



'The Voyage of SV Cuttlefish up the Murray River'

A presentation by Tony Cousins, 26 July 2023

Report by Stephen Thomas

The Kirribilli Room was filled to capacity with 65 people attending Tony Cousin's presentation of his voyage of 500 nm up the Murray River from Goolwa to Mildura in his newly acquired sailing yacht *Cuttlefish*.



Tony grew up in Largs Pier, Port Adelaide, South Australia, learning to sail in a Holdfast trainer dingy where the ultimate achievement was sailing underneath the pier called "shooting the pier".

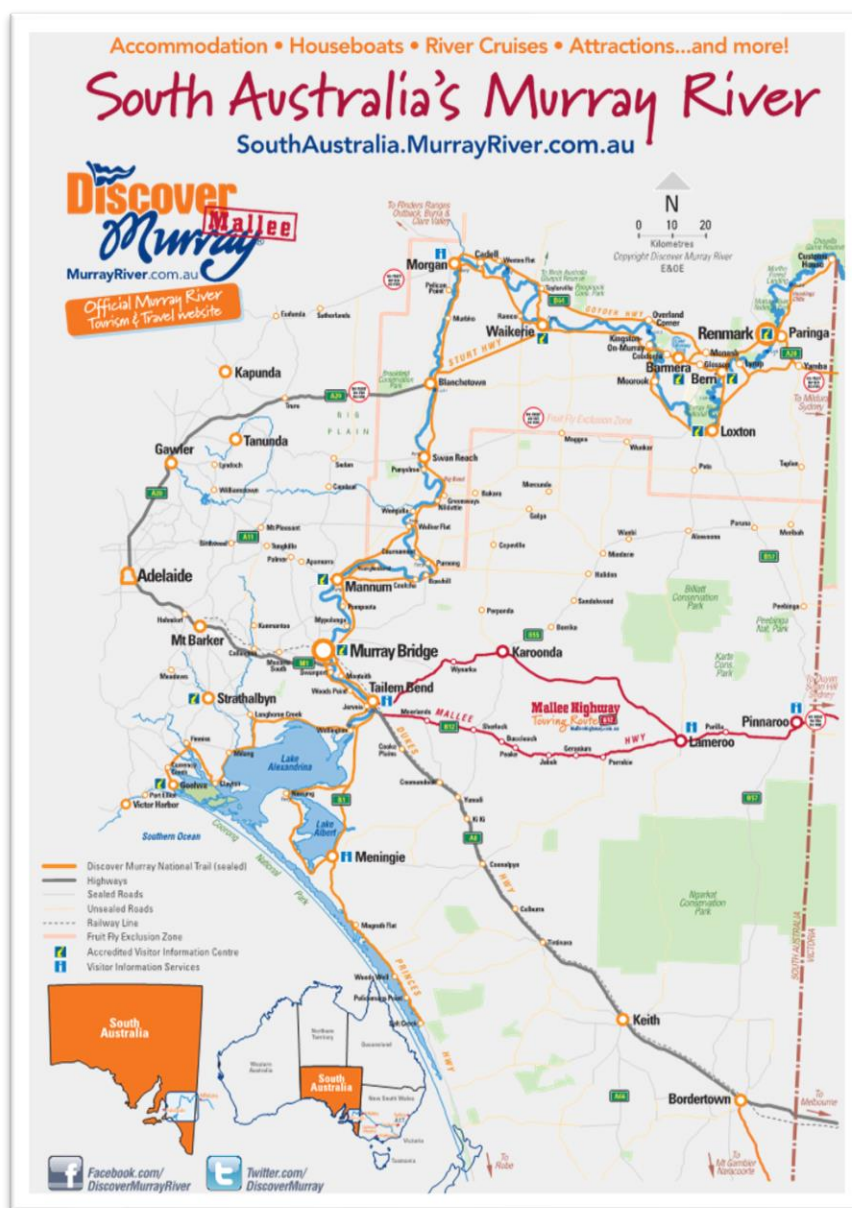
He then graduated to a 12 foot Cadet dinghy and represented South Australia in the Stonehaven Cup. where he towed his 12 foot dinghy to Melbourne in his mother's FC Holden.

He joined the Merchant Navy Marine straight out of school and worked for ANL for ten years sailing on many of their ships, including Australian Escort, River Torrens and Australian Venture. During this time, he attended officer training at the Australian Maritime College in Tasmania. Whilst in Tasmania, he sailed from the Port Dalrymple Yacht Club and was on the Townsville Trader when it ran aground in the Tamar River at Clarence Point. He was invited to sail on the Bounty replica (which was built for the Mel Gibson film) to Portsmouth, so this ship could take part in the reenactment of the first fleet for the Australian Bicentennial in 1988.



Following ten years in the Merchant Navy Marine, Tony joined the stevedoring industry for 20 years in both Australia and New Zealand. This job included supervising the loading of supply ships for Antarctica and, as a result, was invited to sail to Antarctica to supervise the unloading.

He managed a tug boat business in Tasmania called PB Towage and is now a consultant to the maritime industry. Thinking of retirement, Tony looked to buy his perfect boat and finally settled on a design by Neil Cormack built by Chips Barclay in 1991. This little ship is 34 feet overall (27 on the waterline), has a beam of 11 feet and draws only 3 feet with the centreboard raised. This boat was originally called "Yvonne Patrine" and sailed out of Goolwa Regatta Yacht Club with sail number GV 7, and is now called *Cuttlefish*.





The question now, was how to get this yacht from Goolwa to Sydney. With a small draft and deck-stepped mast, which can be lowered, the obvious choice was to voyage up the Murray River to Mildura and then truck the boat to Sydney.

Setting out a few days after Christmas with his wife Janice, the first day was 6.5 hours across Lake Alexandrina to Wellington, followed by 4.5 hours to Murray Bridge at speeds of 4.5 knots. Each day he would cruise from 2 hours up to 7 hours, stopping at the following towns Mannum, Bowhill, Walker Flat, Swan Reach, Moorundi and finally Blanchetown, which is the first lock encountered. At each stop, there seemed to be a hotel, each one better than the last and so New Year's Eve was spent in Blanchetown.

He was joined by his son, Tim, in Blanchetown, which is the start of the Riverland region of South Australia and on stopping in Pelican Point, Tim jumped ashore and a hard redwood splinter penetrated his foot, which required hospitalisation.

Tim soldiered on to Morgan (Terminus Hotel) and thence to the Claudio Winery at Waikerie, where a lay day was taken.

We are now up to days 12 and 13, where it is on to Akuna Station, Kingston On Murray, where one can stay on a luxurious, restored paddle steamer. Day 14 and 15 are to Berri and on to the border town of Renmark and the Woolshed Brewery, so not surprisingly, a lay day was taken.

Day 17 is Renmark to Border Cliffs Customs House, where there is a beautiful walking trail and Lock 6. Customs House to Devils Elbow and Lock 7 was the longest and shallowest day at 8.7 hours cruising. The next stop was Cullulleraine, then Moorne, Wentworth (Lock 10) and finally, after 500nm, on Day 21 to Mildura.

The boat was lifted at Mildura, the bottom cleaned and trucked to Sydney. The temperature across the Hay Plains was above 40 degrees and Tony kept adding water to the bilge of *Cuttlefish* to try and limit the seams opening up in the redwood planks. Despite this, the boat was kept in the water and in the slings on launching at White Bay with the pumps going. It took four weeks for the seams to take up and now *Cuttlefish* is fully watertight.

Cuttlefish is now at home at SASC, participating in classic yacht races and extended cruising.