

Aboard Sengo



Broken Bay to Port Phillip Bay

When the weather allowed....



ENJOYING THE KAYAK

The first few days of the month

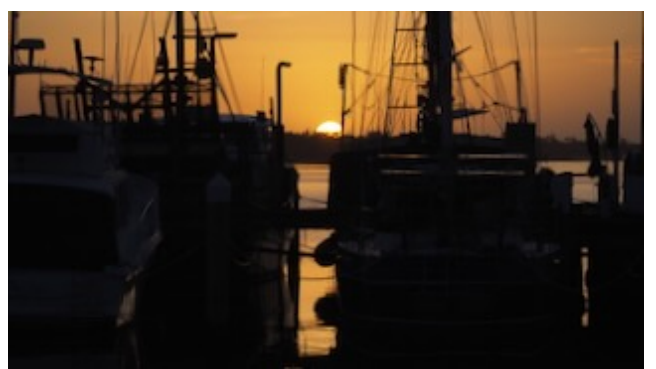
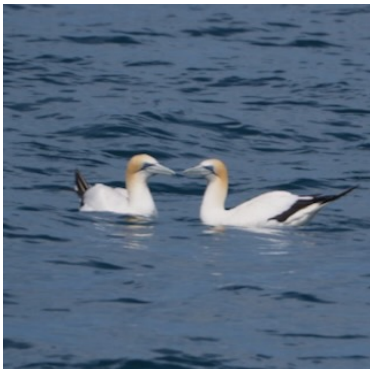
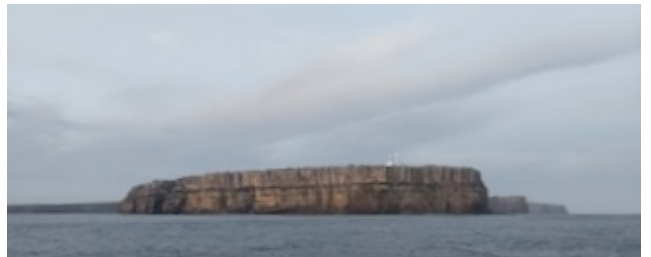
THE JOURNEY SOUTH

From the 5th December

TIED TO DOCK

Catching up with lost connections

We were still on the journey south at the beginning of December; we just needed to wait for the appropriate weather to continue our journey. Any winds that weren't 'on the nose' or 'too strong' would have done. Instead we had to wait for strong southerlies to pass through before we could exit Broken Bay, and then wait again before we exited Port Jackson. And then wait again before we exited Jervis Bay. And then wait again before we exited Eden! The stop over in Lakes Entrance was only overnight. We got to Port Phillip Bay on the 18th December - And then had to wait out strong southerly winds (this is becoming a habit) before we could get onto dock. At the start of the month we were in Kur Ring Gai Chase National Park, New South Wales. At the end of the month we were tied up in a marina pen in Port Phillip Bay, Victoria.



Kur-ring-gai Chase National Park

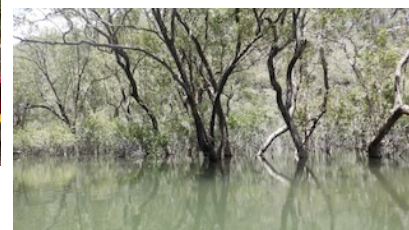
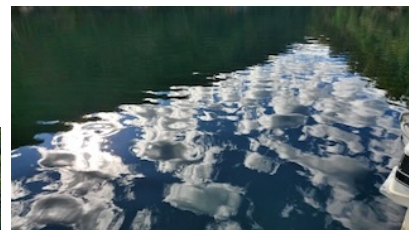
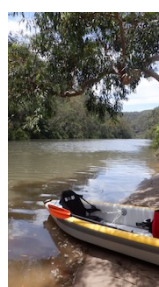
Houseboat Bay

Cowan Creek Paddle

1st December 2023. Andrew was up before me but I was still up, breakfasted, and had pumpkin muffins in the oven, by 0835. Light cumulous scattered across the sky. There was little wind. The predominant bird calls this morning were channel-billed cuckoos, eastern whip-birds and cravens. My 'first morning activities' included finishing yesterday's Wordle, Quordle and Octordle and then getting today's done (I had got distracted yesterday and didn't finish them - most answers are known words - no need for *onomastics* here, but occasionally there are groups of letters that I can only wonder what people were thinking when the words were devised). And over breakfast there was of course our usual Brexit Youtube entertainment.

We decided on another paddle today. This time we put the rudder pedals in the boat for Andrew to rest his feet on - a lot more solid than the foam ring provided, and a lot more stable. We were however, still not going to put the rudder on!

Andrew had given a time for a 1030 departure but it was 1115 when we paddled away from boat, heading upstream, exploring Cowan Creek's nooks and crannies when we could access them. Near where the overhead powerlines cross the creek, we stopped briefly on a sand spot and adjusted our seats. At 1330 we turned around...we had reached the furthest navigable point (with our craft under the conditions), and at 1340 left the sandbank area again, having stopped briefly again to readjust our seats. We got back to boat feeling pretty good under the circumstances, although Andrew was clearly at the

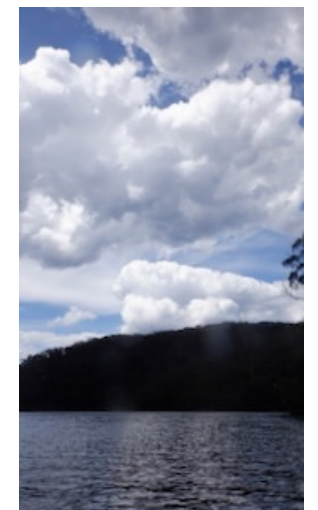
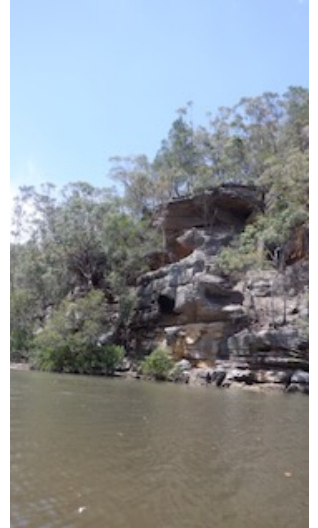
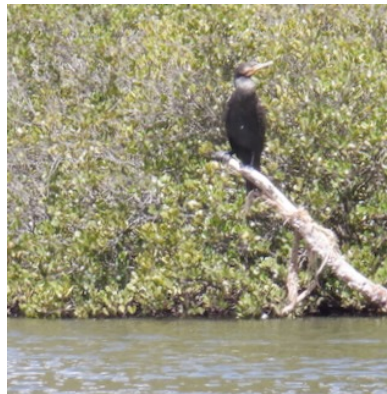


end of current enthusiasm as he didn't even wish to explore around the pointy bit of Houseboat. We were back on Sengo at 1435.

Birds. Channel billed cuckoos, little pied cormorant, black (Great?) Cormorant and a heron. And lots of birds flitting amongst the waterside vegetation: some were clearly honeyeaters. And we saw at least a brown, and a lewin (because the yellow patch was too big for brown). A koel was heard, as was a craven.

Visual highlights of the trip included fish jumping, and admiring the clouds changing shape-.

Back at boat two white-bellied sea-eagles flew low around the boat, and at 1700 a small mono anchored behind us. Currawongs and kookaburras sang in the twilight.



Houseboat Bay to Sting Ray Bay

2nd December 2023. The lightest of mists/rain disturbed the surface of glass when I got up this morning at 0700. The sky was a uniform light grey. A currawong called for a minute, then stopped. Gradually other less definitive sounds emerged from the bush, resulting in a *gallimaufry* of notes.

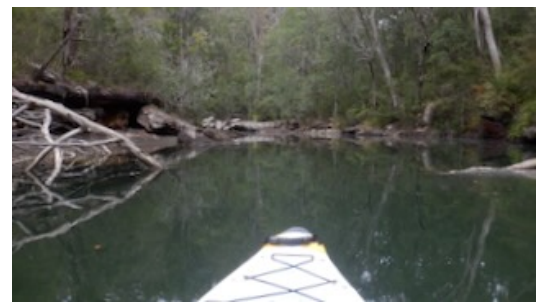
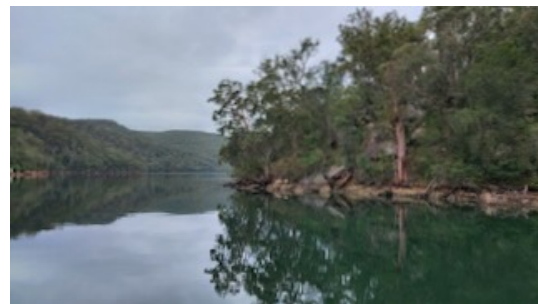
At 0730 the raindrops were heavier. The loud bird call at this time was a channel-billed cuckoo. Bush birds were still a subtle background noise. A couple of yahoos on jetskis yelled up the creek.

I had suggested to Andrew that perhaps we could pick up one of the two moorings near Cottage Point and paddle down to the marina at Akuna Bay for lunch. He considered the distance a bit too far, and probably with a big relief to our bank balance (Cottage Point kiosk is expensive enough, the restaurant at Akuna Bay is scary), he suggested an alternative; to pick up a mooring at Sting Ray or Twilight Bay on Smiths Creek and paddle to Cottage Point for lunch.

The mooring at Houseboat Bay was dropped at 0803. The rain had stopped. The sky was still grey. The only movement at the anchorage was a child rowing the tender of the mono that had anchored behind us last night. After a motor down stream, a mooring was picked up in Sting Ray Bay at 0840. The two other boats here were a chartered houseboat from Brooklyn, and a large sailing cat.

So we paddled off to Cottage Point for lunch; managing the bow waves from boats (and a seaplane) in the main channel. Getting to shore was interesting. We tied up to the Kiosk jetty which fortunately had a lowish platform with which to assist us (they hire out kayaks so have this facility for their customers). Getting back into the kayak after lunch almost ended in disaster - our technique for getting back in the kayak leaves a lot to be desired, and the near capsizing was watched, I imagine, with amusement by other kiosk customers.

On the way back to boat we did a short paddle around the moored boats at Cottage Point before heading back to our own, coming across a lost group of four paddlers who were looking for Smiths Creek. Well, you are here,



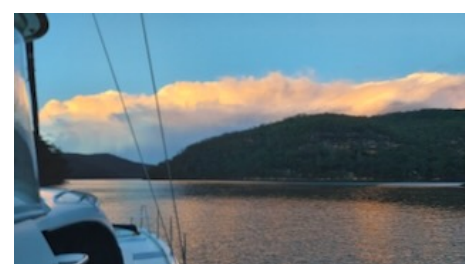
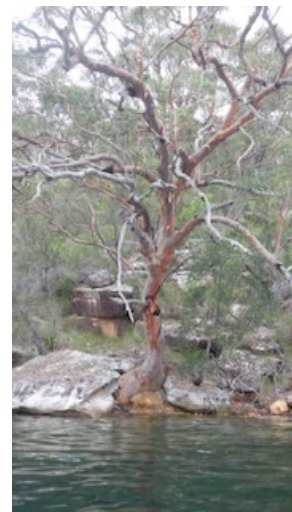
we told them. I admire their tenacity. They had started near the Taronga Zoo in Port Jackson yesterday. However I cry at their lack of planning: they didn't have a chart, or a map, or anything electronic to check. I am not even sure where they would have found good ground to pitch a tent!

