



## **Medina's Delivery**

**Gippsland Lakes to Crookhaven River  
April 2011**



**Thursday 21/4/11**

Our last voyage on Medina started today with a motor from Paynesville to the Entrance, in preparation for an escape into the ocean at dawn tomorrow morning.

We sold Medina a couple of weeks ago to Mick Booth and Lyn Crookshank, from the Jarcat Group, and have agreed to deliver her to them at the entrance of the Crookhaven River on the NSW coast.

We had intended to take Sue sailing with us at Easter: to the Prom and Hogan or Deal Island, for her first ocean run. We are taking her for an ocean run, just in a different direction!

Mick & Lyn drove down from NSW to Paynesville to see us off. Thanks for the use of your boat, guys; we'll take good care of it – promise!

Still, it is an odd feeling to hand Medina over: a mix of pride because she is as good as can be and well proven, anticipation as the South Coast of NSW is a new cruising ground for us, and excitement as at the other end, we are checking out what could end up being our next catamaran.

We left Paynesville later than we had planned. There was the small matter of a visit to the vet with Bengie. Last Sunday she got into a fight with the next door's bully... I kept an eye on her, fully expecting her to end up with infected wounds. By Wednesday night, she was Miss Lumpy with an abscess on her head and another on her cheek – clearly the teeth marks of the big tom cat's jaw. We took her to the Bairnsdale vet and left her there for a couple of hours whilst they fixed her up.



Our leopard looks like she's been in the wars with a drain from the top of her head to the bottom of her cheek: looks like a stick poking out of her head; not pretty, especially with a half shaven face!

Anyway, we loaded all our food and gear, put everything away and waved Mick & Lyn goodbye... and it was their time to see their new possession disappearing across the water.

We are motoring, as despite the strong wind warning, there is only 6 knots of breeze and of course it is on the nose! But the lake is flat, the sky is ablaze, dolphins swim past us, it is peaceful, even with the noise of the tractor... We sing along: "we are going on a sailing holiday".



As we drift down the Cunningham Arm, my mind wanders back to the scene of Medina arriving into the Lakes for the first time, six years ago. From the lookout at the top of the hill overlooking the Entrance, Medina looked so small sailing along the coast and it was so special seeing her cross the bar and motor into the Lakes. It was quite an achievement for Wade, helped by Geoff, Murray and Johnno. He did not have a lot of experience then, the other guys were novices, and we did not have the sort of handover we are going to give to its new owners. So it was a daunting task to bring her from Brisbane to Lakes! Six years later, a whole lot of work done to it, a lot more experience under our belt, it feels like we are closing the loop.

We feel a little sad, but contented too. It is time to move on, and this starts with taking Medina out of the lakes one last time.

We make it to Flagstaff Jetty by nightfall, grab a barbecue, a few glasses of wine to celebrate, then it is off to bed.

**Friday 22/4/11**

It is 7.00 am. The forecast is looking very strong: 20 to 30 knots WSW, easing to 25 tonight. We will have the wind on our stern all the way to Gabo at least, so we decide to go. I can't help thinking "mmm... working to a schedule can make you do silly things", but if we don't leave now, we won't go for 3 days!



The bar is calm, although the sea is lumpy as we head out with the fast flowing ebbing tide. It's not the best time to exit, but there is no swell, just a bumpy bar crossing of steep waves. Sue, who was standing up on the back deck for a better view, falls on her bum as she grabs hold of the open hatch which slides shut, and I scratch my hand on the coarse anti-slide textured paint on the roof as we crest a wave and dive down the other side of it and land in the hollow in a spectacular splash of water, then rise on to the next one!... Crash... Bang... Wow, further out, thanks! We keep motoring further away to get out of the turbulent water.





Once far enough at sea, we turn East, unfurl the jib and we are off... no need for an engine anymore.

