. It is dry, has scattered trees where none have been brought down, and here the skies



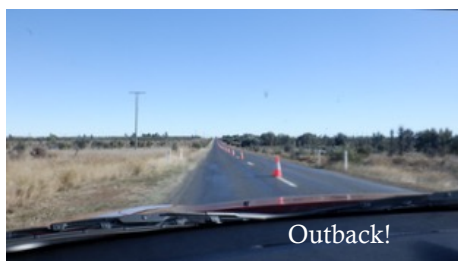
were sunny and blue. It felt hot out of the wind although the hire vehicle indicated only 21 degrees outside. As the average temperatures across the state for a few days are dropping by about 8 degrees, this would normally be, for me, a slightly uncomfortable place.

We only made one stop on the way to our destination, stretching the legs at Durling and having a lively chat to a very enthusiastic Info Centre attendee. We made Blackwater, our base, just before 1400 and apart from a short drive around town and getting food supplies at the Woolworths, we settled in for a relaxing afternoon. The room is not big, a bit noisy as it is on the main road, but does have a queen size bed (a preference for Andrew) and a television, which, when Andrew found the full replay of last weekend's Azerbaijan F1 motor race, was where he spent the rest of the afternoon. Under normal circumstances I would have gone for a walk but the wind was reasonably strong and it was cold so it would not have been a pleasant activity.

The 'kitchenette' consists of an electric frypan and a microwave, the latter of which I managed to use without the need to send out the fire brigade (another Tassie story that isn't written up).

I went to bed early, around 2100





## A Drive Around the Country

10th June 2021. I got up at around 0630. There was movement outside - mine workers chatting and then getting into their cars to head to site; the reversing noise from their vehicles sounding like asthmatic giant insects! At about this time weather observations at the Blackwater Airport read -2 degrees: perhaps this area is more like the Tassie Central Highlands than we thought! (I will note we spent one night in a tent at Roma showground many years ago and that got down to minus 3! That was a cold night!).

Opening the front door at 0730 and sticking my nose out didn't last long. It was still very cold. 2 degrees. Feels like - 2.4. Or so the observations listed. Andrew got up at around this time. The bed was reasonably comfortable and the room surprisingly warm. We did have the drapes pulled but we hadn't had the heater on. The beds are made with only one sheet and I did have the quilt from the cupboard on as extra and an extra blanket as standby, but neither was needed.

Today didn't quite work out as we had planned. The idea was to head north up one of the tourist drive routes via Bedford Weir, and then head south via Springsure and have a look around there. We found Bedford Weir but because we were coming from the middle of the Drive (technically it started from Emerald) we didn't click (I didn't click) that we'd passed the correct left hand turn off to get back to Capricornia Highway until sometime after the event, when I read the description and realised the road names matched. Because we were on a bitumen road we decided to keep going rather than turn back and head down what we knew was, at least at this end, a dirt road. I had tried to purchase a road map where we had filled up for fuel this morning at the servo but there was not a navigation item to be seen! I had also asked at the Info Centre when we briefly dropped in, if they had any more detailed descriptions of the tourist drives listed on their tourists maps. They didn't. The current map was due to be replaced. 'Typical of us to get the last iteration; the non-updated version. The tourist map was marked with thick lines indicating the routes. They weren't always perfectly accurate!



So finding ourselves at a road junction in the 'middle of nowhere' we stopped. A small sign indicated Capella down the obvious dirt road. We only assumed where we were, and a local worker stopped to give us instructions, and according to our rudimentary tourist map, he also assumed where we were. We turned left, even though it turned out we had accurately guessed our location, and going north would have meant a shorter stretch of dirt before bitumen, and a chance to see another body of dammed water. As it was however we saw a small mob of 'roos and a magnificent wedge tailed eagle feeding on the side of the road - but fortunately far enough off it not to be in danger of getting hit by traffic, which was chortling along at high speeds



Bedford Weir



on this gravel road .We drove around the historic site of Lilyvale but didn't get out of the vehicle (nothing there but a few memorials) before finding ourselves in the township of Capella. Where I could finally get a road map! We had lunch by the Capella Creek, which is purported to have 120 bird species listed but as we couldn't see a suitable path to follow we didn't go looking for them. Given that we were now close to 200 kilometres north of where we had expected to be at lunch time we thought exploring locally around this district was the better way to go: there are some prominent rock formations (Peak Hills) rising out of the flattish country to the north east. There is no acknowledgement of who created them but in the Newsagent (cum Hardware Store etc) we found four leaflets, each a different colour, describing four self-drive tourist routes from Capella. That is more like it! 'Detailed directions with a brief bit of history thrown in! We chose Route 4: 144 kilometres that took us to the base of Lords Table National Park. By the time we got back to Capella it was mid afternoon. By the time we got back to our accommodation at Blackwater it was just about dark, the sun having gone over the horizon to the west after highlighting the purple Dawson ranges to the south east as we came into town.

#### Bird list

Kookaburra

Magpie

Mudlark

Crow

Apostle birds

Rainbow bee eater

Pied butcherbird

Indian miners

flying across road

Sulphur Crested

Blue and yellow parrot

Wedgetailed eagle

Whistling kite

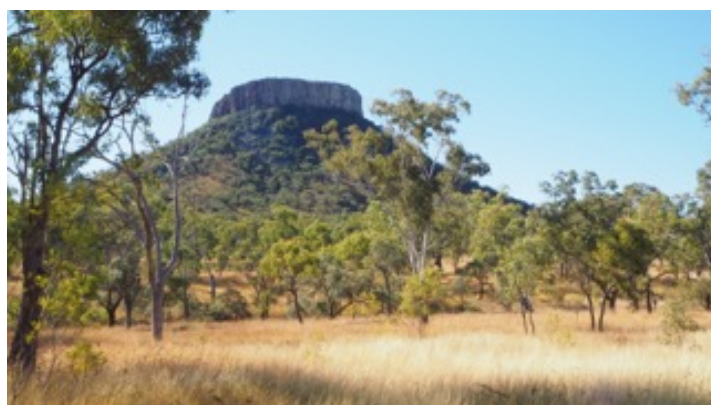
Black kite

Australian kestrel

Falcons?

