

Morton Bay -

5th to 8th March 2021

By Graeme and Charmain "Crosswind"



More to Moreton Bay than Shoals!

A delayed start to Crosswind's & Coconut Duck's planned three weeks discovering Moreton Bay, due to Brisbane's 3 day lockdown. We decided to wait it out cruising the Clarence River from Grafton to Iluka and Yamba and back again. Always an enjoyable cruise and Duck's first time there.

Lock down lifted and we headed north.

Day 1 - Steiglitz to The Bedrooms, Sth Stradbroke Island



Our night at the Horizon Shores Marina allowed us to rig, launch, securely store the cars and trailers, view the first of many rainbow displays, laundry, shower and generally prepare for a few days. Thursday morning we shopped at Pimpama, pumped up the dingy and headed off.

Crosswind and Coconut Duck exited the marina and headed N to Cabbage Tree Pt, then SE at the yellow mark to pass Kangaroo Is (Boonnnahbah) to starboard and Eden Is on the portside. The beacons were something to puzzle over. So many to be seen across the high tide into other channels. Both Crosswind and Coconut Duck had to lift the gear on more than one occasion! Lesson learnt: always listen to local knowledge or have lots of practice lifting gear!





Then east down Walley Gutter to The Broadwater, SE to Tipplers Is an N along a narrow channel with 2m depth at low to The Bedrooms in the E side of Pandanus Is with suitable all weather protection and an appropriate name to spend the night with the sand flies! Poor Cathy!

We fired up the dingy oars, beached and walked over the sand dunes to see the sea and view Surfer's concrete jungle to the south and Jumpinpin entrance to the north, kangaroos and a few campers.

Plenty of turtles, rays and Cathy caught 5 fish.

Day 2- The Bedrooms to Brown Is Puddle Sth, Stradbroke Island

Heading S along Tipplers Passage. Lots of big boats anchored here along the sandy South Stradbroke shore line. Passing Southport Yacht Club jetty, Gold Coast Boat Club and Tipplers Resort Anchorages, sandy shores, jetties and facilities including bar and cafe. Exiting the passage and back into The Broadwater, passing Pimpama River to our starboard and turning east into Couran Cove for a look at the marina, resort, ice creams and settlement. Taking the north branch of the Coomera River narrow but navigable. Following beacons to arrive at the south branch of the Coomera River for lunch Sanctuary Cove among the big boats. Then through the busy waterways back into The Broadwater and into Camp Ground (a little puddle south of Brown Is). Small, shallow but good all round protection. Sludge through the low tide mud for a walk to beach, swim, shower on board, happy hour and fresh caught fish for dinner.



Day 3- Brown Is to Tipplers via Gold Coast

We headed south along The Broadwater to cross the Gold Coast Seaway and into the chaos of the Gold Coast traffic.

OMG! I think we should not have come here on a busy holiday day. Jet skis, launches and every man and his dog were on the water. We checked out Bums Bay near Sea World, went as far south as we could before turning north and along the western shore line. No sailing here by any means. Lots of motoring required refuelling at

Runaway Bay marina just as a quick 20 minute storm rinsed the boats off.

Tipplers Passage was our choice for the night for wind direction protection. We made sure we selected The Gold Coast Boat Club anchorage with the bar and ice creams. A fine choice!

Day 4 - Tipplers to Dunwich, Nth Stradbroke Island

Next morning we continued our northern direction along South Stradbroke Is to the entrance between Nth and Sth Stradbroke Islands, called Jumpinpin, a popular spot judging by the number of boats. The “go slow” zone here is a Dugong spotting spot, however none were seen.

Passing the Slipping Sands where kids were sliding down huge sand hills straight into the water. Garry and I resisted the urge to join them.



Passing Russell Is to port we paused for a while to do some Dugong spotting and experienced the unfriendliness of RQYS at Canaipia Pt when we tried to tie up for water replenishment, so on we went into the big wide waters of Moreton Bay.



Packed away the boom tents, raised the main, unfurled the foresail and headed north to Dunwich for the night. Great Sailing!! I had read so many good reports about Dunwich. We experienced few but did manage (with difficulty) to replenish water supplies. Finding a good anchorage at Deanbilla Bay, Garry and Cathy ubered (Crosswind's dingy) to Crosswind for happy hour, dinner and their first bridge lesson. Coconut Duck's dingy had sprung a leak and was in need of a repair job.

Day 5 - Dunwich to Raby Bay, Greater Brisbane

Lots of rain and wind predicted for the next 2 days, we decided to sit in a marina at Raby Bay for this where we could be productive, restocking, showering, washing and repairing (Coconut Ducks dingy).

So we headed west under the very big black storm clouds, passing Peel Is to its south.

As the rain passed and the sun shone so brightly we doubted the wisdom of our decision, but forged ahead nonetheless and so glad we were not lulled into a false sense of security by the calm before the storm! 200mm of water, lightening and thunder just above us. Garry was glad Crosswind and a taller mast than Coconut Duck. We both battled to keep with water out of the boats resulting in loads of wet towels.

Day 6 - Raby Bay to Myora Passage, Nth Stradbroke Island

As they say "Plans are drawn in the sand". The morning graced us with sunshine, a brisk walk and a change of plans to sail east to an anchorage just north of Dunwich to sit out the forecast rain and 20knt northerlies.

