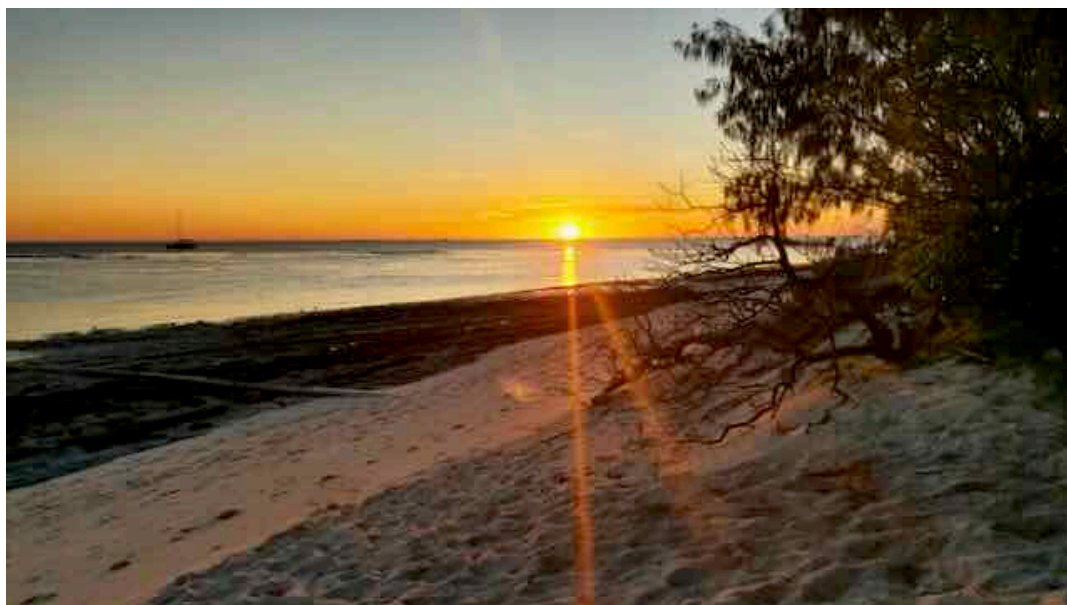


Aboard Sengo



From the Curtis Coast to the Whitsunday's

And back again

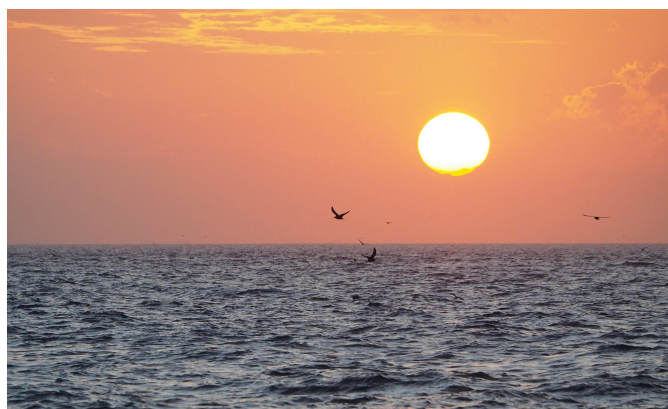


October proved the zenith of our 2022 sailing season; we got to my hoped for 'Whitsundays' and we walked my hoped for Whitehaven Beach. Regardless if we had wanted to, there was no prospect of going further north anyway; it was just too late in the season.

The weather is on the countdown to (and into) 'wet season,' so by the end of October we are on our way south. Fortunately we have been relatively lucky so far, missing the main storms that have graced coastal Queensland, although we have been in the official Severe Thunderstorm warning areas and have been skimmed by a couple of cells. Rainy days were mostly drizzly, and the sunny days were mainly the opposite; absolutely magnificent.

We only caught up with two boats that we knew this month, but we don't mind being anti-social. I went snorkelling, but not in the best spots. I was glad I did as I now have no anxiety regarding a leaky face mask' Andrew tolerated the murky water for my sake, or kept watch from above. Walking was a different adventure - choosing paths we had not taken before; the long flat beach of Whitehaven, or the sharp uphill treks of Honeyeater and Whitsunday Cairn.

Sengo is not going to dawdle on 'her' way south, there are things we need to do further down the coast before Christmas; despite our usual advice to the contrary we are back to being on a timeline. And waiting for the weather!



Hunter Island to Middle Percy Island

1st October 2022. Streaky grey clouds had a tinge of red to them to the east when I woke up. So I got up and enjoyed the colour.

The mono departed toward the west not long after sunrise. The catamaran was still at anchor to the north of us. We started lifting our anchor at 0800. By 0810 we were motoring out of the anchorage, initially south, around the bottom of Hunter Island, and then north up the channel between it and Marble Island. Like yesterday between Marble and Danger Islands, there were eddies in this thin waterway as well. We put the main sail up at 0835 just as we got around the top of the small islet off Marble's north west corner. The genoa was out and the engines were off shortly after this. The wind was blowing south east.

The sail to Middle Percy was mixed - mostly a steady slowish sail - with the occasional engine. The last section however was a hoot - as usual, the afternoon wind picked up just as we didn't need it, and we were heading toward our anchorage doing 8 knots.

We dropped the genoa around two nautical miles from the West Bay anchorage. We dropped the main sail around one nautical mile from the West Bay anchorage. We didn't however drop the anchor.

There was only one boat in the anchorage - a small monohull, and having not looked too closely I suspect the same boat that had followed us in to, and we had followed out of, Pearl Bay. It was of course rocking a bit - but that is normal here. What concerned us was the small yacht was facing north. North? But the winds we had just come out of were south-east. Whilst we were contemplating the fact of north winds, Andrew looked at the gauges. Within the past few moments, the wind now appeared to have gone north west. What! I half suspect the wind at this spot was bending around the island, but we didn't want to take any chances, so we turned around and motored south again. And of course as we got further south, the wind gauges indicated the wind was indeed blowing south east.

What anchorage do we take? What forecast to we take? Windy had indicated east to north east winds for today Yet it was blowing south east. The bom.gov.au marine forecast suggested south east to east, but there hadn't been a lot of east so far (although there were hints of it when the wind angle shaved us at 30 degrees apparent during our sail).



Predict wind was suggesting (across some of its models) south east to east to north east overnight - well, at 0400 tomorrow.

Do we chose an anchorage at the bottom of Middle Percy? Or try the coral strewn anchorage at the top of South Percy instead?

In the end Andrew decided on Whites Bay at the bottom of Middle Percy Island. We knew it had good holding for a lee shore (as it would be when we anchored) as we had been swung around here before (during a storm six years ago)). There was no opportunity to put the sails up - so we motored close to directly into the wind for the trip along the southern coast of Middle Percy Island to Whites Bay

And so the anchor was finally down at 1350 (around ninety minutes after we expected it to be), on a lee shore to deal with a wind tranche of three hours that may, or may not, happen in 14 hours time!

Surprisingly despite wind and swell coming at us, it was remarkably comfortable. (Although the two small islands at the eastern end of the bay gave us a little protection).

The hut. There is a hut at West Bay where visiting sailors leave a trinket of their visit. The hut has taken several forms since the first one several

decades ago- I believe strong winds and cyclones have blown down a few. We didn't leave anything here the last time we visited (apart from a couple of dollars for some lime and ginger marmalade (which I recall putting into muffins in the Kimberley)). This time I had an item in mind. However I wasn't going to walk up to the top of the island and back down to West Bay and back again this afternoon just to leave a trinket. Perhaps next time. The last time we were here was in 2016. I wonder when the next time will be.

By 1930 the wind had gone around to the north east. It was close to low tide. We were facing the right way. Jupiter was obvious in the night sky. We discussed tomorrow - unless we went sideways to Curlew Island we were going to have a very long trip!



Welcome to the 'Whitsunday's'

Middle Percy Island to Scawfell Island

2nd October 2022. 'As long as you don't get me up before 0530,' was one of Andrew's last comments last night, before he set the alarm. The alarm had clearly not been listening. It went off at 0430! What we hadn't really taken much notice of was the date. Queensland doesn't do 'daylight savings' but NSW does. Diving down into the system files we discovered the phone anchored on the Sydney time zone. Well, that was a trap for young players!

After getting a few more minutes sleep we had the anchor up and we were motoring out of Whites Bay at 0555. The main sail was up at 0605, the genoa was out at 0615. My 'go to' on the chart plotter was surprisingly free of obstacles and we turned one engine off just after we turned the corner around the north eastern 'corner' of Middle Percy Island. The wind was blowing only 5 to 6 knots but our SOG was approximately 6 knots.

When we had got up the sky to the east was dominated by clouds. By mid morning however the sun had burnt most of the clouds off, and inside the helm station was getting quite hot.

Last time we left Middle Percy was also from Whites Bay. And last time we were also heading to Scawfell Island. Then the distance scared me. Now we just try to leave earlier - although the engines were on for a majority of the last trip.

At 0925 the port engine went back on. I had been prepared to get through averaging 5 to 6 knots, but we were down to 4.0. The true wind speed had dropped as well and until it picked up again we needed a bit of extra oomph if we wanted to anchor before night fall. The wind direction was also twitching to south of east which was not useful!

I didn't put the engine on hard - at 1800 revs we managed 6.2 knots. The engine went off again 20 minutes later as the wind had picked up, although it was being fickle and I expected to put an engine on again at some point. It was on again, then off again at 0950 and on again at 1000. Then off again at 1045. And back on at 1200

At 1240 we got a visitor. I was first aware of 'its' presence as I noticed a shadow pass across my vision. I wasn't actually looking up - I was reacquainting myself with *100 Magic Miles*. Looking around I initially couldn't see anything. But then I noticed a tern, who



flew in and out of my vision around the boat. 'Perhaps he is going for the lure,' I said to Andrew (we have had to reel lures in before so we didn't catch the chasing birds). 'He would be lucky,' was Andrew's response. 'The lure is bigger than he is'. I picked up the phone to try and capture an image of this tern flying past. But then I realised the Olympus was on the seat behind me with the telephoto lens on. I ventured out to the port side of Sengo and looked up. But couldn't see anything. And then I noticed something much lower. The tern was no longer circling, it had landed. But instead of landing on the deck where it would have been most comfortable, he was balancing on the lifeline..not a bad feat for a big bird. Bobbing away to the movement of the boat can't have been easy..probably the equivalent of us standing on one foot. What ever its equivalent to our core muscles are would have been getting a good work out!