It is great to be out. The motion is fine and steady. We are averaging 6 knots already, and soon we are delighted by the masters of flight: the albatrosses. Sue loves it, ready with binoculars, camera and bird book. There are Grey Headed, Black Browed, Wandering, and of course Gannets, White-Bellied Petrels, Terns.



But as usual we are mesmerized by the albatrosses, and Sue can add a few to her list. They are hard to photograph, between the motion of the boat and the speed of their acrobatics, but stunning to watch.

With 2m swell and the 20-25 knot wind on our back quarter, George the Autopilot does not do a great job to keep us on track, so we take turn at hand steering, using the GPS highway function to keep an eye on our course. It is quite fun and passes the time. Sue picks it up quickly. After some early meandering, she gets the hang of it and looks the part at the helm.



The morning passes quickly. We are in good spirits and going well, at about 6 knots average. We pass level with Orbost at 10.45 and text Mick & Lyn, who are camping there overnight. "Wave" we say! The response quickly comes back: "We waved, did you see us?"



Then it's a heading for Pt Hicks, which we reach by 5pm. By then, we are averaging well over 7 knots. We want to brag to Lyn and Mick, but there is no mobile service. The sea is bigger, a dark aquamarine with serious white caps and the wind has freshened. I also feel ordinary and succumb to a few bouts of nausea. I should have dosed myself up again with Kwells this afternoon. Sue did and is doing remarkably well. We have been on dry biscuits and lots of water all afternoon and these help keep things under control.

As we keep going faster, and surfing waves repeatedly, Wadie gradually winds the furler. It is fun to surf, and Medina holds her line well, but we want control, especially as the night falls.



Once past Pt Hicks, the conditions strengthen even more. I thought it was supposed to ease down to 25 in the evening? Nope! Night falls, and with the cloud cover, the moon and stars are obscured. It is pitch dark, we can't see a thing. There starts another new experience for Sue: navigating at night. Green and red nav lights are explained... what they mean if you see a red light in the distance, what if it's a green light. Keeping a heading also has to be adapted. No more shape of clouds or coastal hills in the distance: instead, stars and the glow of the distant lighthouses. As we look to our Port side, we see the dark shadow of the Victorian coast and use the lighthouses as our guide, with Pt Hicks first, then Rame, Gabo Island, then much later Cape Howe and Green Cape.

