

# ***Chapter 6 Tidying Up Loose Ends***

## ***6.1 Discovery Club: Revisit Kings Creek and Hanns Inlet.***

The tide was good, high at Crib Point at 4.35 p.m. The fellows had agreed that after school, Chris would ride his bike up to Phill's and get some training in. Phill and Chris would then pick up Tristan from his school. Then they would return to Phill's to prepare the boat, collect drawing materials and study the map of the Hastings bight.

At Phill's place, Chris had to complete the following: refuel the Tohatsu outboard, and make sure enough spare petrol was available; start the motor with its leg in a bucket of water; count three life jackets, torch, fire extinguisher, oars, and ensure that boat registration and trailer registration papers were available; check anchor and rope, plus spare ropes for an emergency, and the lead line. Hook up to the Discovery, and check all lights were working.

Tristan was to change into boat clothes. However he discovered he had left some items at home. But he had a look at some of Phill's and was soon okay apart from his shoes. That was fixed when he put on Phill's sailing boots. He also had to check out the map for depths and the location of the creek entrance, as well as make sure the drawing book and charcoal sticks were suitable, then place it all in a waterproof bag.

First stop was at a cake shop in Hastings, for food and drinks. Down at the launching ramp, the wind appeared to be getting up a bit from the south-west. There was a moment or two of good fun: when Phill backed down the ramp, Chris and Tristan horsed around in the water slipping the boat. Before long,

though, they had the motor started, the car and trailer parked, and the fellows were all on board.

In the two-seat layout, Chris steered, Tristan sat in the bow seat facing forward, while Phill sat in the bottom on a makeshift pillow with his back to the rear seat. Leaving the ramp, Chris steered north, skimming the pier on the port side. Tristan had to decide when the mouth of the creek became apparent, and which shore background to include in his drawings.

Chris had to manoeuvre and then stop the boat so Tristan could get his chosen 90-degree view. It was time also to use the lead line to establish a few depths on a bearing of 250 degrees. The information would be included on the drawings.

Finally, the boat entered the mouth of the creek. It was about three metres wide, with the tops of the mangroves floating from one to two metres high. It was rather unreal to motor very slowly along the creek, with the mangroves sometimes towering above. No wind penetrated, every sound became magnified. The creek began to narrow; sometimes low branches scraped the sides or needed to be pushed away to prevent the boat snagging and stopping. In some spots the bank was covered in rough grass. These grass areas could perhaps have been used as camp sites by the early explorers. Although, as Chris remarked, 200 years ago the mangroves, native trees and grass flats might have been in very different locations.

They passed the scout hut, then encountered a tree that had fallen across the creek, stopping all forward progress. They were forced to retreat, and explore elsewhere.



***High tide at the end of the mangroves. Could this have been a good camp site? Possible original site of the first fishing settlement.***



***The creek is not so good at low tide: the boats were drawn up on the bank***  
Part of the original plan was to have Tristan draw a topographical view of the bight, then draw a surveying line from the mouth, looking east to the southern point of Esso Refinery and west to the launching ramp. On the way various soundings would be marked onto the drawing. The wind and waves were

starting to rise, and at idle speed the boat started to wallow like a drunken log, making Tristan's task impossible. Chris put the power on and steered the appropriate course, sideways to the wind and waves. Up front Tristan got a few waves in the face, loving it. After about 20 minutes Chris ran the boat up onto the sand spit at the point.

While Phill stayed in the boat, the guys set about exploring the area. The upper parts of an oil tanker tied up to the jetty, only 100 metres away, appeared over the top of the exotic-looking point. A little later the guys reappeared. They had found what looked like a 44-gallon drum sitting on top of a mound. It appeared that a tunnel dropped away from underneath the drum. Maybe it was a safety outlet for the refinery. However, no warning signs were evident.

Now for the run home to the west. By now, short, choppy waves of one metre plus were rolling in. The boat had to run parallel to them. Once more Chris determinably steered—a greater challenge this time—while Phill sat in the bottom getting an occasional spray, and Tristan loved every minute. He had tucked himself down in the small space forward of the bow seat, but could not get his head down any lower, so the back of his head was resting on the side of the boat, constantly getting a drenching. He laughed and laughed.

Getting close to the pier Chris had to divert slightly to the south to avoid the sunken old dredger, and then proceed into the channel. Both Chris and Tristan had obtained their Boat Operator Licence, so reading the channel markers was second nature.

They retrieved the boat with no problem. Tristan was dropped off at home. At Phill's, Chris lifted his bike into the boat, then Phill took him home.

All the guys had agreed that next time they were going to survey and go ashore at Sandstone Island.