

Supplementary notes to *Western Australian Cruising*, fourth edition, published by Fremantle Sailing Club, prepared by Trevor Robertson, yacht *Iron Bark*, July to October 2016.

All depths in metres reduced to approx LWS.

All bearing True.

CAMDEN HARBOUR

Note: accuracy of charting.

The charting of Camden Sound and Brecknock Harbour from the South Entrance to Slade Island appears to be accurate, at least to reconnaissance levels, but this is not the case further east. There has been considerable shoaling east of Slade Island since the area was surveyed (1974-1979) and chart AUS730 should be disregarded in the immediate vicinity of Camden Harbour. In places there is considerably less water than charted. The Granite Islands no longer exist and are now reefs covered at HWS. This makes the final approach to Camden Harbour difficult using AUS730 – see below for directions. In addition there is considerably less water than charted in the eastern parts of Brecknock and Camden Harbours.

Approach to Brecknock Harbour/Kuri Bay from Camden Sound via South Entrance

The entrance is straightforward. Needle Rock is a remarkable pillar rock on the south side of the entrance. It is conspicuous from some angles only. A rocky reef extends approx 400m northwest of Needle Rock. Favour the New Island side of the channel to avoid it. South Channel has a least depth of 17m for width in excess of 300m. If the depth falls below 15m, you are probably too close to the south side of the channel – alter course to the north.

Kuri Bay Pearl Farm was permanently occupied in 2016 and had 10 or 12 moorings most with small workboats and barges on them. There are a few rows of pearl buoys on the SSW side of Augustus Island. They are well marked by radar reflector buoys.

From South Entrance to Slade Island

There are no obvious dangers on a course 0.5 to 0.8 miles off the south coast of Brecknock Harbour. This part of AUS730 appears to be fairly accurate. An uncharted shoal extends 0.2 or 0.3 miles north from Slade Island. AUS730 is inaccurate east of this shoal and should be disregarded.

Slade Island to Camden Harbour passing south of Green Island

Green Island is 39m high and conspicuous. The two small islands to the south of Green Island shown on AUS 730 and labelled Granite Islands no longer exist. They are now rocky reefs that dry 7m and are covered about 2.5m at HWS. A single mangrove tree on one of them may just show at HWS, other than that they can be very difficult to see at high water. The small island charted to the south of the non-existent Granite Islands and about 0.5 miles NNW of Camden Head does exist. It is low, mangrove covered and always visible.

Approach

From a position 0.5 or 0.6 miles off Slade Island, steer to pass about 200m south of the drying reefs (formerly Granite Islands) if they are visible or to w.p. 15°29.54'S, 124°35.57'E if they are not. The deepest water is close to the reefs on the north side of the channel; the water shoals towards the low mangrove island. It is possible to carry a minimum of 6m on this route, but close to the route there is at least one pinnacle rock with about 4m over it at LWS, and others may exist.

Once clear of the drying reefs that were formerly the Granite Islands, turn gradually to port to pass 0.5nm clear of the south side of Sheep Island. Anchor southeast of Sheep Island in 7-8 m, muddy grit and shell, good holding.

Slade Island to Camden Harbour passing north of Green Island

There is clear channel between Green Island and an area of foul ground northwest of it. The channel has a least width of 400m and a least depth of 8m. The foul ground to the northwest is not easy to see and does not dry. From w.p. 15°29.2'S, 124°35.0'E, steer to pass 0.5nm west of Green Island then pass around its north side keeping 0.5nm off. There is a drying reef 0.6 nm northeast of Green Island. Leave this to port and steer to leave Sheep Island to port. Pass 0.2nm south of Sheep Island to avoid the drying reef on the south side of that island. Anchor as above.

It is possible to anchor anywhere between Sheep Island and Calliance Point or in the mouth of Brown Inlet, but it is choppy in a fresh sea breeze as there is a long fetch to the northwest. The inner part of Brown Inlet are shoal and it is not possible to anchor far enough in to avoid the sea-breeze induced waves. The anchorage close to the southeast of Sheep Island has the best protection from this chop.

Of interest

The grave of Mary Jane Pascoe, the first white woman to be buried in the Kimberley, is on Sheep Island. The grave with a headstone is beneath the large boab tree on the spit of shelly grit on the east side of the island. There are six other unmarked graves immediately adjacent to it, all from the failed 1864-65 settlement attempt.

