

# South Australia Murray River Cruise Report

## Saturday 16 November – Saturday 30 November 2024

What an adventure we had cruising downstream on the Murray River from Renmark to Mannum!!

We had 21 boats who signed up for this challenge – with 2 boats leaving the cruise at Waikerie with another boat joining the cruise at Waikerie.

We travelled 420km downstream, passing through 5 locks and staying at a different location every night (except for our two night stay at Waikerie). This was the biggest cruise ever undertaken by the Whittleby Club Victoria.

Due to the length of the cruise, we had a different crew write a daily trip report that was posted in The Boathouse. These have been incorporated into this cruise report.

### Participating Crews:

Boat Name	Crew Members
FunTime (Cruise Leader)	Gary, Lee & Zali (the dog)
The Boss (Cruise Leader)	Renato & Domenica
Ruby Tuesday (Tail End Charlie)	Wilco, Marisca & Dargo (the dog)
Gottago (Tail End Charlie)	Mark & Eva
Betty Boop	Erwin & Betty
Casper	Peter & Gail
Double J	John & Jenny
Ebony	Phil & Annick
G&T	Tony, Gemma & Gypsy & Rosie (the dogs)
Groovy Ruvie (Waikerie to Mannum)	Paul & Marielle
Happy Time (Renmark to Waikerie)	David & Fannis
Jay Jay	Jay
JB Squared	John & Stephen
Leeway	Wayne & Lee-Anne
Liquid Asset	Scott
Mabel 2	Peter, Vicki & Rusty (the dog)
Sea Legend	Cliff
SS Minnow	Kym , Debbie & Abby (the dog)
Take 2	Russell
Waterway (Renmark to Waikerie)	Richard & Vivian
White Eagle	Artur & Ania

### Thursday 14 November 2024 - Renmark

FunTime & Gottago left the Latrobe Valley early morning to head for an overnight stop at Sea Lake Caravan Park where we also found Mabel 2 and G&T. We had an impromptu happy hour at the Royal Hotel followed by a delicious meal.

### Friday 15 November 202 - Renmark

We (FunTime & Gottago) left early for the 3.5 hour drive to Renmark where we were staying at the pet friendly Echo Caravan Park located on the Murray River. Our hosts Craig and

Leanne couldn't have been more friendly or helpful to us. After settling into our powered site we decided to explore Renmark. During the afternoon more Whittley boats started to appear in the caravan park. We had a yummy BBQ for dinner using the great camp kitchen facilities of the Echo Caravan Park.

### **Day One - Saturday 16 November 2024 - Renmark**

During the day more Whittley boats and crews, continued to arrive at Echo Caravan Park. The weather was hot, so we all headed to the river for the shade and a swim. This was greatly enjoyed by everyone especially by the dogs who splashed and fetched sticks from the river all afternoon.

Dinner was another BBQ held at the Camp Kitchen.

### **Day Two - Sunday 17 November 2024 - Renmark**

Sunday was a busy day for making sure we had all our supplies for our cruise down the Murray River to Mannum. It was also time to launch our boats into the river. The Managers at Echo Caravan Park allowed us to moor our boats along their shoreline for the cost of a powered site. That still gave us access to all the park facilities including showers and the camp kitchen.

The process of launching boats took most of the afternoon with all boats in the water by 3.30pm. We had two boats at Bert Dix Reserve and 18 boats at Echo Caravan Park.

We arranged a "Meet & Greet" to be held at the Paringa Pub which was an easy 15 minute walk from the Bert Dix Reserve and Echo Caravan Park or some smart people called the courtesy bus to be picked up. Again, it had been a very hot day so a cool drink at the pub was going to be most welcome.

We all met in the beer garden which was dog friendly and caught up with each other. There were a few stories of breakdowns and fires from those who had arrived during the day.

The Cruise Leaders provided a briefing of what to expect during the cruise and a reminder that safety was our number one priority. It was decided to split the cruise group into 2 teams. A member from each boat drew a ribbon out to determine which team they would be in. The Green Team would be led by FunTime as cruise leader with Ruby Tuesday as tail end Charlie and The Red Team would be led by The Boss as cruise leader with Gottago as the tail end Charlie. Everybody would remain in their Teams until we got to Loxton where we would redraw teams for the next part of our journey down the river. We then had a game of Boat Bingo where the winners were Gail & Peter from Casper, David & Fannis from Happy Time & Kym & Debbie from SS Minnow.

