

## To Moreton Island 4-8 October 2020

with -

**Warren, Ross, Vivien, Claire, Susan, Irena, Di, Robyn, Phil and Dave**

6 am, Brisbane Port, Sunday 4th October. Our group of eight were lined up at the gates of the Micat. Some had been driven in by partners to help with the unloading of the kayakers. The staff of the ferry kindly allowed us to drive on to the ferry to facilitate the transfer of our luggage. Some then parked in the Micat yard at great expense. The advantage of going on the ferry, with the expense this entails, is that we are assured of being able to return from the island according to schedule, without being delayed by adverse conditions.



All through the Micat journey to The Wrecks we were asking each other, 'How will we find Ross and Warren?'

The two intrepid paddlers were packing their sea kayakers in the dark at Bongaree and intended to paddle to Bulwer. Headwinds were forecast and they were keen to avoid them.

We would meet them somewhere along the coast of Moreton Island, but where exactly?





At the Wrecks, Vivien, Claire, Susan, Di, Irena, Robyn and Phil and Dave proved to be a great team for carrying the kayaks ashore after the traffic had cleared. All our gear was transferred from big bags into our boats and we prepared to launch. Surprisingly, here were Ross and Warren paddling towards us! They had crossed in tricky conditions. Now we would all paddle northwards, meaning an extra few kilometres for them on top of the twenty four they had done. At least we had the tide with us for this paddle.

By lunch time we had established that all the bush camping sites in the North West Zone were occupied. It was after all a holiday weekend, so we retreated to Cowan Cowan to a large well shaded camping area just inside the barrier that excludes beach traffic. This meant we could leave our boats on the beach without fear of their being run over. Mulgumpin camping now handles all the camping bookings for the island, charging fees the same as National Parks, but the cleanliness of the facilities at the serviced campgrounds was well below the standard that I would expect.



Next day we went south as a group of ten, on an incoming tide, passed the crowds and boating mayhem at The Wrecks and Tangalooma, and eventually found the shady campsite next to the Big Sandhills. It was deserted as expected. We settled in as the tide dropped and the wide sand flats became exposed. It seemed to me there was a lot more sand here than there used to be, which means a very long carry between the camp and waters edge as the tide drops. Almost impossible at low tide, as we had not brought trolleys. The spear pump was in working order, giving us at least fresh water for washing.



The weather during these days was beautiful, with light easterlies and glorious sunsets.

But on Tuesday, Ross and Warren decided strategically to return to Bulwer for a crossing back to Bribie on Wednesday because the wind would turn more northerly on Thursday and indeed northwesterly by Friday. Our group of eight also decided to return to the Wrecks a day earlier to avoid the headwinds.

But in the meantime we took a lazy paddle on the high tide through the mangroves at the Little Sandhills, seeing a few turtles and many stingrays.



I was annoyed to discover that traffic along the western side of the island has increased in recent years.

We arrived back at campsite again just before the sand flats were exposed by the receding tide. There was of course the walk to the east coast to do when paddling wasn't possible. Sundowners were on the Big Sandhill this evening.



Wednesday morning we packed our kayaks and waited for the tide to come in enough to launch, leaving at 1115. We sailed all the way to Tangalooma, seeing many large turtles. The COVID plan of the resort didn't allow us to enter to buy an ice cream, so it was back to the Wrecks campground for the night, with sundowners on the beach.

As we set up camp came news from Ross that their crossing from Bulwer to Bribie had been uneventful, and took only three hours. They would have sailed all the way.

Thursday was indeed windy so plans to snorkel the Wrecks and paddle transparent canoes were abandoned: we watched Micat come and go instead.



We didn't get to visit Koorinal or do the circumnavigation of Crab Island on this trip. Ideally one should commence the trip to Moreton Island one or two days before Full Moon, in my opinion, to allow the best window of opportunity to explore the southern end of the island.

On our return to Brisbane, the staff of Micat allowed us again to drive on to the ferry to load our boats and gear. This really is a very progressive development in their approach to kayakers.

Eight, or at most ten, kayaking passengers is the ideal number to fill the space available. (Even so, not all cars can access kayakers at once, so a bunfight develops).

There is of course no numbers limit on those prepared to kayak under their own steam from Bongaree/ Woorim, Cleveland/Amity Point or the Port of Brisbane/Mud Island, apart from the need for good fitness, appropriate equipment and open water skills.

Thanks to all who participated, I thoroughly enjoyed the company and the chance to renew my acquaintance with the Big Sandhills.

*-Robyn*

