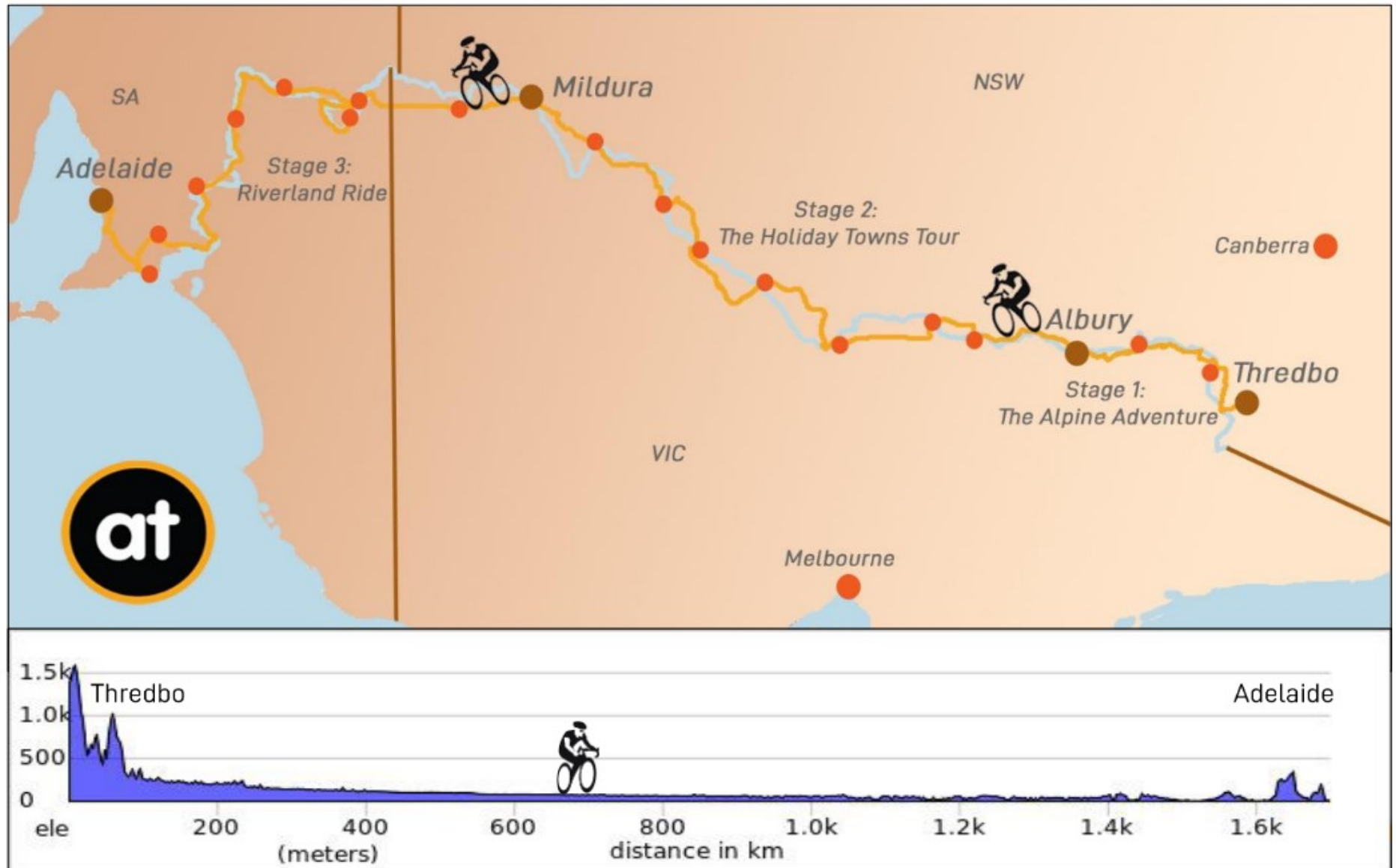




The Murray River ride

Saturday 25 February to Monday 19th March 2023



On the 25 of February 2023 I joined a bicycle tour organised by *AllTrails.com.au* from the highest point in Australia to the mouth of the Murray river beyond Goolwa in South Australia. The tour followed as closely as possible the route of the Murray river. Official distance a little over 1700kms, I managed to clock up 1823kms over 19 riding days with an aggregate climb of 900metres.

