



Melbourne Whittley Cruiser Club Inc.

Cruise Report – Lake Eildon – 27 Dec 2019 to 2 Jan 2020

Attendees:

- Mike and Monica Jones – Impulse
- Mike and Venora Smith – Braveheart
- Marisca and Paul Van Pampus – Groovy Ruvie
- Peter Walters – Mabel 11
- Tony and Gemma Dickson – G&T
- John, Jane, Matilda and Fletcher Archibald – Archie
- Stuart and Annett Malone – Zero Tolerance
- Erwin Abbinga – Black Betty



Peter Walters always arrives early. 6am to 6.15am was our suggested timing but Pete showed up as always earlier than that, strolling casually up to our gate at 5.45am with a broad smile on his dial. At least we were almost ready... driving off to Lake Eildon at 6.23am. We tested the indicators and brake lights on the trailer, trialed the electric brakes and made our way to the Ring Rd.

We always aim to stop at Wallan BP as it's an easy refuelling spot for the car and boat, with all the conveniences of quality coffee, a pit stop and any last minute items you might want. We opted for just one chocolate muffin and the coffees, making it to Yea in good time for a post coffee pit stop for us and a short walk for the dogs. Our new 14 week old schnoodle Rosie was proving to be a dream traveller, falling asleep as soon as we clipped her into the seat belt. But the test will always be the boat with toilet training. Not ideal, but since my (Gem's) dad and sister-in-law passed away in Sept and Oct, Rosie became a welcome new addition.



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Last year Pete had trouble with his trailer, so we were glad to motor on beyond the Alexander turn off where we had spent quite some time trying to stabilise the problem bearing and wheel. It was still pretty quiet on the roads being early in the day and the day after Boxing Day. A great day to travel.

We arrived and launched by around 11am, meeting up with John, Jane, Matilda and Fletcher on the water where we motored up to the dam wall to have some lunch and have a leisurely swim. It was 28degrees so lovely and refreshing.

This year the Archibald's had chanced across an empty bay to moor in with deep water and great private cove beyond a treed entry that cannot be passed by house boats. The banks are fairly steep though, so not great for walking around with pets or for pitching tents. There's lovely wild life with fish jumping around and a fabulous sighting of a pair of King fishers was stunning ...richly coloured feathers and perky beak. Sadly, I missed capturing them on camera, but at least saw them clearly with the binoculars. Tony caught them on camera a little later. Wow birds can be absolute stunners!



Next day, the 28th, my friend Geraldine and Graeme visited for around the 4th year in a row with their Cruiser for a swim and long afternoon happy hour!! Geraldine's sister and Graeme's daughter came too so that was lots of fun catching up, chatting all afternoon. We then settled down to a quiet late afternoon when a Cr660 meandered into the bay... wow, it was Stuart & Annette in Zero Tolerance! Party Party!! We had a few more drinks and swims, shared dinner and talked well into the night.



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The 29th was a little warmer at 38degrees so lots of shade was set up with various awnings, grabbing lots of a swims etc. plus we shared a morning cook up of bacon and eggs followed by a freshly brewed coffee which was perfect. Being Sunday, Stuart & Annette needed to go back to work, but we hoped they would return soon, along with John & Jane.

My sister Lisa (a professional artist) arrived on the 31st for two nights. I was a little nervous as this was her first overnight stay on the boat and she's a brilliant cook. After dad died, I've found my planning for meals a little off-centre, so I did hope to be inspired with culinary cuisine if that was at all possible! LOL! I think we ended up with Happy Hour lasting all night once again, so we ended up with chips, dips, champagne and G&T's... so I was off scot free on the cooking stakes then.

We slept in and took things quietly with a late morning coffee, with another bacon and eggs cook-off with Stuart, Annette, Pete W and us.... Each boat doing a different part of the meal. Pete joined Annette and Stuart, the 3 of us stayed in G&T. It was a lovely way to break into the new year... though John and Jane at this stage were sadly not looking good for a return to the lakes with a sick calf they needed to tend.



After lots more swims, fishing, board paddles, rubber dingy meanders, chats and a snooze, time disappeared until Stuart and Annette had to return home again. My sister left on the 2nd, tag teaming with the arrival of Erwin. His boys and a few family members were coming up for a few days, so a tent site needed to be found. Late in the day we discovered Mike & Monica Jones had arrived (though without their BBQ) along with Mike and Venora Smith. They camped the night at

Jerusalem Creek with plans for the BBQ to be dropped off/delivered on the 3rd.



On the morning of Friday the 3rd, the smoke haze arrived. We knew Pete and Audrey had been marooned at Mallacoota due to the bushfires, and with Eildon surrounded by bush, we knew Eildon could potentially be at risk here too. So with this in mind, we were heading up towards the Delatite and Ford Inlet where the terrain is rolling hills for farming, so less risk of fires in tree-tops above the boats. We were motoring along nicely untilnothing. The motor just stopped.



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Clearly an electrical issue. Darn it.....so a huge thank you to the magnificent prowess of international rescue (Peter Walters) who saved our bacon!! Our engine would not restart. It was only a 5-year-old engine which we lovingly care for and maintain. Glad we had our tow rope there ready. Sometimes things just go wrong! Thank you to our support team on the boat ramp. Venora taking calls... Mike Smith and Paul Van Pampus who were chest deep in the water to help us float the boat onto the trailer. Great suggestion by Mike Smith for Pete to motor forward then turn off at the last moment so we could float directly into their care!

I was actually relieved to some extent to be away from such a high risk fire zone though. (I'm still a bit of a scaredy chicken!!) A fire started only the day before on the opposite side of the mountain range from where we were with Pete, the Archibald's, the Malone's and my sister Lisa. How they would put the fire out in such a remote area I don't know. Fingers crossed it was a quick truck accessed fix.

We were diverted around Thornton on our way home as there had been a head on accident and fatality. The coroner was yet to arrive at the crash site, being of a local forestry worker that was just knocking off work... (according to local people we spoke to). So so so tragic and sad! Apparently Mike Jones son had been first on scene attending to a very confronting sight of people desperately needing urgent medical care. Well done to him!

Getting back to our boat....we believed our Engine had an electrical fault. Probably a \$2 part that will take \$2000 to find and fix...though as I finish this trip report off, it was just a fuse. Geepers! It was tucked in behind the batteries with a spare attached. If only we'd known to look there in the 40-degree afternoon, it would have been a 3-minute fix. At least it didn't cost us thousands to pay someone else to find the answer. Thanks again for the support here of Peter W – International Rescue!

We were slow to empty the boat but what a hot day to get out of Eildon!!!! As we drove out it was 40degrees. Not great for trailer bearings, brakes on steep hill ranges & tyres. But we drove at around 80 or 90 kms and sometimes less. We had a stop at Yea and regularly checked the wheels/tyres etc. arriving home at 10.15pm, parking in our carport as soon as we could.



The cruise continued for a little more at Eildon, though with smoke haze increasing, strong breezes and occasional fires reported regularly nearby, all Eildon boating visitors had departed by the afternoon of Tuesday 7th.