We were back on boat around 1400.

Just before 1600 there was splashing off the back. I went outside in my underwear. Can I help you, I asked. For some inexplicable reason four people had decided to swim over (one paddled in a small boat) to our back steps. I didn't want you going underneath or getting too close, I told them. They were already too close. Oh sorry, they said. No they were not! Really. Some people just have no respect. These four were not the only ones on their boat. I prepared myself for a noisy night

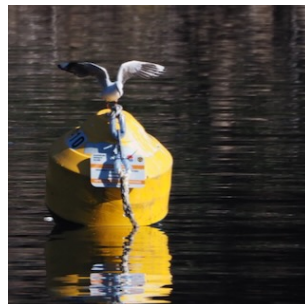
After doing the evening dishes I checked the rain radar. Fortunately any storms on the radar were not a current threat. Outside the sky was full of lovely colours but these had gone by the time I got the panoramic camera out.

I am not sure what made me go outside at 2100. I was trying to ignore the party boat. I could see flashes and I couldn't work out where they were coming from. The big blue cat next door had all its lights on, but nothing was flashing. The party boat had a string of thin party lights but the lighting wasn't obnoxious (the wind was). And Andrew's computer wasn't reflecting light from his screen. So, I looked a bit further away for inspiration. The light show was beyond the hills to the south. Omg! A quick look at the rain radar, and noting the thunderstorm warning from the Bom App, had me grabbing Andrew for assistance to rescue the kayak out the front (we turned it upside down and tied it securely to the front deck). By 2120 the radar seemed to show Sydney would get a whopping... we, fortunately, were only going to get minimal rain. They wouldn't know it was happening but I am sure the kayakers camped further up Smiths Creek would be grateful of their luck if they knew they were missing some really nasty stuff.



Sting Ray Bay to Castle Bay

3rd December 2023. Black cockatoo screeches and friar bird squawks woke us up at the *advent* of the morning. It was 0600. At 0630 it was kookaburras and bush birds. The sun was up but behind the headland. The party boat was thankfully quiet. Strange noises came from the big blue cat...I assumed the tender was being lifted onto its davits. The big blue cat left just after 0700. There was movement of one on the party boat



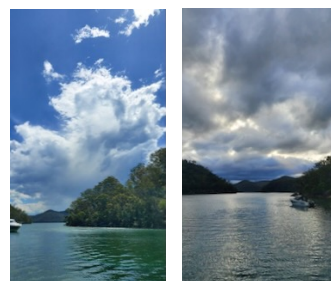
At 0720 channel-billed cuckoos started to squawk again. Possibly the noise came from the pair we saw yesterday, just before we chatted to the kayakers.

Andrew stopped procrastinating and grabbed the drill to install 'handles' onto the catwalk run to help him with the spinnaker lines. The project didn't get far...he found the bolts he had were just a little bit too short!

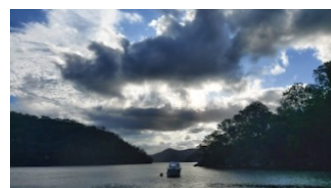
By 1230 we had had a mixture of boats come and go into the bay and ended up with a pigeon pair of pleasure powerboats on the adjacent moorings. Three moorings, three boats. All respectfully quiet.

Today's plan was to head closer to the entrance of Broken Bay for our upcoming departure. We had discussed America Bay. There was however a mix of weather coming up, from a mix of directions. And storms were forecast. Andrew decided that he would prefer to be in a location where the close terrain is higher than we are. With this in mind we decided if there was a mooring free at Castle Bay we would take it. Castle Bay is protected on three sides. Our mooring at Sting Ray Bay was dropped at 1305. A mooring was picked up at Castle Bay at 1330.

We didn't get an off-boat activity today but there was educational reading in the afternoon



In the evening there was a loud bump outside whilst we were watching the Italian news. Nothing was obvious when I went outside to check but I caught a flash from the corner of my eye and came in to check the rain radar. Just after I retreated inside we heard thunder. It started to rain at 2015.



Birds: At Sting Ray Bay we heard galahs and Channel-billed cuckoos. At Castle Bay we were witness to white-bellied sea-eagles soaring. A whistling kite was heard through the afternoon. A screechy owl was heard late at night.

We went to bed at 2245.

A bigger than expected paddle...discussing logistics

4th December 2023. At just before 0700 when I got up skies were grey. Bush birds and a koel called locally. Channel-billed cuckoos called from a distance. There was no wind. A plane broke the ambience.

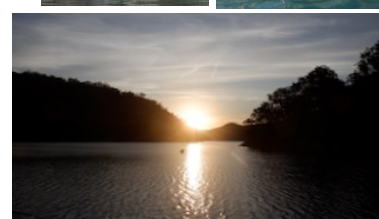
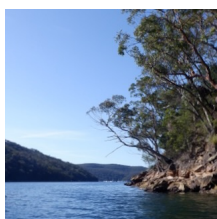
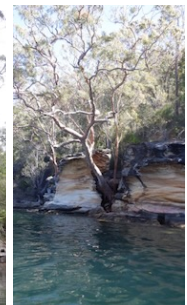
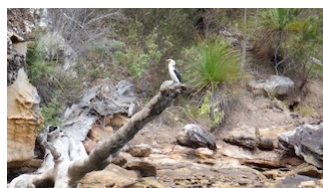
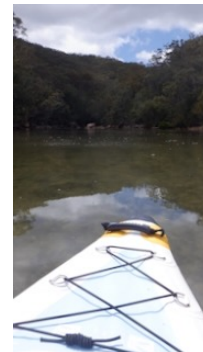
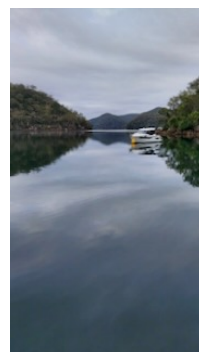
We paddled up Yoemans Bay this morning - a short but satisfying paddle. After lunch we discussed gear carrying for an upcoming trip and checked to see if it would fit in the kayak. At 1500 we left for a slightly longer paddle - to Akuna Bay marina! The paddle to Akuna from here is even longer than it would be from Cottage Point (because we have to go past Cottage Point anyway) and I was surprised Andrew suggested it.

However we took the challenge, and battled the oncoming wind coming along Coal and Candle Creek. We got to Akuna, pulled the kayak out, stretched our legs and paddled back again. The restaurant was closed (as we knew it would be) but the ice-cream freezer that I was hoping would be in the marina office, was actually in the closed restaurant, so there was no cheeky refreshment as a reward; the *mien* of the staff member I asked about the ice-cream was not exactly welcoming.

Akuna Bay marina is in a lovely spot, tucked away from weather. Access to it by car is through the National Park however and not near 'civilisation.' There were some cats on end-betths (t-heads) so if they were available at a push we could tie up here.

We were back on Sengo at 1750 having vaguely retraced our route (with a tad more efficiency - ie cutting corners). We were both a bit tired, and the wind had got a bit chilly for the last section.

Dinner was fish and salad.





The first step south...

leaving the Broken Bay area

Castle Bay to Store Cove, Port Jackson

5th December 2023. We were awake around 0600 but dozed away until around 0800. We had breakfast and did the dishes and then started prepping the boat. Currawongs, channel-billed cuckoos and bush birds provided the morning musical entertainment.

The mooring was dropped around 0950. The main sail was put up between Jerusalem Creek and Cowan Cove at 1000. It took us two hours to get to the Broken Bay entrance. The wind was too light to sail in, and on the nose, blowing from 1.8 to 6 knots. As we passed America Bay at 1010 the water was riddled with large jelly fish. As we approached the Broken Bay entrance the wind was still blowing around 5 knots or under. It was still on the nose. The outgoing tide was giving us a 2-knot advantage.

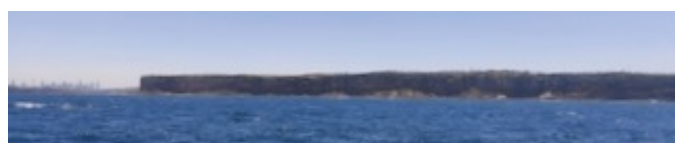
Mercator I passed at 1032; it seems they came over to have a look. There were friendly hand waves all around



The genoa was furled out and engines went off around 1210 as we rounded Barrenjoey Head. Wind speed was now 14 knots plus True. The wind picked up to Apparent 17 to 20 knots. We turned to ease this but had to get around Long Reef before we could aim for Sydney Heads. Andrew was fiddling with 'reefing on the run' and manoeuvres to avoid



the reef meant we got rather close to a charter boat (I didn't see it until we had tacked!).



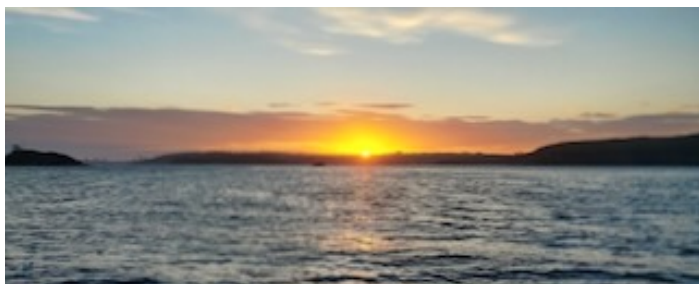
The anchor was down near Store Cove at 1415.

The afternoon was spent taking note of weather forecasts including the Pacific and Queensland cyclone update.

From our anchorage we could see big boats racing to the west: **Money Penny** and **Wild Oats X**, no doubt practice runs for their *cognoscente* crews. We had noticed little boats heading out of the Heads with a training inflatable on our way in. And several mid-sized boats were avoided whilst dropping the sails. Ferries were crossing to and from Manly. It was, as usual, a busy waterway.

All moorings were taken at Quarantine Beach. Of course one was dropped just after we set the anchor. There were obvious day boats in the vicinity of where we wished to anchor, one, very clearly, a Bucks Party! But there were others that we expected to be here overnight. We left plenty of room in front of us with 65m chain for the change in wind direction. We just hoped nobody anchored between us and the ketch to our north east.

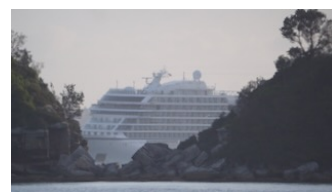
I didn't see the name of the party boat with the Bucks Party. A photo from an obscure angle proved it wasn't 'Elyssium', the boat which had given us anchoring grief here on a previous occasion. The boat very cheekily exited within a few meters. A photo shows how close. One young lady on back was wearing red bikini bottoms. She had nothing on top! I had a great view of her bare chest - even from within the mesh of the front cockpit!



Still anchored off Store Cove... or 'Again!'