At 1250 he was still there! At 1335 he was still there. He was gone at 1350.

(Initially I thought he had left, but coming into Scawfell later a tern flew close to the boat and I suspect he had been on the front - when I went up front to put the anchor down I found on the decks an awful mess to clean up!)

At 1515 we turned an engine off again. And then turned it on again (the other one this time to swap the engines). At 1525 we turned the engine off.

Of course the wind picked up just as we were coming in to harbour -and from the north east. This anchorage really isn't that suitable from the north east. Five boats were already here. One ketch, two cats, one mono and one powerboat (who conveniently had the mooring).

The anchor was down at 1745. The sun was dropping fast. Ahh - a nice time to relax to the sounds of.....a motor! When one expects the evening to be quiet, (which is what you hope for in isolated anchorages) a dingy buzzing around sounding like a giant mosquito for an inordinate amount of time in the twilight is not particularly welcome. And the large power boat on the mooring had its generator going. And then there was music! Without looking I blamed the power boat but it turned out to be the cat. Welcome to the, not so idyllic, 'Whitsundays!'



Scawfell Island to Shaw Island

3rd October 2022. I awoke to peace this morning - just lightly penetrated by the calls of bush birds. Ahh, that's better! The sun wasn't quite over the horizon at 0540 when I got up. Andrew got up at around 0620. We still had a good trip today, but not as long as yesterday so we could relax a little. I started two hatch covers and put the dishes away before I worried about moving.

We had the radio on. 'The Comedy Channel' (charter boat scheds) started at 0800 with the most scheds from 0830. Given the destination noted for some charter boats was Shaw Island we thought perhaps we might try an alternative. According to our version of *100 Magic Miles*, the top of Thomas Island looked like a good prospect. We have been to Thomas before, but only to the south anchorage.

The wind was only blowing 7 knots when we picked up the anchor and if we had followed a straight 'go to' (avoiding a couple of small islands) would have been from directly behind us. So we angled off a bit and gybed for the entire trip. The wind strength got stronger as we headed north, and a bit too strong to be comfortable as we got near Thomas, gusting to 20 knots.

We dropped the sails just to the east of Thomas. We had gone back to discussing Shaw as an option but decided we would check out Thomas as we went past. The anchorage looked lovely so we turned around and went in, anchoring toward the western end.



The anchor was finally down for the night at Shaw Island - we had gone back to Plan A.

The anchorage at Thomas had been very pretty but the forewarned incoming swell mentioned in the



guide, had definitely been present. Whilst it certainly wasn't the worst swell that we have been in, and Andrew was reasonably okay with it, I didn't relish the idea of several days of it, especially as we would unlikely have the opportunity to get off boat. So after lunch we picked up the anchor, around 1400, and headed for the western side of Shaw Island. There were already six boats at Burning Point, a large anchorage where we had been before. We tried an anchorage further up north but it required a lot of chain and the anchor didn't set. I requested a shallower spot and Andrew found a small area on the chart that looked good, just to our south. Unfortunately just at this point in time two power boats came in and settled there.

We ended up back down near Burning Point, opposite the gap in the hill where the wind was blowing straight through. It was blowing 19 knots at this point but at least it was consistent. The highest we saw on our gauges was 20 plus. It was around 1600. And it was getting dark because of the grey clouds and rain to the west of us.

Dinner was chicken mince and veggies. I did the dishes and cut out and edged two hatch covers.



4th October 2022. We stayed at Shaw Island today. And we stayed on boat. Just as we were expecting to'. We didn't see winds as high as the predictions - 20 knots was the maximum we noted. Most of the day the winds were blowing a consistent mid teens.

I spent today doing boat jobs; clove oiling a bit of C2 bookshelf, more hatch covers, clove oiling the desk bookshelves, and sorting paperwork. There was also a cook-up, dishes and recreational reading. And of course listening to the Comedy Channel.

This area was where I had seen my first beach curlew around twelve years ago but we didn't get off boat to search for wildlife. The only wildlife seen today was a school of opaque garfish in the water hanging around the back step.



Toward Airlie Beach

5th October 2022. Having got to an area of internet reception yesterday (albeit intermittent) we were constantly checking the weather forecasts and looking for an opportunity to get to Airlie Beach. It is not that we like a lot of boats, or that we particularly want to be where we aren't insured for anchor or mooring issues, it is just that a) it is an opportunity to stock up (which we weren't desperate for), and, more importantly, b) where we could drop our spinnaker off to get it repaired.

Winds were lighter at Airlie than they were at Shaw Island. Friday morning looked like an opportunity to get off boat. We just had to get there. So given it was mid morning when we made that decision we prepped ourselves for an afternoon sail toward Airlie....until I realised that the tide assistance was now and not in the afternoon.....

So with a sudden rush and quick pack up we got going. The anchor was up at 1105. The genoa was out and one engine was off at 1115. Eventually the second engine went off and we took a (very) slow zig zagging trip gybing up the Whitsunday Passage; the winds were almost directly behind us - and not strong enough to be particularly useful. The plan was to head through the gap between South Molle Island and Long Island and anchor at Sandy Bay. Happy Bay on Long Island would be full of charter boats given what we had heard on the morning scheds (and indeed it looked full when we went past). Sandy Bay, just to the north on South Molle had its quirks according to the guide, but we could live with them.

When we got within range of Sandy Bay however we noticed something strange - all three boats there had a lee shore! That shouldn't be the case. The boats anchored to the south in Happy Bay were facing the way we would expect them to - perhaps the tide was stronger than the wind at Sandy Bay, but given the tide had supposedly turned maybe not. However, we had by this time decided, given the wind was a bit more favourable now, and a bit stronger, that we would continue to Funnel Bay. We managed to sail all the way into Funnel Bay; the anchor was down at 1630.

Bird sounds for the evening were predominantly fruit doves and kookaburras. The wind ironically picked up a bit overnight and we saw 23 knots on the gauges - pity we hadn't seen those wind speeds on the trip up.. We made water (after charging the generator battery). I got another hatch cover completed. The evening was spent recreational reading.



There were only two other boats in Funnel Bay. One was tucked right down in the corner and a charter boat was seaward of us (we had watched this boat coming in. I was a bit worried for him because initially he was heading away from the mainland and then turned around, and then he took several tries to anchor in several different spots. Fortunately he was a long way from us).



Airlie Beach

Funnel Bay to Airlie Beach

6th October 2022. We had the anchor down at Airlie Beach around high tide - at around 0800. We visited **Anapa** shortly after this (a boat we hadn't seen since late April and before that since last November) and we eventually made it to shore, having a late breakfast around 1100 at the Village Cafe near Woolworths. We had grabbed both of our shopping trolleys and the cooler bag so we could fill them up with food; which we invariably did.

We walked from the public jetty to Airlie central and back again, but we noted there were electric scooters everywhere here. Although these ones are grey (and not orange like the Neuron scooters that we used at Bargara) and I suspect, but haven't checked, that you have to return them to base unlike the Neuron system where you can leave them within an approved zone.

We were back on board early afternoon. The boat job for the day was cleaning out the kitchen cupboard; there were some items in there that expired about two years ago!



An easy walk and a missed stop!

7th October 2022. The spinnaker was dropped off to the repairer today - well it got dropped off to a maintenance boat that was tied up next to another yacht whilst the sail repairers were working on its sails. The base for the sail repairer is in Cannonvale but as some of their workers were at the marina on a boat, it was easy just to drop it off to them.

After this little exercise we headed across to the public jetty to meet **Anapa** to go for a walk. Except we actually had to go back to boat because although I had grabbed my walking boots I had somehow left my socks behind. Eventually, booted up, the four of us walked to the Whitsunday Shopping Centre... and then caught a bus to the Whitsunday Plaza.

After many years of admiring other's equipment, we ended up buying a square trolley - it was reasonably priced - and whilst we couldn't think of when we would use it in the short term, it actually came in very handy today. The bus we caught back was expected to stop at the marina....but didn't... so we all got off in town and started to walk back from town. Carrying a big box is not exactly comfortable so we ended up unpacking the trolley and assembling it on the street. It then became a handy repository for all the other bags we were carrying. The wheels were sturdier than the demonstration model we had seen at the retailer; it rolled well. Of course when we got back to boat we had to work out where to store it - and whether to take the wheels off it or not.



Honeyeater Lookout

8th October 2022. We were at the boat ramp at 0730. We were at the start of the walk at 0755. We were back at the start of the walk at 1100. It was hot and muggy and by 1100 our feet were getting tired.

The first 2.5 kilometres of the Honeyeater Lookout Walk is part of the 28 kilometre Whitsunday Great Walk/Conway Circuit. The AllTrails App suggests the average time taken for this walk is about two and a half hours. The National Parks board at the start of the walk suggests it is a three hour return walk. And there is a little bit of a discrepancy for the distance as well. But despite the differences, it took us three hours from start to finish, including a fifteen minute break up the top. However, because we had to walk to the start of the track and back, and we walked into town for lunch after that, we were on our feet a lot longer than we expected.



The notes warn of a fair bit of up. And the notes were not wrong. It was a tough walk, certainly because we were

out of condition. Andrew's description to someone we spoke to in the afternoon was 'relentless.' There was gripping framework under a fair bit of the 'up' part of the track - this is a mountain bike track as well, although I am sure riders would have to get off to get up some of the rocks. We took our walking sticks; I don't know why Andrew didn't use his, but I wanted to push my body as far as I could without needing them - training for the tougher walk in NZ.

