

True Encounter in New Zealand

We were really looking forward to our visit to New Zealand In mid January 2009. Not only would we be seeing the family again, but for the first time we would see *True*, the New yacht that Iain had bought with a little bit of financial help from us.

For the first time we took the route via Hong Kong, and will do so again. Quite apart from avoiding the chaos of Los Angeles, the ability to use the premium lounges at Hong Kong made the

Hong Kong Airport



stopover a relatively pleasant experience.

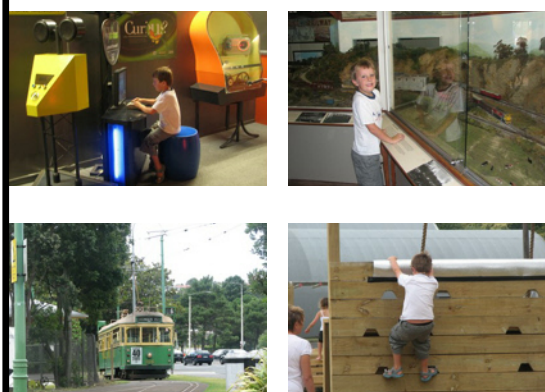
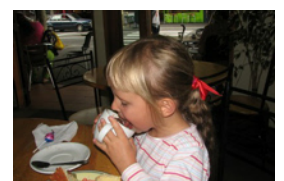
The first couple of weeks of our stay were a mixture of entertaining Harry and Alice when we were at their house, and short trips on *True* to familiarise ourselves with the boat.

On one occasion, I took Harry to MOTAT, the Museum of Transport and Technology in Auckland that he dearly loves, especially the model railway. Then by way of compensation I had to take Alice into Onehunga for a treat.

One evening we all went to restaurant which Harry and Alice were thoroughly enjoyed --- especially the pudding!



Treats!
Above: Harry at MOTAT
Below: Alice in Onehunga



Right, Above and Below:
Eating out



Home Base

Crawford Avenue is now maturing. The back garden is a playground, with some fine tomato plants too. The garage is nearly as tidy as mine back home! But it has a lot to cope with.



Indoors, Clare has to have everything organised to cope with all the activities the twins indulge in. There is swimming, ballet and gymnastics for Alice, speech therapy for Harry, and quite often additional activities as well. Life is busy!

But do not be fooled! When they are not at school Harry and Alice have so much energy that they place huge demands on Clare. She is so inventive, and manages to keep them interested most of the time.

Luckily, Stuart and Catherine across the road have similar aged children. They can share the load a bit. For example, Catherine had recently had a leg problem, so Clare was helping out. In the past it has been the other way round. Next door Arnal and Viv have recently started a family. Clare made the wedding dress, and Arnal upgraded Iain's computer. Good barter!

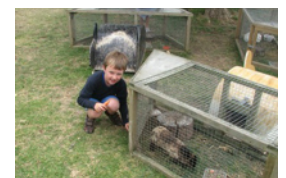
It is a friendly, and happy community.

While we were there, it was still school holidays, and the twins could get over active. So we went to the farm nearby to meet Cameron, so that they could burn off some energy.



The farm is run by the local authority for educational purposes. In addition to Cameron, the shire horse, there are most farm animals there including sheep, goats, pigs, and cows, as well as horses. There are also flocks of chicken and the occasional turkey - though the one on the left did manage to take a chunk out of Alice on one occasion.

There are also cages with rabbits.



There appear to be all the features you would expect on a Kiwi farm - such as shearing sheds, and ramps for loading the animals on to lorries. So the children will eventually see all the activities.





Panmure, Tamaki River



Tamaki River

It was not long before Iain, Clare and the family took us to see *True* at her new home at Panmure in the Tamaki River.

The Club and its moorings are about 4 miles up the river, the entrance to which is sheltered from the north by Brown Island.

Several bends, and a shallow sand bar, mean that the moorings are well protected from even the northerly winds blowing straight into the entrance.

The channel is well marked by piles and buoys. But the estuary is shallow and care needs to be taken near low water.

The two piles in the picture and on the chart to the left mark an



Photo C-Map

especially shallow patch, only 25 metres or so wide in the gap between Brown Island and Musick Point.

Most of the moorings are on piles, though there are quite a few swinging moorings too.



The Club, which is only 15 mins drive from Iain and Clare's home, is friendly and has excellent facilities, including covered storage for dinghies (essential to protect inflatables from ultra violet damage). There are haul out facilities on site.

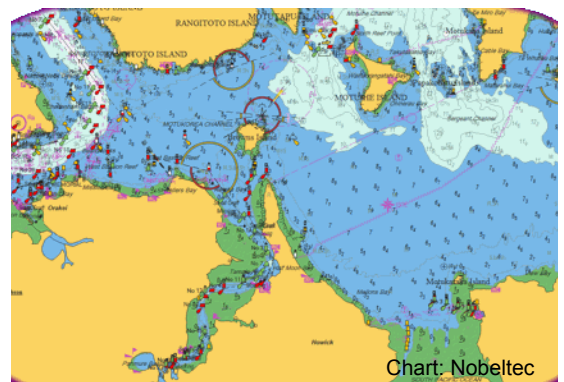


Chart: Nobeltec

True

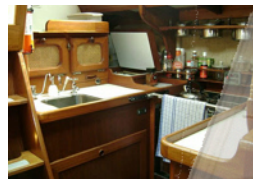
True has certainly delivered all that we expected. She has turned out to be seaworthy, comfortable, and extremely well equipped. Naturally, a 25 year old boat has a few bits of equipment that are obsolete, or just worn out. But the build quality is such that it is only a matter of time and money to get things right. Iain has got his priorities right. For the first year, the plan was to do as little as possible until he learned what the issues were.

Clearly new canvas work for the hood, dodgers, and sail cover would be a priority. But we could manage for a season.

