

The on again, off again, on again cruise.

It's years since I last did a cruise from Nagambie up to the Mitchelton and Tahbilk wineries. It's the sort of trip that takes a bit of mucking around and preparation for only one night away. From memory there were 9 or 10 boats and we launched at the old caravan park ramp before they had problems with the sewerage system.

When I saw that a trip was planned for October I had an urge to do it again. I'd been told that the caravan park was inhabited by ferals, the ramp was not available and it may have been like that at some time, but that couldn't be further from the truth.

Through a happy coincidence Joan and I went to the recent Leisurefest at Sandown Park to look at 'stuff'. In one of the display areas Nagambie Lakes Leisure Park was spruiking their park. Check out <http://www.nagambielakespark.com.au> Millions of dollars had been invested and the entire place re-birthed. The person at the display said that it was fine to launch at the park just talk to the girls in the office. Security was tops and there was no charge. He also said that in his opinion the public ramp was a risk gamble for overnight.

Through another happy coincidence I'd received a notice from Tahbilk that the Purbrick family were celebrating the wineries 150th anniversary and it coincided with the cruise. So I was a definite starter if the weather co-operated. Saturday saw perfect 21 degree weather and 3 MTYC boats launched for a leisurely trip up-river to Mitchelton. The mooring area is still against the high bank but they have removed some of the willows which makes it easier to disembark. A couple of hours of tastings followed by an excellent BBQ with more wine (of course) capped off a perfect day. The sky that night was clear and full of stars undimmed by any lights. Even the mozzies were well behaved (after dark).

We started Sunday in true cruising tradition with a slow breakfast and eventually cast off around 10 and headed downstream to Tahbilk. Good bank moorings with bollards have been installed to cater for the river visitors near the commercial jetty. The winery was in full swing for the birthday bash and looked magnificent. Gourmet food, bands playing, the museum open for vintage tastings, 1860 and 1875 cellar tours, the magnificent old homestead gardens open to wander around, the wetland café and free boat tours of the wetland all happening.

We did our best to do it all, tasted heaps, bought some special supplies and got away (unwillingly) around 4. We were retrieved by 5.30 and home about 7.30. A fabulous spring week-end away of 25 sunny degrees on the Sunday made even better by the festivities at Tahbilk, but only 3 boats. Adrians RL with Campbell, Peter Marts Explorer 16 and Joan in my Farr 6.

Colin Clark.