Most crews stayed for dinner to enjoy the cool air conditioning of the pub before catching the courtesy bus or walking back to the caravan park.

### **Day Three - Monday 18 November 2024 - Renmark**

Today was vehicle and trailer transfer day from Renmark to Mannum.

One member from each crew had to drive their vehicle and trailer to Mannum or Waikerie (Happy Time, Waterway and SS Minnow) where a bus would transport all the drivers back to Renmark. Everyone was up early with some people leaving super early to get some repairs

done to their trailers before bus pick up time. The bus was on time and managed to find all drivers and return them to Renmark by mid-afternoon.

Happy hour and dinner were again in the Camp Kitchen.

Only one more sleep before we headed downstream to Mannum!!

#### **Day Four - Tuesday 19 November 2024**

##### **- Renmark to Berri by Marisca Seinen, Ruby Tuesday**

20 boats leaving Renmark today, what a privilege.

Peeling off the bank, antennas down, we made our way under the Paringa Bridge.

Through Lock 5 we came.

Mabel 2 trying to jump ship to the other team, but hey, when in the lock we are all the same.

Hanging on to the ropes, the water dropping us 2.5 metres down, the doors opened up and we all made our way downstream.

A sandy bank where a quick lunch was had, then Gary on Green Team and Renato on Red Team took us home to bed.

In Berri we arrived with 14 boats tucked away in the lagoon and 6 comfortably on the jetty.

Then we all met in the pub for a drink, rump, salad or a patty.

I bet we will sleep well!

#### **Day Five - Wednesday 20 November 2024**

##### **- Berri to Loxton by Lee Honeychurch, FunTime**

19 boats departed Berri for Loxton. Unfortunately, Kym and Debbie on SS Minnow had a suspected head gasket problem and retrieved their boat at Berri. We arrived safely at lock 4 where Cody and Darren made sure we got in and out of the lock safely. Some of the crews did the traditional "lock-o-clock" or "beer-o-lock" toast for members who had been previously and couldn't join us on this cruise. The weather was superb - blue sky and 26 degrees.

The Green Team led the way out of the lock with the Red Team following. We made our way safely downstream, managing to dodge all the sand bars and shallow water.

We arrived in the beautiful town of Loxton mid-afternoon where some of the girls did some retail therapy whilst others relaxed on the beautiful shaded lawn near the boats. We did some life vest training by pulling the cord of 3, out of date, life jackets – a big thank you to our volunteers – Wayne from LeeWay, Artur from White Eagle and Gail from Casper. We also changed Teams where we became the Blue and Yellow Teams. Again a member from each crew drew a coloured ribbon out of a hat to determine which team they would belong to. The Blue Team would be led by FunTime and the Yellow Team by The Boss.

We then had a yummy dinner at the Loxton Hotel. Some boats received a surprise when the lawn sprinklers turned on at 12:30 am and gave the inside of the boats a wash through open hatches and sunroofs!

Another great day cruising on the water.

**Day Six        - Thursday 21 November 2024**

**– Loxton to Kingston-on-Murray by Marie-Annick & Phill Arnold, Ebony**

We left Loxton at the allotted time of 8:30 am, no lock on this part of our journey. We were able to reach speeds of 25 and sometimes 30 knots on the plane (very exhilarating). We arrived at our destination in good time being about 10:45 am. We were later taken by minibus for our lunch.

We spent a fabulous lunch at Banrock Station Winery, all the organisers did a great job in the sweltering heat. It is a beautiful location. Their wines were well worth the trip. The food was excellent, a variety of choices to suit everyone's taste.

On return to our boat location, we were given the opportunity to shower, do laundry and have the use of the facilities at the Kingston-on-Murray Caravan Park for a nominal fee.

We had a good night. Fresh for the following day.

**Day Seven     - Friday 22 November 2024**

**– Kingston-on-Murray to Waikerie by Betty Abbinga, Betty Boop**

The day was hot, the day was long – Lock 3 didn't have enough ropes and we had a long refuelling process before we left, but thanks to our champion leaders – Lee, Gary, Risky, Wilco, Dom, Ren, Mark and Eva who did such a wonderful job navigating us through everything and looking after us all, we all got through unscathed – well, mostly!

