

Port Stephens Cruise

27-29 November 2020



By Dave and Sandra “Ice-Dancer”

Our Port Stephens cruise was Ice Dancer’s first hosting of a cruise. It was decided to launch from Lemon Tree Passage ramp on the Friday, where there are three ramps, pontoon, a jetty around the pool, a nice park, cafes etc. The weather forecast was clear and sunny for Friday and Saturday. Sunday was forecast for a hot 43C and strong NW winds, with a late Southerly. We better keep an eye on that.

After rigging, launching, a bite of lunch and a quick repair to Blew by U’s forestay, Only Time, Ice Dancer and Blew by U motored out of the passage and set sail for Fame Cove. Arriving in Fame Cove, we met up with Liquid Lunch who had taken up one of the courtesy moorings in the cove, while the rest of us anchored nearby.

Crosswind, having launched at Soldiers Point ramp, soon joined us in the cove, but due to poor internet reception, decided to stay the night on the yacht club mooring at Soldiers Pt. Apparently Graeme had a multi-million dollar deal to transact overnight, and good internet access was essential in transferring Russian rubles.





Kev tempted the legionary Fame Cove bull sharks by having a swim off the back of Only Time. He having survived, I took a quick dip to cool off too, but stayed very close to the ladder. (Note: for the seven years I've been sailing at Port Stephens, I've never seen a shark – plenty of dolphins and turtles though).

A pleasant afternoon and a restful night were had in the cove. Meanwhile, Gypsea, Free Spirit, and Farr and Beyond spent the night in Lemon Tree Passage, ready to meet up with the fleet in the morning.

Saturday morning, and the plan was for all to meet off Soldiers Point at 11am. Coffee would be good, so a quick call to Soldiers Pt marina to line up courtesy berths to pull up and have coffee at one of their cafes. Farr and Beyond pretending to be a Noalex among Liquid Lunch, Free Spirit and Ice Dancer.

After coffee, the fleet forms off Soldiers Pt for our cruise to Dutchies Beach for lunch and a swim. Some sail, some motor, and some do both. The fleet spreads out across the bay but eventually converges on Dutchies. One technically was that local commercial operators use channel 72, so we decided to use another channel – something to keep in mind when away. Meanwhile, Crosswind being independent as they are, decides to explore the north side of the bay, finding a path through the shallows along to Jimmies Beach.

After lunch we head off around Nelson Head to Shoal Bay. Crosswind has arrived before us and has found a group of private moorings just off the beach, which suits us while we have another swim. By now we have all had a big day, and decide to head to our booked berths at Nelson Bay marina.

The marina staff are on hand to assist us in berthing. Once settled, we meet up for a pleasant happy hour under the shade on shore. Dinner was a casual affair, with most people choosing from many of the take away options available locally. Unfortunately our stay on the marina wasn't as peaceful as our stay in Fame Cove. Once the pub closed, a party started up on the boat next to Gypsea, continuing to about 2am. Our complaint has been passed on to the marina management for their failure to enforce their noise policy.



Sunday morning and the concern is the forecast 43 degrees and the strong NW winds. After breakfast most boats decide to make their way back to Lemon Tree Passage while it is still cool and calm. Ice Dancer leaves a little later and enjoys a sail to Soldiers Pt, where we farewell Liquid Lunch who are heading back to the shelter of Fame Cove.

The NW wind begins to blow in hard. Down with the sails and motor across to Lemon Tree to retrieve, have a swim, sit in the shade and slowly pack up in the heat.

Feeling adventurous, Crosswind and Only Time decide to explore the lower Myall River towards Tea Gardens. The NW kicks in and they battle their way back against the strong breeze to Soldiers Pt marina where they have booked berths for the night. Many thanks to all those who visited us in Port Stephens.

David and Sandra Ice Dancer

