

MELBOURNE WHITTLEY CRUISER CLUB

EASTER CRUISE 2011

GIPPSLAND LAKES

Four Whittley Cruisers gathered at the Johnsonville boat ramp on the Tambo River Good Friday 2011 at 10:00am. Bay Cruiser, Mabel 2 and Zero Tolerance were on the water waiting for our SA members Peachy to arrive and launch. It was a bright sunny day with a freshening westerly wind. We were having lunch as Peachy arrived. Once they launched and had a VHF radio installed the days itinerary was discussed. The strengthening westerly wind would be making it difficult to cross Lake King comfortably so it was decided to head further up the sheltered Tambo River to a known sandbar where we could spend our first night.

Travelling at 5 knots Bay Cruiser, Mabel 2, Zero Tolerance and Peachy navigated the Tambo River upstream. Passing under the Princess Hwy at Swan Reach we continued on through cattle grazing country till the river turned at the foot of some rocky cliffs which were reflecting the setting sun. Soon after shallow waters were encountered. With our legs raised we were still able to navigate the river till the sandbar on the port side was reached. Boats were nosed into the sandbar and secured to each other.



All members were invited onto Bay Cruiser for the traditional Happy Hour where our S.A. members onboard Peachy were made welcome.

Saturday morning saw a bright clear sky replace the cold air of the night. A peaceful sleep was had by all. After breakfast we explored a further 2kms upstream in an inflatable where another sandbar was located. Our boats would not be able to reach this second sandbar.

Eager to get out on the lake proper we departed our overnight site and travelled the 2 hours back downstream. Some took the opportunity to let partners take the helm while windows were cleaned and polished. Once at the mouth of the Tambo River it was all boats up on the plane with Peachy, Mabel 2 and Zero Tolerance enroute for Rotamah Island and Bay Cruiser heading to Paynesville for supplies.

Arriving at the Rotamah Island jetty the south westerly was increasing. Peachy, Mabel 2 and Zero Tolerance docked on the windward side. Allowing the wind to bring us alongside made docking easy. Arriving later, Bay Cruiser had to dock on the leeward side. The difficult docking into the wind made to look easy with an experienced helmsman and deckhand.

The remainder of the day was spent exploring the island which must be a bird watching haven. On the way to the ninety mile beach two bird hides were encountered. One could imagine the hours spent waiting for a bird to come into view.

Departing Rotomah Island all cruisers' headed out across Lake Victoria for the short run to Duck arm. Passing the port marker at the entrance to Duck Arm all boats slowed to 5 knots. Taking the first turn to starboard Picnic Arm was entered. A suitable site was located to the west where we nosed into the shore, rafted up for the night and set up for happy hour. The very protected and calm waters of Picnic Arm ensured a restful night sleep.



Sunday's sun rising on our sterns revealed the Easter bunny had visited us during the night. Much to the delight of the boys on Zero Tolerance most of the morning was spent hunting for Easter eggs in the bush.

A leisurely cooked breakfast followed the Easter egg hunt. As conditions for the day were improving it was decided to explore Lake Victoria towards Loch sport. Leaving Picnic Arm we pushed out into a westerly wind and moderate chop. Good progress was made on the plane. We decided to pull into the jetty at Wattle Point which was protected from the westerly wind and halfway to Loch Sport. After briefly exploring the area on foot and helping another fellow Whittley owner launch his boat at the boat ramp we settled in for lunch.

After lunch we continued on towards Loch Sport and docked at the towns' jetty. Being calmer a number of boats were out tubing and skiing despite the cool conditions. We all walked to the Loch Sport shops where ice-creams were had as the café was closing despite it being only 3:30!

Departing the jetty we made our way down through the channel markers to the Loch Sport marina. The public jetty at the entrance to marina had recently been upgraded and improved better allowing boats like ours to dock and visit the Loch Sport Hotel.

Heading back to Duck Arm the calm waters and fading light on Lake Victoria combined to produce a very smooth and scenic trip. A most memorable trip with the drone of the engine providing the background noise.

Sunday night saw three cruisers raft up again at Picnic Arm where a calm and quiet night was had. Zero Tolerance spent the night with friends on the Paynesville channels.

Monday morning saw all four cruisers re-group at Paynesville where we headed off to Lakes Entrance. The hour trip on glassy waters ended with us docking at the Post Office public jetty. Lunch was ordered from the bakery opposite. Then the newly constructed marina with floating pontoons and ninety mile Beach Bridge were explored.

While enjoying the afternoon lounging around in our boats Mabel 2 broke the peaceful serenity with news his steering cable had broken. Oh \$#!%. Fortunately an advantage of being on a club cruise was that many suggestions were offered on how to solve the problem. Ultimately no quick fix could be made. We decided we would have to tow Mabel 2 back to the boat ramp.

Being late in the day it was decided to tow Mabel 2 alongside Wave Rider across the entrance to Barrier Landing. There is a public jetty or boats can nose into the beach. Zero Tolerance left the cruise at this time since they launched from Lakes Entrance. Wave Rider and Peachy made their way back to Johnsonville with Mabel 2 in tow from Barrier Landing the next day.

Another enjoyable cruise shared with like minded people came to the end. It made us appreciate the benefits of cruising with the club and the safety it brings.

