

# Morgan's Rites of Passage

NZ to Western Australia

Warren Batt

Morgan is our son. He had just turned five when we set off last year aboard *Mustang Sally*, a Farr 46 performance cruiser that I have raced and cruised over many thousands of miles in the last 21 years. We had a vague plan to head for Vancouver, but not before returning to her home port of Fremantle in Western Australia for the first time in 16 years. This is the story of the first six months of Morgan's odyssey.

## *Opua to Sydney*

We departed New Zealand on 9 November 2014 with two blue water novices, Mark and Judy, with only 12 years sailing experience, all in



sheltered waters. It was also Morgan's first ocean passage, having been limited to the beautiful waters of the Hauraki Gulf and the Bay of Islands in New Zealand. For Trish and me, it was our first foray offshore since 2009 owing to business commitments, but at last the shackles were loosened.

The crossing to Coffs Harbour took us an extra 200nm well north of the rhumb line to escape the worst of a vigorous south-westerly airflow that gripped the eastern Tasman Sea. Our departure was already four months late and our very patient crew had time constraints, which denied us the picking of the ideal weather window, if there is such a luxury for a spring crossing of the ditch. We enjoyed free sailing on only 2 days of the 8 day passage. The passing of two fronts gave us mainly NW-SW F5-6 - on the nose in a rather unpleasant baptism for Mark, Judy and Morgan.

After a fast reach on the last day across the confused seas of the strong



Warren, Morgan and Trish

southbound East Australian Current (EAC), Morgan conned us through the heads into Coffs Harbour. There we were welcomed by a very friendly and efficient official responsible for customs, immigration and quarantine. His main concern was termites, somewhat surprising for a country that was already full of them. Apparently there are even worse countries, and *Mustang Sally* had been to most of them, including Madeira, which was at the top of his list. It's hard to imagine that rocky outpost in the Atlantic are home to such destructive beasts, but for those of you sailing to the Antipodes via Madeira, beware. After inspecting the nooks, crannies and bilges, however, he gave our finely fitted yacht a complimentary pass. We were free to go ashore to enjoy Coffs Harbour, with its wonderful freshly cooked prawns from the fishermen's cooperative and the baked flathead speciality in the restaurants.

A fast EAC assisted our 160 mile overnight sail down to Port Stephens a couple of days later, with the breeze building to 20-25 knots behind. There is a peaceful anchorage at Fame Cove, an hour's sail up the harbour, almost totally land locked and surrounded by eucalyptus forests. The mornings are heralded by an orchestra of birds ringing across the water.

Another day's sail took us 80 miles south to Refuge Bay in Broken Bay, the deeply indented mouth of the Hawkesbury River just north of Sydney. It's a delightful spot, albeit full of moorings and rather crowded, deep in the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. A waterfall tumbles down the banded cliffs of Hawkesbury Sandstone in the south-eastern corner of the bay onto a golden sand beach, inundated at high tide. The beach is a popular gathering place for families and children to swim, rinse off and chat in the heat of the day. A local hawker plies the waters with coffee, cold drinks, ice creams, fruit and bread; shades of the blue coast of Turkey. We could have spent more time in Hawkesbury and its deep tributaries, but

after two nights we had to move on. Mark and Judy were due to fly out of Sydney.

The 27 mile passage down to Port Jackson was in thick sea fog after clearing Barrenjoey Head, the southern sentinel of Broken Bay. It was all hands keeping a sharp look out or glued to the radar, with visibility down to a cable or two at times. We overtook a yacht race (with a bit of motor assistance), their ghostly sails emerging from the mist, before sailing out of the fog bank as we rounded North Head into Port Jackson, Sydney's magnificent harbour.

We dodged our way up Middle Harbour through waters crowded with ferries, sailing dinghies and yachts, launches and large power yachts, speed boats, water skiers and kayakers, out in force to enjoy the glorious sunny and warm Sunday afternoon. We made the Spit Bridge opening with 15 minutes to spare before joining the mad stampede up harbour. Beyond the Spit it was another 2 miles to Cammeray Marina, where we were met by Buzz and guided to our berth. A welcoming flock of screeching sulphur crested cockatoos descended on the marina to land on mastheads to worry wind instruments and antennae. On this occasion the RCC burgee fluttering at the masthead of *Mustang Sally* appeared to save the day.

