

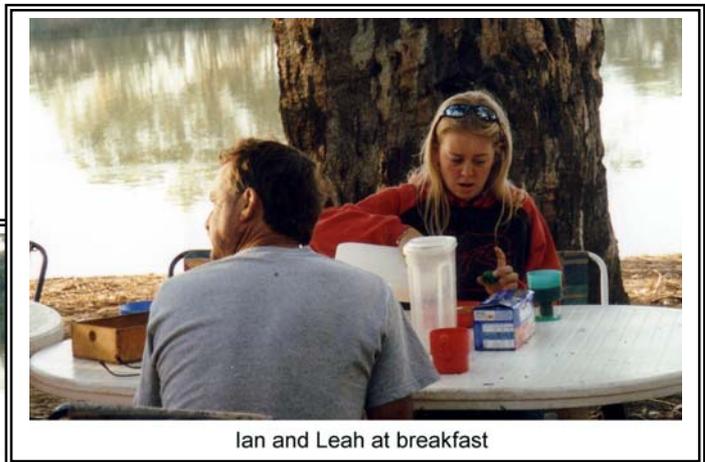
Wentworth to Renmark

Day Six Friday 7 February 2003

The early morning air was rent by the staccato rip of Kevin's swag zip. Met by nonchalance. Familiarity breeds contempt.



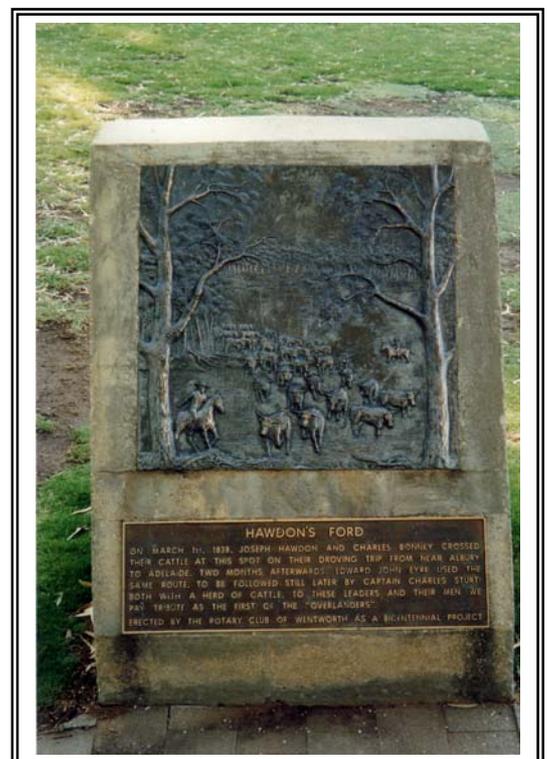
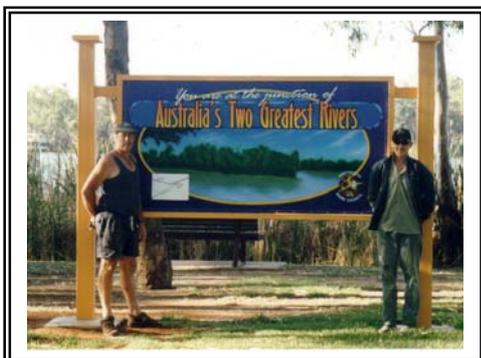
Keith, Barbara and Graham at Breakfast



