

The following blog is a brief record of the delivery trip of Eagle 5308 from Main Beach on the Gold Coast north to the Whitsundays. This will allow the Eagle to be berthed for customer inspections in northern Queensland and also further test the Eagle in varying conditions.

Days 1 – 2 (31 July – 1 August) Main Beach to Lady Musgrave Island

After departing Main Beach at 0530 it was decided to drive up the inside of South Stradbroke Island and out through Moreton Bay rather than go straight offshore through the Southport Seaway. This allowed us to pick up our fourth crew member from Jacobs Well and also avoid the strong northerly that was forecast for the morning.

Unfortunately we were delayed for two hours in the shoals south of Jacobs Well as the sounder (situated well forward in the hull) was signalling that the depth would be too shallow for the Eagle's 4 foot 10 draft. This is one area that would benefit from immediate attention as part of the dredge works required for our south east Queensland waterways.



This area was too shallow to pass through at low tide and put us two hours behind schedule, while waiting for the incoming tide to provide enough water to safely pass.

A short time later we had reached Moreton Bay where we were greeted with a steep short chop. This soon abated to a nice northerly swell. The AIS system was helpful in keeping us clear of the tankers and cargo ships entering and exiting Brisbane.

With moderate wind and seas forecast we had the option of stopping at Mooloolaba if conditions were too uncomfortable. As we would be passing Wide Bay Bar at night, crossing there would not be an option. Approaching Mooloolaba it was decided to continue onto Lady Musgrave which we would reach the next afternoon. As we had lost two hours back on the Gold Coast we had to increase our speed to over 10 knots to reach Lady Musgrave with the sun still overhead to help anchoring in the lagoon. This pushed the fuel burn to around 20 litres/hour per engine.

Passing the tip of Fraser Island in the early morning we were welcomed to Breaksea Spit with near perfect conditions. A few further miles north we came across a long line Humpback Whales spouting air and water into the air all around.



One of the Whales decides to take a closer look at the Eagle

We entered the lagoon at Lady Musgrave and anchored in about 7 metres of water. The tender was taken ashore where we took a walk across and around the island. It was interesting to see quite a few bird species ashore and identifying them off the many signs that have been placed along the track.

Day 3 (Monday, 2 August) Lady Musgrave Island to Pancake Creek

The lagoon provided a comfortable anchorage overnight up until about 0400 when an abrupt southerly started ripping across the coral lagoon. Four of the five boats in the lagoon looked to be preparing to weigh anchor and with strong wind warnings being promptly issued for the next few days we decided to head to either Pancake Creek or Yeppoon for a more protected anchorage. By this time a small yacht had dragged its anchor and was perilously close to north western coral reef. Two crew aboard the Eagle prepared to take our tender over to provide assistance as it looked like the yacht was having trouble lifting its anchor. By the time we had our shoes on, the yacht had finally recovered its anchor and was on its way out of the lagoon.

After exiting the lagoon ourselves, a confused south-westerly swell had picked up and rather than head beam on to Yeppoon and Rosslyn Bay we headed for Pancake creek which was only fours away into the sea. The first two hours provided some excitement to the crew with some waves reaching 3 metres plus and sending spray over the top of the flybridge bimini.



A still image captured from video of one of the larger waves



Only a short time later we had reached Bustard Head and the conditions had improved to a near perfect day with all strong wind warnings cancelled in our area. We anchored in Pancake Creek by midday and had the BBQ heated up for steak sandwiches within minutes as our abrupt exit from Lady Musgrave had not afforded us time for breakfast. As I write this now we are enjoying some fishing and have caught within an hour some Bream, Whiting, Flathead and a Spotted Mackerel. Depending on the weather we will be heading north for some fuel tomorrow and to continue our journey.

Day 4 (Tuesday, 3 August) Pancake Creek to Rosslyn Bay

Day four of the journey has turned out to be a quiet day with a quick run from our anchorage at Pancake Creek to Rosslyn Bay Marina near Yeppoon. Overall, Pancake Creek was an excellent anchorage with deep access, fishing, a sandy beach and clear blue water. The entrance was deep enough to allow us to leave at low tide and head north. Since arriving at Rosslyn Bay we have taken on fuel and water and are staying overnight at the Marina.



Venturing past Cape Capricorn, named by Captain Cook due to its proximity to the Tropic of Capricorn

Day 5 (Wednesday, 4 August) Rosslyn Bay to Middle Percy Island

Day five of the journey consisted of a 10 hour run from Rosslyn Bay to Middle Percy Island. With a south easterly swell and light breeze helping keep the fuel consumption down to 25 to 30 litres per hour (total) for most of the day while averaging over 10 knots. We decided to try some fishing around Steep Island and

slowed to around 6 knots working from the exposed east side, down around the south and back across the western shoals.



Trolling off Steep Island

Unfortunately we had no luck fishing in that area and as we had slowed down we were running around an hour behind schedule. To be able to reach Middle Percy before sunset we revved up the engines to take advantage of the swell and have enough speed to surf the waves. At 2600RPM we were running at around 15 to 17 knots at about 110LPH. With our ETA constantly being calculated by the GPS chartplotter we were soon able to return to a more leisurely and economical pace.

We rounded into West Bay with a spectacular sunset as the backdrop. Despite being one of the must stop anchorages on most cruisers itineraries (due to its famed hut and sandy beach), the bay is prone to some swell most of the time. Our stay was only to be for six hours, and we had a slight roll on occasion that was not significant enough to impede our gourmet dinner thanks to the fish caught from the previous days. On the menu was a fresh fish (Whiting and Bream) and prawn spaghetti with grilled garlic butter bread.