Reg, the previous owner is a helicopter pilot, so the electronics had some advanced features. For example, there were 2 SSB radios (he kept one of them), 2 independent gps systems, one of which displayed via the radar screen, and was somehow linked to a laptop and computer screen at the navstation, and we have added SOB and Nobeltec chart software. There was also a small plotter slung under the hood right in front of the helmsman (which I am copying on *Ariadne*). BUT, the autopilot is ancient, and can only be controlled from below. Moreover, there is no signal from the compass that can be fed into the computer, so it does not know what the ships heading is. So autopilot replacement is fairly high up the list.



Other kit including Aries Windvane and Air-X wind generator are OK given a bit of TLC. The sails are tough and usable. A cursing chute for light weather would be nice, but that will have to take its place in the queue. Inevitably there will be times when essential gear replacements will gazump the priorities from time to time (Just after we left, Iain had to replace the outboard, for example)



The boat came with spares, crockery, cutlery, pots and pans, spares, tools and even a workmate.



We reckoned Iain had found a wonderful boat, and *True* certainly looked after us all while we were there. Wit a substantial forecabin and aft cabin, all six of us had plenty of space. Yet the boat could be handled by two.



During our first week, we went out one evening for a sail round Motuihe. What we learned on that trip was that this was a big complex boat, and we would need a little while to come to terms with all the systems such as fuel, gas, water, and - oh yes! I almost forgot! - the loo.

New Zealand has tough environmental laws, and Reg's solution had been to fit a chemical toilet that needed emptying every day when in open water. It is a real chore, and Iain is thinking about alternative solutions.

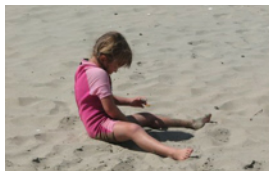
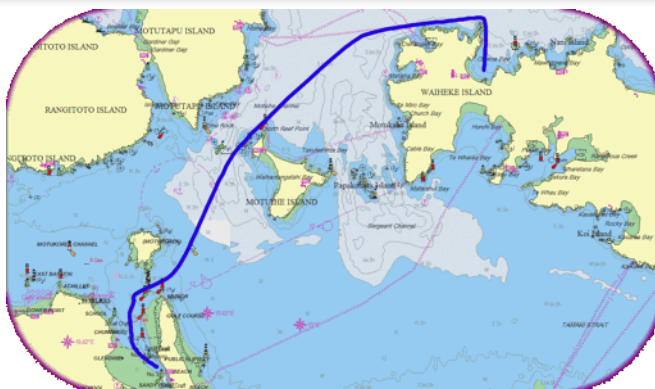
After all he is water treatment engineer.....



Photo
Tony Barker

Beach Weekend

At the end of the week, we all went away on *True* for the weekend. We anchored at Oneroa for some beach fun.



The trip out was a gentle broad reach passing north of Motuihe (see chart above) before rounding the tip of Waiheke to make Oneroa.

On the way back, there was a brisk breeze. We had a beat to the east of Motuihe Island. The water was flat and *True* was making a good 7kts most of the time.

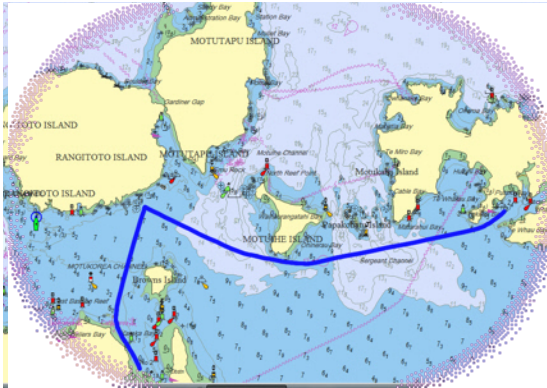
It is quite a long plug up the Tamaki River to the mooring at Panmure, but this gives plenty of time to get the boat packed and ready for the mooring.



Putiki Bay, Waiheke

The great thing about the Hauraki Gulf is that the islands just outside Auckland provide a protective barrier. It is a bit like the Solent in that sailing is possible in all but the most extreme weather.

We decided to try our hand with *True*. Sadly, before we cleared the piles, I got a rope round the Kiwi prop. *True* has more prop walk than I have ever encountered. Even though she is a long fin with a separate skeg, she will *not* steer going



astern. The tides run diagonally across the piles where she is moored, so getting clear can be tricky.

Iain, who was at work, took my phone call in his stride, and within a couple of hours, we had a diver to clear quite a mess. Then we were away.

This time we took the channel to the west of Brown Island, and had a pleasant beat towards Waiheke.

We chose Putiki Bay because it is less used, and worked our way in to anchor for the night.

This was a quiet, peaceful anchorage, which was exactly what was needed after our earlier embarrassment.

We were still learning about getting fuel up from the keel and main tanks (which hold more than 700 litres) and managing the three water tanks, (which together hold 750 litres)



Apart from the initial glitch, we had a successful couple of days.

We returned to Panmure to prepare for a 3-day weekend with all the family.

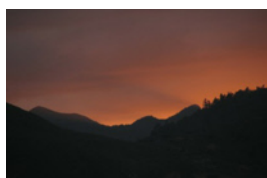


Great Barrier

The following weekend was a bank holiday, so Iain was keen to take true out to Great Barrier Island, some 50 miles from Auckland. In the event we left on the Thursday evening with the wind blowing fairly hard. It was a wild night, so Iain kept well clear of the rocky islets as he motored almost straight into the wind. Later, after Clare and I had taken over, we were able to turn the engine off and sail. The trip turned into a very fast close fetch all the way to Port Fitzroy on Great Barrier Island.



Through the early hours of the morning we could see the light on Channel Island blinking away, and at first light, away to port there was a cloud cap on Little Barrier Island. To starboard, the early morning sun rising out of the Pacific was obscured by Great Barrier Island, the results being flaming red sky.



It was full daylight as we turned through Man O'War passage into Port Fitzroy, where we first anchored in Smokehouse Bay.