Mark and Judy said their farewells and we settled in for a week which became eight. Morgan became a little dock rat, disappearing for hours, befriended by the staff, sharing their lunches and morning tea, manning the tender, taking lines and fishing. Endearingly



Brooding Afternoon in Cammeray

they called him 'the dock master'. Surrounded by multi-million dollar waterfront homes cascading down the ramparts of Hawkesbury Sandstone, it is one of the few places in Sydney Harbour that tolerates cruisers and live-aboards. It can only be accessed by 108 very steep steps from the road above or by the tender service provided by the marina to the road a quarter of a mile away at the top of the narrow bay.

During December, the afternoon storms built up ominously to culminate in fierce thunder storms and squalls that swept down the bay. At least one of our nearby fellow cruisers was struck by lightning. The storms passed at last and the humidity dropped to give beautiful calm evenings. We entertained and were entertained by old Sydney based friends and new found friends among our dock neighbours and visiting



Morgan's best friend, Karla

Morgan's closest friend, Karla the dog. We quietly slipped our lines one afternoon in late January with a tearful Morgan on board to make the 200 mile overnight run to Eden.

### *Sydney to Hobart*

We entered Twofold Bay late in the afternoon to be headed by a sharp line squall moving offshore in front of a spectacular thunderstorm with lightning repeatedly hitting high ground behind the fishing village of Eden. Twofold Bay, with its anchorages at Eden and Boyd Bays East and West, is the last refuge before tackling Bass Strait; a pleasant place to stay and to complete last minute provisioning. We had nights in all three anchorages in response to changing wind directions. The whaling museum at Eden is well worth a visit to relive the tale of the killer whale Old Tom, who shepherded whales into the bay and then summoned the shore bound whalers, to be rewarded with the whales' tongues.

Three days later the conditions were as good as they were going to get for a Bass Strait crossing so we left mid-afternoon in light variables to motor clear of Cape Green into the strait proper. After midnight the wind filled in from the south-east, increasing to F5 by daybreak to give us a fast close reach to Killiecrankie where we dropped anchor late that afternoon in the lee of Flinders Island. This remote and wild sparsely populated island extends 60 miles northwards into Bass Strait from the north east corner of Tasmania. Tide and wind swept, it bears the brunt of Bass Strait's fierce westerlies. Wind sculptured granite peaks rise in stark beauty behind pure white sandy beaches. In its dark past, the last of Tasmania's indigenous Aborigines were round up and incarcerated on the island at Port Davies to die; death by civilisation.

The anchorage at Killiecrankie was shared with a number of wooden boat classics heading south to Hobart for the biennial Wooden Boat Festival. We made friends with *Lahara*, a sweet 35' Jock Muir design (Tasmania) launched in the early fifties, with her Corinthian crew of Captain Babbling, Farmer Jones and the Professor. Wombats grazed the

foreshore and the friendly Deep Bite café was a short wander up the hill – we would have stayed much longer if not chased out by a veering wind.

A strong southerly air flow made southward progress painfully slow from here on. We day hopped down to Port Davies and Badger Island before making our departure in a lull for the east coast of Tasmania through Banks Strait. A fair current set us east at 3kts against a very short and steep 2-3m south-easterly swell – a nasty place to be in with any strong contrary winds – as the wind backed and dropped to NE2. Time to start the engine, and we altered course to plug south overnight for the remaining 100 miles to Wineglass Bay. We dropped anchor there at 0545.

Wineglass Bay is one of Tasmania's gems – picture book perfect and accessible only by sea or on foot. White sands backed by low dunes scribe a wide arc between the lofty peaks of The Hazards and Mount Graham in the Freycinet National Park. We spent another three days here sheltering from the strong south-westerlies. Happy hour on *Lahara* meant being rugged up in jackets while squeezed into the tiny cockpit, followed by curry dinner snug around the cosy saloon table. It was a marked contrast to the soft comforts aboard *Mustang Sally* with her large cockpit enclosed by 'clears', but a privilege to enjoy the company of these hexagenarians from the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club, home of many classic yachts. Our time was easily occupied by wallabies and walks ashore to stunning views over the bay or along the sandy promenade.