Day 6 (Thursday, 5 August) Middle Percy Island to Scawfell Island to Whitsunday Passage

We lifted anchor at Middle Percy at midnight with an aim of reaching Scawfell Island for breakfast. With flights booked out of Hamilton Island on Sunday we currently only have three full days of cruising to reach the Whitsundays and decided to make the last run with calm weather. We quietly left West Bay anchorage as not to disturb the other boats. With the moon still set for the next hour or so we faced dark skies and had to be careful of a nearby sailing yacht that had neglected to use its anchor light.

The radar overlay on the chartplotter was comforting as it confirmed our GPS derived position in the dark conditions. Despite this we carry a full set of paper charts on board which we regularly note our position, speed, and heading as well as crosschecking our planned course does not run over any hazards that may have been missed on the plotter.



Chartplotter as we anchor at Scawfell Island

Passing abeam of Mackay enroute to Scawfell at around 0300 we were faced with a sea of bright anchor lights displayed by ships in the area. Most of these were over 900 feet long and cluttered our radar considerably. The photo above shows how these ships positions appear using the AIS system (with Scawfell Island blocking the radar's view). Each triangle represents a ship's position as received by our AIS transponder. Each ship has its own transponder connected to a VHF antenna which sends and receives information such as heading, speed, cargo, ship size, destination, and home port. The closest point of approach (the closest distance that the Eagle will get to a ship if both continue current heading and speed) and the time that this will occur are also able to be displayed.

We reached Refuge Bay, Scawfell Island at 0730 and took the tender ashore after some bacon and eggs. As we idled in we noticed that the air was full of blue butterflies. They were also resting across the beach and up into the trees of the island. Luckily we had closed the doors on the Eagle and when we returned there were only a few butterflies around the flybridge that quickly flew away as we headed off to continue north. Scawfell is also a highly recommended anchorage with blue water lapping at majestic rocks with a contrasting green forest and a few old pines clinging to the rock faces. There are two beaches to choose from at the northern anchorages, although the sand is little coarse. This would have been an ideal anchorage to enjoy over a few days if we were not running to a deadline.



Current conditions, looking through the pilothouse window to Sir James Smith Group

Currently we are expected to reach the northern side of Hamilton Island at 1530. This will allow us a day or two to explore the Whitsunday Islands before giving the Eagle a good clean to bring her back to boat show sparkling condition before our flights.

Day 7 (Friday, 6 August) Cid Harbour to Butterfly Bay

We had anchored overnight at Sawmill Bay, Cid Harbour, in gusty conditions. The breeze made for cold conditions on the bow and fly bridge so dinner was enjoyed in the protected saloon area. In the morning we took the tender over to Sawmill Beach for a 20 minute, 1km, hike across to the next bay and Dugong Beach. We noticed a few turtles in the harbour and upon reaching Dugong Beach we were told there was a turtle that was resting down the northern end of the beach. We carefully approached the turtle to avoid disturbing it and to check if it was in any obvious distress.



The view from the walk, and the turtle on Dugong Beach

With southerly winds forecast we decided to move to Butterfly Bay, Hook Island. A short hour of cruising through the islands and we were moored off one of the public moorings in the west side of the bay close to shore. We have a coral bommie only 3 metres behind the duckboard and expect to do some snorkelling this afternoon.



Swinging alongside the bommie

Day 8 (Saturday, 7 August) Butterfly Bay to Blue Pearl Bay to Stonehaven

For the final full day of cruising with the delivery crew we decided to head around to Blue Pearl Bay on the western side of Hayman Island for a snorkel and lunch. Butterfly Bay was a pleasant overnight anchorage, however we were subject to a few south easterly bullets coming down the mountains that the anchorage is known for.

With the wind a little more westerly than forecast Blue Pearl did not provide much protection, however we all managed to get in the water for a snorkel and relax on the beach before heading over to our overnight anchorage at Stonehaven about 30 minutes away on the north western side of Hook Island.



Butterfly Bay

Day 9 (Sunday, 8 August) Stonehaven to Hamilton Island

After a late breakfast we made our way south to Hamilton Island, travelling the Whitsunday Passage the importance of planning the trip with the tide was evident. Around the islands the incoming tide is to the south and the outgoing to the north, with currents up 2 knots. While this is more important for sailboats, the tides can save 10-20LPH on the Eagle and make the trip a little faster.

Hamilton Island was very busy with the marina advising that over 20 vessels were on standby for a berth and to make things worse the marina's computer system had crashed. Luckily we had booked earlier and managed to secure a berth. Turning into the marina we found a stream of boats on their way in and out and radioed the marina to get details of our berth number. With the marina courtesy boat busy we sent our tender ahead to find the berth as they were very poorly signed, in the end we had to radio the marina to get details of the boats either side to find our berth.

The boat was washed and we decided to have lunch at the Fish and Chip shop overlooking the marina. A flock of Cockatoos were causing havoc along the picnic tables with one brave bird snatching at our chips

while we were still eating them despite us trying to push it away. Another had managed to get itself into one of the bins and was quite surprised when we went to put our rubbish in. The results of why visitors should not feed the birds was now clear to us.



Some Sulphur-crested Cockatoos looking for food on a previous trip to Hamilton Island

After lunch we hired a buggy to drive to the airport, although there are free shuttle buses the buggy was useful to explore and also run other errands while on the Island. The Eagle 53 will shortly be moved to Airlie Beach where she will be available for inspection by appointment.