



Fishing, Diving & Exploring The Percy Islands

“The Cruising Bible” describes it as “Breathtaking”. The lighthouse keepers of the day say it is “a haunted place of rugged beauty” and the cruising yachties describe it as “The Jewel of the Pacific”.

In this report by Scott Shepherd, these superlatives make way for a story about seven mates on a sea going adventure.

Story by Scott Shepherd Photos by Scott and Larraby

Once in a lifetime you just have to break the shackles of the 9 to 5 life and see what the alternative has to offer.

To some, it's a getaway to a far, far away retreat in the Pacific Islands, or maybe a European tour to find some long lost relics. Everyone has their holy grail – a place, or a situation that has eluded them for many years and seemed like it would never be realised.

Well, like all folk young and old, I too had these dreams and aspirations of a special place. A

place that has long been in my mind, and a place that has few visitors but many stories to tell. As we rounded the South Bluff on the largest land mass of the Percy Group of islands, it came into view – the white sandy beach of the place I've dreamed about for 25 years – the well known 'A' framed Percy “Hilton” in West Bay on Middle Percy Island.

This long awaited trip was well planned, as Percy Island is located 70 nautical miles (nm) S/E of Mackay in QLD. It was not for the faint of heart, or the queasy of

stomach, as it was a 7 day, 700nm trip in very open ocean.

Our adventure happened in April 09, but the planning started in July 08.

I first discussed the trip with my mate Paul Jacklin from Tannum Sands. We then spread the word around and at one stage had 5 boats lined up to go. But alas, as always happens, they kept dropping like flies, until in the end, there were 3 boats set to go.

In my boat “Red Hot” (a Seafarer 2800) I was accompanied by Paul, another Paul (we call Flicker) and

my bro' in-law, Ricky. We also had Larraby, Craig and Garry in Larraby's 2600 Powercat “Reel Torque”. We planned to meet up with some well known Gladstone identities - Daryl Branthwaite, his son Matt and Captain Greg Kleese in Greg's 40' Clipper “Saltim”.

So the plan was laid, date set and at 12.05 on a Thursday morning, Ricky and I took off from my home port of Toogoom in Hervey Bay and headed 40nm up to Burnett Heads for a quick kip. Then at first light, we headed up the coast past Baffle Creek, the