6th December 2023. 'Quick, get the engines on! We are dragging!' It was not the first thing I was expecting to say this morning! I had woken up at 0345. The southerly had come in, and according to our gauges, we were at full stretch; the lights of the other two boats seemed a good distance away. As I looked out the window this morning when I got up however, the cat near us seemed just that little bit too close. As I had accidentally left the gauges on we didn't have to wait for the chart plotter to fire up; the graphics did not tell a good story.

The two moorings near Quarantine Bay had been taken last night. I thought there was a third but there wasn't. So after pulling up the anchor and circling around for a couple of minutes, we put the anchor back down in the same spot. In the mean time the cat behind us was picking up its anchor. Whether it was because it was now swinging too close to the rocks, or because we were getting closer to it, I don't know. And I didn't ask as they motored past...I was perhaps not willing to



hear the answer. I don't believe either of us were feeling *comity*.

After all that excitement I was just happy to spend the rest of the morning sitting in the front cockpit; with only the middle open so I didn't get too cold, and listen to the eastern whip birds calling from shore

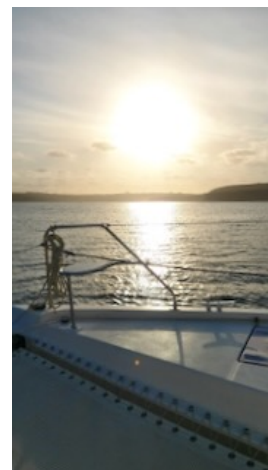
Around 0830 one mono dropped its mooring at Quarantine and headed our way. It settled inside a cat on the outer edges of Store Cove. The depth of water is shallower there so I guess there was less chain put out. The cat however moved off. Was the one mono too close or did they have other plans?

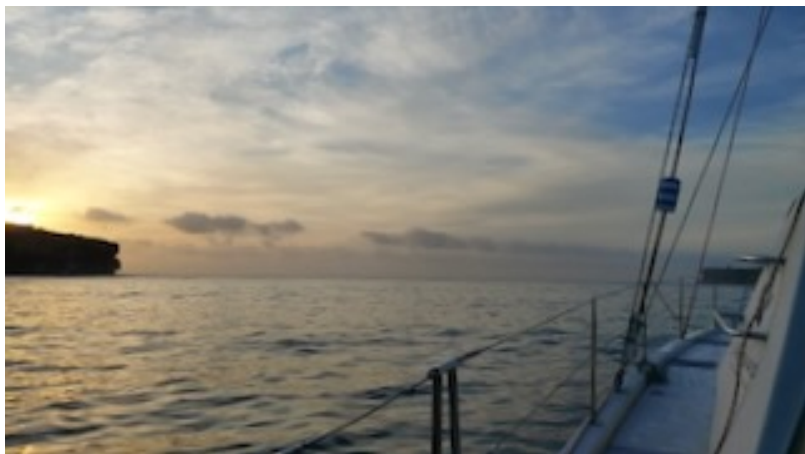
At 0900 the mono on the second mooring dropped it, raised his main sail and sailed away.

Just before 1000 the corporate mono, which had been anchored to our south yesterday, came in to anchor off Store Cove again..south west of existing mono. There was a very brief kookaburra call

A rather fancy gin palace anchored between us and the boats in Store Cove. Whilst some crew set up some fun equipment (blow-up slides etc), the rather large tender went to shore to pick up the boat's guests. It turned out to be a children's party - the participants/guests around low-teens at a guess. Someone clearly has money!

We kept an eye on all these boats all day. And on our position!





Store Cove, Port Jackson to Jervis Bay

Shearwaters or sheer waters

7th December 2023. The alarm was on for 0500. The anchor was up at 0550. We were out Sydney Heads and had turned south by 0630. There was at this point little wind. Ideally we would have waited a few hours for the predicted wind to show up, but if we did that we wouldn't get to Eden by dark tomorrow (based on my usual planning speed). Given the fickle weather... we still may not. The wind was blowing 3 to 5 knots when we got out of bed. When we left the anchorage it was blowing 0! We couldn't predict the wind- we may as well be trying to read *futhark*.

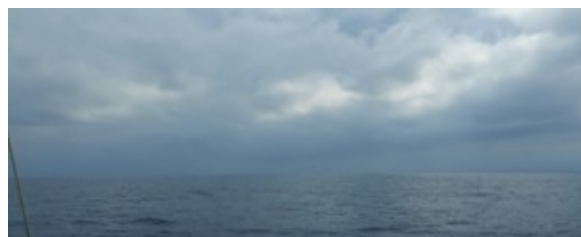
With motors on we were off Botany Bay at 0830. The wind had picked up a little. The spinnaker was up and engines were off at 0850

The predicted swell was for 1 to 1.5m. The swell we encountered started out around 1.5. It got to 2m plus. By 1100 it had settled down again to a comfortable 1m to 1.5m. The spinnaker was dropped around 1500. The engines went on. And then one wasn't. Not Again! We thought we had fixed this issue when we headed into

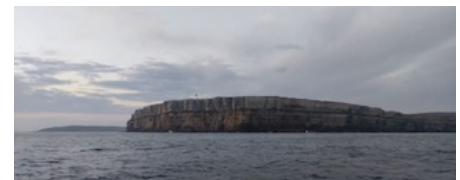
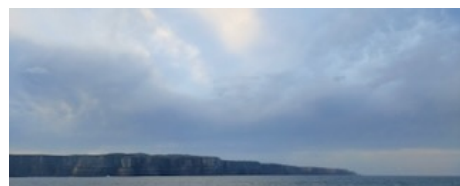
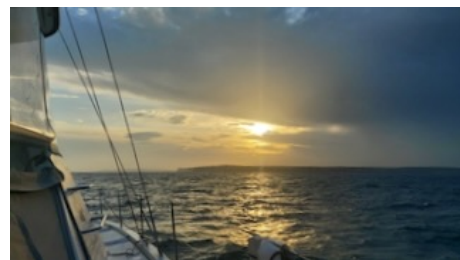


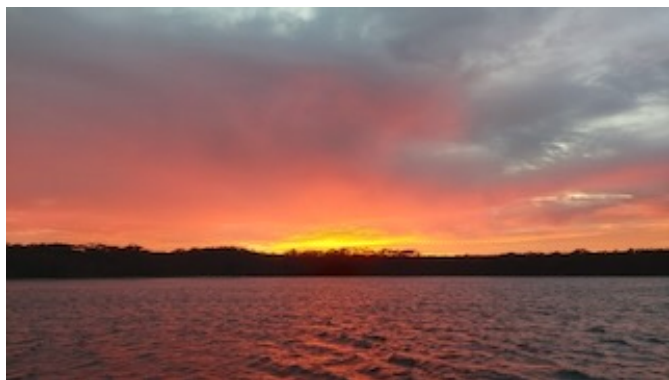
Port Stephens last month. Given this circumstance we changed our destination to Jervis Bay.

6 hours on, 6 hours off... is our usual daily shift schedule. I just didn't expect it to apply to today's sail to motor ratio. We entered Jervis Bay on dusk. It was dark by the time we were approaching where we wanted to anchor.



We spotted one boat by its lights near the campground. Our destination was further north but there were a couple of small lights in that direction. It wasn't obvious until we got closer that they were likely to be boats ...the boat to starboard a small pleasure boat perhaps. The boat to port had more lights. A bigger power boat maybe. Sundown had been officially at 2001 but the sun was behind a bank of clouds before that. Last light had been at 2030...





Jervis Bay

8th December 2023. When I had suggested to Andrew, as we were motoring north up the inside of Jervis Bay, that we could sleep in tomorrow, he had quipped. What 0530! I was thinking more of 0700, I replied. We had slept in until 0700 a couple of days ago. The irony was, we were both right. My eyes had opened to light outside and looking out the window I discovered the sky was light. I got up briefly to take a photo before getting back to bed. The phone indicated it was 0529. The next time I opened my eyes, my watch indicated it was 0705.

I got up, turned the wind gauges on, and looked for the boats we had seen last night. The small boat was still there, I suspect very close to the beach as the boat is not big and they may be camping. The larger boat was also obvious but not where I expected it to be...I thought it was closer but it appears to be in Hare Bay. The boat to our south was either gone, or not a boat at all (possibly the light pole near a jetty) and the two boats I had noted on AIS at Darling Roads last night (I suspect on the moorings...you wouldn't in your right mind be anchored on a lee shore with a fetch the entire length of Jervis Bay) were now heading north; I suspect the change in position *consequential* to the weather conditions. We will be getting neighbours-ish, but as they are anchoring in daylight I suspect they will head a lot further inshore.

The wind was blowing around 13 knots when I got up (as it had been when I went to

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bed). At 0840 it was blowing 2! And at one point we were facing south...clearly the tide was stronger than the wind...



Dolphins were spotted during the morning, and kookaburras and shore birds heard.

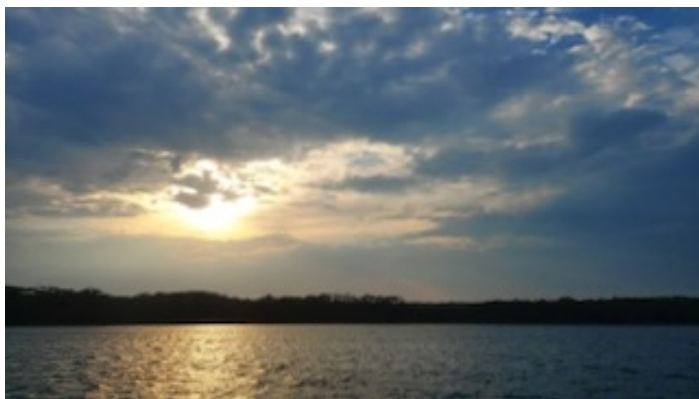
We had a fry-up for an early lunch, at around 1100, by which time the boat had turned back around with the increasing wind...but it wasn't much..wind speed was still less than 10 knots

Boat jobs: a small patch of clove oiling, wiped rust from stanchions. Other jobs/activities: read a bit, paid the credit card bill!

We saw 28 knots on gauges around 1530. There was rain over Eden (if we had made it there we would have got very wet!) and rain to our north and east. So far we were dry.

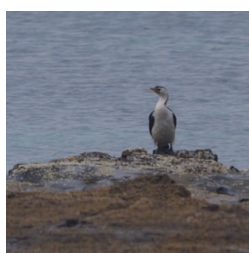
By evening there were four boats to our north..two monos, one cat and a powerboat.





Stretching the legs - and a cute surprise

9th December 2023. Having gone to bed last night relieved that the storms outside were going to miss us, I was woken at 0100 this morning to thunder and lightening - closer than before. The wind was initially calm and then it picked up. I checked the rain radar. We should be okay. I went back to bed.



We got up at 0630 ish. Bush birds and sea eagles called from shore. Wind was calm at 0700. All boats here...two sailing monos plus the power boat plus us, were facing south.

Andrew offered a morning walk, which I jumped on with glee. It was only along the beach (plus a small



piece of bitumen) and no chance to see any rare or *relict* wildlife (last time we had seen, on the other side of the bay, uncommon bristle-birds - our first) but it was a good stretch of the legs. The highlight was the baby pied oystercatcher.

