

By Faye and Mike Harman



Highlights from our Brisbane to Adelaide delivery trip.

With the mainsail clew renewed, Refuge Bay in Cowan Creek

ON 21 April this year, Mike and I berthed our new yacht in our Squadron marina berth. We had done it! We were proud of ourselves and very happy to be home with the boat we loved. What's more, we had cruised back with only the two of us.

We had taken 10 weeks to do so, three weeks longer than planned. This was partly due to weather, but also to our physical abilities. We found that we needed longer recovery times than anticipated, and that overnight sails were more strenuous and stressful now.

The highlights of our trip were the places we didn't intend to visit – places we had rejected as being too industrial and dowdy, or too difficult to enter. But breakdowns and weather patterns necessitated changes.

The first of these was Newcastle. We had bypassed this industrial city on all of our previous trips, but we had torn the clew from our in-mast furling mainsail, and so we needed a sailmaker. The next place one was available was at the marina in Newcastle. We reluctantly left rural Port Stephens for the industrial city and its marina.

To our surprise and delight the Newcastle wharf precinct has been attractively modernised. There are now tree-lined walkways and bikeways. The marina itself is secure, has many 'learn to sail' activities, a laundry, showers and toilets, and a restaurant where both the food and view are good and it is open every day. The bus stops at the front door, so shopping is easy by bus or even on foot. Coles, Anaconda, Dan Murphys, Macpac and pharmacies are nearby. Whitworths is a bit more of a bus adventure.

Altogether, Newcastle exceeded our expectations in every way, except for the main reason for calling in. Our mainsail could not be unfurled to re-stitch the clew. As a marina berth was only available to us for three nights, Michael was instructed on how to re-sew by hand and was sold the materials needed to fix it.

He did this successfully at Refuge Bay in Cowan Creek: an anchorage that was just as beautiful, well protected and as easily accessed as we remembered, despite the fact that it is so close to Sydney and the madding crowds.

Weather conditions were ideal when we left and we sailed non-stop to Eden. This took two nights at sea, but we were confident that, once in Eden, we could rest and relax. Not so!

Snug Cove, the town anchorage, was full of private moorings and access to one of the wharves was unavailable due to construction work. Visiting yachts have very restricted anchoring/mooring options. We anchored uncomfortably at the edge of the bay, close to the

rocks and in some swell. Reprovisioning is difficult as the shopping centre is up a steep hill and fuel is not easily obtained from the wharf. Most yachties prefer to cart jerry cans from the garage at the top of the hill. The town water at the wharf is said to be potable but is unfortunately tan-coloured, and the chandlery was limited and expensive.

East Boyd Bay is the recommended anchorage. It has a long white beach, clean water, and is overlooked by a prestigious remote resort, a Navy wharf, a gigantic woodchip pile and a woodchip loading wharf. It is, however, exposed to northerly winds and easterly swells – both of which we experienced while there.



Marina at Lakes Entrance

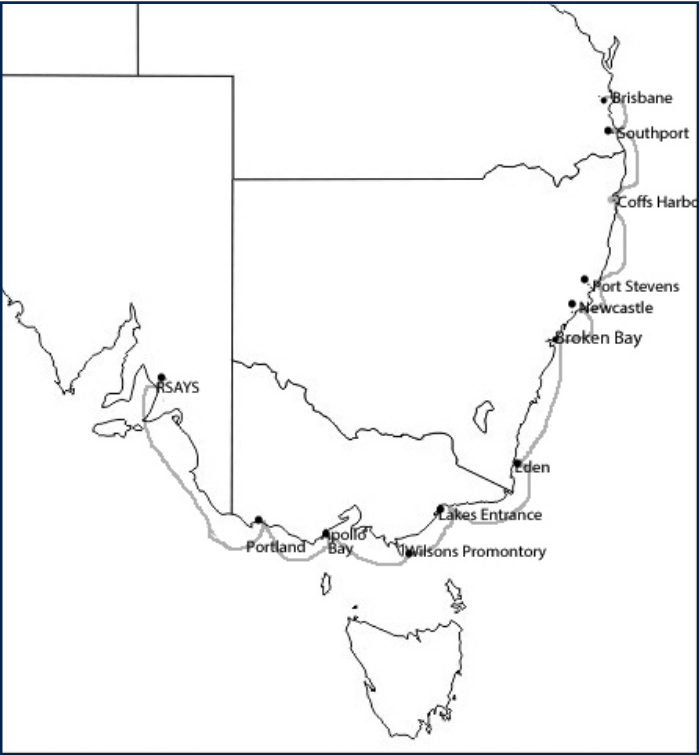
Luckily, in East Boyd Bay we met *Twilight Express*, an ex-Squadron boat. The new owners had extensively refitted her in Paynesville, Lakes Entrance, and highly recommended it as a cruising destination. Talking with them allayed most of our concerns about the notorious bar entrance. Gippsland Ports has an accessible and informative website dedicated to the waterways and marine facilities. This includes two real-time videos of the bar from different locations.

Armed with all this, plus the knowledge that our alternator was no longer charging our house battery, a stopover at Lakes Entrance became very attractive. It was our next highlight.

The bar crossing was easily made, the leads were clear, and we were lucky to find a marina berth in Cunninghams Channel. It was private, secure, had power and water, and was a short walk to Woolies, BWS, etc. The owner recommended an excellent marine electrician so that, having arrived on Saturday, by Monday we had an alternator that charged both sets of batteries. We could now confidently continue. However the lure of security, after the stress of storms at Eden, a night at sea, and the dodgy alternator, was too tempting, so we let the next weather window pass while we shopped for warm clothes and bedding. The days were getting shorter and colder, and we had intended to be home by now. We also reprovisioned at a leisurely pace and visited the laundromat, second-hand book shops, bought books, DVDs and puzzles, and fresh hot chips from the local takeaway (these had replaced ice-cream in our fantasies as the temperature cooled).

As the weather was still unfavourable, we began exploring the lakes. We spent a relaxing Easter at Duck Arm, an inlet near Paynesville. We read in sunshine in the cockpit, explored the waterways, watched waterbirds through binoculars and generally enjoyed the pleasure of being on our boat in an anchorage free from waves. We remembered, as you do, before setting off in the dinghy, to check on the Victorian rules and Regulations to ensure we were compliant (Life Jackets? Torch? Anchor? Paddles? etc).

We also began planning for a longer term stay by investigating a berth at the Council marina in Paynesville and land trips home. The Tuesday after Easter we planned to visit the marina and make a



final decision on the berth. Like all such plans, this changed when we checked the latest weather forecast. It was ideal for travelling further west long enough for us to reach Portland. We couldn't pass the opportunity. So we motored past the marina we had been allocated and on towards Cunninghams Inlet and the bar.

As you can see from our map, we continued on to Refuge Cove on Wilsons Promontory, then Apollo Bay, Portland and home. That part of our story will be told at a later date.



Home at RSAYS