It was now February 5 and the festival starts on the 6th, so it's another 70 mile beat to windward in F3-4 increasing to F5. For a second time in our passage down the coast we lost boat speed with a mass of kelp caught around *Mustang Sally's* deep T-Keel, so once again we are able to heave to and back free. Meanwhile our shoal drafted wooden companions had taken the Denison Canal, a protected shallow water route cutting miles from the passage to Hobart. With F7 reported ahead at Tasman Island, at dusk we took refuge in Pirates Bay, close by Eaglehawk Neck, a narrow strip of land connecting the Tasman Peninsula to the mainland. It was once guarded by fierce dogs to prevent absconding convicts from Port Arthur making good their escape. If you listen carefully you can still hear their ghostly bays on the wind.

Only 58 miles to go as we motored south to round Tasman Island into Storm Bay in a calm sea with a moderate swell surging against the columns of ominous black dolerite rising vertically to the Tasman Light. Between Tasman Island and Cape Pillar in south-east Tasmania, the sea breeze filled in from the south-east to give us a wonderful run across Storm Bay to the Iron Pot and up the Derwent, in marked contrast to the NW9 experienced only 6 weeks earlier when finishing the Sydney Hobart race. We dropped anchor in Sandy Bay off the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania (CYRT) at 1650, 3 months and 2400 miles from home.



Hobart is a place with which I feel an affinity; my great grandfather emigrated from here to New Zealand in 1899. Its maritime history is jealously guarded and two great events, the annual Sydney Hobart yacht race and the biannual Wooden Boat Festival attract hoards to its well preserved historic waterfront for a melding of land



Wooden Boat Festival, Hobart

and sea, with Tasmanian wines, cider and beer, cheeses and scallop pies, together with children's entertainment, street performers and musicians, all competing with the nautical attractions.

The 2015 Wooden Boat Festival attracted 500 entries – beautiful craft lovingly maintained and manned by their proud owners keen to share their boat's history. Unfortunately the two star attractions, the barque *Endeavour* (the replica of Captain Cook's famous ship of discovery) and the four masted windjammer *James Craig*, failed to make the passage down, being turned back by the same strong headwinds that had challenged us over the preceding two weeks.

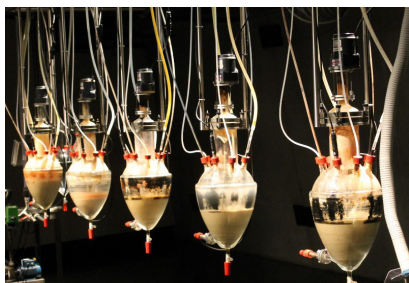
Three days were spent enjoying the festival. Sandy Bay was a convenient if at times boisterous anchorage, and it was a very wet dinghy ride to and from the yacht club with fresh south-easterlies blowing across the Derwent. We were anchored well out in a bay full of transients, both visitors and those evicted from Kings Marina to make way for the Wooden Boat Festival. From the RYCT it was only a 25 minute walk across Errol Flynn Reserve and over the hill through the historic precinct of Battery Point into Salamanca Place and the heart of the waterfront. There were great watering holes en route and at either end of the journey – the Shipwrights Arms, RYCT and Customs House Hotel in town.

When the Festival ended, we sailed back down the Derwent to the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, escorted by a flotilla of yachts heading south. My eldest son and family were on board, taking a nautical break from a year-long odyssey by 4WD and off road camper around Australia. Morgan was delighted to have his niece and nephew as little people company. The Channel is a 40 mile long sheltered waterway between the Huron Peninsular and the mainland to the west, and Bruny Island to the east. On this first trip we didn't get past Barnes Bay located on the north-western

corner of Bruny where we languished for a few days catching undersized flatheads and a very tasty gummy shark.

Back to Hobart and a berth at the RYCT, now available after the exodus of visitors. I returned to New Zealand while Trish and Morgan looked after the boat. There are fair facilities with an excellent bar and restaurant at the club, and both members and staff are most welcoming. On my return we explored the hinterland by car searching for ancestors' graves. We enjoyed the regional restaurants and cafes as well as the well preserved Georgian architecture, courtesy of the abundant building stone and cheap indentured convict labour of the early 1800's.

A last minute 'must do' dash by ferry up the Derwent to MONA, the Museum of Old and New Art, took us under the Tasman Bridge and past the Risdon zinc refinery. Zinc was once the core business of the Company, which first employed me as a geologist in Australia in the mid 70's. During that time one ship carrying zinc concentrates up river to the refinery went out of control and smashed into the central piers. The bridge collapsed and the ship sank, sending five motorists and seven crewmen to their deaths, as well as causing great disruption to Hobart. Forty years on there is no trace of the disaster.