There is a rock in the middle of the approach to Man O'War passage that is supposed to be buoyed, but the buoy had gone missing. The plotter helped negotiate round it.

Right:
Entering Man O'War
Passage to anchor in
Smokehouse Bay



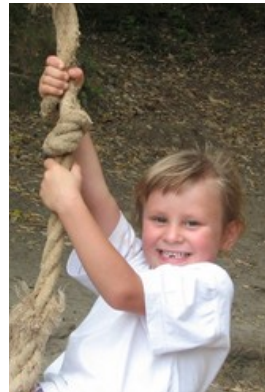
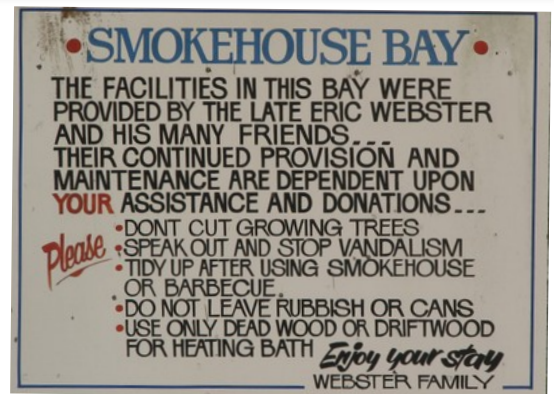
After a fairly vigorous passage, Smokehouse Bay seemed idyllic.

Having rested, the twins needed to get ashore to let off steam.....



Smokehouse Bay

Tony, Dairne's cousin, had told us about Smokehouse Bay. The facilities here have been created by volunteers and include couple of smoking chambers for smoking fish; a bathhouse (first collect wood; then a light the fire under the boiler, before you can have a bath).



There are swinging ropes for the children.

We all went ashore to explore - or just to sit in the shade . It was very hot.



There is also a hand washing machine, ringers and drying lines. These are the best marina facilities on Great Barrier Island.



Iain met some work colleagues who were regular visitors to Great Barrier.

They were busy smoking snapper.

The spirit of the place, engendered by the volunteers that built it seems to be completely respected.



Some years ago, in a severe storm, the place was destroyed by a landslide.

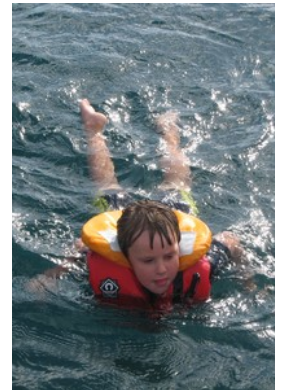
So the guys got together and rebuilt it.



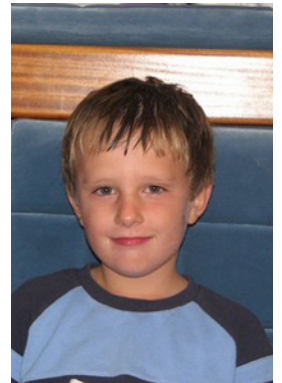
Kiarara Bay



In the afternoon, we moved over to Kiarara Bay which Iain thought would be more sheltered as an overnight anchorage. Then most people swam off the back of the boat. It was the first time that Harry and Alice had been swimming in very deep water (it was about 15 metres) with only their wetsuits giving them some additional buoyancy. The children really enjoyed themselves, Harry leaping off the dinghy with total abandon.



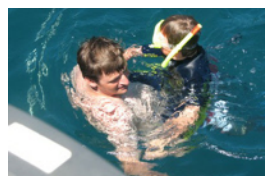
Tired but happy, we had room to relax below in the evening



Next morning, Iain went up the mast to reeve the spare halyard so we could rig the larger headsail. I managed to lose the halyard up the mast, so he had to do it again.

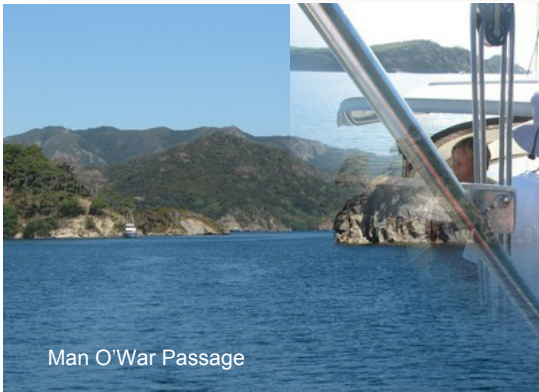
His language was restrained.

Then it was back to more swimming....





Mt Wellington behind Panmure, seen from Tamaki River



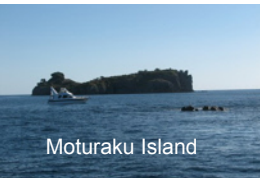
Man O'War Passage



The next day, after a fruitless fishing expedition, we anchored in Oneura Bay (right) just outside Port Fitzroy so that we could make an early start for the return journey the following morning



Oneura Bay

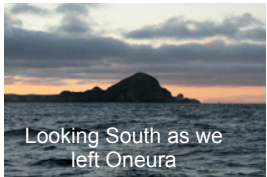


Moturaku Island

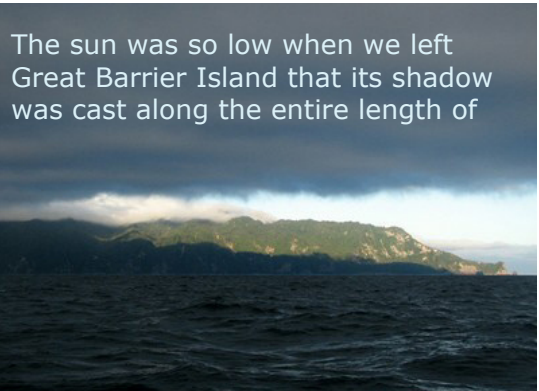


In the early morning, we tried to sail for a while, but the wind was fickle and we had a long way to go so most of passage home was made under engine.

