

NEWSLETTER

Marlay Point Overnight Race

6-7 March 2021



I had been told by numerous Victorians that I had to do the famous Marlay Point Overnight race and showcase the Cygnet 20 on the Gippsland lakes. This iconic race has been running on the Gippsland Lakes since 1969. Boats start at Lake Wellington Yacht Club, head through the McLennan Strait into Lake Victoria, towards Paynesville to finish at the Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club. 2021 being the year we are launching our Cygnet 20 Gaff Association with 16 boats on the water, I thought we would start the year festivities entering two Cygnet 20's in this famous race.

Typical panorama of the Gippsland Lakes.

The Gippsland Lakes are a network of lakes, marshes and lagoons separated from the ocean by coastal dunes known as Ninety Mile Beach.

For its 53th editions, the race gathered 90 boats and their crew. I got Cygnet ready which seems onerous having already had her in Cat 7 safety and now needed to reach Cat 5. I had spoken to Will Hardcastle and he seemed pretty relaxed about the requirements having just passed the incline test. It was good to have Will put

things into perspective as so many details to organize. As it turned out they try and audit every boat entering and check 10 critical items. We came through no problems. It was good to race on Lake Macquarie and take Cygnet out a few times leading up to this race. I was confident about her systems, engine, safety, mast, rigging, sails,

keel, rudder and trailer etc. But I didn't appreciate how much more taxing this race was than anything else I had done previously on Cygnet. Organizing bedding, filling tanks, checking lights, cleaning gear, tyres, petrol, vehicle, wet weathers, torches, crew, food to be finally ready to go!

CYGNET 20 GAFF ASSOCIATION

Bluewater Cruising Yachts is delighted to launch the Cygnet 20 Gaff Association to create exciting opportunities to sail together our beautiful Cygnet 20's. We will organise a few events this year.

Already we have been invited to the Noosa Gaff Rig Regatta in June 2021. Check out the information at the end of this newsletter.

If you have suggestions about events you are keen to join, let us know!

David 0412 656 271

The way to Gippsland Lakes

I was keen to get a head start and travel down over two days as it's a 12 hour drive from Newcastle to Paynesville not allowing for stops. Driving 4 hours from Newcastle got us to Goulburn, a beautiful historic town. We arrived at the Tesla charging facility opposite the information centre. We parked overnight with the trailer and enjoyed late snacks in a beautiful rose garden in the middle of town. I realise these trips are great for discovering things along the way. What a shame we couldn't stay longer. The journey continued with the Goulburn to Paynesville eight hours driving through Canberra and then onto the Monaro Highway.

I haven't stopped at Canberra for decades, but now I'm looking forward to having a weekend with the GAFF Association checking out Lake Burley Griffin and the National Monuments. Monaro highway, driving past Cooma through Bombala, is a picturesque drive through different landscapes: barren plains, hills, rocky outcrops and forests.

The hull number are placed, Cygnet is ready to be launched at the Gippsland Lakes Yacht club.

Amethyst arriving and ready to be launched at the Wellington Yacht Club.



Upon reaching lakes entrance 3.30pm, we had a chance to check out these massive waterways, some 340 km² over three times larger than lake Macquarie (110 km²) from some lovely vantage points.

I had been talking to Will along the way he was telling me how fresh it was! Fresh doesn't sound too bad. Well, it wasn't, until we reached our destination, the finishing line of the race in Paynesville. We stepped out of the car. It was windy and cold blowing 20 knots I reckon. Straight up the boat ramp I could see why Will wasn't keen

to launch in these conditions. I doubt he would have been able to launch without damaging his boat. It didn't look good. No problems, a local said. No one launches here, go around to King Street, the boat ramp is much better. Thank you for the advice. This was indeed a great boat ramp, well protected with generous setup area and parking.

After fixing the hull number and rigging the boat (15 min), we were ready to launch. Car and trailer were parked, we were off for a cruise to Marlay Point, the race starting point, 28 nm away.



First stop at Duck Bay, a well-protected anchorage. Dinner consisted of snacks, noodles, more noodles, pumpkin soup and bread, which really hit the spot on a cold windy night. When anchoring at night things seem so much further away. Waking up at 6 a.m. sun was just rising. We needed to get away early as still another 22 miles to go. We motored SE along Lake Victoria until the wind picked up. Beautiful townships and secluded beaches confirmed we were exploring a very beautiful part of Australia! How exciting! We need to come back. Maybe next year, we can stay for a week!

We sailed through McLennan Strait joining Lake Victoria to Lake Wellington. Such an array of birds is what must be a wetland Paradise for them. Such a beautiful day. What about a swim in the lake? Are there sharks? A quick Google seems to indicate nothing too alarming. Why not? Water temperature must have been around 17-18 degrees, a bit cold to start with but much better the second swim, after getting over the shock of the first swim.

A long night...



Cygnets and Amethyst amongst other boats tied up in the reeds waiting for the race to start.

Briefing to the 90 boats and their crew prior to racing at the Wellington Yacht Club.

We reached Marley Point around 3.30pm, tied up beside Will's Amethyst, in amongst the Reeds, this was different! A great festival atmosphere was the feeling at Wellington Marley Point, band playing and eateries. The excitement of 90 boats and crews about to test themselves. Briefing 5:30pm and race start at 7:45pm.