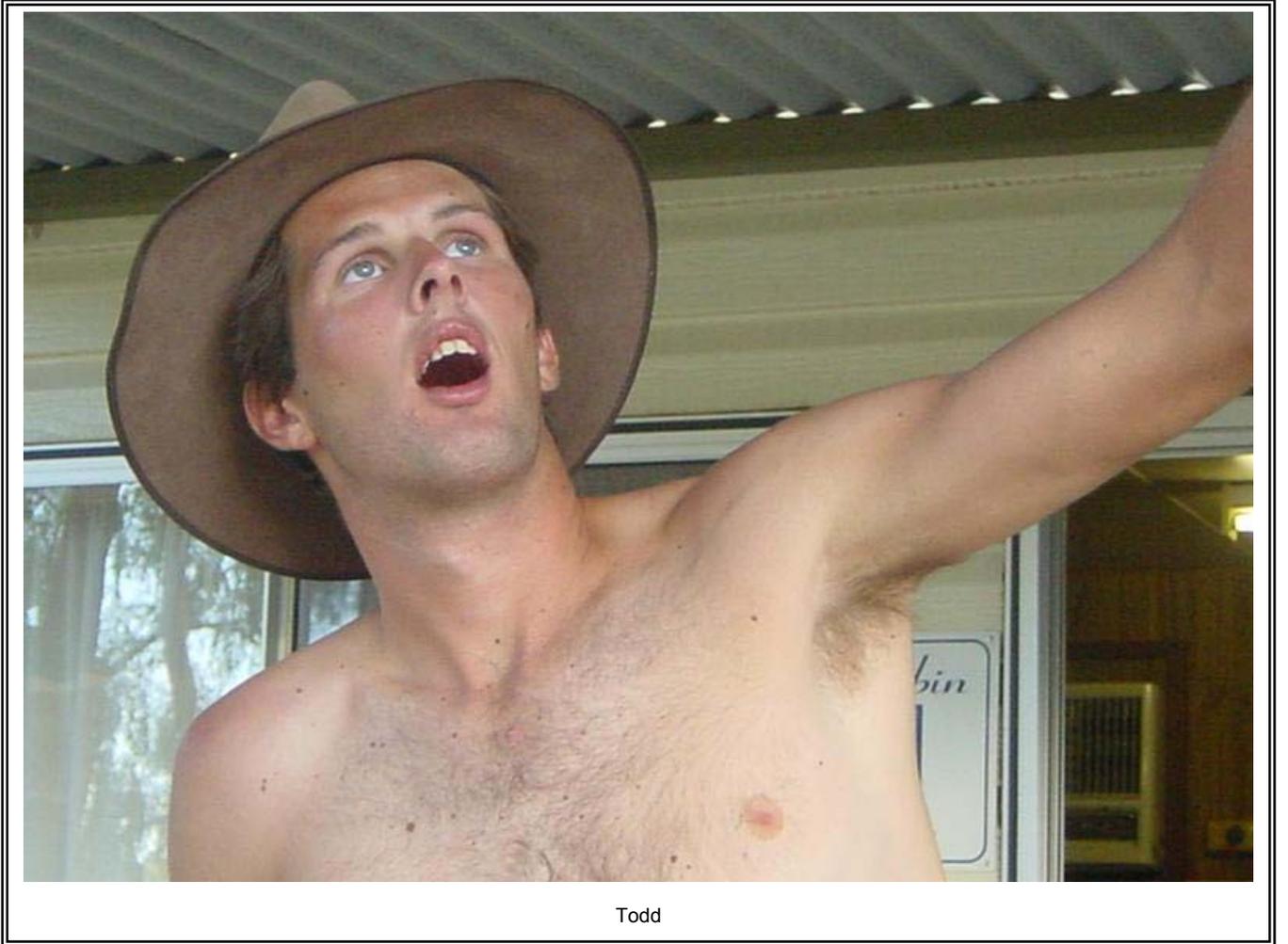
Ian and Leah at breakfast

After breakfast and much discussion, it was decided that the 264 kilometers to Renmark was too far for what was to be a truncated day. The decision was made to re-start at Rufus River – 130 kilometers downriver.