Most of the way home, Alice made paper toys and volcanoes. Harry had been suffering from seasickness. We later suggested Stugeron, and this proved to be a great success. He really started to enjoy being on *True*



Looking South as we left Oneura



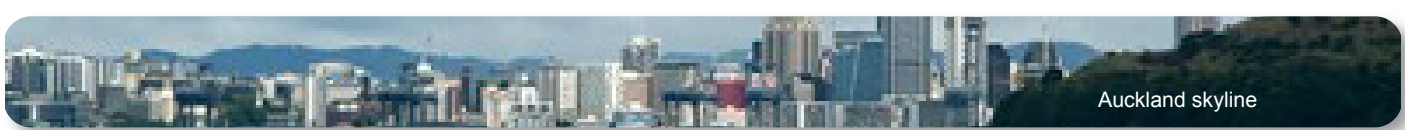
The sun was so low when we left Great Barrier Island that its shadow was cast along the entire length of



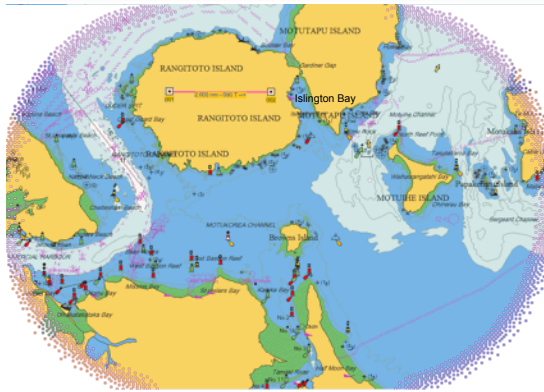
Rakino

The final part of the trip brought us back along the route we had taken in darkness a few nights earlier, passing the Noises and Rakino before making our way up the river.





Auckland skyline



Louis Vuitton Cup

Below: Islington Bay



Dairne and I were not quite ready to take full responsibility for *True* on an extended cruise. So we had another week where we were sailing for just a couple of days.

We started by motoring over to Islington Bay, between Rangitoto and Motutapu. It was a peaceful evening.

As Iain and Clare were going off on *True* for the weekend, we could not go far. So Next morning we sailed gently past the Rangitoto lighthouse to the race area for the Louis Vuitton Pacific Series races for Americas Cup yachts.

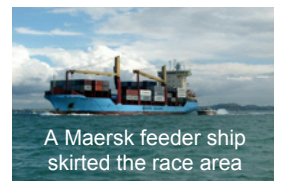
We spent a happy couple of hours watching the racing. Rather than anchor we just gently gilled back and forth through the spectator fleet. Sadly we saw the British yacht being eliminated.

Then we made our way slowly back to the Tamaki River and Panmure.

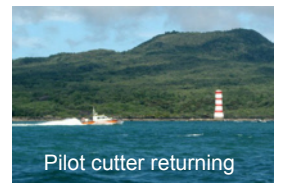


There were two pairs of yachts, 1 pair American; 1 Kiwi. As each race finished, new crews leapt aboard

Above & Right: Rangitoto Light



A Maersk feeder ship skirted the race area

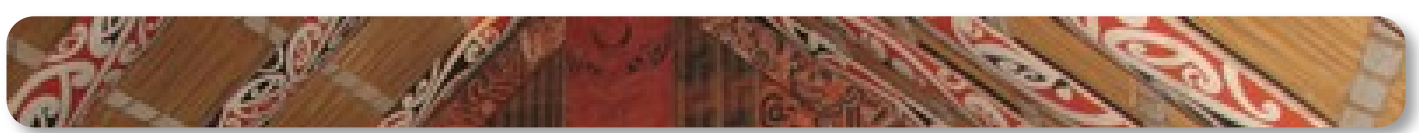


Pilot cutter returning



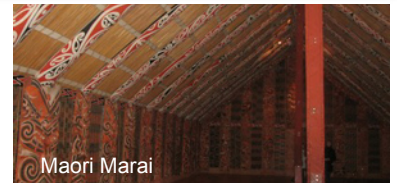
Rangitoto Light





Being Grandparents

That weekend we looked after Harry and Alice while Iain and Clare went off on their own on *True*. On a wet and windy day, was to the Domain museum in Auckland. Harry and Alice were interested in different things, which complicated matters. Afterwards Harry and Alice consumed a monumental meal at a restaurant in Saint Helier. Alice ate an incredible amount of fruit; while Harry chomped his way through a large bowl of chips.



It was the first time that Iain and Clare had been able to get away on *True* without having to think about the twins all the time.

Even though the weather was vile on the Saturday, they had a hard sail out to Waiheke, an evening to themselves and, eventually, a good sail home.

On the Sunday, the weather was more promising. So we agreed to take the twins to Glenbrook steam railway, about 40 minutes drive south from Auckland.



Strangely, although Harry loved the train, he did not like the noise, which is not an untypical side effect of autism.



The railway must be about 5 miles long; the scenery interesting, and the trains fascinating.



Halfway along the route, the train stops so you can look round the engine sheds. Back at the main station, there is plenty of space and opportunity for the twins to really burn off a lot of energy.





Ruthe Channel, Waiheke Island



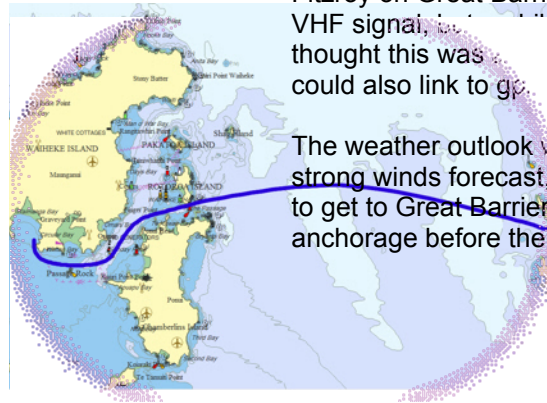
Our Cruise to Great Barrier

The weather was becoming rather unsettled, but by now we felt sufficiently confident to take True away for a short cruise, hopefully for about 10 days. The broad plan was to link up with Tony and Chree who were already on holiday at Great Barrier in their launch Outrider.

