



Medina's Log

Summer 2006

Although our log starts on 26 December 2005, our adventure started well before Christmas with weeks of preparation and dreaming:

- Maintenance and improvements to the boat, ready for a serious sail
- Provisioning for a month at sea and construction of menus
- Study of the charts and the weather for several weeks before our departure

This trip is a test for both of us:

- Will we like being at sea for a month?
- Will we get along in cramped and demanding conditions?
- Will we suffer from sea sickness?
- Will Medina be well enough equipped for the crossing?
- Are we experienced enough for Bass Strait?
- Will we go through stressful moments?
- Will we have enough food, water and diesel?

For Wade who has made the Melbourne to Tasmania trip several times crewing on other yachts, it is the first time that he is doing it on his own boat. It is quite different when you are in charge and have to make all the decisions. His dream is to go away sailing for a year, to explore the Australian coast. So this trip will give him a good idea of what cruising life is like.

For me, who has never been far from the coast and who is still learning about sailing, it is the opportunity to go on a voyage of discovery, about the sea, the boat, myself, the two of us.

Our Trip



LAKES ENTRANCE TO THE DEAL GROUP	5
THE KENT GROUP	8
FLINDERS ISLAND	14
BACK TO DEAL	29
FROM DEAL TO WILSON'S PROMONTORY	37
RETURN FROM THE PROM TO THE LAKES	47
BACK IN THE LAKES	52

Lakes Entrance to the Deal Group

26/12/05

We spent the morning getting Medina ready: food organized, water replenished, cleaning inside and out, new fire extinguisher hooked on.

Lunch in Paynesville, then another listen to the forecast: we will be playing in the Lakes for a few days.

We set sail for Waddy Point... nice 5 knots breeze bound for a 'secret' mooring. We found in fact two of them and we are now swinging gently for the night. Nice gentle rocking motion. It is going to be a hot one tomorrow: Over 30°. I would not mind staying here for the day to unwind!

Our friends are obviously thinking of us... there are a few well wishing messages from Geoff & Maz, Greg and Ann, Phil, Bruce.

27/12/05

It is a hot morning on the mooring; we are being buzzed by a nasty motor boat who is taking a mean pleasure at circling around us.

Securitae warning. We decide to head off for the shelter of Duck Arm. Great sail back at 5 to 6 knots, although discovered the hand made bracket on the furler was being bent under pressure, stopping us from letting it out. Once in Duck Arm, together with many other boats, we anchored right at the end and settled in for the night.

28/12/05

SW change came at 7.00 am - worst of it is over by 9.00 and a sunny day ahead. Wadey went visiting Phil who was anchored nearby. Nutmeg is as bad as Medina when it comes to going into wind! Two hours later and many tacks done, he finally made it to Frolic! I sat on the deck, sunning myself and enjoying the view!

Afternoon sail to Two Dogs doing 7 knots in 15 to 18 knots breeze. Medina does like it on the bottom!

Went prawning in the night and caught 60 of the beasties and one good size flounder. One great breakfast coming up!

29/12/05

We might be leaving the safety of the Lakes this afternoon: three days of NE, although a little strong tomorrow (10 -20). The mood has become quite serious all of a sudden. Avomine tablets swallowed, we will have to fill up with water and diesel at the Entrance.... Wade has gone awfully quiet!

Morning spent tidying up, setting up the lifeline, cooking the prawns, making frequent trips to the loo. There is nothing like Bass Strait to activate the gut!

And despite some attempts at sabotage – CD threw the diary away (which apparently had important reference notes for the engine and not just lots of blank pages from a 2-year-old AXA diary) – and WB put the wrong oil in the prop leg which then had to be pumped out and refilled with the right stuff... We managed to head off from Lakes Entrance at 5.00 pm after all.



And two nervous sailors crossed the bar at 5.10 pm... Yeah! Out of the Lakes at last. 10 knots wind, averaged 4.5 knots for a couple of hours. 'Memorize this picture, Miss Cricri, we've got to find our way back in when we return' says Wadey as we look back at The Entrance. It is a weird feeling of excitement as we sail away.

At about 8.00 pm, the breeze was too light.... It would have taken us some 40 hours to get to Deal, according to the GPS! So on the engine went, with George in charge of steering, whilst we feasted on the prawns from last night's catch.



CD took the 11 to 2 am shift at the wheel. Main up, George on, engine on.... It was dark out there, except for the oil rigs lit up like Christmas trees. With the gentle rocking and the constant hum of the 'tractor', it was hard to stay awake... Marking the coordinates on the chart every hour gave evidence of progress towards our heading.

At 2.00 am, Wadie got up and it was his turn to keep watch. I went to bed and fell asleep pretty quickly, despite the noise of our tractor! Weird dreams... The 3 hours passed quickly and at 4.50 am I got up, went to the loo, felt the rocking motion and thought: 'ho, ho, I feel sick'. Quick glance at the buckets... no time to unravel the cords, and rushed to the outside... back corner of the boat and spewed over the side. I felt a bit green for a couple of hours, and then the nausea went as quickly as it had appeared.

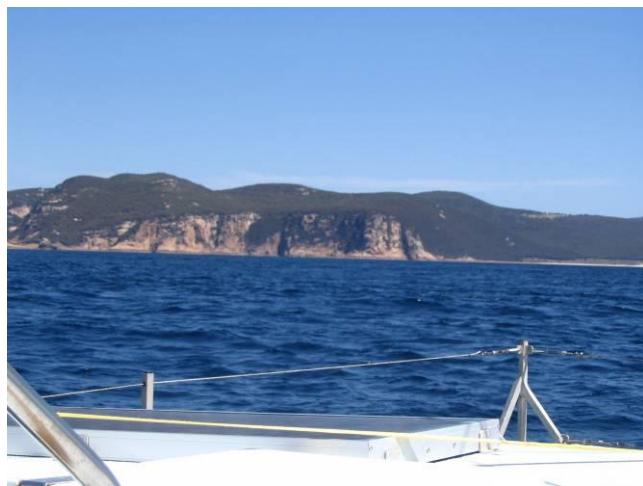
We turned the engine off at 8.00 am as the breeze had picked up. However, it was short lived. Two hours later, on went the tractor again!

360° view... no land in sight. Wow the earth is flat! Well the ocean is... The swell is small...a meter or so and it is quite a nice motion... sort of wallowing.

Saw our first albatross. Checked the bird book. It was a 'black browed' albatross. A few gannets as well and some black shearwaters, I think, or may be petrels. Yes, I think they were white chinned petrels after consulting the photographic guide... Sue would have fun out here.

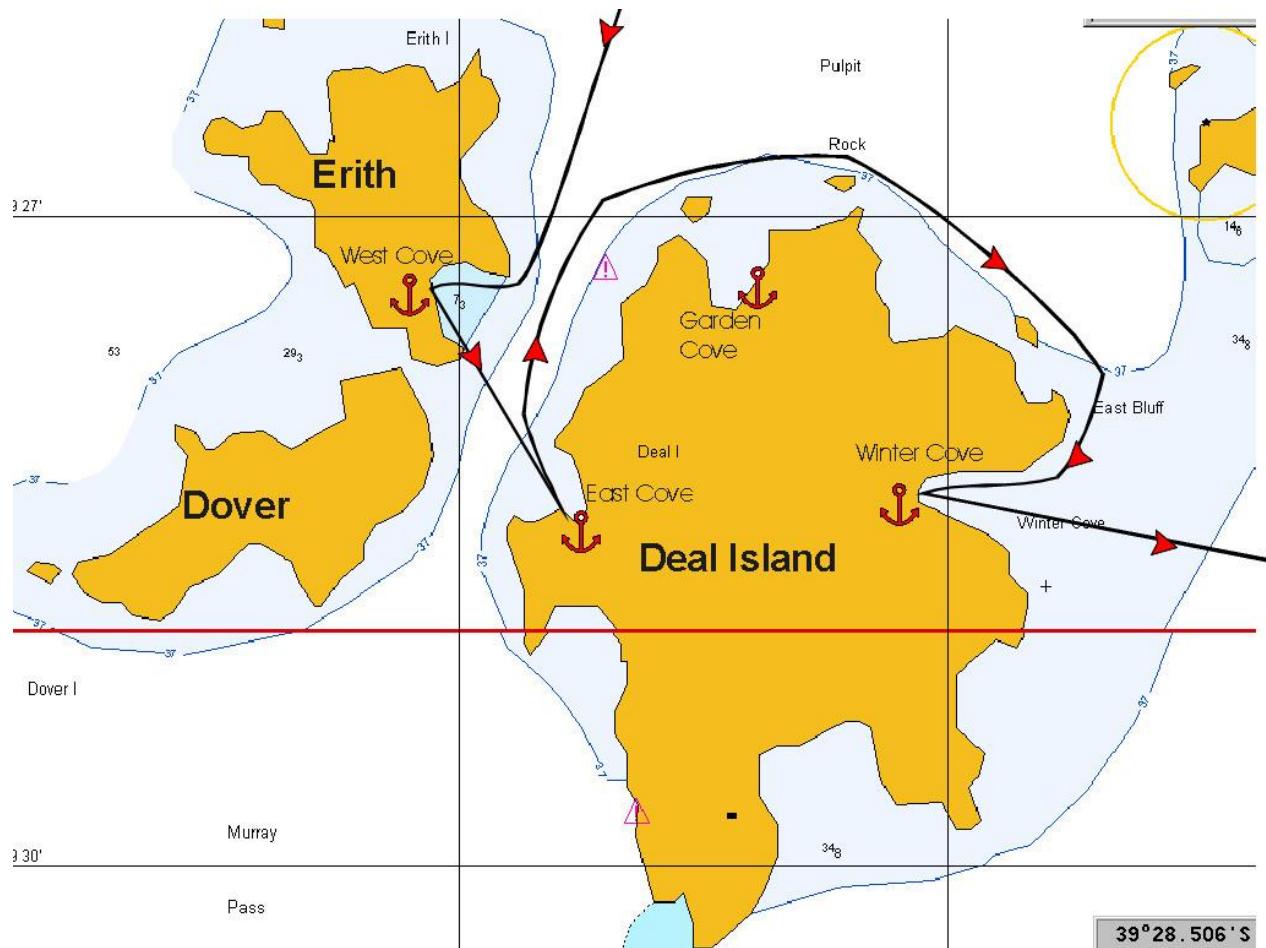
Then all of a sudden, a pod of dolphins joined us and played with our bow waves. There would have been over a dozen of them. I reckon they like catamarans, more fun playing between the hulls! We could hear them call each other and they seemed encouraged by our screams of delight too!

Later on, Wadey caught a barracouta on the trawling line. Mean looking teeth... Dinner! Then there was a seal playing around on its back, flippers up in the air... they swim a long way out from any shore!



Nearing Deal Island after
23 hours at sea.