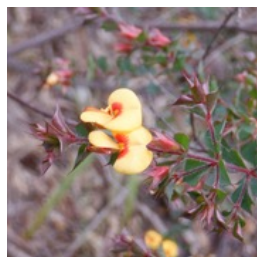
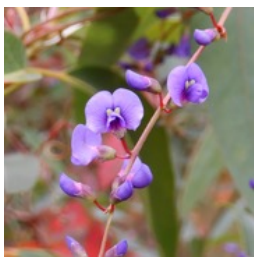
Heard at wier

Small birds



Peak Hills lookout south of Capella





## Blackdown Tableland National Park Goon Goon Dina

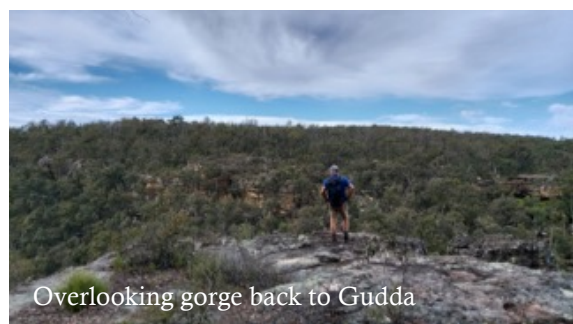
11th June 2021. I got up at around 0600, Andrew got up after 0700. Today's drive was short compared with yesterday but I didn't want to leave too late. We were heading to Blackdown Tableland National Park for some bushwalking. It was however, close to 0900 when we finally left the service station next door. (We had intended to fill up with fuel last evening as we got back to save some time this morning, but the service station had been full of mine vehicles).

There are five walks at Blackland Tableland National Park but given the time, and the season, there was no way we were going to be able to complete them all today. We managed three.

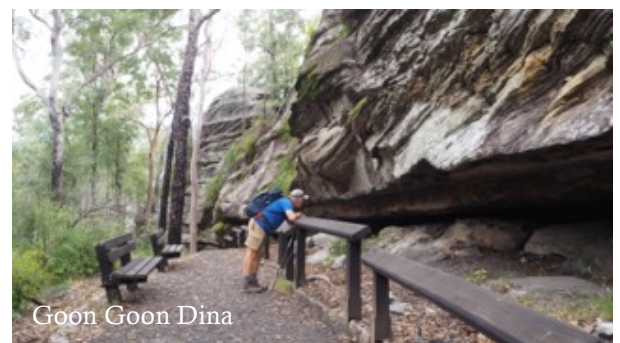
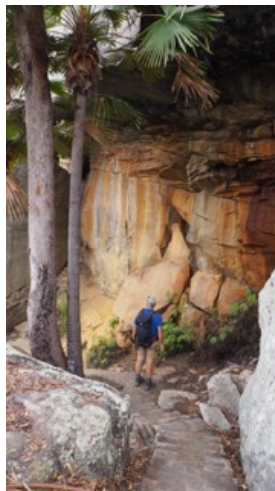
We started with the walk the furthest away from the park entrance, and the 'hardest' to get to as 4wd's are recommended. The track however was dry and our hire car has a slightly higher clearance than your basic sedan, so careful driving meant we reached the car park of the Gudda Gumoo with no issues. The walk from here to the falls is all downhill, although not particularly steep until you get to the last bit, which you are warned about, of 240 stairs. Going down wasn't so hard: but coming up made me feel my lungs were bursting. We made the up in about 6 minutes! The walk is listed as 2 hours but by the time we stopped down the bottom for a nibble (accosted by a pied currawong), and had a look at an area at the top of the falls, it was 2 hours 20 minutes by the time we got back to the car.

For lunch we drove back to Mynall Campground and borrowed Site 8 to eat our lunch before we totted off for the Goon Goon Dina walk. This walk isn't to the escarpment edge, but inland, passing evidence of European pastoral occupation and Aboriginal occupation with some cave paintings. It was 1500 by the time got back to the car and too late really for a third walk but as we stopped at the flushing toilet on the way out we thought we could afford the 100m each way stroll to the escarpment edge.

We were back in the hotel room for a relaxing late afternoon











## Time for a paddle

12<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The idea was to leave around 0800 to 0830 but it was again around 0900 when we got on the road.

We had been told that Lake Theresa was a lovely spot but that was south of Clermont and not on the main road, over 200 kilometres away and far too far for a road day trip. Bedford Weir was only 26 kilometres away and full but we had seen the end of it and we weren't all that sure it was long enough to give us a day's activity. So we headed for Lake Maraboon, south of Emerald, instead. It was still a fair way away and it was 1030 before we were setting up the kayak.

The actual inflation of the kayak only took around ten minutes. It was the installation of the rudder system that took the time. It was the first time Andrew had installed it and there was a fair bit of swearing going on. Once we had got the rudder and associated components in place (as per the video on the internet) it still didn't seem right and wasn't moving smoothly. Andrew temporarily gave up and we finally got out on the water.

Lake Maraboon is a very large stocked dam (according to interps we had seen previously it is three times the size of 'Sydney Harbour'. I can't remember if that is volume or area, and let's not go into my thoughts on calling 'Port Jackson', 'Sydney Harbour'). Lake Maraboon is also at the moment less than 18 per cent full, so there is a lot of 'bank'. It has clearly been low for some time as young eucalypts are growing near the water's edge where there is vegetation. There are a few low islands scattered around and the birdlife was utilising these; clearly they would not be exposed with the storage dam at full capacity. We saw teals, little black cormorants, great cormorants, pacific black ducks, great egrets, intermediate egrets, silver gulls, Caspian terns, other terns, lapwings and a plover. The bird 'spot' was however several groups of brolgas; two threatening to dance for us but after a couple of jumps they stopped.



We had lunch on a soft bit of ground on a point, where Andrew had a look at the rudder and turned it upside down. It seemed to work better on the way back. We got back to boat around 1500, and had packed up and were heading back to base at 1530. We got back to the hotel, after a shop and a fuel up, at 1700.



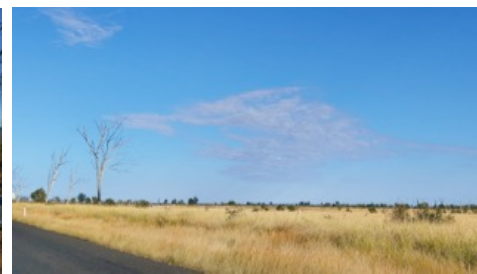




Blackwater Mine



Opposite Blackwater Mine



## A long drive and a couple of short walks

13th June 2021. Today was a day we dedicated to exploring, not exercise, and we left the hotel car park at 0750 heading south on the Rolleston Road. Unfortunately it was too early to see any detail on the rocky Blackdown Tableland/Dawson Range escapement – the sun was in the wrong direction and the afternoon sun would probably bring out the full glory on this piece of geological wonder. This Range is present for around three quarters of the distance to Rolleston and makes for a delightful easterly view for this drive. We had with us a tourist map which we think has some age on it because according to the legend, most of this road should be dirt – it was however bituminised for the entire length.

The first section of this road was busy, and we were passed by several cars heading to work. Admittedly as I was driving today, I probably wasn't doing the speed limit – but I wasn't much off it, however clearly the local mine workers couldn't wait! Where the road made a sharp left hand curve, opposite the mine entrance, we noted a medium sized kangaroo on the corner. He was lucky he was stationary – a collision with a car with that size animal would not be good news for either party.