The notes suggest that because the days can get hot, that you start the walk early. I spoke to someone at the dingy dock who hadn't walked the track for a few years, but his suggestion was to do it at dawn. I couldn't get Andrew up for that, but clearly there were

earlier starters than us; we passed several groups who were heading down the track as we were heading up, and all but one individual were not carrying much so they would have only walked to the lookout. That one individual who was carrying a full, mid sized pack could I suspect had been camping overnight.

On the way down we passed only four 'groups'. Two couples (one old, one younger), one family, and a couple at the steps where Andrew did his best to convince 'her' not to go. The boyfriend was encouraging but I get the feeling both were out of condition. I don't know what they did in the end.

We walked to town, had a smoothie, a walk around the market, lunch at the Whitsunday Sailing Club and made a visit to **Anapa** on the way back to boat.



9th October 2022. I knew I would sleep well and I woke up with a start at 0630. The sun was already well and truly up... and hot. It was blowing west - it would have been great to be at Whitehaven!

But we were still hanging off Airlie so we had access to television reception. Andrew had wanted to watch Bathurst so I had brokered a deal; instead of Walking Whitehaven Beach this weekend I was prepared to stay at Airlie if we did a local walk; hence the Honeyeater Lookout Walk yesterday.

Because Andrew wanted to start watching the Bathurst telecast at 1000 our social event for today was early - around 0800 with **Skellum**. We haven't caught up with **Skellum** since earlier in the year so there was lot to chat about. Just before this however I had discovered an almighty mess on the roof.

I am not sure how long the cormorant had been occupying our boom bag, but he had been in the groove on the top of it when I went to investigate. I had noticed the mess first as I was putting something in the helm station; there were ugly stains down the port side of our clears. When I climbed on the roof to check out the extent of the damage, I found the mess was all over the roof and the boom bag as well. I initially didn't see the bird, he must have been hunkered, but very shortly after he startled me by flying off - from a few feet away from my head.

So when we got back after our cuppa we were intending to clean the mess up. I was attaching the hose to the water line when Andrew yelled at me. Get the net! It took me a couple of seconds to compute this message, and by the time I grabbed the net it was too late. In the hurry to get the power cord out the bottom of the helm door a couple of other times had been pushed/pulled through the tight gap - one was a travel waller which was still on



deck, and one was one of my socks, which was now floating toward Bowen!

Grabbing the paddle board I attempted to chase it. But the paddle board had gone in on the side without the step ladder, the tide was strong and I struggled to get the board around so I could get on it. The sock was sailing further away. In the end I jumped when I probably shouldn't have, lost balance, and went in. I am now in the water, in croc and shark country, with a strong tide. I am fortunately holding onto the boat. However. The sock as far as I was concerned at this point, could keep going - with that tide I would struggle to get back anyway, even with the paddle. I just wanted to get out of the water- and that task proved bad enough, heading obliquely to the tide to get to our, now dropped, stairs. I apologise to any vegetation the sock may eventually deposit on - but it wasn't worth my safety going after it.

On a positive note, the Bathurst telecast had minimal interruptions.

We got the karcher out and cleaned the cormorant poo off in the twilight - after the race had finished.

Cid Harbour

Airlie Beach to Cid Harbour; Sawmill Beach

10th October 2022. The nights are getting hotter. Or is it just that I slept in until 0600 when the sun was up - albeit temporarily behind clouds. Andrew got up around 0620. I found my phone was out of charge - I must have left the hotspot on. There was no wind - not yet - the gauges were reading 4 knots. We were facing north east - I guess that was tide related. The early morning job was cleaning some cormorant poo off the solar panels that we had missed yesterday.

We waited a while for the wind to pick up a bit so we could leave the anchorage; we should have perhaps left earlier, for whilst the wind at Airlie was lightish, it was clearly a lot stronger to the east. When we did leave we ended up sailing with the genoa out only, and on such an angle we headed for the bottom south west corner of Hook Island. True wind across Whitsunday Passage was blowing 25 knots We saw up to 27 knots apparent on the gauge. When we got to the bottom corner of Hook Island we pulled the genoa in and put the engines on - we couldn't sail comfortably into winds of that strength, although we had started to try. We motored east, then south to Cid Harbour. We could have perhaps sailed the last half of the southern trajectory, but didn't.

I was impressed with the spacing between boats at Cid - usually the anchorage is a lot more compact, although I do note with the coming wind for the night, the charter companies were advising their clients to allow plenty of swinging room. We managed to anchor (a fair way) behind **Anapa**. There were boats 'sort of' on either side of us but with at least 90 meters to spare.

We anchored facing south but the boat swung to face west. We were still facing west at 1800. The wind was minimal. Bush birds were calling. Insects were calling. I saw gulls flying and had heard white bellied sea eagles calling earlier in the day.

There were at least 9 charter boats here and whilst two were adjacent us they were not on a side to worry about. The three boats inshore from us - two monohulls and a powerboat, all look privately owned. The boat to our south was **Anapa**. I was hoping all the others knew how to anchor.

We had spent the afternoon drifting around in minimal winds. This was a bit of a shock after our frisky trip across. Kookaburras were still calling at 1830. Fruit doves had joined the evening chorus but the bush birds were now silent. Chartering tourist's voices cackled in the background

11th October 2022. We got up late; at 0730. And despite the original plan to go visiting or for a short walk, we stayed on boat all day. I read a lot and had two snoozes - the second one probably due to a food reaction from lunch.

As usual we listened to the morning 'comedy channel' - we didn't bother with the afternoon scheds although perhaps we should have to check who was coming into this anchorage. Hamilton Island had gusted to 31 during the day. We had gusted to 17 - once. The rest of the day here was calm - the tide was stronger than wind.

Some boats came in -some out . Activities included clove oiling what was in my desk - which wasn't much. We did a few minutes of Spanish.

With the wind and tide today, the boat went around and around and around



A small walk - Dugong Beach

12th October. We were up at 0600 and followed the usual morning routine; turn the anchor light off, turn the radio on, wait for the comedy channel charter reports to begin. Etc. At 0755 someone reported over the radio that there was 26 to 28 knots in the channel. I wasn't quick enough to see which radio channel they were on, and therefore guess which waterway channel they were likely to be talking about, but we had checked Hamilton Island's observations and they were a lot windier than here. The presence of two islands definitely helps knock the wind down.

The only job I did in the morning was a small section of clove oiling some of the back cockpit roof - this is a job I get Andrew to help me with - he is taller. The rest of the morning was a 'me' morning - I read a lot. I also completed the medium sudoku in the local paper which I was pleased with - I haven't done a sudoku for a long time - I used to do one on the train to work each work morning.

This morning there wasn't an excessive amount of boats in the anchorage but it looked full and to our south there were several swanky looking gin palaces - we had the gauges on but I didn't bother checking who they were .

The light drizzle yesterday had managed to fill the bucket up so I need to think about how I am going to use the water.

After being on boat for the past few days I wanted an excursion - preferably a walk. Our first excursion however was a social visit - we popped over to the 'boat next door.' After a catch up cuppa with Anapa however, we headed across to shore to stretch our legs.

It wasn't a long walk. And it wasn't a hard walk. The walk to Dugong Beach from Sawmill Beach is so short that by the time we started, meant we were only 40 minutes on our feet there and back. Originally we had landed the tinnie near the memorial at the southern end of Sawmill Beach, where Andrew put on his socks and walking boots, but we found, due to the depth of the inlet along the middle of the beach, that we had to get back in the tinnie and move to the other end of the beach.



We haven't done this walk for many years and had been warned there had been some clearing of the track, due mainly I suspect to fallen trees. This made the ramble a more open and exposed affair. It is still not a bad little walk - with dryer vegetation than I had expected (although I can't remember what the vegetation was like when we were last here).

Fellow yachties had seen three large monitors in close proximity to each other on this track a few days ago. I only saw one monitor today, and smaller than the previously reported beasts (mine was only around two thirds of a meter) and on the beach.

Back on boat we spent a fair bit of time planning the second tranche of our Te Araroa trek. This was exhausting - but not nearly as exhausting as the walk is going to be.

In the late afternoon however there was a bit more of a heart flutter....

'Don't panic,' Andrew said as he came into the front cockpit where I was reading, 'but there is a lagoon anchoring between us and Anapa.' '

What! You are joking!' I exclaimed.

It wasn't a small lagoon either. It was Whitsunday Freedom (WF) - a charter boat from Portland Roads. By the time I got out the back, Anapa's owner was already on the back on his boat, watching this large boat backing closer to him. I was hoping the new boat had an experienced skipper on her - but then again if she did she would not have parked there. There were no boats to the west of her - WF would have plenty of room to the West of her. Perhaps she is only in for sunset?

After WF had the anchor down they were around 90 meters from us and a lot closer to Anapa. But. I didn't know how much chain they had out. They didn't know how much chain we had out, or where our anchor was. Ditto to Anapa. Our anchor was actually in front of us, but only a few meters and to our north - we had around forty meters to go south if the wind/conditions picked up. Whilst the wind was unlikely to go north the conditions here were not predictable - over the past few nights we had undergone some pretty strange movements in some unexpected directions.

By the time I got through to Anapa on the phone (the reception is dodgy here and this is only the second phone call that got through) the interloper was picking up their anchor and was now further away from Anapa but now 60 meters away from us. I didn't take a measurement as the anchor actually came up but both Anapa and I watched closely as they moved further out. Was it Anapa and I

standing outside starting at them projecting our golf rangers that made them move? Or did the skipper actually decide on his own that he was too close. But he shouldn't have even anchored there in the first place!

Shortly afterward WF's tender with a few people in it skimmed a couple of meters past our back steps. Cheeky!

I was thankful they had moved, for several reasons; they put music on in the evening so it would have been louder had they been closer to us. At least they had taste. The first lot of songs was a medley of Neil Diamond!



