

Yarrowonga to Goolwa in an RL28

Brian and Louise are travelling from Yarrowonga where the River Murray is blocked by a hydroelectric dam back to Goolwa in their RL28 Elanora, a trip of approximately 2000 kms 25th June 2012



Picked up a few final provisions, decamped Lil'E (Elanora's tender) and launched Elanora without mishap at the ramp just downstream of the Yarrawonga dam. Once Brian had stored the car and trailer at the caravan park, we pushed off into the swift moving stream and started our journey. The river is quite high, just below minor flood, and we have about 2 metres extra under our keel that our chart indicates. Despite the extra water we are soon dodging snags and the rudder thuds into a couple deeper below us. We strike camp on a sandy beach, build a fire and enjoy a couple of sundowners.



26th June – 1st July 2012

Cool mornings greet us and ensure a leisurely start to the day. Once underway we stop for lunch then make a few more k's before calling it a day mid afternoon. Build a fire, cook, take in the scenery and retire for the day. This has become our routine – plus we try and stop so that the morning sun hits the boat early and starts to warm us up and dry the boat off. I seem to have got the hang of the camp oven and can bake bread and scones quite well. Travelled through The Narrows which was thick with forest and littered with significant snags - at one point we had to sneak through a narrow gap between two large trees that had fallen into the water; one fallen from each side of the river bank.

2nd – 5th July 2012



The river red gum forests are magnificent, thick and imposing. The bird life is plentiful and we are doing our best to identify as many as possible. We were very pleased to spot a White Bellied Sea Eagle and have also seen Falcons, Eagles, Wrens, Herons, numerous types of Ducks, Swifts etc. On the wildlife front we've seen Kangaroos, Wallabies, a Koala and some water based marsupials or maybe Platypus' (we hope). We've hardly seen any other boats and only one houseboat on the move but this changed as we approached Echuca. Once at Echuca we struggled to find a place to moor the boat (no public moorings like at Goolwa and elsewhere in SA) and settled for a spot in front of a



caravan park but next moved the boat to the foreshore near the main ramp. Brian caught the bus back to Yarrowonga and picked up the car and trailer. We then made arrangements with a nearby caravan park to use their facilities and did the unavoidable chores – washing, dump station, topped up the water tanks, fetched fuel and some extra fresh provisions. Having the car handy made this all very convenient. Then Brian drove to Swan Hill, stored the car and trailer at another caravan park and caught the train and bus back to Echuca and we were on our way again.

6th – 12th July 2012

Motor not running as well as we would like, considering it had a major service before we left; the spark plugs keep fouling but we have spares so in they went. During a fuel tank change we let Elanora drift in the current and we calculated the river is running at about 3 knots so even at low revs we are doing about 6 (10kms) an hour. 2000 kms (not including the Murrumbidge or the Darling) at 10kms an hour makes 200 hours. We travel around 3 or 4 hours a day so we reckon we should be home mid to late August. Arrived at Torrumbarry in the afternoon, made arrangements for our lockage at 0930 the next day. Once inside the lock and halfway through the process the power went out and we were locked in the lock for about 2 hours. A day or so later we reached Barham/Koondrook and as we approached the bridge were dismayed to find the gap between the water and bridge very small. We pulled over and Brian measured it – barely more than 2 metres. We had to dismantle the bimini, solar panel, aerials and targer and had about 100mm to spare as we nervously slipped under. There was no chance of having the lift span raised as it is out of order and has been for some time! Other similarly low bridges are ahead – Gonn Crossing, Swan Hill, Tooleybuc and Nyah but I was told by someone from the RTA (now RMS) that Barham was the worst so if we could make it through that we'd be ok with the rest. Once at Swan Hill we pulled up in front of the caravan park where the

car and trailer are and went about some reprovisioning.



13th - 18th July 2012

We passed under the Swan Hill and Tooleybuc Bridges without incident, although the aerials were removed for the latter. Having left Tooleybuc we entered the section of the river known as the Bitch and Pups, a stretch notoriously difficult to navigate and impassable in low water. We didn't foresee such difficulties for us though, given the high water. The river narrowed and became quite winding as we neared the Bitch and Pups and was very swirly with many whirlpools indicating submerged obstacles or deep pools. However we cleared the area quite easily and always had a couple of metres under the keel. Later the next day we made the Murrumbidge River and turned up into her and we made camp about an hour upstream. The next day we ventured further up the Murrumbidge, somewhat slowly as we have no chart, and found it to be quite narrow but very beautiful and apparently little touched by humans. After some hours we pulled over for lunch and later headed back down to the camp we made the previous night.