Past the large open cut Blackwater Mine we noted many birds of prey, both flying and perched; wedge tailed eagles, falcons, black kites and kestrels – this is the greatest concentration of birds of prey we'd seen for a while. As the county is fairly dry we wondered whether there was an explosion in rodents to support this raptor population....

And then it was confirmed. Pulling into Rolleston we stopped at the local park. Here there is a hot drink caravan; a local who is here on weekends and holidays. We spoke to several tourists, all caravan/camper based, and not only did we get a history of the local and NSW rodent problem over the past few years of drought, but a current account, where one couple were battling with a stow-away rodent in their 4wheel drive. Whilst the female half of this couple continued chatting to the coffee proprietress, the male went off to see if he could evict the unwanted guest. I wondered at the environmental responsibility of this – would you not just potentially be starting another mouse plague?

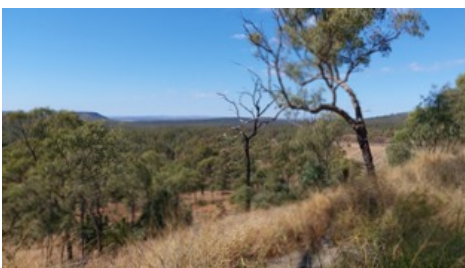
The park at Rolleston has a couple of historic buildings with some interps information in them. There is also, next to the park, a



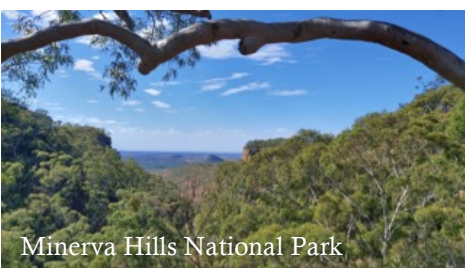
Staircase Pass



Staircase Pass



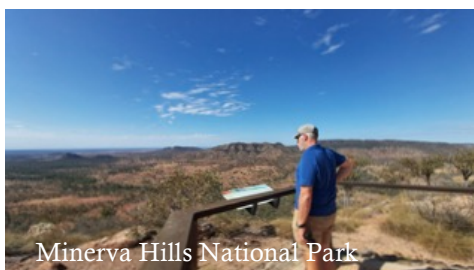
Minerva Hills National Park



Minerva Hills National Park

fabulous looking historic house. Whilst the house is in private hands, it has been renovated, and

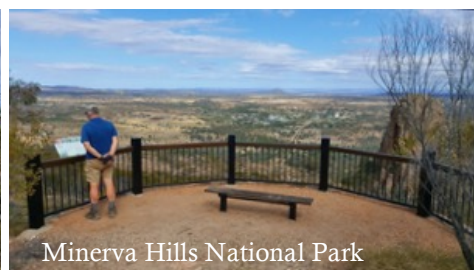




Minerva Hills National Park



Minerva Hills National Park

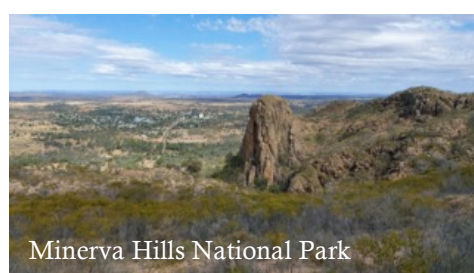


Minerva Hills National Park

the write-up of this and the young family that live in it (young at the time of the article) is in a compendium in the old post office (one of the historic buildings on site).

From Rolleston to Springsure we stopped first at a lookout over looking and highlighting some of the Bluegrass Downs Grassland area, and then at Staircase Pass, where the original road through the range was built by Chinese labour (slaves?). We didn't stop at Springsure township before heading to Minerva Hills National Park. Depending on which tourist brochure or website you read, there are two tracks in Minerva Hills National Park that require a 4wd; other roads are listed as suitable for All Wheel Drives in good weather. Whilst in the National Park there was only one track that gave the 4wd sign at the start of it, we avoided both tracks just in case – we were in a SUV hire car after all. The main lookout picnic area has two tables under a shelter, a toilet and a lovely view at Freds Gorge. The modern interps board has been sponsored by the mining community. From here there are two lookouts to explore, one at a car park and one at the end of a short walk, where the highlight was being buzzed by a striated pardalote. All roads in the park are dirt, and the main one a bit rough – if we had had the usual 'smallest car' we can get as a hire vehicle we wouldn't have been able to traverse these tracks. The park is small with no camping – but it is very pretty - in a dry, outback sort of a way.

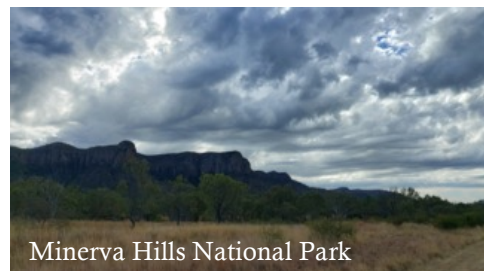
In the hope of perhaps an afternoon cuppa in town before we headed back, we headed into Springsure. But it was Sunday and nothing was open, and we left town empty handed and drove the 150 (ish) kilometres to get back to base. It was late afternoon but not too late to potentially get a good photo of the local Blackdown range in the dying light. There was a great view in evening light of this range several days ago – the whole range was purple – but we'd seen these colours as we'd been coming into town on the road with nowhere to pull over and take advantage of the view. Tonight I tried for a closer shot, firstly from the township side of the railway line and then, seeing there was a road on the other side, I crossed over the track and turned left in the hope to get a good position – and came across a big 'No Unauthorised Access' sign. I am sure if I'd rung the mine with a request to access for a photo there would have been no problem – but it was too late to do that for tonight – and tomorrow night we'd be back on boat! Next time!



Minerva Hills National Park



Minerva Hills National Park



Minerva Hills National Park



Botanic Gardens Emerald – quick stop on way to base



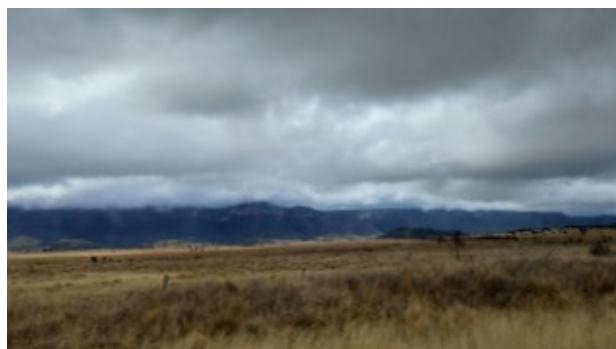
Art on side of main road!





