

**DAY 1 - 18/8/02. Sunny early then overcast. SE winds 10-15 knots.**

Gladstone. We dropped into the Marine Rescue base and updated them with our plans. They will pass our information to the bases at Rosslyn Bay and Yeppoon. We finally left Gladstone at 12.30 and headed out to Facing Island to camp at "The Oaks" camp ground on North Point. It was a hard slog out from Gladstone due to the 10-15 knot head wind. We crossed the southern side of Quoin Island and got stranded by sandbars on the low tide. We kept battering away at the head winds until we reached "The Oaks" camping ground on North Point about 3.30pm. What a relief!

From the campsite we can see north along the coast and believe we can see Rundle Island (or Rocky Island as the locals know it) about 20 kms north. We pitched the tents right on the beach and had a campfire to keep us warm from the strong southerlies. By 7.30pm my back was so tender, that I just collapsed into the sack. A good night's sleep is well in order.

**DAY 2 – 19/8/02 Windy, SE 10-15 knots, overcast and rain threatening.**

We departed about 10.30am with only about 5-7 knots of SE wind. We paddled about 3-4 kms offshore and looked for a better wind to push the kayaks along under sail. We paddled/sailed the first 5 kms when suddenly I spotted a large black fin about 300 metres inshore and heading south. About 10 minutes of paddling later I spotted another large dark fin only about 40 metres inshore and crossing our path. We looked hard but never saw it again. We stayed on a direct bearing to Rundle Island and enjoyed a 10-15 knot wind in our sails. We paddle/sailed along, averaging about 8-10 kph, hitting the sticks for 20 minute sessions, then resting for 10. From Black Head north, we were about 8 kms offshore and made excellent time to Rundle Island, arriving by 2pm. What a magic island this turned out to be! It was just what Wayne and I were after, remoteness, camping right on the waters edge and full protection from the southeast winds. We made camp in a small gutter with our own mini beach at high tide. On dusk, we climbed to the top of Rundle Island and checked the lights of Gladstone. We could also see the lighthouse working at Cape Capricorn (8 kms north) and just make out the light at Bustard Head (55 kms south). An island was also just visible north of the Cape, so we are hoping that is Hummocky Island. From the GPS co-ordinates it should be 19 kms north. By 8.45pm, the rain is just about to arrive, so it's into bed. The 22 km paddle in 3.5 hours has worn this young man out. No sooner laid back and the rain came and the wind started howling.

**DAY 3 – 20/8/02 Overcast, threatening more rain and 10-15 km SE winds.**

Shame that the weather was so foul on Rundle Island as we spotted some great patches of coral on the way out. Leaving at 10.30, we paddle/sailed the 8 kms to the Cape in 1 hour. The winds were 10-15 knots and a 1-1.5 metre following swell. We did some trolling along the cliffs as we rounded the Cape but no luck there. Once inside the protected side of the Cape, we found a good campsite on the beach just below the lighthouse access track. It even had a timber shelter of table and chairs. Later we went spearfishing in a protected cove just inside the Cape. I was amazed at the quality of the coral and the fish life there. In the first few metres, I came face to face with a sea turtle grazing on some seagrass. He did not seem too fazed by my presence. Also saw another 3 or 4 turtles in the next 10 minutes. Before dark, we trekked up to the lighthouse and met the lighthouse keeper, Doug. The walk up was just fantastic, but also demanding. The views from up top of the lighthouse were magic, all the way north to Great Keppel. We could see Hummocky Island 12 kms north and just make out Great Keppel about 40 kms away. Also got a good view of Yellowpatch and the estuaries around there. Those areas are full of mud crabs according to Doug. We checked out the rail cart system that services the lighthouse from

the beach below. We returned to set up camp, only downside of the location appears to be the over zealous mozzies, they were into everything.