13th October 2022. I was up at 0600. It seems my internal clock seems to wake between 0500 and 0700 most days now. Despite a slightly less frisky forecast the wind seemed to be stronger here today than the last two days, and there were more gusts (and frustratingly seemed to happen every time I went outside to work on the boat). Quite a few boats left during the day and a couple came in but in the end there were only 19 anchor lights on when it got dark. And the night sky was lovely.

We didn't do much. Mostly a lot of reading and some planning for New Zealand. I did manage to wash the port gunnel and do a bit of a rust run but I will need to get the tape residue off before I polish it. I also ran the sponge over the tramp and one of the front hatches. By this stage the towel I was using to wipe off the soap was quite wet so I had to stop that job. Outside was also getting very hot when the wind wasn't gusting..

We had an afternoon farewell to Anapa before heading back to boat at sundown and prepping the boat to move.

At 1830 the only sounds in the anchorage were kookaburras chortling and insects humming. And our neighbour on the phone (and probably me chatting to Andrew) - but apart from that all was quiet. All was still.



Whitehaven Beach

Cid Harbour to Whitehaven Beach

A good sail - and - a good walk

14th October 2022. I was up around 0520. All was quiet. Then I heard an anchor going up and the mono who had sailed in yesterday to anchor adjacent Sawmill Beach was on its way. Then I heard **Anapa** lifting their anchor. I wasn't expecting them to leave early but they had decided to take advantage of the calm conditions. They circled around to say goodbye, between us and a neat little powerboat that had been anchored inshore of us for the past few days. The power boat then lifted his motor and left the anchorage. Once we had lifted our anchor, the blue mono I thought was going to be a problem when putting up our sail was also moving..... must be the day for it!



There was blue sky over us and a few clouds to our east. According to windy .com Cid Harbour was expecting no rain; Whitehaven Beach up to 0.2ml.

My early morning job was continuing the deck clean up - the towel was dry enough to absorb more of the soapy water. Andrew got up around 0630. The anchor was up just after 0700. The sails were up by 0720. The engines were off not long after.

Andrew did briefly put the engines back on - at the top of Hook Passage because we lost wind (the gauges were reading 0.5 knots True and the indicator arrow circling around the dial). Apparently this area has a reputation for flukey winds.

Our initial sailing angle from the top of Hook Passage was north east. With the south east winds we zig zagged our way down to Whitehaven Beach, anchoring between the touro area down the southern end and Hill Inlet at the northern end. The sails were dropped at 1100. The anchor was down at 1110.

It was noisy. We watched a float plane fly over heading south to land in the 'touro' spot. A helicopter landed on the beach adjacent us and a touro ferry came in to anchor just south of us; its passengers the clients of the helicopter. Whilst all this was happening another helicopter (white this time) headed over the top of us. I am sure the turtle that popped its head up to welcome us just ignored the noisy fuss happening above water.

We had eaten a breakfast of cereal whilst we were underway.

At anchor I clove oiled some of Andrew's electronic stuff, opened up the side flaps of the cockpit to let in some fresh air, and made a pear loaf for lunch. Whilst in the kitchen I looked up to find a rather big gin palace anchored next door. Andrew thought it may not stay long

Walking Whitehaven - Tranche 1

My goal for this year's delayed and shortened cruising season, if we could do it, was to get to Whitehaven Beach and walk the length of it. It had always been on a list of things to do, but given that the first section of the TA in NZ is sand, I had extra incentive.

This afternoon's winds were reasonable. The day looked fabulous. However there was probably not enough time to walk the entire beach today. So I proposed an alternative. We could do half of Whitehaven today, and



half tomorrow. But which to choose. As a wild guess using a straight measure on a basic chart, the entrance to Hill Inlet was about 1.8 nautical miles away. In the other direction, the end of the beach was 1.2 nautical miles away, but we could make this a longer walk if we continued to Chance Bay. If we went south this afternoon it would mean we would go north tomorrow, starting with a low tide and perhaps see some of the sandbanks swirling that Hill Inlet is famous for. If we went north today, whilst we would be on a dropping tide, we may not be late enough to enjoy the view. So we went south.

After setting foot on the southern end of Whitehaven Beach, I couldn't convince Andrew to continue the 2.3km to Chance Bay. But he was prepared to try the Whitehaven Lookout. I don't actually think we have done this walk before - in fact I don't think it was here last time we were here. There is a lot of up - involving a lot of stairs. But the view at the top was pretty spectacular.

Wildlife on this section included a monitor, several other small lizards, and an unidentified shrike. Other birds seen at Whitehaven in general included several gulls, adults and juveniles, a sea eagle, pied currawongs and a single pied oyster catcher.



Whitehaven Beach - Tranche 2

15th October 2022. I was up before 0600. Andrew got up at a little later.

The sun rose over Haslewood Island and Chalkies Beach and the sound of pied oyster catchers and fruit dove penetrated the air.

'I'll put a rainproof hat on and we'll keep going,' Andrew said. I was surprised at Andrew's comment given he doesn't start walking in the rain. We had seen the rain band over the western end of Haselwood Island. I thought it was going to miss us. We kept going in our tinnie prep but I stopped Andrew when I felt the first drops. That's when he made his unusual statement.

However half way to shore the rain was getting heavier. We turned around. We were back on boat at 0835

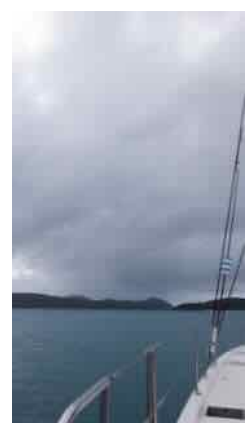
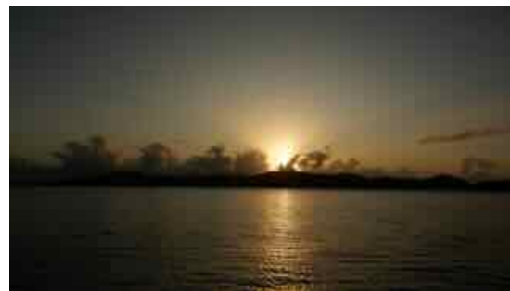
We had waited to hear the comedy channel and the radio scheds. They start with the weather. Whilst the first orator got tongue tied they did end up saying the forecast indicated sunny. There was no mention of rain. And it definitely wasn't sunny at the moment.

At 1035 we finally got to the beach - just. At 1045 we had put our walking shoes on and were heading north. I had been hoping for an isolated beach, which we probably would have got had we started earlier as originally planned. But by now planes were flying in, helicopters were landing and boats were arriving - all depositing their paying guests on their own bit of 'isolated' paradise for a morning picnic, lunch or a few hours rest (and in one case some kite surfing lessons!)

I didn't take note of when we got to Hill Inlet. The tide was still coming in but I walked almost to the end of the spit, stopping to chat to H who was photographing red capped plovers. I was also reluctant to go all the way to the water's edge as there was a small flock of whimbrels frolicking in the surf, and I didn't want to disturb them.

Andrew had ensconced himself under the shade of the casuarinas in his portable light weight chair. This is the first time the chairs have been used on track. I eventually pulled mine out as well and we spent a pleasant time chatting to H & R, trailer sailors from Victoria. Eventually we headed back to boat, chatting to some charterers on the way, and having a refreshing swim before getting back aboard Sengo. It was now around an hour before high tide

On the morning scheds the charter mobs had read out the predicted weather forecast. Some mobs read out today's weather - some mobs read out tomorrow's as well. Tomorrow's was important - the direction of the wind was changing ninety degrees overnight. If the forecast wind came in, the direction was going to be north east. We were not in an ideal spot to be for that forecast. We had to move.



Initially we thought about anchoring in Chance Bay or Waites Bay on the southern coast of Whitsunday and Haselwood Island respectively. But Chance didn't



have good easterly protection and what happened if the east predominated and the north east came in late. What if we go up to the top of Hook Passage, I suggested. So we decided to head north instead. It was worth while waiting for the change of tide at 1455 to get a tidal push, and was probably just as well, as whilst we were technically motor sailing - the port engine only on at 1500 revs, the wind was blowing anywhere between 4 and 7 knots on our northerly journey - the tide will have been doing all the work! The genoa was wound in by the time we headed down Hook Passage.



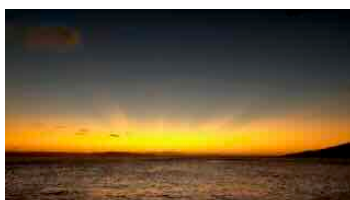
The moorings at the top of Hook Passage adjacent Whitsunday Island were all occupied so we headed further south to anchor, putting the pick down around 1730 south of a medium sized gin palace.



Initially the gin palace had music going but it was tasteful. The loud music of the evening came instead from a black ketch on the other side of the passage adjacent Hook Island - it was a tourist party boat! Lovely - I had forgotten how invasive they can be.



Looking like an owl! Whilst I hadn't started our walk this morning with long pants on I wasn't too worried about the sun. We don't usually put sunscreen on, unless we know we are going to be exposed significantly (or our nose sticks out) because we don't normally get a lot of vitamin D. Given the rain this morning Andrew had upgraded from a straw hat (which would have disintegrated in the rain) to a cap. Because of this he had put a face sock on which covered most of his face. I had a hat on and I was constantly checking where the shade was on my face. However I didn't take into consideration the reflection from the sand or water, and tonight ended up looking like an owl, with big white patches where my sunglasses were and a very burnt face otherwise. Next time I will be putting a face sock on as well, although I am not sure how I am going to protect my forehead.



Whitsunday Cairn

16th October 2022. Andrew didn't get up particularly early. The best time to snorkel is at low tide, and low tide was early. So having missed the best time to snorkel, I suggested we do the walk today instead.

We didn't really set a time for this until I asked Andrew when he wanted to leave. 'How about we get ready now'. Talk about running by the minute! When we got to the beach we discovered we couldn't have been any earlier - we would have been going over large chunks of coral; instead we managed to land the tinnie at the line of the small dead coral on the beach. The sand layer was further up the slope.