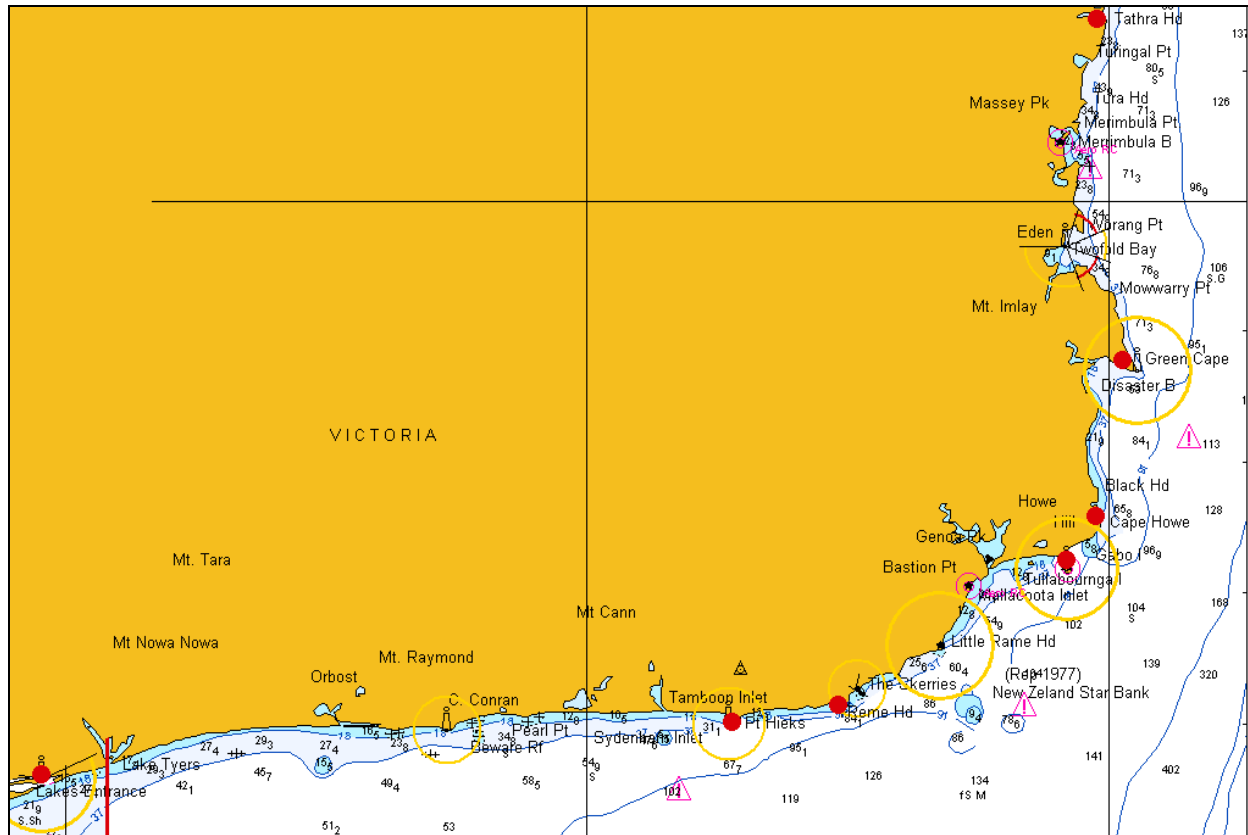
I make a few more quick escapes to the toilet, feeling decidedly green; Sue tries to steer us under water as she manages to drive us through the back of a 3m wave, which floods the front decks, then lets the next one catch us at the back... lots of white water, lots of screaming, lots of wondering if the hatches were closed – and they were, we learnt our lesson on that recently!

In fact, in all the darkness, one thing shows up clearly: white water. Some of it overtakes us at times, some you can see crashing down in the distance, thankful it is not near us or on top of us. But in the main, we can't distinguish what's coming at us... probably just as well! Sometimes it pays to be blindly ignorant of what's around you. The wind is whistling through the rigging and it is a bit unnerving – even for the more initiated.

“This 29 foot piece of wood is keeping me from being thrown in this turbulent sea - shit!” thinks Sue. I too look around us. When you compare the size of the boat with the extent of the ocean and its moods, we are such a little dot, and so alone.

At 7pm it is dark. I think: “God, 12 hours before sunrise in this weather. It's gonna be a long night!” Everything feels worse at night. If you are tense at the wheel during the day, you will be tenser; if you have trouble keeping a heading in the waves, it will be more demanding at night; if steering is a struggle by day despite lots of visual clues, it will be more disorientating at night without anything to guide you other than a compass. You have to rely on feel a lot more, and the feel of the boat is not something you develop in a couple of hours' lesson. Night sailing is a challenge for all of us, but especially daunting for Sue.

From Pt Hicks, we start heading in a North West direction, angling slightly all the way to Gabo Island, then we take a marked turn North around Cape Howe.



As we work towards the Rame lighthouse, then that of Gabo, the wind hits us right on our stern, rather than on the back quarter, making it harder to steer. And without a clear point in the distance to use as a mark, it is hard to keep a straight heading, especially with the breaking waves. We are wallowing and getting thrown off track from side to side. We follow each other at the wheel in quick succession, each finding the boat a handful to steer. We only have a hankie of a sail left, but still, we are doing 8, 9, 10 knots regularly, rushing into nothingness and surrounded by the noise of crashing waves and whistling winds. It only takes a couple of seconds of distraction, and we drift off course, then it is a struggle to get back on course. Our eyes cycle between the jib, a star in the distance, the GPS and the wind indicator. The wind and waves push us around like a piece of cork. It's meander city!

