

FINDING

The youngest crew on *Red Thread* may not be keen on the spirited wind and seas just yet, but he has beachcombing down pat. North Tinpot Anchorage, Bruny Island.



SOLACE

Our CM440, *Red Thread*, contains the most beautiful parts of my life.

"I sit in utter silence watching sawtooth dolerite peaks gnaw at meaty grey clouds. Only the occasional cry from a seabird echoing across the motionless bay breaks the stillness."

—Jessie's journal, Recherche Bay

I have ached for this moment. For this seclusion. For this crisp, salty air. Forty-four feet and 15 tons of fiberglass suspend me above the chilly seawater that spills into this bay from the Southern Ocean. Even in the height of summer temperature doesn't break 60° Fahrenheit. Twenty feet below the hull of our CM440, *Red Thread*, our 33-kg Rocna is holding fast, tethering me to blissful solitude in this stunning place.

This boat contains the most beautiful parts of my life, my husband and our baby boy, who are lost in dreamland below decks. The most glorious joys and challenges of our 10 years together are etched into the story of this vessel: our engagement, our wedding and honeymoon, moments that tried to break us and others that made us fly, more than a hundred nights at sea, our son's first crawl. There is one exception: *the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic*.

How did we get here?

Lured by tales of cruising grounds akin our home waters in the Pacific Northwest, our little family had sailed away from the skyscrapers of Melbourne, Victoria, in December 2019 (see Fall 2020 issue) and toward Tasmania. Much to our

souls' content, we found forests rooted right to the water's edge and misshapen bays that would delight the saltiest of gunkholers, just as we had been promised. We fell in love with Hobart, the island state's capitol city. Established as a penal colony in 1804, Hobart is a beguiling amalgamation



A rainbow bursts through the fog blanketing the mountains that tower above Hobart. Derwent Sailing Squadron, Hobart.

**By Jessie Mackelprang-Carter, CM440 Association Editor
Red Thread, Hull #33**

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of convict-era architecture and modern convenience. Fishing boats clad with wooden beehive rock lobster pots moor one after then next a stone's throw from the business district, and the finish line of the renowned Rolex Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race is just off the waterfront. Kunanyi, named by Tasmania's First People, the Palawa people, keeps watch more than 4,170-foot skyward. Hobart is a seafarer's delight and a nature-lover's paradise. *Red Thread* found a new home at the Derwent Sailing Squadron, a 20-minute walk from the heart of the city.

We were smitten.

In early 2020, we flew home to Melbourne and started planning our Tassie holidays for the remainder of the year. With Australia being generous in vacation days and public holidays and jobs that enabled us to work remotely

some of the time, we figured that we could hop a cheap, 60-minute flight from Melbourne to Hobart every six weeks or so and spend a week afloat.

Plans washed away

Little did we know that we were scrawling plans into the sand; an invisible tide was already awash on many of the world's shores. Within weeks, the gears of modern life as we knew it would grind to a halt. Our plans were erased as the COVID-19 pandemic gripped the globe. Planes grounded, quieting the skies, and suddenly Australia felt painfully far away from the United States, our home country. Melbourne entered what would become the most severe and long-lasting lockdown of any city on the planet.

Meanwhile, like a castle hoisting its drawbridge, Tasmania closed its

borders for the better part of a year. It opted to protect the health of its citizens by making the island state all but impenetrable, even to other Australian states.

It was nine months before we laid eyes on *Red Thread* again.