We had blinis for lunch while a very curious jetskier (marine rescue member) got a bit close for comfort. Again I don't know if there is any respect of boundaries on the water in NSW)

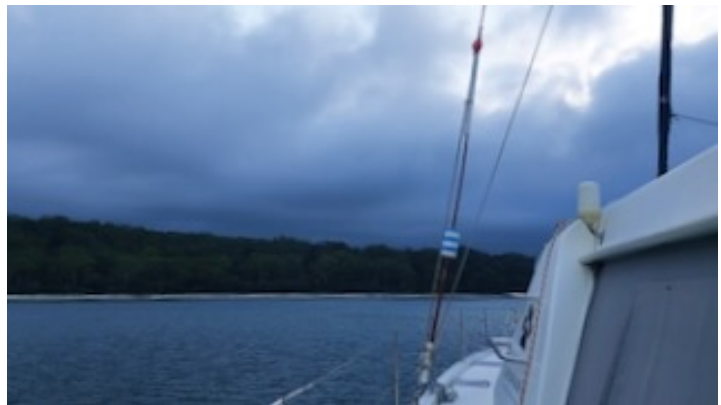
The wind was due to swing south so the anchor was up, the genoa out and the engines off at 1245. We weren't travelling fast (3.6 knots over ground) but we were on

schedule to get to Darling Roads when the really strong wind was due to hit.

A 'tall ship' anchored to the west turned out to be the Young Endeavour.

Two monos, a cat (tourist) and a powerboat were still at the northern end of Long Beach when we furled the genoa and put the engines on at 1440. Boat speed went from 9.0 knots to 0.3! Was this the calm before the storm?

We had been watching the observations on the internet from the weather stations up the New South Wales Coast. Jervis Bay Airport (not far to the south of us) at 1400 was blowing 9 knots gusting to 13 knots. At 1430 it was blowing 9 knots gusting to 17 knots. Wind direction was WSW.



The anchor was down west of Darling Roads with 80m chain out at 1445. The stronger wind was coming in - we were facing south.

An almost dragging collision

- but we weren't the untethered boat!

10th December 2023. We went to bed around 2200 last night and whilst there were some gusts, they were nowhere near as strong as expected. I woke up to lightening and thunder around 0100. The rain radar suggest that the oncoming rain, rather than taking a direct line to us, would split and the heavy parts of the storm were due to go both to the north and south of us. We got some rain but nothing more intense. Satisfied we would miss any major issues I went back to bed.

And woke up to a neighbour! 40m away! We had 75 plus meters of chain out and this boat had the entire bay (almost) and he parks next to us. Well, that's what I initially thought. We were lucky we weren't kissing.

The boat was old and I couldn't easily see its name. It wasn't on AIS. Do we get his attention and get him to move, or save the argument and just move ourselves. What a pain.

It was misty/mizzly/drizzly; not enough to show up on either rain radar that I checked...

When I used the golf ranger again to check our new neighbour - I read 31.9m, and I was standing on the top step, I knew we had to move soon! Andrew was already up but was making the bed and hadn't emerged upstairs. I yelled downstairs. 'We need to move. Now!'

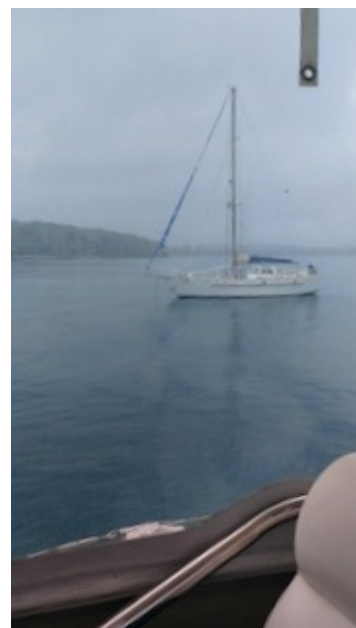
At 0740 the anchor was up. At 0805 the anchor was back down again a little to the east and far enough away from the moving object...192m!

An hour later, at 0840 I chatted to a fellow yachtie (J). Bush birds were calling from shore. It was still misty drizzly.

Whilst listening at our UK Brexit I heard an engine...prob a tinnie but possibly a generator on the boat we had moved away from. I looked outside. That boat was now 77m closer! He is definitely dragging! We picked up anchor again (yelled at the boat as we motored past - got no response) - and ended up picking up a mooring at Darling Roads. By this time we had contacted Marine Rescue Jervis Bay. It was now 1140.

Marine Rescue came out, spoke to the owner (who was on board but hadn't had the decency to answer our hails), and now assured us that the 'trouble' the owner was having was fixed. Apparently he was known to marine rescue regarding his engine issue - you think he would have had the decency to talk to us. If we hadn't have moved we would have had a collision - we are very lucky we saw the issue in time. It didn't look like a fancy boat - I suspect it was uninsured - and I suspect the owner wouldn't have cared if his steel boat had run into our plastic one! At some point early afternoon the boat disappeared from our view.

I managed to *wheedle* a walk at 1500. It wasn't a long walk but again, it was good to stretch the legs. We walked from the adjacent beach up toward to boat ramp at the point - unfortunately it is a facility designed only for

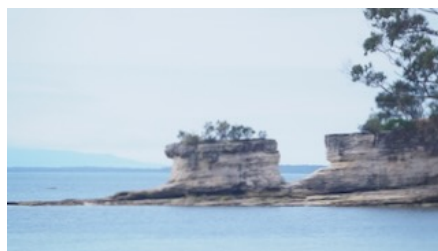
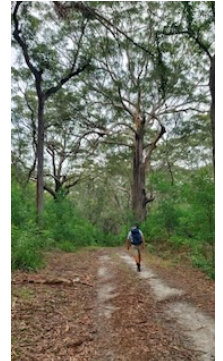
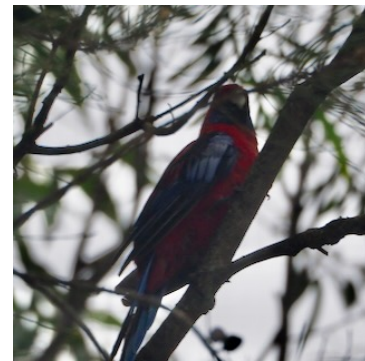
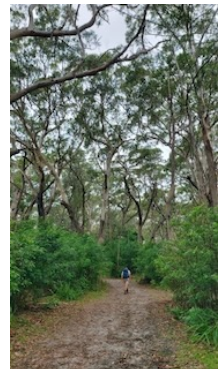
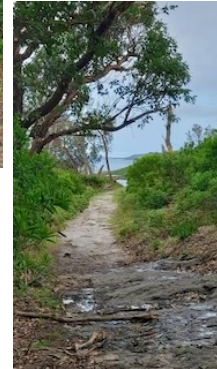
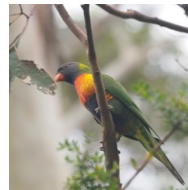
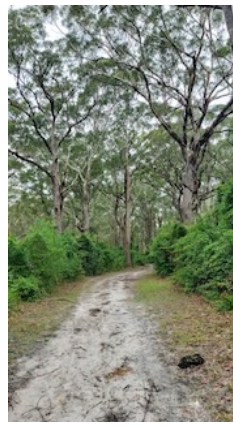




getting a boat in and out of the water - not for tying up for any length of time - that makes it useless for us. We diverted to Governor's Lookout before heading back to boat.

Birds: crimson rosellas, rainbow lorikeets, craven, pied oystercatcher, white-bellied sea eagle (heard), bush birds various sizes (heard), little black cormorants, kookaburra (heard). Lapwings (heard). A mopoke was heard later in the evening.

A small group of dolphins was seen passing through the anchorage - 4 times!



Jervis Bay to Eden

11th - 12th December 2023

11th December 2023. I had a niggly back so pulled myself out of bed at 0510. And heard a rumbling noise. An engine perhaps. I knew one boat was leaving this morning. I stuck my head outside. Two boats had their sails up and one was lifting the anchor. Everybody is leaving! At 0515 the small fishing boat on the other mooring motored away as well. A couple of oystercatchers were heard flying past



Around 0530 bush birds, craven, eastern whip birds and kookaburras were heard.

At 0845 we were dropping the genoa to put a temporary fix to the sun strip patch that was flapping off.

We dropped our mooring just after 1030. The mainsail was up at 1045. True wind speed was around 5 to 6 knots. The genoa was out and engines were off at 1106. True wind was still under 10 knots

The first wildlife seen was a flock shearwaters. Then a distant pod of dolphins. Then a penguin!

The engines went on at 1245. And off again at 1330. A couple of albatross circled at 1900 and 2000.

12th December 2024. I thought I put the alarm on for 2355 but it didn't go off. I woke with a start at 0020 and jumped out of bed. Andrew hadn't noticed...he was reading. My midnight to 0300 shift went without a hitch (when I finally started it). So did Andrew's 0300 to 0600 shift. At 0730 two albatross and a gannet passed, plus some shearwaters. The genoa was furled at 1015. The main dropped 1030. And we headed into Snug Cove. We didn't see any *natant* dolphins this morning.

We tried to tie up to a free mooring but decided we didn't want the bump so dropped it again. The anchor was down in slightly swelly seas at 1110.

Skies were grey.



Eden - Two Fold Bay

13th to 14th December 2023

13th December 2023. Because Andrew had dropped the second blind in our cabin to block out the lights from outside, the light in our cabin was more muted than usual, and perhaps I slept in longer. Or perhaps I was just tired and the *gulosity* of my body was trying to get back to normality after an overnight shift.

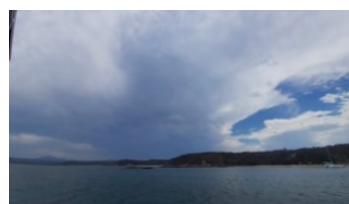
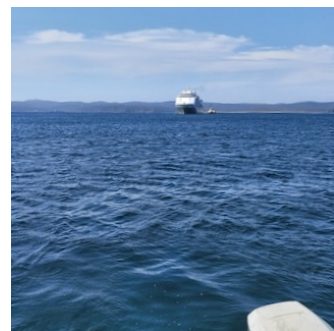
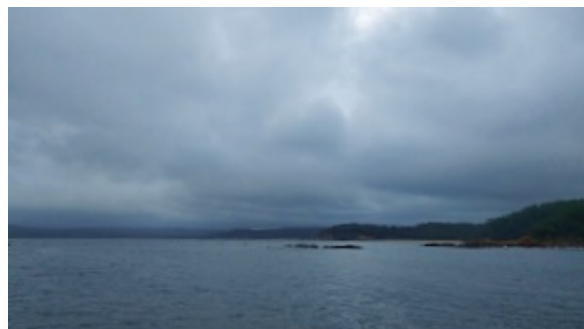
But what a contrast to yesterday. Yes, there was some fog and some distant cumulous, but for a good part of the day there was a majority of blue sky and the sun was bright. Looking out the back I realised I had forgotten there was a small mountain behind us. We couldn't see very far yesterday, and we had not been here for quite a few years.