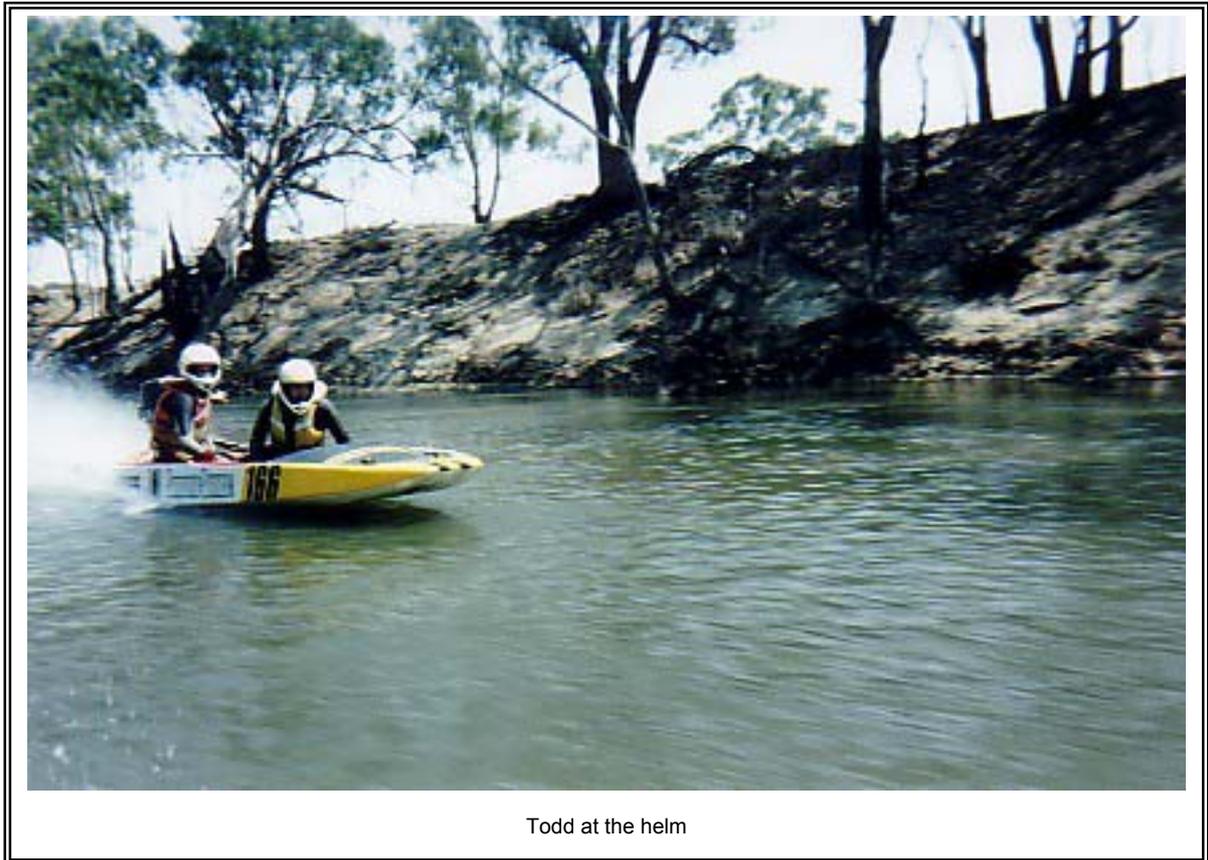
The boats had been loaded on to the trailer the previous night so it was simply a matter of packing up and moving out.



HAWDON'S FORD
ON MARCH 11, 1828, JOSEPH HAWDON AND CHARLES BONNEY CROSSED THEIR CATTLE AT THIS SPOT ON THEIR DROVING TRIP FROM NEAR ALEXANDRIA TO ADELAIDE. TWO MONTHS AFTERWARDS EDWARD JOHN EYRE DID THE SAME ROUTE TO BE FOLLOWED STILL LATER BY CAPTAIN CHARLES STURT BOTH WITH A HERD OF CATTLE. TO THESE LEADERS AND THEIR MEN WE PAY TRIBUTE AS THE FIRST OF THE "OVERLANDERS".
ERECTED BY THE ROTARY CLUB OF WENTWORTH AS A MEMORIAL PROJECT



Todd



Todd at the helm

Lake Victoria

Lake Victoria is an important part of the Murray water conservation system. Water entering the Lake through Frenchmans Creek is stored until required and then is fed back into the Murray via the Rufus River.

The lake is a natural basin whose capacity has been increased by the construction of an embankment on the southern side.