Despite the fact there was only one person on Lock 3 and there were not enough ropes, there was no damage to any boats.

Despite the heat, Wayne (LeeWay) was feeling pretty positive because Lee-Anne drove the boat!

Ania says we had such a lovely lunch spot (chosen by Ania) and an invigorating swim and beautiful views all the way – so that made up for the heat!

Gail suggested that the positive for the day was that blue and gold teams were able to join up for a while to make green!!

Eva provided everyone with icy poles (sugar free too!)

Even Gemma and Tony's boat problems were fixed, and they were able to rejoin the group after someone from Loxton came to help.

So, all in all, despite the fact that the day was hot – the day was long – Lock 3 didn't have enough ropes, and we had the long process of refuelling before we left – our glasses were half full and all of us enjoyed a great meal and great company in the lovely air-conditioned Waikerie Pub that evening.

**Day Eight     - Saturday 23 November 2024**

**– Waikerie by Ania Sekula, White Eagle**

Waikerie rest day started boiling hot but the relief in a form of rain came before 11 am and washed the heat away.

Waterway, Happy Time and Betty from Betty Boop sadly said their farewell and several kind members that stayed in cabins overnight offered the shower and aircon to those who opted not to. Your kindness has not gone unnoticed!! Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!!

Mark aka "DumpMeister" was spotted bolting to the toilet first thing in the morning. Rumour has it City Council had to close the entire toilet block for renovations after the event. But when you Gotta Go you Gotta Go!

JB had some steering issues and nearly took Scotty waterskiing on his fishing rod. Imagine Scotty's excitement after catching only small redfin earlier in the morning for angling big 2600 immediately after that! Is there a prize for biggest catch on this trip?

Erwin invited the electrician that helped G&T fixing their boat on the prior day to come to see his boat issues hoping he would be able to help but not much luck.

Mabel 2 stayed on the boat catching the drips with the bucket as it did not stop raining all day long.

King Art has been privileged to look after beautiful Zali while Lee, Marisca and few others have gone shopping for the BBQ tonight!! Thank you awesome people!

Art occupied himself with helping Jenny to find her lost phone whilst the innocent phone was on the boat the entire time!

Since her hubby was otherwise engaged Ania prepared him lunch box – sandwiches with polish sausage and dill cucumbers plus several beers – Yum! A good wife is prized far above rubies!

Russell reported to do F### All.

Jay watched Chevy shows.

Paul and Marielle watched the entertaining JB Squared prop adventures.

Mark, Gary & Ren were preparing the trip to Morgan. A big round of applause to our awesome Cruise Leaders and Their Tail End Charlies – Hip Hip Hurrah!!

Scotty waited patiently for Youth Hub to open and Art slid under his boat and reopened his Paynesville trip injury that has just started to heal. We have replaced shopaholic Betty for new shopaholic Gemma who got herself 2 new dresses and something else.

At 4:30pm we had all members catchup (big thanks to Phill for suggesting the location!) at which Gail, Vicki and Dom graced us with a pleasure of showing their freshly washed and styled spectacular heads of hair.

When Gail was using her free time to make herself stunning and irresistible (allegedly sticking her fingers into 240v), Peter was recharging his batteries in anticipation.

Each boat drew a number based on which the black or pink ribbons were handed out to the new Playboy and Bunnies crews. FunTime were the new Black Team leaders and The Boss the Pink Team.

Then our "Singles" drew their Team members out of the hat, and we all enjoyed pub trivia run by Risky which was won by Scotties "Greatest of All Time (GOAT) Team. Silly me thought winners are Grinners.

Eva got many rounds of applauses for driving a boat like a champ when G&T broke down. The crowd went wild – Eva, Eva, Eva, Eva. Mabel 2 got an honourable mention.

Waterway marked himself safe at home after a Betty home delivery. Fantastic feat Waterway!

Marisca and Lee downloaded the Waikerie app earlier in the day to walk the steps around the city and learn its history, but duty called, and the teams need to be fed so they gracefully sacrificed their entertainment for the greater good of all!! Your sacrifice will be rewarded in heaven! We are all truly thankful to you for procuring such delightful food for JB, Zippy and Jay to cook which they have done to perfection!

If I have told any porky pies, please speak now for forever hold your peace.

