

Flinders Banks Strait March 2018

Sat. 24th Left home at 7.45am to collect John. Left John's at 8.45 and was driving via the East Coast route. Absent mindedly turned right at Sorell and didn't realise my mistake until I noticed a sign to Port Arthur just after crossing the bridge at Dunalley. 30km in the wrong direction!! Turned around and without further incident arrived at LMB at about 3.30pm, an hour later than planned. The others were all here by this stage. Laurie and Toby had driven up the night before and Georgia, Tom and Roger had driven off the Spirit that morning.

We already knew the forecast wasn't looking good for at least the next 3 days but Laurie thought if we left at low tide at 10.30pm we would get to Clark, Preservation or Cape Barren in 4 hrs or so. We waited until the 5.30 weather to make a decision. The forecast was for 10-20 knot winds with a storm approaching the next day. We foolishly decided to give it a go and turn back after a ½ hr or so if anyone didn't feel comfortable. We ended up setting off at just after 10.00pm with the wind at 25km NW. I got swamped going out LMB as I'd left my spray deck off in case I had to get out to drag the boat over the bar as it was low tide. This wasn't necessary and the first thing I knew was small waves lapping over my cockpit. Unfortunately I had my sponge jammed under the middle of my seat so any water in the cockpit couldn't get back to the pump. It would have been a couple of hours before I was able to raft up with John and empty out. The wind had dropped back to 9km NW by 2.00am and stayed between 9km and 14km N until 6.00am.

25/10:19am	19.6	NNW	29	36	993.1	-	0.0
25/10:00am	18.3	N	23	31	993.1	-	0.0
25/09:41am	18.0	NNE	19	30	993.3	-	0.0
25/09:30am	17.6	NNE	18	22	993.5	-	0.0
25/09:00am	17.4	NNE	18	22	994.6	-	4.8
25/08:30am	16.9	NNE	19	26	995.4	-	4.8
25/08:00am	16.9	NNE	15	20	996.1	-	4.2
25/07:30am	17.3	NNE	13	18	997.2	-	2.8
25/07:00am	17.1	NE	14	21	997.8	-	2.6
25/06:50am	17.1	NE	12	16	997.0	-	2.6
25/06:30am	16.9	N	14	18	999.0	-	2.2
25/06:00am	16.6	NE	5	6	999.4	-	2.2
25/05:30am	16.6	N	6	8	999.9	-	2.2
25/05:00am	16.5	N	7	8	1000.7	-	2.2
25/04:30am	16.8	N	7	9	1001.4	-	2.2
25/04:00am	16.9	N	8	9	1002.0	-	2.2
25/03:30am	16.8	N	5	7	1002.7	-	2.2
25/03:00am	17.3	N	5	7	1003.2	-	2.2
25/02:30am	17.2	NNW	5	6	1003.6	-	2.2
25/02:00am	17.1	NW	5	6	1004.1	-	2.2
25/01:30am	17.2	NW	8	10	1004.4	-	2.2
25/01:00am	17.3	NW	9	11	1004.9	-	2.2
25/12:30am	17.5	NW	10	12	1005.3	-	2.2
25/12:00am	17.5	WNW	10	12	1005.5	-	2.2

Date/Time EDT	Temp °C	Wind			Pressure		Rain since 9am mm
		Dir	Spd kts	Gust kts	hPa	Trend	
24/11:30pm	17.6	NW	8	11	1005.9	-	2.2
24/11:00pm	17.8	NW	12	15	1006.5	-	2.2
24/10:30pm	17.8	NW	12	16	1007.1	-	2.2
24/10:00pm	17.8	NW	14	17	1007.2	-	2.2
24/09:30pm	17.7	NW	13	16	1007.6	-	2.2

It then increased to 25km N/NE rising to 52km NNW by the time I landed at about 10.19am. It was hard to hold the paddle by that stage and the water had been pretty confused since the increase began around 6.30am. Anyway the damage had been done very early on as with our slow progress and a fast incoming tide we had been swept into the middle of Banks Strait and never got near Clark nor did we see it.

There was confusion and conflict between the Victorians and Laurie as to what we should do at around 3.00amish. Laurie was determined to continue on but change course to NE rather than continue on N as we had until then.

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They reluctantly followed on but when we didn't seem to be making forward progress after another hour or so they decided to turn around and go it alone saying we were putting everyone's life in danger. Somewhere in amongst all this John was sick for the second time, I rafted up with him and tried shining my torch to let everyone know we had stopped, but alas no one noticed, the trouble with being at the back of a group. For a period of time I found it very difficult to focus and was sure the lights I was following were down some sort of steep ravine and at one stage I thought Laurie's boat was a small yacht as his white light reflected off his sail and his paddle movement seemed to confuse things also. We continued on until the wind picked up to 25km at around 6.30am. It was just starting to get light now but still there was no land in sight in any direction, although a few times during the night John had been certain he saw land in the distance when lightning had lit the sky.

Although the Victorians had turned around 1 ½ hrs earlier than us they landed at a similar time to Laurie, but they made it into LMB.

All in all a disastrous trip, conflict, splitting up, Laurie's capsize, John being sick, me being slow and terribly confused seas with high winds.

Laurie could only sail back in the end as his legs and back were giving him trouble and he couldn't sit up and paddle. Toby, John and I weren't prepared to sail but at least the wind was basically behind us, our progress wasn't much slower than Laurie's but I lost sight of him quite away from shore although John managed to see him for longer. John, Toby and I were within sight of each other, but wouldn't have been able to help one another. I landed (at about 10.15am) west of LMB by about 500m or less but was too spent and the conditions too uncomfortable to fight to make it any closer. John and Toby landed 1 more beach to the west of where I was. I had trouble standing up and walking after 12hrs in the kayak and started to walk around the rocky headland to the beach where I had seen John land (Toby arrived a little later). I couldn't stay upright and was falling over so decided to walk in the direction of LMB as that was sand for a hundred metres or so which was enough to free the legs up. I followed the shore back to LMB, the Victorians kayaks were there but they'd gone off in their 4wd looking for us I think. By this stage the wind and seas had calmed right down and the little bay I was in was as calm as a mill pond. I returned to my kayak and had another go at walking around to John but by the time I got half way around the point I could see his kayak was no longer on the beach. When I turned to come back to my boat I saw John and Toby paddling east past the beach my boat was on. I went back to my boat, followed them around and caught up to them as they towed their boats the last bit of the way to the boat ramp.

We didn't know where Laurie was at this stage although John had seen him further to the west. The Victorians returned shortly after we landed. Fortunately Georgia could contact Peter Newman and have him check Laurie's tracker position which showed him landed and moving about. Toby went for a walk around the shore looking for Laurie but came back not having found him. After some food/drink and recovery time John and I went for a walk and walked halfway around the point on the eastern end of the beach where Laurie was. Unfortunately we stopped half way and should have found him if we'd gone that bit further and been able to see the full extent of the beach. John and I decided to call it quits and head for home so we left at about 4.00pm and I was back home just after 10.00pm.

Once home I could enlarge the tracker image and worked out Laurie had landed one more beach to the west than John and Toby. Next morning I used "The List" and its satellite image of the area to enlarge it enough to see there was a house/building near to where Laurie was. I let John know this who said he contacted someone at LMB to give them this information. Liz took Toby around in the afternoon, Laurie was located and "all was well". Laurie and Toby packed up and headed out also. The young Victorian couple decided to have a look around Tassie with Roger still determined to attempt a solo crossing.

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Laurie's location