## Back to the big boat

14<sup>th</sup> June 2021. I woke up to the Aurizon workers leaving just past 0600. It started raining after that. By the time we left, the rain was down to an almost non-existent drizzle. Our morning touro activity was the museum at the Blackwater International Coal Centre. We had been warned that some of the audio-visual items were not working. Unfortunately the 'some' turned out to be 'most.' Add to this some interps that was too small, or too dark, or not lit up enough, and it wasn't the best experience. There were notices in the space that thanked everyone who had given feedback and the museum was being redone, but clearly that work hadn't yet come through. After cuppa it was time to start heading back to Gladstone. We took the same road out of Blackwater that we had taken yesterday, although the hope of seeing sun on the escarpment of the Dawson Range because of the later hour was dashed, as for a long time with the cloud so low you couldn't see the range at all.



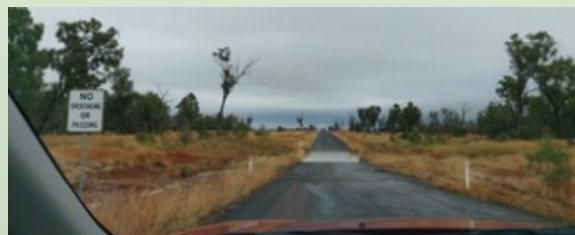
The trip back was in the rain on and off. It had been raining on and off since last night and it was making an appearance in the county side. Dry river crossings on the Rolleston Road south were no longer dry, some raging frothy dirty water and threatening to topple over the fords crossing the bitumen. We stopped at Bauhinia for a toilet stop, managing to convince a local to let me into the local hall – he was doing a job there. He did note there was a fuel stop on the main road (the only thing in town) but it looked a bit scary, and the two individuals outside were having a shouting conversation where every second word was 'f\*\*k'. Not very inviting.

Lunch was at Moura at a free camp by the Dawson River. There was plenty of water in the Dawson – dirty admittedly but had we had our holiday based

around Plan A, then we could have gone paddling on this waterway. We were still an hour out of Calliope (between Biloela and Calliope) when Budget rang us, wanting to know where the car was? What! It was due back at lunchtime today, the caller on the other end of the phone told me. Well, no – it wasn't. We hired it on the 1<sup>st</sup> for a week. Then we extended it for a week – that makes a drop back on Tuesday; tomorrow. The woman on the other end of the phone threatened that an extension to tomorrow would be our last one. It shouldn't be an extension – it is not our fault that whoever took the extension phone call can't count. It wasn't the relaxing end to the holiday that we'd hoped for.

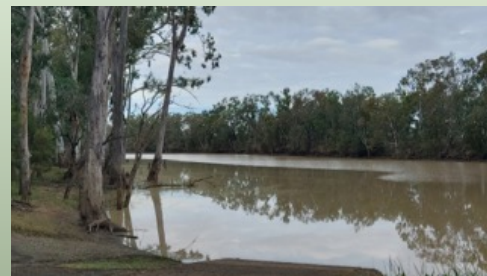
I had had a text from a friend in the morning saying it had hailed at Gladstone. The tinnie had been tied to the dock since we had left a week ago, but we weren't too worried, the forecast was for up to 6mm. By the time we got back however, Gladstone had had 47.6mm rain in the previous 18 hours. The tinnie was on a distinct angle to the back and significantly full of water. Getting the water out was made considerably easier by borrowing *Social Platform's* hand pump.

We got one run of stuff back on boat from the car before we headed off to get dinner. The sun was going down by the time we got back to boat from Woollies with a hot chook and salad.



Approaching water on the Rolleston road. All creeks and most waterways we'd seen over the past week had been dry or a series of small struggling puddles.

Picnic area on the banks of the Dawson River. The board at the boat ramp includes information on the six species of tortoise/turtle that are found here.







A bit of a clean before departure

1600. This area is renowned for its midgies but despite little wind I didn't start feeling them until around 1730 and twilight. And then it was completely uncomfortable!



Graham Creek



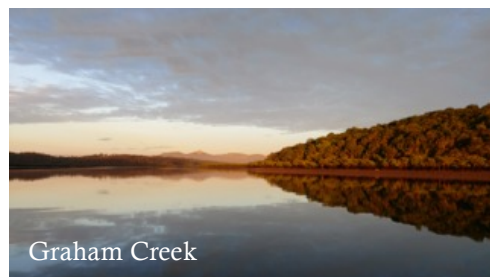
Graham Creek

## Leaving Gladstone

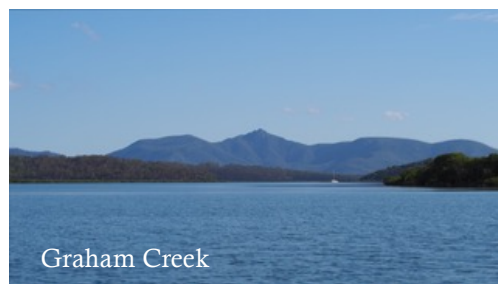
### Graham Creek

15<sup>th</sup> June 2021. It was an overcast morning but the rain was hopefully yesterday's news. We had breakfast before heading to shore for the two trips needed to get the rest of our holiday gear out of the vehicle. Then it was a trip to Woolworths to do a large shop, before taking a breath over lunch. We eventually dropped the car off and after sorting out the bill (the accounting program was charging us too much), we headed back to boat for a final diesel and gas run. After giving 'M' a 'rain check' on sundowners tonight to hopefully another opportunity further up the coast, we headed off. The mooring was dropped around 1430 or thereabouts. We were anchored in Graham Creek by

16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Our original idea had been to head through The Narrows on the 16<sup>th</sup> but on said morning decided, looking at the weather, we would stick around a couple of extra days. There was initially no extra boats around – although one powerboat did pass us and anchor further up the Creek, and a couple of fishing tinnies passed, but essentially we had the anchorage to ourselves. Well ourselves and a few midgies! Calm mornings and evenings presented us with tranquil views; the ones to the west with the all-impressive Mount Larcom.