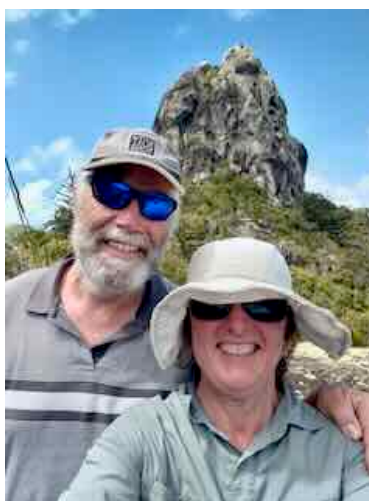
We started our walk up a track at 1135. Someone bellowed from behind us - I didn't realise he was bellowing at us; we had chosen the track for the toilets for the campground! Back in the right direction we then started our walk up the proper track at 1140. We got to the top at 1310. The track is steep to start with and then some descriptions have the rest of the track described as 'undulating.' I think both descriptions are fair.

We only had a twenty minute break at the top - had we been earlier in the day we may have stayed longer but given the terrain we were not sure if the trip down the steep section would take longer than going up. It was hot. It was muggy. Fortunately most of the track is shaded; but we were still struggling with the weather.

We got back to the tinnie at 1430. We were back on board Sengo at 1500.

We heard a few birds on our walk but didn't see many; disturbing a brown pigeon and a brush turkey. There were a few small birds flitting around within site but not close enough to be identified. The only large animal spotted was a monitor...there was lots of scurrying sounds in the bushes adjacent the track, and a few brief glimpses of small lizards noted.





17th October 2022. The 17th was a mostly sunny day. And I took advantage of it. I cleaned a little of the deck, and wiped down the front tramp. This was where the mattress from C2 spent most of the day airing. Whilst the mattress was outside I delved into the storage area under the bed and cleaned that, airing what could be aired and cleaning the mildew off those items that needed a bit more work. My cowgirl boots were spotted white - they had been a uniform beige when I bought them! I washed sheets, bags, bike pants (not that we have the bikes any more) and an old army camping mosquito net. I also washed yesterday's sweaty clothes from our hike.

I also managed to clove oil the front cockpit roof, got breakfast, made lunch and did the dishes and swept the decks. The packs went away and we did a little recreational reading. We also did some more New Zealand planning.



Under the water

18th October 2022. We tried going snorkelling today - but it wasn't as successful as I'd hoped. First of all we had taken the tinne around to where our old version of '100 Magic Miles' suggested the snorkelling was particularly good. The water looked reasonably clear but with the wind direction the site was unprotected from the sea, and add to that the enormous bow waves created as large power boats went past, I didn't feel overly comfortable dropping into the water here. Perhaps we would try when the wind had turned south.

So we headed back to an area where we had seen another tender with snorkelers mucking around, near a yellow boy and what looked like very old moorings. When we approached them the mooring buoy ropes were covered in muck and barnacles and the tags were slimed over. The buoys were further away than I had hoped to the edge of the reef and after tying the tinnie up to one of them we mucked through the cold water toward shore. When I came to the first lot of reef it was a shock - the water was that cloudy I didn't see it coming. Andrew almost immediately gave up and got back in the tinnie. He wasn't prepared to swim where it was murky enough that you couldn't see the sharks coming - we were not that far from Cid Harbour. Before heading back to boat we headed across the passage to an area adjacent Hook Island. There are some old mooring buoys here too - I suspect they were designed for bigger boats. The water wasn't quite as murky here but it wasn't clear. I saw only three fish.

Despite this, where both areas were mostly dead unexciting coral there was some life around. Healthy looking coral specimens were dotted on the dead substrate. There were also clams buried within coral heads - small with blue lips - several closed up as I got near. Andrew didn't get back in the water - mine was a brief visit.

Back on boat after lunch we spent several hours sorting out logistics for a couple of stages of our New Zealand walk (and going mentally insane in the process!). We spent 'sun down' on the front deck facing the island and south, not the sun.





Hook Passage to Funnel Bay

19th October 2022. It was supposed to be a sunny day but it started out raining. My idea had been to move to the west side of Hook Island to do a bit of snorkelling near low tide, around mid day. By the time mid day came around the sky had cleared. There was practically no wind but we hadn't moved anchorages. I wasn't exactly happy with this.

Around 1500 I checked the weather. We had mentioned to the sail maker that we might pick the sail up on Friday. Tomorrow however looked like a better day from a rain perspective. The wind direction was almost irrelevant - the predictions were northerly but below 5 knots. Airlie Beach is not a place to be in strong northerly winds, especially since our insurance does not cover us for anchoring or mooring issues, but with wind speeds that light the tide was likely to be more of an influence.

But - there were thunderstorms predicted overnight. Thunderstorms mean squalls. Squalls mean rough winds, albeit usually only for short periods of time, from all directions. So, in order to be near to Airlie for tomorrow morning it was best to move today. We had three hours of daylight left - it would take about three hours of motoring to get there. But in order to have plenty of room to swing around in briefly adverse winds we didn't anchor off Airlie Beach or Cannonvale, we headed into Funnel Bay instead. We put the anchor down in the middle of the bay to ensure swinging room.

The most wind speed we saw before we went to bed was 19 point something knots. We didn't get any storms.

Funnel Bay to Airlie Beach

20th October 2022. We got up after 0700 -which is a little late for us. It had rained overnight but not much. Decks were wet. The rain radar didn't show much. There had been no tempest.

The clouds seemed to be lifting. Windy.com's predictions had changed again. Now the clearest tranche was 1000 to 1300. Andrew telephoned US sails to see whether we could pick up the sail today and not tomorrow. Just give them 30 minutes, they said, but don't ask for delivery during smoko.

We moved around to anchor off Cannonvale at around 0930: the chain taking a fair bit of time to get up because cleaning the fine limey mud from it took a while.

We were on the VMR jetty at 1020. After a shop at Coles we were back on the VMR jetty at 1135. The sail was dropped off to us at 1145 (for which we are

exceedingly grateful) and the social chat on dock truncated because of the coming rain. We were back on board Sengo and put the spinnaker in its locker just as the first drops came down. It took around another 45 minutes to put the groceries away. The drizzle at this point turned into something more steady. Distant thunder was heard around 1154.....and on and off after that, but it seemed a fair way away.

Winds were supposedly northerly but the tide was stronger. It was muggy. A 'mee' sound ran in the background of our saloon...we have actually reverted to turning the fans on!

We heard our first real grumbly thunder around 1400. By 1600 the weather was starting to clear - to a large extent -



there were even patches of blue sky where the sun shone onto the water! But the rain hadn't really disappeared by sun down, small light showers persisting until it was dark.

We did a small bit of Spanish at 1630 and yoga at 1900.



Airlie Beach

21st October 2022. We woke up at 0615. The rocking of wind against tide was surprisingly mild for Airlie'. All was quiet outside. Looking out the window we found we were facing west. Skies were a thick grey. We took a little while waking up. There was no hurry. The rain radar had potential rain coming our way. windy.com had rain predicted all day, both here and in the islands, although not much. We weren't going to be getting off boat

Looking out the back door when we did get up we could just see Hook Island; grey skies reached down to the horizon and we could see a line of a weather front in that direction.

The closest boat to us moved early morning - and several more boats were seen heading into inclement weather; we wondered why - the rain radar was showing the islands getting rather wet.

It did end up raining all day, mostly lightly, only stopping around 1700; Hamilton Island officially got 1.2 mm (until 22nd October at 0900). The wind was mixed but gusts reached up to 31 knots. The morning charter boat scheds were telling people not to anchor at certain spots because of the impending thunderstorms.

We kept a constant eye on the bom.gov.au rain radar and watched several opal coloured storms approach within a hundred or so km before they dissipated to blues on the radar, and fortunately most of the heavier rain went either to the north or south of us. Whilst we did see most points of the compass today (at one point I extrapolated our COG to the Solomon Islands) we didn't have any real wind or tide issues, and the waves were coming in from the north east. It was surprisingly calm considering the impending storms coming in from various directions

Fortunately, It was a quiet night



Airlie Beach to Stonehaven Bay, Hook Island

22nd October 2022. It was a magnificent day. We woke up to blue skies...And a cruise ship! Breakfast was indulgent gluten free waffles with banana, cream, bits of brownie and pink 'white' chocolate. The dish was topped off with two nasturtiums (I think); I only ate one. In fact, the dish was that indulgent that I only ate three quarters of it - and it lasted for lunch as well. The location of this indulgent breakfast was the Paradise Cafe, Airlie Beach. We had walked to the market for a pleasant stroll and to get a bit of exercise. It was also nice to see, and be out in, sunshine.

The market was thriving but given there was a cruise ship in town I was surprised there weren't more people about.

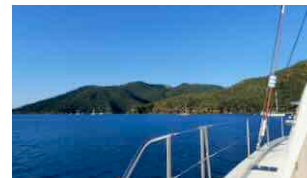
Once back on Sengo the anchor was lifted around 1030. But the wind wasn't great for a straight sail so we zigged and zagged toward Hook Island, mainly on the north side of our rum line. The cruise ship was still ferrying passengers to and from shore and the VMR made periodic announcements for all mariners and vessels to keep clear.

Given we were zigging and zagging we were never going to make my preferred snorkel location of Black Island at low tide today, so I gave up on that idea and suggested to Andrew that we just enjoy the sail. - we could go snorkelling tomorrow afternoon. But then we lost the wind anyway, dropped the sails and put the motors on. Given we could head straight to our destination, a possible afternoon snorkel was back on the cards.

The wind came up during the last 30 minutes of our journey but we couldn't be bothered putting the sails back up. I also didn't think I would be comfortable snorkelling in an exposed area in 16 to 20 knots of wind, so we headed for Stonehaven Bay instead. At this point it was thirty minutes past low tide.