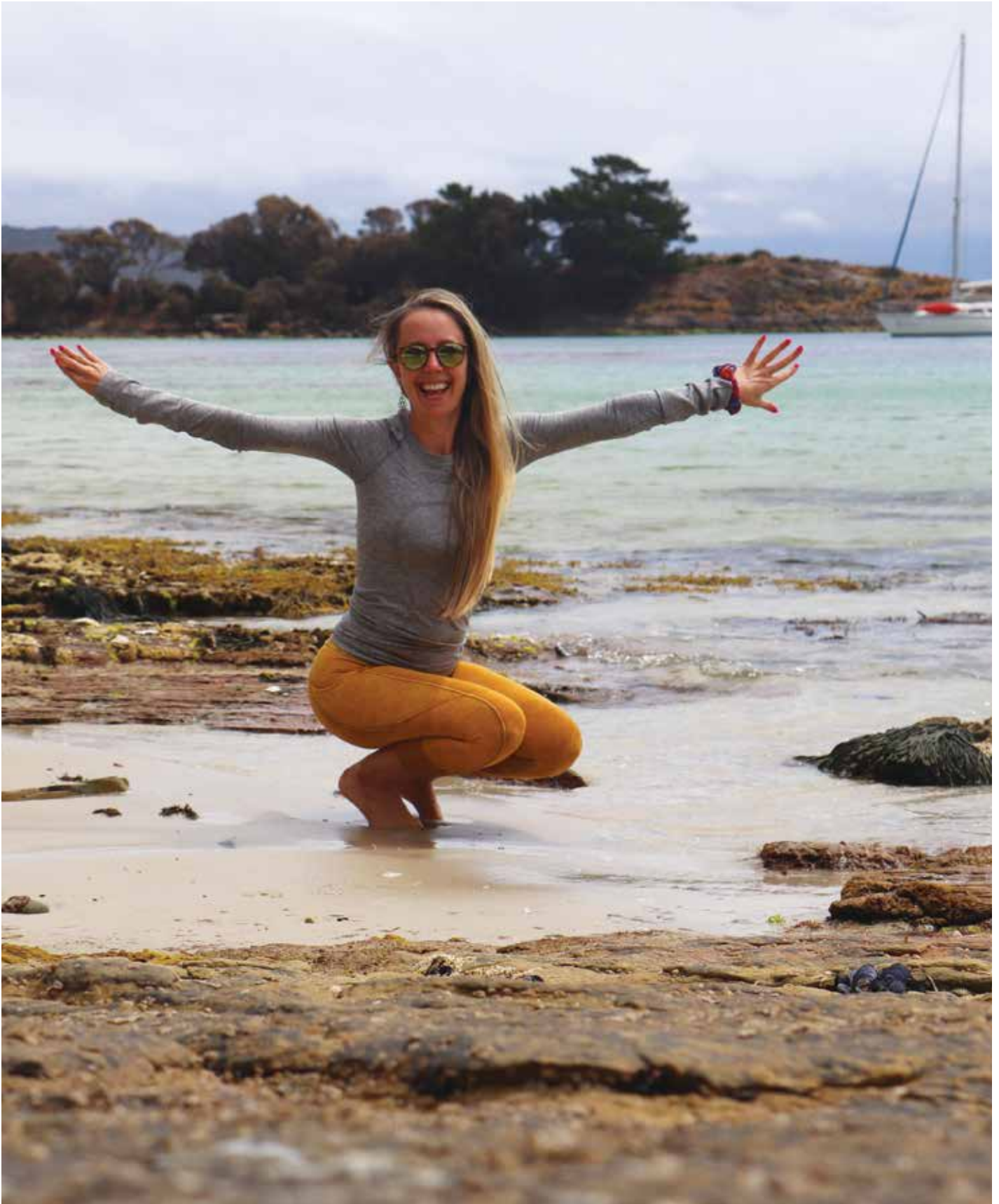
Drop by drop

We anticipated that when we were finally able to return to Hobart, we would crack the companionway and be greeted by mouldy walls that plagued us during Pacific Northwest winters. We breathed a sigh of relief; she was just as we had left her nearly a year earlier.

We untied *Red Thread's* dock lines and unfurled her headsail. Twelve- to 17 knots of breeze astern breathed life back into our CM440, and into us. Well, two of us, anyway. Sawyer was less impressed by the whole fandango



Neil and Sawyer wave from the bow before Tasmania's magnificent Southern Ranges. Pigsties Anchorage, Recherche Bay.



After 9 months of lockdowns in mainland Australia, the feeling of exploring new anchorages was incomparable. North Tinpot Anchorage, Bruny Island.

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and clung to me like a terrified koala for much of the time underway. His bulky yellow lifejacket and oversized sunhat made for a cumbersome cuddle, as we ventured south through the d'Entrecasteaux Channel and into Recherche Bay 50 NM south over several days.

We were hellbent on losing ourselves in nature for a couple weeks and did precisely that.

We found our way to anchorages where we could pluck muscles from the rocks, and shared bonfires and sundowners with strangers who seemed every bit as interested to learn about us as we were them. I could feel my cup, depleted from a year of uncertainty, separation from loved ones in the United States, and the mayhem of working from home with a toddler at my ankles, filling drop by drop.

In Pigsties Bay, we befriended Jason and Tiggy, a lovely couple from a Cape

Dory 330 called Sirens' Song, with whom we shared an anchorage, drinks, and stories. Jason schooled Neil in the art of skin diving for abalone and harvesting them from the seafloor. I learned the gory process of slicing said abalone from their opulent shells and the culinary delight of searing them "just right." We carried Sawyer on our shoulders over beaches laden with black boulders, and wiggled our toes in soft, pale sand. We paddleboarded and took naps and watched our tiny adventurer beachcomb for treasures of seashells and driftwood.

And then we caught a weather window and scurried north. We had a haulout for some major maintenance scheduled back in Hobart and no interest in getting caught out in a blow in the roaring 40s.

Two years on...

As we knock on the 2-year anniversary of COVID-19 being declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, I wonder about the ways this global event has stretched and even broken each of us in different ways. As sailors, as people, I hope we can hold space for one another as we work individually and collectively to heal. May we find silverlinings as we reflect on the ways that this [hopefully] once-in-a-century event has shifted our daily lives, our priorities, and our relationships.

For me, I need more time afloat.

There are ways that boats nourish us and replenish us that words simply cannot convey. I hope that just as the rocking of *Red Thread* and the gurgling of seawater beneath her stern helped to calm my angst at the dawn of 2021 that you, too, can find healing from this period of global heartache aboard your Catalina yacht.



Transfixed, Sawyer would sit still for the better part of an hour as we explored the shoreline aboard our iSUP. Pigsties Anchorage, Recherche Bay.