MONA Cloaca - Digestive Machine

MONA is the eclectic private collection and creation of the eccentric Tasmanian gambling multi-millionaire, David Walsh. Challenging, fascinating, industrial, mythical, deviant, puzzling, nonsensical, ludicrous, but never dull, it is one Tasmania's leading attractions. Morgan innocently commented, 'look at all the fossils' in response to a dimly lit wall of moulds of female genitalia. I became fascinated by the amazing blend of natural art and architecture in the underground walls of cut Triassic sandstone, an integral part of the fabulous building, too embarrassed to be seen closely studying Morgan's 'fossils'. On our return to Hobart town we had a late lunch at a favourite breakfast haunt, the Harbour Lights Café, followed by a leisurely ramble across Battery Point to the boat via the renowned Jackman and McRoss to sample their delectable patisseries - one never tires of Hobart's wares.

### *Hobart to Port Davey*

Five weeks after our arrival, the three of us departed Hobart once again bound for Southport, 43nm to the south. We motor sailed down the Channel past the Georgian farm houses of the Huron Peninsula and also its numerous salmon farms. At times the stench of fish meal was

overwhelming on the light breeze. Sated seals lolled on the surface, replete after their salmon snacks.

On dropping anchor at Deep Hole, the owner of a neighbouring yacht dinghied across to warn us that he had lost his chain and anchor, and hadn't been able to retrieve it. It would only be an issue if we snagged it on weighing anchor, so we left well alone. It blew 20-30kts all the next day and we remained boat bound. On Sunday morning our neighbouring yachtsman returned and introduced himself. He was a New Zealander, although the boat was Australian, and he had been living on it for 24 years. Amazingly, we discovered we came from the same town and went to school together. I bought my bike off his older brother and his father bought my parents' general store! We last saw each other 54 years ago. Needless to say Morgan and I now gave him a hand to find and successfully retrieve his anchor. It was hard work, but Tony's gratitude was very rewarding.

We finally rounded the bottom of Tasmania after three weeks of more or less strong westerlies. The forecast change to easterly lasted a whole 24 hours, so we left at 0130 on the 17 March to enjoy a good breeze until we were west of South Cape. Then as we put in a second reef the wind dropped and we had to motor sail the last six hours through the desolate Mattsuyker group of Islands over an unusually calm sea. Normally it seems to be blowing 50kts here when elsewhere is reporting only 30kts. Then we went around South West Cape and up the west coast to Port Davey, where we planned to hole up for another series of fronts to cross.

Port Davey is beautiful, remote and wild, with no road access - like the southern fiords of New Zealand. We were the first yacht to enter Bramble



Entering Port Davey

Cove, but by night fall we had been joined by five other yachts, a trimaran and three big fishing boats. The latter three rafted up in the middle of the bay and proceeded to party long into the night. Bright lights glared, though fortunately the loud rock music was

shredded by the strong northerly that gusted over the mountain tops. We were too tired after a long day to care very much.

We remained boat bound for the next three days as the weather continued to deteriorate. The wind was 25-35kts, gusting over 40kts, with rain and low scudding cloud. It was hardly tropical; the water temperature was 12° and the air temperature not much higher. Trish was close to mutiny, but could be comforted by the fact we reached our southernmost



## Warren Batt

point (43° 42'S) rounding South Cape and from here on the weather could only get better. The anchorage at Bramble Cove rapidly emptied until there were only two of us left. What did the locals know that we didn't? Despite the weather, Morgan still had to do his schoolwork. Not every kid goes to school in a cockpit surrounded by clears, with the view rapidly changing as we veered on the anchor, and he was occasionally consternated as the savage gusts heeled us to one side or the other.

By the end of the second day we had had enough. We motored the 8nm up Bathurst Channel to Kings Point



*Mustang Sally, Mt Rugged, Pt Davey*

in Bathurst Harbour. The channel meanders through rugged country, narrowing to only 200m in places, but deep in its centre. The peaks rise to 2,500ft, wreathed in mist and blotted by rain squalls. We found two more yachts at Kings Point in flat water and excellent holding, while the wind gusted only 25kts. There is a stark brooding beauty that is reputedly enhanced by the chameleon changes of Mt Rugged in fine weather, but with another gale warning out we weren't going to be enjoying it. Still, it was snug below with the oil lamps going while Trish roasted an eye of fillet with baked cherry cauliflower for dessert. It proved to be another wild and woolly night. We were glad not to be still at Bramble Cove.

