

Tony's Weipa EXPEDITION

At first blush, it sounded simple enough - take Tony's Caribbean 35 to Weipa, by sea, to act as a mothership for their Trailcraft 485 Pro Fish - which would be taken up by road . . . that's when they started to appreciate the scale of the logistics involved.

George Jekyll report (and most pictures)

Fishing the Weipa region, particularly the Love River, on the Western side of the Gulf of Carpentaria, had been the focus for Tony and I for many years. This had been done in a purpose built 7.4m Sportfish Time Out culminating in a report on our adventures in F&B magazine.

(F&B #69, 2001, now available in the SEA Library -Ed).

Time Out was ultimately replaced by a 35 Caribbean sports cruiser, *Break Free* and a 4.85m Trailcraft.

The methodology we wanted to employ in this latest adventure with the two craft was deceptively simple: we would tow the Trailcraft behind the Caribbean into the rivers north and south of Weipa, live on the Caribbean and fish the Trailcraft up the creeks. We even fitted the heavy towing lug low onto the bow of the Trailcraft when it was purchased, a decision that revealed just how far back we'd been thinking - and planning - for this 2010 expedition. Then, all we had to do was get the Caribbean and Trailcraft to Weipa! If you say it quickly, it doesn't hurt too much - but believe me, it is an eye-glazing prospect, involving thousands of miles of land and sea travel.

Two years later it actually started to happen. Tony got serious: Yes, we were going to do it this year. Yes, the Trailcraft would be trailered to Weipa and Tony and I would take *Break Free*

up around the top.

We didn't think getting the Trailcraft to Weipa would be too much of a problem. The offer of 5 days fishing the Ducie River was all we needed to find 2 drivers who volunteered for the job. We just had to cull the queue!

Then, all we needed to do was get the Caribbean from Runaway Bay (on the Gold Coast) up around the top of Cape York, and down into the Gulf of Carpentaria to Weipa.

Now the run from the Gold Coast to Cairns normally does not present a lot of problems, as there are numerous quality marinas within 200 nm of each other, so fuel supply is always pretty good, but throw in a little Category 3 cyclone called *Ului* on the 20th and 21st of March, and our plans started to get a bit mucked up.

Leaving The Gold Coast

Saturday the 6th March at 0500 hours, Tony and I left Runaway Bay on the Gold Coast. We had a 10-15 knot nor'easterly and 1.0m swell which was handled comfortably by *Break Free* as we headed north, but by the time we had reached the top of Moreton Island we were hitting into a constant 20 knots of nor'easterly and conditions deteriorated.

We had put ourselves under a bit of pressure with high tide peaking on the Wide Bay Bar at 1150 hours and wanting to cross before the big pressure waves built, so the Caribbean

was asked to put her nose down and punch into the building sea which she did well, getting us across the bar at 1300 hours with the pressure waves just starting to build. After a smooth three hour passage up the Great Sandy Strait, we were safely moored in the marina at Urangan.

After spending a quiet Sunday in Urangan we left the marina at 0500 hours Monday morning the 8th for the short run to Bundaberg in 10 to 15knots of south easterly.

Weather was perfect, birds were working, and we soon had four mackerel in the boat. So we arrived at Bundaberg relaxed and in good spirits.

The Caribbean had used 928ltrs for the 230nm to Bundaberg, which was a good indication of the rate of consumption ahead of us.

Tuesday the 9th we departed Bundaberg at 0500 hours, with 15-20 knots of sou'easterly and a 1.5m swell.

The Caribbean revelled in these conditions, running at 20-21 knots all the way to Rosslyn Bay, arriving at 1125 hours. After putting 530 litres in

Above: There was no shortage of quality red fish on the reefs down the east side of the the Gulf. **Centre:** The Trailcraft 485 Pro Fish is just about the perfect 'dory' to use fishing the FNQ creeks and rivers. It was towed behind the Caribbean. **Right:** Yep, this is why they do it! For most fishos, this is the stuff of dreams *superb!*

