

Kyalite to Wemen

Day Four Wednesday 5 February 2003

Fortunately for the layabouts, Kim's swag doesn't have a high decibel zip like Kevin's – because he is generally up about 15-20 minutes before him. Nevertheless, much to the consternation of those unused to rising so early, the staccato of Kevin's zip ripped through the early morning.

The condition of Keith's arms was improving but Cameron's knee had swollen and looked infected. He moved into the Support Crew. Ian was trying to ascertain how his \$26 waterproof camera worked.



Changing gearboxes



Interested observers

On the water Fred's navigation skills and knowledge of the river totally astounded the others as he negotiated the narrow channels of the Wakool River to reach the Murray River.

On land, Leah was honing her navigating skills first gained on the trip from Renmark to The Coorong in 2002. Bush tracks lead to the Wakool/Murray Junction. Directional signs were confusing rather than helpful. A little bit of logic coupled with an eye for the lie of the land and the conundrum was resolved.



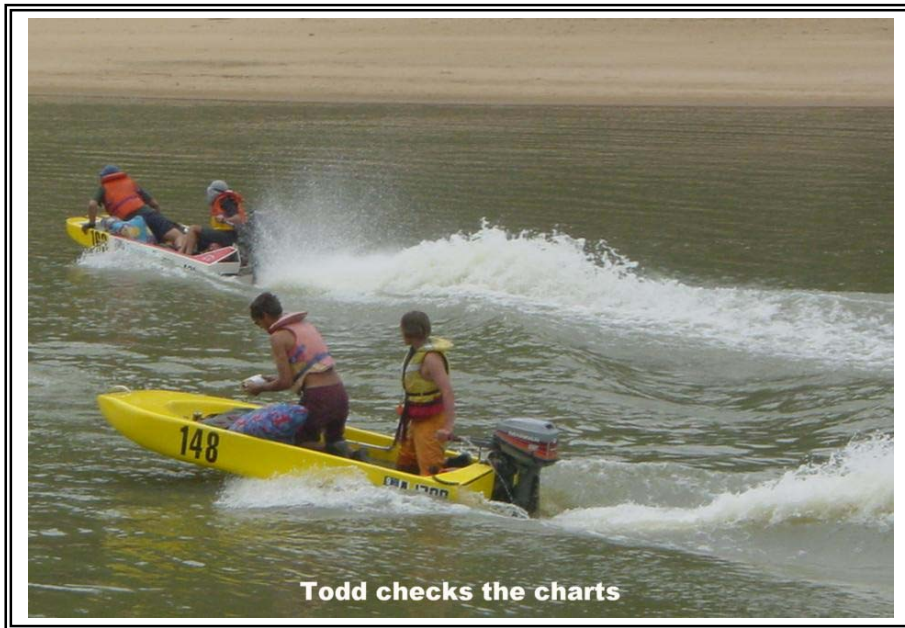
Bye

One could be excused for being confused as to which river is which at this junction – the Wakool is clearly superior in size and the Murray appears to enter it rather than it entering the Murray.

The day was warming up. Refuelled the boats and continued the journey. Ian was still trying to sort out his camera.

Once out onto the bitumen there was a minor panic as Barbara believed she had left a beanbag at the river.

Just as Kim was turning the vehicle around to retrieve the vital asset, Kevin announced that he had picked it up.



Back on water, Ian recorded "Passing to the rear of Keith & Graham's boat my driver did not slow down and I was drenched!! – I was blamed for not leaning enough!! (as usual)". Keith recorded the alternative version, "The Brooker/Williamson Splashing Contest resulted in a serious Ian Williamson classic dummy spit.

A grovelling apology by KSB lead to a tenuous peace. But we reckon it was Ian's fault 'cos he didn't lean!!"

Was that a fat lady swimming in the river? She wasn't singing but she was naked. If Ian had sorted out his camera he could have taken a photo!