The dirt road to Renmark was the first long distance, off road test for the Camp Kitchen trailer. It performed faultlessly, sitting serenely behind the big Nissan tow vehicle. Numerous creeks and waterways crisscrossed the flood plains surrounding the causeway at the "map dot" of Rufus River. The Riverina Run convoy pulled into the boat ramp area.



The junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers

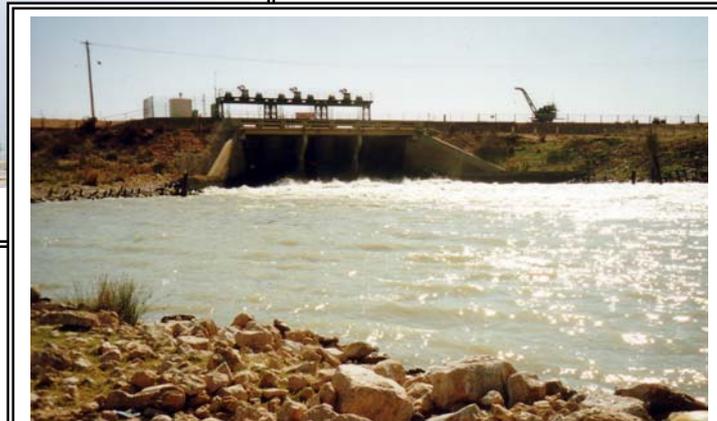
Rufus River

The Rufus River is a perpetual reminder of George Macleay's red hair. Macleay was a member of Charles Sturt's 1830 expedition of discovery along the Murray River.

Water pulsated from the Lake Victoria outfall into the last five kilometers of the Rufus River.



Leah and Todd at Lake Victoria



Lake Victoria Outfall



Eagles at Rufus River

Boats were unloaded, motors attached and gear readied. Ian's motor was still playing up and he changed a scavenging tube as a precaution.

Kim and Fred organised a radio check for Devils Elbow, 22 kilometers downstream, and the push was underway again.



Leaving Rufus River

Thirty kilometers below Devils Elbow the Boat Crew passed from NSW into South Australia and 11 kilometers further on crossed the Victoria/South Australia border.

Kim led the land convoy off the Renmark road towards Lock 6. As he approached the bridge over Monoman Creek he spotted a good size bungarra.



Bungarra

to reach Lock 6 from the other side of the river. This necessitated driving through Renmark and Paringa and then travelling upriver along the other bank. Many kilometers further than planned and a lot longer time to get there.

There was no alternative but to turn around and do the kilometers. As the Support Crew headed into Renmark, Kevin suggested that one of the vehicles be left at Renmark – a good suggestion but one that caused some consternation to the Boat Crew who were able to hear some (but not all) of the Support Crew's radio conversations and interpreted them that one of the vehicles had experienced mechanical trouble/damage.

The Support Crew headed off and parked on the side of the road opposite Devils Elbow, waiting for a radio call from the Boat Crew.

At this point the road was only 500 meters from the river. The call was made and both crews moved on.



Just downriver from Rufus River

Everyone was out of the vehicles, cameras clicking. Excitement over, Kevin announced that the gate on the bridge was locked. Serious problem.

Unless the boats got fuel at Lock 6 they would not make Renmark.

Kim consulted the map, got a position from the GPS and decided that the only alternative was



Kevin at monument

A few kilometers later Kevin further suggested that it would be wise to contact the Lockkeeper to ask him to pass on to the Boat Crew that the Support Crew had not abandoned them to their fate and was on their way with fuel and food. Good stuff, Kevin.