The Kent Group



Around one o'clock we could start seeing the Kent group of islands and progressively got close and picked our anchorage on the West Cove – Erith Island.



Idyllic spot, aqua water near the shore, ultramarine further out.... Clear...

A few more birds: Pacific gulls, sooty oystercatchers... And a huge stingray right under the hull!

We went for a swim... very brief, as the water is very cold!

31/12/05

The wind has turned southerly and there is a strong wind warning. We are dragging our anchor... It is time to move to the opposite corner: across the Pass to Deal Island – East Cove.





We walked up to the lighthouse, via the caretakers' house – Tony and Linda – who were very chatty and had been 'expecting' the crew from Medina... Nothing escapes them on the radio! A thank you to the weatherman from Tamar Radio got us noticed. The view from the lighthouse was spectacular. Plenty of exploring to do... We might do a circumnavigation of Deal and check out a couple of other coves... That is if we are not roped into ferrying the 'Erith Mob' from West Cove to East Cove!

Tonight being New Year's Eve, it sounds like BBQ on the beach might be the go.

Saw some Cape Barren Geese and many wallabies that came right down to the beach.

As the wind picked up and the swell started coming right into the Cove, other yachts, anchored a fair way out, moved in. Seven of us were swinging around in 3 to 5 meters of water. A bit close!

We had an uncomfortable, swelly night. I ended up sleeping on the bridge deck to avoid rolling out of bed!

1/1/06

7.30 am. Another yacht – Wind Song – from Mornington, is anchored right next to us. The swell is still bad and we can see everyone getting ready for a run across Murray Path to the West Cove!

The man from the big cat 'Watpinga' from Darwin comes on board for a sticky beak at our toy cat, on the pretext of wanting the weather report! Oh yeah, we believe you! There are off to Flinders Island despite the strong wind warning.



We decide to be different to the others and to head off to the Western side of Deal, to Winter Cove. Sedate motor-sail up the Murray Path under genoa, then start heading out and to the West and face the music: Down wind/beam run in 20-knot wind and choppy seas... We are averaging 7 knots, and when the gusts come – max 31 knots – I stop looking at the speedo at 9.3.

We are surfing down the waves and I am at the wheel thinking 'fuck, Wade, we should not be here', but steering and feeling relief when our speed slows down to 8 knots after the gust... Time to furl the genoa in a fraction, I think!

It is with relief that we turn into Winter Cove... this little trip might not have been such a good idea: very swelly and a lot more windy than we expected... However, we are not getting out again! Two anchors down. We are not moving. And by the sound of the weather forecast, we might be here for a few days. It is bloody windy everywhere.

It has been a productive day despite the weather. Wadey rigged up something to collect fresh water since it rained in the afternoon. I did a bit of sewing, and then we decided to try the Cobb Cooker. Baking time! Made a muesli slice... a bit crumbly, but tastes good, and our first ever 'hand made' loaf of bread. It looked like we were going to have a brick, but it finally turned into a descent loaf.

Part way through the afternoon, another yacht arrived in our cove, having had a tough passage from Flinders Island. Would not you know it, they came and anchored right alongside us, way too close for our liking. Wadey had to ask them to move. They must have been attracted by the yummy cooking smells!

2/1/06



It is a reasonably sunny day today, but too windy to go for a sail. Instead, we drop Nutmeg in the water and row to the beach for a walk up to the Settlement and 'Museum' – 4 Kms each way. Good exercise, but next time we will wear long pants to protect our poor legs from the prickly grass.

Tried fishing from the boat in the afternoon, but no success.

The forecast for tomorrow is much the same, so we will try snorkeling in the bay and probably go for another explore on the island. May be Wednesday will be calmer and allow us to escape to Flinders Island.

3/1/106

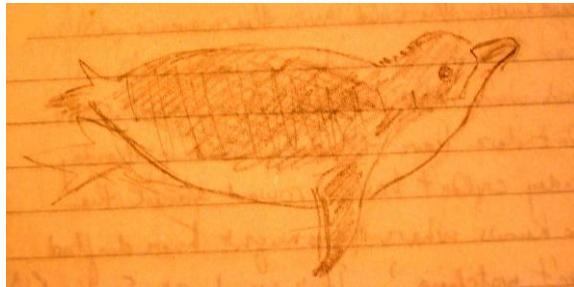
Not much sleep last night. It was blowing a gale. The gusts were yanking us on the anchor. You could hear them building up, whistling through, and then hitting us at over 30 knots. I am not sure what was more unsettling: the strength of the wind, or the noise level and the thought of what would happen if we were not sheltered in a cove. Your mind plays tricks on you: will the anchors hold, what if the clears blow out, what if the chain breaks... what if you had to contend with the wind AND the waves...

Well, it is 7 pm, we are still in Winter Cove, and it is still howling. We would not dare leave Medina during the day. For a start, Wadey couldn't have rowed against the gusts, and who knows where Medina might have drifted to, whilst we were not watching? It maxed at 50 knots! And this is in a sheltered cove! Bloody hell! So no fishing, no snorkeling, no shower, unless you wanted to stand at the bow in the willy willies! We kept an eye on Musket and Wombat, two other yachts who were drifting and had to re-anchor...

We made good use of the Cobb Cooker – more bread. This time, a beauty, and Wade made a nice stew for dinner. I like making bread... takes time, but what else is there to do? We both finished books, and I finished binding the wattle quilt. Wadey put on chafe protection for the anchor bridle.

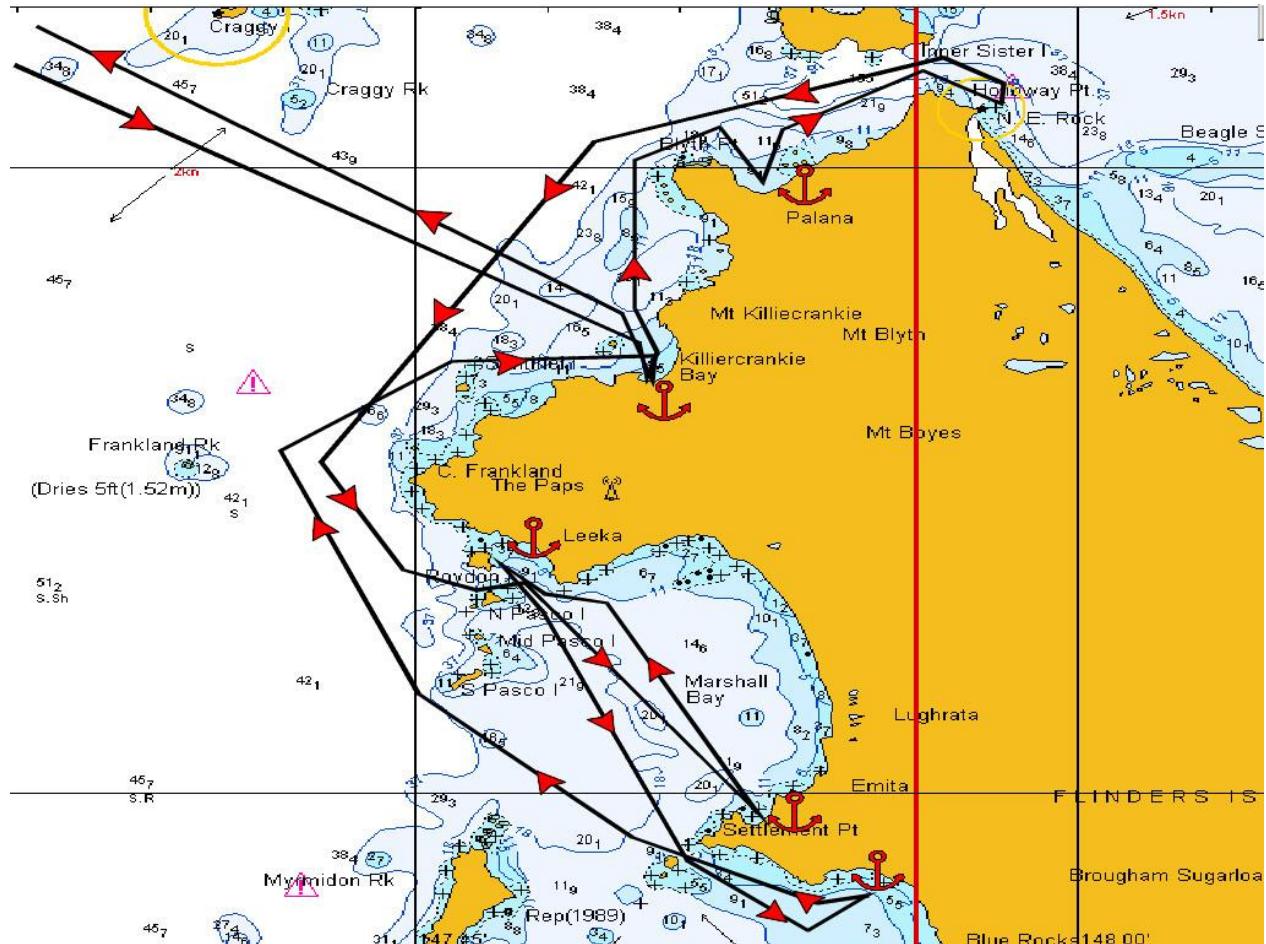
When we peer out to sea, through the binoculars, we can see breaking waves – 3 to 4 meters. 'Ugly shmuggly'. Don't want to be there.

Every night, an hour after dark, we can hear the penguins call out... the parents return to their youngs from their day's fishing. I want to go and see them with a torch when the weather calms down...
Penguin Parade on Deal Island.



But it won't be tonight. Getting out on the deck is enough of a challenge to balance, let alone jumping into Nutmeg! Wadey is dreaming of a little outboard engine and I too could be tempted!

Flinders Island



4/1/06

All quiet first thing in the morning, we are sitting beam to the swell. We decide to head off to Flinders Island at 9.00 am.

It is all on, or all off around here. It is hard to believe it was blowing at 40 knots yesterday, when today we need the tractor to keep us going. The breeze is very light all day. All that is left of the gale is a bit of swell. We do some sailing between the rocky outcrops that punctuate our bearing to Killiercrankie, but a lot of boring motoring.... too much for our liking. The rocking of the swell and drone of the engine makes me drowsy!

We got to Killiecrankie at 5 pm and set up between the beach and the fishermen's moorings.



Old Man's Head, at Killiecrankie Bay. Seen from our anchorage, it looks like a peaceful old Asian monk. Up close, it is just a pile of rocks!

Wadie caught a small barracouta... dinner tonight! - A lot more tasty than the last one, but still lots of bones.

Fresh water shower on board for both of us tonight... luxury!

5/1/06

We went ashore for a walk along the beach, then a chat to the locals. Discovered water, rubbish bins, a telephone box and a small corner shop...