Day one February 25th.

At Thredbo Alpine resort from where we were scheduled to take the 10am chair lift up the mountain before hiking the 7kms to the summit of Kosciuszko, Australia's highest point. Due to the cancellation of the booked shuttle bus, Richard was forced to make the round trip from Thredbo to Canberra and back resulting in a much later lift up the mountain. Given the reduced time on the mountain and being rather apprehensive about the climbing challenges planned for the following



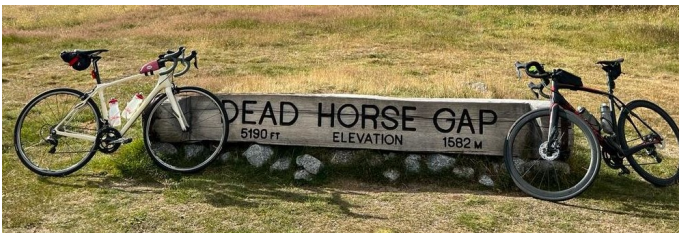
day I turned back somewhat short of the summit. A fabulous hike mostly on quality steel boardwalks protecting the fragile alpine environment.



Day two Sunday 26th.

79kms from Thredbo to Khancoban.

A steady climb to the top of Dead Horse Gap the highest point on our cycling journey followed by an at times exhilarating 17k down hill rush dropping 1000m before morning tea the Gordon rest area and our first glimpse of the stream that will become the Mighty Murray. On that run achieved the highest noted speed of the tour of 67km/hour.



Khancoban motel is firmly fixed in a 60's time warp from when it was built as accommodation for

workers on the Snowy Mountain hydro electric scheme parts of which we observed during our ride.

Day 3 Khancoban to Kennedy's Reserve 97kms via Towong and Tintaldra.

Some very attractive scenery overlooking lush green river flats hosting beef cattle. Our first introduction to one of the features of rural cycling namely the smells; green grass, eucalyptus, fresh silage, cattle trucks, sheep decks and the not so pleasant diesel fumes and last week's road kill. Roadside plaques celebrating the establishment of the Murray Grey cattle breed and the big bogan. There being no local accommodation we halted the ride at Kennedy's reserve and were bussed to Albury.









Day 4 Kennedy reserve to Albury 73kms.

A fairly gentle riding day after being bussed back to Kennedy's reserve. Rolling hill roads beside the river and later alongside Lake Hume.

Through sheep and cattle country before crossing the river at Bellbridge and on to Albury. Many very attractive vistas.

Day 5 Albury to Mulwala 100kms.

A fairly easy riding day, with some heavily trafficked sections to deal with. Coming out of Albury my closest pass of the whole tour was by a police car. Overnight at the Yarrawonga/Mulwala golf resort where we arrived before 1pm and I clocked up another 25kms just poking around the town and along the lakeside attractions.



Day 6. Mulwala to Barooga. 60kms

A later start providing time for a bit more local sightseeing before morning tea at a crossing of the Mulwala canal. Some apprehension amongst the riders about the promised cattle grids along the way which turned out to be almost completely filled with gravel and a total non event.

A few long stretches of single lane asphalt with no traffic through cropping country, an easy ride to another golf resort at Cobram – Barooga, a district which going by the signage has a strange fixation on Federation... I presume that something associated with federation occurred there.

Day 7 Barooga to Echuca 110kms

A warmish day starting with a gentle 3kms along a treed avenue into a 50kms straight of empty country road. Just rolling along through wheat fields and past a spot where a grass fire had been started on the side of the road and successfully quenched within a couple of hundred metres.

Flat, mostly intensively farmed country, grain and tree crops and the occasional vineyard or centre pivot irrigator.

