

Murray Magic – June 2007

The Queens Birthday Long Weekend cruise on the Murray River was an eventful cruise. A cruise that would be talked about for cruises to come. In all, 4 boats participated in the cruise which began at the Torrumbarry weir and covered a little over 100 kms by water.

The cruise began for Wayne and Maria Taylor and kids on Friday night, enduring peak hour traffic, and driving to Shepparton to get an early start on the proposed launch at Torrumbarry weir at 10.00am Saturday. Despite taking nearly 4 hours (mainly through peak hour traffic), the drive with their boat “Still Cruisin” was uneventful.

A cold but sunny Saturday morning saw Wayne and his family leave from Shepparton where they spent the night at the Malone place. The 2 boats headed off towards Mooroopna when Wayne’s trailer began smoking. Immediately pulling off to the side of the road on the busy causeway between Shepparton and Mooroopna it was found that one of the portside wheel bearing had failed. We were to spend the next 6 hours here searching for parts, learning about wheel bearings and wondering if we were ever going to get to our destination. Then out of nowhere a passer by stopped to offer assistance after seeing the Whittleby on the side of the road. After a short discussion the good samaritan announced that he managed a trailer manufacturing business in Shepparton and he was also a friend of Neville Whittleby and family. After looking at the problem his diagnosis was that the heat generated had welded the outer bearing casings to the hub. It all looked hopeless until he said he had a hub complete with bearings at his factory. After collecting the new hub, he fitted it for us on the roadside for just the price of a new hub. Owning a Whittleby has its rewards.

While Wayne and Stuart were trying to repair the wheel, Debbie and David Jonker with their 2 kids called to say they were lost and found in Euroa after missing the turn off to Echuca. They were not going to meet the 10.00am launch time deadline. Hearing of the situation they opted for some sight seeing around Echuca where the annual Steam Rally was on. Only Steve and Mary in Juliet had any chance of being on the water on time.

With trailer fixed and on the move again, both boats arrived at the boat ramp by 4.15pm. and joined the Jonker’s for the pre launch preparations. Wayne launched followed by the Jonker’s who found they had a flat battery (fridge was left on?) Having had this experience myself I knew how to get things started and with a bit of careful positioning and battery juggling we were able to get the boat started by connecting a fresh battery directly to the Jonker’s engine. Steve and Mary had launched earlier in the day and now were sitting in deckchairs around a campfire about 10 kms upstream.

I successfully launched, but in the dark and not having my best mate (wife) to do the usual things we forgot to take the winch handle off and lost it when parking the trailer.

With all on the water and now in the dark, with Steve and Mary upstream enjoying a campfire - should we stay or should we go? Of course we went. A night cruise to start the weekend. Using Wayne’s spotlight we carefully negotiated the river and found Steve and Mary. Making good our berthing, our dinner was prepared on the boats and fireside. The odd beer and wine was consumed but it was early to bed for our tired, exhausted but finally relaxed bodies.

Club Cruise Report

Sunday morning saw daylight break revealing fog on the water. A magnificent site, first seen since arriving in the dark. A leisurely pace was set in the morning. Meeting new people, eating breakfast, kids exploring and playing, and coffee shared while sitting on the Jonker's boat were all par for the course. We were treated to a "cruise by" of some other Whittley boats while getting ready to depart.



Lunchtime was approaching and we were ready to get our boats "on the plane". Finally cruising we headed upstream to Deep Creek marina where those that wanted showers had them. I spent a good hour trying to get a splinter out of my 7 year old's big toe here.

After lunch we headed further upstream to Will's bend which is a sandy beach and "no-wash" zone. The kids dug a big hole while a campfire was lit and supplied by timber we brought from home. Steaks, onions, jacket potatoes and a footy meat pie were all cooked around the fire while Mary prepared a batch of scones in the camp oven using a recipe which will be on our new club website.

Many boating stories, tips and experiences were recounted around the fire where it was decided a tips site on the website would be helpful. Feeling the warmth of the fire and camaraderie everyone was finally relaxed and looking forward to the next days cruising on the plane down the Murray (mindful of our wake) for the 50 kms back to the boat ramp.

Monday morning arrived. This was the moment we were as far away from our homes as we had been all weekend. We knew by that night we would all be home. Our journey began around 10.30am with all 4 boats 'up on the plane' and heading back to Torrumbarry. Every bend revealed water level with the bank, due to the weir. A luxury, in this time of drought.

Club Cruise Report



We arrived back at the boat ramp around lunchtime. Lunch was had and the boats were pulled out. What an achievement! With a long drive home ahead of us we all said our goodbyes. Wayne's parting remark to me was could I write the cruise report? I guess I only had to drive one and a half hours to Shepparton. Time enough for me to think that if we had not been part of the Melbourne Whittleby Cruiser Club, with all the events of the weekend, as individuals we probably would not have gone boating this weekend!

Till the next cruise.

The Malone Crew