These weather conditions are too demanding to stay at the wheel for more than an hour at a time for me and for Sue. Wade gets the lion share of the steering. We do what we can to help and give him a break, but it is a long night for him in particular.

All three of us are up till midnight – with me fleeting in and out of the 'bucket'. I give up for a couple hours all together, then so does Sue. Wade is on his own after we round Cape Howe and things quieten. By now we have the wind on our beam, and are in the lee of the coast, so the sea flattens and the wind eases.

**Saturday, 23/4/11**

At 4am, I get up again to relieve Wade. By then we are motor-sailing past Eden... it is all quiet!

God, we have really flown! Outside Eden at 4am, that's a lot earlier than we expected.

As the day breaks, everything feels better. The tension disappears, the motion of the boat is easier, the ocean is calmer, we can see what we are doing and where we are going.



We are close to the shore, in its lee, and it is hard to believe the conditions are so gentle after yesterday. We can see the little townships of Pambula and Merimbula.

We are all feeling relieved and chirpy, and decide to stop at Tathra and treat ourselves to bacon and eggs. "Should we anchor or do we keep going?" asks Wade. The response comes sharply: "We have been at it for 25 hours, we deserve a break!"

A text to Mick and Lyn lets them know we have survived the night. I suspect they are surprised by the extent of our progress... So are we!



Tathra is a lovely little nook with a tall pier and long half moon sandy beach. There are lots of people fishing, a seal frolicking. Paddlers come and say hello. For sue it is a novel perspective to see this familiar village from the ocean.

We savor our well earned breakfast out on deck in the sunshine. Bengie surfaces from under the covers too. We are a bit ravenous after a day of crackers and water!

After breakfast, it is a motor-sail to our destination for tonight: Bermagui. The wind is from the North West so we need the tractor, but we are close to the shore and admire the beautiful coastline.



George is in charge, we are sitting in the nets, enjoying the sunshine, reading, writing... Nice! It is peaceful and relaxing. Wadie catches up on some sleep.

By 1.30pm the North East sea breeze picks up and it is the end of the relaxation in the nets. We escape repeated dunkings in the waves by retreating to the upper deck, but we keep getting splashed, so we end up back inside the cockpit, and hang on to dear life as we bash our way in for the last bit of the trip, to the entrance of Bermagui.



By 2pm, we are in... but what a tight, busy little spot. There are boats everywhere, little space to 'swing a cat', no vacant spots along any jetty and no moorings. With no real help forthcoming from the coastguard, Wade rafts us up to a fishing boat and goes ashore to ask for directions. He comes back with a smile. "For 30 bucks, we can stay here, and use the shore facilities... Hot showers!"



Behind us, a newly arrived fishing boat unloads marlins and yellow fin tunas. They are huge and attract a crowd of onlookers.



We watch for a while, then it is time for a hot shower, a change of clothes, a late lunch...

Not long after that, Mick and Lyn arrive to greet us. More chatting, descriptions of the previous day's experience, a few "tell me about this bit" questions from Mick, then we check our photos – which never look as awe inspiring as they should... I hate how the sea always looks flat in photos when it in fact feels like a roller coaster!

Dinner and bed at last. We crash by 7.30pm, exhausted!

The toughest part of the trip is behind us now. We know we will be able to deliver Medina all the way to its destination. We can relax a little and not feel pushed.

## **Easter Sunday, 24/4/11**

After a heavy, deep sleep – we were so tired – some hard task master gets us out of bed early. Sue and I manage to sneak in a hot shower. By the time we get back, the engine is running, we put the kettle on and we untie ourselves from the green fishing boat. At 6.45am Medina follows lots of boats out of the busy little harbour of Bermagui. The sea is lumpy, the wakes from the large and fast cruisers awful. The chaotic movement continues for a while as poor little Medina gets overtaken by all those stink boats. Man! We need a padded cell in the cockpit to keep us from turning black and blue!



