



CRUISING GROUP



THREE HUMMOCKS, TWO CRAYS & A CHEESE FACTORY

In February 2015 a group of four boats with 11 crew set off to tour West Bass Strait. As a group we had previously been on a number of cruises together, including the Gippsland Lakes in 2012 and Hobart and the D'Entrecasteaux Channel in 2013. Some of us had also returned to the Furneaux Group in 2014.

Over the course of these cruises the group has developed a relatively cautious approach to ensure comfortable sailing. We try to have a flexible cruise plan so that we have maximum ability to avoid adverse weather. Three weeks were allowed for this trip, during which we hoped to visit Three Hummock Island, via Apollo Bay and King Island, and possibly return via the same route. We prefer not to sail to windward in over 15 knots, or downwind in over 25 knots, and endeavour not to go anywhere in more than 2 metres of swell. Night sailing is also kept to a minimum. All decisions tend to be taken collectively by the group and generally make allowance for each other's anxieties and foibles. With a few exceptions this approach has generally resulted in happy cruising. After what seemed like months of preparation by cruise organiser Dick O'Hanlon, and multiple purchases to satisfy almost every possible disaster scenario, we left our pens at RGYC on Saturday 7 February with a plan to stay overnight at Queenscliff Cruising Yacht Club before heading to Apollo Bay for a few days.

However, unfavourable winds forced us to endure not one but

three glorious days at Queenscliff, walking, swimming and relaxing in the wonderful and recently renovated facilities at QCYC. An improved forecast and a light easterly on Tuesday encouraged us to leave the Heads early in the morning but the lack of wind meant a motor sail to Apollo Bay. There was minimal swell over the entrance to the harbour during the late afternoon high tide and we entered in an orderly sequence with only one boat getting clobbered by a breaking wave. Dick's conversations with the Harbour Master proved to be invaluable and we followed a line bisecting the boat ramp to avoid the shifting sand bank, rather than the now obsolete leads shown on the charts.

The forecast for the next few days didn't allow us to explore Apollo Bay other than to get some fish and chips and, at 3:30am, some 12 hours after arriving, we left the pontoon for the 87 nm trip to Grassy Harbor. A light southeasterly and some early fog eventually cleared to a nice westerly and a glorious sail down the east coast of King Island. However, the predicted 20-25 knot southwesterly arrived on time and made the last hour or so a little messy. The leads into Grassy Harbor are very clear and the entrance well marked, making it a relatively easy arrival even in the gusty on shore wind.

Once in the harbor the initial advice from one of the fishing elders was to anchor overnight. This proved straightforward for Paul and Sue on 'Cadence', always the first boat to arrive, but the restricted anchorage and strong southerly made it a harder task for