I got up at 0630, raised half the back covers, removed 2/3 front covers to let in light and wiped down the stanchions with fresh water..a job I should have done yesterday after dropping anchor. At 0730 I took a break.

At 0730 ish...all three boats that had been in the anchorage at Darling Roads and who had headed to East Boyd Bay yesterday when they came into Two Fold Bay, came back into Snug Cove. The Leopard cat took the free mooring. The other two monos ended up between the free moorings and the shore

At 0915 is I looked up to find tug. Then two, then another come in. Clearly something was about to happen.

Grey clouds had started to accumulate during the day. After lunch I checked the rain radar. Rain predictions indicated we might get wet but we would miss the rough stuff and get just a smattering of rain. I looked outside at 1530 and decided I should check the rain radar again. The radar readings suggested the coming precipitation looks a little more

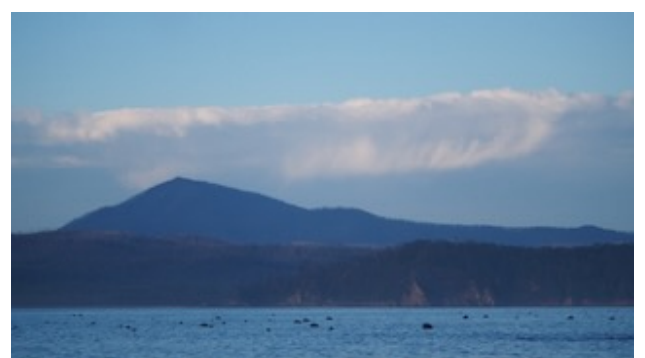
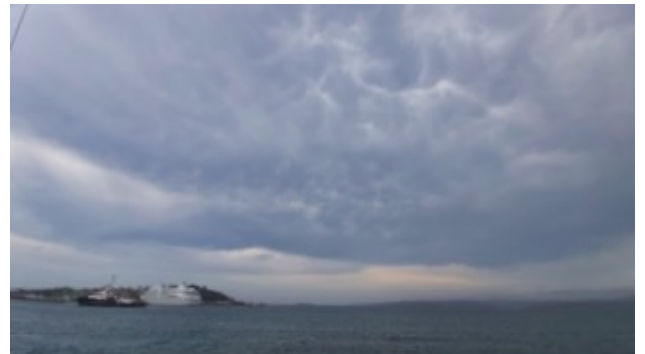
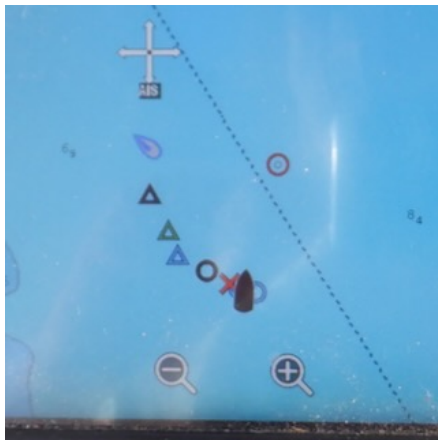


serious. I had already shut the overhead hatch and starboard port lights. I now shut up the front cockpit and pulled down the back cockpit covers (except for door). I pulled the wet hatch covers in. I had already blocked gaps into helm station

The first rain drops landed on us at 1557.

Birds; we heard sea eagles, bell birds, heard and black cockatoos (? sp). We saw silver gulls, and sooty oyster catchers

A mono came in and anchored next to us. We hailed him. His current position was within our turning circle. He didn't seem too worried. We were. We were not happy!



14th December 2023. 0558. Not much wind. I can hear swallows on the boat. It rained overnight but I didn't check the time. At 0600 I was wondering when the 0800 tranche of a southerly change was going to come in. the wind had started changing - it was currently blowing from the west.

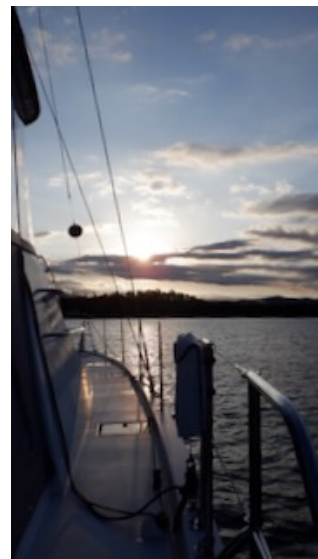
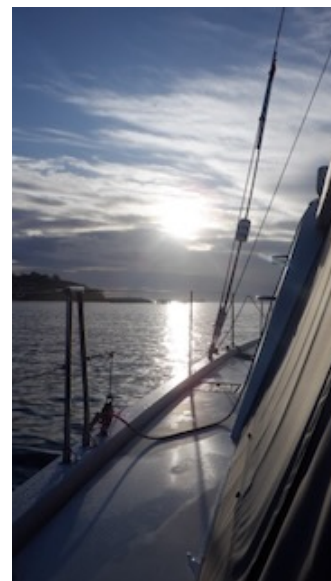
The boat next to us had his anchor up at 0720 for which I was grateful because I didn't know how close we would get to it had we picked up our anchor first. He headed toward the wharves. After listing to our usual morning breakfast Brexit YouTube, we had our anchor up after 0730. We motored across to Nullica Bay (the wind had already turned south-ish at Gabo Island and Green Cape to our south).

The anchor was down at a previously used spot at 0755. As it was sunny I opened the covers up to let the air and light in.

Having pulled yesterday's rinsing in so it wouldn't get wetter with potential rain overnight, I put it back on the lines at the back of the boat. There is limited amount of rain due today so hopefully I can get this lot dry and rinse the rest of the hatch covers before we leave. There was a side on swell when we anchored - but we expected that.

We sat down to relax, listening to the other two Brexit YouTube episodes that had been posted overnight. Today was spent doing a lot of reading, editing some diary notes, watching the weather, and packing my bag for our upcoming trip.

By evening there were four boats in the anchorage: us, the mono who had anchored just a bit too close last night, a medium sized pleasure boat, and a very fancy largish pleasure boat. The weather was calm enough to head out to socialise; but we didn't know the boats so we didn't *hobnob*.



Eden to Lakes Entrance

15th - 16th December 2023.

15th December 2023. We were up at 0545. A few minutes later I looked out the window - in the distance I could see the pleasure boat that had been anchored on the other side of the mono exiting the bay.... perhaps the rocking of its bow waves had woken me up. Not long after I heard the mono lift their anchor. Hmm. *Afflatus!* If they are going as well perhaps we have an opportunity. I logged on to check the weather. And then I got Andrew up

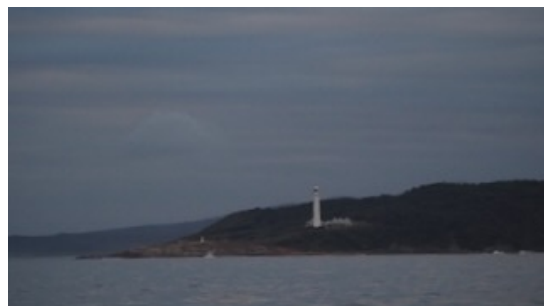
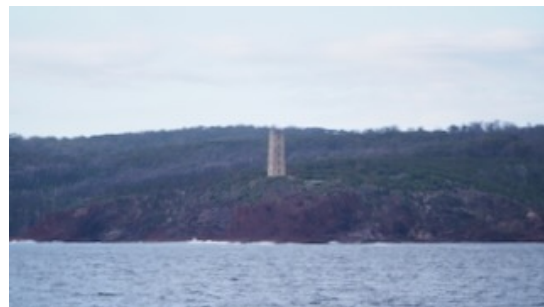
We had 24 hours at 6 knots to get to slack tide at Lakes Entrance. It would require motoring - but then again plan A, for Sunday, would have required motoring as well. As we are in delivery mode - getting from A to B - and not cruising mode - going with the wind, we are unfortunately going to have to put the motors on to avoid any detrimental weather.

The anchor was up and chocks locked off at around 0700. The Main was up not long afterwards, as was the genoa out, once we had faced the right direction. The wind was strong enough for one engine off but we decided we would wait to exit Two Fold Bay before we turned the other off. Passing Boyd Tower the second engine was turned off. Wind speed was strong enough to give us 7 knots SOG under sail. And then it wasn't.

Chutzpah passed going the other way - no doubt on his way to Sydney for the Hobart Race. **Chutzpah** is a 'Royals' (Royal Yacht Club of Victoria) boat - Andrew used to be a member of 'Royals' - the last time we passed this boat we were also going in the opposite direction to it - but we were heading north, they were heading south and they were celebrating their win (Brisbane to Gladstone race, I think)

At 0845 we were passed by **Calypso** - which had also been at Nulluca Bay last night. Calypso is a very swanky looking power boat, and a few minutes later, **Statesman** passed- a barge - we have seen this boat before but I cant remember when or where.

At 1030 we angled in towards land and turned an engine off, knowing full well would have to tack in order to clear the border. The second engine went off at



1045. We were doing around 6 knots and at a trajectory of around 199 degrees!

The wind dropped at 1200 and both engines went on. At 1215 I saw the first albatross. I had only seen shearwaters up until this point. At 1220 I saw the first gannet of the trip, followed shortly after by the second albatross.

Andrew got lunch and then took helm. I saw our second gannet of the day at 1745. We had dinner

before 1800. Skies had been grey most of the day, the sea was a dull, flat colour, not the usual *verdigris* hue given with a sunlit day.

We passed Point Hicks not long before 'sun down,' not that there was a lot of sun to be seen; only the a slither of the orange orb was seen between cloud and the horizon.

I discovered that whilst my good camera had the correct date in its meta data, it was three hours out (early). One hour can be explained away by daylight savings.. but three!

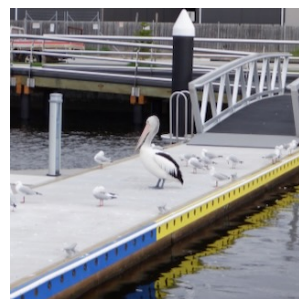
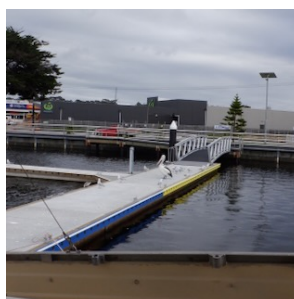
Shearwaters had been the most consistent bird all day, either as individuals flying quite close to boat (no photos), or in small flocks, above, or on top of, the water

16th December 2023. I came up on shift at 0000 and it was not long after that I noticed the 'fires' to the south west -the lights from the oil rigs. And the yacht that I couldn't see on the chart plotter became obvious within 10 nautical miles - I suspect this also had something to do with monitoring. At 0020 it looked like there were two sailing lights in front of us. one was the yacht Seaspray - the other wasn't on the chart plotter.. or maybe it was just reflection playing with my eyes.

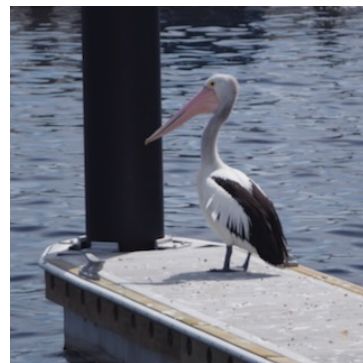
I filled in the time editing November's newsletter.

