

SAILING IN TASMANIA; HEADING TO PORT DAVEY

It seems that everyone is heading to Tassie! Here's another fascinating tale from two intrepid members who've headed down to Tasmania for adventure and fun. Helen Prisk shares *The Tardis's* recent journey from Hobart to Pt. Davey, while Phil Moody remembers sailing the opposite direction from Pt. MacQuarie to the same destination on board *Pied Piper II* a few years ago. Whichever course you take, it sounds a great experience!

Helen Prisk:

In February this year it was a great experience to sail in *The Tardis*, a 10 metre Nantucket Islander, to the extremely remote area of Port Davey which is in the World Heritage Listed south west corner of Tasmania. We needed to be totally self sufficient with food, water and fuel for a month.



The Tardis in Port Davey.

My friend Graham Kilgariff and I were joined by veteran sailing friends John and Veronica Wickham. John's skills were a great asset in assisting with the efficient sailing of the boat in very remote waters. Veronica proved a great boon in the galley with food preparation to keep the troops running.

The odyssey began on Monday February 13 early in the morning at 0815. Our plan was to sail the 48 nautical miles from Hobart to Recherche Bay and wait for a suitable weather window to begin the sail around the bottom of Tasmania. We motor-sailed most of the way using the autopilot. We passed through the very beautiful D'Entrecasteaux Channel in smooth seas until we left the Channel and passed into a gentle sea. We arrived at Recherche Bay at 1800 where we anchored in Coalbins Bay which afforded us the best protection from a strong westerly. Recherche is a spectacular area which includes the beginning of the vast South West National Park Wilderness.

The Tardis remained at Coalbins for two nights until the weather improved and departed the anchorage on Wednesday at 0530. The trip would take 12 hours to complete the 70 nautical miles to Port Davey. There was a 3 metre swell with not much wave activity and the winds were south westerly but not very strong. We kept relatively close to the shore so that we could view the spectacular scenery passing Whale Head, South East Cape and South Cape by 1100. Next, we sailed by the cliffs of DeWitt Island known by the locals as 'Big Witch'.

Crayfishermen were busy tending to their pots along much of the coast. *The Tardis* soon passed Maatsuyker Island which has a light house, radio repeater and weather station. Views of the coast in



Rugged coastline, south west Tasmania.

this area were superb and *The Tardis* was now heading for the very rugged South West Cape which is quite breathtaking when seen from the ocean. Rounding the Cape ahead of time at 1500, the seas changed and the wind strengthened. In the distance we could see The Pyramids, big rocks marking the gateway to Port Davey. We watched closely for craypots in this area.

We passed the pots without incident and had our first sighting of The Breaksea Islands which guard the entrance to Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour. The Breakseas are very rugged with several perforations through the rocks. We passed the beautiful Spain Bay and headed for Bramble Cove at the beginning of the Bathurst Channel, arriving at 1700 well ahead of time. Anchored close to shore we settled into a peaceful night as the wind died down. The crew experienced the first magnificent sunset as nibbles and wine were served. Our sail east to west was easier than we had imagined and we were about to experience an even more amazing week as we were blessed by good weather.

We hoisted anchor on Thursday at 1000 under blue skies and motored into the Bathurst Channel. At Horseshoe Inlet we stopped in the very pretty Casilda Cove. Carefully avoiding a submerged rock off Danger Bluff.

We began our first walking trip at Casilda Cove. John, Veronica and I walked up Mt Balmoral over wet boggy peat covered in thick button grass. John led, making noise to warn any snakes of our



Tranquil Port Davey.

approach. Proper walking shoes and long pants are essential as well as a camera. The spectacular view from the mountain showed the grandeur further into Bathurst Harbour as well as magnificent seaward views. Veronica and I kayaked on Casilda Cove. The boat was moved to Shelter Point when strong SE winds made the anchorage uncomfortable.

On Friday, Iola Bay was our lunch stop. Iola is quite small and already had two boats anchored. We were fortunate to see a brigantine sail from Bathurst Harbour into the channel with all sails rigged. It was a wonderful sight. Next morning the grandeur of Mt Rugby reflected perfectly in the waters.

On Saturday *The Tardis* moved to Claytons Corner which is part of the human history of Port Davey. Clyde was a fisherman who married

Win, the sister of tin miner Denny King. Clyde also helped maintain supplies to local tin miners. Clyde built Win a house at Claytons Corner and also, with Denny, a jetty to moor his boat. The jetty still remains in place at Clayton's Corner and fresh water from which yachties replenish their tanks. Win established a vegetable garden for the house as well as a flower garden. There are still two of her rhododendrons near the house.

