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Contribute - Most Welcome

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Front Cover:
Chris Ramsay
with a one of
many classic
Barra caught up
in Lakefield
National Park



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Three Fisherman and a Real Estate Agent

By Callum Jones



Do I need a rod? Do I need to buy some lures? These were the first questions asked to Pete Brown who I was travelling with a river boat in tow to the famous Lakefield National Park recently. Here we'd we would catch up with Port locals, Dan Francis & Chris Ramsay. These mentioned two boys had already travelled up a of day prior with their tinnie and are seasoned Lakefield specialists.

Brownie answers, "Nah these blokes are die-hards, they have more rods than you've had sales this year in the Real Estate game". This comment was not far from the truth due to the Covid crap. "No problems", I say, "but I need to get to BCF so I can get some fishing shirts and a pair of gloves"... keyboard hands and fish don't mix too well with me.

All excited and happy with my pre-purchases and then tying the shirts to the dogs and dragging them around the yard before pre-washing to get the fold lin Yielding only minimal numbers of these fresh water prawns apparently compared to previous years, there was some concern from the three fisherman the following morning. es out, it was time to take care of the main preparations... buying booze. Two blokes, three nights, a five hour drive and \$500 later we were off chucking in a BBQ Chicken and a tub of coleslaw for good measure.

The work mobile phone reception being zero meant the next three days were going to be gloriously quiet... it was a pity Brownie couldn't be silenced as easily with his never ending verbal commentary, sometimes tedious diarrhea. The coming days were going to be a master class of how we was going to catch all these famous Lakefield Barra...

Meeting us at Micky Finns campsite on the Normanby River were our glorious hosts, Ramsay and Francis just on dark and the boys were still recovering from their first night of camping the day before nailing some impressive barra already. Their dancing foot-marks in the

dirt around the camp site showed the moves these guys were capable of. Presenting a camp oven full of lamb shanks to be best washed down with Shiraz for my first night, what could possibly go wrong ? ... For those young players it's apparently not a good idea to take wine glasses camping, plastic only ! The cuisine we had morning, lunch and dinner for the following days was to die for with a well oiled set up set up by experts.

This first night trip after dinner on the M.S. Minnow to check the cheribin pots for bait (fresh water yabbies), was the first introduction to the myriad of lagoons and river systems this amazing place possesses. 'Eagle Eye', Ramsay was forever pointing out the series of crocodile eyes watching us during the criss-cross journey from the banks to banks... another tip for young players is that if you are colour blind it is unlikely you will see them even with a torch lighting up their eyes and they are already highly camouflaged.

Eventually to bed with just enough live bait secured for the next day the serenity of the National Park night sky was shattered by the chainsaw sound effects coming from Brownies swag, soon to be joined by the snores of the remaining fishermen – perhaps part reason for the declining numbers of cherebin since they arrived ? ▶



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So it took a real estate agent to come up with the idea of a footy draft pick concept by the two boat captains, Francis & Ramsay, until all the nervous fresh water prawns were selected. Pick one going to team Francis and Brown and so on... the scene was set for the battle...

First day's fishing was tough with the Captains, Francis and Ramsay showing their prowess on the rods and reel, before yours truly landed his first 85cm silvery beast. What a feeling, wow wee, these fish are truly addictive to catch. They are everything and more with power runs and the most explosive surface action when they come out and dance around like maniacs. Perhaps it was the gloves, perhaps it was the soft hands, perhaps it was the VB cans, whatever the reason it was the team of Jones and his mentor Ramsay who went on to clean up the others and yielded over 3 metres in length of quality Barra that day, 4 in total. They were all caught and released before the cherebin supply were devoured amongst the snags we fished. The barra just can't resist this delicacy bait floated down amongst the timber and flicking around in front of their noses.

The following couple of days were just as impressive heralding some big fish between the two boats. One metre barramundi, Holy Moly ! These fish are just a bonus amongst such tranquility and rugged beauty of the Australian outback of this place. I now truly appreciate why Lakefield is considered a must do fishing and camping experience. Wildlife galore inclusive of monster crocs, big fish, flora and fauna and much more for the eye to see. Good company is the bonus !

I must get in, old mate Brownie suffering an embarrassing couple of days on the rods and scales absolutely proved his worth around the dinner table with his kitchen skills, along with his tales of past fishing journeys and overall camping knowledge... it was sweet justice when a photo turned up with him holding a good barra late on the final day.