Once it is a little less rock and rolly, it is time for breakfast: Easter buns and chocolate bunnies!

We are slowly motor-sailing... well, mainly motoring... staying reasonably close to the shore, going due North. As we pass Montague Island to our starboard side, we notice the current against us gets stronger, running at 1.5 knot. Our progress is slow, the day is overcast and the sea lumpy... not the most wonderful conditions, but hopefully the wind will pick up later and we won't have to put up with the drone of the engine all day! From time to time the sun streams out of the dark clouds like curtains of light over the silver, shimmering ocean, making for a dramatic seascape.



Sue gets her book out, Wade his Sudoku, Bengie stares into nothingness, and I get my journal out... We are set to pass the time for a while, during a tedious passage.

The wind never really picks up much. We get to Broulee Island by 2pm, anchor in the company of a trimaran and settle in for the afternoon.

Broulee Island is not an island but an isthmus. We are anchored in 3m of water. The bay offers great shelter. There is a long sandy beach where the local couples walk their dogs. The back drop is beautiful, with the mountain range in the distance.



Having been sitting on our bottoms since 7.00 am, we are keen to get shore for a wander... at least the girls are... which means Sue and I have to row Nutmeg to the beach. No problem, we'll get the oars and rollicks organized, drop slippery Nutmeg in the water, carefully lower ourselves in and start paddling... then we realise we have forgotten the cameras; back we go, pick them up, then onto the beach.



My rowing redefines the meaning of meandering, but we get there eventually. I hop out. Sue sits there, looking noble, waiting to be dragged to dry ground. She obviously does not know Nutmeg. As long as it floats, you are safe, but once it does not, she's tippy! I say: "Time to get off, Suzie". Oh oh, challenge... impersonation of a piece of soap down the bottom of the shower... and yes... she rolls off into the water, feet in the air, back soaking wet, cap full of sand... Cameras? Yes, where did the cameras go? One is in the dry bag, still in Nutmeg – good. The Canon is in a puddle. Oh no, that will finish it off after the fall into the cockpit during the big waves! The view finder now gives a very warped view of the scenes I want to photograph, although the shots come out clear. God knows it's the end of the camera if sea water has got in. What a bummer!

Nutmeg makes enemies till the end and I am silly for not bringing a large dry bag for my camera! Lesson learnt!

Meanwhile, back at the boat, Wade has to run a couple of little repairs. When we rowed back to get the cameras, I jammed Nutmeg's bow spit into the lever hoisting duver lucky and broke the pop rivet. It fell in the water. Any excuse for Wadie to done on the wetsuit and jump in the water. He recovered the metal duver and although he had no drill on board, fiddled around and managed to fix it... but not before dropping the spanner overboard... back in the water he goes to fish it out. By the time Sue and I get back, the deck is soaking wet, we are sandy... it's time to clean the place!

It is funny. Medina does not belong to us anymore, but we can't help ourselves. We have to keep it tidy. That is just the way we are. We don't like to live in a mess, and with a yacht, if you don't keep it clean and put stuff you don't need away, it quickly becomes bedlam. Whilst all this tidiness is going on, Bengie is on the boom, having a look around, sniffing the air.



"Straw head" Bengie is a bit better today. She is eating, walking around, and being a little more social... just looking a bit silly. We have to take the stitches out and the straw off on Tuesday. Something to look forward to! All hands on deck for that jobby!

Early night again tonight, after plotting tomorrow's adventure. Weather allowing, it's onto Ulladulla where we have agreed to pick up Mick. He will do the last couple of legs of the trip with us, so he can have some practical experience on board.

It feels like we are going up the coast at a great rate of knots! But the sooner we finish this delivery job, the sooner we can look at the catamaran in Sydney and decide what happens next!