**DAY 4 – 21/8/02** Poured overnight, then mixed day, overcast with some dry spells

Started at 6am, I saw a pod of dolphins about 20m off the beach at our camp. Then I spotted the “blow” of a whale out wide of the point and heading south, so I raced up the Cape and watched it pass by. It’s tail was coming right out of the water. Also saw a few boats coming out of Yellowpatch. I went back to camp and grabbed the kayak and paddled to Yellowpatch. Did some trolling on the way with no luck. I checked out the sandhills in Yellowpatch. They were the most amazing burnt orange colour. There were 5 boats in the channel, you can see why they take shelter here, it was so protected. On my way back to camp, I passed Wayne, he was walking to Yellowpatch. He told me of some dugongs that he had spotted from atop of the Cape. I returned to camp, had some lunch then did some trolling along the beach near the camp. It looked like the bonito were also rounding up the baitfish along the beach, but I could not get any hits with the lure. Just then I spotted this large head break the surface just off the point. When I got near, it was two dugong slowly cruising along the surface in about 2 metres of water. They were huge in size and looked like a cross between a whale and a walrus. They were not really disturbed by me, so I paddled with them for about 15 minutes.

**DAY 5 – 22/8/02** Raining yet again ! No sign of a break.

We decided that we would stay put at the Cape until the weather cleared. At least we had some contact here and shelter. If we moved onto Hummocky Island, we would be isolated out there if the weather turned bad again. By 8am it was still raining so I returned to the sack for a reading day. Mid morning, I walked up the ridge and checked out the Cape, then wandered back along the rocks. What amazing countryside! It’s reminiscent of an English coastal scene, craggy shale cliffs, the raging sea below and an isolated lighthouse residence on the peak.

Then finally, finally!! ....we saw a break in the cloud with a strange golden coloured object shining at us (ie: the SUN). So we walked around to Yellowpatch to check out the sand hills. We located the camp area at Yellowpatch. It’s fairly poor, just a table in a small clearing and infested with mozzies & sandflies. There is a fresh water well there if you urgently need water. We climbed the monstrous sand hills, they have a gradient of about 1:5.

We did some exploring then ran/fell back down the dunes and wandered back towards camp. As we passed some yachts in the inlet, one of the yachties struck up a conversation and invited us on board for a cuppa. (40ft Catamaran named “Against the Wind”). We had to decline as it was getting late and we had about 3-4 kms to get back to camp. And anyway, the sandflies were eating us alive We discussed meeting them at Hummocky Island the next day if the weather was kind to us. I’ve got to say, that I was not overly keen on Yellowpatch, but I could see some attractions for yachties. Smooth, protected water with some fishing and crabbing up river. Back at camp we had more pasta for dinner, with our fair share of mozzies as guests. Then the sun turned on the most brilliant sunset, so we ran up to the Cape with the binoculars to check out the islands.

**DAY 6 – 23/8/02.** Not raining ?? Forecast 25 degrees.

I was awake from about 3am onwards. It drizzled overnight, but awoke to a full moon behind the clouds. At 6am a thick sea fog came in and cut the visibility. We packed our

gear early in preparation, and left the Cape at 9.20 and paddled in light sea mist until it cleared to the smoothest of seas. Absolute glassy conditions. We made about 6 kms per hour across the 12kms to Hummocky. On the way we tried for a close up photo of a huge sea turtle, but he saw us at the last moment and did a runner from about 20m away. Only other companion was a lone dolphin that passed us just before Fairway Rocks and the Catamaran that we could see was leaving Yellowpatch and heading our way. We stopped at Fairway Rocks and had a dive on the coral bommie. There were some nice coral formations and we saw a shark cruising the bottom. Also had 2 large Bonito cruise within metres of me at one stage. No place to land the kayaks on Fairway Rocks so we paddled the 2 kms across to Hummocky Island and trolled the lures along the western side of the island. Wayne stopped to spear a fish and I kept going around to the protected beach on the north side. I was keen to set camp and start drying out some of the gear.

The Catamaran with Reg and Karen onboard followed me into the bay and set anchor. Reg and Ashley bought the tinnie into the beach and after introducing themselves, invited us onboard the yacht for a hot bread and mudcrab luncheon at 1pm. We quickly set up camp and hung our rain soaked gear out to dry. The camp area was only small but someone had left behind a small fireplace, grill and length of timber for a seat. After 1 o'clock, we paddled out to the yacht for lunch. On the way out I spotted a couple of whales about 300m out from the yacht. They were calling out and belting the water with their tail and side fins. Absolutely spectacular! The meal of hot bread and mud crab was fantastic, the company great. After lunch we arrange to climb the summit of Hummocky Island with the group. There was no actual track, so we beat our way through the scrub. It was a hard climb but well worth the effort. The views from the top were superb. South was past Fairway Rocks, to Cape Capricorn and Yellowpatch. In the north, views out to Great Keppel, Humpy and Barren Islands. We were also joined up the hill by 2 white bellied sea eagles soaring past us on the thermals. Things were looking up after the past few days of miserable weather. Reg tells us there reportedly good sea caves on the island, so we make that our mission for tomorrow. Anyway, the forecast looks good, so we may occupy this island for a day or two longer, before crossing 27 kms to Humpy Island.