The weather finally turned late the next day and we climbed Mt Beattie (276m) the following morning from Claytons Corner for the panoramic views of Bathurst Harbour and down the channel out to sea. Morgan made it to within couple of hundred metres from the top when he and Trish rebelled and stopped for lunch, deciding the button grass and peaty mire were enough. Apart from that, Morgan was a little trooper, walking up and down for over three hours. We had a reasonable weather forecast for the next couple of days, so it was a pity that we had to go. It was late in the season, however, and we now had a window of opportunity to cross the western approaches to Bass Strait and to get on top of a big fat high that was approaching across the Great Australian Bight. We motored back

down the channel to Schooner Cove and prepared for an early departure the next day.

*Port Davey – Port Lincoln*

We enjoyed a pleasant sail for a few hours, accompanied by soaring albatrosses, before motoring until evening over a grey oily sea, heaving under a 2-3 metre swell. A miserable night and day followed with wind up and down from north and south during a pitch black night with steady rain - reefs in, reefs out, tack and motor. However by 1000 we were across the trough and its associated low into an icy cold SSW7-8 building into a big quartering sea. We were taking it easy and sailing very conservatively under a triple reefed main and a scrap of headsail - 'this is not a race,' as I'm so often told! Anyway, my body is getting too old to be thrown around the way it used to be.

We left the roaring forties the following morning as we crossed Bass Strait. Light to moderate winds all day slowly veered north-west as a precursor to the next frontal system. We were due to cross the shipping lanes that night, but so far we had been a lonely light on a lonely ocean, with only albatrosses and petrels for company. There is not much traffic to the west of Tasmania, just a vast abyssal plain lying 4-5km below us.

Wednesday 25 was a day we would prefer to forget. Tasmania wasn't going to let us go without a parting gift of southern weather. We had sailed a little too free on a building north-westerly in anticipation of a south-westerly change in the early afternoon. We had already made the decision that we were not going to clear the western end of Kangaroo Island, but would instead crack off to the eastern end and sail to Port Lincoln across the gulfs of St Vincent and Spencer, largely in the lee of the land. The change didn't come until late afternoon, however, and we had to tack out to sea in a rising NW7 off Cape Jaffa in South Australia. A dangerous lee shore and the chart is hardly comforting with the warning 'Rock Lobster and Giant Crab Fishery' in the shallow waters extending ten miles off the coast. We had no wish to tangle with buoys and lines in these conditions and were fortunate to see only one apparently abandoned pot before clearing the land.

The frontal change came with a vengeance and blew a solid F7-8 all night with frequent squalls of driving rain. So much for the 20-25kt GRIB weather files! With little sea room to leeward we had no option but to sail our course initially in horribly confused seas under a triple reefed main. Not good for boat, body or soul, and no one got a great deal of sleep. Morgan was very stoic, although quite wan and listless during the heavier weather. During that wild night I found him lying wide awake in his bunk, woken by all the banging, crashing and violent motion of the boat, but with nary a complaint. He said, 'I'm not scared, but don't like it,

Dad!’ It was a relief to sail into the lee of Kangaroo Island as we entered the Gulf of St Vincent via the Back Stairs Passage at daybreak.

We then enjoyed a great day’s sail in a wind moderating to F5, admittedly well forward of the beam, until we approached Cape Spencer where a heavy but regular south-westerly swell rolled in. We were able to crack on for the passage across Spencer Gulf and we dropped anchor off the Port Lincoln marina at 0300 on Friday. We had had a magic sail in the early hours of the morning, slipping along at 5kts in a gentle breeze over dead flat water under the flash of Cape Donington Light – sailing that you wish would go on forever. Trish and I had a little tot to celebrate the successful completion of our first serious offshore passage alone with Morgan before crashing into bed. We had covered the 785 miles in 4 days 21 hours and weathered two vigorous frontal systems, with the frame of the bimini being the only thing not to survive intact after the solid one (me) was thrown off balance by a particularly nasty wave.

