



Melbourne Whittley Cruiser Club Inc.

Gippsland Cruise March 2021

The Boats & Crew:

- Tom Tsotsos and Karen Phillips - TK
- Brad and Karen Jones - Surreal
- Richard Dong and Miao Wu - Big Dong
- Peter and Audrey Nicolopoulos - ConKiKi
- John, Jane, Matilda & Fletcher Archibald - Archie
- Rod and Karyn Obrien & Mitchell- 2380
- Stuart Malone - Zero Tolerance

Like most club cruises, boats and crew began arriving at the Paynesville boat ramp the day before. ConKiKi and TK arrived on the Friday and launched. The only problem, TK's battery was flat due their freezer draining the power on the trip down. Through persistence, Peter on ConKiKi was able to secure moorings and power at the Paynesville Motor Yacht Club. Well done guys. The safety of cruising in numbers most evident here.

After 20 knot winds on the preceding days the cruise officially commenced 10.00am Saturday morning with an on water briefing over the VHF radio channel 72. The weather looked perfect with light winds and sunshine. We set off cruising south from the boat ramp through McMillan Straight between Raymond Island and Paynesville. Our "Tail End Charlie", ConKiKi was cut off by the passage of the Raymond Island Ferry.

With all boats assembled at Point Montague and radios checked it was up on the plane towards Ocean Grange and Bunga Arm. Heading south east we were mindful of sighting the lateral markers marking the Aurora Channel. This would help us avoid the shallow waters and guide us to the junction of the Steamer and Grange Channels. Taking the Steamer Channel we remained on the plane, passing the Steamer Landing we continued up Bunga Arm a further 4 nautical miles finally nosing in on a sand spit.



After a short walk over the dunes to the Ninety Mile Beach we sighted a lone seal. We hoped it was not injured but trying to make its way out of the water and onto the beach for a rest. Perhaps it was on its way to the The Entrance where a seal colony is often sighted.



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Enjoying the comfort of our Whittley boats, the perfect weather and lunch time passed without a care. Life was complete! Our only thought was where to for Happy Hour and our overnight stay.



Retracing our course, we headed back out into Lake Victoria where we set course for Lady Bay and the entrance to Duck Arm. A following sea breeze made for the only rough water encountered on the weekend. Once safely in Duck Arm our usual spot just inside the headland was full so we continued up Picnic Arm to nose in and raft up in the usual Whittley manner. The moderate sea breeze abated as we enjoyed Happy Hour which merged into tea.

The abundance of stars in the clear night sky lead to discussions of which “app” would you download to enable you identify the constellations. With all the star gazing our weary crews were asleep shortly after.

Sunday morning sunshine reflecting off the smooth water bathed our sterns in warm light. After morning greetings and a simple breakfast it was decided to cruise to Lakes Entrance given the perfect conditions.

The cruise was perfect. Lake King was glass smooth, as was Bancroft Bay as we rounded shaving point at Metung. Passing Bell point at Nungerner our passage through Reeve Channel saw many boats out fishing for whiting on the outgoing tide flowing over the shallows.

Approaching The Entrance the force of the outgoing tide was evident as we turned into Cunningham Arm. We were worried we would be pushed onto the rocks as we turned out of the fast flowing water. Glad our Whittley boats have the power when we need it!

Cruising up Cunningham Arm, passing the fleet of commercial fishing boats we searched for a spot to moor our boats. It was not till we arrived at the footbridge did we find a spot. With just two spots available we decided to dock two boats and raft the remaining boats. Close quarter manoeuvring skills practiced. Luckily by the time we secured our third boat other spaces became available and ConKiKi and Big Dong were able to come alongside. It was at this time Archi joined the cruise and the whole jetty was full of Whittley’s.



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Before the 4 hour mooring limit was up we departed for Barrier Landing which would be our overnight stay. We were mindful of the current running out The Entrance as we crossed from Cunningham Arm to the narrow Hopetoun Channel.

Rafting up at Barrier Landing, the jetty was full, we had to allow for the changing tide overnight and secured ourselves appropriately. We were also aware of a brand new Whittley 2380 CR moored nearby. It even smelt new! We introduced ourselves to Rod and Karyn Obrien and their son Mitchell. They rafted up with us and joined in our Happy Hour where they took in a great amount of Whittley Club knowledge and experience from us all. It was great to see the club in action.

With a total of seven boats rafted up for the night it must be noted that Richard and Miao on the 2500 SL and Brad on Soreal were the only crew to catch fish and crabs. John on Archie caught prawns. The rest of us caught photos of the perfect sunset over the boats.



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Monday morning was overcast with a slight breeze and light rain. A light breakfast was had as we decided we had better leave before our boats became beached on the outgoing tide.

We headed for Metung passing between Fraser and Rigby Islands and continuing past the steep forested banks of Nyerimilang. The jetty at Metung were surprisingly empty with plenty of room to practice close quarter manoeuvring and dock. It was here we said good-bye to Rod and Karyn Obrien as we went ashore for coffee and morning tea.



Departing Metung we commenced our final leg of the journey back to the Paynesville boat ramp. This time we approached McMillan Straight from the north rounding Point King. A good choice as dolphins were seen by ConKiKi and Surreal.

Back at the boat ramp, with no wind, current or crowds we efficiently drove our boats onto trailers to retrieve them with only a minor "redip" to reposition a boat. Saying our good byes TK, Surreal and ConKiKi continued onto Mallacoota while Big Dong returned home to Melbourne and Zero Tolerance to Shepparton.

A great weekend cruising on perfect weather for the Gippsland Lakes.

*Written by
Stuart Malone.*