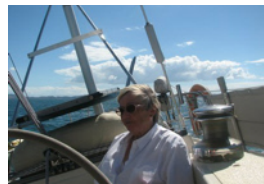
I had worked out how to use my mobile to get weather information over the Internet. This can be important because, when in Port Fitzroy on Great Barrier Island, there is no VHF signal, but the phones work well! Iain thought this was a major plus as his phone could also link to Google.

The weather outlook was not good, with very strong winds forecast, so we had to press on to get to Great Barrier and into a safe anchorage before the weather really broke.

We beat along the south side of Waiheke Island, anchoring for lunch at Awaawaroa Bay before beating out through the Ruthe channel across to Coromandel. There were so many anchorages around the Ruthe Channel and at the East end of Waiheke (see below) that it was tempting to stop and explore. But, like Scotland, it is impossible to do it all. It would take years to explore all the anchorages.



It was a delightful sail, and we were beginning to feel increasingly confident in handling *True*, although we were convinced that Iain had come to terms with boat far better than we had.

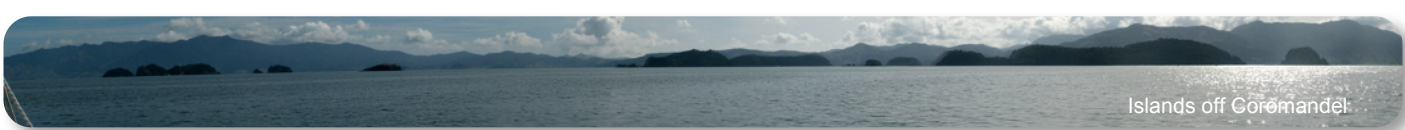


There was only just enough room for us to anchor in Squadron Bay in Te Kouma Harbour- there were quite a number of other boats there already. We had a peaceful night there, but the forecasters were confirming the probability of deteriorating weather within 48 hours. This meant that instead of pottering through the wonderful islands close to the Coromandel peninsula, we had to press on.



Leaving Te Kouma



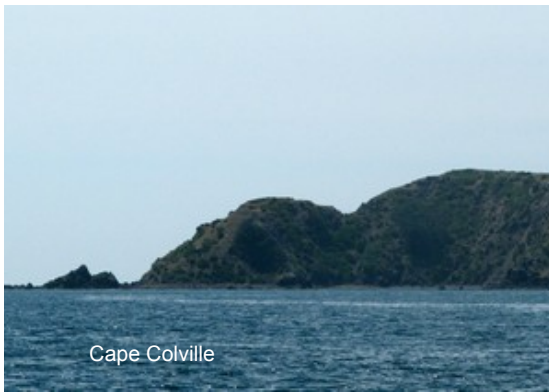
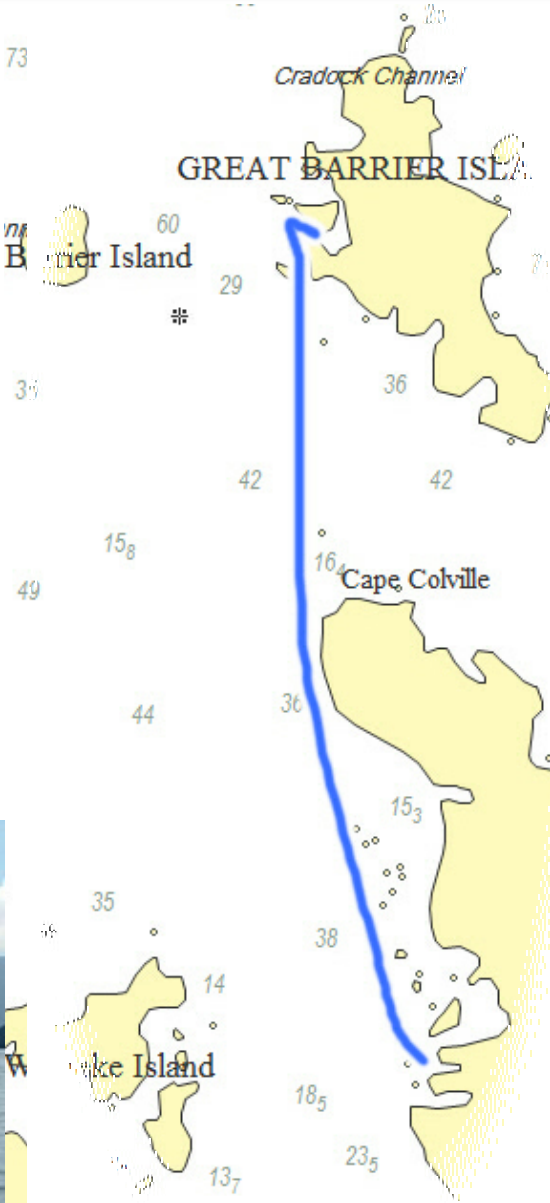


Islands off Coromandel.



**Coromandel
to Port Fitzroy**

We motored all the way through the Coromandel Islands, past Cape Colville and Channel Island to Great Barrier.



