

The Riverina Run 2003

A Power Dinghy Expedition along the full length
of the Edward River, into the Wakool and then
along the Murray River to Renmark.

An account of the Riverina Run 2003

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From Concept to Reality

AFTER KIM EPTON WON THE 1981 Edward River Race he asked Keith French, the organiser of the race, "What's down there?" pointing downriver from the race finish at Deniliquin. When Keith informed him that the Edward rejoined the Murray River after a journey of about 400 kilometers Kim determined that, one day, he would complete the journey. Twenty plus years and many expeditions in all parts of Australia were to intervene before he was able fulfil that promise but eventually, in February 2003, "the Expedition was on".

The Riverina Run 2003 would start at Picnic Point, New South Wales, the point where the Edward leaves the mighty Murray River.

The Run would negotiate the full length of the Edward, continue along the Wakool River and then power into the Murray at the Wakool Junction. From this point, the boats would travel 600 kilometers downstream to Renmark in South Australia.

The six day trip was planned for the period 2 – 7 February 2003. Participants would then compete in the Riverland Dinghy Derby on Sunday 9 February.

The Riverina is one of Australia's most important irrigation and pastoral areas. Temperatures in the area had been extremely high (45°C+) in the days preceding departure but moderated for the duration of the Run.

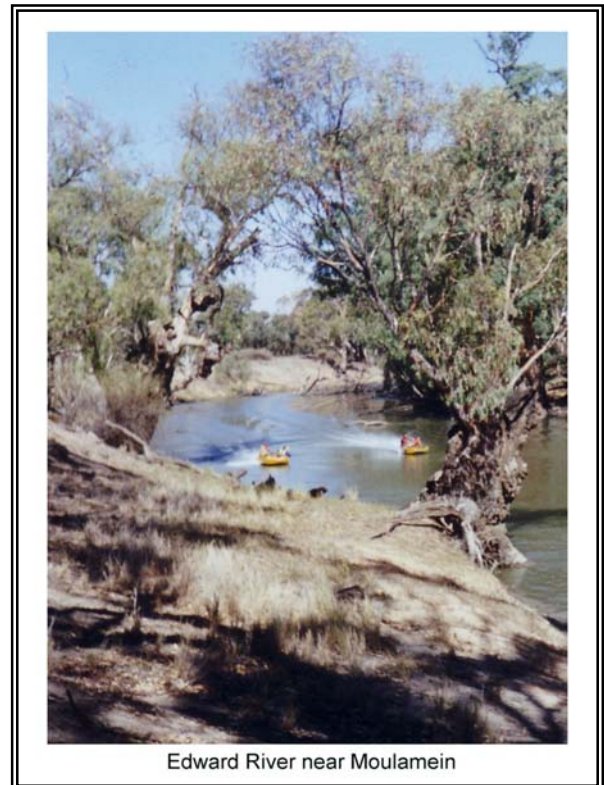
The Edward River

THE EDWARD RIVER HAS ITS source at Picnic Point, near Mathoura in the Riverina region of New South Wales, part of the Murray Darling Basin. It is an anabranch of the Murray River. An anabranch is a watercourse that leaves its parent river and returns to it at a point downstream.

At 420 kilometers in length, the Edward is one of the longest anabranches in Australia. It was named after Edward Howe, who was exploring for pastoral land in the area in January 1840.

The Edward River was formed by the Cadell Tilt, a north-south fault in the earth's surface where the land to the west of the fault was lifted 10-12 meters. This blocked the flow of the Murray and forced it to divide, creating the anabranch that is the Edward River. The Tilt is visible on the eastern side of the Cobb Highway where the ground slopes down to the Mathoura Forest.

Navigation of the Edward River started in 1856. The *South Australian Register* reported that Captain Cadell, the pioneer of navigation on the Murray and the Darling, had started on an exploratory trip of the Edward in a boat constructed at Gundagai for the purpose, in November 1856. A news item in December 1856, stated that Cadell had just passed down the river in his skiff and declared that navigation was possible.



Edward River near Moulamein

The first vessel brought down the river was a pontoon purchased by a Mr Gleeson, lessee of the river ferry, aided by Mr. Leonard, a shipwright and the owner of *Maiden's Punt*. Gleeson brought the pontoon down the river loaded with 27 tons of goods. Several years passed, however, before steamers actually navigated the river.

Moolgewanke was the first steamer to reach Deniliquin, on 13 July 1860. Shortly afterward the *Moolgewanke* succeeded in navigating the Edward throughout its whole course.

