

HAWKESBURY RIVER CRUISE 2008

This amazing waterway north of Sydney was the playground for three Whittley cruisers. Two 2800's, Time Out and Chill Pill and one 660 Cruiser, Zero Tolerance took part in this Christmas cruise. Six adults and 4 children were comfortably accommodated.

The crews were as follows.

Chill Pill Darren and Tracy Cain with Minnie the dog

Time Out Wayne and Maria Taylor with Aiden and Ashley and Chloe the dog

Zero Tolerance Stuart and Annette Malone with Lachlan and Ethan

Time Out and Chill Pill left Melbourne Boxing Day heading to Goulburn for the night. Arriving at Brooklyn the next day the boats were launched and docked at Fenwick's Marina for the night.

The following day Zero Tolerance arrived direct from Shepparton. With the boat launched preparations were made which included inflation of our tenders, necessary when exploring the river system. Rock strewn banks covered with oyster shells and great tidal heights made pulling into the banks impossible. So anchoring or attaching to a mooring and deploying the tender became an everyday occurrence if the shore was to be explored.



We planned to see the New Year in watching the fireworks from Sydney harbor. Wayne Taylor heard Athol Bay near the Taronga Zoo was the prime location to view the fireworks. We planned to take the 22 nautical mile ocean trip from the Hawkesbury river to Sydney harbor. Since none of us had been out in the ocean before, we thought it would be prudent to go early in the morning before any wind picked up.

Since we wanted to get away early the next day our first night out on the Hawkesbury was near the entrance to the ocean at a little cove called the The Basin. Here we had our first lesson in mooring etiquette. Public moorings are very few. Private moorings are plentiful. You can use a private mooring but must give it up if the owners arrive. If they arrive after dark there is a gentleman's agreement that they will not ask you to move. And you are only allowed 1 boat per mooring. Anyhow we found a mooring and we all rafted up to it for the night.

The following day we woke early and prepared ourselves for the ocean voyage. Without breakfast and wearing lifejackets we headed out. Little or no wind was encountered as we rounded Barrenjoey Head. All looked promising till the rolling ocean swell pitched our boats up and down. Since we had never experienced this before we all felt a little uneasy. Discussions amongst boat crews and between boats over the VHF radios resulted in Chill Pill and Zero Tolerance continuing and Time Out deciding to abort.



As skipper of Zero Tolerance heading out into the swell for the first time was an anxious moment. The pitching and rolling was like nothing I has experienced before. Both my sons were sick and the mandatory bucket was used. After a while with careful and constant steering, trim and power adjustments I felt at ease and understood the boat was very capable with the state of the sea. Darren, the skipper of Chill Pill logged our intentions with the Coast Guard over the VHF radio and we both had an exhilarating trip through the heads into Sydney Harbor.

Arriving at Athol bay both Chill Pill and Zero Tolerance prepared breakfast and we heard Time Out was on the way by road to join us. Fuel was taken at Rushcutters Bay and we all had lunch docked at the fish market



Sugarloaf Bay, Sydney harbor

We headed off to find a beach to swim and cool off. Participating in the recent NSW Whittley Regatta we knew of a little cove and beach, near Manly the NSW club showed us. Only this time it was very crowded. From here we headed up past the Spit and onto Sugarloaf Bay were we rafted up for the night on calm waters

New Years Eve dawned and we headed to Athol bay to claim a vantage point. With wind and many boats swinging off anchors we all rafted up for the celebrations. The kids and mum of Zero Tolerance headed up to the Zoo for the day. The rest of us watched as more and more boats arrived and dropped anchor.

The fireworks came and went and it was worth it. A fantastic experience. Parties on nearby boats continued but we all called it a night soon after considering the adventures we had just to get there and the early morning we would have to get away through the heads and back to the Hawkesbury.

The trip back to the Hawkesbury was uneventful. All three boats joined up at Akuna Bay where fuel was taken on and clothes washed. The very hot conditions meant our clothes dried very quickly.



Athol bay, Sunset New Years eve

Leaving Akuna Bay we headed further up Cowan Creek to Smiths Creek where we all moored for the night. Luck would have it the members of the NSW Whittley club were moored nearby, sighted us and radioed contact. A happy hour soon followed where boating tips and sights to see on the Hawkesbury River were discussed. Smiths creek was our home for two nights, with the 3 boats doing their own exploring around the area – Bobbin Head, Pittwater marinas, Brooklyn, Barrenjoey Head, Palm Beach.



Barrenjoey Head, Palm Beach

The next day all three boats headed upstream, approximately 20km to Wiseman's ferry, stopping at Spencer for supplies. The vistas changed from open waters of the Hawkesbury to the steep cliffs and dense bush land of the river upstream. The boat craft changed from cruising/sailing boats to ski and house boats. Public moorings were difficult to come by - a common experience in these waters. We found private mooring each and spent the night. The challenge for this area was managing the strong tidal flow. Historically, Wiseman ferry was the only way north of Sydney by road. Zero Tolerance crew took a ride on the ferry and explored the remains of a bridge the convicts built.

A rendezvous with the NSW Whittley club members at Berowra Waters occurred on the Saturday night. We had a fabulous buffet evening meal at the Waterview Restaurant and a great extension of hospitality by the NSW Whittley Club members. We retired for a calm and relaxing night docked at the fuel jetty. A picturesque place to visit – great oysters and prawns!



Waterview restaurant Berowra waters



Wisemans Ferry Hawkesbury river

Time Out and Chill Pill headed downstream to our next rendezvous point – Royal Prince Alfred Yacht Club in Newport (Pittwater). We were to spend two nights here with showers! It was great to step foot on solid ground and we all enjoyed a meal at the Newport Arms hotel. The Time Out crew set out for a day in Sydney, traveling by bus the next day. Chill Pill and Zero Tolerance decided to explore around Lion Island and headed towards Brisbane Waters. We found a protected beach surrounded by national park, anchored here for a swim ashore and fishing. Zero Tolerance and Chill Pill went to Refuge Bay for lunch and to find the well known water falls. Much to our surprise the water fall was a trickle set back from a small but popular beach. There were many boats, all shapes and sizes, moored. Fortunately there were many wet moorings available. Returning back to the Prince Alfred Yacht Club, we had tea at Royal Motor Yacht Club much to the delight of Zero Tolerance boys of a pool and playground. Had we arrived a little earlier, they could have enjoyed swimming at the pool.

The next day the three boats did their own thing deciding to meet up at Refuge Bay for the night. The weather changed from hot and windy to thunder storms and much cooler weather for the next two days. The crews of Chill Pill and Zero Tolerance decided to climb to the top of the water falls exploring the surrounding bush. There was no marked trail – 4 adults, 2 kids and one dog had an adventure!



Refuge bay Waterfall



Refuge bay

For our final day on the water, Chill Pill decided to head back to Brooklyn in the early afternoon to pull out and clean the boat. Time Out and Zero Tolerance headed to Bobbin Head for the morning and lunch. Much history surrounds this area as a meeting place for the public, in the mix of European and Native parkland.

Alas our boating holiday was nearing an end as we headed back to Brooklyn to ready our boats for road departure. As we slipped into the Hawkesbury River from Cowan Creek, Zero Tolerance had to have one more adventure denying the end of the holiday. They snuck back to Palm Beach for afternoon tea and watched the Sea Planes come and go, thinking about what had been enjoyed and achieved, learning new boating skills, pushing the limits of what we thought possible on a Whitley boating holiday. A sigh..... We will be back.

