

## **SAILING TO LAKE MACQUARIE**

**Please note: the following should be not be regarded as definitive and skippers should employ their own methods of seamanship.**

I delivered a vessel to Lake Macquarie on the weekend of 16/17 December 2006. I haven't been there for maybe 15 or so years and would like to post details of the trip for anyone in the division who is thinking of cruising there in the near future.

The CCCA are having their Christmas Cruise there, and Balmain boats are always welcome.

In a smaller boat (the one I took was 27') you will need a good weather window, 30 knot Nor'Easters are not the go and I put a limit of 25 knots from anywhere south of east.

Maximum breeze I got was about 20 knots South East, but swell and sea were confused and choppy South East. It is best to do the trip in two stages: Sydney – Pittwater, which takes about 4 hours, and Pittwater – Lake Macquarie, allow about 8 hours. Again, this is for small boats and using the motor when wind is light. Again, pick the best weather window and try to travel while conditions are good, there are NO easy anchorages to shelter in.

If conditions deteriorate you would probably be best to return to Sydney Harbour, Pittwater or go to Newcastle Harbour.

The Swansea bar is a "barred" river entrance and can be subject to swell from the North. South swell is reduced by the reef that runs from Moon Islet to the Southern Breakwall. It is a maritime requirement that lifejackets be worn when crossing the bar. Assuming that wind and swell and general conditions are good, I found the entrance to be good and well marked.

I used the Coastguard from Sydney/Pittwater (they have good coverage while at sea from their South Head position, but this deteriorates when going behind Barrenjoey, so I usually log off abeam Barrenjoey after entering Broken Bay. This saves following problems of losing contact with Sydney Coastguard and having to relay or phone to log off. Don't log off until you feel you are safe in port of destination. I used Coastal Patrol from Pittwater to the Lake as they have good coverage. Coastal Patrol Gosford, Coastal Patrol Terrigal and Coastal Patrol Lake Macquarie handed my transit sheet over. Coastal Patrol Lake Macquarie even booked the bridge opening at Swansea – how good is that? If you see these marine organizations, feel free to make a donation, they do a great job and on my trip, being single-handed, give a sense of security that they know where you are.

Notable way points are Long Reef, Terrigal, The Entrance, Norah Head, Bird Island and Catherine Hill Bay. Stay clear of Moon Islet as you round it to the North, when you are between Moon Islet and the beach you will see your navigation marks, binoculars are of assistance here as the marks appear black and get lost in swell and sunlight. The first port marker lies in line from Moon Islet to the Northern Breakwall. The next is closer to the Southern Breakwall. There are also triangular leads which will be picked up anyway, but use the port markers first, then the leads – I checked the depth on the leads when crossing the bar at 4 feet under the keel on a half risen neap tide of 1.1 metre, it takes about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour to down sails near Moon Islet, motor over the bar and travel to the bridge, so you will need to allow for this when you or the VCP book the bridge. There are 3 pink moorings on either side of the bridge for waiting vessels. On the inland side of the bridge I had as little as 2' under the keel near the coastal patrol station and 1' at the “dropoff” – the end of the channel leading into the lake. The boat was a Northshore 27 and the depth about 1.52 metres – about 5'.

Good watering holes for fuel, ice, beer etc can be found at RMYC and LMYC at the lake and RMYC Broken Bay – all allow day mooring alongside the perimeter of the berthing areas, Coasters Retreat makes a good overnight anchorage.

Lake Macquarie after being at sea is like sailing on a tabletop and has some great places to go and moor and all facilities. Toronto is good for shopping, there are good waterfront Clubs.

It was a shame I had to leave the boat there and rail it back to Sydney.

Regards,  
Alan