The Wakool River

THE WAKOOL RIVER LEAVES THE Edward River nine kilometers below Deniliquin and for much of its length flows roughly parallel with the Edward River. The two courses converge near Kyalite. Five kilometers above Kyalite the Edward flows into the Wakool.

32 kilometers further on the Wakool flows into the Murray near Tooleybuc.

About 400 kilometers in length, the Wakool is a much smaller and more congested river than the Edward. It is an anabranch of an anabranch. Anabranches are quite common in Australian rivers but are rarely found elsewhere.

The Wakool River gives its name to the shire centered on Moulamein.



Refuelling at the junction of the Wakool and Murray Rivers

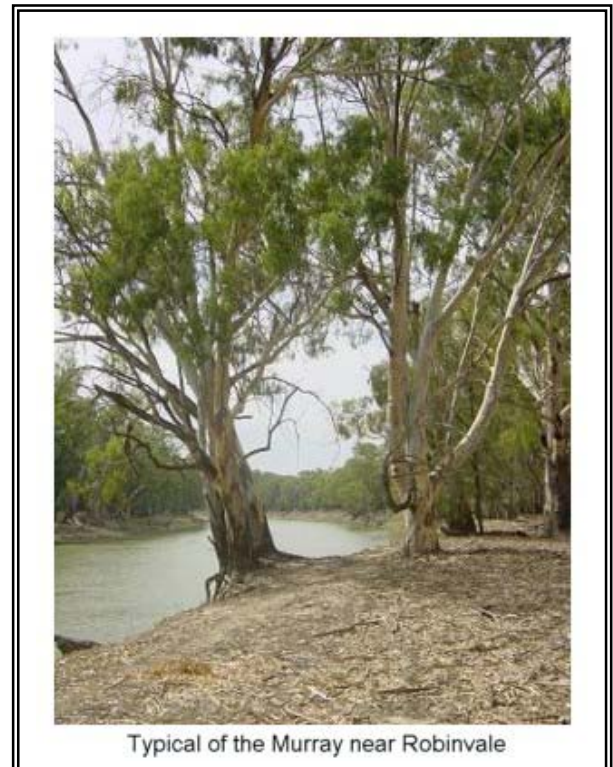
The Murray River

THE MURRAY RIVER HAS ITS source in the Snowy Mountains and flows 2560 kilometers to its mouth near Goolwa. The Riverina Run 2003 was to cover about 600 kilometers on the Murray River from the Wakool Junction to Renmark. This section includes six locks and weirs.

The average rainfall over the Murray-Darling basin is 430 mm (about half that of Perth). The catchment of the upper Murray above Albury contributes more than one-quarter of the total flow in the Murray system, from an area that is less than two per cent of the catchment area. At times more water flows down the Edward than down the Murray.

The River Murray Basin covers an area of just over 1,000,000 square kilometers - one-seventh of the total area of Australia. It comprises three-quarters of New South Wales, over one-half of Victoria, a small portion of South Australia, and an area of Queensland greater than the total area of Victoria.

The river was named in January 1830 by Captain Charles Sturt who



Typical of the Murray near Robinvale

was exploring along the Murrumbidgee River. His boat shot out into what he termed "a broad and noble river". A few days later, he named it "the Murray, after Sir George Murray, an English statesman". Hume and Hovell, of course, had already discovered the same stream and named it the Hume but Sturt considered his discovery to be a new river to which the Hume, Ovens and Goulburn Rivers all contributed.

The Riverina Run 2003

The Plan

After completing 60 kilometers from Picnic Point to Deniliquin (the same course as the now-defunct Edward River Race) the boats were to be loaded on a trailer and transported to Conargo for a run down the Billabong Creek to Wanganella. The crews would then return to Deniliquin for the night before re-starting the trip down the Edward River past Stevens Weir and on to Moulamein. From Kyalite, at the junction of the Edward and Wakool River, the expedition would travel to the Murray at Boundary Bend before heading downriver through Robinvale, Mildura and Wentworth to Renmark.

The State of the Rivers

An extra allocation of water from the reserves in the Upper Murray was being released into the Edward River and the levels were higher than expected. However, small outbreaks of blue-green algae were noted in the Murray. From Wentworth to Renmark, pondage at each of the weir was full, backing up to the weir above.

The People



At Wiela below Lock 6

At one stage fifteen people were intent on being part of the adventure and six boats were committed. As always happens, as the deadline approaches, other factors come into play and numbers drop.