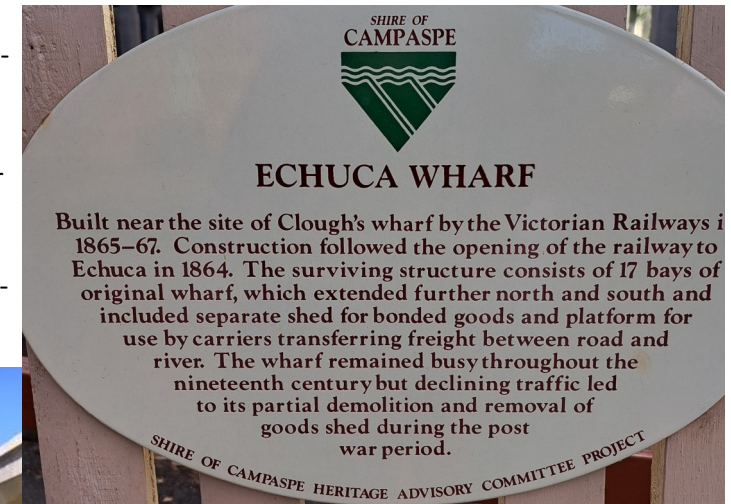
Evening cruise on the paddle steamer "Canberra". The PS Canberra is the oldest river boat in the Murray River paddle steamer fleet, having celebrated her century in August 2013, she is



powered by a 1923 wood-fired Marshall compound steam engine. Although not the original fitted to the vessel this engine which spent its early working life as a stationary engine powering a saw mill is identical to the original boat engine.

Day 8 Rest day at Echuca.

A day spent poking around on the trike and visiting colonial museums, the old port and exploring the rivers (Murray and Campaspe) creeks, red gum stands and a plethora of bird life. The twin towns showing distinct signs of being early centres of wealth and river commerce.



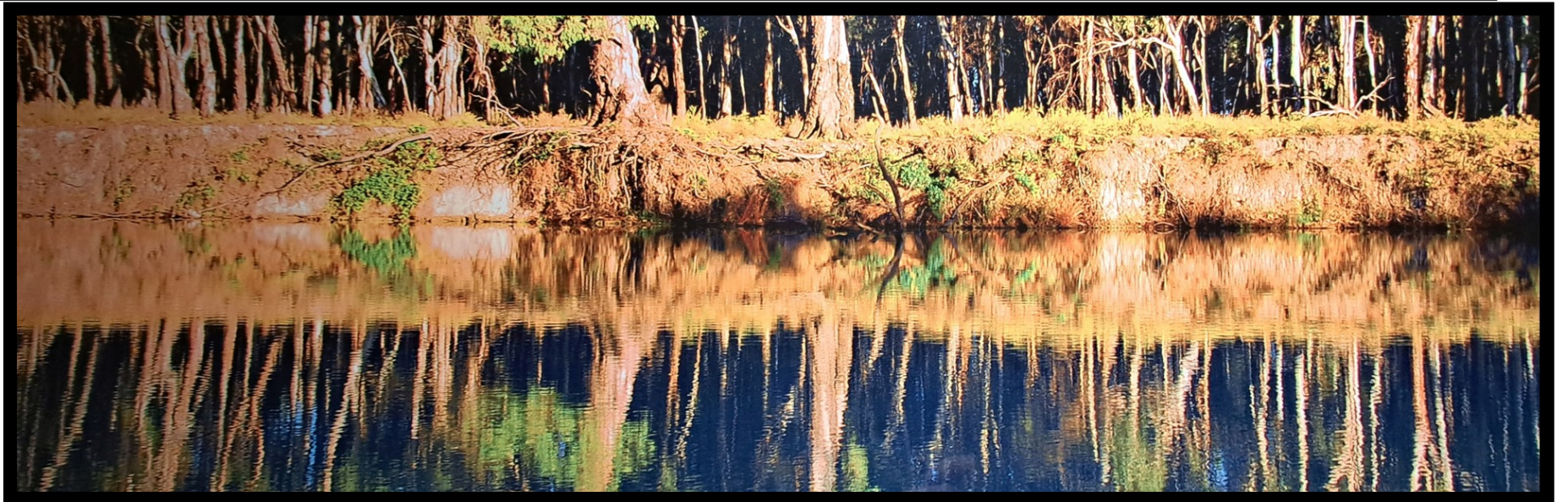
Day 9 Sunday March 5th.

Echuca to Barham 90kms via Wharparilla, Patho, Gunbower and Wee Wee Rup.

Much of the ride along the Murray Valley highway a rather busy road with many heavy vehicles bashing holes in the air as they passed.. A very hot and windy day scarred by a blown tyre and a second puncture that marred a day of intermittent spectacular wetland views.