So we gave sign of life to Wadey's Mum who probably would have been anxious. Then we bought ice creams, milk and a diamond... a Killiecrankie diamond – a topaz! I will get that set as a pendant... very nice souvenir of our adventure.

Replenished the water, got rid of the rubbish, and decided to head off to Palana on the Northern tip of the island, towards North East River, which Wadey is keen to explore. It

has a bit of a frontier ring to the name. It took us a few goes to manage to get past Blyth Point: between the head wind and the 2-knot current, we were either drifting out sideways or not making headway. Tried tacking a few times, but to no avail. So the tractor came to the rescue and we made it around Blyth Point into Palana Bay.

A bit of sun baking on the deck, a small interlude in the 'state room', then starkies over the side... which must have entertained the local 'land base' station as a call for 'Medina' came on the radio later, whilst we were warming ourselves in the sunshine. 'Just welcoming you to Palana!' – Hello Land Base!

We enquired about North East River. 'There's a bar. Enter on a full tide'. Wadey is particularly eager to get in there, and 'hole in' for the night. Me, I hope we will see lots of birds there, some new ones may be. This morning, saw a couple of petrels. All dark, wedged tail, grey face.... possibly the great winged petrel. There were quite big, nearly as big as a Pacific gull.

6/1/06

Well that was a horrible night. Rolly polly, noisy water slapping. We did not get much sleep. We might have been more comfortable at the Inner Sister Island after all.

We are ready to go at 9.00 am and catch the current down the Sisters' Passage. The depth is amazing: up to 150m deep. As we get close to Stanley Point, the water gets very rough: a bit like boiling water and very rock and rolly and the swell increases significantly. We look at the sandy beach at Stanley Point, which if we could anchor there and row ashore, would enable us to walk to the river's head to have a good look at the entrance. However, it is too rough and we decide to motor all the way around Holloway Point to see the river entrance from the other side... Talk about rough water, I guess that is what they call 'confused swell'. It is messy and uncomfortable and the current is strong. Not my cup of tea, and I am praying that Wadey decides not to attempt getting closer! He looks through the binoculars and likes what he sees in there! Bummer! I don't want us to go in there... quick way to trash the boat!

In the distance we see the 'Stern Choppers': major eddies that have a very apt name. So we skirt around the edge of them to avoid the worst of it.

We have now decided to head back towards Killiecrankie and beyond if the wind allows.... I select Port Davies as our destination.... a long way down, past Cape Frankland.

And now I know the meaning of the French phrase: 'passer le cap'. To get past a cape means crossing some pretty turbulent water and air....just like with paragliding I guess! In French, it is about doing something tough and getting past it.

It is an interesting sail beyond the Cape, negotiating our way through the Pasco Group of islands. Gee, I am glad we have got the Tracker... makes it easier to see the obstacle course of rocks! There is a nice little anchorage behind Roydon Island... store that in memory for the return trip...



Then it is across the Marshall Bay to Port Davies, some 2 hours sail further. On the way Wadey catches 3 barracoutas, so dinner is taken care of. What big teeth they have!

We also see some little penguins... Yeah! They look like little cormorants from a distance, but as we get close to them, instead of flying off, they dive.... That's penguins for you!

Port Davies is a very nice, sheltered little cove. No swell. A nice beach and some tracks to explore ashore.



That is once Wadey has fixed the engine lifting rope, which just broke! Guess who forgot to lock the doover lucky after turning the engine on ready for anchoring? Naughty boy! But he nearly got hypothermia fixing the damn thing and checking the anchor. Well that is his shower taken care of. Then he cleaned the fish. Very messy business, but it interested the Pacific gulls.

Wow, we had some seven hours of sailing today and about one hour, if that, of motoring. I think we deserve a rest day tomorrow. We had fun today!

Purchase List:

- A decent size chopping board – for the meter long barras!
- A fisherman's anchor (I wonder who thought of that?)
- 6 ml rope for the leg as a spare – make that 2 lengths
- A washing machine – just kidding
- A water maker – only kidding again
- A filleting knife – a good one!
- A large dry bag

Extracts from life aboard Medina:

Oh no, Wadey just had another epiphany! A home made LED. 'It uses bugger all power'. Mind you, can't see shit.... 'You can', he says, 'it's good, dear; it's an OK light' – for nocturnal animals, may be! Now we are really in trouble. He is surprised how good these are, thinking of replacing the lights above the sink and in the loo. Now he is plotting a major electrical project.... But wait.... What did he say?

- 'Can't see' as he turns the real fluro on!
- Ah, ah! Got you Wadey!'
- 'Oh, but you've taken it out of context'
- 'Yeah, keep finding your way out of that one, Wadey!'

And now, to help his case, Wadey decides to try to hang his LED from the rafter. The lead catches my glass of wine, which falls off the table and breaks. Mr Bean is now getting the vacuum cleaner to suck up the glass, thus ruining any power saving from the LED. Need I say more?

Better stop writing now, gotta do the dishes ... or else!

More added to the purchase list as we're going along:

- More nibbles (savory ones)
- Round baking dish, about 25 cm diameter
- Oven glove
- Curry powder/chicken cubes/spices
- Cook book for the boat, e.g. simple one pot camping
- Cheese slicer and more cheese!
- Fly spray
- Tins of mushrooms
- More ginger cordial
- Hatch seals for roof
- Door latches
- Maintenance log book
- 'Car' blinds (rolly ones) for the 2 front windows when it's hot

7/7/06



Quieter day, but still managed to explore ashore at Port Davies, then sail off to Roydon Island on the Northern side of the bay. A very cruisy sail it was, averaging 4.5 knots. Saw a few more little penguins on the way. Two hours later, we were anchored in aqua green water, all on our lonesome. It is a craggy islet just under Cape Frankland.

Had a wander around the rocks and collected some great ballast for Medina: granite 'eggs' and a few whalebones, as any good yacht should have: a couple of ribs and we will get the vertebrae tomorrow! Now that sort of collecting would put my Mum to shame! Also saw some little dotterels and sooty oystercatchers.

Got chatting to a local this morning and found that the reason our fish last night tasted good, was that it was not barracouta, but pike. Got rid of the rest of the couta and we will have pike again for dinner tonight.

Late afternoon, I heard the yacht's name 'Addiction' on the radio. That is one of the Sydney to Hobart contestants, which Peter Dunn is helping to sail back to Melbourne. I called in for a chat. Amazingly, they were moored some 8 miles from us at Prime Seal Island. Small world! However, they are on a schedule and we are not, so that is how close we are going to get!

8/1/06

Decided on the plan for the day:

1. Circumnavigate the island – on foot, mind you
2. Climb to the top of the craggy hill
3. Sail down to Lillies Beach – back to Port Davies, but on the other side of the Point.

Well, the walk around the island was excellent: rock hopping, watching the birds, great scenery. We saw some Cape Barren geese, in flight, and some young ones we managed to get very close to. Saw a Peregrine Falcon, very large, with a white collar, sitting on a thorn bush. Saw lots of sooty oyster catchers and Pacific gulls, and even saw a little penguin who looked very lonely and probably not so well... but took a couple of photos of him anyway. They are so small! And Wadie saw a snake..., which meant that we did not bother with stage 2 of our plan. The thought of being bitten very far away from help just did not appeal!

The little penguin from Roydon Island.

We saw lots of them in the water. They seem to move together in pods of a dozen or so.

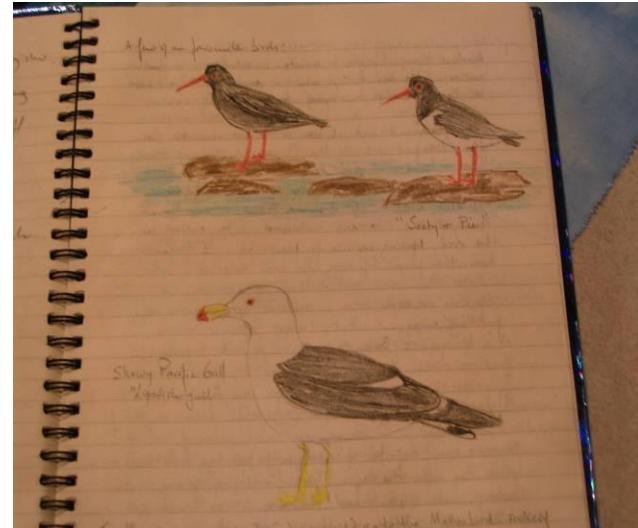


Stage 3 of the plan went well: a slow sail – very slow. We are now anchored in a very shallow bay, all on our lonesome. No risk of other yachts making it into this one! Quiet little beach – Lillies Beach – with an old pier perched rather high off the water! We can see the Strezleckis to the South.

Back to Stage 1 – forgot to mention we scavenged more of the dead whale: a vertebra and found some beach treasures: a float, a good rope, which has now been turned into a 'preventer' for the mainsail.

A few of our favorite birds
'Sooty and Pie'

Showy Pacific Gull- "Lipstick Gull"



In the evening, we decided we would go to the mutton-bird rookery on Settlement Point, near Port Davies. The idea was to row ashore, follow the beach to the rookery and get there by dusk, and walk back on the road. It took forever to get there but it was fun to rock hop.

We were expecting hoards of 'muttons' to swamp us but only half a dozen of the birdies turned up and it was too dark to see them properly anyway! And we did not see any little penguins either! But there were loads of wallabies and a galloping wombat! And we got to see moonlight shadow.

Another thing I forgot to mention: Wadey's anchoring antics. He does fret, which is good 'cos I don't have to. He does enough worrying for the two of us.

So, Wadey decided it was a bright idea to swim the Danforth out to the Plough anchor and attach them in tandem... to be sure to be sure for the strong wind warning! Swimming, holding an anchor, sinking, holding breath.... You guessed it... a bit awkward. He called for the baby life ring we use for prawning. I threw him the proper life ring for good measure.

What a sight this was: naked bum, goggles on, a life ring on each arm, anchor in his arms, dog paddling away... However, I have to give it to him, it is blowing at 30 knots and we are not moving!



9/1/06 – Crossing the Roaring 40's

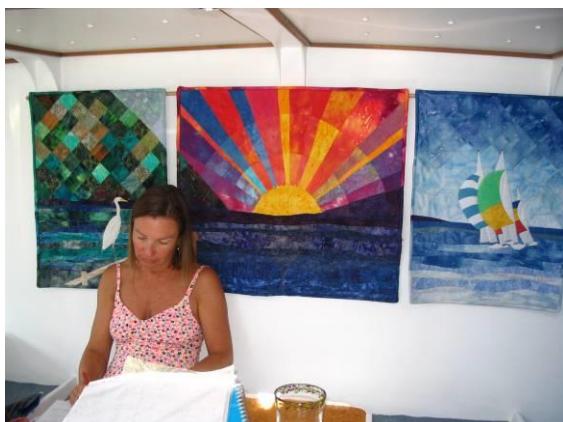
No more sun, but lots of wind in the morning. It looks like we are in Lillies Bay for the day. Time for playing games, reading, sewing, bread making. We will not get Nutmeg out in this weather: too trick to get in and out. Last night's return from the rookery expedition was exciting enough: Medina going up and down, Nutmeg bouncing wildly up and down, us trying to time our jump from one craft to the other! Then getting Nutmeg back on the lifty contraption without bashing the hell out of either boat, all in the dark of course!