The experience from the get go was sensational, the journey through our vast Tablelands and stunning country to get to Lakefield. The newly acquired luxury 4WD vehicle and driving expertise of Mr. Brown was highly commendable. To the sharing of the fishing skills by all the boys & the equipment was just sensational for someone like me that doesn't do much in the area of fishing. The amazing camp site provided by Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Francis and the surreal quietness and beauty of the Lakefield National Park is something that will be remembered for some long years to come. I can't wait to get out of the hustle and bustle of the office and to get into the smelly worn fishing shirts and gloves out for the next adventure – thanks lads - bloody legends! ■



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The Dragon's Den

By Steve Adamson

Without question the last few weeks have seen a bit more flow in regards to visitors to the area. It is still a far stretch to what we normally get but I guess anything is better than nothing. The recent NSW border closure to QLD I feel will be extremely detrimental moving forward into September. We experienced within two days of this announcement over 40K of cancellations for the September period. We knew Victoria was going to be a big blow a month or so ago, but NSW on top of this is like a bullet to the head. We have already seen before our eyes the drop off visitors especially on the marina as the numbers are dwindling quite rapidly by the day. All we can hope for is some trade moving forward.

On the water we have seen a big shift in the weather pattern with the pesty south easterly winds easing off. Prior to this it was a few months of battling the elements I can assure you. A lot of it has to do with the bitter conditions rolling across the southern states with some real nasty stuff in certain coastal areas. You can almost say if it's bad down south it is generally nice up here and vice versa.

The fishing overall has been on the upside to be honest with some really, really big days in the mix. The standout recently was a day where we returned with 20 plus large mouth nannygai all at 8kg and better. This was amongst a host of others as well. These are the thumpers we ideally target and extremely pleasing when a plan all comes together. For the most our daily plan has worked well tapping into the large mouth nannygai, the small mouth nannygai are quite consistent and there's cod, spangled emperor, red emperor



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and coral trout to add to the mix. We have also caught the odd tuskfish which seem to prefer the coral organisms, but have taken a liking to a bit pilchard and squid for some reason. Our trout numbers haven't been as high as normal but this is mainly because we've taking the advantage of the fairer weather fishing as deep as possible. We know where to chase them in numbers but will do so when we see fit. It may be a case of when the big reds aren't on the chew we'll soon round these guys up in the shallows with a quick shift to ensure a good day's catch.

Moving forward it all comes down to what numbers we can get on the boat and already we are starting to find we'll run every second or third day to maximise our efforts. If proceedings dry up considerably we still have our commercial fishing plan in place which could be a saviour for us moving forward. We're ready to throw the ropes at anytime and travel way further north and do our thing over a few days. I'm hoping that this will not become the necessity as I much prefer sleeping in my own bed each night as opposed to the rough and tumble of sleeping on the boat at sea. ■

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Breathing in the Saltaire

By Damian Collete



Imagine the ultimate, ultimate, absolute boys trip ? Camping on your own tropical island in the most stunning surrounds, awesome fishing, the slickest and smartest 35ft game boat in FNQ - Saltaire , at your daily disposal & right on the beach where you've been camping each night - exclusively. They should make beer commercials out of this, seriously!

Well for the 8th year running we've done this trip for a dedicated group of old university mates who do this annually. It is seriously the 'ducks nuts' of trips. This year they struck absolute Gold with the weather on our Hope Island experience. The main boys have seen some harder conditions over the years in regards to wind, but this year was picture post card for the 7 day trip. The calendar is always the second week of August so the boys can fully arrange themselves in preparation and there's always a slightly different plan as to how

they all get on the island for the week. They pre-book with National Parks for exclusive use over 7 days. That in itself means no-one else is allowed on the island and it creates literally a Blokes World bubble.

From a logistic point of view it entailed getting 7 blokes up to Hope Is on Saltaire for the very first day. It was then followed up by a further 4 guys a couple of days later with the aid of Don't Know charters who transported them from the Daintree River. So in total we had after a couple of days 11 close mates nestled on, in my opinion one of the most exotic islands you can ever imagine.

These guys do a lot of the hard yards in their organisation bringing up extra eskies off the plane, arranging transport, bringing fishing gear, food supplies and drinks. It is super highly organised and at Saltaire we do as much as we can to help this yearly return trip.



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As mentioned, with the best weather for this recent charter on offer for a couple of years it was an open ticket to catch as many fish as possible. We explored every possible system within a short drive from the island and the marks we have accumulated over the years is quite astonishing. We caught too many fish to mention to from day to day but the bigger fish included a 160cm spanish mackerel, an 82cm red emperor, coral trout after coral trout and added to this 12-15kg giant trevally popper fishing from off the beach in the late afternoons. It was just insane fishing just to keep it purely simple!

Us crew slept on the boat within a heartbeat of putting foot on sand from the island and the boys slept not far away on the designated camp areas in their swags and tarp arrangements overhead. They had access to the old fashioned bush dunnies provided by National Parks on the island and they bathed in the lagoon.