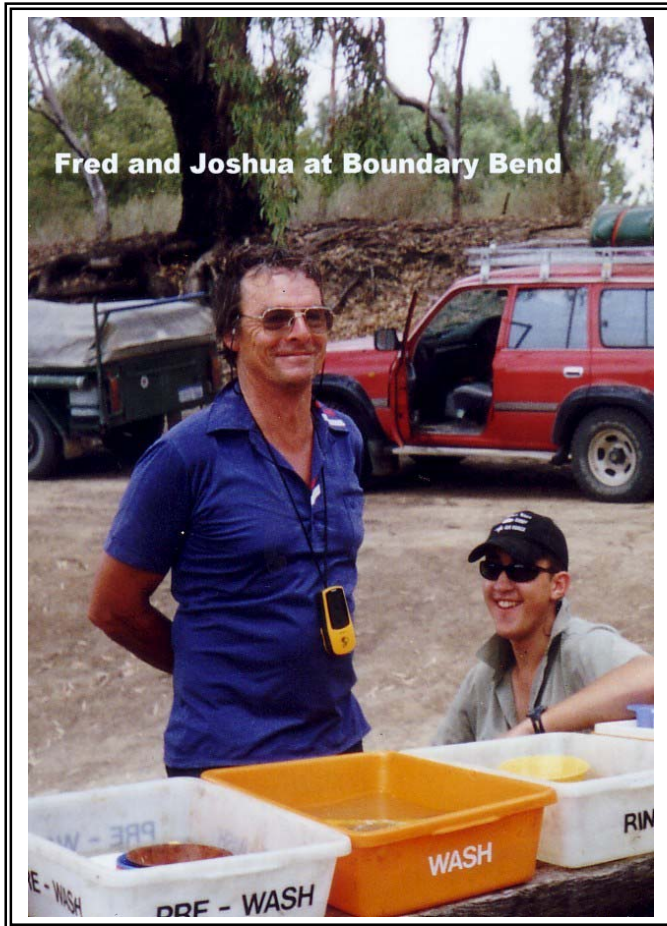
Just after the fleet entered the Murray River at the Wakool Junction Keith's engine trouble became too much and all boats were pulled into the north bank to fix the problem. According to Graham the motor had "pinged, tonked and then stalled". He thought it was a failed big end or piston. A message was sent to the Support Crew by UHF radio. Kim only just heard as he turned on to the Murray Valley Highway near Piambie and believed that it was others parties talking. Keith had to repeat his message before Kim realised who was calling. Keith relayed latitude and longitude (from GPS) and Kim located their position on the map – close to Kenley but it was inaccessible. Kim made an educated guess that a bush track would lead close to where the boats were stopped. Leaving Barbara, Leah and Cameron to deal with two dogs barking madly at the entrance to the Station where they had stopped, he and Kevin drove off to the end of the Wilga Park road and, sure enough, were able to follow a track along the river. They were 60m from the calculated position when Keith called on the radio "Stop, I can see you – stop!"

As the gearboxes were being swapped ten canoeists in five canoes paddled past. Hmm. However, it was not long before the mechanics had finished and the motors fired up. Now, to catch those paddlers. Ian was still trying to get his camera working.

Kim took the Support Crew to the boat ramp at Boundary Bend to prepare lunch. Fred was trying to locate them a few kilometers further upriver around a very large bend in the river (also Boundary Bend and less than a kilometer by land from the boat ramp). Eventually the confusion was sorted out over the radio and the boaters arrived at historic Boundary Bend. It was here that Major Mitchell crossed the Murray on his journey of discovery. It was also here that Ian waxed lyrical about the majesty of Wedge-tail Eagles. Looking up while having lunch, he spotted two birds.

"Look at those magnificent eagles", he said. "They're always in pairs. Brilliant eyesight. Top of the food chain. See them up there hunting for their prey. What a magnificent sight. Wedge-tail Eagles really are masters of the skies". Fred looked up and said, "Ian, they're pelicans!"

Now, if Ian could just work out the intricacies of his camera and take a photo of those pelicans for future reference.



Leah and Todd visited the shop across the road and bought everyone an icecream- the sugar hit was well appreciated.

Kevin jumped into Fred's boat for the run through to Robinvale. The injury toll mounted. Graham tripped when refuelling and spilled petrol over his legs and stomach. Cam's leg was getting worse.

Refuelled the jerry cans at the Boundary Bend store (105c/litre – standard price was 98c/litre).

Ian (driving) tried to show Kevin (in other boat) that Todd was trying to "fly" at the bow but each time he got his attention Todd would pull in his arms and act normally (as much as Todd can act normally). Kevin didn't know what was going on.