But if you do not like the weather, just wait a while. It is 4 pm, the wind has died down. It is all quiet, drizzling on and off. Wadey has of course gone for a dive over the anchors – just to check... I think he has become a bit neurotic, just quietly! Three dolphins came to visit.

We are starting to get a bit of cabin fever. There is talk of a walk along the beach.

So, down goes Nutmeg. We have it down pat now! We cannot walk on the beach without beachcombing... this time for sea sponges. We got a good collection of not so smelly sponges of different shapes. The spare bedroom is fast becoming the Treasure Room. Back on board at 6.00 pm.

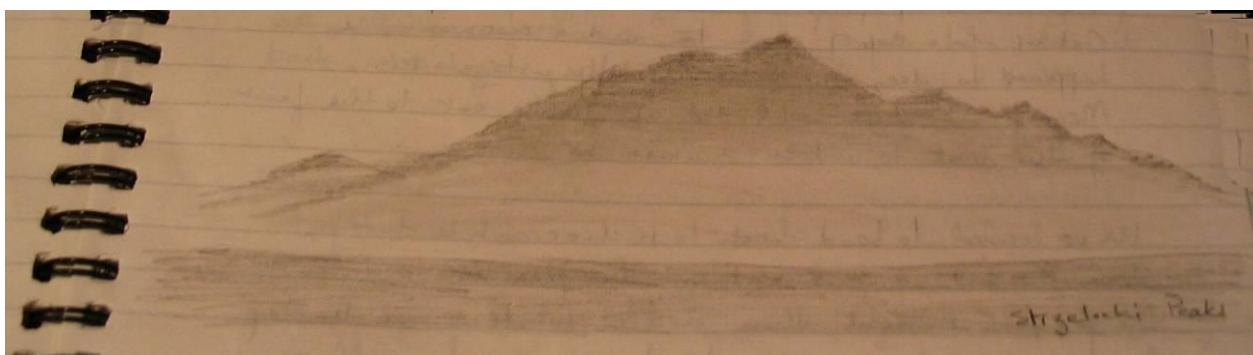
I baked a good loaf of bread – best ever. The challenge is to keep Wadey from eating half of it within minutes of it coming out of the oven. I must admit that it smells delicious on Medina. Wadey is now baking kangaroo and roast veggies while the Cobb Cooker is still going! It smells pretty good too! Very tasty dinner coming up!



This is a rather nice lifestyle. We are both really enjoying cruising life. Plenty to do to keep ourselves amused when we are not sailing! The fresh water 'restrictions' haven't been a problem at all. We have got into a routine with weather forecasts and planning our days.

10/1/06

I woke up in the middle of the night, startled by the stillness and quietness! I have become so accustomed to the constant roll and slapping of the water against the hulls that a totally quiet night is a shock to the system. Got up for a cup of 'sleepy tea' and a crossword and happened to see day break over the strezeleckis...magnificent site. I ended up getting out to the front of the boat to watch sunrise in awe.



We have decided to head back to Killiecrankie today, some 4 or 5 hours sail north. The plan is to listen to the forecast tonight, then decide whether we'll stay for a couple of days and may be hire a car from Alan, to see the island from within, or head back to Deal Island. Hope we can stay, I would like to explore a bit.

For now, we have just bought a crayfish, live from Alan's hidey-hole in the bay, next to his boat. Sumptuous dinner coming up, it is big, Meme's 'cocotte minute' (pressure cooker) is just deep enough to cook it. We certainly cannot get any fresher than this.

Had a hot shower on the boat to wash our hair and get rid of the salt of the last few days. Luxury all round today!

The funniest thing for the day was sailing past Cape Frankland, backwards! As is often the case with capes, there was a sudden wind change. We ended up in irons then reversed, and reversed, and reversed, quite quickly too! We had to work out how to steer backwards with the sails working in reverse. Entertaining for a while... Apart from this little episode, the sailing was gentle and slow, but with the current, we were averaging 5 knots.

Saw lots of little penguins again. They do swim a long way out. Wadie caught a couta, but I made him throw it back. We are getting fussy now!

11/1/06

It is raining. It rained all night. It is wet, grey, coolish, not a good day for driving around. So we have decided to stay put and wait for tomorrow to hire a car. It is raining on our summer holiday!



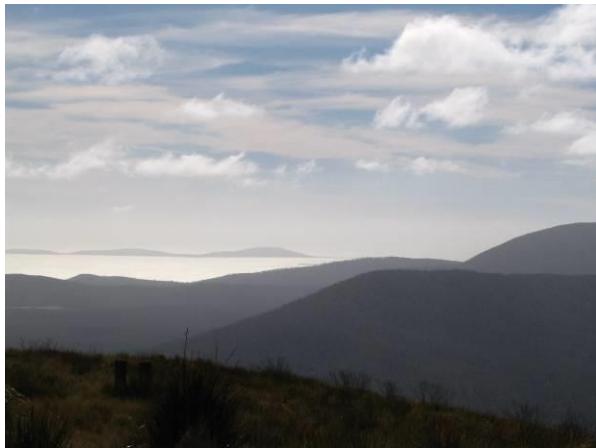
So it is a day of sitting in the cabin. Reading, drinking cups of tea and coffee, eating, reading some more. We have discovered that the homemade bread tastes heaps better when it is toasted – very nutty. So it is disappearing fast. And announcing I will bake another loaf this afternoon, for something to do, makes it disappear even faster!

I do not think we want too many bad weather days or will eat the supplies out, although Wadie doubts we will. We have slightly over-catered - especially fruit cakes. That is because Elaine gave us a Christmas pudding and a Christmas cake – two weeks later, we are still trying to finish them off!

Wadie cooked us a corn frittata in the Cobb and I made a loaf of bread. We baked in the cabin, which was just as well because it was quite chilly, so the heat of the oven was welcome. Even them, we were rugged up, Wadie cutting a dashing figure in his torn off jean shorts, homer slippers and granny rug.... However, I have to admit to being just as bad and having a bit of a kip on the settee half way through the day.

12/1/06

We hired a car and spent the day exploring the island. Went to Palana, not much there, North East River which looks tricky to get into, but magic once you're in there, Patriarch inlet on the east side, Sellars Point behind Babel Island which looks like a nice place to anchor at the next trip, Cameron Inlet – heaps of Australian shelducks there, had a counter lunch at Lady Barron's Furneaux Tavern, overlooking the Franklin Sound; then off to Trouser Point where we should definitely come back to next time – great spot, sheltered, with good onshore facilities. We then got to Whitemark – supposedly the 'commercial' town, but there was very little there, except for a very nice bakery.



View towards the north of the island

We drove up to Walkers look out which gave us a 360 view over the entire island and a close up view of the Strzelecki Peaks – good recommendation from the artist at the Furneaux Gallery in Whitemark.



Dropped the car back at Alan's and ended up staying for a glass of wine with him and his wife, Margaret. Quite hospitable people and it was interesting to find out a bit about them. He was born here and has lived in Killiecrankie all his life. Between fishing and selling crays, running the souvenir shops, a couple of holiday houses, the small car and boat hire, and taking boat charters on the little red boat in the bay, I think they have a busy but pretty profitable lifestyle. Margaret also takes great digital photos. She gave me one of Roydon Island on sunset: magic! When I told them this was my favorite spot for the whole trip, they were pleased.

We checked out the weather with them and it looks like we might make an escape back to Deal Island tomorrow. Coming back to Medina was a bit of fun and games, with the wind blowing hard and making it difficult for Wadie to row, the two of us to board Medina and put Nutmeg away. So it will need to ease off a fair bit for us to leave!



During the day, we saw a multitude of birds, dozens of Australian kestrels, a white-bellied sea eagle, some cape barren geese, many sooty oystercatchers (the emblem of the island's National Park) and many Australian Shelducks.

The island is quite varied in landscape: a mix of cleared plains and low scrub land, with some hilly parts in the centre and the south in particular. There are also some large lagoons on the east coast. What surprised me the most though is the lack of facilities: there is one small supermarket (very small) in Cape Barron and one in Whitemark, and there is a butcher and a bakery in Whitemark. That is it!

People have to be very self-sufficient to live here. And with a very sandy soil and lots of salt air, I wonder how easily veggies and fruit would grow here; but if you can be self-reliant, what a beautiful place to live, with million dollar views all around you.



A bit isolated, and it probably gets a bit lonely too, but there is no overcrowding here! The whole time we have been here, there has not been another yacht in sight. We have had the most beautiful coves to ourselves. We will definitely come back again. There are a few more spots to explore and some coves to revisit.