Because Andrew had revved the engines up some time ago we were now doing over 7 knots. We would be early - but better than being late. We would get to Lakes Entrance at low tide. Slack tide is half tide. We had a south westerly to beat so I guess being near the destination early is a good thing (we learnt the hard way over the top of the Northern Territory in 2016) but could we fill in our time for three hours before the bar crossing?

When Andrew took over shift at 0310 we put the genoa out and the engines off. The wind had changed to a favourable angle about an hour before but I wasn't going outside in the dark, by myself, to set the sails up. the wind angle wasn't perfect and Andrew threw a few tacks to keep our forward



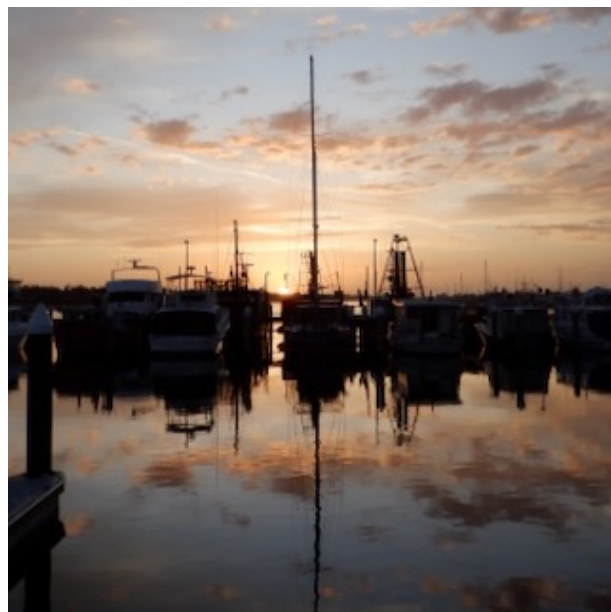
progress. When I got up and joined him at helm at 0550 the wind angle was blowing close to south west, as it was expected to do, and whilst it wasn't strong it was in the wrong direction to be useful, so at 0620 we furled the genoa and dropped the main and motored in... getting through the very flat bar a few minutes after the predicted slack at 0700.... predicted wave buoys on the Port website are quite useful. We were tied up to a time-limited dock next to the coast guard, and with the help of *Matilda V*, at 0810.



Deep breath, time for breakfast, and time for a rest. Our first excursion to land was a supermarket shop. Not a big one as we wouldn't need much food until we got to Port Phillip Bay, but I finally got some apples! (We had run out a few days before). After putting the groceries away we ventured out again for a very short stroll along the waterfront, and after peering in two op-shops and a book store, we had an indulgent lunch at the hotel. The early afternoon job was decanting our spare fuel from the jerry cans that had been under the table since Broken Bay, and then refilling them at the local fuel station. We had finished this all by 1515.

I went for a short snooze at 1530, wanting to get up and go for a walk at 1630. I slept however until 1720 when Andrew went down for a snooze. I checked the weather again.... the wind strengths had lightened-off significantly. The next travel tranche toward Port Phillip Bay would unfortunately be another motor - we would possibly need more fuel. So I woke Andrew up, we got the trolley out, and after pulling the bread back out of the oven we decanted more fuel and trundled back to the fuel station to fill up the jerries again. Our fuel gauges are indicating just over 3/4; that should be heaps but we have the back up jerries if necessary.

I still had envisioned a quick walk after we got back but we ended up chatting to the nice boatie next door.



Lakes Entrance to Port Phillip Bay

17th - 18th December 2023

17th December 2023. The alarm was on for 0500. We were out walking at 0520. The aim was to watch the sun rise. Maybe.

We made the outer beach technically in time for the sunrise but a photo from the top of the dunes was going to include other people as they made their way toward the shore for their own photos. And the sky was filled with grey. Instead of waiting we moved on, picking a different track that lead to an area with less people. We still didn't stay any length of time to watch the sun rise. Moving further along the walking track we turned around at the intersection to return to boat. We had slack tide over the bar to meet, not that there was any roughness. Several boats had left before us...but we were not going to *lampoon* them for beating the tide.

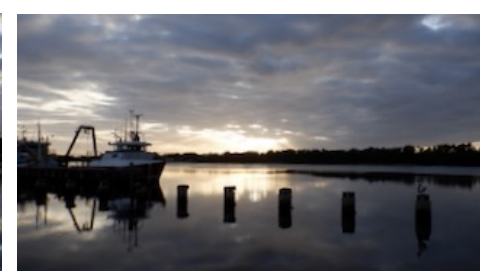
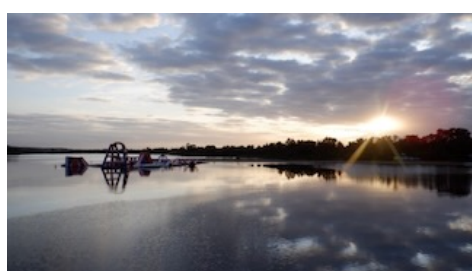
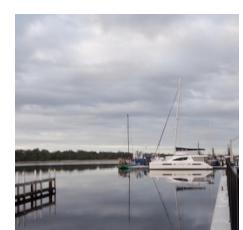
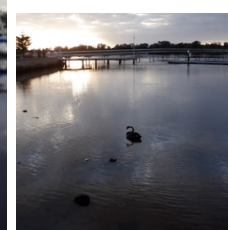
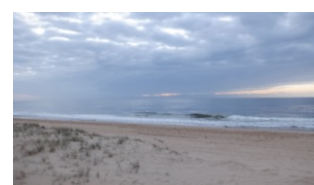
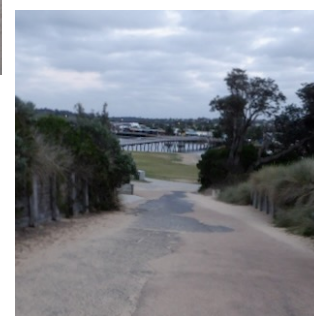
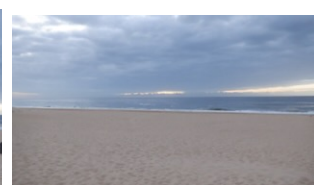
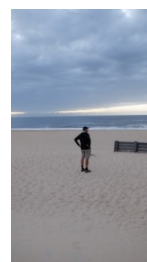
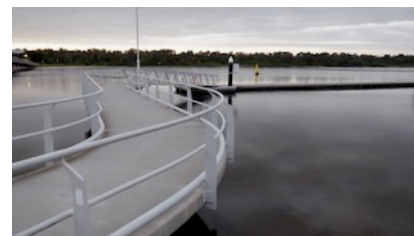
Birds for our walk: An eastern whipbird, craven, swans (with cygnets), bronze wing pigeon, blackbird, magpie, silver gull, rock pigeon, pelican, white-bellied sea eagle, grebe?, kestrel.

We were back on boat at 0620. Andrew checked the engines and I did a final tidy of the boat. We were off dock at 0725. We were out The Entrance at 0735.

The entrance rocks were lined with hundreds of birds; predominantly cormorants. Seals were also frolicking in the entrance. The first gannet was spotted at 0755

The genoa had been out for a little while by the time there was a change of shift. When Andrew took over the helm around 1200 we furled the genoa, raised the main, put the genoa back out again and turned off the engines. At 1930 I put the second engine on - the wind had dropped and was flipping around behind us.

Birds - minimal out to sea. two whitish individuals - at a distance too far to be identified - and one black cormorant that we were both surprised to see this far offshore!



18th December 2023. When I got up a few minutes after midnight - I had slept through the alarm - we had turned under the 'Prom' - the lighthouse was behind us. Whilst Andrew was still up we put the genoa back out and turned an engine off.

I ended up putting a second engine back on again and tightening the genoa. The wind in the end was all over the place, and light. In order to avoid the jolt of the mainsheets I kept a little south of the rum line - Andrew could adjust the mainsheets and get us back on track when he got back on shift

* * * * *

The alarm did actually wake me up at 0555 this time - so much so this time that even when I had turned it off I couldn't get it out of my head. This morning, after breakfast, Andrew went to bed. This is most unusual; usually he stays up a bit, we play Brexit, he does a log reading, and then catches up with anything 'geeky' that he's missed. But clearly he was a little more tired than usual this time.

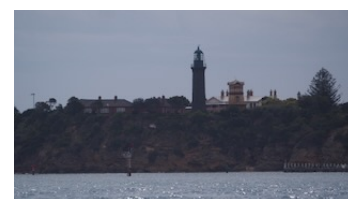
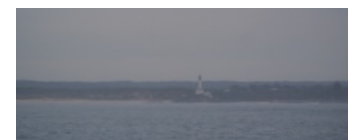
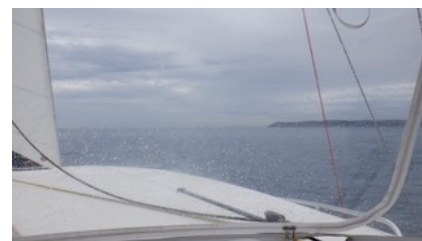
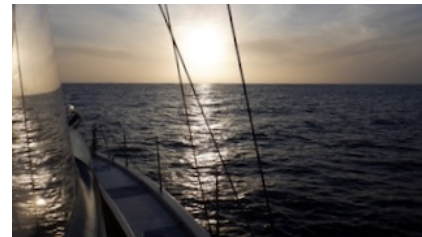
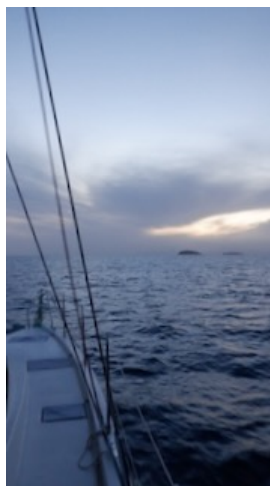
Andrew had adjusted the main and pointed us to the 'goto'. When I got up the wind was at an angle that we could have the genoa out so we put that out before he disappeared downstairs. The sea state was not as smooth as it had been - as attested by the fact that I was unexpectedly tossed across the living area like a drunk for a moment - but it was perfectly manageable.

There were three yachts still on the chart plotter screen - although because of the westerly trajectory to avoid the swell crush they were a bit further away than they had been - and three ships - two heading north-west, one heading south-east.

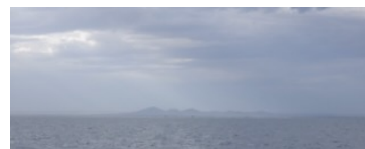
My first bird spot was a gannet at 0630. Grey skies

At 1110 we had an unexpected wind change - we changed the main but the wind was back on the starboard side 5 minutes later... and we had a visit by two dolphins - who also only stayed a matter of minutes

The wind picked up - then it didn't. It was at the right angle and then it wasn't. It swung around to the south-east then back to the north-east. In the end we had a strengthening north-west wind giving us 21 knots apparent. Given we were going to have to turn up into this we eventually dropped both sails - although we could have pulled the genoa out for the last 8 nm.