**25/4/11**

Broulee to Ulladulla is a fairly tedious passage: 7.00 am start, not much wind, so we have to motor-sail in very lumpy seas. The highlights are seeing a huddle of little penguins, a first for Sue, and a few gannets, but the sailing is a bit lack luster.

The views of the coast are however stunning, with misty hills, moody skies and soft hues.



A couple of hours on, we sail past the Tollgate Islands, blocking the entrance of Bateman's Bay. We could have anchored there last night, but we are glad we stopped at Broulee Island instead.



We will have to remember this spot, as it is a good anchorage if we make a return trip down the coast with another yacht!

As we progress North along the coast, the distinctive outline of Pigeon House is striking. It takes me back 30 years ago, when I first arrived in Australia. Pigeon House and Monolith Valley was my first ever hike in this country, and my introduction to Drop Bears! Some nasty pasty friends were telling me porkies and scaring the be Jesus out of me during the night, making drop bear grunting noises and thumping my tent!



Pigeon House towers over us for many hours, as we slowly make progress towards Ulladulla.

The approach to the fishing harbour is well marked, with a line right in to the breakwater shown on the charts. It is a narrow slot in. As is often the case, everything is tight, with no room for visiting yachts to tie to.



We talk to the coastguards on the radio. They direct us initially to the Fishing Coop, and get us to raft up to one of the fishing boats. We pick a bright purple one, easy for me to bring Medina to. As usual, Wade is on the mooring ropes, but it's not so easy to tie her up to the trawler, and it is awfully stinky. In fact it is that horrid, that I think we'd better find somewhere else before we pass out from the rotten fish stench.

The locals were not particularly helpful and it felt like Ulladulla was another one of those ports best avoided along the South Coast. But Wadie went ashore, ended up visiting the Marine Rescue guys; and when he told them which fishing boat he had tied us onto, they immediately found us a spot on a different jetty. The owner of the purple trawler is apparently a dodgy fellow and there is no predicting what mood he might be in... You could easily get cast adrift or rammed up the side, depending on the day! We did not need any convincing to relocate along a jetty on the inside of the rock wall... much more pleasant, no rafting up to any rusty bucket, no stinking fish smells... just a bit of a climber to get ashore as this pier is built for big ships, not little cats like Medina!



Compulsory warm shower for Sue and I, then Mick has arrived when we get back and the boys are doing bloke things around the engine - refuel, oil check. Once done, we settled into the cockpit for sundowners and watched a sea eagle diving for a meal... missed!

The only bit of excitement was when we saw a beautiful Bruizen monohull coming in through the breakwater, then turning in towards us, obviously intent on rafting up to us. Apparently the coast guard told them to tie up alongside us! Wadie jumped out like a jack in a box, shouting "we'd rather you did not do this, we are 4 tons, you're about 18, do the maths! You will crush us against the pier". They moved along a bit further, rafting up to a more substantial fishing vessel... Our Wadie is protective of his duckling till the end.

**26/4/11**

Even though we did not need to get up early this morning, we still did... different noises, and a change of pace with Mick on board. On the program today: various briefings and handover to the new skipper. But first, I need to do some surgery on Bengie.

I have to take her stitches and the drain out, which makes me a little nervous. But with Wadie holding her tight, she surprisingly lets me fiddle with her wound without moving or struggling. It takes a bit of effort to free the stitches from the dried up gunk, but I manage to snip them and they come out easily. Next, the straw... it too slides out much more easily than I expected, and does not appear to hurt my kitten... Good thing done! No more straw, just a couple of holes in the head! Still not very pretty!

By about 8.00 am we are ready to go. The wind has picked up and once out of the harbour, we are ready to have Mick raise the sails and set a course for Jervis Bay. It is amazing all the things we do on Medina and take for granted. Wade and I have our routine and respective jobs. We keep having to remind each other to let Mick do everything so he can get used to her... There's so much to explain!