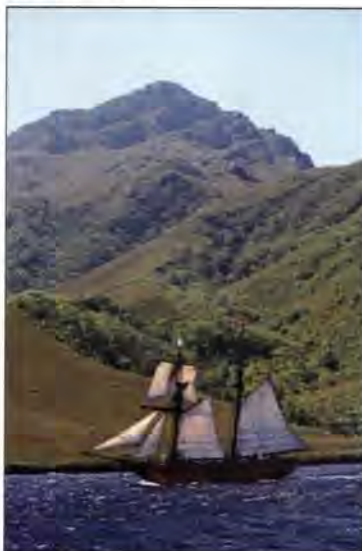
The crew set off from Claytons Corner in the inflatable dinghy to explore Melaleuca Inlet and find the house built by Denny King for his family. Denny was a tin miner who became famous for his hospitality to the many walkers who turned up at his doorstep needing accommodation and food. He entertained many famous people and also assisted universities with the collection of flora and fauna. He was a naturalist who spent his life maintaining the remote area of Pt Davey including fighting fires, building the airstrip which is used to this day by tourists and emergency services and constructing light beacons for boating. Denny built the Charles King hut named after his father. He was also an artist and painted many scenes of the area. He protected the endangered orange-bellied parrot.

We motored 3 to 4 kilometres along the inlet then turned into Melaleuca Creek where we found the landing for the airstrip and Denny King's Home. A boardwalk crosses the button grass to a track. We were surprised at the size of the airstrip and found four planes landed. A weather station is also present. A track leads to his Nissan hut-style house which is surrounded by gardens and a bird hide.

John very carefully steered us back up Melaleuca Creek to the Inlet as we were low on fuel. The last kilometre we rowed back to Claytons Corner.

Sunday morning we filled our water bottles at the jetty. An eight foot black tiger snake slithered away on an old pile of tin near the track to the house. *The Tardis* departed Claytons for Moulters Inlet passing Celery Top Islands which show no signs of ever being burnt by fire as opposed to other parts of Port Davey. Mile after mile of mountain reflections in the tannin-stained waters in Bathurst Harbour were mesmerising. We kayaked scenic Moulters Inlet seeing much birdlife before returning to Bathurst Channel and Ila Bay on the

immediate west side of Mt Rugby. The anchorage was idyllic with fantastic reflections once again of Mt Rugby. Numerous orange jellyfish swam around the boat.



Brigantine in Bathurst Harbour.

A strong westerly was expected on Monday so we headed for Schooner Cove to a safe anchorage where we found several other boats doing the same thing. We saw a large sea eagle on Little Woody island on the way into the cove. A large power boat dragged past *The Tardis* and re-anchored with more chain. The wind howled over the mountains and trees above our heads but the skies were still blue.

On Tuesday, we awoke to misty rain and the mountains were shrouded in cloud. It was quite beautiful in a different way to what we had experienced over the last week. We departed for Spain Bay which has a beach surrounded by sand hills and rocky outcrops. We trekked into the sand hills to look for an Aboriginal Midden but aborted the trip because the button grass and ground was very soggy and snakes were likely to be about. Our

trek took us far enough to see into the open sea with magnificent views of the Pyramids, islands and coast. The anchorage was very good holding but the boat did roll during the night.

At 0615 on Wednesday, we ended our fabulous trip to Port Davey as we weighed anchor and set off back to Recherche Bay. I believe we were extremely fortunate to have enjoyed such good weather for our trip and would love to return to the grandeur of Port Davey.

Phil Moody:

Thanks to Di and Ian Moncrieff on *Pied Piper 2*, Helen and I had the opportunity to sail the west coast of Tasmania in February 2009. We met up at the Wooden Boat Festival in Hobart, hired a car and drove to Strachan through the scenic hills and valleys of central west Tasmania. We spent one day walking around Strachan undertaking last minute provisioning, admiring the views and local tourist attractions while waiting for appropriate weather.

To allow for a long day sail to Port Davey we exited Macquarie Harbour from Strachan via Hell's Gates which is the name of the mouth of Macquarie Harbour. It is a notoriously shallow and dangerous channel entrance. Navigating out through the narrow heads required careful concentration and attention to navigational landmarks and markers. We proceeded to motor sail to Spain Bay to prepare for our entrance into the Bathurst Channel, a 12 km long



Phil and Helen Moody in Bathurst Channel, SW Tasmania.



