

WHITSUNDAY ISLAND PADDLE REPORT

IS HE SERIOUS OR IS THIS HIS SENSE OF HUMOUR!!!

June 16th – 21st 2015.

Dave Pass.

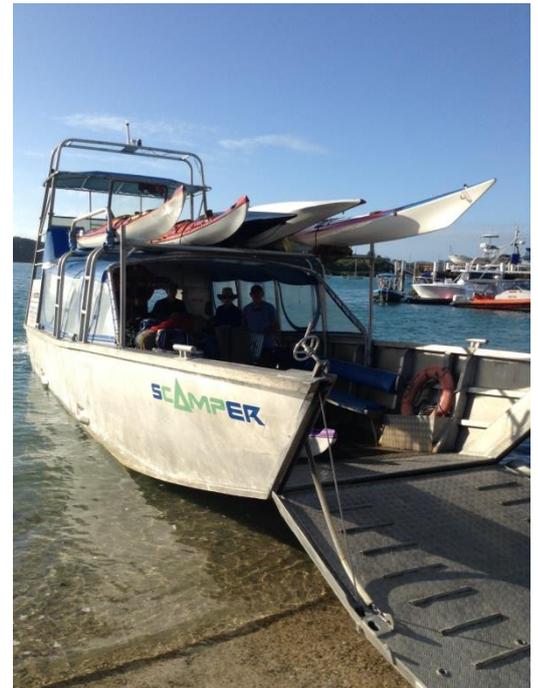
At last, having waited impatiently for almost three weeks for the strong SE winds to ease, Graham Garrett, Marg and Garth Petersen, Corrie and John Bongertman, Anita and I gathered at the Flame Tree Caravan Park near Shute Harbour to finalise plans and enjoy five days of relaxed kayaking Whitsunday Island. Our intention is to take the “scamper” across, and indulge ourselves: no rough conditions and no paddle over 20km!

The original intention was to base ourselves at Whitehaven Beach but as the forecast indicated four days of ideal weather and then it would blow up again. (We had visions of the kayaks being trashed on the “scamper” coming back in a heavy SE), we decided to camp at Joe’s Beach and Paddle the Cid Harbour side of the Island.

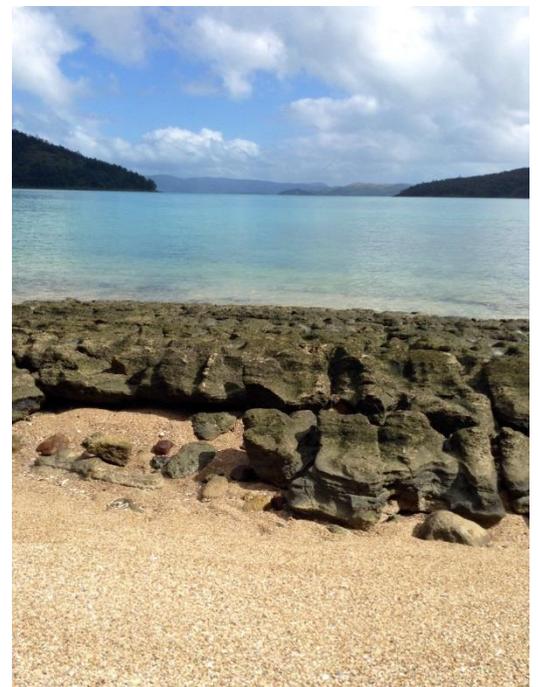
Tuesday

So, on a calm sunny Tuesday morning, we loaded five single and one double (Garth & Margaret) kayaks and a mountain of gear onto the scamper and were given a tour of the area as we dropped non paddling campers at Dugong and at Nari’s before arriving at lovely Joe’s beach. Sparkling blue water (high tide), white sand and a solitary coconut palm to welcome us. Camp was soon set up and we then paddled, with not a ripple on the water, a few km around the bay seeking out each cove and headland, commenting on a glimpse of fish, coral or turtle on the way.

Our first evening, dinner over and now sitting around a central table under cover and with a good camp light over, our revelry was interrupted by a torch light approaching the beach. Next, the sound of a tinny hitting the beach, then a staffy dog putting its nose where it had no right to put its nose and a bloke (mid 30’s) emerging from the dark, sitting himself at the table (along with a large bottle of whisky, one quarter consumed) and introducing himself “Hi, I’m Ivan Malatt’s brother!!!” Talk about a lead balloon!! We soon learned that, no, he does not book camp sites and the dog goes with him, national park or not. He soon got the message that he was not camping with us and he could depart or camp at the far end of the beach, so he stumbled off to find a distant camp spot. It was about now that Margaret noticed that his tinnie was floating away over the coral reef. We gave him a shout and he and the dog took off through the water until it was obvious he had no hope of catching it. Garth bundled him into the double kayak and somehow got him into it without dunking himself or Mr. Malatt.