Short of Robinvale the Support Crew pulled into a clearing to check on the progress of the boats. A path lead down the high, steep bank to the river. Kim and Leah took off into Robinvale to do some shopping leaving Keith, Barbara and Cameron to greet the Boat Crew and ensure they had sufficient fuel to reach Robinvale.

Leah had to climb up on the Camp Kitchen trailer and ease branches over the solar panels when Kim drove down a narrow, overgrown track. She was getting scratched but being a team player she persisted and the trailer got through. After buying vital supplies in Robinvale, Kim and Leah drove to the Lock 15 and Weir and arranged with the Lockkeeper to open the Lock out of hours. They close at 4.00 p.m. which, at the height of summer combined with daylight saving, is the middle of the day!

The boats were passed through the lock without delay. Ten or so River Commission workers who were attending a training course were interested onlookers – never having seen racing dinghies before. After a quick discussion between Kim and Fred about the next refuel/overnight stop, the Boat Crew sped off downriver.

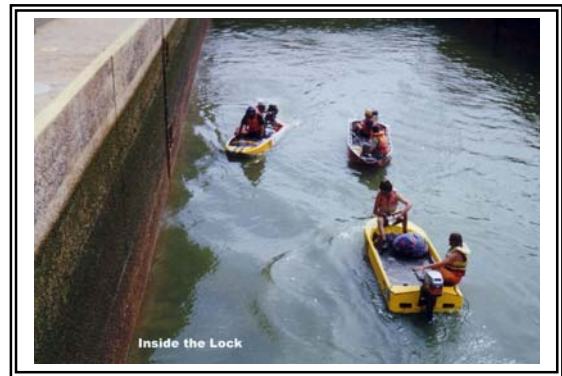
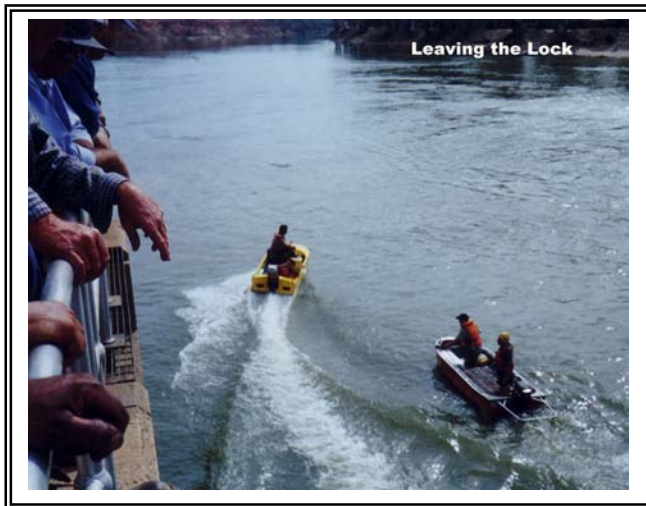
In the Support Crew, Leah navigated out of Robinvale to Happy Valley - though some in the other vehicles were wondering if she was going the right way. A hot, dry wind blew over the land crew as they watched from the high river bank.

Robinvale

Robinvale is situated on the Murray River surrounded by Australia's richest table grape growing vines.

It is the largest growth area in Victoria due to the expansion of the almond and vegetable growing industries.

The boats sped past and the Support Crew then headed towards Wemen – a dot on the map. After directions from a local, Kim “followed his nose” along bush tracks close to the river to a fantastic campsite at the water’s edge.