Claytons Corner in Port Davey. Melealeuca Creek in mid picture, narrow channel that connects with Port Davey. The channel is quite wide and deep but in its meandering course does get shallow in spots. *Pied Piper 2* negotiated the channel from Port Davey through with an eye on the depth. Passage time was approximately 2 hours.

When fresh water meets saltwater layering occurs because freshwater is lighter in weight than dense salt water. Within the marine reserve this causes the dark band of tannin-rich freshwater to sit on top of the clear saltwater. Bathurst Channel is the jewel of the marine reserve, however if you were to travel over these dark waters you could be forgiven for thinking nothing much was going on down below. Nothing is further from the truth.

The area is renowned for its bad weather, but we struck an unusually calm and balmy week. The area is controlled by National Parks and a pass is required. Indeed, the Rangers visited us daily, noting the people on board and counting that no one had been lost overboard since the previous day.

We walked daily at various locations up hill, down dale and across to the southern ocean through tea tree scrub. There is an excellent map produced by National Parks about the area that includes the

popular walks with some detail about each of them. For the more enthusiastic there is always Mount Rugby, which is a challenge. Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour can only be accessed by sea, plane or walking overland on the south coast track. It has a special feeling of remoteness until walking to the airstrip at Melaluca!

Clayton's corner is just on the outside of Melaluca channel that leads to the Melaluca settlement where Deny King's house is situated, now along with the National Parks huts and airstrip. He was the pioneer settler / tin miner of this area and King of the Wilderness.

From Claytons corner to Melaluca is a shallow tidal channel that can be safely navigated at high tide if you draw under 2m. Anchoring is possible at Melaluca, however we tied up and rafted with another yacht to an old jetty. There was another old jetty warning of instability that was promptly demolished by a large motor vessel trying to tie up regardless of the warnings posted.

We had a great time exploring the Melaluca site with its airstrip. It also has an elaborate bird hide to view the endangered orange bellied parrots. Planes fly in and out regularly transporting bushwalkers, kayakers, day visitors and engine parts - such as another yacht's alternator. It is possible to sail in and fly out or visa versa if crew time is an issue. This was the backup plan for us should we have been stuck with inclement weather when we needed to get back to work.

The highlights of our west coast adventure were many but the ones that stand out include the magnificent scenery, the fantastic feeling of being somewhere not many other people get to, the great food, the company and of course the sailing. A big thank you to Di and Ian and *Pied Piper 2* for superb hospitality and giving us that wonderful opportunity. 

IN THE GALLEY



Veronica, the efficient Galley Slave!

On board catering is not difficult if you have a plan, according to Veronica Wickham, Chief-Cook-and-Bottlewasher on *The Tardis's* recent *Tassie* voyage. Here she shares some tips for provisioning and providing tasty meals on long journeys when there is not a shop in sight for a couple of weeks.

1. Take into account the number of people on board e.g.; 4 people 4 pieces of chicken 4 pieces of steak etc. then double it.
2. Get the meat from the butcher and get them to Cryovac it so if you are having 8 pieces of chicken have two separate packets 4 in each, etc.
3. Buy plenty of tinned food, peas/carrots/beans corn etc., and a variety of canned soups; cup of soups are handy for cold rough days although not my favourite. A supply of tinned fruit with long life cream also comes in handy.
4. Large cracker breads are handy for when the bread has gone stale. Use stale bread for toasty sandwiches like grilled tomato and cheese. Packets of mountain bread make delicious

wraps, filled with salad, cheese, salmon or tuna.

5. Fresh fruit like apples and oranges will last the distance.
6. Fresh vegies will only last a week or so, potatoes a little longer but onions do well;
7. Take plenty long life milk for loads of tea and coffee.
8. Have on board all your spices and sauces to 'tart up' your meals
9. Nibbles are 'a must' for the Cocktail Hour, or just as a snack! Stock up on cheeses/nuts/dips/olives and plenty of dry biscuits
10. Plenty of sweet biscuits and cake, preferably fruitcake. Trickle some brandy over the cake - it will last longer and taste better!

Veronica's Most Popular Seafaring Recipe

CHICKEN CURRY MAYO

4 Chicken breast fillets
 1 can mushroom soup Diluted with
 ½ cup long life cream & ½ cup water
 2 dessertspoons mayonnaise
 2 teaspoons curry powder
 ½ cup grated cheese
 Add all together
 Bake in moderate oven for ½ hr.
 Add any vegetables you like e.g. Broccoli/cauliflower/carrot.