We had been heading for one of a pair of moorings at the southern end of Stonehaven Bay, tucked in behind the reef. But so was a red party boat with a lot of people on board. Not knowing their exact intentions, and not wanting to be right next to a potentially noisy boat, we picked up a mooring on the opposite side of the adjacent monohull instead. The touro boat did end up with music on, but after a snorkel the party boat left.

Our afternoon snorkel was delayed a bit when we got in the tinnie, in fact I thought we were not going to go snorkelling at all. The tinnie's



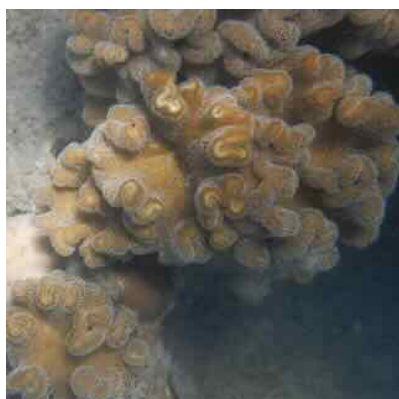
engine had a conniption - which Andrew finally fixed with a piece of string, but for a few minutes I thought we were not to be snorkel bound after all.

Today's snorkel was longer than the previous attempt and whilst the water wasn't pristine, it was clearer. Again soft corals just invited you to tussle them with your hands, and there were actually quite a few fish - many darting out of the way, but some curious enough to stop, turn towards you, and stare at you as you swam past.

There were also quite a few clams imbedded in coral showing their lovely fleshy colours - at one spot one green individual and one purple individual were close neighbours.

Stonehaven ended up a popular spot for the night - there was only one free mooring at Stonehaven Bay when the sun went down.

The night was glorious; the waters calm, and we spent some of the evening admiring the night sky and counting shooting stars; we had minimal light pollution (from anchor lights and fancy boats).





On a mooring at Black Island



Stonehaven Bay, Hook Island to Whitehaven Beach, Whitsunday Island

23 October 2022. There was to be no wind this morning - well nothing predicted to be of any note. So I suggested to Andrew that we drop the mooring, and rather than start our journey south, pick up a mooring at Black Island instead and go to shore - at least we could say we had stepped on the island, even if we hadn't admired its underwater inhabitants. In the end all we did was take a tinnie trip around the island, checking out a few flitting swallows, a couple of terns, a gull, and a cockatoo which was flying past. The beach at the northern end is small and was occupied by scantily clad women (whose g-strings were that restrictive that the full roundness of their derrières was on display for all to see) whilst their male partners snorkelled in the water. Clearly you can do a high tide snorkel here... but we were moving on.

Before we dropped the mooring here Andrew set up the lines for the spinnaker. When the wind was due, it wasn't expected to be strong, but it was expected to be from the north west - which means we would not have got an efficient sail with standard sails.

But that wasn't going to be for a couple of hours so we motored around the north west corner of Hook Island and picked up the only mooring of appropriate size in Maureens Cove. The wind at this point was blowing 2.8 knots True.

It was fairly pleasant here. A sandy beach, a rock wall, and a goat bleating! Officials are conducting a feral animal reduction program over the next week or so at the southern end of the island - for the goat's sake I hope it stays here.

After lunch the wind was still low but picking up. 2 knots, 3 knots, 4 knots...not yet enough to sail in so we waited a bit longer. This gave me another chance to get wet. Andrew didn't want to go into the water and I was a bit miffed that we had swung around so that the reef was now further away from the back of the boat, but I braved the cold temperatures to have a look. I wasn't at the 'good' end of Maureens Cove, but I was happy that I got in. The water was full of algae unfortunately which 'muddied' the view, but it didn't hide the fact that the reef is very poor where I looked, with relatively few healthy looking coral reestablishing themselves on tired and barren surfaces. This was in contrast to



yesterday where despite the turbidity of the water, there was much more reestablishment of healthy looking coral on the dead and dying substrate. What I did notice here today however was more fish. The first experience of this was being surrounded by hundreds of blue fish with yellow tails. But then there were others - too numerous and quick for me to really take in. I tried to get photos but was unsure of what was captured electronically; not only can I not see the screen clearly because of my eyesight, the screen vs visual pad is slightly offset, the water was murky, I had to deal with the added complication of the sunlight dappling its shadows.....and ... the back screen of the camera had fogged up!



The highlight today was a fabulous clam - I don't think I will forget its fleshy iridescent blue lips!

By 1400 we had dropped the mooring in Maureens Cove and were moving east. We put the genoa out only to start with, just to move us along the top of Hook Island, and because another cat also had its genoa out it would be poor form to look like we were motoring. But we weren't going particularly fast.



Once we had angled outside Double Rocks off the top north east corner of Hook Island, we put the spinnaker up. This would be a good test. The winds were in the right direction - almost - for a straight run. The repairers had told us that they had repaired the spinnaker with a colour as close to our orange that they could find in their factory. It is noticeable if you look - but it is not that obvious if you don't. And we don't care anyway - we were just happy to have the sail fixed. We had a lovely spinnaker run down south, past our first option of Saba Bay, past our second option of Tongue Bay, and headed for Whitehaven Beach. Despite what the wind gauge indicated (north west) when we were sailing, by the time we anchored the wind was blowing north - ish, and the waves were coming from the north east. All the boats in this anchorage had a lee shore; indeed within half an hour, half of them had left. The wind was supposed to be blowing north west!



Possible thunderstorms had been in the forecast and a grumble of thunder threatened from the west as we were sailing south. Fortunately, apart from a few strange clouds (which I didn't get photos of) all threats of tempest had dissipated by the time we anchored. The anchor was down around 1700.

Because Whitehaven Beach was Plan C and we hadn't discussed a plan D, we didn't move, it was getting late and we didn't actually relish the idea of putting down the anchor in a coral bottom close to sun down if we had moved through Solway Passage and around to Whites or Turtle Bay, so we put 60 meters of chain out in good holding sand and prepared ourselves for a slightly rocky night.

Whitsunday Island to Keswick Island

24th October 2022. The day started out slightly uncomfortable. The day ended slightly stressed!

The wind hadn't changed to the expected north-west overnight, or when it did, briefly, it was that light that the tide was predominant, and we were at one stage facing south-east. Because we were rocking around quite a bit we wanted to move on as soon as possible, and our anchor was lifted and the sails were out at 0725. Fortunately the timing was good for the Solway Passage traverse, so it was a comfortable ride.

Our plan had been to get to the southern anchorage at Goldsmith Island, a spot we hadn't been to before, but we were making such good time that we thought we would extend our trip to Brampton Island. However the good winds continued, and increased, and we decided on St Bees Island for the afternoon stop.

We had noticed impending storms on the rain radar on bom.gov.au and we noted they were heading our way, so we were aware that we needed swinging room. Just as we were going to put the anchor down in one of the southern anchorages on St Bees, there was an announcement over the radio from Mackay VMR. "Dangerous thunderstorm warning" etc. And yes, our stress levels suddenly shot up.

The bay we had chosen was already occupied by a few boats, with one boat leaving and three coming in. The shallower substrate was closer to the shore, which of course meant it was closer to the reef. With the impending south west storm we were potentially going to swing around into the rocks.

Our first attempt at anchoring, after motoring around the bay to find a suitable spot, didn't take. Anchoring in a substrate that is labelled sand and coral isn't ideal to do the first time under stressful conditions. Pulling the anchor up to potentially try again wasn't easy. Toward the end of the chain near the anchor the winch was struggling. Really struggling. It turns out that I had managed to pick up an enormous piece of coral, bigger than the anchor, and I couldn't budge it. So the first thing we had to do was get rid of it. I swapped spots with Andrew and I steered the boat out to sea whilst Andrew and the anchor had a conversation with a boat hook...which is the only thing the boat hook was used for today, as no fish were caught on the line we had out earlier, even with three changes of lure.

One of Andrews comments in the middle of the search for a good spot to put the anchor down, had been that we would, in thunderstorm conditions, possibly be better off 'at sea.' By the time he had got the coral off the anchor i we had checked the rain radar again. There seemed to be two main storm cells coming from the west. There seemed to be a gap between them. Perhaps we would head for the



gap. Zooming in on a phone is an imprecise activity, but it looked like St Bees may be impacted by the edge of the southern cell. Keswick Island next to it, where the majority of the boats were anchored, however, seemed to be going to miss the northern cell, which was now turning to the north east.



We motored toward the gap in the storm on the western side of Keswick Island. We battened the covers down, Andrew tidied up the mainsail, and I rescued everything in from the tinnie. In the end, all was good. After the worst of the storms had passed, we anchored in Arthur Bay where the only other boat was a small mono. A power boat which had moved to Horseshoe Bay between the two islands, returned west to anchor the other side of the mono.



Our anchor was finally down for the night at 1620. Before stopping the winds had progressively got stronger - we had dropped the genoa in 26 plus knot gust. The highest gust we saw overnight was 30.1 knots.



Keswick Island to Middle Percy Island

25th October 2022. The anchor was up, the main sail was up (with a reef) and the genoa was out at 0650. We were heading to Middle Percy Island. But so was every man and his boat! I had seen boats leave when I looked outside after I had got up. Some no doubt will be going to Curlew Island, but by 0720 when our boat speed was in the 9s and our SOG in the 8s there were obviously at least 3 boats in front of us on their way to Middle Percy...all showing up on AIS.

'Ovation' started outside our rum line - I suspect from Victor Bay - but ended up crossing not far in front of us - which was a pain as I had turned off the line to pass him to port only to discover we were still converging. We ended up passing them to starboard.

Andrews question at 0715 after he had put the log details in was...'what are we going to do if Whites Bay is full'? I guess we keep going, I replied.

The highest SOG we saw on the gauges was 12 knots but that was surfing. Mostly it was 8s, 9s, 10s and occasionally 11 knots. It was a fabulous, albeit, slightly frisky sail, and a quicker journey than I expected. The anchor was down around 1515 at the western end of bay with another cat. Four cats and two monos were up the eastern end. There was still room for two or three boats in between.