Now we are talking about seasoned travellers and the food supply was on the money each day, especially at night with the camp ovens going on the beach. To put it short it was the ultimate Bush Tucker from big cuts of meats, to fish and pasta dishes. It just makes the world of difference when the boys are so well fed & we were lucky enough to be part of every evening.

This trip takes a bit to organise but with a great system in place over the years and with days upon days of fishing, it all is so worth it. It is our speciality and touch base at Fishing Port Douglas with Heff if you are

wishing to experience a similar trip. You'll come back year after year just like these southern QLD boys have, who will back again, then again and again !! ■



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No Problem - It's a 'Sure Bet'

By Heff

Recently I had a phone call from an old mate which some of you locals may well know. Scotty Ewert, former Port Douglas AFL Crocs President called me from Thailand where he now resides and runs his own Aussie Bar in Phuket. We all knew Scotty as "Surebet" because he was well versed in the horse racing stakes but also managed jockeys around Australia for years and years. If Scotty had a 'sure thing' it paid to get on that horse with the punt. Talking with him the situation with Covid in Thailand is diabolical as simply no tourists are traveling there and his business is almost 100% reliant on visitors. He admitted they are fairly much screwed for sometime to come and they don't have the government support as we do in Australia.

Anyway, the main reason for his phone call was that he had some jockey mates coming to Port Douglas and were keen for a fish. As Scotty said to them, 'give Heff a call, he'll look after you, that's a Sure Bet'. That was easy enough and we teed up the best reef fishing charter boat in Dragon Lady to service their requirements.

Andrew Mallyon, a Brisbane jockey was my point of contact from this point on, to tee up the trip. He would also bring along fellow jockeys, James McDonald and Luke Ditmann. Now we'll give you some background on these elite sportsmen.



Andrew Mallyon
 8255 starts including Group 1 races all over Australia


922 wins
907 seconds
845 thirds
10% win strike rate
32% place strike rate
\$20,614,869 total prize money won on his horses



Luke McDonald
4765 Starts including 42 Group 1
Winners in Australia
956 wins
716 seconds
585 thirds
20% win strike rate
61.5% place strike rate
\$97,321,438 total prize money won on his horses



Luke Ditmann
Son of a Gun - Father Mick Ditmann
1983 starts including Group 1 races all over Australia
350 wins
285 seconds
273 thirds



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15% win strike rate
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\$7,756,875 prize money won on his horses

So collectively between these three superstars we had a group of young talented men on our boat that has yielded to date over 125.5 million dollars for their connections. That in itself is very impressive and that figure will only grow as their careers prosper.

So moving forward they boys went out on a super weather day for their day of fishing on the Great Barrier Reef on the Dragon Lady vessel. The boys did exceptionally well nailing some ripping large mouth nannygai to 8kg amongst a host of other top quality fish. Being supreme athletes they had no trouble hauling up some big fish from the depths and were quite handy trading the saddle cloth and whip for a rod and reel. The boys following the trip did a big push for us on social media with Facebook and Instagram and it is hard to fathom how many followers they collectively have given us which is a bonus exposure. We truly appreciated that from our point of view. They also enjoyed a bash of golf at the Mirage Country Club where I caught up



with them for a beer in the clubhouse and they were obliging to get a photo with my mate Tony who is a tragic horse punter over many years.

Interestingly at the time we also had the Gai Waterhouse family staying at the Sheraton Resort as well at the time as well as the Lloyd Williams clan, all of which are legend folklore in the horse racing industry.

It's not every day you get to rub shoulders with household names in another elite sport, but at the end of the day they are like any other punter and it's our job to go and catch fish to the best of our ability. On the day the boys traveled out, the Dragon Lady team came 1st Place in their eyes on the track they were riding that day.

In further conversation with them they will come back in a heartbeat at their next opportunity and exclusively do a decent trip over a few days. They just fell in love with Port Douglas!

Scotty 'Surebet' Ewert, hope you are reading this my old mate!



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On the Daintree Charters

With Jamie Beitzel



Welcome to my humble post each month for the Line Burner. We've been ticking along at a steady rate of knots considering the down turn in regional tourist numbers. Heff at Fishing Port Douglas has been crunching out good bookings with the family types which I really enjoy having on the boat. I've also seen some good returns from the grey nomad fleet. How they managed to get up with all the border closures going on has me a bit baffled but we are grateful that they are here and been loyal servants over the years. They have meticulously planned their travel movements and foreseen a lot of the issues we now see being able to get around the country. As they say the older you get comes with a bit more wisdom and foresight. For those that have been part of our magical river it has been good times. There's been a couple of slower tides but for the best it has been quite consistent. The drab, overcast days have been replaced by a lot more

sunshine and the fish seem to appreciate that temperature change in the water and get a bit more active.

