



Echuca – Torrumbarry Weir to Barham

June Long Weekend 2011

With the promise of good weather for the Queens Birthday weekend we drove to Torrumbarry Weir a day early to find Don & Jan – Wave Rider, Peter & Tuppence – Mabel 11 and Greg, Colleen & Molly Elks – Kahala, already in the water – they had been there since the Wednesday!

Greg was already in campfire mode bringing out his trusty Stihl chainsaw that evening saw us around a fire discussing our options for the coming cruise. Was it to be up river to Echuca or as recommended by the Lock master downstream to Koondrook/Barham?



The section of the river below Lock 26 was in high water and with the recent flows and flooding the channel in the river offered us a unique opportunity to traverse a section that would ordinarily not be available to us.

Don & Jan along with Peter had done some serious investigation prior with a printout of some great maps of the Murray River – which had been mapped in 2002 when the river was quite low...

so all the tricky spots were marked – shallows; gravel shoals; and odd stumps were all marked, so navigation was going to be easy – providing there were no new snags (dead trees riverside) brought down by the high water.

A 'phone call to Stuart, Annette & crew (Zero Tolerance) who were yet to arrive... and we were all in agreement. So the decision was made rather than push it to go up to Koondrook and back (a distance of approx 102k each way on river) with the river flow pretty strong or only do half the distance and return to Lock 26 – petrol for our vessels could be an issue – we agreed to take our time and enjoy the trip one way to Koondrook. That meant taking two vehicles to leave one at Koondrook and return to commence the journey by river... so Greg & Peter made the trek up and back, leaving Peters' vehicle at Koondrook to ferry all the drivers back to Torrumbarry to collect vehicles and trailers at the end of our cruise.

We retired fairly early that Friday night & it was a cold one .. perhaps the coldest of the trip.

So all systems go... the Malone family arrived on Saturday morning and were quickly in the water. Peter & Greg got back from the car sortie and the Lockmaster was booked to let us through around 11am.

To navigate the lock you have to motor into the lock and berth at the wall side. A rope from both the bow and stern is held without tying off to keep the boat steady while the water drops once the lock gates are closed... around 4 meters to meet the level of the water below the lock. Then the gates are opened into the river below the lock and you motor out... sounds easy and it was. A pretty big event though, as the Lockmaster usually only sees about half a dozen boats annually & we had 5 boats go through all in one go!!

Don & Jan (Wave Rider) took the lead and the Malone crew (Zero Tolerance) were Tail-End-Charlie for the cruise. We – John & Helen with Bella & Amy in Shalimar were the rookies... so we were kept under Peters' watchful eye – with Tuppence supervising the chocolate biscuits in Mabel 11.... so that left Greg & Colleen with Molly in Kahala to play at the rear with Stuart , Annette and crew Lochie & Ethan



on Zero Tolerance. An early lunch near Torrangabby Cutting after all the organising and then a pleasurable afternoon cruising down river... there were some lovely stretches and many bends to enjoy. We managed to get up on the plane a few times but care had to be taken as there were many fishermen in tinnys & craypots or buoys with funnel traps for redfin often right across the river.

Around 4pm Don found a bank that was not too steep on the NSW side that was big enough for us all to raft up and Greg wasted no time getting some wood for the campfire with many helping hands.

With a few lines in the river and b-b-q's on the go we quickly made ourselves a meal and settled in for some campfire chat.

The following morning we woke to another beautiful day – campfire still smouldering was restoked for breakfast and a bit of leg stretching – finally dousing the fire and setting off by 10am

Our journey down this stretch of river was outstanding. Long stretches of water and then lots of hair pin bends made it a most enjoyable cruise. Slowing again for the fishermen the odd one tucked around a corner got a bit of a choppy ride... but we did our best keeping watch for them. It was beaut to see so many people enjoying the forest and the river... wisps of smoke from their campfires across the water made some picture perfect snaps... if you had time that is, as the river demanded your full attention.

By lunch we had travelled further the second day than we had the first and took a couple of hours to languish in the sun and relax – Don & Jan making the most of their

rubber ducky (tender) for a bit of sunning. That afternoon we made further good progress and stopped a little earlier – this time on the Victorian side of the Murray.

Wood gathering and campfire preparations ensued then all the goodies came out for happy hour. The evening darkened to a clear night and a full moon. Stuart (Zero Tolerance) had brought out a small shovel – these Whittley's are like the proverbial tardis.. what we fit in & pull out is amazing!! This shovel proved to be the reason for a long night fireside when John (Shalimar) shared a campfire trick that warmed you from your bottom to your ears – literally. The pleasure of feeling this warm out in the open was the reason for the many “oohhs & aahhs” even from Lochie & Ethan – the junior crew from Zero Tolerance. You will have to come to our next winter outing with campfire to try it out ☺ . And we won't mention Tuppences' snoring will we Peter??

The following morning we only had around 30ks to go – again on another perfect day. Zero Tolerance and Kahala decided to start the morning off with some 'drifting' – the water like glass though the flow was fast.

The river was becoming a little busier getting closer to the riverside towns of Koondrook and we finished our trek at Barham – rafting up on the NSW side near Barham Caravan Park. The local paper Koondrook-Barham Bridge came and took some pictures and a trip report from Peter (Mabel 11) as it apparently was a rare event to see boats such as our Whittleys up river.

Peter and drivers took their leave – driving back to Torrumbarry Weir to collect cars and trailers and they returned in a couple of hours when we had lunch after which the Zero Tolerance crew retrieved their boat for the trip home. The rest of us stayed put that night and Greg & Colleen (Kahala) & ourselves in Shalimar made our exit the following day.

All credit to Don, Jan (Wave Rider) and Peter (Mabel 11) for their good planning for a great trip, particularly as Don was just out of hospital it was a great effort and we hope things continue to improve for you Don. Total of kilometres travelled on the water was about 102klms

So next time a trip on the Murray is planned... put it in your diary as a must do – it's a weekend and an experience to remember.

Helen & John Fawcett (with Bella & Amy)
Shalimar