We moved into a marina berth when we awoke and relaxed over a huge three course meal at the marina hotel that evening - Coffin Bay oysters, eye fillet steak and deserts - while Morgan played with a new found friend in the restaurant. The next day was devoted to boat repairs while Morgan entertained us with his climbing prowess, scurrying up the shrouds to the first spreaders, toes curled around the wire like a monkey. A mandatory two hour stint in a playground with Morgan followed, where he was fortunate to fall in with a bunch of similar aged boys playing tag. It is a challenge to find him peer company while sailing in these southern waters.

That evening he was befriended by two older girls who entertained him while we enjoyed dinner before joining the girls’ mothers. Both of them were Japanese teachers at the local high school. You might wonder why Port Lincoln (pop. 14,000) needs two teachers of Japanese, but the connection with Japan through the fishing industry is very strong. Japan is the only significant market for the blue fin tuna on which the fortunes of the town are founded. Port Lincoln is first and foremost a fishing port, arguably one of the most salubrious in the world, with tuna boats, prawners and trawlers neatly berthed stern-to in long arrays along the docks within the modern marina, which was excavated from swamp land and is now surrounded by luxury homes and apartments. The wealth that was so apparent when I stopped off 15 years ago, however, is not so apparent now. Tuna prices have fallen from a high of \$120/kg to only \$17-18/kg. Many tuna fishermen and farmers now struggle.

Little is invested in the marina facilities - in fact for visiting boaties they are non-existent. A shower at the local swimming pool costs \$4.50 and a visit to the loo requires a walk up the road to a council owned public toilet. All this left us a little ambivalent towards Port Lincoln, but the people we met were friendly, all services are available and it is at the centre

of a wonderful recreational boating and fishing area.

Sunday was our final day here. Chores completed, we drove across to Coffin Bay to lunch at the 1802 bistro on freshly shucked oysters washed down by a fine South Australian sauvignon blanc. Coffin Bay oysters are arguably amongst the best in the world. The waters of Coffin Bay are too saline to breed spat so they are brought in from Tasmania; the run-off free tidal waters, however, provide a great growing environment. The bistro's '1802' alludes to the year Mathew Flinders, the first man to circumnavigate Australia, entered and named Coffin Bay after his good friend Sir Isaac Coffin, the naval commissioner at Sheerness.

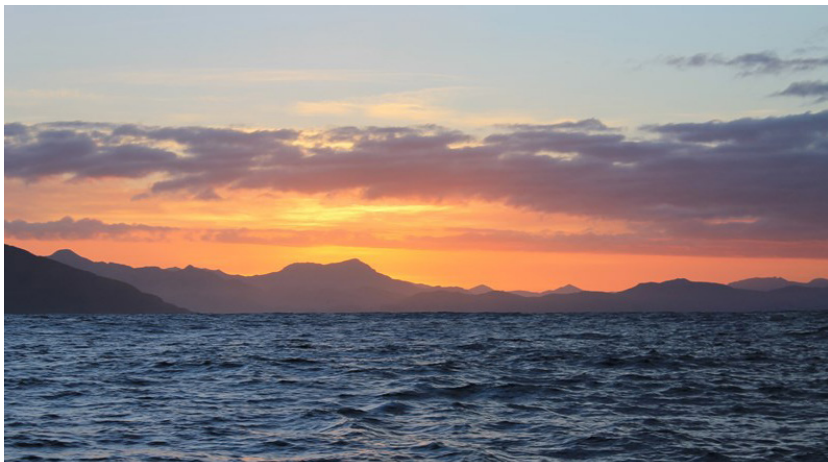
### *Port Lincoln to Fremantle*

The next afternoon we left to cross the Great Australian Bight. Cape Catastrophe was rounded in a calm sea, a marked contrast to the maelstrom that drowned eight of Matthew Flinder's crew back in 1802. Their whaleboat capsized in the narrow passage between the cape and the surrounding islands, now named after the dead crew - Thistle, Hopkins, Grindal, Lewis, Williams, Taylor, Little and Smith. We paid our respects and turned west towards Albany 860 miles away.

We enjoyed mostly fair winds, F4-7, and following seas, with daily runs of 150 to 190 miles per day under reefed main and poled out genoa. Then on the fourth day we ran out of wind and had to motor-sail for eleven hours in F2-3 from dead astern. What a change it was to be running along the parallels on the right side of the highs, and with a full moon to boot. Morgan was truly finding his sea legs now as the boat danced rather than slammed over the waves. His initiative warmed us while we re-attached one of the mainsail batten holders to the track car - a very willing helper, bringing tools and warm clothing to the cockpit, requested or otherwise, while Trish and I were occupied on deck.