The 'go' to fish for me has been the big queenfish between the 80cm - 100cm range and they have been content to hunt in the river where the bait supply has been encouraging. These fish never disappoint and put up a magnificent fight and display on the light sportfishing gear. We are lucky to have these guys around for the majority of the year and a real highlight for our clients.


Other than this we've come across some handy fingermark on our deeper snags and the golden trevally are still up and about. With a return to better weather we've persisted for those really wanting the experience a few barramundi mainly around the 60cm range. It's a highly requested tick of the box type trip for many and I've been able to get the job done. It will only get better moving forward.

I have done the odd trip around the coastline and completed the task with some hard pulling big golden trevally amongst other similar species. The coastal fishing looks prime to go off if the weather keeps tracking the way it is at the moment.

Anyway we are well and truly looking forward to anyone keen to get a genuine good day's of fishing in a special part of the world. See you on the Daintree or nearby soon




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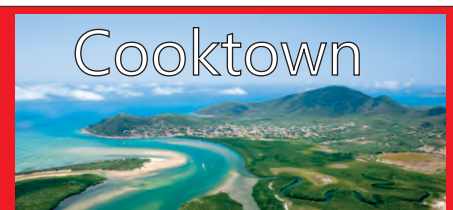


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Reel Cooking with Mick Hart

Mackerel Pasties Fit for a King



This is a simple favourite which can only be made better with your own imagination. Recently I used some older mackerel fillets which I found in the freezer and once defrosted it turned into a very hearty meal, and oh yes extremely tasty. Here was my take on it, but get creative with your own tastes. All the family will love it and they also great from the fridge the next day too!

Ingredients

Salt & Pepper Tandaco coating mix (BIG RECOMMENDATION) - herb isle at the Supermarket
500gm Spanish Mackerel fillets
Frozen Puff Pastry - easily bought at the Supermarket
Garlic Paste
Grated Carrot
Grated Onion
Spinach Baby Leaves



Method

Cut your mackerel fillet into small cubes, place in a small plastic bag and add the Tandaco coating powder. Give a good toss and roll around and let sit for awhile.

When ready, with your pastry sheet using a cooking brush, coat the inside layer with a light spread of garlic paste. Combine the mackerel, carrot, onion and spinach into each other and then make your cake on the pastry. Seal it into what ever shape you prefer and whatever size you like. The rustic look is great in my opinion. No real need to coat the outside of pastie but a light spray of olive oil on the baking tray helps to crisp the bottom.

Heat the oven hot at 220C, let the pasties cook initially for 10 minutes before dropping back to 180C till golden brown & crispy. Always check on the product as it cooks and depending on your oven you will have a Mackerel Pastie Fit for a King in around 30-40 minutes.

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magical daintree

Trials & Tribulations with Bruce Belcher

As I write this instalment, it's the perfect day; about 25 degrees and sunny. It's the sort of day whereby just about all of our visitors are from Melbourne or New Zealand. The crocs are out sunning themselves and everyone is feeling good. Unfortunately, the Victorians cannot leave their state and we're still awaiting the day for the Kiwis to be allowed to come over. It was anticipated that July the 10th would be the day that the Victorian border would open and that we would be inundated with people but something went wrong with their lockdown procedures and the Corona virus had a relapse. The story goes that because Victoria is multi-cultured, more than NSW, and that many people were returning from overseas, and that the people should have been self-isolating, the procedures weren't followed properly and the infections spiked. During the last few days, their infection rate rose radically, above a few hundred per day. Soon after it transpired to NSW and now we see our neighboring state closed at our border.

Life goes on in and along the Daintree River, as if nothing ever happened. The few tourists that we're seeing here are mainly from Queensland and more recently, from Sydney (but that will drop off now). There are a few European back-packers who are stranded here and they don't seem to be bothered! The Queenslanders are mostly from Brisbane, the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, Townsville and quite a few locals. We have even reduced the prices by one third, just to help families out during the school holidays.

The general crocodile breeding season was a success, unlike last year when the floods destroyed all the nests. There have been good sightings of hatchlings which are now about 4 months old and independent. Our favourite female, Lizzie, had a nest but nothing happened and I think that the pigs got into it.

Just the other day I came across two large males locked together, whereby one had the other in its jaws, by the head and pinned against a log. There was no movement and it seemed as though the pinned croc had resigned itself to being dominated and couldn't escape. They assumed that position for a few hours. Eventually they obviously separated and we saw no more of them.



We've had more prolonged wet weather this year. The land is usually the colour of peanut paste but the verdancy is continuing. Resorts across the river have closed their doors. I hope their futures are positive and that they can resume operating but who knows when. This strange period of uncertainty is worrying and I hope we don't have to consider closing, too. I suppose that if one has to "go troppo", then we're lucky that we can do it in the Magical Daintree!

See you next month.



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