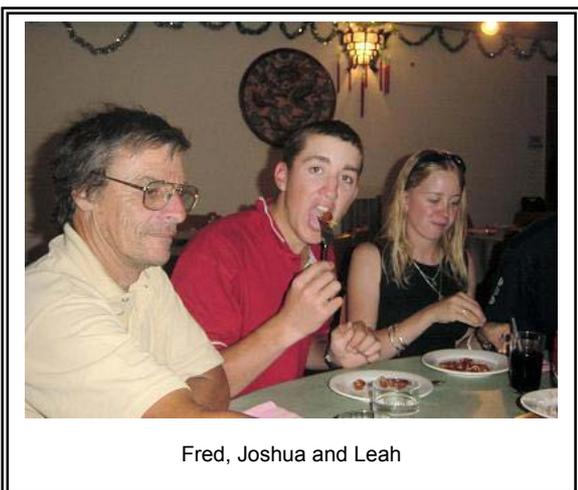
At Renmark Kim telephoned the Lockkeeper and was informed that there was no access to the Lock. So, how to refuel the boats? The Lockkeeper suggested the Houseboat Access Point at Wiela Station and assured Kim that he would tell the Boat Crews what was happening when he went back down to the Lock after finishing his lunch break in twenty minutes time. No accounting for bureaucracy.



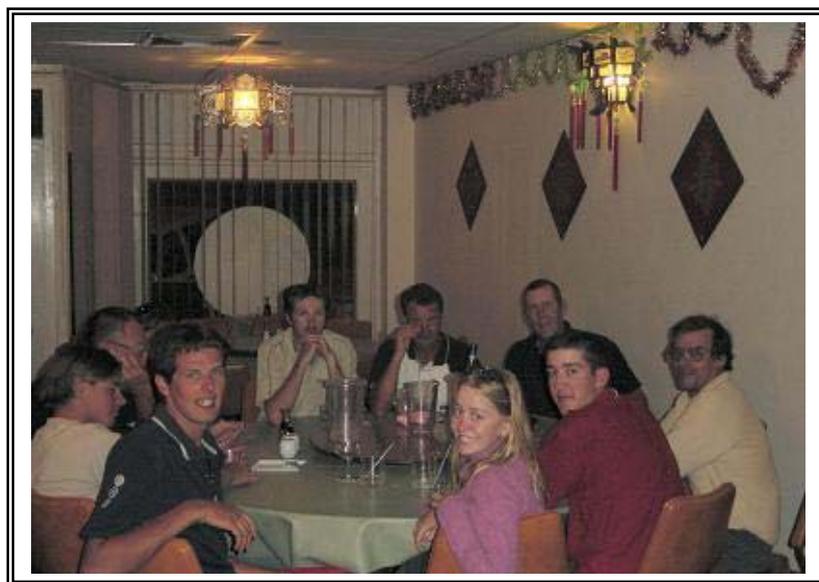
It surprised the Boat Crew that the Lockkeeper did not try to get rid of them earlier. They were a sorry sight spread out, dozing in the dappled shade on his beautifully manicured lawns with lifejackets, beanbags and other boat gear spread everywhere.



Graham and Cameron in 148 had run out of fuel as they entered the lock. Fred had only a cupful left in his tank. The Lockkeeper (perhaps now feeling sorry for keeping the crew waiting) raced off to his workshop, mixed five litres of fuel and brought it down to the Lock. He would not accept any payment.



Kim, Kevin, Barb, Leah and Cameron headed up to Wiela Station, prepared lunch and waited for the Boat Crew.



Three boats powered into Wiela.

Lunch over it was time for the final run to Renmark. Keith pulled out and let Kevin have a ride in the boat.



Kim

Graham and Fred successfully drove the entire trip. Todd was also in a boat for the entirety of the trip both as driver and deckie. The motor on 166 only just made it to the caravan park at Renmark.

The Riverina Run ended as it started – with minimal fanfare.

Everyone involved could be satisfied that they had completed a journey made by few others before them. Everyone had seen some country new to them.

The trip was a success.

That success was celebrated at a simple dinner at the local Chinese restaurant.

Renmark

Renmark is the largest of the Riverland towns and is famous for the nation's oldest irrigation settlement. The Canadian Chaffey brothers developed the irrigation scheme in 1887. Unfortunately they went bankrupt in 1892 but the scheme was adopted by local government and became very successful. Operating on some 7000ha of land banking the river Murray, the irrigated land produces wine, table grapes, citrus and stone fruits and vegetables for local and export markets.

Renmark takes its name from an aboriginal word meaning 'Red Mud'.

It is known as the 'Houseboat Centre' of South Australia.