Day 5 brought more motoring over a glassy sea before a weak front crossed to give us a freshening southerly. A spectacular sunset followed - a fiery red on the bow as the full moon rose on our stern. Then there was an eclipse a couple of hours later - an auspicious day for the Jewish Passover and Easter. Dawn was more subdued. The moon sank half an hour before the sun rose, leaving delicate pale grey-blues rising through deep indigo and violet to a pinkish orange blush on the western horizon. Beads of molten gold etched the rim of the cloud bank, low to the east before the dazzling orb of the sun burst above to herald the new day. Is this why we sail?

Easter Sunday and Morgan woke early - well, not really early, as we had set the clocks back two hours the day before - to find Easter eggs hidden in nooks and crannies around his bunk. Amazing where the Easter Bunny (and the Tooth Fairy) can find a small boy these days. Perhaps



it helps to keep the masthead navigation lights on! The day turned uncomfortable as the wind shifted SE5 giving us a bumpy ride over a very confused sea; south-easterly waves on leftover southerly waves and a 2-3m south-westerly swell. Morgan and Trish spent the afternoon cocooned in the starboard saloon berth watching funny videos - well I presume they were funny because there were lots of laughs and giggles. I'm above such things, preferring to play navigation when not watch-keeping, looking for optimal routes using the latest weather files and the navigation and routing software! It told me we could be in Fremantle in 2 days 3 hours with 350 miles to go. The faint loom of Albany could be seen under the clouds some 30 miles off the starboard bow, but the dice has been cast. We have decided to continue on directly to Cape Leeuwin and Fremantle. There had been no short term improvement in the weather forecast and I had a plane to catch. The sooner we were round the corner the better, even if it meant a bash up the coast on the last day.

Cape Leeuwin was rounded at 2100 with a pleasant 15kt breeze and slight seas on our beam as we turned northwards, with Leeuwin light flashing on our quarter. The cape itself is a most unimposing headland, stuck out on a flat platform that extends southwards from higher land, with rocks, islets and strong currents going a further 10nm offshore - a place to give a wide berth. The wind backed and strengthened as we beam reached up the dark coast, broken only by the lights of Margaret River.

Cape Naturaliste lay abeam at 0650 on Tuesday morning with the wind now blowing F5-6 straight out of Fremantle. We tacked and ran 20 miles or so across Geographe Bay, losing a bit of ground in the process, but into the partial lee of the land. Then we motor sailed the last 100 miles up the coast, a mile or so offshore in non-stop and at times torrential rain with visibility down to a couple of hundred metres. It was comforting to have



the radar and chart plotter by which to navigate!

Our next challenge in the wee black hours of the following morning was Challenger Pass through the offshore reefs that protect Fremantle. It was more difficult because we had lost our wheel steering the day before and were relying on the Autohelm entirely. We abandoned the first attempt as we approached too fast under a double reefed main to hold course with the set taking us south. The pass is only 200m wide and beset by strong currents, although lit by a port and a starboard light. More than one yacht has ended up hitting Challenger Rock on the south side of the pass. Our second attempt with the main down and under power was more controlled. We successfully negotiated the mile of reefs before laying course for Fremantle, with the wind on the nose and its strength unabated.

We used the emergency tiller to enter the harbour and it was two tired but relieved people (Morgan slept through it all) who finally docked in the quiet of the marina at 0425 on 8 April. At last the boat was still after seven and a half days at sea. It called for another celebratory tot before bed. We were just turning out the lights when the first of the welcoming committee arrived at quarter to five. Rory, an old crew member, didn't stay long as he headed off to work. We crashed only to be woken again by the Commodore of the club stopping by at 0830 to welcome us. It was a great feeling to return to *Mustang Sally's* home port after almost 16 years away. Most of the day was lost renewing old acquaintances whom we bumped into between the dock and the club. They included John Saunders, Western Australia's most famous sailor, who had just returned to Perth after completing his 7th circumnavigation at the age of 75!!!

Six months and 4,700 miles after leaving New Zealand, Morgan had completed his first rite of passage with flying colours. From Fremantle we were to carry on to Indonesia and beyond, but that is another story!