Tree crops and large dairy properties interspersed with grape vines and horticultural crops supported by dry land irrigation.







At Swan Hill I managed to get a replacement for the tyre that blew.

In the best tradition of Aussie Big Things Swan Hill has the giant Murray Cod. A visually prosperous service town for the agricultural and tourist industries.

Along the way we saw evidence of Irrigated stonefruit, vegetables, nuts (almonds and pistachios), olives, citrus, grapes, pasture hay and rice. Broadacre cropping – grain including wheat, barley and vetch. While beyond the reaches of the irrigators cattle and sheep livestock.



Day 10 Monday 6th March. Barnbam to Swan Hill. 75Kms via Myall, Murabitt and Lake Bulga, .

More river views. Large dairy farms and citrus groves with some lucerne stands where irrigation water available. On the drier lands evidence of cropping probably mostly wheat and barley on the gentler slopes and sheep and cattle on the higher and stonier grounds.

Myall the site of the Myall massacre that resulted in the first conviction and hanging of British subjects for the murder of Aboriginal persons.

Lunch at Lake Boga, historic home of the Catalina WWII flying boat base and now a major recreational asset. Accommodation at the Bourke and Wills motel.



**Day 11 Tuesday March 7th Swan Hill to Tooleybuc
50kms.**



I started the day badly with a flat tyre. Changed the tube and on the road through some very scenic landscapes via Nyah, Nyah West Pira and Wood Wood. Vast almond plantations, and many wheat silos and tarpaulined bunkers of grain.



Night at Tooleybuc sporting club home of the big Malley root that came second to Omeo's root that secured the Guinness book of records as the largest Malley root, housed in its own special shelter adjacent to a giant yellow metal ant (termite?).



Very pleasant river walk between our accommodation and the river bridge. The bridge has a central lifting section to allow the paddle steamers passage.



**Day 12 Tooleybuc to Robinvale via Goodnight,
Boundary Bend and Lake Powell. 90 Kms**

A bit chilly to start with and an embarrassing "WhatsApp" post thanks to autocorrect substituting "feeling up" for my intended "fuelling up".

Many tree crops along the way and centre pivot irrigators as well. Walnuts, Pistachios, Almonds, Avocados, along the way and moving towards more stone fruits, olives, carrots and vines approaching Robinvale. Robinvale is a sister city with the town of Villers-Bretonneux in the Somme department in northern France and home to the Australian John Monash war memorial..

Of particular note along the way was an example of a "ring tree" believed to have been created by Aboriginal people as a territory, special site, or directional marker.

Lunch



Day 13. March 9th. Robinvale to Mildura 90kms via Paringi, and Trentham Estate winery.

Murray Valley highway a busy road with many heavy and long vehicles including the occasional road train to give us a thorough buffeting as they passed. Lunch at the Trentham Estate winery entered via a long and glorious avenue. A stunning venue overlooking the river.



Dinner at Mildura Grand Hotel presented almost as a wedding feast, large white bows on the chairs, alternate drop menu, and very limited bar choices.

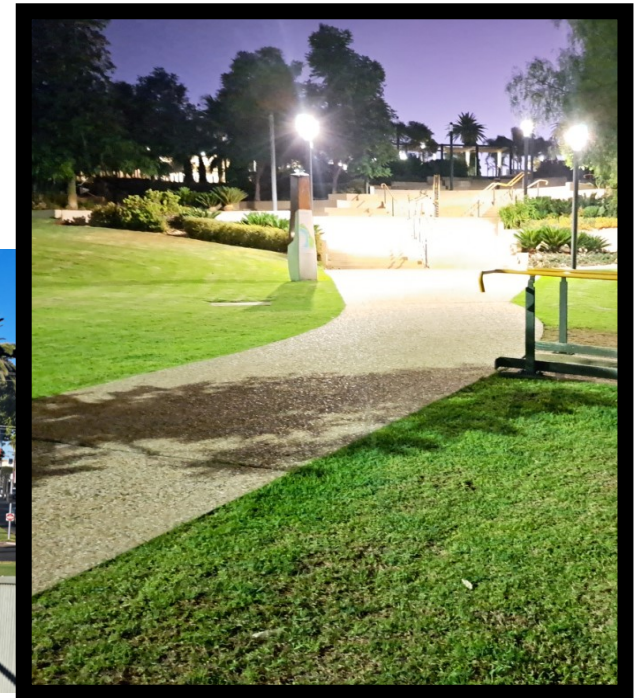
Great fun never the less in a glorious old venue on the river front.