Thank you all for such a wonderful day again and looking forward what adventure tomorrow brings!

## **Day Nine - Sunday 24 November 2024**

### **- Waikerie to Morgan by Domenica Greco, The Boss**

The day began on a less-than-ideal note as heavy rainfall cast a damp mood over the morning.

Mabel 2 unfortunately, the boat encountered a significant issue, taking on water due to a leak.

Plans interrupted:

A planned photo shoot with all the boaters had to be scrapped as most participants were understandably reluctant to brave the wet weather.

Preparing for the Wednesday night BBQ:

Despite the rain, preparations for Wednesday night's cruise BBQ were underway. The meat, which had been pre-purchased, was stored with the help of everyone making space and pitching in to assist.

The Journey:

The wait until 10:30 am departure to Lock 2 felt long but the convoy of 19 boats eventually set off. With speeds reaching 24 knots, most boats cruised smoothly down the Murray.

Pink Team – Took a break for lunch round 2pm at a stunning sandbank opposite Caudo Winery.

Black Team: Stopped for the lunch at the next sandbar after Caudo Winery, called Wilsons bend.

By 3:15 pm the weather started to improve. The rain stopped, the clouds began to clear, and glimpses of sunlight broke through, lifting the spirits.

A Sight to Behold:

Cruising down the Murray, we passed the majestic Murray Princess. Its grandeur never fails to captivate and inspire awe.

Arrival at Morgan:

Upon reaching Morgan –

Happy Hour – a chance to relax and socialise, fishing, a quick last minute shop.

Dinner – The group enjoyed a meal at the Terminus Hotel, rounding off a challenging yet rewarding day on the river.

## **Day Ten - Monday 25 November 2024**

### **– Morgan to Blanchetown by Gemma & Tony Dickson, G&T**

After the heat, then the rain of previous days, the opportunity to sleep in was enjoyed by most crews. Starting from 8:30 am, all boats took turns to travel half a kilometre downstream in pairs to top up their fuel and water.

In sunny but humid weather, we then lazed the morning and made lunch on our boats, some wandered around town until early afternoon. We then gathered for a group photo, then the cruise departed for Blanchetown at 2.00 pm.

The Pink Team headed off first with Black Team following around 10 minutes behind. Initially, we passed many moored houseboats and beautiful riverside houses, some still in various stages of re-build after the 2022 floods. Further along we travelled directly beside kilometres of breathtakingly beautiful sandstone cliffs, which provided some great photo opportunities. Arriving at Blanchetown around 4.00 pm, we were barely rafted on the shore before everyone jumped into the water and proceeded straight into an extended and very happy hour utilising every form of floatation aid.

After a team meeting on the riverbank just before sunset, all crews then adjourned back to their boats for dinner as we watched a beautiful sunset.

We did the final change of teams for our last part of our trip down the river to Mannum. We now became the Orange and Purple Teams. The Orange Team leader was FunTime and the Purple Team leader was The Boss.

## **Day Eleven - Tuesday 26 November 2024**

### **– Blanchetown to Big Bend Sandbar by Gail Miller, Casper**

Starting with hot air balloons across the cliffs at sunrise. Then an energetic workout from instructors Lee and Gary, followed by a swim.

Departing Blanchetown, straight into Lock 1, the lucky last lock hooray...

Our journey was slow with fabulous scenery. Arriving at Big Bend sandbar, we had to split the groups because a houseboat was in the middle of the sandy beach!!

More swims and then happy hour, looking at these beautiful cliffs, watching pelicans, whistling kites and cockatoos. The men were attempting to catch fish and yabbies.

Artur was successful with one small yellow belly. Suddenly we were treated to a large thunderstorm, rain and lightning. Batton down the hatches!!!

All cleared and back to cooking dinners.

## **Day Twelve - Wednesday 27 November 2024**

### **– Big Bend Sandbar to Riverview Lodge by Lee-Anne Carpenter, LeeWay**

After massive thunderstorm of the previous night, Wednesday dawned cloudy with patches of sunshine! But at least it wasn't raining! Although the wind did make up for it!

We took off at 9:30am travelling mainly on the plane. After stopping for a photo op at some more spectacular cliffs, we proceeded on to Bowhill for morning tea at a fabulous little general store.