We started through The Heads around 1530. The sea state was essentially flat - with a few eddies - and 6 knots of current - our SOG was 11.6 on the gauges.



Port Arlington was our eventual destination but given the wind wasn't supposed to change until 2300 we wondered whether we would need to anchor in the north of Corio Bay for a few hours.



The 'Port Phillip Chop' gave us, for a while, the most uncomfortable ride of this entire trip

The anchor was down at 1840 with a lee shore and True wind blowing north-east 14 to 18 knots. Before we did anything else we collected the spinnaker lines, and the blocks, and I removed the hatch covers. Andrew put the water maker on. then Andrew cooked a steak. By 1940 we had consumed our steak with a salad for dinner, and the boat had now swung south west - we were on the north edge of the rain band - we would miss most of it - at least that was what was indicated at that time.



At 2120 Andrew turned the water maker off. Peace. Relax. For the first time since 0720 yesterday morning. It was lightly drizzly outside. The rain radar still indicated we were at the very edge of the rain band.

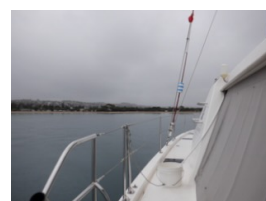
19th December 2023. A light drizzle was falling when I got up around 0715 (after a gloriously normal sleep of just over eight hours, the only interruption of which was to rescue the towels out the back from increasing *hale* wind just after we first went to bed). But where was the wind this morning? The gauges indicated under 6 knots!



We could hear machinery working on the shore - and assumed it had something to do with the very large sand pile noted to our south-west yesterday.

The rain radar indicated there may be a little more rain coming - but not much at this stage. MetEYE suggested less winds than predicted yesterday, although officially Port Phillip still had a Strong Wind warning. We saw over 26 knots on the gauges. We spent the day reading. I washed the hatch covers.

20th December 2023. It was, as predicted, windy; the highest gust we saw was 25 knots. Weather stations mid Bay read 33!. We didn't do much. We couldn't do much - there was no option of getting to land. I finished washing the hatch covers, we did some Italian and played a game of rummyking. We read a lot and I had a short snooze.



A short move to Clifton Springs

21st December 2023. We were always pushing it with the position of our anchorage for a more *categorical* easterly than south-east wind. But when we came into Port Phillip Bay on Monday there was due to be wind with a bit of westerly in it so where we had put the anchor down was a familiar spot (we still had an anchor symbol on the chart plotter), which covered most of the wind predicted at the time for the coming days. However, last night and this morning we really felt the swell, which would have been wrapping around the corner.

So at 0800 we picked up the anchor, in trying conditions, and put it down again at 0915, west-ish of the ruined Clifton Springs Jetty. During the trip we had discovered the impeller had gone in the port engine ...again... so another complication we didn't want to deal with. Tomorrow looks dubious to get to dock. Saturday looks much better. However, neither will be doable with only one engine unless there is a back up t-head at the marina.

I left Andrew to chase the marina, and the car hire place for opening hours should we have to delay picking up the hire car. I washed some rags, edited some newsletter, and replied to some correspondence...

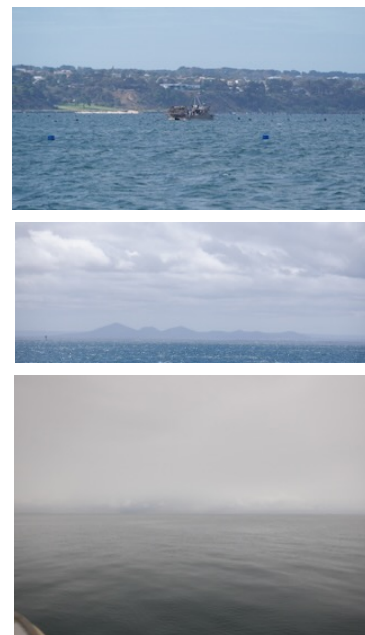
We saw 26 plus knots on the gauges - but the usual caveat applies - it may have been windier.

Whilst today was as windy, if not windier, than yesterday, the wind wasn't as bone-chillingly cold, and I de-procrastinated myself and started to wash bits of the boat again. I managed the front gunwales back to the first stanchion and then realised that washing down the catwalk and the tramp was better use of my time, as I had the spinnaker lines soaking in a tub on the back porch, and they would need somewhere clean to dry. So tramp cleaned, spinnaker lines rinsed, I put them on the tramp to dry. Normally if I do this I need to go out after a couple of hours and turn the lines over - not today - the wind was strong enough to blow the lines around - and as a result, a couple of hours after being put on the tramp, they were dry enough to be put back in storage.

Fenders and ropes were extracted out for tomorrow.

Breakfast was yoghurt and fruit; lunch was chicken salad; dinner lamb chops and salad (not inspiring). We spent most of the day reading...

And I assisted Andrew replace yet another impeller - he has discovered the problem may actually be a water pump seal - something to be investigated later. The marina has provided us with a backup option for tomorrow's landing (privately owned L berth for a night).



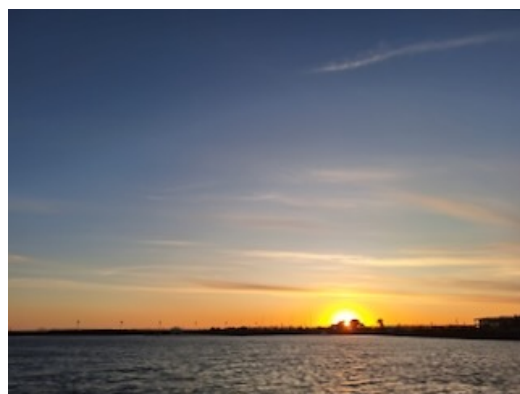
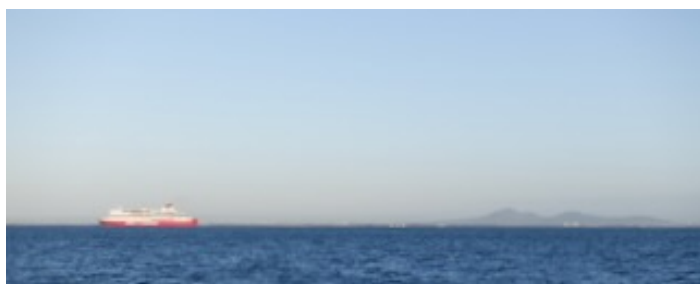
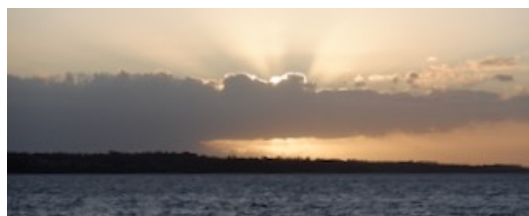
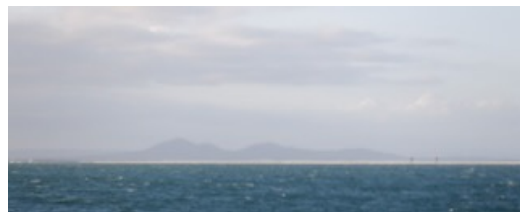
Onto dock!

22 December 2023. I could have *retrodicted* that it would be an uncomfortable day! I had asked Andrew to put the alarm on for 0700 for a 0730 anchor lift, but we were both up by 0630 anyway. Breakfast was dehydrated hiking food and after loading the water pump port engine with water, we got to the task of lifting the anchor - in 20 knot winds! Andrew had deliberately left the port engine off but using one engine proved too troublesome, so we got the anchor up as quickly as possible under two engines, before he shut the port engine off again. The anchor was up, genoa was out and engine off at 0730. The wind had more east in it than preferred and the sail to Werribee South was a rough and ready, slightly uncomfortable trip, closer to beam than we preferred, apparent wind speed nearing 26.5 knots on occasion. Once inside the marina walls the sea state was calmer however the wind whilst dropping, wasn't enough for me to be comfortable backing into the pen. Andrew would have preferred to get the docking over and done with today but I felt after a stressful trip, that little extra stress would have broken us. There was help getting onto dock, some more useful than others, but all well intended. Technically we were put into a 15m berth, but they are only 80 per cent length, which meant that our back step was beyond the finger - a fender was repurposed into a very awkward step.

Travel into Werribee was by free bus because our met cards had expired, and then after replacing our metcards with new ones at the Werribee Station, our travel to Hoppers Crossing was also free because the ticket machine on the bus we boarded wasn't working.

After the car pickup we braved the crowds at Werribee Plaza, although we managed to avoid the carpark chaos by parking in a side street. The trip back to the marina was an exercise in new town planning; the old route cut-off by new buildings near the railway line and Google Maps hasn't caught up. We got back to base in time to wish the marina staff merry xmas before we settled into boat for the evening. The wind was blowing 23-plus knots when we got back to boat and the sea state inside the marina area wasn't nearly as calm as when we had come in. When we went to bed the wind was in the high teens.plus...the wind along this coast had gusted to 30 at several weather stations early afternoon.

Birds: one gannet, one tern, flocks of seagulls. On land: black bird, common myna, cravens, white-backed magpie. 'Some great white ibis feet at the base of a bridge in Werribee (structural art) and lots of large birds of prey (unidentified) near the Werribee River.



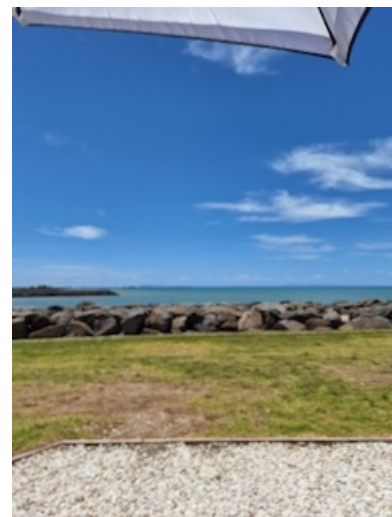
Idling around Eyensbury!

23 December 2023. I got up around 0215. It sounded blowy. And the wind was indeed blowing around the 20 knot mark. The wind predictions still had the lull at the 1100 tranche, but not as low as indicated yesterday. Still, it should be low enough for a move...it will be stressful enough. This time I am hoping we can get more experienced people to help us.

Manoeuvring the confusing dock-lines so we could get off dock took longer than expected, and the motor around to the new dock took less time than expected; much to my chagrin as I didn't feel I was ready. There were several people on dock to help, and others offered as we motored in. This included three staff (although one was not experienced and once I knew that I told her she shouldn't be on the end of the line). Fortunately the wind speed dropped to around 5 knots when we did actually back into the pen, Andrew having started the recalcitrant motor briefly for manoeuvring off dock, and then again for manoeuvring into the pen.

Dazed, we then started to plan the day. We ended up trying '3030' for lunch - and ordered pizza. Whilst my base was still mushy and not entirely cooked, at least my cheese had melted. Andrew's base was in a similar position but his cheese hadn't melted. He was not happy. He sent it back for another stint in the oven, and *galumphed* away from the establishment disappointed.