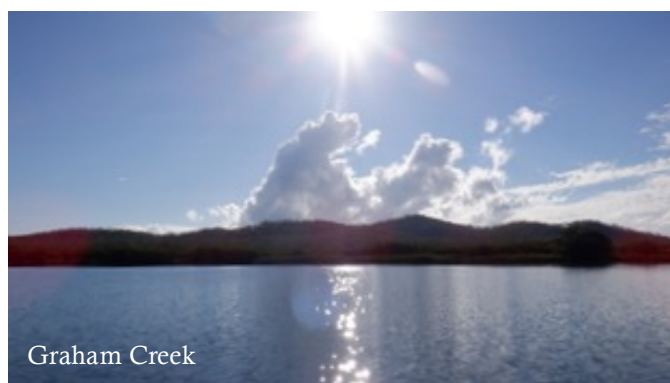
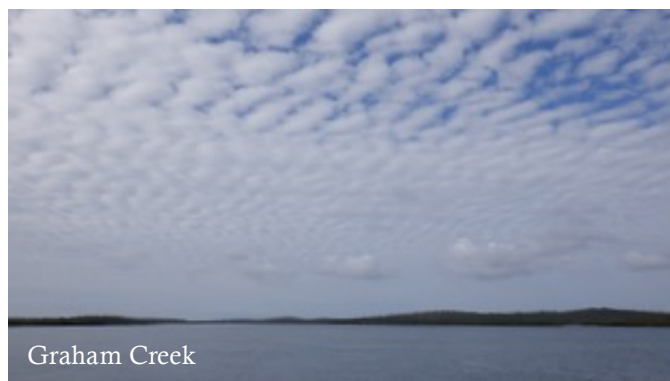
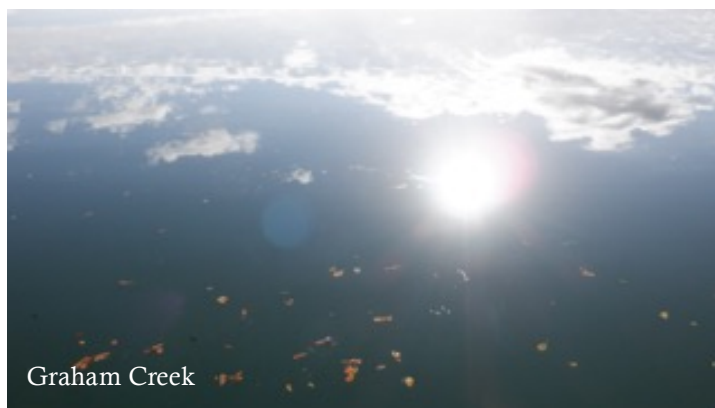
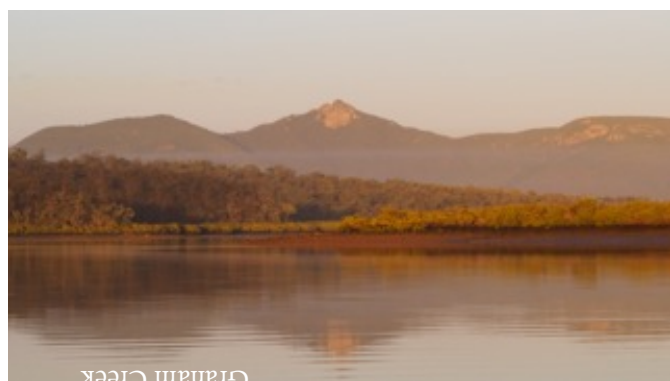


Graham Creek



Graham Creek

We spent both days relaxing, cleaning up, reading, and putting stuff away. We did make one small excursion up the adjacent inlet arm in the tinnie, but there is still plenty left to explore here next time we pass through.

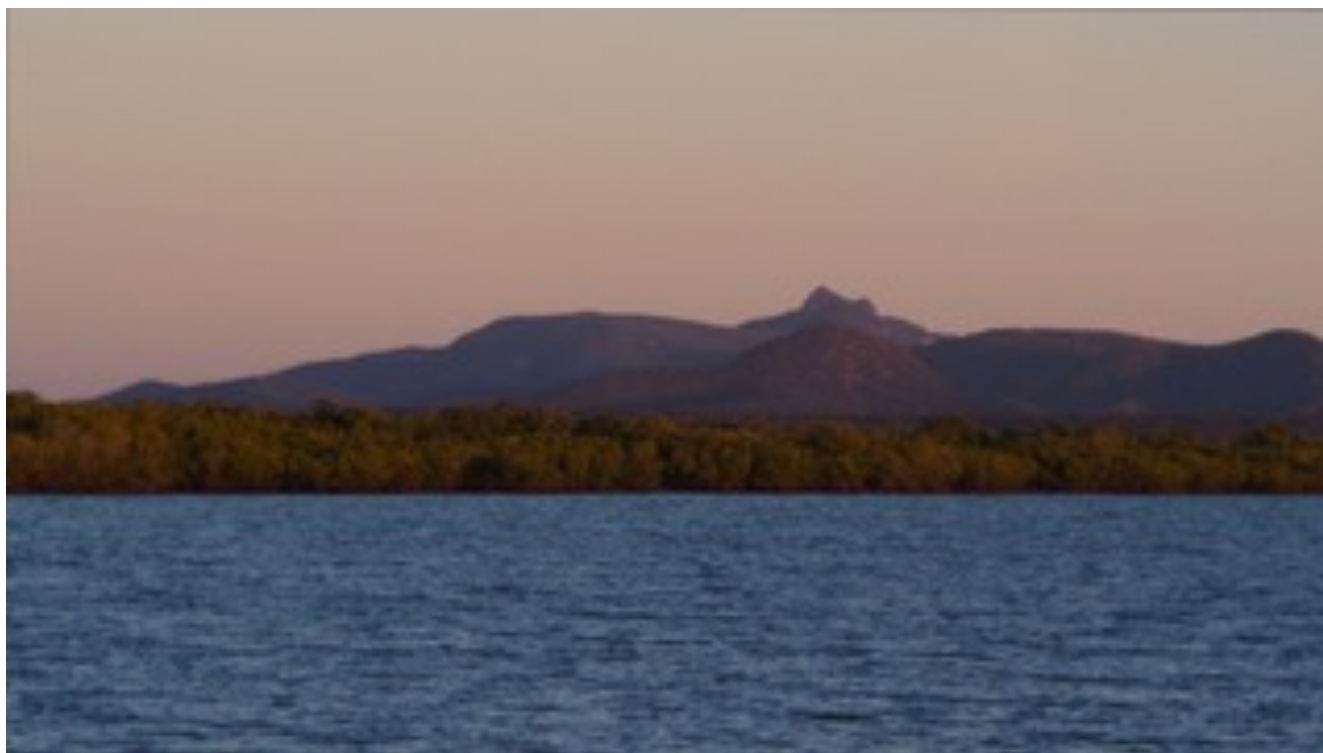




## Through The Narrows

18<sup>th</sup> June 2021. Because of the time of today's high tide, departure from Graham Creek was always going to be an afternoon exercise. So the morning was spent on practical things: putting the now fully dried mooring lines away, washing towels, putting vinyl covers away, put tinnie seats away, making stock and sending an enquiry email to our current insurer. We'd received an email a few days ago from a contact at the company we didn't know, asking questions where the answers are already on file. I wasn't all that impressed at being shuffled around like a deck of cards with no warning, so sent an email back asking amongst other things, for the background of the current contact and why we'd been swapped. It was a bit terse, but then again so was I. Insurance is generally money for jam when it comes to us so you would think we'd be treated with a bit more care. Having got that out of my system I prepared to leave the anchorage.