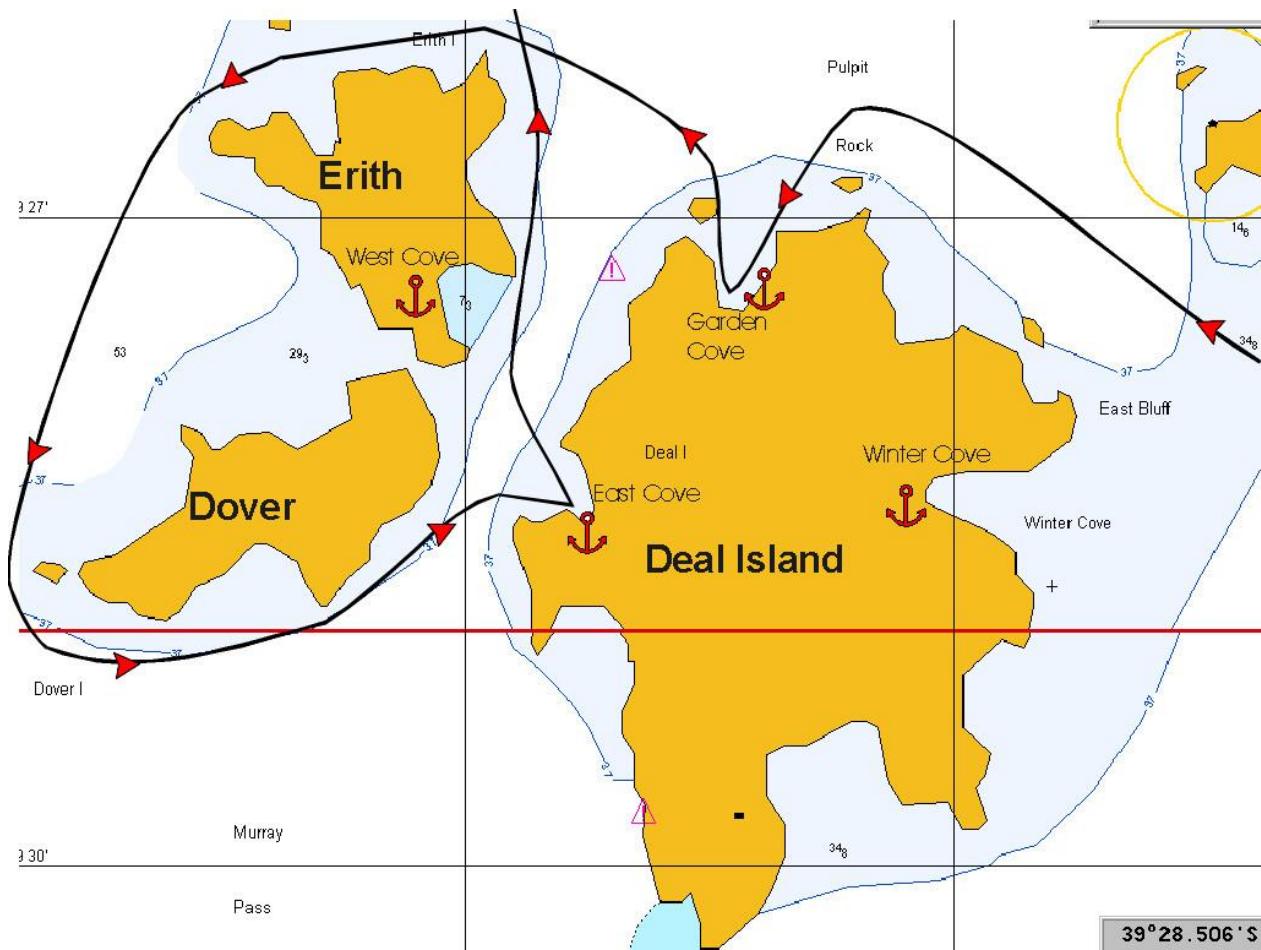
Friday the 13th!

We are making a slow start as it is still blowing a bit strong, with gusts to 25 knots. So we are waiting for the wind to back off, which it should do if the forecast is correct. The trouble is that we have an 8 to 10 hour sail back to Deal, so we cannot leave it for too long.

One of the fishermen's boats – Seaquest – has just come back from checking their pots and emptied the contents of their hull into their coff. We counted 85 crays, a week's catch apparently! They also confirmed that the breeze was not too strong: 15 – 18. Therefore, at 10.30 am we slipped the mooring Alan had let us use and left Killiecrankie.

We had a steady breeze and a bit of swell, about two meters, for this first third of the trip, averaging about 5 knots. Wadie had to put two reefs in the main as a precaution, but took them off fairly soon. At about 3pm the engine went on as the breeze was lightening off and was not strong enough for us to make progress against the current. I started getting very drowsy and disappeared for a nap. Woke up an hour later from the noise on the back deck! Wadie had caught a couta! By then, we also had the wind on our nose and ended up motoring for the rest of the way.

Return to Deal Island



We made it to Garden Cove by 7pm... a 10-hour sail. Those people who say it is a 6-hour job... Don't know where they get it! Doing 5 knots all the way! On the way, we saw a seal that followed us joyfully for a few minutes; also spotted a couple of juvenile albatrosses, and the compulsory pacific gulls.

I reckon long sails with lightish winds can be fairly boring. A four or five hour sail is just right. Longer it seems to drag on a bit with nothing much to do. However, I guess you have to do the longer ones to get to good places.

Garden Cove is very sheltered, quite a deep niche, with a fresh water stream running onto the beach. That will be handy to replenish our water supplies and may be, god forbid, do a bit of laundry! Even the wallabies like it and come down to the shore for a drink.



14/1/06

The wind has picked up but we are snug in Garden Cove. Wadie took his usual dive onto the anchor to check out the 'situation' this morning, and – horror – we have dragged a few meters! So he has remedied this by dropping a second anchor as dead weight and letting out more chain. While he was busy doing that, I made some pancakes for breakfast. Yum, yum.

Well, having watched pacific gulls flying in the gusts, thermalling, playing, diving, trimming their wings, rising straight up, banking.... I think Jonathan Livingstone was a Pacific gull! They look like they are having fun and really are skilled flyers.

Did a few chores: a clean up after a warm shower, and some laundry: that was a time consuming exercise for a few knickers and T-shirts! Salt water wash and rinse in a big bucket, then we went ashore to do the last rinse in the fresh water from the creek, but there wasn't much water flowing, so the clothes are still a bit salty. Still, it smells clean and fresh at least! The boat is now looking like a cloth horse. However, with this wind, it should dry fairly quickly. We were going to go ashore again for a walk, but decided against it... it is very windy and we are not comfortable abandoning Medina and leaving it unattended. In addition, it is bloody hard to row against a 25-knot breeze for poor Wadey! Where is this outboard engine?

Wadie decided he should drop some pots near the rocky shore, in the hope of catching a cray. So he took Nutmeg, baited our pots with left over bits of yesterday's couta and dropped them a little way away from Medina. A few hours later, he went to check on them: no crays, but a couple of wrasses, some little fish we freed and, wait for it, a shark! That was not supposed to happen! How did he get in there? And more to the point how do we get it out of the pot without losing some fingers?



The wrasses will be good for dinner tonight though. So Mr Fisherman is now filleting them on the front deck, since we do not have a board large enough for the job. At least when the bloody mess is over, he just hoses the deck and it is clean. And the gulls like to hang around for a feed too. It even attracted a large black stingray.

The chef is at work, cooking us dinner. Now is it skin up or skin down? It is in fact skin up first, otherwise the fish arches up. Now remember this, Miss Cricri, co's I will forget... write it down!

We really enjoy this lifestyle. Everything takes time, but we appreciate what nature has to offer and relish every taste and sight. I find I can spend ages just gazing out, looking at birds flying and marveling at their skills, noticing the orange lichen on the rocks, listening to the wind through the rigging.

As Wade just said, Deal Island is really a destination in itself, with its protected coves in all directions, its nice walks ashore (without nasty snakes), the fishing (well, we will have to check where the Marine Park boundary ends), and the swimming... well with a winter wetsuit that is!



15/1/06

The wind has died down. That enabled Wadie to get up the mast to fix the lazy jack as one of the cords was broken on the crossing from Flinders Island. Mr Fix It also repaired the door catch, which I had managed to snap whilst closing the door a bit too energetically to avoid the March flies. I did the daily sweeping to keep the place tidy.

I was attracted back up on deck by the honking of six Cape Barren geese that had flown in for a drink at the beach creek and a small wallaby joined them. This is a fantastic place to see wildlife up close. But these geese think they own the place! It is fun watching them chase gulls and other birds away. They are big bullies!

We also found a bit of water in the hulls, but failed to discover where it might have come from. Whether it is from us being a bit sloppy in the galley or the shower, I do not know. We emptied all the food stored in there, dried everything up and re-stacked the food. We will keep an eye on this. As Wadie says: 'I like the water on the other side'.

We then decided to row ashore, to go and visit Tony and Linda, but they turned up on the beach, doing some weed pulling with their friend Harriette. So Tony gave us a lift up the hill in the four wheeler, we had a cuppa with him, and then walked up Barn Hill. Saw a little green snake on the way, only small, not scary.... The view up the top was sensational. You could see the Western side of the island as well as Erith and Dover. The cliffs on that side are very abrupt, sheer right down to the water.



We came back to Medina for lunch, and agreed with Tony and Linda to circumnavigate Erith and Dover in the afternoon. So they came on board at 3.30 pm and we spent the next couple of hours motoring around (no wind for sailing). Very pleasant and a very interesting coastline with lots of caves, but nowhere to land, except for Wallaby Cove.

When we came back to East Cove, Frolic was there. Phil was ashore and waved madly, then rushed to his dinghy to board us. He had arrived an hour before from Refuge Cove. We had a bit of a chat about our respective adventures.



It was good going around the island, and Tony and Linda seemed pretty pleased to have had that little escapade and to have seen their island from a different perspective. Without a boat or tinny, they are a bit stuck!

While on our walk, we saw a scarlet robin and a new bird: the bassian thrush... 'Big eyes' bird, and of course lots of territorial cape barren geese with their lime green beak, their pink legs and big black feet.



Another Mr Fix it jobby out of the way. One of the burners on the stove had been dripping, thus causing major flames at regular intervals... We nearly had to use our extinguisher! And we were going through metho rather quickly. Hopefully this will not happen again for a while. These little repair jobs seem to be a constant occupation.

16/1/06

We are staying put in East Cove as the weather forecast is for some strongish wind to about 25 knots. Looks like tomorrow might be the right day for us to head to the Prom and for Frolic to get to Flinders Island.

For today, the activities consist of a walk with Phil to Squally and Little Squally Coves, bread making in the afternoon, and a barbecue on the wharf with Tony and Linda and may be Phil and John.

A steep track leads down to Squally Cove and it was drizzly. Just as well because the walk back up was hard and hot work! Nothing much down there and one cove we will not rush to anchor in as it is covered with granite rocks. Wadey found a bundle of rope and spent half an hour unraveling the spaghetti junction. He cannot help himself, he has to fossick. Back up from there, we then walked to Little Squally Cove, which was littered with timber, drift wood and the ubiquitous collection of single thongs, and also had a very smelly dead seal, so we did not hang around there for very long.

Saw a new little bird: the scrub wren and Wadie saw a fire tail finch. The six cape barren geese have made East Cove their beach today and are chasing away anything that moves. The bullies are back!



Well, did we have some excitement this afternoon, or what! 'Rough Red', a yacht that had arrived in the bay and I noticed was rather casual with their anchoring – pick over the side and turn the engine off – started drifting, with of course no one on board. We watched it for a while, but then it really started moving pretty quickly, anchor line totally floppy, backwards towards the rocks.

Wadey dived into the water and swam to the boat in the hope of either letting out more chain or starting the engine, but there was no chain to be found, only light rope, and the key was not in the ignition. Plan B was then to use one of Phil's heavy-duty spare anchors, take it over in the dinghy and set it.... That stopped a bit of the mad drift, but Rough Red was very close to getting a rough landing on the rocks. So Plan C was put in place, with us lifting up our anchor and motoring to the 'drifter', and Phil helping us tie a rope from their bow to our stern, so we could tow them away from the rocks.

However, that was pretty hard going and Medina was getting awfully close to the rocks too.

In the midst of all of this, I had been calling Deal Island on the radio and finally got hold of Harriette to say 'we've got a yacht adrift, we're trying to keep it away from the rocks. If the owners are up at the museum, tell them to come down quick smart'.

On guy finally wandered down, and after some trouble starting his zodiac, made it back to Rough Red, started his engine and we let the rope tying him up to us go and got away from those nasty rocks.