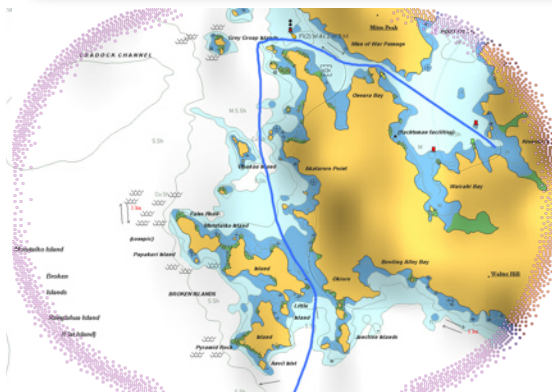
Cape Colville



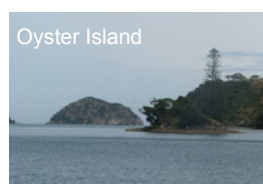
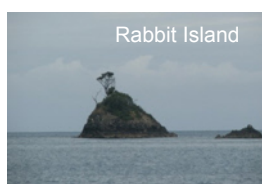
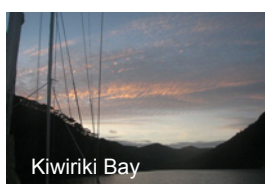
Channel Island

Outrider was waiting for us as we approached the Broken Islands to the southwest of Great Barrier.





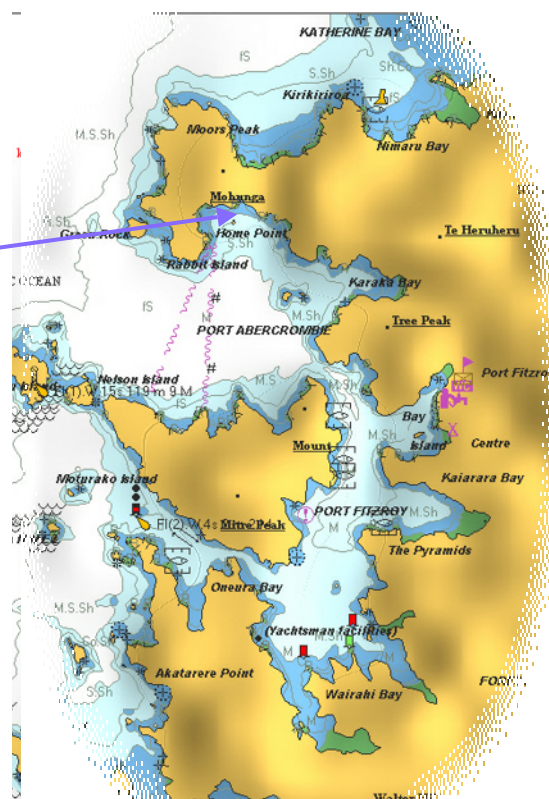
Tony piloted us through the rocky channel, back into Port Fitzroy.--- He selected Kiwiriki Bay (right) for our first overnight anchorage.



After a peaceful night, the dawn sky (above left) showed signs of the strong weather to come. We had plenty of time to cruise round Port Abercrombie so Tony could get some pictures of *True* under sail, after which we anchored in Nagle Cove at the northwest corner of Port Abercrombie. Dairne, Tony and Chree all swam.



Nagle Cove



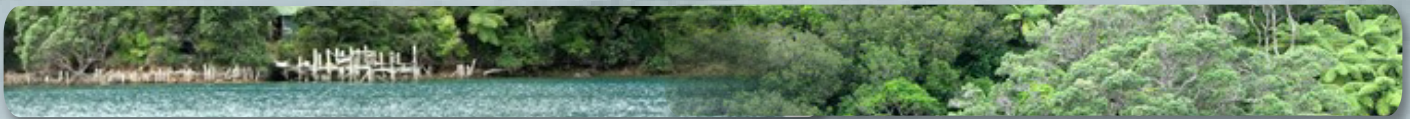


True

All the pictures on this page were taken by Tony Barker from his launch *Outrider* while cruising in company at Great Barrier Island

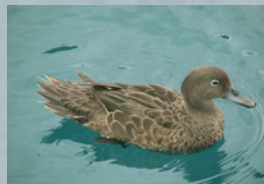
We had the smaller Yankee on for this cruise, a sail which Iain tends to prefer.





Kiarara Bay

With a severe gale, likely to shift through nearly 180°, Tony suggested we go to Kiarara Bay where we would find shelter and good holding.

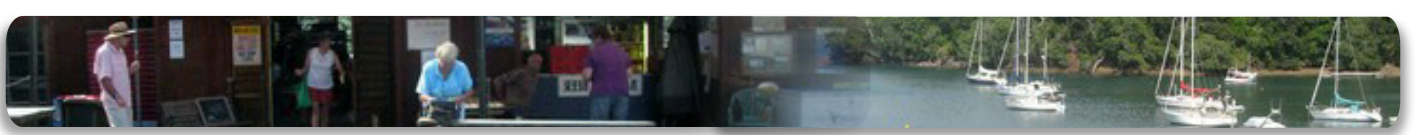


The brown Teal is a threatened species, this colony of about 100 birds being the biggest in New Zealand. They seem to thrive at Great Barrier.



During the evening it blew 50 kts, and overnight it shifted 180° as forecast. We probably moved about 10 metres as the anchor reset itself. By morning, it was raining hard (or APD as we have heard it described!). We waited half an hour for the decks to be washed, then opened the valves so all the rain from the deck drained through filters into the water tanks. It took less than a couple of hours to fill the 250 litres we needed. Ver effective!





Port Fitzroy

We were able to do a little bit of shopping at the Port Fitzroy metropolis(!)

There are roads on the Island, but the vehicles in use were mainly 4x4 or, more usually, wrecks that would faint if ever shown an MOT certificate test form.

Tony and Chree have walked quite a lot on the Island, but it looked a bit too demanding for us.



After lunch we went out into port Abercrombie stopping briefly at Nagle Cove (below) before going back to Smokehouse Bay

Looking out from Port Abercrombie toward Little Barrier Island (below), I could just see a container ship hull down (bottom right) . This long range shot almost shows the curvature of the Earth





Smokehouse Bay.

Tony and Chree had been away quite a time, so wanted to catch up on essential chores. So the washing was done, put through the wringer, and hung out to dry.



Next morning we moved down the coast to Whangaparapara



We had a pleasant evening together, being well entertained on Outrider.