The anchor was up at 1320 and we turned right toward The Narrows leaving Gladstone to our south at 1340. When we turned around the corner we saw that two other boats were ahead of us. It was unclear if they'd been anchored and waiting for the tide, or whether they had travelled straight up from further south. We ended up overtaking them, one after the other, the first one - which had got a bit too close to the shallow stuff, and sometime later, the second one that was waiting for the first. We managed to get through The Narrows with 0.00 on the depth gauge for a while, but we have a smidge of leeway so most of that time there was constant movement. We did touch very briefly on one keel but slid over within a second. We hit high tide at Ramsays Crossing (or thereabouts) and we were through. We anchored in Deception Creek for first time and had it, and its northerly view, to ourselves until we were joined by one of the other boats that had travelled through The Narrows with us. To the south we had a slightly interrupted view of Mt Larcom. I could say the mountain is haunting us – but I don't mind – I find something about that particular geologic feature quite majestic.

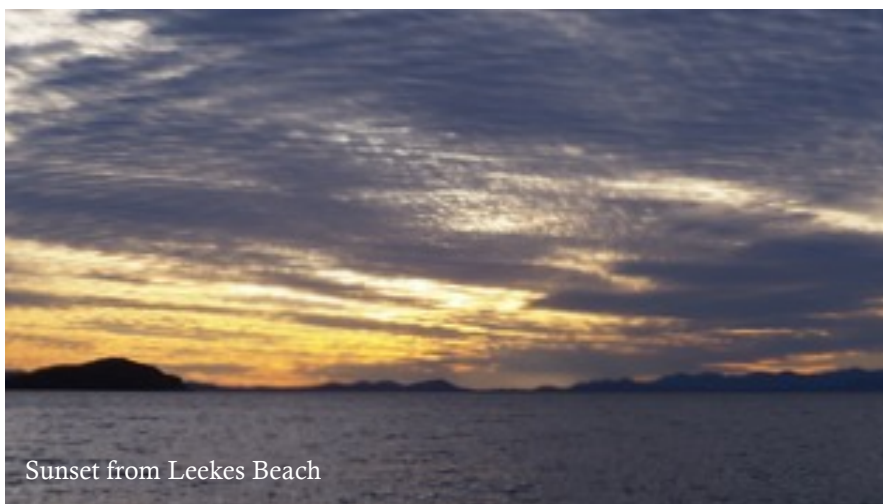




## Great Keppel Island

19th June 2021. The anchor was up at 0735 but the wind was very light. So we motored north and it wasn't until we were just off Pacific Creek, five nm later that Andrew started setting up to sail. The spinnaker was up at 0835 and the engines off at 0840. We had a lovely smooth sail – true wind speed from 9 knots to briefly gusting to 20 knots. As we were approaching our anchorage we had contemplated sailing with spinnaker though the gap between Middle Island and Great Keppel Island - but as the wind speed was increasing we took caution as the better part of valour and dropped the spinnaker whilst we were still off Fisherman's Beach. We were anchored in Leekes Beach around 1130, a lot earlier than we'd expected. A 5-knot average would have meant a 5 to 6 hour trip. But we were running at over 6 knots - sometimes 7's, so we arrived at the Leekes Beach anchorage four hours after we started.

After lunch we were delightfully reunited with *Anapa* enjoying a vey relaxing cuppa with them and contemplating the plans for our coming cruising season.



Sunset from Leekes Beach





## Walk to Fisherman's Beach

20th June 2021. We hadn't been off boat for some days and I, at least, was desperate for a walk. Having not anchored here for some years we had to work out where the track inland was from mid beach and anchored the tinnie near its exit.

This track along the western side of the lagoon in quite fiat (ish) until you turn onto the main track (old road) and head west toward the resort. Then it is a definite up. We hadn't bought our walking sticks and whilst I did puff a bit, the sticks would have made the traverse easier. We passed the turn to Mount Wyndham on the left and then the dilapidated structure near Lookout 1 on the right before descending. We took the foot track, not the broken road, although both routes require you to be careful of where you put your feet. Lunch was at Tropical Vibe at Fisherman's Beach – our 'go to' establishment here – I think we were turned off the service given by the backpackers at the resort last year. We returned to Leekes Beach via the resort and the track over the headland, and the beach.





## Mount Wyndham

21st June 2021. We got up early, around 0630. My first task of the day was to make pumpkin soup, primarily to get rid of some of the stock that I had made. Around 0900 we made our way to shore and headed inland. We happen to hook up temporarily with another yachty until we turned left up the path to Mount Wyndham and he continued to the resort - brave fellow - he was doing this walk in thongs!

The vegetation on this side of the peak was dryish tropical scrub, eucalyptus (or eucalyptus-looking trees) with xanthorias as undergrowth. The sign had warned us - Steep Grade, it read. And it was. Fortunately we made it without too many deep breaths or stops. A couple of years ago we would have been reticent to try this walk, but after Tassie we are more confident, and unlike our ascent on Mount Larcom three weeks ago, we have at least had some recent training. The views to Leekes Beach on the north and Long Beach on the south were filtered and not photo worthy but we admired clearer views of other directions from several spots along the way.

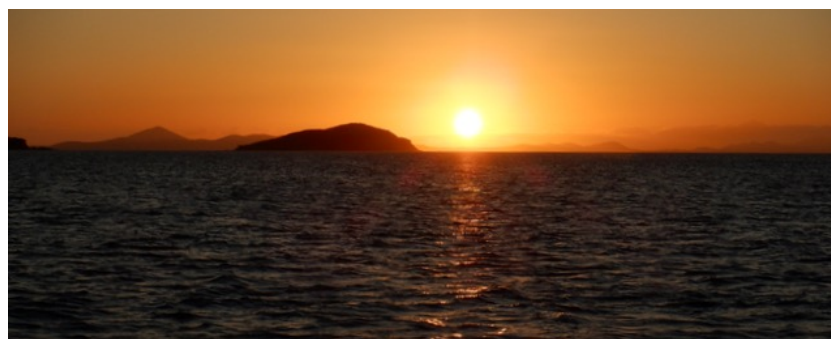
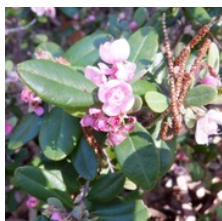
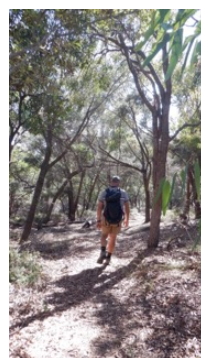
The sign stating Mount Wyndham is one that has been there a long time. Two posts stand forlornly with the written panel resting on them on the ground. After a rest and an apple we started the ascent continuing along a circuit track. This side of the mountain was more exposed, the dominant vegetation here stunted acacias, most in, or trying to be in, flower. Dropping down we entered forest dominated by casuarinas and eucalypts before emerging near the weed infested (and goat occupied) paddock of the old homestead. Turning finally back to the track back to Leekes Beach we encountered a lost day visitor and a shuffling echidna. We were back aboard Sengo around 1200. I didn't do much for the rest of the day; washed four shirts and read a bit. Lunch was crackers and boiled eggs. Dinner, unsurprisingly, was pumpkin soup



