

SUMMER CRUISE REPORTS 2010

The cruising division has been busy over the last few months, but it has proved difficult to get many boats together for the same weekends! Those of us whose children are no longer an issue are finding ourselves committed to grandchildren instead, or annoying employers who think weekend duty is on the cards. Other members were recovering from surgery and unable to take part, much to their disappointment.

Even so, we managed a pre-Christmas get-together on Dangar Island in early December. Just 3 boats rafted up in Americas Bay on the Saturday evening and we shared dinner on board *Kirin*. Next morning we all boarded *Kirin* again to head over to Dangar for breakfast at the café, which is situated on the northern shore alongside the ferry wharf. The location on the waterside is lovely, but the barbecue breakfast was not exactly gourmet! We did enjoy an interesting walk around the island. We also enjoyed a brisk sail on both legs of the trip. *Kate Kelly* had a bit of a challenge as her engine was not working, so we had to do all our mooring work under sail. Good practice, and we are so glad we got the final one first time as the owners of the adjoining yacht were watching on deck and Roman was taking photos from *Kirin*!

Arrangements for the post-Christmas cruise varied. *Kate Kelly* was alone for the long offshore trip north this year. *Hagar*, *Vela* and *Kirin* all headed for Sydney Harbour, but with commitments to families and visitors, did not all meet up to share the New Year celebrations. We left the Basin in *Kate Kelly* the morning after Boxing Day, in darkness and rain at 0400 and set off for Broughton Island. We had a steady south-easterly wind and got there in the evening after 16 hours sailing. The cool and frequently wet conditions were actually ideal – we did not get hot, sunburnt or parched and had the wind pushing us along happily on one reach most of the way, gusty under the storm clouds but light at times in between. Plenty of opportunity to try out various sail configurations – reefed at times and poled out at others! The weather continued cool and wet for a while at Broughton, ideal for walking but not so appealing for swimming and snorkelling, although the sun did show its face occasionally. We met up with the usual group of friends from our previous 5 visits and spent time with them, learning the tricks of catching snapper (and enjoying eating them!), snorkelling with the grey nurse sharks at Looking Glass island, playing boules and badminton on the beach and walking. Our New Year's Eve was quiet due to rain, but the usual bonfire on the beach took place the following evening and we shared drinks and yarns round a good blaze on New Year's Day. Snorkelling through the cleft in the island, which forms the shark nursery, was definitely the highlight of the visit, as long as you didn't dwell on what other types of sharks might live in the local waters. Anyway, they would much prefer the abundant supply of juicy fish to the odd tough and pickled yachtsman one would like to believe!

Conditions at Broughton were pretty mild. We did retreat to Port Stephens one afternoon to avoid a forecast strong southerly. We sat on a "borrowed" mooring in Salamander to await the southerly, but it was just a feeble change of wind direction and hardly noticeable! We spent the day in port replenishing supplies, having a great seafood lunch and then a peaceful night in Fame Cove before returning to Broughton. A few evenings later we rounded the island in the dark after hearing a radio report of very strong southerly gusts at Newcastle, but once again nothing much eventuated (isolated gusts with thunderstorms can be misleading). Coal Shaft Bay, on the southern side of the island is no place to be caught out by a strong southerly though, so one has to be very cautious. Our radar came in very useful in finding our way round the island and bommies in the dark. Sometimes the reef around Coal Shaft is not up to the task of keeping a heavy swell at bay and we had a few rather rocky nights. We love Broughton and one fellow yachtsman there has been visiting for 27 years in a row, but it is not for the ill-prepared or comfort-loving sailor.

Our final night at Broughton was marked by the arrival by a fleet of some 6 – 8 yachts from Palm Beach Yacht Club, all having a great time sailing up the coast. We spent one night in Newcastle Marina on the way home, enjoying the first hot shower in a fortnight and the delights of the Rocksalt restaurant after our many nights eating out of cans! We saw *Etihad Stadium* and the superyacht *Squall* at the marina – about a billion dollars worth of boat between them! The wind was rather light on the way home, but in the right direction at least, so we hoisted the spinnaker and trebled our speed. A great sail back, but rather hot. We poled out the headsail and sailed peacefully up Broken Bay and Cowan Creek, but then made the mistake of picking up the club mooring at Refuge for the evening – noisy houseboats and rafts of stinkers running their engines mindlessly, regardless of their neighbours. A hideous experience! We were cheered up by having an exciting sail back to the club in a strong southerly and enjoyed beating up Pittwater to finish our trip.