Outrider showing the way



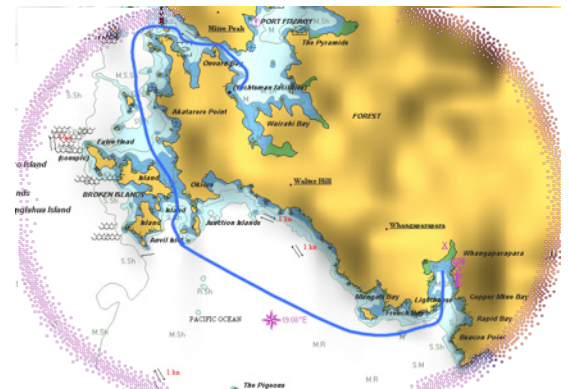
Going through the Broken Islands



Great Barrier behind Whangaparapara



Looking Inland





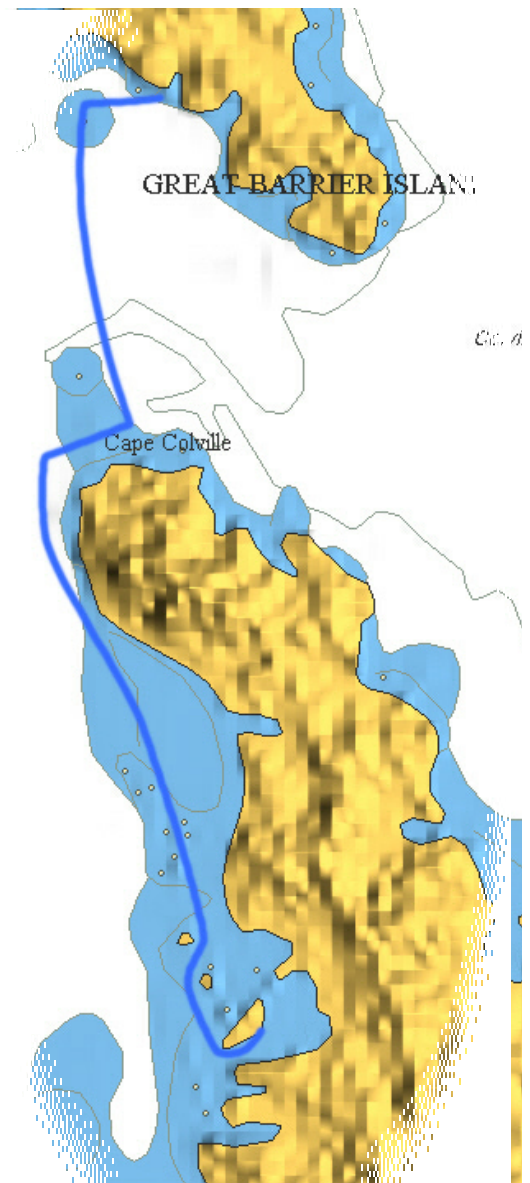
Homeward Bound

Most unusually for this time of year, the forecasts were already indicating another period of strong winds within a few days. We therefore abandoned all hope of going further north towards the Bay Of Islands. A revised plan was to try and beat to Kawau island and then work our way back towards Auckland. Tony decided that he would stay on at Great Barrier for a few days more.



The next morning looked quite promising, although the winds were light. We soon discovered that it was going to be a long and tedious beat to Kawau, so we decided instead to bear away and go back to Coromandel. It was slow work, but pleasant sailing. For a while there was a bit of breeze, and we even mastered the Aries and got it to perform tolerably well. As we were making about 4 kts, a whale surfaced and blew only a few yards off the port bow. Somehow we did not hit it.

Gradually we eased to the east of Channel Island, and headed towards Cape Colville. Then the wind died

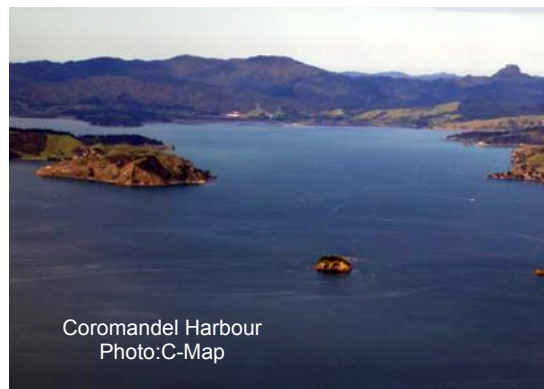


Near Right: Elephant Cove on Happy Jack Island

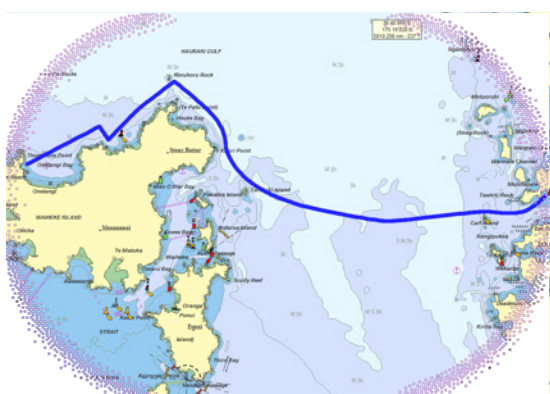
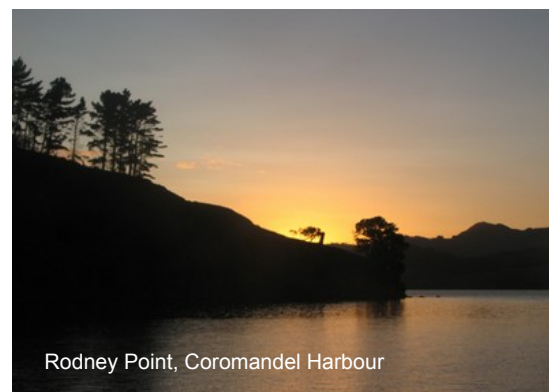
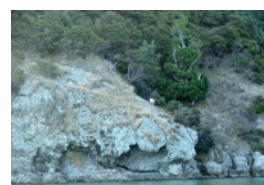
Far Right: General view of the islands just north of Coromandel Harbour.