Soon after departing Bowhill, Mabel 2 regretfully had to turn back and call it quits after experiencing repeated engine trouble. The rest of the cruise proceeded and arrived at Riverview Lodge early afternoon!

Our Xmas party (which had been postponed due to the storm of the previous day) kicked off around 3pm. A hilarious game of armchair volleyball brought out the competitive spirit and team rivalry was fierce. But the purple team prevailed! Go purple team!

Another game of pub trivia was played and then a delicious BBQ dinner was provided the WCV.

The nightly entertainment (around a fabulous fire pit) commenced with "Silent Night" being sung in as many languages as humanly possible. This morphed into a general sing song for the rest of the night!

On behalf of all attending members, I would like to thank FunTime, Ruby Tuesday, The Boss and Gottago for their tireless efforts in organising this spectacular cruise!

## **Day Thirteen - Thursday 28 November 2024**

### **– Riverview Lodge to Mannum by Jenny Mather, Double J**

Our last day on the water!!

The day began with a Big Breakfast, thank you Gaz for the egg-in-bread cooking lesson.

Dallas and Prettie arrived so we could say thanks and bye and we'll be back. A few hardy souls walked up to the top of the hill for their morning constitution and the puppies took their owners for a walk.

Erwin and Scott left early to go shopping in Mannum.

Leaving Riverview was BAU for the rest of us and the journey to Mannum seemed uneventful including passing houseboats. Catching up with Ebony changed that story a little as the Water Police ventured we had not travelled according to the boating rules when passing other traffic on the river. That may have been because Ebony passed their check with flying colours and they had to find fault somewhere!

Many enjoyed the Mannum Bakery lunch – cleaning them out pies.

The girls went successfully shopping whilst another member tried to coerce the Information Centre to part with their only original copy of the mapped river in Victoria.

A houseboat offered a challenge as it was mooring with Marisca calmly and expertly guiding them with manpower ably supplied by the Whittleby crews.

All superficial bumps and bruises appear to be healing well.

For dinner we “took over” the Hotel Pretoria and began with heartfelt graduation speeches.

Thanks again to our outstanding leaders and tail end Charlies. Congratulations to Lee & Gary (see other daily cruise reports) and Happy Birthday to Vicki from all of the hotel guests!

Tomorrow will not be the same without the camaraderie, planning and rafting up with such marvellous companions.

Take care everyone, thanks for a fabulous finale to Spring, have a safe and enjoyable festive season.

## **Day Fourteen – Friday 29 November 2024**

### **– Mannum to Home or somewhere in-between**

After our farewell dinner at The Pretoria Hotel the night before it was time to retrieve our boats from the Murray River at the Mannum Marina and head home.

Five boats pulled out the night before and stayed in the Mannum Caravan Park in readiness for an early start to get home in one day! The rest of us headed slowly down to the Marina and gradually retrieved our boats during the morning and then hit the road for home.

A must do stop on the way back to Victoria was the Belgium Waffle Café at Coonallypn. It was amazing how many Whittley crews were spotted eating waffles with a variety of delicious toppings.

A popular overnight stop was the Bordertown Caravan Park where 8 Whittley crews ended up staying the night. We managed to have a final happy hour sitting in the shade around the boats before heading to one of the Bordertown pubs for dinner. G&T had trailer problems and were stuck in Murray Bridge for several hours whilst Gemma had to drive to Adelaide to secure a spare part for the trailer. However, they managed to fix the trailer and got back on the road and spent the night in Keith. Other crews got to Horsham for the night and some even made it back to Melbourne!!

## **Day Fifteen – Saturday 30 November 2024 – Home!!**

The crew from Bordertown were up early for the drive home. JB Squared discovered that he had lost his sunroof somewhere between Bordertown and Dimboola. The call was put out for other boats to keep an eye out for it on the road but unfortunately it was lost!! What started as a beautiful sunny day turned into a wet wild raining day with some crews going through heavy rain at various locations along the road home. However, everybody made it home safely!

A big thank you to all the crews that participated in this incredible cruise from Renmark to Mannum. Your dedication and teamwork was truly amazing. It was lovely to meet new members and reconnect with existing members. The fun, the laughter, the adventure and memories will last forever.

Please note a video which includes photos, will be put up on the WCV website.

Happy Boating  
Gary & Lee Honeychurch  
FunTime.