

After two long years of boat building, F&B's 8.0 m diesel project boat, *Dusty Rover*, was launched last August, and began its northern cruise from Townsville in November. Since then it has been based at the stunning Port Hinchinbrook marina. This month, we continued north to Cairns, and on to Half Moon Bay Marina at Yorkys Knob.

Story and pics by Peter Webster and Ruth Cunningham.



Cardwell To Cairns, FNQ

After several months based in the Port Hinchinbrook Marina, it was time to move on. Without slipping facilities in Port Hinchinbrook (yet) we needed to haul *Dusty Rover* out of the water either on its own trailer or a hoist, and neither was available at the marina. So we decided to move on, maintaining our overall plan of heading north – this time to Cairns.

There is a tangible magic about the Hinchinbrook region, and the decision to leave the very well placed marina at Port Hinchinbrook, just a few hundred metres down the road from Cardwell shopping centre, was quite a wrench. Over the last couple of months filming and researching in the area, we've got to know it a little better and hopefully,

we have imparted some of our enthusiasm about this region to F&B readers.

As this is written, we expect to have completed the new publication "Fishing The Hinchinbrook Wilderness And The Palm Islands" in a few weeks, and have the book on sale in newsagents, tackle shops, (etc) early in April. We've nearly completed our video production on the area too, and that should also be ready for release sometime in April.

The completion of these projects does not mean that we have finished our mission in this extraordinary area – in fact, almost the reverse is true. As we've noted several times in the past, it would be very easy to spend a lifetime within a 50-mile radius of

Cardwell, and quite frankly, that possibility is very much on our minds.

But for the moment at least, we had some mechanical problems to deal with, not least of which was the continuing erosion of the anodes affixed to *Dusty Rover's* MerCruiser sterndrive leg, and the worrisome blistering of the antifouling that we'd observed in the forefoot region just behind the bow.

As it happens, in February 2002, the new Travelift-type hoist being installed at Hinchinbrook (by Ray Fry from Cairns) is not yet operating, so it's impossible to slip a boat like *Dusty Rover* at this point in time. It now looks like it will be April or May 2002 before the new hoist is up and running, and people can antifoul their boats in

Taking the shots clockwise: **Left, on the facing page:** The very comfortable, convenient and helpful Cairns Cruising Yacht Squadron has an excellent haul-out facility and a good ramp. **Top Right:** Slipping past Bramo Bay at Dunk Island, one of the better anchorages in the area in a sou'easter. **Second Down:** The North Barnard islands. **Third Down:** Mourilyan Harbour is a working sugar port, and a very popular stepping off point for the area's trailerboat fraternity. **Bottom:** The narrow, but safe, entrance to Mourilyan.

the designated semi-industrial area in the Port Hinchinbrook complex.

F&B contributor Bob Ford has a very unusual but effective lift-out system based on an adapted tractor trailer at Meunga Creek, (just up north from the Cardwell shops) but Bob's system is really designed for big trimarans or catamarans as distinct from smaller, high-powered mono trailerboats or displacement craft.

The Run To Cairns Statistically, the run from Cardwell to Cairns is approximately 100-110 nautical miles, with the variation caused by a number of navigation decisions the skipper must make en-route.

Like most of these areas in the north, there are plenty of islands and dozens of reefs to pass by, and although the "inside" route is fairly obvious, there's enough navigation involved to ensure the skipper keeps his or her wits about them.

There's not too many navigational hazards that aren't obvious (like islands or headlands) but as so often happens, you can waste an awful lot of fuel and time by going the wrong way around an island group, when an 'inside run' might be several miles shorter.

In a similar vein, if you do the route planning properly, it's not uncommon to find that it's quicker to go round the outside of a island or reef structure, especially if the coast itself is taking the dog leg one way or another.

In a sense, that's what happens here in this run from Cardwell up to Cairns. The actual run of the coast up to the Innisfail region from Cardwell is nor-nor east, but after you get around Mourilyan Harbour, and/or the North Barnard Islands, the actual run of the coast swings back to nor-nor west.