**DAY 7 – 24.8.02      Strong wind overnight, gale warnings from 7am.**

That was one of the best settings to sleep in of all our camps. It was a full moon, and I slept with the tent fly open all night. At 6am I was up for breakfast, and then paddled the kayak around the north-east corner of the island and found two HUGE sea caves. I went back to tell Wayne and the others. When I got back to the beach, all the boats (including Reg and Karen), were getting underway. The forecast was for gale force winds, SE 25-30 knots. The gale warning was for tomorrow (Sunday) through to Tuesday. We arranged with Reg and Karen to catch up with them on Keppel in a couple of days. Wayne and I plan to check out the sea caves this morning, then head over to Humpy Island today with the winds behind us. We will then move onto Great Keppel on Sunday. Firstly, we packed up camp. We then took the empty kayaks and paddled around to the sea caves. What an unbelievable experience this was! The first cave was about 4-5 metres wide by 10m high. We went into it (at high tide) for about 50-60 metres. We took some amazing photo's, Wayne even used his disposable camera with the inbuilt flash when we were way back inside the cave. The second cave was wider but not as deep (about 8m wide by 5m high). We paddled about 15m into this cave. When the surge went past us, we timed it up the back of the cave and it took 4 secs before you heard the loud "boom". The cave must have been incredibly deep. We packed the kayaks, then left about 11am for the 28 km crossing to Humpy Island. The SE winds were the strongest we had sailed in, at around 25 knots with a 2-3 metre following sea. The 28 km crossing was the longest we had attempted so far. As we could see Humpy in the distance, the GPS was only used to get

our bearing (309 degrees magnetic) and our initial speed under paddle/sail at 10 kmph. As we headed from the lee of Hummocky Island, the winds gusted up to 35 knots and the swell was a consistent 2 metres plus. This was the most hair-raising and exciting time we have had so far in the kayaks !

On some swells we were paddle/sailing at 20kmph (10-12 knots), surfing down the face of the swells. The kayaks performed in a way that I could not have imagined possible. The thing to watch out for, was the nose going under and the risk of pitch-poling. I took that to the limit on one giant swell (2.5m +). The kayak nose-dived at speed, right up to my seat area, the sail was slammed back on the deck at my feet and I thought, "this is it.....I'm a gonna" !! Then ... the wind took hold of the sail, it launched itself, the nose of the kayak hit the surface and I took off on the next swell. All that happened in about 5 seconds. Absolutely unbelievable! I can not believe that I did not tip or roll and that no equipment was broken. I tell you, these sit-on-top Scuppers and twin mast sails are beyond belief, they are virtually indestructible. We continued on in the same conditions, mainly paddle/sailing across the 28 kms. In fact, we were still doing an incredible 8-10 kmph when we were just sitting back under sail and enjoying our lunch. Just the same, I was glad to reach Humpy Island about 2pm. The camp ground at Humpy was top notch. It was huge and was well catered for. Fresh water, picnic tables, toilets, showers, well signposted with walking trails and plenty of protection under the she-oaks from the SE winds. The island itself is fairly special too, with a beautiful sandy beach, covered in low vegetation of mainly grevillea's and a fantastic walking trail around the ridge. We set up camp and then with some dry gear on, did the 4 km walk around the ridge of the island. On the exposed southern side, I took a photo of Wayne on the cliff edge. He was leaning into the wind and I swear he could almost have taken off and soared on the updraught. From the ridge top you can easily see the islands of Peak, Divided, Wedge and Pelican islands and just make out Hummock Island in the distance. Barren Island and "The Child" were not far offshore and to the east of Humpy Island, but they both looked fairly inhospitable. The heath plants on Humpy island were in flower and looked superb. Mainly red flowering grevillea but also low growing banksia, blackboys, broom etc. We followed the trail back to the main beach and back to camp. Into bed by 7.30 as the winds are still howling and it' started to drizzle. I did a GPS position fix and established that we had paddle/sailed 28.2kms in 3 ¼ hours. (Up all it was 40 kms from the Cape and 70 kms north from Gladstone).