The most recent cruising excursion was to Sydney Harbour for the Australia Day 'weekend'. Some of us took the Monday off to make a four day break. We headed down early on the Saturday to get there before the very strong south-easterly which had been forecast. However, the strong westerlies forecast for earlier in the day did not oblige and we limped down the coast in searingly hot conditions until the nor'easter came in and pushed us along at a better pace. *Hagar* headed off to the CYCA marina for the night, handy for a family party in the city, but with very tight pens and little manoeuvring room. We decided not to join the Cronans in Fairlight, as even with the

security of a rented mooring, it is very exposed and uncomfortable in south-easterly winds. We tried tucking into Store Beach, which is in theory out of a south-easter, but when the southerly whammed in we decided it was not the place to be and headed off to Cobblers Beach on the Balmoral side. With 35 knots on the dial, this proved to be a very wet and slow process, until we assisted the labouring engine with some reefed headsail and started moving at 8 knots rather than 2! Very exciting! Cobblers was totally sheltered but we have been put off going there by past memories of bare bums on the beach and the boats there! John and Jenny meanwhile had decided not to spend the night on *Windborne* in wild and rocky Fairlight or to come aboard the following wet and grey morning. We set off up the Harbour on the Sunday to join up with Paul and Bev and the Coastal Cruising Club sailaway in Balls Head Bay. There were about 10 CCC boats in the bay and we walked up to Waverton to a café in the afternoon and met ashore in the evening for happy hour, enjoying many nautical yarns with a variety of interesting people. We were surprised to see Bob & Irma Birchall walking across the park, but discovered that they live nearby! We had a good chat with them also. The next day we motored round to Cockatoo Island in *KK* with Paul and Bev. The marina there is only for boats under 27 feet, so we anchored off Balmoral and took the rubber ducky over to explore the island. It is a very interesting visit. You can easily spend half a day investigating the historic buildings, docks and tunnels and there is a good café offering lunch and a cold beverage if required! There is a campsite on the island and the historic houses have been renovated as holiday homes. Back at Balls Head we joined in the happy hour again, talking to cruisers from England and the USA who were 10 years into their circumnavigations! John and Jenny Cronan joined us for the evening and we had dinner on board *Hagar*, enjoying the prawns we had picked up the Fish Market before returning from Cockatoo.

We upped anchor the next morning after family had jumped aboard. It is very easy to pick up crew here, as both Waverton and Wollstonecraft stations are within walking distance. The Sinclairs and Cronans returned to Pittwater from Balls Head Bay and avoided the activities on the harbour, but we got in the thick of it all again! It was a glorious morning and we watched the fun and excitement of the Ferrython from behind Shark Island. We returned to Farm Cove for the 21 gun salute and then went back up the harbour to anchor off the Vaucluse shore and watch the Tall Ships Race and various flyovers whilst enjoying a gourmet lunch brought on board by my brother and wife, whom we dropped ashore at Balmoral before heading home. We were in illustrious company, with Jamie Packer's new toy (all \$50 mill of it) anchored alongside. We later saw them gunning it down the coast as we limped northwards in the fickle winds. The sail back was very light and we had to motor from Long Reef but it was a lovely evening and we had a fish dinner on deck en route, with a few playful dolphins to escort us briefly. We returned to our mooring at 2100, just in time to see the beautiful fireworks on the Central Coast. A fitting end to a great weekend.

Once again we were disturbed by the inaccuracy of the BOM forecasts issued on Channel 16. There are no live updates on actual conditions, just continual re-reading of a forecast several hours old. We found that by eavesdropping on calls between the Marine Rescue stations up and down the coast, they were giving each other up-to-the-minute timings and strengths of the changes. This vital information helps you decide whether or not you need to change your anchorage or sailing plans. Two of the "strong southerlies" were non-events, but had we ignored the third one because of this sort of misinformation, we could have been in big trouble if we'd been at Broughton. Keep an ear out on Channel 16! And if you call them, get the new name right, as we heard calls to "Coastal Patrol" and "Coast Guard" being ignored or corrected briskly!

The next cruising event on the calendar is the Challengers Head Race on 20/21st February and then to Smiths Creek on 27/28 February (but possibly put back to March some time). We also hope to overnight in Maitland Bay when we get the right steady NE forecast for the weekend. Members will be contacted by email at short notice for this one.

Sue Flaye

Kate Kelly