Eventually the number of participants was settled at eleven, eight from WA and three from NSW with three boats and three support vehicles.

Leah Adams	Keith (Fred) French
Graham Brooker	Joshua Williams
Keith Brooker	Kevin Williams
Cameron Clarke	Ian Williamson
Kim Epton	Todd Williamson
Barbara French	

The Rigs



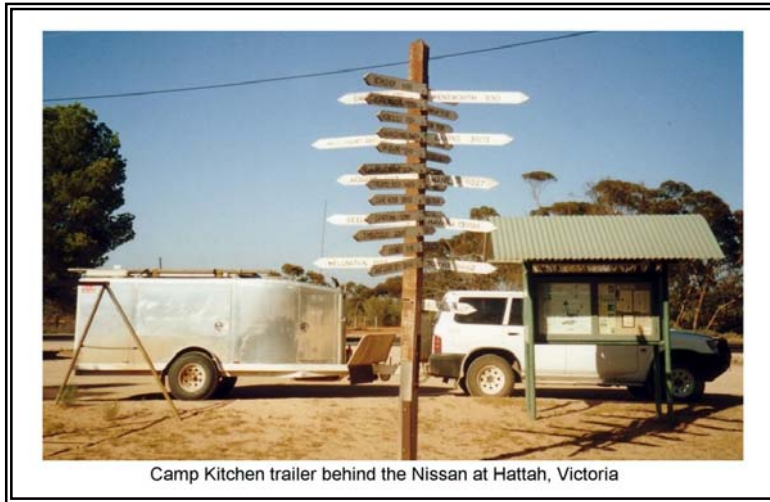
Keith Brooker
Fiberglass Racing Dinghy
10hp Mariner

Keith French
Alloy Punt
10hp Mercury



Ian Williamson
Fiberglass Racing Dinghy
10hp Tohatsu

Preparation of the Camp Kitchen Trailer



Camp Kitchen trailer behind the Nissan at Hattah, Victoria

Cliff Hills and Kim Epton spent many, many hours preparing the Camp Kitchen Trailer including 12 hours every day from Boxing Day 2002 through to New Years Day 2003 and then 2-3 hours every night and 10 hours each day of every weekend from then until departure.

It was exhausting but very necessary to get the job done. The trailer was functional and performed faultlessly.

The Expedition before the Expedition

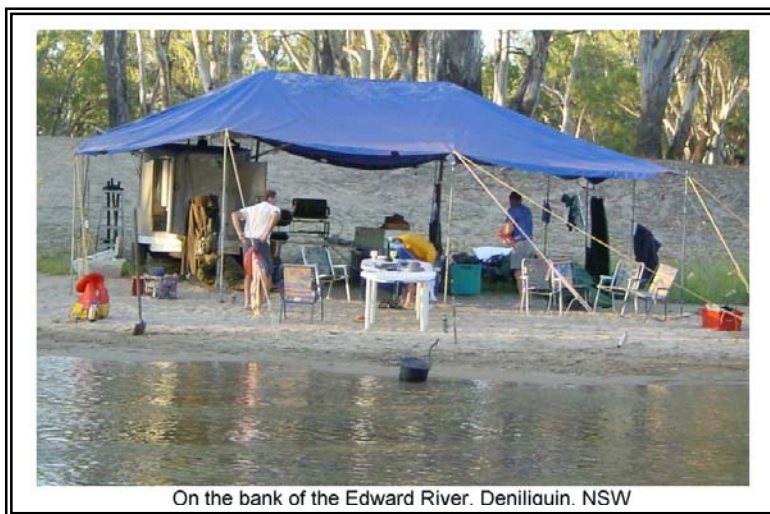
As always with expeditions in the eastern states, just getting there is an expedition in itself.

Keith, Lesley and Graham Brooker had travelled to the area from Boxing Day for a family holiday. Leslie flew out to Perth from Melbourne. Ian, Todd and Leah flew to Melbourne and were picked up early Saturday morning by Keith and Graham. They then drove to Deniliquin after playing tourist for a while at Echuca.

Kim, Kevin and Joshua drove from Perth – a 3300 kilometer trip to Keith and Barbara French’s property on the banks of the Edward River at Deniliquin – arriving midday Friday.

On Site Preparation

Kevin, Josh and Kim set up a comfortable camp on the banks of the Edward River at Keith and Barb’s property on Friday afternoon.



On the bank of the Edward River. Deniliquin. NSW

Ian, Todd, Leah, Keith Graham arrived on Saturday.



Kim and Ian filling beanbags