Day 14 Thursday 8th March. Rest day at Mildura.

Spent much of the day on a bus excursion organised by Betsy and David to an Almond processing facility. 600 acres of truck access and almond bunkers all under the control of our host Des the truck wrangler.

A great illustration of just how large are the industries behind the foodstuffs that grace the supermarket shelves. Then back to the Grand for another evening and slap up dinner.





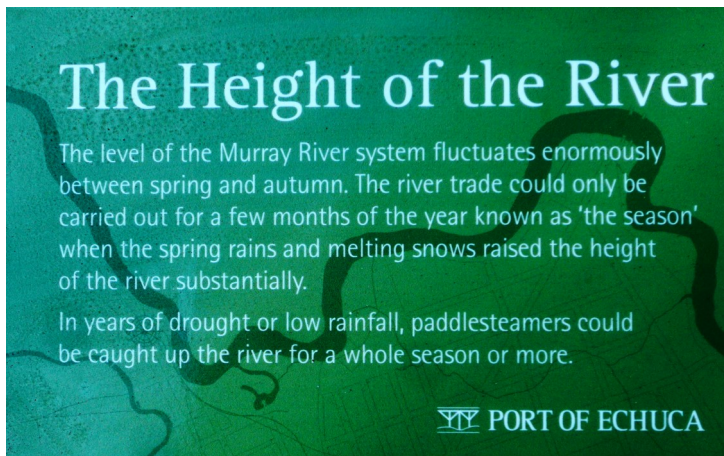
The River.

The river that we saw was mostly one of begin peaceful beauty; a source of nourishment for the land and the spirit, a paradise of recreational pursuits. Houseboats, paddle steamers, paddle boarding, canoes, kayaks, wind surfing, water skiing, bird watching, fishing etc etc.

However there was that other side to the river also in plain view; the ravishing, house home and spirit crushing river of high floods.

Piles of dead fish at the Walker Flat ferry crossing and a tide mark at the cross members on the power poles.

A note that the Mid Murray Council had managed to get 5 of 28 septic waste water systems and 3 of 25 boat ramps back in service just about summed up the challenge facing the re-builders.



At Nildottie one family was living in a tent amid a strew of detritus beside their beached and destroyed houseboat .

The Mid Murray region was hard hit, with 2300 dwellings inundated and 155 kilometres of roads damaged or destroyed. Damage most evident to us at Banchetown, Mannum, Swan Reach, Walker Flat and Morgan.



Mannun seemed to be especially hit with the entire river side of the commercial district closed, boarded up or under re-construction.

At Renmark it was evident that great expense and effort had been exerted to make the waterfront environment by our hotel clean and attractive. A morale boosting enterprise that did nothing to repair the damaged homes, businesses and infrastructure.

At most of our riverside stops the toilet facilities bore "closed" signage.



Day 15 Mildura to Meringur, 95km via Pirlta and Werrimull.

There being not much in the way of accommodation at Meringur, at day's end we were bussed back to Mildura. The day started with a good smooth, straight, and quiet road to morning tea at Pirlta silos.



Mostly grain country with many silos and grain bunkers. Then on to the seriously outback hotel at Werrimull for lunch too late for the “feral festival” that concluded a week earlier. Perhaps just as well!!!

From there to the Pioneer park at Millewa. A fascinating place built up from various buildings, machinery, artifacts and railway equipment collected from around the district.

A school room and district hall stocked with many old records, documents and artifacts left open for the passing visitors to admire.

No graffiti and presumably no damage or thefts. A wonder to behold and enjoy.









Day 16. Meringur to Renmark 80kms.

A long steady ride in mostly flat country during which we clocked up the first 1000 kms on our journey along the river's route. A fair amount of heavy traffic on the Stuart highway passing into South Australia close to Yamba after complying with the fruit quarantine requirements. Why the big tyre I have no idea; it must be a South Australian thing.



An

almost 5kms bike path to our Renmark Hotel with one section of the path down the centre of the highway bridge.



Overnight at the Renmark Hotel .

(At least that is what the sign said).