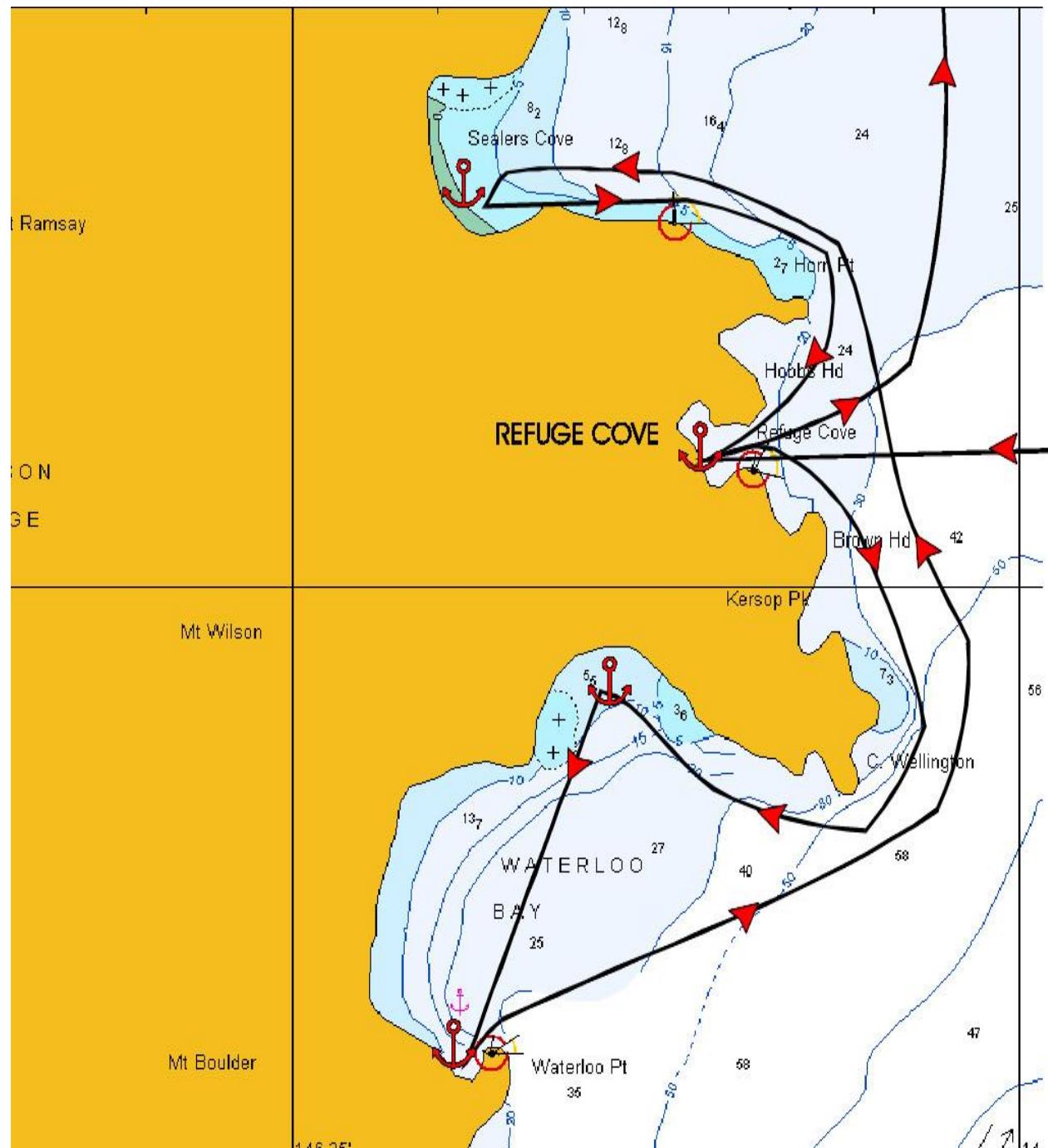
The buggers were apparently on their way back from the Melbourne to Hobart race, and watching their anchoring attempts after the drifting episode, they have never had to anchor properly anywhere... no bloody idea how to do it! We will have to watch them like hawks tonight!

Linda got on the radio to them later and told them wine for the barbecue tonight is on them! Good on her. Made two loafs of bread, one for us, one for Phil and John. And those wines were indeed tasty, and so was the barbie. Good company too. We talked lots about racing. Rough Red had 60 knots wind with seas as high as their mast during the Melbourne to Hobart (West Coaster) – scary monsters!

Later in the evening, I finally got to see the little penguins coming out of the water and scrambling up the hill. We saw babies too, very soft. We were naughty and patted one. That was a very fitting conclusion to our stay on Deal Island.

Tomorrow, weather allowing, we are heading off to the Prom, whilst Frolic sails to Flinders.

From Deal to Wilson's Promontory



17/1/06

South, South Easter forecast, 10-20 knots; that sounds OK to go, so we closely follow Rough Red out at 7.45 am, although the breeze is Northerly, and thus on our nose.

We are motoring, hoping the wind will turn, and although it goes Westerly, it never gets past that. So, on a motor sail we go. And it lasted for about ten hours, with one to two meter swell and 15-22 knot Westerly wind. So much for the forecast. Frolic would have had a nice sail at least! We took a few waves over the top and discovered the seals on the hatches need changing... the seats were wet when we got to Refuge Cove.



Refuge Cove is nicely sheltered, and quite pretty, with tall trees all around.

There are another five or six yachts anchored, including Rough Red who got in by 4.00pm! It made it tricky to find the right spot to anchor, as Wadie of course wanted everything just right: anchor in a sandy spot, not too close to the rocks, not too close to the shore, not too close to the other boaties. It took us at least an hour of fiddling around before we relaxed and enjoyed some food. We were a bit ravenous by then as eating and drinking when it is bouncy gets a bit scary. Another thing that is scary on a bouncy crossing is going to the loo. The 'head' is the last place you want to be: I have now made very good use of the handles! Trouble is, you have to let go of them to pull your trousers back up. Not an easy thing to do. You have to wedge yourself in a little corner, and time the letting go of the handles and grabbing of the trousers real well!

I also found that marking our progress on the chart and concentrating on little numbers while the whole dinette jumps around is not good for the stomach. So I only did that a couple of times! The most comfortable spot was really at the wheel: you are in the fresh air, you have something to brace yourself against and you are busy keeping the heading. So apart from the odd drenching when a wave washes over, it's probably the best place to be! So you guessed it, I am the wheel hogger!

Half way through, we heard a Securitae warning. It was for the East coast of Tassie, so did not affect us too much, but it made me reflect on what we would do if this were for the area we were in. Once you are a few hours into a crossing, you are committed. The only thing you can do is put a couple of reefs in and may be change your heading to run with it if it gets too rough. Not a situation we would like to find ourselves in.

When we arrived in Refuge Cove, we had not even anchored properly and a man from one of the yachts came over in his dinghy and just about boarded us, wanting to take a close look at our cat. He was building one in his backyard. We had to tell him to let us anchor and settle in because we had just come from Deal Island! We then had to go into hiding inside so he would not come over.

We spent what was left of the day putting cushions and mats out to dry and cleaning up the mess inside, then went to bed pretty early, feeling exhausted. However, during the night, the South Easterly picked up, so Wadey got up to shorten our anchor as we had swung, and to put out a stern anchor into the land. It was midnight then and he came back to bed. But an hour later, the movement of the boat was odd. He got up again; the stern anchor had dragged, and it was now ineffectual. So he swam ashore again to this time tie our stern to a tree stump. Then he sat out and watched the pandemonium in the Cove as four out of six yachts had dragged and were playing bumper cars. Rough Red was true to form. It was getting rather close to us, to the point where Wadie put out fenders on Medina, but instead, Red collected two other yachts! Wadey finally came back to bed at 3.00am, once everyone had their boats under control... some Refuge Cove!

18/1/06

More fiddling around with anchors for those staying in the Cove, including us. We moved and re-anchored, but have stayed on board all day, as we are not confident we are staying put, not to mention that we have put Nutmeg out of action. It was hard getting it back on the back of Medina and we managed to punch a hole in it with the end of the metal lifter! Bummer! Particularly since we are stuck in Refuge Cove for a couple of days with strong wind warnings. We will have to think about an easier way to lift Nutmeg out of the water in rough conditions, as it has been a problem this trip. It is OK in the Lakes when we do not go out if it is blowing too hard, but when we are cruising, we are bound to have the odd bit of bad weather. In addition, the issue of outboard engine for it comes into play also, as rowing is hard work and not particularly safe when it is blowing.... Some thinking to do...

I would like to get ashore to have a good look around. There is supposed to be a fresh water creek and some good walking tracks too. I might have to don the wetsuit on and swim to shore tomorrow. The water is still cold here, not as bad as Deal Island, but still not comfortable to stay in!

19/1/06

Wow, that was a hard night with the wind swinging NNE in the Cove and strengthening, we were sitting a bit too close to another yacht. We decided to have an anchor watch for the night. I took the first one and after 1 ½ hour, felt we had to move. So at 11.30pm we upped anchors and repositioned ourselves in the middle of the Cove, away from everyone else. It is quite unnerving doing this when it is pitch dark and you have no depth perception. But I am glad we did. At least the anchor watch was less nerve racking. We each did two hours stints, keeping an eye on the three other yachts, the depth sounder, the rocks, and the wind speed.



Are we getting closer to those rocks?



This morning, it is still blowing strongly and there is a half-meter swell rolling in. Not comfortable!

Looking at the charts, we probably would have done better, knowing the forecast, to make our arrival point Oberon Bay rather than Refuge Cove. We would be sitting a lot more comfortably on the Western side of the Prom. It will teach us for being a bit too focused on checking out Refuge and Sealers Coves... OK when we first arrived, but not for the following 2 or 3 days of strong NE. It is a bit sad when you have to take seasickness tablets to keep your stomach together at anchor! But unfortunately, looking through the binoculars at the ocean, it is very rough out there and getting out of here to round the Prom is totally out of the question. We live and learn!

The 'lipstick gull' is bopping around next to Medina, possibly hoping for a tasty little morsel. But no such luck... This afternoon it actually landed on the life ring and watched us from this perch. Very tame indeed.



Surprisingly, after a very rolly morning, the wind calmed down and the sun came out. Much better! We had a visit from Andy, Irena and their son Simon, from Shahbumadah, an H28 made by Kahn Walker some 25 years ago. This was the guy who had come over before we were anchored when we first arrived at the Prom. He is building a cat, so was very interested at having a good look around. He picked up a few ideas. Nice people – they have certainly done a lot of sailing: around the world for 8 years!