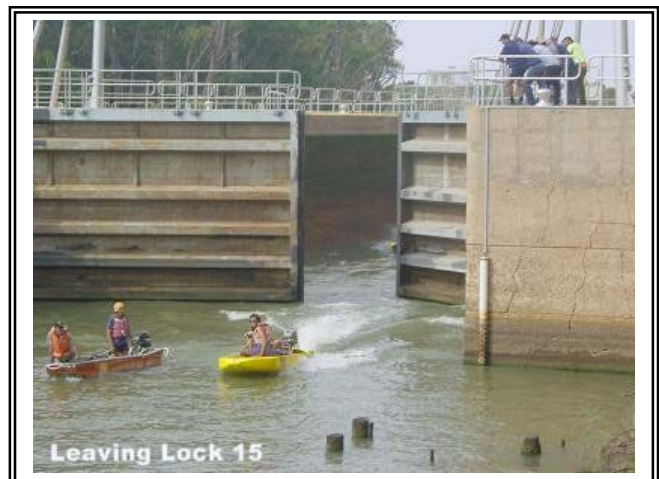
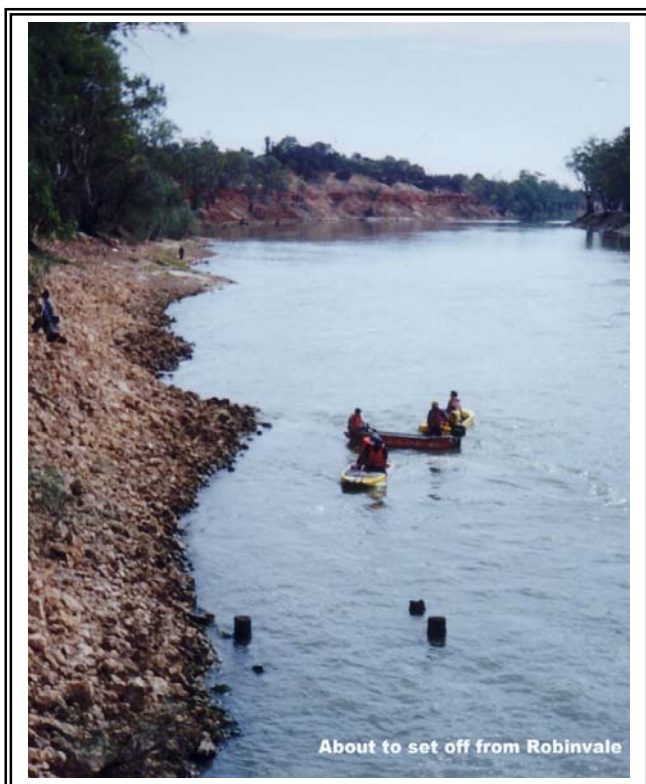


Wemen

Wemen is a focal point for fruit growers west of Robinvale.

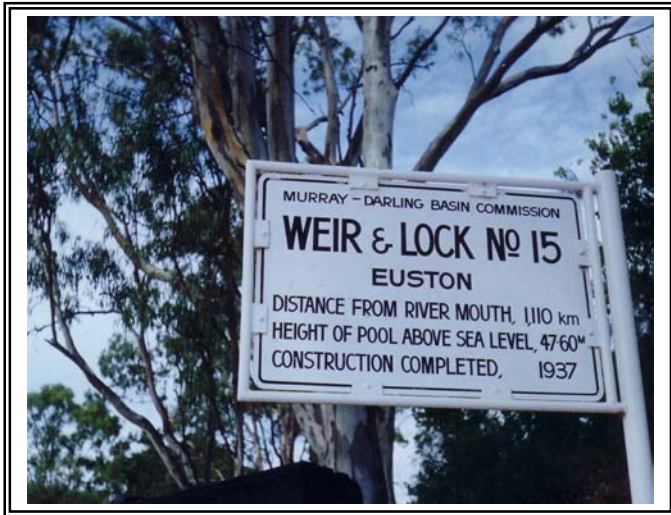
Mineral sands were recently discovered in the area.

Keith revealed that he had a solar shower in his camper trailer, causing mixed emotions for Barbara and Leah – disgust that he not told them before and relief that he had told them now. Fred and Cameron erected a shower screen among the trees and everyone enjoy a semi-civilised wash.



The surfing contingent tried out a new “board” - a three meter plank (a “sleeper back”) they had earlier found in the river and a had insisted that the Support Crew lug to the overnight camp.

Despite many, many attempts and countless concentric circles by the tow boat, they could not get it to plane.



Ian was convinced his motor was going to blow from the effort.

During all this some locals were trying to have a quite fish in their dinghy on the opposite bank – although as was observed early the next morning there were in fact setting an illegal set line.

Fred bashed out a few wrinkles from the bottom of his ali boat – bringing back memories of the Pit Area at the Avon Descent overnight stop in bygone days.

Ian was the only person to get a fish bone at dinner but was pacified by fresh bread rolls. Kevin had to be told to sit down, relax and stop working.

A gentle breeze cooled the early evening, picking up later in the night.