Getting out to the start line was a little challenging motoring into 15 knots and a 3' chop. I wonder how Will was fairing with his 3 HP electric engine, a bit more challenging, no doubt? There was a lot of jockeying at the start with so many boats all flexing their muscles. My tactic? Follow Amethyst, because I knew Will would have sussed out the best start! Sure enough with the start flare, Will was in the box seat but we couldn't keep up! In fact Cygnets couldn't even cross the start line on its first attempt (too close to the start boat) so we had to jibe and have another go! At least we had started at the back of the fleet.



realised by this stage I had made a big mistake starting with the No.3 jib, not enough power upwind. Will was off, after a great start as usual and was leading the pack, great to see a Cygnet doing well! First tack, we had to change the headsail as we were coming last with no prospects of improving. This proved easier said than done battling the chop and going on dark. So easy to tangle lines up, which I thought I did but it miraculously sorted itself out.

We were off and Cygnet immediately felt good pointing close and increased boat speed. Now all we had to do the work and get back into the fray. This race was head winds all the way and settling back to around 12 KTS NE. The next two hours was a tacking duel cross Lake Wellington to try and claw back what boats we could. Success upon heading into the strait, we had overtaken 12 boats. It was a beautiful sailing night, stars were out in the sky and on the water. A very special night.

Now the fun part the McLennan Strait linking Lake Victoria to Lake Wellington, 9.7km long and approximately 50 to 100 meter width, certainly an excellent opportunity to perfect your tacking technique! A powerful torch to check how close the shore was prior to tacking was instrumental. Polish your boating right of way knowledge and understanding!

The wind suddenly died and what Will taught me years before became so relevant: loosen everything off, halyard tension, sheets, outhaul, sit on the lee side, to keep the sails hanging in the right shape.

We kept on moving while other boats looked dead in the water. We must have overtaken another eight to ten boats and even caught up with Will's Amethyst. Another boat commented "It looks like you've got your own slipstream". Magic moment! This was the third time I have felt this in my sailing experience and it felt Oh so special! Sailing the strait was fun, picturesque, beautiful, challenging, intense and totally satisfying. I was in my element and having a ball. The night was cold. However, this extra exercise warmed us up.

Once out of the strait it was back to tacking up lake Victoria for the next 18 miles. But shock, horror, I thought our steering felt heavy and when I looked out the stern, I noticed the rudder uphaul had broken and the rudder was horizontal. A not so quick threading the eye while sailing put the rudder back vertical as it should be. We had run ground coming out of the strait, which must have been where the uphaul had broken.



The night went on, cold, exhausting, delirious at times but we still needed to concentrate and sail Cygnet to its optimum. The milky way was still striking and conditions were perfect. This part of the race took five hours before sunrise. It's always spectacular on the water when the warm sun rises to give you a new life. Looking astern, I lost count of how many boats were behind us. We had done well through the night and kept our lead. Heading around the

last point, we had a good lead on the next group of boats before making the last dash to the line. Should I tack or continue to sail the line and then tack? Well, I must have been in a state because I continued to sail the knock and not sail the lift to the line. This costs about 20-25 minutes I imagine, which would have put us 25 minutes behind Amethyst. I later found out Amethyst came 5th and Cygnet 12th over line in our division A (31 boats registered and 29 boats finished), an excellent result all in all.



Sunrise on Lake Victoria on Sunday morning. Early morning stir, still awake!



Cygnet and Amethyst overnight stay at the welcoming and leafy Cooma Caravan Park for a well deserved night of recovery sleep.



Let's enjoy a glass of wine from the Lerida winery overlooking the very dry Lake George. The staff explained us that the 2020 grape harvest was not used because of the smoke taint from last year bushfire. Older wines were perfectly fine!



After the race we had a chance to catch up with Will and go over the race and how close we came to Amethyst in the strait. Having packed up Cygnet for the drive back, not soon into the trip fatigue set back in. A stop at a rest area for an hour gave us enough energy to reach Cooma where we stayed at the local Caravan park. Funny enough, Amethyst was booked in for the night too! How nice to shower, uncouple the boat and head into town for a well-deserved pub dinner! So good after the long night before. Next morning breakfast back in Cooma, busting with cars carrying mountain bikes.

We made a last stop for a late lunch at Lerida Winery, overlooking Lake George. I was surprised how much I enjoyed the camaraderie of traveling together and stopping along the way. I really like these trips away with their mix of road trips, anticipation, discovery, relaxing scenery, festival atmosphere, apprehension, excitement, challenge, camaraderie. So much was packed in four days - very satisfying, comparable to my offshore cruises of 2-3 weeks. I am so glad to have a beautiful Cygnet to access these adventures. I can't wait to participate next year, to go for a week and cruise this lovely waterway and community.

WHAT DID I LEARN?

- Have the correct sails up leading into night.
- For this overnight race, three crew would be best so everyone can take turn and have a break/sleep through the night.
- Always sail the lift, never the knocks.

Join the 2021 Noosa Gaff Rig Regatta!

The Cygnet 20 Gaff Association is joining the 2021 Noosa Gaff Rig Regatta planned for Sunday the 6th of June 2021. This event is a not too serious regatta and sail in beautiful conditions and great camaraderie.

If you are interested to participate, please let me know and contact the Noosa Sailing Club (Valere on 0434879861 or valere.oddoux@gmail.com). The club can arrange launching, mooring, accommodation, crew and anything else if required. If you are a solo sailer or have little racing experience, the club can assist you with a local crew.

To make the most of this trip to Queensland, I suggest to cruise the Noosa Everglades for a couple of nights prior to the regatta, (Friday 4th and Saturday 5th of June), Noosa Everglades, one of only two everglades systems on earth, is a unique national park known as "a photographer's dream, a bird watcher's paradise and a nature lover's dream escape".



Invitation Flyer to the 2021 Noosa Gaff Rig Regatta by the Noosa

Don't miss out a sail on Noosa River everglades, ecosystem unchanged for thousands of years, home to over 40% of Australia's bird species. The region is nicknamed 'river of mirrors' for its clear and calm waters.