Afterwards, Wadey did a sterling job of temporarily patching Nutmeg, so we could get ashore. She now has a blue band-aid, which worked remarkably well at keeping the water on the right side of the hull! So we rowed ashore, collected some fresh water and went for a bit of a walk around to shake the cabin fever off. Getting back on board Medina was the usual fun and games as the bay is still swelly and we managed to drop one of the rowlocks overboard. And as we are sitting in 5 meters of water, Wadie's diving was not successful at recovering it.

No anchor watch tonight, hopefully, but we have to stay up until 10.30 as we missed the 6.30pm weather forecast. We may or may not be staying another night. Our 24-hour stint back to Lakes Entrance is the next big passage to time well. Hopefully we will get the right conditions to sail back all the way without having to motor. We will see what tomorrow holds for us. We still have time, so we might explore around the Prom first.

20/1/06

NE 15-25 forecast with a SW change in the late afternoon. This makes Refuge Cove unsuitable. Everybody is raising anchor. So we had a good look at the chart and decided to go around Cape Wellington and go and hide in the NE end of Waterloo Bay, which will give us the option to cross the bay and move to Waterloo Point at the Southern end when the change comes. Sounds like a good plan!

We had a quick sail – 8 knots! We like tail/beam runs. And that was with a reef in the main. There was thunder and lightening in the distance.

We are sitting just under the Kersop Peak, quite comfortably, with a great view of Waterloo Point. We can see where the fire went through last year. With the sun out, the water looks inviting so I decide to jump overboard and swim ashore. Wadey joins me later and we go for a walk along the beach and find that we are anchored in 'Little Waterloo', as per the National Park signs.

Back for lunch, a little interlude out on the deck, since we have the bay to ourselves. Very nice spot. Later on, the breeze turns to our expected Southerly. We talk to Shahbumadah on the radio, which came to the bay for a short time then were headed back towards Melbourne, but decided to back track and return to Refuge Cove, as Andy did not like the conditions.

We decide to stick to our plan, raise anchor and motor to the other side of Waterloo Bay, just under Waterloo Point. It is a small white sandy beach, but there are a few rocks scattered around. So we anchor at a reasonable distance and go for another swim ashore.

Came back on board, fiddled with the anchor, as the wind had changed again. We are on weed and sand, and Wadey would rather have a fisherman's anchor. I guess we will get one when we get back. It will make Emu Bight a possibility then.

Made some more bread.... Anything to keep away from the nasty March flies. They are a shocker here! And Wadey has baited the crab pot and dropped it over the back. We might catch some fish. I would rather we did not catch another shark, given that we have been swimming here! No luck with the pot, so Wadey is cooking corn frittata.

In the distance, we can see Mt Wilson towering over the bay and Mt Ramsay over the back. This is a very pretty spot.



21/1/06

Well the forecast SW never came, or at least did not last for more than an hour or so. Therefore, we were anchored in the wrong spot, and were stern to the rocks - not a comfortable thing. We waited and waited, but the change never came. Had a sleepless night as a result, and although we did not officially keep an anchor watch, we pretty well did, especially Wadey.

So we were up and ready to go early in the morning. The breeze was Westerly and we decided to head towards Sealers Cove, past Refuge Cove. The first tack was a very cruisy, sedate sail in 5 knots breeze, and then we rounded Cape Wellington and slowed right down to 2 knots, to the point where we had to turn the tractor on. However, on a sunny morning, with time on our hands, it did not really matter. It was pleasant all the same.



As Wade puts it, the three girls: Cricri, Nutmeg and Medina at Sealers Cove.

Sealers Cove is a broad sandy bay, with a creek coming in at the Southern end. No other yacht there, but plenty of walkers. In fact, there was a constant stream of them appearing in groups of two to six from the centre of the beach, headed for the campsite at the river end of the Cove. They all had the heavy pack on their back and varied only in their walking pace, some obviously more tired than others!



We spent the early afternoon there, and then headed back to Refuge Cove where we intend to stay two nights to hide from the strong northerlies. No other yacht there either!

We saw lots of short-tailed shearwaters, e.g. mutton birds, huge flocks skimming the water and looking like they were rounding up fish. I also saw one floating quietly on its own, so was able to have a good look at it at close quarters. We also saw a seal.

Reflecting on yesterday afternoon/evening, we probably should not have stayed at Waterloo Point when the breeze turned back to NW. Having checked out the anchorage and thus knowing what to expect, we should have motored back to Little Waterloo Bay, where we would have been sheltered and much more comfortable. Then if the SW had come, we would have crossed the bay again, even at night, knowing what the anchorage was like. Another lesson!

Nice fresh water shower tonight. Clean hair, no salty skin, luxury. It is 6pm and a pretty yawl has just come into the Cove – old fashion looking... They had another lousy way of anchoring though: the usual drop of anchor, whilst still moving forward, engine off, no check. We will have to watch them in case they drift back onto us.

Another lesson for tonight: empty the bilge after each shower, otherwise the water overflows into the next bilge where we store our food, which means unpacking it all, drying everything and repacking. Now we know!

Yet another lesson – but this one for Wadey only, as I can tell the difference between a salty patch and bird pooh. Wadey is busy cleaning the deck and the multitude of little flies captured by the dew. There is a white patch of dry salty looking thing. Wadey tends to figure things out by tasting them. So what does he do? Finger on the salty patch, then licks up the finger, then big splutter as I burst out laughing and remind him that the Pacific gull landed there for a while! Another spot they like perching on is the life ring. So beware of white dots on the red ring... not for eating!

An for the latest use for the vent on the bridge deck step: not only can we dump veggie peels, have an emergency piddle, get some fresh air on anchor or a douche on the way, but you can also drop a fishing line down incognito in a National Park! But to teach naughty boy Wadey, all he catches is a toady!



22/1/06

It is 9.00am and already you can feel the heat in the sun. I have just noticed the sign on the beach for a total fire ban day. Sunday, Wadey is cooking us bacon and eggs. Yumbo!

I did not sleep so well last night, even though it was a quiet night. May be it is because it was a quiet night! I kept thinking that our adventure is nearly over and I do not want it to be. This month of exploring, learning, discovering and just going where the wind allowed us has been wonderful. But we still have the big sail back to Lakes Entrance: 98 miles away, which makes it the biggest leg of the trip.

At this stage, it looks like tomorrow is D-day for the return trip. It should be a pretty fast sail if the forecast is correct: 15 to 25 knots SSW. And as Wadey is reminding us, Medina likes it best with a still breeze up its bottom. It would be great to sail the whole way to our homeport, none of this motor sailing. And not having to beat into it will mean a much more comfortable and dry passage. However, we will see how it all develops.

For today, hot Northerlies to 30 knots in the afternoon. So we have to decide whether to stay put in Refuge Cove and go ashore for a bush walk and lots of swims, or sail to our favorite Little Waterloo Cove this morning and come screaming back to Refuge this afternoon with the SW change. We will check the latest forecast at 10.30am then decide. We have a plan anyway!

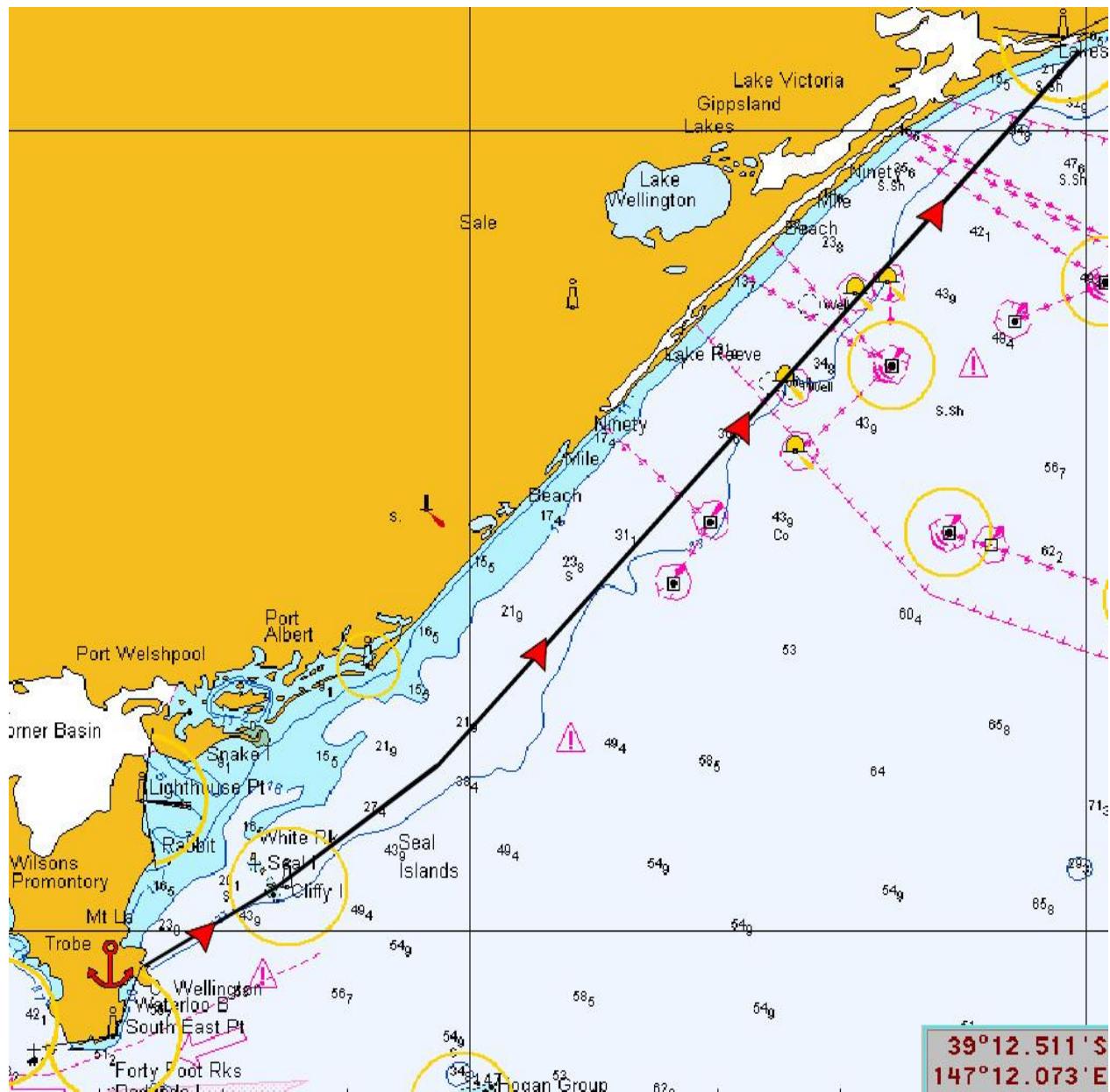
Have to do a few chores: wipe and sweep everywhere inside... There are dead flies everywhere, and lots of dust and salt. Unless you do the clean up everyday, Medina gets very messy very quickly and I was lazy and skipped the jobby yesterday. Wadey is busy too outside, rinsing the clears with fresh water so we can see through them.