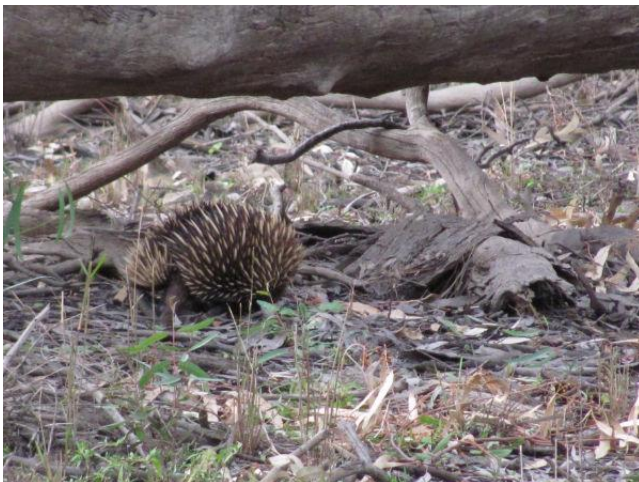
19th – 23rd July 2012

We've now passed the halfway mark of our trip in terms of days and in kilometres. Sadly the 1000km mark was missing so we kept on motoring. We stopped for a meal at the Euston Club – the largest club for the smallest town! Good meal too. Finally we have come across another river cruiser in the form of a 21 foot motor cruiser owned by a guy from Ballarat who bought the boat in Goolwa! He spends some 9 or so months a year cruising the river! The river has been wider and 4 or so metres deep, with thickly wooded banks and an abundance of birdlife. We have also had a great run with the weather turning on warm sunny winter's days for us.



24th – 27th July 2012

Mildura! We've now completed the section of the river which we've never been on. We pulled up on the banks of the caravan park on the NSW side and set about some chores. Later that day we rowed across the river in our tender and went for some beers and a meal and then rowed back. The next day Brian went about recovering the car from Swan Hill. Having earlier been told that Lock 9 won't be open until mid September!, we drove down to take a look at the adjacent ramps and chat with the lock master. The downstream ramp looks vaguely feasible even if the road to it is dodgy... The lockmaster said they are abandoning the job due to the high water (they are concerned an empty lock will float as the water rises) and the lock may be open again in about 3 weeks. Not sure that is soon enough for us and we will probably have to trail the boat around the lock none the less.



28th – 30th July 2012

We had an easy leg from Mildura to Renmark and camped opposite the junction of the Murray and the Darling.



The next day we started our trip up the Darling. Immediately the river was different, more narrow, somewhat greener in colour and with a lot more development along her banks. After an hour or two the river became a bit more ‘rural’ and the snags began proliferating. Generally we had 3 to 4 metres under us with a knot or 2 of current. We had some lovely campsites on sandy banks – no fires though as all the land abutting the river is privately owned...

31 July - 6th Aug 2012

With the lock still out of action, we pulled the boat out and headed to Mildura (the road to the ramp downstream of lock 9 being unsuitable) where we launched at Liba Liba/Jane Eliza Landing and started the long haul upriver. It took 3 and a half days of long hours (for us) and high revs (for us) to reach our destination. Along the way we stopped for fuel at the Old Customs House and passed through the removable section of the weir at lock 7 (the lock closed due to high water).





The trip back down river was much easier and we put in our longest stretch doing 88kms in one day. We were on this section in Elanora 8 years ago and the river has changed a bit, many more trees have grown along the banks and especially on the sandy points. All the waterways that run off the river are full and all the little creeks are flowing.

7th – 13th August 2012

Back at Renmark, Brian did the final movement of the car and took her back to Goolwa. Whilst in Renmark I met 2 other trailerable yachts exploring sections of the river: True Colours from Clayton were heading up river with their mast on and Pure Magic (a Noelex) from Garden Island were heading down river without their mast. Brian arrived back in Renmark late the next day so we had a meal there, over-nighted and head off the following morning. There are a number of towns and places from Renmark onwards and we had planned to stop for a meal at the Overland Corner Hotel but the high river meant it was too difficult to get ashore... Our final campfire was put to good use with a loaf of bread baked, 2 batches of my Mum's lemonade (made with soda water) scones, a baked melanzanne fritte and baked potatoes. Yumm! The River is definitely South Australian here – long sweeps of high cliffs, wide and lined with many shacks. There are even the odd house boats. We passed a canoeist who started in Bourke! Also clocked our deepest bend at 22 metres.



Big Bend

14th – 15th August 2012

We've been watching the weather for a few days now and the forecast shows a series of westerly fronts moving across the south central area, which will bring some strong winds. As we only have the motor and are dragging a tender, we are keen to cross Lake Alexandrina in mild conditions so we left Mannum early in the morning and motored non stop to Tailern Bend where we had to do a quick repair to the exhaust, then had a quick stop at Wellington to change fuel tanks and set the tender up for the crossing. By 1430 we were at Point Pomanda, made contact with Victor Harbour Sea Rescue and set the GPS for Pt Sturt. The afternoon's forecast (Willy Weather that is) proved correct and the wind proceeded to ease as did the

chop and we made 6knots comfortably. As the sun set we approached Rat Island and pulled up into Snug Cove in the last light. The next morning we motored the final leg from Clayton to Goolwa in freshening breezes.



Final night approach to Clayton Bay