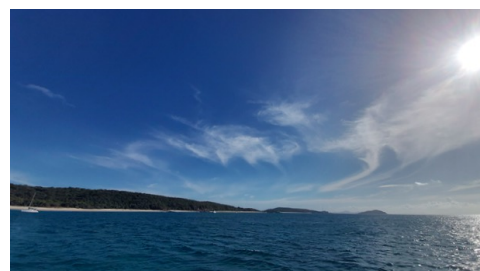




At top of Mount Wyndham



22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021 A day of strong winds and we stayed on boat. The only thing of note today was getting a shopping list across to *Anapa* so they could pick up some fresh vegies for us.





## Fishermans Beach

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021. We moved after breakfast to Fisherman's Beach as the swell was getting a little uncomfortable where we were. As it was the time of the full moon however, and therefore the tides were high, we couldn't move in as close to the beach as we would have preferred, and anchored with all the monohulls in a line between the two moored tourist boats. The only cat further in was a Wharam. Later in the day a couple of cats managed to anchor in line of us but most were further out.

I had hoped for a walk but the wind didn't die down too much, and so I had to be content with a small evening yoga session instead.

Dinner was a couple of cliff bars as Andrew lost all interest in cooking after spilling a container of stock, which not only spread over the bench top and the floor, but down the side of the oven as well, initiating the fiddly job of moving it out of its posy so the mess could be cleaned up. I didn't do much during the day, a bit of reading, and a bit of washing.







24<sup>th</sup> June 2021. I was up at around 0730. My first job, when it got light enough to see the yellow chalk marks, was to cut out the mock up for the helm seat cover.

After doing yesterdays (and this morning's breakfast) dishes we headed to shore for a morning walk

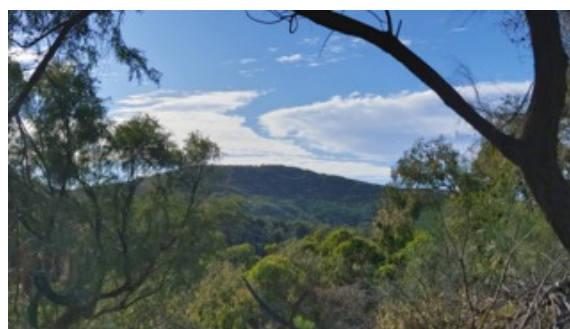
High tide was listed at 0830. We got to the beach just after this and waited some time to ensure the water was going out before we left tinnie...we didn't particularly want to drag it further up beach

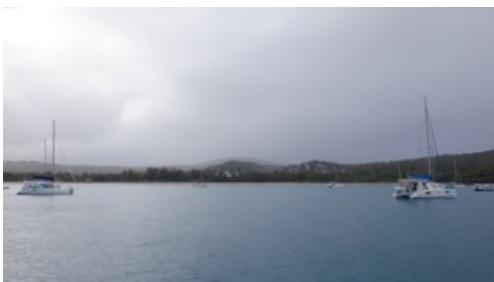
By the time we actually started our walk it was 0855. We took the track that lead to the middle of Long Beach. Long Beach was deserted and only one boat was in the anchorage, a monohull, and despite the side on wind and swell, it looked not to be rolling too much. We took the coast track back via Monkey Beach where we stopped for an apple break. There was one couple on beach when we arrived, and four more people when we left, and soon to be more as the morning ferry had arrived and we passed small groups of day trippers as we traversed the up and down track back to Fishermans beach.

After lunch I inflated the paddleboards. They felt stiff at 7 but they have an operating range of 15 to 22 psi so I had to keep going. The last few psi were a struggle. It was too late to go boarding today but I hoped for a paddle tomorrow morning

We caught up with *Anapa* in the afternoon - they had very generously picked up a few groceries on the mainland for us.

In the evening I listened to 3/4 of an AFL footy match – I turned off in disgust as Geelong was 49 points behind!.





25<sup>th</sup> June 2021. The forecast today was for little wind so the idea originally was to go for a paddleboard after breakfast, but when I got up it was grey and not inspiring, and it did eventually start to drizzle. The weather did clear up enough however for us to get to shore for a short beach walk and lunch at Tropical Vibe with *Anapa*.

Jobs for the day included: Clearing and vacuuming the plastic container hold, and putting only those back that had lids; Project Blue (new helm seat); and had a chat to another boat about insurance. That that inspired me to prompt Andrew into ringing a second broker for a quote (but because of the timing however we won't get an answer back by the end of today. To ensure we can converse on Monday we are staying at GKI for the coming rough weather rather than moving up to slightly move protected Port Clinton). I also checked the weather before going to bed. All seemed calm except for one little rough anomaly overnight - I might get a paddle in tomorrow after all!

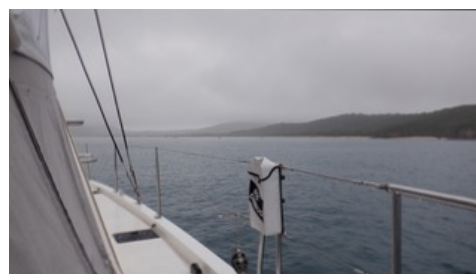
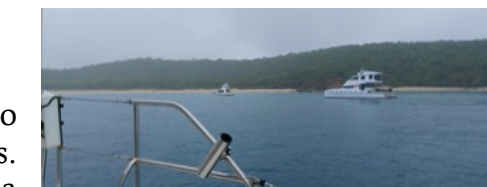


Project Blue mock up

## Back to Leekes Beach

26<sup>th</sup> June 2021. I awoke to beautifully flat and glass seas. Perfect conditions for a paddleboard. But no sun. Cloud grey, and low hovering over GKI's hills and shortly after I got up, it rained. And it didn't stop, in one form or another - light mist to steady showers, for almost 24 hours. Conditions were not conducive to get off boat and I resigned myself to maybe the first paddle of the season is going to be further up the coast, off shore of course, away from any crocodiles.