I saw 30.1 knots on the gauges during the evening. Bom.gov.au indicated it was going to calm down. It hadn't by time we went to bed at 2115.

Breakfast had been cereal, lunch was pumpkin scones, and dinner was red chicken curry. We spent the afternoon relaxing and reading.



Leaving Keswick Island

Middle Percy Island to Port Clinton

26th October 2022. The anchor was up at 0550 this morning and we headed around the west side of South Percy with a genoa only. We then swapped to the spinnaker and it was a very slow start. It wasn't as if the boat speed was terrible...a respectable 5.5 knots (ish) but at one stage, with the tide, we were crawling at 2.4 knots SOG.

But it didn't get any better, and the occupants of the motor boat which passed us at 0723 must have had a smile on their faces. We persisted for five hours and eventually socked the spinnaker and turned an engine on at 1045. We had only been doing 1 knot boat speed at that point...even less SOG.

The deck at our feet in the helm station was a blood bath, strewn with dead and bloody bodies. Somehow we had managed to have attracted a swamp worth of insects overnight. Whilst there were lots of moths, it seemed like thousands of mozzies had invaded as well, and it was a war of survival - yet few were squashed unless they attacked first. Other bugs abounded around the boat and we were hoping they would all realise that their home was disappearing behind them and head back to base..

An hour after the engines were on the spinnaker was up again...for all of 45 minutes.

The wind dropped, the angle awkward and apart from motor sailing with genoa for around an hour in the afternoon, we did rely on the sails for only half the day.

There were three existing boats in Delacombe Bay , Port Clinton when we arrived (another cat turned up before dark) and nine boats in the bay to the west. The anchor was down at 1745. It had been a twelve hour travel day.



Delacombe Bay, Port Clinton to Long Beach, Great Keppel Island

27th October 2022. It was already hot when we got up at 0550. There was no wind. All five boats in our little bay were facing south-east

The mono in our anchorage had gone by 0700. The cat that came in last yesterday lifted anchor at 0730. There was still no wind.

Several boats from the bay next door had gone and then so did the boat next to us. The line of boats heading south were all going to be motoring. Our gauges indicated 0.00 True until around 0730 and then the wind was only blowing around 3 knots. Wind predictions didn't expect 10 to 15 knots to arrive until the 1000 tranche.

I spent morning on a rust run, washing clothes, washing dishes, and wiping the bugs from the floor of the helm station.

At 1030 the anchor was up and we motor-sailed out of anchorage with one engine on and the genoa out. Shortly after this we turned east and the engine went off. At 1115 we turned down wind to 120 degrees and put the spinnaker up. We weren't going fast, 5 to 6 knots initially, and we weren't quite in the right direction, but we were heading south with a very smooth sail.

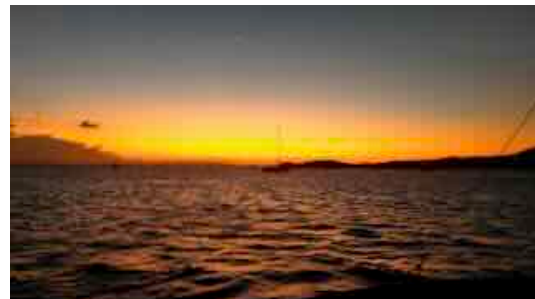
The spinnaker was up until 1615. At this point True wind had picked up and apparent wind was around 16 to 17 knots, probably at the peak of being comfortable to be able to drop the sail without any damage. We managed to drop the spinnaker and deploy the genoa without turning on an engine; which was a first for us. We had been expecting the stronger winds, but they had come in later than anticipated - by the time we got them they had been supposed to be receding. We furled the genoa and turned the engines on as we turned south west around the bottom of Great Keppel Island. It was now gusting to 22.9 knots.

The anchor was down in a busy anchorage (with over forty other boats) at 1830. Last light was officially 1829.

After dinner we spent quite some time admiring the night sky. Above us was clear and the stars, magnificent. But the 'stars' of the show were not hydrogen or helium orbs above us, they were the two lightening shows to the south-west-of us; each heading east. We were very grateful we weren't further south

At around 2200 the wind very quickly shot up. And I immediately knew we were getting touched by the top of one of the storms.

We weren't getting rain or lightening but we had been spun around and now had a lee shore - the wind was blowing south-east - I am not sure if we were getting any protection from Humpy



Island. It was a little amusing that we had watched the sun set behind Humpy Island on the way into the anchorage earlier this evening, and I was now watching a fast moving lightening show light the island up from the other direction. Initially we didn't have the gauges on but sometime later Andrew did see 23 knots when we had turned all our instruments on. Fortunately our anchor held.

Great Keppel Island to North West Island, Capricorn Cays group

28th October 2022. The mooring at North West Island was picked up at 1430. We had been on this particular mooring before - there is another one but I don't know where the other one is - apparently it is also up the north end of the island, as relayed to me by a catamaran who had been following us East all day. He had started later but had always been going faster, leading me to believe he had his motors on all the way. Of course we started with a reef in the main, which we shook out around 1000. And we are also a heavy boat.

Our anchor had been lifted at GKI at 0700, the main up at 0715. The genoa however wasn't out until we had wind at a reasonable angle as we turned around the top of Half Way Island, and at around 0730 and the engines went off. Unfortunately they were back on at 0755 when we found ourselves wallowing at 1.8 to 2.4 knots.. The wind had been light when we got up, around 5 knots, but it was blowing 10 knots when we started to leave; unfortunately it dropped off again soon after this and didn't pick up again for some time.

When it did pick up, we had two good hours of sailing before the wind direction changed and our SOG reduced. So the engines went on again. This was predominantly because of timing; if we weren't able to get a mooring and had to anchor we needed to be able to see the reef. We are, temporarily at least, in reef spotting territory, which means our movements are dictated by not only by weather but by the timing and sunlight angle.

An engine went back on at 1200. Apart from the boat following us out of GKI there were two other boats of note. One was to the south and because it wasn't all that far away I wondered whether it was heading for North West Island or Heron Island - the more time that elapsed the more I was convinced of the former. However that boat eventually turned off. The other boat was to the north, coming south from an interesting angled trajectory which almost suggested it might have started at Port Clinton. On the plotter this boat seemed to subtly regularly change which way it was facing, and I didn't know whether the boat was heading for North West or heading further south.



Early morning - GKI



Yikes - he is getting close!



I love North West; the birdlife is amazing! At dusk there are thousands of birds waiting to come in to roost.



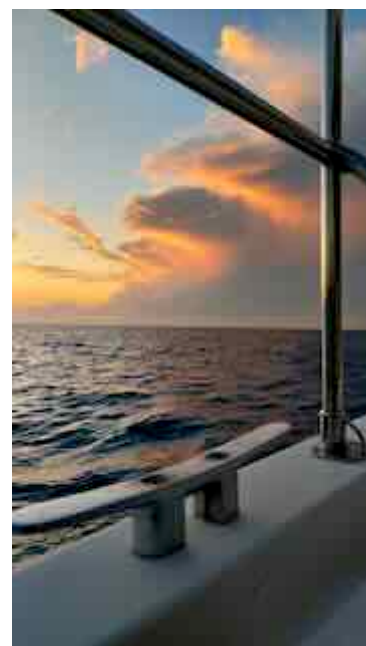
One very big organised group!

I had swapped places with Andrew when I cooked lunch and so spent a couple of hours sitting in the cool below the helm station. When I checked the oven for our lunch loaf I happened to look out the window. There was this boat almost on top of us! Andrew was trying to hail it as we were on a collision course. No response. In the end Andrew hit the horn five times (the second time he has had to do this recently) and suddenly there was a wave and some action. Instead of turning off to parallel us though, this boat sped up, crossed our bow within an uncomfortably small distance, and kept going. I am sure if we hadn't got them out of their stupor (or whatever they may have been doing) they would have run into a reef; there was clearly no one on watch! This boat dropped its sails just west of North West and I thought I was going to have to fight them for a mooring, but despite initially heading towards the mooring they turned around and kept going around the bottom of the reef. They weren't on AIS - I don't know where they ended up.

The boat behind us hailed us and asked what we were doing. I said we were going to try for a mooring but if it was too uncomfortable then we would drop it and anchor south of Tyron Island. Both crews were conscious of the coming southerly change. We picked up a mooring; the boat behind us anchored where we had anchored last year (their AIS symbol was on top of our anchor symbol on our chart plotter). I tried contacting them to say the conditions weren't too bad where we were, just in case they wanted the other mooring, but they were not answering.

Yes, we were front on to the swell here - that was up and down but not too bad and likely to change with change of tide and wind. But we weren't expecting the southerly change until the 0400 tranche tomorrow - I had been up at 0500 this morning. I guess I would be up early enough to deal with any major issues.

After the sails were packed up we relaxed. Thunder rumbled in the distance and we struggled with internet to check the bom.gov.au rain radar. Fortunately any tempests were a long way to the north and south of us.



North West Island to Heron Island

29th October 2022. There were hundreds of little fish hanging around Sengo at 0545 this morning, just like there were hundreds of mozzies hanging around Sengo at 0100 this morning. There were also hundreds of mozzies hanging around Sengo at 0400. And at 0445. So many mozzies in fact that my second attempt at removing a banging mooring buoy from the hulls (at 0400) was abandoned because of the attack of the proboscis troops all over my body. I retreated inside for long pants and sleeves before I went back outside again. I am covered this morning in bites.



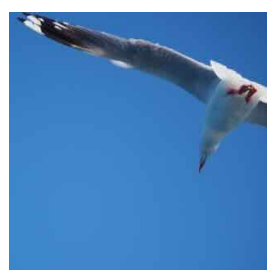
Whilst not completely smooth, it had been a relatively comfortable night, even with the interruptions for noise control. We dropped the mooring at 0740, had the sails up at 0750 and were happily sailing with the engines off, at 40 degrees to the wind, at 0800. In the wrong direction! We were heading south-west instead of south-east. Well at least it was south something, but we wanted Heron Island. At this trajectory we were going to Mast Head Island instead.