Photos: C-Map





We had to motor the rest of the way to Coromandel. Nevertheless it was a fascinating passage through the sunlit islands that litter this coast of the Coromandel peninsula. The islands have both Maori names, and descriptive English names such as Rabbit Island, High Island, Square Island, and so on. Sadly, I did not log accurately enough to be able to name all the islets in the photographs.



Above: Cow Island light, just outside Coromandel

Right: Gannet Rock off the northern tip of Waiheke

Somehow, the long dinghy journey ashore to Coromandel town did not appeal, even though the prize might have been an excellent seafood meal. Instead we anchored for the night under Cape Rodney.



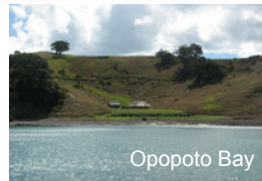
The beat back to Waiheke Island the next day was dramatised by heavy rain and some extraordinary wind shifts. We could see these coming and had reduced sail so we were not caught out. The wind was eventually forecast to go round into the west, or even the southwest, so we worked our way along the north coast of Waiheke and anchored for the night in Opopoto Bay where we had a peaceful night.



This bay is an easy day sail from Auckland, and is very popular. We found a pleasant restaurant ashore for lunch.

There was a risk that the swell would work into the bay, so in the afternoon we enjoyed a brisk little beat round the corner to Owhanake Bay.

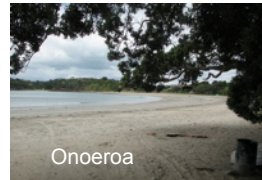
During the afternoon, we dug out the second headsail which hanks on to the stay. It turned out to be not much different in size to the roller sail. A good standby, and for twin headsail running. But this is not really a light weather sail. A gennaker or cursing chuts has to stay on the wish list - but not at the top yet.



Oropoto Bay



Oropoto Bay



Onoeroa



Owhanake Bay



Opopoto to Owhanake Bay

From Opopoto, we had a clear view to the North. Little Barrier and Great Barrier, both of which are quite high, showed clearly over the horizon, and the Coromandel peninsular was a blue haze over to the east (see Banner above).

Next morning, we had a gentle sail to Oneroa Bay.



Oneroa





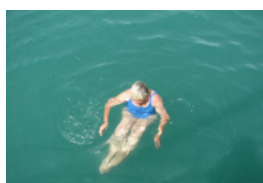
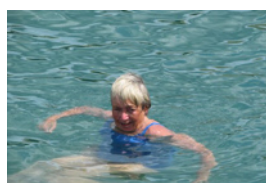
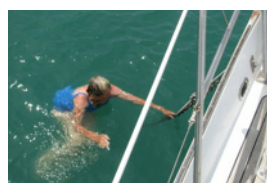
Rakino

Back to Panmure

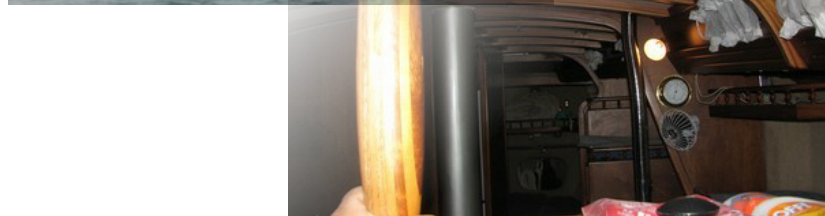
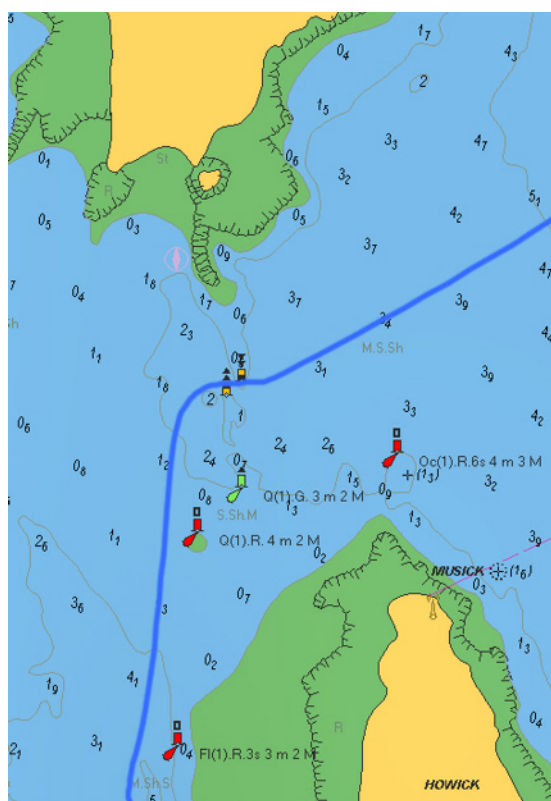
Forecast warnings were becoming quite severe, but we had one more day of good weather to enjoy. It was hot and sunny with very little wind, so we drifted gently out towards Rakino.



Eventually the tide had turned against us, so we diverted into Home



In the afternoon we made our way between Musick Point and Brown Island between the piles over the shoal patch (which is the route used by the Waiheke ferries) - see chart below



It was then just a matter of motoring past Brown Island and up the Tamaki river to the mooring at Panmure.

We were there a few days earlier than we had originally intended, but we had the boat snug and safe in advance of the forecast gales. It also meant we could return to Iain and Clare's house for the final week of our stay.

Crawford Avenue



Shoen, the guinea pig

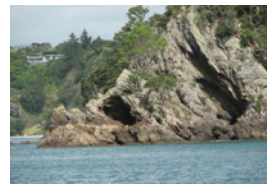


Bike lessons in the school playground





Final weekend afloat



A long flight home, via Hongkong



Change the mindset from True to Ariadne.....