The oldest community owned hotel in the British Empire.







Day 17 Monday 13th. Renmark to Berri 102 kms.

After clocking up 100kms we ended the ride only 20km in a direct line from our starting point. However we did experience some fabulous country along the way. Especially the view over Lake Bonney during morning tea at Barmera.

Barmera home to a fabulous art deco movie theatre and a water sports mecca with yachting, water skiing, wind and kite surfing etc. Then on to Loxton for a delicious picnic lunch with our final destination the Berri Hotel right on the river front.

Day 18. Monday 12th March. Berri to Waikerie 71km via Barmera, Lake Bonney and a ferry crossing to Waikerie.

Another great riding day, road a bit rough to start followed by a loop around lake Bonney from Barmera. Absolutely stunning!!!

On the way out of Berri a forest of massive wine tanks.

Countryside barren without the irrigation and emerald green where the water is available. After leaving the lake behind we entered sparse, dry and empty countryside until morning tea at Overland Corner where the main and only feature is the historic pub, not open when we visited.

At Waikerie I rode out past the painted silos some 7kms to a bike shop in the countryside and purchased some new puncture resistant inner tubes.





Day 19. Waikerie to Blanchetown 80kms and bus back to Waikerie.

Another out and back day, some good riding marred by two punctures. After the second flat we manoeuvred the trike into the bus and in our haste left my flags on the side of the road. Arrived Morgan too late for morning tea. Changed the tyre, back across the river by ferry and on our way again.



Doug in the bus went back and retrieved the flags. Thank you Doug.

Another night at Waikerie.

Day 20. Waikerie—Blanchetown by bus then 95kms to Mannum.

A day of spectacular river views and small towns, Swan reach, Nildottie, Wongulla, Walker Flat etc. Ferry crossing to Walker Flat for morning tea. The occasion steep climb through limestone rock-strewn scrublands interspersed with cropping fields.,

Mannum is the river gateway to the Barossa Valley, Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Peninsula and boasts many old-ware shops and photographic museums. The town presents as house boat central with seemingly hundreds of them moored nearby. A beautiful spot close to Adelaide. .

Day 21 Friday March 17. Mannum to Strathalbyn 105kms.

Richard had been concerned about whether the ferry would be operating. The ferry was back in service but our planned road route was still out as a result of the recent flooding.

Consequently he had to hurriedly plan a new route. And what a stunning route it was!! Mannum, Caloote, Mobilong, Murray Bridge and on to Strathalbyn.

A very diverse agriculture on view along the way, large lucerne fields under irrigation, much silage, stone fruits, and



extensive grain growing on broad acre fields, massive feed mills, huge piggeries and dairy properties. On approach to Strathalbyn many wineries.

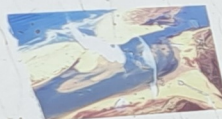
Very hot on approach to Strathalbyn. As we passed a tennis court close to our motel one little boy was heard to ask his mother. Why is that man on that different bike?. "just because he is real old" was the reply.

Strathalbyn a very attractive town built around the Angas river, extensive gardens, plentiful trees and old buildings make for a most pleasant down town. The town and the nearby wineries an easy drive for Adelaide folk.



The Murray Mouth Sand Pumping Project

Sand pumping plays an essential role in keeping the Murray Mouth open and allowing water to flow to the sea. Excessive water extraction, combined with drought conditions, have meant that the barriers have remained closed for long periods to hold water in Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert for irrigation and other uses. As a result, large amounts of sand have entered the estuary and congested the Mouth.



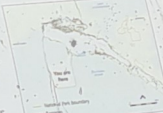
What is being done
If the Mouth closes, it will have a major impact on the Coorong environment. An open Murray Mouth allows cool, oxygen-rich seawater to enter the Coorong and mix with the waters of the North Lagoon. This is important for maintaining the right salinity and

temperature levels for a healthy estuarine ecosystem. It also allows the rise and fall of the tides to expose mudflats, used by wading birds each summer in their search for food. Many fish species need to enter the estuary, the Coorong, and the lakes to breed and feed, but cannot do so if the Mouth is congested.

How the dredge works

A dredge is being used to remove sand from the Murray Mouth. It features a conveyor belt, attached to the front of the dredge, to dig up the sand. The sand is sucked into a pipe and pumped over the dunes of Kangaroo Island and Sir Richard Peninsula (the other side of the Mouth). The waves then pick up the dredged sand and it is transported via longshore drift to replenish the beaches along the coast.