We ended up staying in the cove. Went for a walk to the other end, found some drift wood for our sign, Wadey carved Medina's name on it and we swam ashore for the hanging ceremony!

That is our sign to add to the history board at Refuge Cove!

Return from the Prom to the Lakes



23/1/06 – Homeward Run!

The SW change came last night at about 11.00pm. The strong gusts did not last very long, about an hour, but that was enough for the other two boats in the Cove to get unsettled. Spotlights were going, people were repositioning themselves around us and in the end, we could not tell whether we had dragged or not. We would have done a few 360s around our anchor anyway until the wind settled!

We were up early and the forecast we needed to go safely was confirmed. We did not feel like hanging around waiting, so after a leisurely breakfast, we upped anchor and left Refuge Cove at 9.00 am.

First waypoint: Clifffy Island. It is one of three or four islands in the Seal Group, with a lighthouse. We rounded it, hoping to be able to anchor there for lunch, but it did not look very inviting so we kept going.



We have had a steady 10 – 18 knots breeze from SW for about six hours, going at about 5 - 5.5 knots, a cruisy, no stress ride. Then it slowed down for a couple of hours, during my shift at the wheel, would not you know it! But we are back on track now! We have both had a turn at a snooze for an hour or two.

It is 5.30pm, we are both 'awake' thanks to the numerous 'coffee shots', the 'Commitments' CD is on loud, we are sailing well, life is good! Eight hours under sail, without engine, it has to be a record!



8.30pm – we are having the ride of our life! The wind has picked up: 20-25 knots, sea about two meters, lots of breaking waves. For the past two hours, we have been sailing fast, I mean really fast! I was getting envious that Wadey was getting a good shift. 5-6 knots when I had been doing the slow poke at 2.5 to 3 knots. However, for some reason he asked me to take over at the wheel, I think he wanted to take the weather forecast at 6.30pm. Then it was ON!



The wind speed alarm was regularly beeping as we were registering at over 20kn/hr and I started getting excited when we surfed a wave and the speedo read 9.9! I yelled the speed out, but Wadie shooshed me as he missed the wind direction forecast!

When I regularly picked up waves and surfed at 10.5, we decided to put a reef in... when we reached 14.5 surfing a wave for what seemed like minutes, we decided a second reef was in order.



We are still flying and Wadey is now at the wheel looking pretty relaxed whilst I am looking at the waves flowing past us and thinking 'shit, I hope it does not get too much stronger'. The wind is whistling, Joe Cocker is singing, and at this rate, we will be at Lakes Entrance at 2.00 am.



The sunset is out of this world: very red sun and orange streaks in the sky, with waves breaking in silhouette.

The night shift at the wheel is very odd: pitch dark, wind still strong so we are going at 7 knots minimum with two reefs in the genoa and all you can do is go by feel with the waves you cannot see. Two hours at a time is what we have decided to do. It is too hard to last longer hand steering in this weather.

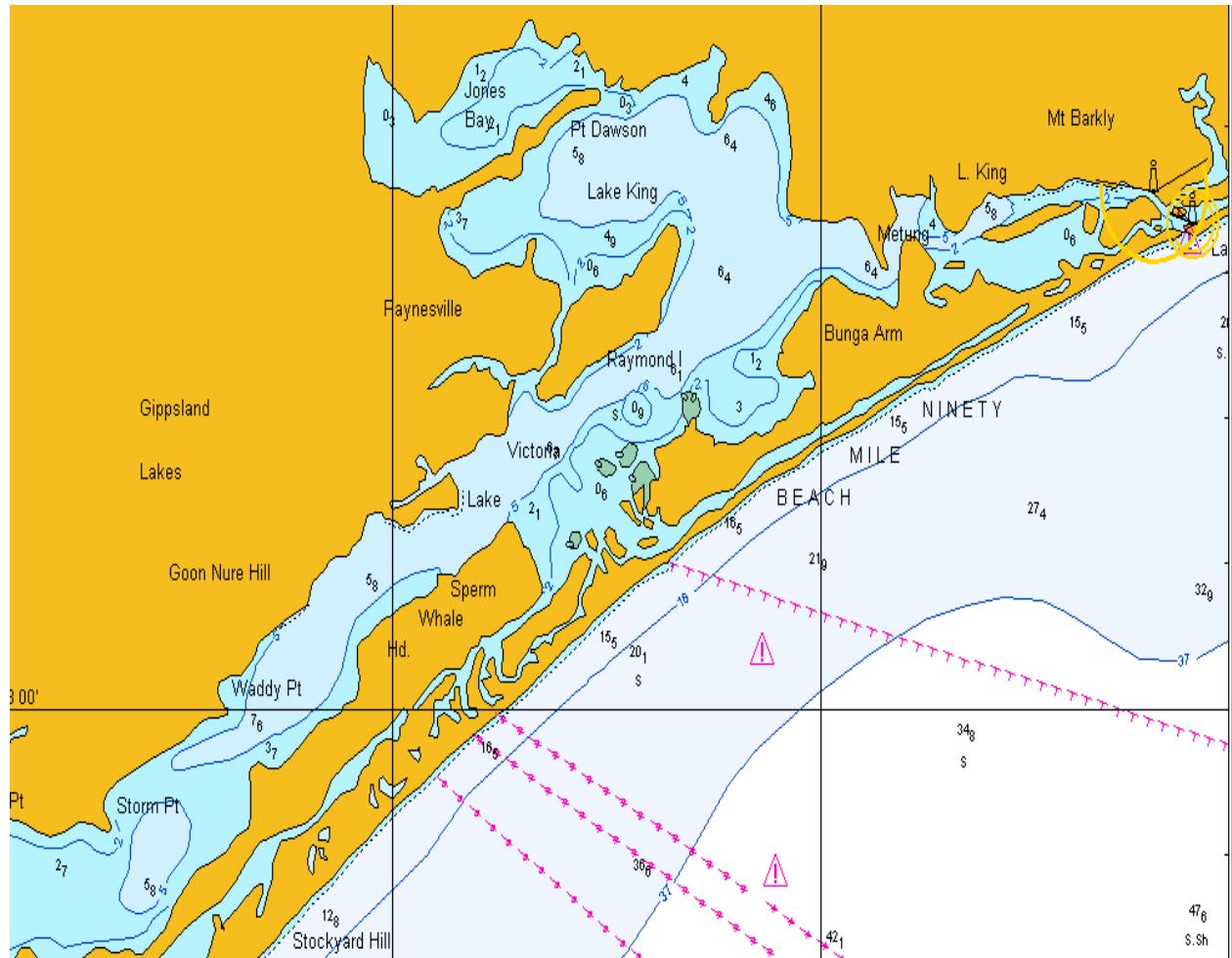
24/1/06

Wadey is on the 4am shift, with 1.5 hours to go. The wind is a little quieter now and we have been sailing on the full genoa since 2.00 am. We have to slow ourselves down, as we do not want to go through the bar at the Entrance in the dark.

It is 5.15 am; we are in front of the entrance, bobbing up and down in the swell with a handkerchief of a jib, waiting for daybreak. At 5.30am the engine goes on to warm it up. We are now going round and round in circles with the entrance leads in sight and the visibility slowly improving.

At 6.00 am, it is full steam ahead, blue leads lined up, life jackets on, heart pounding... It is a very narrow slot, with not much depth even on a full tide, but we are in! God, the Lakes are flat!

Back in the Lakes





Sunrise inside the Entrance
On 24 January 2006

We decide to motor towards Two Dogs or One Pole for breakfast, but we must be very rusty with our navigation in shallow water and manage to find the one meter depth spots too easily, so opt for a different breakfast destination. It would be a shame to plant ourselves on our home ground after a trip like this! One of the jetties opposite Shaving Point is now the choice, in front of Metung.

Bacon and eggs for breakfast, phone messages checked, and then it is time for a well-deserved snooze for an hour or two to recover from our 20 hour sail.

After lunch, we decide to sail to Paynesville, via Eagle Point Bay... We had a play sail in flat water, but were still doing 6 to 7 knots so this was quite a respectable way to come back to our pen.

We did a bit of a clean up, transferred our 'treasures' – bones, granite eggs etc to the fat Ford, did a couple of loads of washing at the Cruiser Club, hosed down Medina to get rid of all the salt, then enjoyed a luxuriously long shower and had fish and chips with Bruce. It was nice to catch up with him, brag about our adventures and bore him with our photos!

25/1/06

It is a hot one today – over 30 degrees. Thought we would go to the Bunga Arm before everybody turns up for the long weekend, may be catch some crabs, and laze around in the sunshine and warm waters of the Lake.

There is a strong NE blowing, coming straight down the Bunga Arm, which means two things: it is on the nose and not too many people will come this way. Well three things actually, it is blowing along the beach, which means the cray pots will be drifting back down to Melbourne on their own! So no crabs for dinner tonight!

Very lazy last day on the Lakes – just sunning ourselves, thinking about how good this adventure has been and plotting our next escapade: may be at Easter. We have had a thought. May be we should look into the cost and availability of temporary moorings in Port Welshpool – say for two or three months. That would allow us to explore a bit more around the Prom... Food for thought, anyway. The taste of the ocean is making the Lakes a little less exciting. It is just that once you get out of the Lakes, everything of interest is so far away. 24 hour sails each way demand a lot more than a long weekend!

This has been a really good holiday and confirmed our love of cruising, and our desire to do a lot more of it. We both enjoyed the challenge, the sense of discovery and adventure. I particularly enjoyed not being rushed or feeling we were on a schedule. I never got bored and yet filled our days with a lot more day dreaming than purposeful activities. I hardly touched my sewing, did some reading but not heaps. Writing this was fun, so was drawing. Wadey has done lots of odd jobs, reading, fretting.... But we are really pleased with the way Medina behaved, and the way we managed. It has really built our confidence that the boat and ourselves can handle more 'serious' sailing. Nothing wrong with weekend sailing on the Lakes, mind you!

Made another loaf of bread, just to prove the holiday is not yet over.

Wadey is drawing up a list of small jobs for improvements:

- A system of gutters to stop the splashes and water build up in front of the hatches when it rains, plus collect fresh water to replenish the tanks
- Better anchoring equipment, e.g. a dead weight and a fisherman's anchor
- Non return valves for the bilge pumps – we like the water on the outside and like dust in the bilges, not water
- Seal on all the hatches – again, we don't like the waves to soak our seats in the dinette
- Improvement to the lifting gear for Nutmeg
- Reinforcement for the gunnels of Nutmeg so it does not fall apart

My 'to do' list:

- Translate the log in French and send to my folks
- Type the log as is and send to friends
- Steam iron the yachts' quilt to stop the curling up
- New cushion covers for the settee
- Frame the Roydon Island photo
- Get the diamond set as a pendant



Once upon a time, there was a little boat...