The ruins of the Government Camp are on the mainland directly east of Sheep Island. A cleared slipway and ramp leading up from the high water mark are visible from offshore. Land the dinghy at the slipway, walk up the ramp and follow the obvious path about 200m to the ruins. The Resident Magistrate, surveyors, the police and their aboriginal assistants occupied this camp. The most obvious ruins are six or seven stone chimneys.

The Alliance Camp is at the head of Brown Inlet and harder to find and requires forcing a path through thick mangroves. It is easiest to approach near high water.

SILVER GULL BAY

Anchor in either of the two coves on the east side of the outer part of Silver Gull Bay in moderate depths with fair to good holding. The reef on the west side of Silver Gull Bay extends a little further offshore than charted.

Of interest

‘Squatter’s Arms’, the camp two miles up the creek, is permanently occupied. It is sited on an artesian spring that was used as a water source for the Cockatoo and Koolan Island mines until about 1969. Phil and Marion occupied the site in about 1992 and obtained a lease over the area in 2009. Marion has since died and Phil no longer lives there permanently. In 2016 Scottie O’Brien was looking after the place for Phil, tending the extensive irrigation system and welcoming visitors. Scottie intends to remain as caretaker/manager for the indefinite future. A visit and swim in the spring-fed tank is not to be missed.

PLEASE CALL AHEAD ON VHF 16 BEFORE COMING UP THE CREEK. The passage by dinghy up the creek to the camp is straightforward with a minimum tide of 3.5m (Koolan Island tables). It is possible to get up to the camp with less tide but this requires knowledge of the deeper gutters. There is enough water in the entrance to the creek to anchor at any state of the tide, but swinging room is limited. In 2016 there was a mooring at the all-tide limit for anchoring. This mooring is a 45lb anchor. Anyone may use it, but treat it with caution as it is on short scope.

In 2016 the resident crocodile at the Silver Gull camp was a wee timorous beastie. It is only 2.25m long (I measured it) and frightened of dinghies. She is hard to see but usually lurks close to the camp. However do not be deceived by her apparent timidity as it probably relates more to dinghies than anyone foolish enough to go wading.

DOG LEG CREEK

The fuel barge in Dog Leg Creek was operating in 2016 and intends to continue indefinitely, but that will depend on developments on Koolan and Cockatoo Islands. Without ongoing work servicing the mines, the barges may be withdrawn at some future date.

A small yellow buoy usually marks a rock that constricts the dogleg. Leave this buoy to starboard on entry. The barges are now moored just past the dogleg, about 0.4 miles north-northwest of the position shown on the sketch chart on p126.

Call Dogleg Creek on VHF 16. In 2016 diesel was \$3/litre, petrol \$3.75, cash only.

The resident crocodile in Dog Leg Creek is aggressive and sometimes chases dinghies.

The GRAVEYARD

The eastern entrance is straight and clear of dangers, least depth 40m, least width 100m. The tide runs through the entrance at maximum of about 4 knots on neaps and perhaps twice that on springs, but the flow is seldom too turbulent for a low-powered yacht to enter at any stage of a favourable tide. If it is necessary to anchor to wait on tide before entering, the best place is immediately southeast of the entrance where depths are moderate, holding is good and it is out of the worst of the tide stream.

Once inside The Graveyard, there is a reef that dries about 5m (i.e. is covered about 4m at HWS) lying 0.6 miles east of the entrance. Keeping 150m or so south of the line of small islands that run west from the 120m high island clears the reef. Thereafter, a midchannel course between the 120m high island and the island to the southeast is clear of dangers and leads to the best anchorage in The Graveyard. This anchorage is off the 88m high island, immediately northwest of the conspicuous headland on the southwest side of the island, in 4-8m with good holding. A drying bank extends 0.2 miles out from the 88m island on the northwest side of the anchorage.

There are other possible anchorages, but those in the northwest end of the bay are only accessible near high water as a drying bank extends from the 121m island to the northeast shore of The Graveyard.

Of interest

There do not appear to be any graves within The Graveyard. The Graveyard's shores and islands are rocky and digging a grave would require blasting. Some pearler's graves on the southern end of the Edeline Islands, just outside the entrance to The Graveyard, probably gave the area its name.