We have a great sail: 6 to 7 knots – although the seas are lumpy – all the way to the entrance of Jervis Bay. The cliffs around there are impressive, especially Cape Perpendicular at the Northern Head of the bay. And Jervis Bay is absolutely huge!





By 1.00 pm, we are tied up to one of the moorings at “Hole in the Wall”, so named because there used to be a rock arch, but now half of it has collapsed.

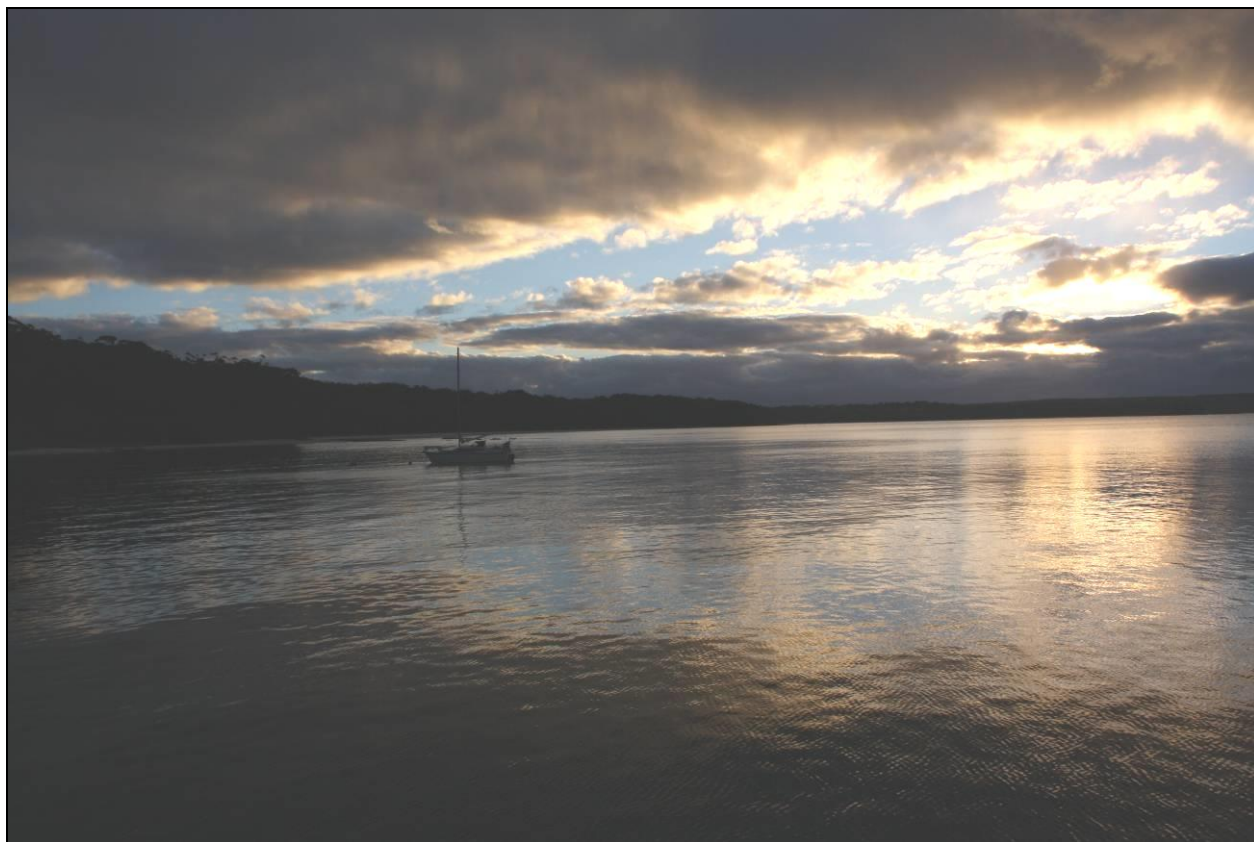


It is a pretty and peaceful place, with half a dozen moorings. Another yacht is tied up, and later a Mac Gregor joins us, and two gigantic multi million cruisers are anchored further out.

