

CONTRIBUTIONS

NORTHWARD HO! with ARCHERNAR

An ambition realised was for us our winter cruise to the Barrier Reef, but first a few statistics:-

Furthest North reached	-	Port Douglas
Total distance travelled	-	6,300 NM
Coldest Temperature	-	70° Wilsons Promontory
Hottest Temperature	-	30° Cairns
Most Memorable spots	-	Hinchinbrook Islands (Low Islets off Port Douglas)
Time away from home	-	28th April to 5th November 6 Months 7 Days.

Our journey from Adelaide to Sydney was with an "all boys" crew, picking up Margaret and daughter Briony in Sydney.

On the East Coast the SE's were in so with free sheet we rolled our way to Queensland stopping at Broken Bay, Port Stephens, Coffs Harbour, Iluka on the Clarence River, Ballina on the Richmond River. Both of these last two anchorages involved us in crossing river bars which was a new and very exciting experience even though the bars were reasonably quiet, but I will tell you more on bars a little later on. An overnight sail past Surfers with 30 knot winds dead square and a SE swell, which as we shot down the face of the enormous East Coast rollers frequently had the speedo hard against its maximum stop.

Dawn on 22nd May saw us off Cape Marton and across the entrance to Morton Bay entering the Breakwater at Mooloolabah at 10.30 a.m. - 3½ weeks to Queensland with only 2 nights at sea after Sydney.

We were very hospitably treated at Mooloolabah, tying up to the marina in front of the Yacht Club. Still anxious to get to warmer weather we slipped lines the next morning and

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headed for Double Island Point, an anchorage adjacent to the southern entrance to Great Sandy Strait the waterway separating Frazer Island from the mainland. The anchorage at Double Island Point held a number of yachts, some waiting for the SE's to abate and head South and a few waiting for the bar to calm down before entering Great Sandy Strait. We walked over the sand hills to explore the wreck of the cargo ship "Cherry Venture" washed ashore in the 1972 Cyclone and sitting perfectly upright as if still under full power, high and dry above the surf line.

We anchored 3 nights at Double Island Point, going down in the morning to check the bar and returning immediately after having a look. On the fourth morning we were off the bar at 7.30 a.m. and I quote from the log:-

"Up bright and early to go over the bar - well that's another thing - the weather is now perfect but, a big swell is setting over the bar and this is a sight to behold. Bondi Beach at its best - three other yachts are also trying to cross and one a 40ft ferro ketch took the "bone in her teeth" and let her rip - she broached on the first comber, and we, from astern, could see his entire underbody from the rudder to under his main mast. He broached took the next comber beam on and with his crosstrees in the water surfed in on his side. Not for us; we set course for Breaksea spit and the detour of 170 miles around Frazer Island". Entered Bundaberg the next day and motored the 15 miles up the Burnett River past sugar cane, dairies and sugar mills to the city of Bundaberg, anchoring in the river opposite the Rowing Club which extended an open house to us for welcome showers etc.

North of Bundaberg one starts to feel the benefit of the Barrier Reef for from here on there is no ocean swell.

With SE wind at 10-15 knots and the large spinnaker set we headed North stopping at Pancake Creek and then at 1.30 on the next day a milestone of the trip - we crossed the Tropic of Capricorn and anchored the night under the lee of Cape Capricorn. A visit to the lighthouse was rewarding as one

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of the keepers was a yachtie and gave us plenty of local knowledge. The weather was now warming up and after a 26 mile sail we arrived at our first resort island - Great Kepple. Run by TAA, Great Kepple is one of the best of the resorts having beautiful beaches, coconut palms and crystal clear water; it is not spoilt like most of the Whitsunday resorts by the extreme tides which keep the water cloudy and expose massive mud and reef flats at low water.

The yacht anchorage is on the North Beach of Great Kepple well away from any civilization and resort guests - after a few days lazing in the sun and BBQ's ashore we realized our holiday had began. It was now 1st June, one month from home and no more nights at sea for the next four months: what a pleasant thought.

Between Great Kepple and the Whitsundays are two very interesting anchorages, the first is Island Head Creek an inland waterway which you enter after crossing a shallow bar and stretches for 10 miles back into the rugged mountains of the Army jungle training reserve, a very beautiful spot. The second anchorage is Mid Percy Island where Andy the Island's lone inhabitant lives in his cottage high on the hill and makes his living supplying fresh vegetables, chooks and goats to visiting yachts of which the average is 6 per day throughout the season. We picked our fresh lettuce, tomatoes and carrots ourselves, drank fresh lime juice, ate tropical fruit, bought some of his home made jams and jungle juice and headed back to the anchorage called West Bay. On the beach is a shed filled with mementoes of visiting yachts; we painted up the second name plaque for Achernar, the first being placed there by Edla & Clive Fricker when they visited the Island in the early 60's. It was actually on their visit that Achernar first brought Andy out to take up his solitary residence on Percy Island. Andy has set up on the beach a fresh water bath & shower facilities in a jovial al fresco manner.

A dawn start was made from Middle Percy because of the 70 mile leg to the Whitsundays, sailing through the many small

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uninhabited islands off Shoalwater Bay and it is indeed fortunate that there are plenty of islands for here navigation is tricky, this is the area of greatest tide, in spots up to 30 ft and with the tide setting at 90° to our track the course achieved is at times quite at variance.

Perhaps a point here on tides would be interesting. The tide governs your day's activities whilst cruising in the Whitsundays. Maximum tides at Springs being around 27 ft., the currents between small islands reach up to 6 knots with eddies and whirlpools. Great care must be taken as the tide in general floods from North to South but where a small island has an East-West passage which way does the tide flow? - It must be tricky as even the charts do not show, observation and local knowledge is the answer and to say the least a good engine. Of course another interesting problem created by this range of tide is 'How far out to anchor?'. Arriving off a pretty beach at high water and dropping the pick in 5 fathoms would leave one high and dry at low water. Most of the beaches have a fringing reef which has a deep drop off into 10 F. At Hayman Island at low water the stern of the boat is close in to the drying reef and the anchor is down in 12 fathoms. Add to this 4 fathoms of tide and it tests the anchor winch to bring all this up.

We were now in the Whitsundays with its hundreds of islands of all sizes with a sheltered anchorage never more than 5 miles away, warm water to swim in and good sailing in the afternoon SE seabreeze. We planned to stay in these waters for a month before moving further North but more of that next Newsletter.

ION & MARGARET ULLETT