There was more precipitation in Leekes Beach just around the corner and we had to move there for the coming strong southerlies. So at 0845 we lifted anchor and hopped through the channel and just around the corner. Normally we would tuck in as far as possible to the bottom curve of the bay but we stayed near the western end so a visit to *Anapa* was more convenient. There were two other boats here apart from *Anapa*; a catamaran we sailed on in Airlie Beach Race Week 6 years ago (but now with new owners we haven't met), and two monohulls. By dark there were quite a few more, including one large powerboat that had anchored inshore of us. Really. Given what's coming, does he think anchoring between us and the wind is sensible. Clearly he doesn't care, if he drags we will be the ones in the firing line. With predicted gusts in the mid thirties it is quite frankly a stress I don't need.



The job for the day was Project Blue. It was a project I figured I was going to be doing over the upcoming strong winds but as the gear was out and I was set up on the back table (the biggest one we have got) I thought finishing it today was a) more efficient than moving everything inside and b) necessary as we needed to table to get the paddle boards out of the weather...they had ridden up on the tramp last night in 23 plus knots. Where would they end up in over 30! Fortunately I had had them tied on, but not strapped down.



Project Blue





27<sup>th</sup> June 2021. We got up late. 'Really late for us - around 0830. Outside was overcast and chilly although the wind speed was doable. More boats had arrived in the anchorage yesterday afternoon but they were spread, to a large extent, along the entire length of Leekes Beach. We were at the western end of the flotilla, and the extreme west boat at some wind angles in the evening after two catamarans departed. In fact several boats departed during the day, as would have we if plan A had come to fruition. But instead of heading to Port Clinton today, we were waiting around Great Keppel Island where we summised after reading sailors reviews that we would have better phone reception, in this case necessary in order to organise our annual boat insurance.

The wind started picking up around 0845 and the rain started in earnest at 0915. It wasn't drenching rain, nor was it even pouring rain. For the most part of the day it was steady light to medium rain, with a cold wind, and whilst we saw some on the beach and some drifting visiting in tenders between boats, the conditions weren't conducive to temp us off Sengo.

This of course means I got no off boat exercise and managed to get half a yoga session in before bed to align my back.

I didn't do much all day, the first half spent educational reading, the second half recreational reading. Breakfast was at 0930 - pancakes, lunch at around 1430 - pasta salad, and dinner was tofu and broccoli.

28th June 2021. Sun! The sun was up when we pulled ourselves out of bed at 0710. But so was the wind! Some fierce souls had got themselves to shore for a walk on the beach but instead I scheduled with Andrew a morning yoga session. The sky wasn't exactly clear, stratus occupied at least half of it and we couldn't see some of the mainland, but the predicted rain for the day was 10pc chance and the sky wasn't threatening.

A dolphin swam by just off the back step, which was lovely, but it didn't stick around for me to work out which species it was.

I spent day reading a bit, and spent afternoon and evening scrutinising details of some proposed insurance

We made a quick visit to *Anapa* in the morning before it got windy. The anchorage at this end had cleared out, maybe because it had become a bit rolly - but it wasn't exceedingly uncomfortable. We did see over 30 knots on the gauges.



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### Insurance

29<sup>th</sup> June 2021. What can I say? I spent most of the day going through proposed insurance details. By the end of the day my eyes were tired but I wanted something else to focus my brain on – a bit of recreational reading before bed.





## Fisherman's Beach

30<sup>th</sup> June 2021. We moved back to Fisherman's Beach this morning after breakfast, which was earlier than our initial estimation of an afternoon move. The anchor was down at around 0930. There were two other non-local boats in the bay – one who we'd followed around. We could have tucked in close but we didn't want less than 0.5 metres under our keel at low tide today – although the wind conditions weren't threatening any swell.

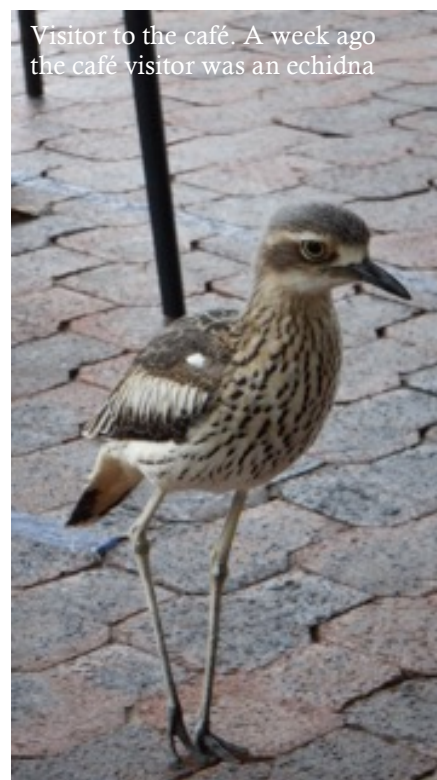
At around 1130 we headed to shore and a beach walk and lunch with *Anapa* before heading off on our own for a slightly longer jaunt. We took the middle access to Long Beach and came back the track via Morris' Lookout. From leaving the beach to getting back to the beach at Fishemans – in a slightly different spot, we took 1.5 hours. We were back on boat around 1500.

We finally heard back from one insurance broker this afternoon, the one we'd hung around Great Keppel Island for, with the explanation the product he was' talking to' couldn't abide by changes that would suit us. So why had he offered us the product in the first place?

We had been recommended to this broker through another boat, because this broker had found a product that suited their lifestyle. Their lifestyle is the same as ours, yet the broker recommended a different product. We queried this and he was going to chase up further up the management tree. In the mean time the broker sent the pds of the product he recommended (I can tell you your brain becomes quite numb after reading several insurance company pds's in one day) for us to consider. There were several clauses that simply did not cover us, or were not going to work. The broker should have known this; we had given him this information over the phone to start with, and the fact that this product did not suit us in places kept me awake. I got up at 0430 to address these concerns on paper before handing it over to Andrew to send though. Andrew sent an abridged version of my queries back to the broker – it took until the next day to send back the reply to us.

What really annoys me is the time that this has cost us - because of the broker ignorance we gave up a great opportunity on Sunday for the next jump before the wild weather to ensure we were around in an area we could get phone reception to wait for the initial response from the broker – A broker should know his product. Clearly this one didn't. With the weather the way it is, this has cost us around a week, possibly more because whilst the next two days might be calm, they are too calm for sailing – and

we have used up four days of food – four days that were allocated for exploring before the next food stop. A trip across to Rosslyn Bay was not expected nor planned for, and getting an end berth will be pushing it with short notice – the marina is reluctant to give them up at the best of times. And weather in two days time is getting potentially hairy again.



Visitor to the café. A week ago the café visitor was an echidna