Scamper loaded with our kayaks.



Absolutely perfect!

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We then endured a restless night wondering if we might be “visited “ and listening to him dragging the tinnie over every rock on the beach as the rising tide carried the boat up to leave it stranded at about 1am. Come the morning we all carried his boat down to the water’s edge so that he could soon be on his way. We did not see him or his dog again.



Camp at Joe's Beach.

Wednesday

Wednesday morning we launched on the rising tide and in perfect conditions paddled out from Cid Harbour, south toward Hamilton Island. The tide flow was like a river, swirling us around headlands and underwater obstructions and hustling us on our way. So calm was the sea that this usually intimidating situation was exciting and enjoyable. We paddled into long Gulnare Inlet for morning tea and then to Henning Island for lunch. Henning is in the main Whitsunday channel, great swimming under clear sky. With the tide now having turned, once again in our favour, we were soon back at camp.



Henning Island.

Garth and Margaret.

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Thursday

On Thursday, we paddled north in Cid Harbor, past Nari's and Sawmill for a cuppa in a sweet little bay tucked away on Whitsunday Island and then further on toward Hook passage. Time to turn back into a moderate afternoon breeze. Early signs of the forecast weather change?



Joe's Beach



Day's End

Friday

Fridays paddle was most leisurely, just a very slow wander around Cid Island, again in great conditions. We drifted into small bays, through rock gardens and under steep high headlands to smoko on a wide beach on the west side. Back to camp for a late lunch.

The breeze began from the SE. Having experienced this classic area in perfect conditions we decided to head back to Shute Harbour tomorrow (Sat) to stay ahead of the weather change. Wayne, the operator of the "Scamper" generously said he could pick us up, even though we had him booked for Sunday. But it would be a bit late as he had a big group to get from Hook Is. "You will most likely need to walk your gear to the boat" was his advice.

Saturday

Saturday was another fine day, and well sheltered in this large harbor. We made a slow start in packing our tents, cleaning sand off the kayaks, placing them on branches so Wayne and any others would not get 'sand blasted' when scamper gets moving. Our gear was lined up on the beach so we could form a human chain to load it if we needed to walk it out. Hmm ... He is late, the tide is now well out and falling further.

Scamper arrives and stands at what looks to me, 100 meters off shore and Wayne indicates to bring the gear out. Consternation!! Is he serious or is this his sense of humour?? No, the man is serious. 'It's only this deep out here he shouts (indicating 50cm). "OK", I say, he must know how this works. So Anita and I throw our huge bags on to our (clean) kayaks and begin to walk. Others gather their gear on the beach. We stumble over coral and rocks hoping we

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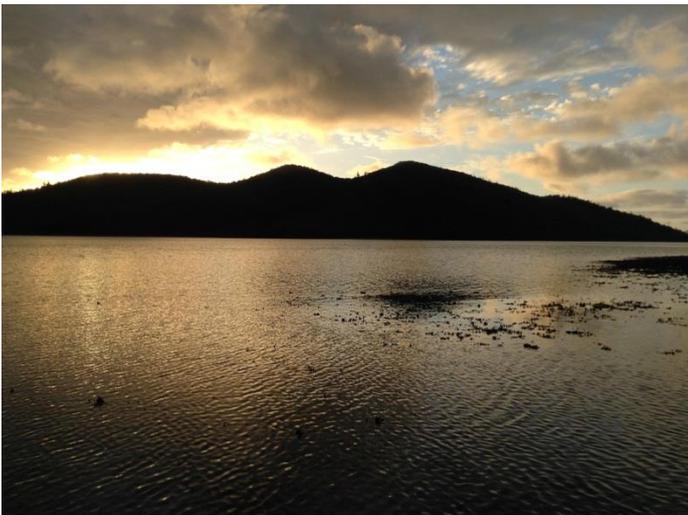
don't lose a bag, water up to our waste then our chest and still scamper is a long way out and still wane is saying "Its only this deep out here"!

With the threat of drowning now a real possibility, (I swear Nita was gulping water), we said "No way, come back on the high tide tomorrow".

We returned to the beach, unpacked our gear and set up camp for the night.

And then we looked at the video Margaret had taken of our aborted boarding and we laughed and laughed until we cried!!

Not much more to say really.



Sunset at Joe's



Dave and Anita

Sunday

Wayne picked us up on Sunday's high tide and took good care of our kayaks as we thrashed it back to Airlie in a strong wind warning. (He would not take the 'fuel money' we offered for his wasted trip).

The sun was still shining as we all packed our gear onto vehicles and headed home.

Another great trip and exceptional paddling.

Dave Pass.