**DAY 8 - Howled overnight, light winds and strong rain today.**

No let up from the wind overnight. Wayne listened to the radio where he heard that conditions yesterday reached 3m sea's and 25-33knots of SE winds. We have great protection on Humpy Is. We decide to head over to Great Keppel today. About 11am, we packed up and headed over to Keppel. Only about 3-4kms across, to the most busiest beach, Putney Beach. The 20 knot winds made the crossing interesting just the same, just as we sailed around the point a huge dugong swam past us heading south. We hit Putney Beach and tied the kayaks off, then straight to the shops for some real food! The sun came out for a change, so we had a swim at Putney Beach before heading off around towards Svendsens Beach in search of a campsite. We found an ideal spot in the dunes along Leeks Beach, a spot known as Chocolate Rocks about halfway along Leeks Beach. We were well hidden and pretty protected by a couple of she-oaks, so we pitched the tents and spent the afternoon drying out our gear. About 5pm we walked the bush track and along Putney Beach into town (about 3 kms). We finished up around midnight and walked the track home by the full moon. That was a task in itself believe me!

**DAY 9 – 26/8/02 Not raining for a change ! Sunshine/overcast mix, SE winds 10knots.**

Up at 6am. At Svendsens Beach met up with Karen and Reg, they were anchored along with a group of other yachts in the bay. Reg surprised me by suggesting that Wayne and I travel back onboard the Catamaran to Gladstone. Of course I refrained from dancing about with my arms in the air chanting "Here we go, here we go, here we go!" That afternoon Wayne and I headed around to "Middle Sandhills" beach for a dive, but the sea was too rough and vision lousy. Coming back around the point there was a 1m swell running on a point break so we spent a heap of time there surfing the break. It was an absolute blast! We caught a dozen or so waves and would use the sails to get back out to the point between waves.

**DAY 10 – 27/8/02. Sunny, light cloud. Mod SE winds, looking superb !**

After lunch, we paddled ... no make that sailed! over to the underwater observatory on Middle Island. Had planned to dive around the observatory but it is marked "OFF Limits for 400m". The water there was too rough and dirty anyhow! We then sailed down the west side of Middle Island, past a camp area and settled on a nice camp ground on the protected north side. It was a great camp for two people, under a couple of she-oaks and had a picnic table. We decided to camp there as the nearby Miall Island does not show any camp grounds on the map. That night we had a camp fire going and hung out until about 9pm. This could have been one of the best nights of the trip ... we had a brilliant fire, little to no wind, no mozzies, no rodents!

**DAY 11 – 28/8/02. Bright, sunny, 23 degrees, light to mod SE winds. Looks Good!!**

Wayne and I then left our gear on Middle Island and paddled over to Miall Island only about 1 km away. We ran our lures out along the south side of Miall but had no luck. We then dived on some coral reef on the western side of the island. The water was fairly clean considering the wind and sea's but there was no fish life. We spotted a camp site on Miall Island but it was only tiny with enough room for 1-2 tents and a constructed picnic table. There was little protection from the SE winds so we paddled back across the passage to Middle Island. What a hard slog that was into the southeaster! Late in the day we checked through the binoculars and confirmed that "Against the Wind" was still anchored at Svendsens Beach, so we packed up camp and headed back to Great Keppel Island.

**DAY 12 – 29.8.02. Beaut!! Sunny day, 24 degrees, mod SE winds about 10 knots.**

Day started 6am. At the camp the sandflies were also "up and at 'em! We packed our gear and made two trips ferrying it out to the Cat. We boarded about 8.30 and secured the kayaks along each side of the deck. Most of the gear we repacked into the hatches and only took out bedding and food inside the yacht. The Cat then sailed south through the passage between Great Keppel and Middle Islands, past Pelican, Wedge, Divided and Peak Islands, and we motored towards Sea Hill into a mod SE wind and sea. The trip took us about 4 hours. We set some new plans to move down The Narrows tomorrow to Maria Inlet or a nearby creek. Then hopefully we will venture through the "Narrows" at Monte Christo or Boat Creek on Sunday at the high tide and overnight stay at Graham Creek. Heading into Gladstone marina on Monday, then head for home on Tuesday.