This time we passed Peel Is to the north and took a short cut through the shallows at high tide to Lazarette Gutter and continue a shorter course to the east and round to the south side of the island.

Seeing rays and turtles....but no dugongs and watching our depth indicators closely, with our gear raised and a falling tide, we made it passed the Platypus Wreck and to Horseshoe Bay for rafting up, lunch and a swim. Still rafted up, Coconut Duck fired up the motor and guided Crosswind for a closer look at the wreck. The intention was to pick up a close by mooring so Garry could have a dive around the wreck. The mooring was unpickupable, (I think that is a word), the wind blew and Garry had to manoeuvre through a rather narrow pass with rusty, sharp pointy wreck one side and jagged rocks the other and Crosswind still rafted up!!!! Well done Garry....we survived, made it to Myora anchorage (not rafted up) to ride out the 25-30knt SE winds and rain. Second anchors were deployed, set and reset. Nothing fell short of the predictions and a sleepless night was had checking transits for dragging anchors. Again, another exercise in survival, just like this crazy tree!



Day 7 - Myora to Myora.....Cabin Fever

You guessed it.... due to wind and rain conditions we decided to sit for the day, reassess in the afternoon to see if the weather would allow a dash north along Nth Stradbroke to Amity Pt.



More bridge lessons and good cheer to these boat confined sailors trying to keep cabin fever at bay. Thanks to Crosswind's uber and The Duck's motor, anchors were again checked and rechecked.

It was here I learnt the real reason for lots of anchor checking at the Myall Lakes.



Day 8 - Myora to The Sand Hills Moreton Island

Up early, sunny, 12knt SSE all day, boom tents off and a great sail to Amity Pt. Dolphins but sadly no dugongs...maybe they are otherwise known as unicorns!

What a pretty place Amity Pt is. Red sand, clear blue waters, lovely little beaches. Fuel and water restock and ice creams for the sailors.

Leaving Amity Pt at 11.30am for Koorinal Sth Moreton Is, we crossed the South Passage Entrance between Nth Stradbroke Is and Moreton

Is. And an exciting crossing it was, surfing a few waves we finally made it to the calm of Days Gutter stopping at Campbell Pt for a well earned refreshing ale and a spot of lunch at a very tropical Gutter Bar & Cafe. Again our comfort zones were tested....and we survived! Further north to an anchorage between the Big Sand Hills and Little Sand Hills. Yes, even the little ones are big.

Day 9 - The Sand Hills to St Helena via Tangalooma

Becoming a bit short of time due to the initial lock down delay, we made the decision to skip Bribie Is and north west side of Moreton Bay to allow us exploration time to the south west of the bay and the many islands it has to offer.

So we were up early, sailing north to Tangalooma on Nth Moreton Is for exploration of the artificial wreck reef. What fun swimming in the crystal clear waters, snorkelling and using the dingy to

explore the area. After a quick on board lunch we headed back south looking for some wind to sail and those elusive dugongs/unicorns. We found the wind, but not the dugongs. However, after an hour or so of drifting in the shallows through the sea grass along the Moreton Banks to the south of Moreton Is (which was the suggested dugong spotting place) we did see many turtles, various rays and strange water skimming fish. We eventually gave up our search at 4pm to make a quick 7.5nm dash to St Helena Is before dark to shelter from the north easterly.

Exhausted after such a big day we settled quietly for the night. As usual sundowners put on a beautiful display for us.



Day 10 - St Helena Is to Macleay Island



Early morning shower (of rain that is), breakfast and a little explore on the historic island of St Helena. Sailing south west towards Manly then south east to Coochiemudlo Is, the beautiful easterly 10knt breeze was enjoyed until we arrived at the southern side of Coochiemudlo for lunch, a swim and a walk. Not too sure we were supposed to all soap up for our off the beach communal outdoor shower, but we did and we all came away with very fluffy hair! Sadly the ice cream shop was closed.

A short hop (30 minutes) east across the channel to Macleay Is we picked up a mooring and settled for the night listening to the sounds of the night birds....bliss!

Day 11 - Macleay Is to Steiglitz

Leaving the anchorage we sailed south along the west side of Macleay Is. Bearing south east to the south of the island and north of Karragarra Is, we planned to drift in the Marine Zone on the east of Sundowners displayed the appropriate light show. Lamb Is but the easterly winds put a stop to that. So we headed across to the west of Nth Stradbroke's marine zone to do more drifting in a last ditch effort to spot dugongs. Unfortunately nobody told us the dugongs went away for the Australia Day holiday to Tin Can Bay! After lunch we head through the Krummel Passage, passing Karragarra Is to its south and continuing south back to the marina at Steiglitz and our shared last supper.

Reflections

- *I could easily become addicted to ice cream....thanks Garry!*
- *Good days are in abundance, sailing can't be 100%, 100% of the time.*
- *Dugongs really do exist, so do unicorns and mermaids for that matter.*
- *We would be lost without our uber dingy taxi service to allow the shared sundowners, meals and bridge games.*
- *Sometimes sundowners morph into sun risers.*
- *Anchoring every night made me feel more relaxed about it (not generally one of my favourite ways to spend a night).*
- *11 days is definitely not enough time to explore from the Gold Coast to the north of Moreton Bay. There was so much more we would liked to have done. Next time?*
- *The journey gave us a variety of weather conditions, scenery, experiences, tested our comfort zones and allowed us to experience the pleasure of cruising with Garry and Cathy.*

