

Cruise Report for Torrumbarry on the Queen's Birthday Weekend.

June 6-8th 2015. The Melbourne Whittley Cruiser Club.

The gathering commenced on Friday for some including John and Helen in Shalimar, Gemma and Tony in G&T, Erwin and Peter in Black Betty, Peter and Tuppence in Mabel 2, newcomers Paul and Marielle in Why Knot and just on dark, John, Jane, Fletcher and Matilda in their 2600 (no name/Archie??).

Saturday arrivals were Stuart and Zero Tolerance and Peter and Cobie in Hollywood. We all departed Torrumbarry to meet for lunch and collect Tony and Dianne in Serenity at the Headworks rd boat ramp.

A few hiccups before departure with G&T having engine pump problems and Hollywood with freshwater pump issues but alas Stuart to the rescue, his capable mechanic in Echuca for G&T first thing on Saturday with a quick fix impeller and a spare freshwater pump in Stuart's shed installed at lunchtime by the capable Peter M. for Hollywood. Not to be deterred, we all arrived safely at Deep Creek Marina in time for happy hour to meet and greet with the other Family Cruising Club. In total our club had 9 boats.

By chance the Victorian Family Motor Cruiser Club was up here too with 5 boats, four of them Whittley's. Having launched at Deep Creek Marina, they had arranged to meet us here, and started greetings with our fellow second club members on the jetty for pre-dinner drinks and proceeded to the bar and lounge for dinner at the hotel, barely 20 metres from our moorings. A great night to break the ice for those of us who had not met before, including getting to know our two new members in Paul and Marielle, welcome and enjoy which they did! Peter and Audrey Nic. also made the effort to drive join us for dinner staying in Echuca for the night, Audrey's knee reconstruction is almost there for her to participate on Conkiki again.

The following morning we made a leisurely start off towards Echuca with the MWCC with a farewell from Peter and Audrey waving us goodbye and the other club heading back towards Torrumbarry to find a spot for us all for the night. A big ask for some with so many boats, we had faith and they delivered brilliantly.

We had lunch at a lovely beach which was covered in a fine grey silt, Gemma and Stuart braved the silt in bare feet to assist the rest of us in rafting up for lunch. Nobody else got off their boat in fear of getting sucked in by the mud. Great leadership from Gem and Stu!! Better you than the rest of us. Even Fletcher decided against a swim after some sound advice from dad John, "think of your options and the consequences of getting back on this pristine boat looking like Gem and Stu!!!" The departure saw Gem don the wellies releasing us all and away we went.

Alas, trouble loomed... "Black Betty, Black Betty from Serenity, from Serenity the engine has just stopped and we're dead in the water, no power" then a silence that was deafening, not much noise happening on the VHF channel 72. Then "Serenity, Serenity from Black Betty from Black Betty "so what's happened?", the rest of us said nothing. Then Di's on the air "Black Betty, Black Betty, from Serenity, its going again we'll continue on" then more silence. It happened to Serenity at least three or four more times, some avenues of attack were suggested and tried with little to no effect, but we all held our breath for Serenity as we progressed on towards our destination. No-one had a solution and Di and Tone were pretty much on their own!!!! We were spread over the Murray for many kilometres with Stuart leading the pack and slowing to 5 knots every time Serenity had kenipchons, very frustrating as there were also tinnies and skiers on the water as well.

Then, in the midst of all our angst and secretly thanking God, Allah and Fate, that it was not one of us in their (Serenity's) predicament. Out of the blue our esteemed Commodore comes up on ch 72 for one of our fleet to lighten the atmosphere (I think it was Black Betty), to do some circle work (equivalent of burnouts on bitumen) in the middle of the river in front of G&T for a shot of the boat to make a gif file. They had to do it two or three times to get it right for the camera. This in the midst of the chaos with Serenity miles away from our destination. Gemma the film clip better be a pearler! And it certainly lightened the mood on board Hollywood.