Having now got to land we were desperate to stretch our legs. I thought Andrew would balk at something with a bit of travel but when I suggested a closer alternative I found he didn't want to do anything he'd done before. So I chose a loop walk that one of the AllTrails users had put in at Eynesbury. Getting there was half the adventure. Google Maps directed us up a road that is clearly a farm track but is still being developed as a main road, the next option also lead up a farm track to a closed-off gate, and the third option, finally, got us to where we wanted to go; via the main roads - from the north! There was a music festival playing and instead of parking near the old homestead, now a social venue, we parked in the back streets. The loop is around six kilometres long, and because it was late afternoon when we started - around 1630 - the birdlife (predominantly lorikeets

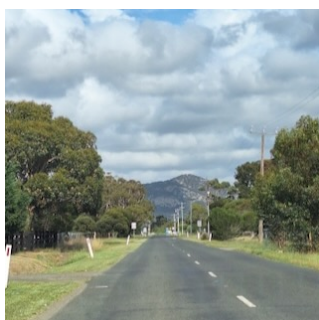




but other species were noted) was prolific. Andrew spotted a rabbit near the old shearing sheds.

We took a different way back to. boat, through the back streets (some still rough and almost single lane) and down through new housing estate at Tarneit - what an eyesore that is!





Flinders Peak. You Yangs

24th December 2023. We hadn't actually planned the walk for today before we got up, which is always fraught with danger.

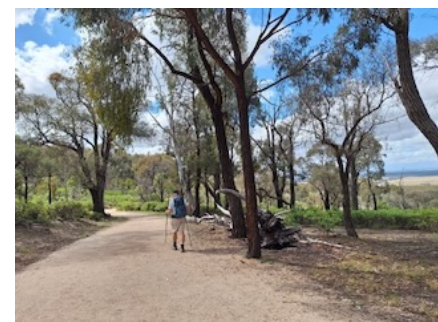
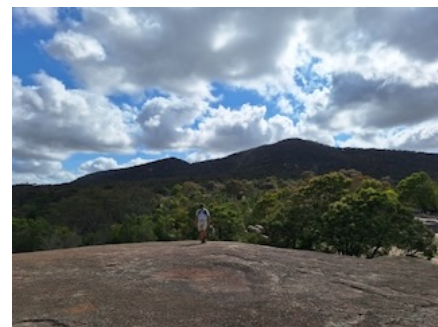
To mention something easy, there was a 6km walk around the foreshore here, but Andrew again said 'we've done that!' I was delighted he was looking for something new but it was going to be at a distance, as Eynesbury had been the closest new walk yesterday. Anything else would be further away.

I honed in on the You Yangs. Yes, we have been there before, but *abiding* by the plan for a walk of at least 'medium' difficulty, the walk to Flinders Peak seemed just the ticket. It was almost 9km. And it had a steepish 'up'.

We left the marina carpark, and after a quick Coles shop for track nibblies, we started the walk around 1000. The AllTrails (now that I could access it on a new phone) suggested their walkers had completed the marked track in an average of 2 hours 43 minutes. We got back to car at 1325..slightly longer, but we did have a couple of toilet stops, a break at the top, and a break at Big Rock picnic ground to enjoy an apple on the way down.

There was a quick shop at the Lara supermarkets before taking the freeway back to boat, getting back to the marina area around 1500. The wind was blowing low to high 20s. Point Wilson and Point Cook gusting over 30 knots around 1600.

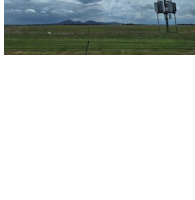
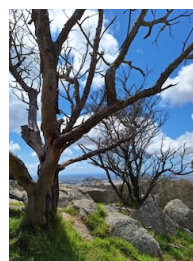
We took a lovely warm shower in the office before the oncoming rain arrived. I turned the instruments on at 1700 - 29.9 knots!





The first bout of thunder was heard at 2010, and there was lightening to our north...which made no sense with relation to the rain radar...the rain was all to the south west of us.

We watched the Italian news and I watched Rex in Rome. We checked the bucket under the hatch - no leaks!



25th December 2023. Grey and wet and not a good day to be on the roads - for both the weather *and* the expected number of cars. None-the-less we left boat around 0830. Surprisingly, there was little traffic on the Western Ring road. A missed turn off meant we actually went through our old hamlet, but we purposely avoided going past our old house. It took us just over two hours to get to our lunch destination with family. It took just less than two hours to get back, despite increased traffic on the road. At least it didn't rain on our return journey.



26th December 2023. We didn't wake up until around 0830 this morning. We have no idea why we slept in. The wind was up, but not much. Rain was forecast for the afternoon so whilst my *peregrine* nature suggests I was happy for a longer sojourn, I dragged Andrew out for a succinct 40 minute coastal walk before the start of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race - I figured I wouldn't get him out after that.



We checked out the tv in the office (big screen) but by the time we got back to boat we didn't have time to organise lunch *and* get to the big tv before race start. After the telecast of the race start we watched the cricket, helped a boat come into the pen next door, did

a load of washing, watched some news in Italian and I managed to watch an episode of Rex in Rome

Whereas last night had been very windy, tonight there was hardly a breath of air. The water around us was glass! There had been quite a few thunderstorms travel across Victoria from the north east. Fortunately they split and whilst we got a small amount of rain the main storms went to the north and south of us.

The monohull that arrived late afternoon/ early evening had come through them - down from St Kilda - we got them on dock - the sailers were wet - their gear was in the dryer when I went to put a load of washing on.



Socialising on boat

27th December 2023. I had gone to bed at around 0115 this morning. but I was up again at 0630. Outside was grey. There was still little wind. Today was another catch-up social day, catching up with a friend I've known since I was fourteen years old, and of course, I haven't seen since last time we were in Victoria. She arrived mid morning - she left mid afternoon. It's exhausting trying to fit five years of news into only a few hours!



Catching up with friends

28th December 2023. We were up at 0745. The sky was grey. A police vessel parked in the next pen at 0830 and this gave rise to *contestation* of their purpose - but we think they were only doing a routine stop - or getting their coffee from the cafe. There was not much wind. We caught up with friends tonight in Templestowe, at a slightly fancy restaurant. The familiar drive down the Western Ring Road proved easy - what were the major roundabouts ten years ago in the suburbs however, proved a bit confusing. Two massive roundabouts have now been removed (along with the trees that were on them) and there are traffic lights at these major intersections. The landscape has completely changed - I don't know if you would call it progress.

We were back on boat at 2230.

Wandering around the shops

29th December 2023. The morning was spent foofing around the boat. After lunch we ventured out for a bit of shopping, well, at least being *acquisitive* of the items in the shop windows. We weren't after much, or anything expensive, and I did search some op-shops for a few needed items. Unfortunately the items we were looking for were not found as a second hand offering. We did get a couple of small items that we needed in Anaconda.

The evening social event was dinner in Warrandyte. We travelled the same way we did last night, traversing the same new sets of traffic lights. The aim of the evening, apart from catching up with friends, was to consume a bottle of wine we had been looking forward to for 14 years. It was bought with a friend when we both celebrated our 40th birthdays. The aim was to drink it on our 50th. With deaths in the family and Covid that didn't happen, and this was the first opportunity to enjoy it. However, whilst the wine wasn't vinegar, it wasn't the rich bodied brew I had hoped for... ah well, what can you expect when you are late to dinner!

Another lunch with friends

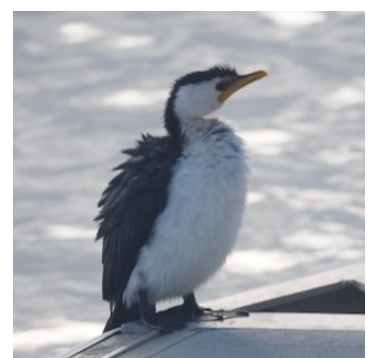
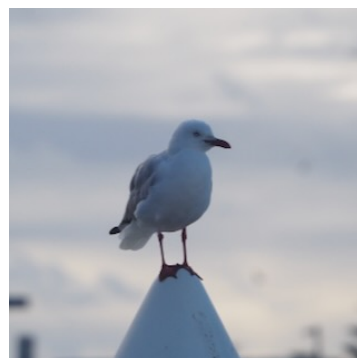
30th December 2023. I was psyching myself up to cope with the cold outside to do a rust run but it started to rain. And that was enough to dampen idea of boat work for the morning. It was 0900.

Today's social event was lunch with friends in the city. They live in a nearby suburb and walked to the venue. We took the train: three lanes of the Westgate Bridge are apparently blocked for maintenance, and all signs on the freeway and radio announcements are warning of long delays.. .so we took public transport instead.

We got the train earlier than expected (a muted trip - no *banshee*-like whistles on trains these days) and wandered around the DFO at Southern Cross Station before arriving at The Mail Exchange Hotel right on time. The corner of Bourke and Spencer Street is now occupied by a Movenpick Hotel: a rather curious glass covered building with a squarish boxy base and a curvy phallic-styled tower. I don't know when this building was completed, but that site was a building site last time we were here, and had been boarded up for many years prior to that. The new police building on Spencer Street is likewise a big, bulky and domineering edifice. I don't think that was even considered last time we were in Victoria, although the correctional centre has been near that site for some time.

The trip in presented a novel and new experience. Lots has changed in the expanding edges of Melbourne. The countryside is rapidly disappearing under new housing, and there are new train stations along the track. Of the remaining wild areas, there are a couple of wetland sites where water and waterbirds can be spotted from the train - we saw quite a few birds including a black shouldered kite, and black swans at Altona Coastal Park.

We were back on boat late afternoon. The evening was spent getting gear together for the upcoming trip to New Zealand.



Back to the You Yangs

and

A walk in the Brisbane Ranges...

but we are still in Victoria

31st December 2023. I had allocated today, weather pending, for a final training session before our flight to NZ. R & A, whom we had lunch with yesterday, were keen to come for a walk with us. The You Yangs is one of their local haunts so we joined them for a jaunt around one of their favourite trails: a little less popular than the usual well-known trails of the park. It was a lovely walk, good company with a lot of crazy fun with the camera thrown in. However, it was only 5 km and whilst there was a bit of up it wasn't the final strenuous workout that I was looking for.

We said our goodbyes at the entrance gate, and Andrew and I were heading to Lara to find a cafe for lunch when, on a whim, we u-turned and made our way north-west to Brisbane Ranges National Park. Having not researched the options before this, I grabbed hold of an AllTrails users entry, which just happened to follow a standard official trail. On the interps board at the Stony Creek picnic ground, the trail is listed as difficult. Importantly, it had some 'ups'. According to the local signs it takes 3 hours. We took 2 hours 50 minutes and that included a ten minute break, and me getting lost: (Andrew stuck to the trail, I seemed to *tittup* happily by accidentally going off piste onto an old track for a while - and got myself lost).

Back at boat we finalised arrangements to leave the boat for a couple of weeks: put padlocks on items outside where needed, pickled the water-maker, and put buckets and towels under potential dicky hatches.

The evening was spent packing our hiking backpacks. It was New Year's Eve but neither of us stayed up for the fireworks!