Sue and I read in the nets at the front of Medina, while Mick and Wade run through a few more things: Nutmeg's launch and retrieve, servicing of the main self-tailing winch, anchoring, bridles, Navman operations.... This would have to be the most thorough and unhurried handover Mick could wish for.



As the sun sets, I realise that this is our last night on board Medina. It is nearly time to let our duckling go. We have both really learnt serious sailing on her. We have built our experience and confidence on her. I think we will always have a soft spot for Medina.



**Wednesday, 27/4/11**

No rush to leave today, as our last hop is a shorter one, so we enjoy the sunshine and have Easter buns for breakfast out on deck. Jervis Bay really is a beautiful, moody spot. The light is soft, and the outline of the hills in the distance behind the bay looks hazy, like a Chinese wood print. You could easily spend a few days exploring these protected waters, and this would make an excellent spot for Mick and Lyn to get to know their boat.

By 9.00 am, we release ourselves from the mooring and head out for the final leg of the trip: to the Crookhaven River and Greenwell Point. As soon as we cross the invisible line between the cliffs of Cape Perpendicular and Bowen Island, we go from flat waters to 'the washing machine'. The motion is chaotic and quite uncomfortable. It is as if the wind and waves bounce off the sheer cliffs and the chop comes at you from all directions. Although there is enough wind to sail, we keep the engine going to help us through this horrible patch and distance ourselves from the high walls.



Mick tries to do a bit of everything, since it is his last opportunity to absorb all he can from us: steering, sails handling, tack track positioning, engine leg up, engine leg down, don't lose that heading, hey, the sails are flapping!



Our Arab looking skipper is a wheel hogger. Only a dash to the toilet forces him to let it go!

Medina is now his pride and joy. Wade and I are onlookers, ready to pitch in, but needing to let her go. It is an odd feeling. We are both so used to her, we can feel when something needs adjusting, but we can't just do it. Mick needs to learn to do everything himself, and it will take time and practice. I keep thinking that Wade and I work well together and this helps a lot too. Mick and Lyn will develop this teamwork also.

It is funny watching Mick. I can see him smiling from ear to ear as wind gusts make Medina accelerate. How does it feel? "She's a bit alright, hey"... or "How good is that!" It is great that his two days on board with us are windy enough to allow him to experience different sail combinations and conditions.

Once past Beecroft Head, we enter the Crookhaven Bight. It is a long tail wind run which seems to take forever, but at least the waters are smoother. We eventually line ourselves up with the leads to the entrance of the Crookhaven River, put on the life jackets for the bar crossing and we are in! We meander our way in , following the leads to Greenwell Point.



Some brand new floating pontoons have been installed next to the boat ramp, and a nervous Mick takes his boat in to the jetty. It is so nerve racking the first time you take her in to a pontoon... You don't know how she carries her way, you have to contend with tidal flow and wind... and not crash your pride and joy in front of the tourists and the old owners!



He did a very good job. Lyn is there with their little dog, beaming. There's hugs, and hand clapping, and pink bubbly flowing. Even the pets get on together!



We've done it. Successful delivery, successful handover. And she looks bloody good in her new surroundings in that soft autumn light, even if we are all a bit biased!











<b>Location</b>	<b>Distance</b>	<b>Cumulative Miles</b>
Paynesville	0	0
Lakes Entrance	15	15
Pt Hicks	63	78
Gabo Island	35	113
Green Cape	21	134
Eden	14	148
Tathra	23	171
Bermagui	20	191
Broulee Island	39	230
Ulladulla	40	270
Jervis Bay	24	294
Crookhaven River – Greenwell Point	21	315