The dredged channels allow seawater to flow from the Mouth to the Coorong, benefiting this unique environment.



Scope and funding

Dredging of the Mouth commenced in October 2012, at a crucial period when the Mouth almost closed. Ongoing dredging has continued and will do so until there are sufficient flows in the River Murray.

The dredging project was initiated by the South Australian Government, and is funded by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. The Authority receives equal contributions from the state governments of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. The Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation manages the project. SA Water manages the dredging contract and other physical works.



Quick facts

600,000 to 1,000,000 m³

The average amount of sand pumped per year

\$6 million

The average amount used to maintain the Mouth

3000 years

Estimated age of the Murray Mouth

Estimated age of the Murray Mouth



Day 22. Strathalbyn to Goolwa 80kms via Milang, Currency Creek, Goolwa, Hindmarsh Island, Murray Mouth and back to Goolwa.

Early on the ride we come upon Lake Alexandrina on our way to morning tea at Milang foreshore overlooking Lake Alexandrina; a very attractive spot, great views, green grass, spotless amenities all rounded out by Richard supplying lammingtons and chocolate eggs.

Rolling green pastures, vineyards and horticulture on our way over Hindmarsh bridge towards the mouth.

Great views at Finness creek including a canoe tree on the road side. Very windy on the last leg to the mouth. Then back to Goolwa and a ride around town. Many old buildings but I found the old port and railway bit of a let down.





**Day 23. The Grand Fi-
nale !! Goolwa to Ade-
laide (Glenelg). 95kms.**

A cool ride through rolling hills, very green after some of the dry lands we passed plenty of grape vines, some grain and horticultural crops.

After a steady climb we crested Old Willung Hill for the 4km downhill sweep.

From Willunga entered a long rail trail that deceived us into thinking that all the climbing was behind us. Not so.!

Eventually met the coast at Brighton where we bunched up for a massed ride to Glenelg.

A fabulous experience. !

Would I do it all again?

Yes please!!

The overall experience was most enjoyable. Three weeks shared with a cohort of people whose company I enjoyed .

It was my sixth tour with AllTrails and I cannot speak highly enough of Richard, Jo and Midge's professionalism and organisational skills.

On the road Richard and Doug, the mechanic, provided exemplary care, guidance and good humour.

As well as fabulous on road catering and quality overnight accommodations.

While the official length was just over 1700kms, I by a spot of touring around our overnight stops managed to clock up 1823kms over the 20 riding days. We climbed an aggregate of 900mtres and because of where we started must have descended at least 2500 mt.

The highest speed my machine recorded was 67kph and a longest day of 121kms. My 1940 issue legs were amply assisted by 250 watts of e-assist.

I was the only rider on a recumbent trike, a machine newly built for me by Ben at Trisled. Had I really thought about the riding conditions in the Malley I would have specified more thorn resistant tyres than the Scorchers chosen for their low rolling resistance and speed. Five punctures later, a lesson learnt.

Ben talks of this build at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wobSC-8Ulug>



Why ride a Trike

Comfort. I could ride for 8 hours straight and nothing would hurt. Tired Yes. Sore no.!

Trikes are heavy and thus slow up hill and seriously fast down again. They are very stable and will not fall over regardless of how slow one is going or are waiting at the lights nor do they wobble about when very slow.

With a low C of G they are very stable at speed. Trike riders arrive at an accident feet not head first. I have never struck an incline that I could not climb on the trike; however loose sandy or greasy surface can lead to the back wheel spinning and no forward progression.

They are fun. Serious fun.

The downsides:- they are heavy awkward devices when one is trying to transport or store them. Their low profile requires flags to bring them up to driver eye level. My experience riding both two and three wheels is that the traffic give me much more room on the trike than on the bike. The novelty factor makes them more visible where as bikes are so common that they can become psychologically invisible.

You cannot stand on the pedals to assist in a climb, but you can dig your shoulders in and exert much more leverage than one's weight which is the limit on a bicycle.

They are serious fun and practical touring and commuting machines.

Thank you Richard for accommodating me and my trike.



Another puncture for Doug's attention.