As always and predictably, Mabel 2 offered to stay with Serenity until they got to our home base. Pete, you are a gentleman and a true boatie. To Di and Tony's credit, they kept their cool under trying conditions and made the home base safely. Problem still unsolved until tomorrow.

Our home base chosen by the other club was fantastic, they went to a lagoon not too far from Torrumbarry which they totally prepared for us complete with a huge fire and plenty of wood. Mike had his rubber duckie at the ready to guide us all in and use it as a barge to assist G&T to reverse in sideways and backwards. They picked moorings for boats with dogs and children and all 14 boats fitted in the space, we had a group of boats moored stern to stern and rafted up in a block of eight. This ended up as a party barge at the end of the night, more on that later. On our arrival the other club helped with lines and fenders to get us all moored safely, a great effort and a most welcoming experience.

After everyone finally secured their boats, found their chairs, filled their glasses and assembled their nibbles we were treated to a fantastic night around the fire. John (Shalimar) decided to woo the younger ladies as the night got colder with a party trick he has used for years. He delivered each one with shovel full of hot coals right under their seats to keep their derrieres warm through the night. Lyne got so hot she had to move her chair. Later in the night he also delivered to the more mature ladies and I got a shovel full too, only to discover my chair had 'aged' underneath during the night, good on you John for looking after us! Nibbles were fantastic and so was the company. At this point Paul and Mariel thought this club stuff was going pretty good, they got to meet all of us and discussed lots of boating issues as they are new to the Whittleys, and this was only their third launching. They retrieved easily at Torrumbarry and vowed to join us again.

I also remember a discussion about the benefits of being in a club with the other members. The other club owns a chainsaw, we want one too, Peter Walters got a mention, they wanted to trade him for the chainsaw, but he's not for sale, he is definitely always and forever ours along with Tuppence. In fact, later in the night we talked about how Peter manages to get onto all our boats for a meal, well we reckon we've got enough brownie points to get on Pete's boat for a dish or two. We promise to bring the truffles, liquorice and chocolates as well. Great to see Peter make such a strong recovery after his hip surgery.

When it was time to retire for dinner we all headed back to our boats, however block of eight decided to kick on a little longer with Gemma giving a fine rendition of 'dancing' using the chrome 'poles' on the marlin board, much hilarity and laughter. Irwin got a mention for his slippers, 'pretty but practical Erwin'. Great to see Peter Abbinga again too, it was last year's Torrumbarry trip where there were only two boats for the weekend, Peter and Erwin and Peter and I (we both talked about getting the next boat and here we are with them this year), it was sunny but very, very cold, we had great fun and Peter A. came back for more this year. Great stuff.

Another leisurely morning on the Monday, up around 8ish, doing breakfast, lots of chatter, Stuart had already run 8kms to the weir and back, Peter (Hollywood) had put a line in on the river side with

no luck, fire still going, no-one going anywhere in a hurry. Mabel 2, G&T, Black Betty and Shalimar were all staying on with Monica and Mike and others for the Monday night. Serenity was yet to get back to the Headworksrd jetty safely.

The day finished with Zero Tolerance, Why Knot, No Name / Archie (John & Jane) and Hollywood retrieving at Torrumbarry safely. Another great weekend with Paul and Mariel acknowledging a welcoming weekend from all club members and huge round of applause to Stuart for his as usual thorough preparation and safe boating. By Cobie Morris.

Later on in the afternoon, Black Betty's crew escorted and supported Serenity back to their car, and returned for a quiet night by the fire and dinner and drinks. No Happy Hour tonight really, as we were all worn out! The morning saw some showers that were just enough to wet the boats.

Impulse was first off early that day, followed a few hours later by all the remaining boats. It was a fabulous weekend, and all the more enjoyable for meeting everyone in the VFMCC and enjoying boating with 14x like-minded cruising families!

Thanks to everyone for a brilliant weekend of boating, and adventuring along the Murray River!