

**WHITTLEY RALLY 2006**  
**GIPPSLAND LAKES – VICTORIA**

When April finally arrived there were four Queensland boats .... Monty, Olivier, Sonata and Ande, left to make the great journey South to join fifty or so NSWelshmen and Victorians and their partners for the 2006 Whittley rally. So great was the distance that the intrepid travelers had to stop and rest on the way ..... for six nights on the Hawkesbury river!!! This little cruise really needs a report of its own, but suffice to say the weather was beautiful and the Lower Hawkesbury and Pittwater lived up to their reputation as a great boating venue.

The trip from Sydney to Victoria was pleasant and uneventful (apart from one crew disappearing over the side of Brown Mountain!) with an overnight stopover at Bombala and a shopping spree at Lakes Entrance to stock up with supplies. We arrived at Nicholson on Wednesday afternoon prior to Easter and were lucky enough to meet up with two Victorian boats on their way out to meet a large flotilla of NSW boats who had arrived about a week earlier!! Mike Smith showed us where to store the cars and trailers and following a quick squiz at the charts of the area took off down river. Monty and Ande were duly launched and motored upstream away from the traffic to anchor in perfect calm and open the first bottle of grape-juice (for Victoria that is). Our first impressions of boating in the Lakes area were those of the fabulous facilities available. Excellent launching ramps, wharf areas available for 48 hour stays combined with toilets, picnic tables, water, free hot showers and sewage disposal were located all around the very extensive area covered, this making for very comfortable boating.

Thursday morning provided perfect weather conditions and as the forecast for the weekend was not so good we decided to see as much as possible while the sun shone. The Nicholson River (as with all the rivers and inlets) has a 5 knot speed limit which the Victorians claim is a good chance to cook dinner or have a cuppa . At the entrance we got our first look at Lake King .... so big that there are large signboards pointing directions at strategic points out in the middle of the lake! First stop was inside the silt banks which form the entrance to the Mitchell River and which, although being in places only a few meters wide, stretch about eight kilometers across the lake. Depths in this area were often only a few centimeters so care was required and it was good to be able to get GPS references while the weather was calm. Next destination was Metung, a lovely little town with great facilities and pretty good fishing .... we managed to pick up a feed of whiting in very quick time! From Metung a run of about 15 km took us below Raymond Is. and into the sheltered channel at Paynesville, the capital of boating in the area with marinas, shops and more excellent facilities for berthing and going ashore. We cooked and ate the whiting (didn't want them to get stale) then headed south for a quick look at Bunga Arm. Again the entrance for about 5 km was very narrow and shallow but fortunately well marked with channel markers. We stopped just inside Bunga Arm at a wharf called Steamer Landing and from here walked a short distance across the sand dunes to view the 90 Mile Beach and Bass Strait. Being late afternoon and with a breeze getting up we headed back the 20 or so km to Nicholson for another night of perfect calm on the river.

Friday morning saw a very impressive assembly of boats at the Nicholson wharf ready for briefing by the Victorian club organizers who were very well prepared. After issuing maps and outlining procedures for the weekend we were put into groups of about

ten boats, each with a group leader and “tail-end-Charlie” to ensure no one got into trouble. Each group left at a different time and traveled to various different destinations to minimize over-crowding on the lakes. Over the next three days we visited Metung, Lakes Entrance, Paynesville and Bunga Arm and although the wind got up on a couple of days we were always able to find a sheltered berth in order to enjoy walks, coffees, hot showers and other such luxuries.

Because of the strong winds we returned each evening to a sheltered bank at the head of Duck Arm where the boats were nosed in “the Victorian way” and crews were able to step ashore to mingle, socialize, party on etc.. This proved to be an excellent method of mooring such a large number of boats in a relatively small area whilst allowing everyone to mix freely on the shore. The formal social activities included first night drinks and nibbles on board a local cruise boat, the Enterprise, which tied up at a wharf close by our moorings. Generators and floodlights provided for safe movement around the shore. The second night we were transported by the Enterprise to Paynesville, about 30 minutes away, where we were dined and entertained at the Old Paynesville Pub with dinner followed by dancing, prizes, speeches and more dancing well into the night. Sunday morning was not an early start but boat crews were surprised to find that the Easter Bunny had left a little parcel neatly tied to the bow rail of each boat. A nice touch.

Monday we traveled up Bunga Arm and after lunch many crews had to say farewell and head back to Nicholson. A few of us stayed on and late in the afternoon were joined by a large group of NSW boats, so a fire was lit on the beach and another great social night enjoyed.

All in all the rally was a great success and very enjoyable with the Victorian club to be congratulated for their organization and fabulous hospitality. Rumor has it that 2008 will see a large gathering of Whittleys on Sydney Harbor!!!

Keith and Edna “Ande”