I had seen a large power boat ahead of us, all 89 feet of it according to AIS, but hadn't taken too much notice. Thankfully its captain was alert and radioed us to ask if we wanted to turn off the wind to go port to port, or keep on a starboard to starboard track. I didn't really want to go too much further west (although the COG was heading that way any way) so I requested the starboard to starboard pass if possible. The large power boat did a very obvious move west and then resumed its course.

After this boat had passed Andrew emerged and joined me in the cockpit. It was time to change direction so we made our first tack. The mooring at Heron Island was picked up at 1200 after spending four and a half hours, and at over 33 tacks, tacking directly into the wind.

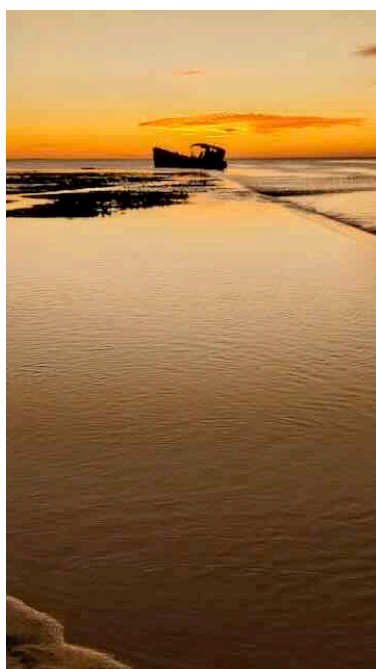
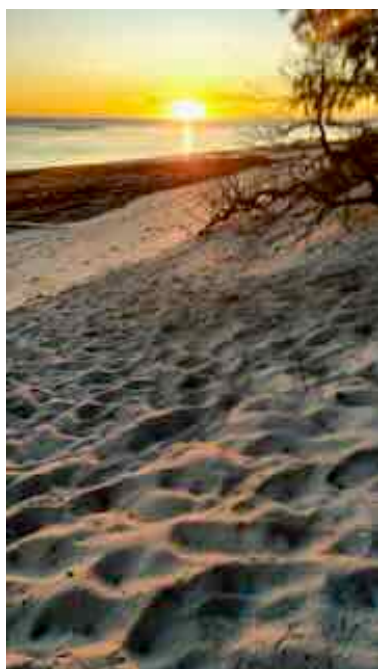
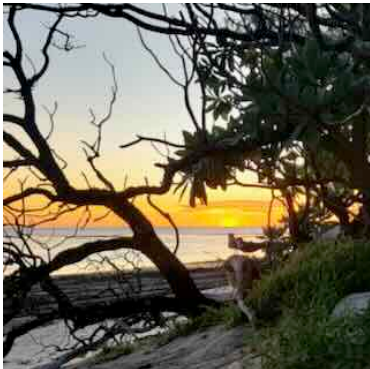
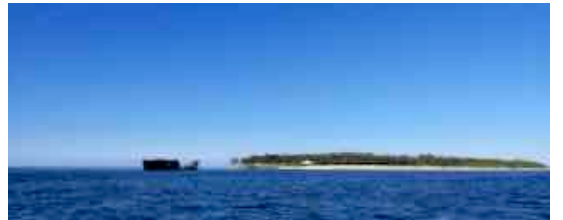
The mooring rope at Heron, was of course not on the side of the buoy we expected it to be, and once hooked up we immediately had issues with the location of the buoy compared with the boat. We have had issues here before; a combination of wind, tide



and the channel current, I suspect. There is not much we can do about it (apart from move to the other mooring over at Wistari Reef) so I guess we are going to have to put up with the bump, bump, bump all day and night. Both the wind and swell seemed to be coming up the channel between the two reefs, and the conditions not ideal to get off boat.

At around 1600 I noticed the seas had evened out, the mooring buoy was where it was supposed to be at the front of Sengo, and we headed to shore to catch up with S (who was the reason we were visiting Heron in the first place). We got back to Sengo just on dusk. Dinner was left over muffins.

Wildlife today; five cuttlefish lined up in a row at North West Island - almost if they were laughing at us, brown boobies, turtles, bridled terns, black noddies, an unidentified gull, unidentified small fish, flying fish, and a rail and juvenile at Heron Island (these curious birds came so close they almost walked over our feet).





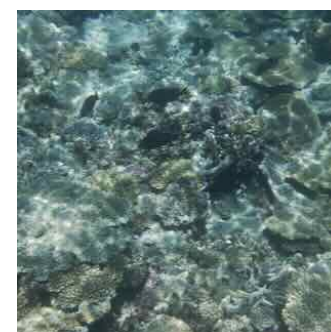
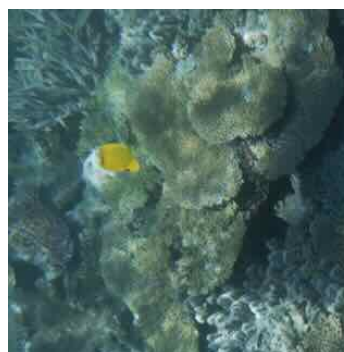
Heron Island

30th October 2022. I was up around 0500. Before the sun, but not by much. The night had been calm and I woke up at one stage to suddenly think that something must be wrong - there had been no 'bumps' in the night. Of course now I was thinking about it I heard one, and then another, but they were so light that I ignored them. And they were more like 'little taps.'

I got up, did the dishes, folded some clothes, got Andrew's paddle board out for some glueing, put my phone on charge, boiled the kettle and did some newsletter. I am waiting for photos which Andrew may have downloaded last night but I went to bed before retrieving them, and at 0550 he is not up yet to ask.

The phone/internet reception here is better than last time. Although not perfect and not strong and occasionally still cuts out. But at least we have a chance - last time we were hoisting the dongle up the mast to get reception just to email across a few hundred meters.

The power boat that had come in to take the mooring at Wistari Reef last night at dusk, had moved on this



morning, but I did notice a boat on the mooring at the other end of Heron Reef so maybe they didn't move far.

Snorkelling. In mostly clear water.

Unfortunately it was at the top of the tide when we got in the water and my camera photos have a blue hue and are not necessarily clear because we were so far away from the coral and fish - and of course the fact the back screen fogged up even before I got the camera in the water meant I didn't know what I was taking photos of didn't help.

But this 'reef,' scattered on top of the plain substrate was a lovely garden mosaic, with different colours, sizes, shapes and textures. There were lots more 'greens' here. Our first choice of snorkel spot was taken with a local boat so we braved the outside of the reef instead. And I was really pleased we had. Even Andrew didn't complain - too much.. He is never going to be happy - he has dived on some of the well known overseas locations before the climate had shown an impact. Here however he saw more algae in the water than I did - but compared with our last three attempts at looking under the water's surface, the view was crystal clear.

Back on boat we caught up with S again, downloaded some photos, wiped down the davits for salt and rust (mostly), read a lot and prepped to head back to the mainland tomorrow.

A big party group made a raucous noise from the jetty in the late afternoon to early evening. I am not sure whether it was normal resort guests or current conference attendees, but their acrobatics and somersaults off the jetty were quite impressive - I would have added them to the olympic diving team.

Sunset was subdued with the smoke from the mainland forming a thin line along the horizon. It had been a magnificent day. There was hardly a cloud in the sky, the winds had been light and the seas calm.

Wildlife: turtle whilst snorkelling, reef herons (white and grey morph), black noddies, brown boobies, an unidentified gull, bridled terns.



Heron Island to the mainland; heading toward Gladstone

31st October 2022. The mooring was dropped at 0619. The sails up and engines off at 0638. The heading was 248 degrees M.

For the most part today's sail was supposed to be across the wind and I was expecting a slightly forward of beam reach, given the forecast was for straight northerlies. But early on there was a hint of east so the apparent wind angle did dip behind 90 degrees on occasion. And got to about 120 when we finally turned south west for the run to the top of Facing Island. We mostly got winds ranging in the 9s and 10s True although we had started off with 6s and 7s. The wind only really got a bit frisky, as it was expected to do, after we had travelled down the North Channel along the top of Facing Island towards Gladstone. Here winds gusted up to 20 knots. Of course this was precisely at the time of limited manoeuvrability and when we wanted to drop the sails!

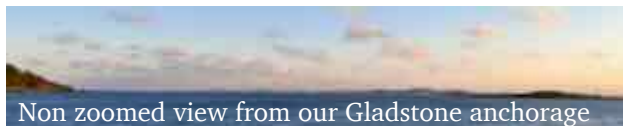
Anchor was down at around 1400. A late lunch was then had of left over chicken curry and green pea pasta. The afternoon was spent surfing the web, reading and chatting to friends.

Swallows were curious within a short time of us putting the anchor down and visited periodically during the afternoon. They are welcome to visit, just not to make a mess or get too comfortable.

Other birds of note today included bridle terns on mooring buoys leaving Heron Island, black noddies and brown boobies out to sea, and we heard channel billed cuckoos and emerald doves in the evening.



Sunrise Heron Island



Non zoomed view from our Gladstone anchorage



Dolphin Olympics. I am going to sack the newly appointed olympic team from the revellers jumping acrobatics off the Heron Island jetty yesterday; today's athletes were even more impressive. A pod of local dolphins swam past us heading south. I heard big splashes off the the side and when I got up to investigate saw the most magnificent circus show. This wasn't just your average dolphin jumping out of the water in the normal forward leap. This was a vertical display -high jumps, somersaults with twists, frolicking to the fullest extent. And it wasn't only just one individual. There were several performers. Of course the rest of the pod just moved in typical dolphin fashion. After admiring them swimming past they turned around and headed back into the inlet to the north of us. Of course I didn't manage to get any photos of the acrobatic show.

