**GRYC Cruising Zoom Talk**

**May 2020**

Hi everyone!

This talk is aimed at people new to sailing or new to cruising or just new to Goolwa, the Coorong and the Lower Lakes cruising area.

It is not about off-shore, long distance cruising, but about spending a couple of nights on your boat away from the marina.

Cruising is the other end of the sailing spectrum from racing. It is about the journey and not how fast one can get to the destination. Think champagne and “cheese on crackers”, relaxed sailing with friends and family. Of course, you still have to be safe on the water and so must plan for the unexpected.

For more detailed information on cruising there are innumerable resources on the web and You Tube, and there are notes and pictures on the club’s website detailing the best destinations.

Let’s start by talking about safety.

The S. A. Government deems the lakes to be off-shore waters and therefore boats are required to meet the regulations for off-shore sailing (almost). Make no mistake, the lakes can be nasty in a blow (think washing machine) and this is because they are shallow. But often as not they can also be as flat as a sheet of glass. Always stay informed of the weather – there are reliable apps to go on your smartphone.

Speaking of phones, you will get reliable reception everywhere with TELSTRA, not so much with other providers.

1. Firstly, make sure there are enough life jackets on the boat and make sure they are PFD1’s if you are going out onto the lakes.
2. Is your boat equipped with a VHF radio and do you know how to use it? DON’T BE AFRAID TO USE YOUR RADIO! Even if you have a 27 Mhz radio get a VHF (and get a handheld as a backup as well!!).
3. Have you got a set of flares? Are they in date?
4. Have you got a fire bucket on a lanyard? (It doesn’t have to be a metal bucket.)
5. You do not need an EPIRB when out on the lakes, but you should consider the safety issues – they are reasonably cheap these days. And if you do get one make sure it has a GPS built into it.
6. Torches – take a couple – make them good ones!
7. Is there a life ring attached to the boat ready to deploy if someone goes overboard?

OK, the next topic is ‘Before You Leave the Marina’!

Always plan for the unexpected and remember cruising often doesn’t go to plan! You may decide (or be forced) to spend an extra night on your boat for any number of reasons.

1. FUEL – make sure you carry enough for the whole trip plus a healthy extra. Assume you might have to motor for the whole trip. Assume you may be punching into a headwind all the way home. My healthy extra is a 20 litre jerrycan of diesel. If you have a diesel motor (like me) and you run out of fuel you are a dead duck in the water for at least half an hour (or more) before you will have the motor going (assuming you even have spare fuel). And I recently did this – ran out a kilometre from the bridge in 25+ knots. I was sailing by myself, with the centreboard up, and had to quickly unfurl the genoa and tack into a southerly coming straight through the bridge, and then park alongside the marina under sail. Oh, and I ran aground as well!
2. FUEL – Part 2 – Make sure there is enough fuel for your stove to cover cooking for an extra day.
3. WATER – Make sure there is enough water to last at least a day longer than you plan the trip to be.
4. FOOD – Same as for water – at least enough to last an extra day. (I carry ‘emergency extras’ like muesli bars, small tins of tuna and Champagne.)
5. SPARES – I love backups and redundancy! Carry as many spares as you think necessary! I carry spare fan belts, fuel filters, impellors, fuses, wire, GPS’s, winch handles, ropes, anchors, torches, nuts, bolts and screws, clothing – the list goes on and on!
6. TOOLS – I carry lots of tools, but I have a big, heavy boat. Everyone should carry a set of basic tools at least – enough to fix minor electrical and motor problems and enough to get the rig over the side if it should come down.

So, what basic tools should you have?

* Multimeter
* Basic spanners and sockets
* Adjustable spanners
* Multigrips and pliers (bull and needle nose)
* Hammer
* Screwdrivers
* Electrical tape/gaffer tape/ zip ties
* Hacksaw
* Wire cutters (for copper wire not rigging)
1. WET WEATHER GEAR / COLD WEATHER GEAR – Have enough wet weather gear for all the crew on deck? And a few extra woolies can come in useful if it is really cold or windy.
2. Always take hats, sunblock, insect repellent, fly spray, after sun gel and stingoes.
3. First aid kit, and don’t forget the Panadol.

OK, time to leave the Marina.

Generally, it is calm and flat in the morning with the wind increasing during the day, so if you want to cross the lake in the least challenging conditions leave early.

The skipper should be able to sail the boat on their own including anchoring and mooring. If your crew is sick or injured you are going to have to do it anyway. GO OUT AND PRACTICE!

And don’t forget about back-winding your jib or genoa. If you are having a rough time out on the lake just backwind the jib and go below, make a cuppa, take a deep breath and relax. Go out and practice this so you know it works. For example, on my boat I have to bring the boat to a complete stop before tacking to backwind or it doesn’t work and the boat just sails off on the new tack. (You wont believe how peaceful it all becomes when backwinded.)

Make sure you know how to reef your mainsail. The rule of thumb for cruisers is reef early. I learnt a new thing from Bram a while ago – you don’t need to go head-to-wind to reef (in fact it can be dangerous) – you have winches on your boat for good reason – use them to reef a loaded mainsail.

And now we get onto destinations.

All the well-known ones are detailed on the club website, but there are others marked on various maps, charts and books as well. Go out and explore! I wrote an article for the club magazine recently where I discussed seeing a boat moored in one of the tiny little bays on the North Eastern end of Hindmarsh Island – safe from anything except a northerly wind.

Some destinations have access to pubs and shops and some have nothing except reeds, sky and the stars at night.

Where to go and explore as a beginner?

Start with Clayton, it is only one or two hours from Goolwa and there are four or five places that are safe to spend the night. The most obvious one is the town jetty, but you can use the marina at the Clayton Bay Boat Club, or the little jetty complex in Snug Cove at the other end of the channel at Clayton. Another place is tucked under Hindmarsh Island in the little bay opposite Clayton – this is safe and private, and you are only ten minutes from the town jetty to get a cappuccino in the morning, or lunch from ‘Sails’ restaurant. Also, there is a free BBQ in the large shelter shed part way between the town jetty and ‘Sails’.

Next, try going up the Finnis River to Wally’s Landing. The destination is safe and protected from everything, and it’s a wonderful adventure sailing and motoring to get there. It takes about three hours from Goolwa. Don’t forget to lift your centreboard as you turn to port to enter the Finnis River as while the entrance is about a kilometre wide, it is also shallow. When you run out of the wide part of the Finnis and it looks like impenetrable reeds, you will see a red channel marker off to port – this is the entrance to a winding channel that brings you to Wally’s Landing after about three kilometres of twist and turns. At the destination are three jetties and a shed, firepit and some concrete blocks for seats.

Just before the jetties are some windmills and pumping sheds, take it really easy here as there are a couple of hidden snags that you might hit (keep hard to port is the safest approach).

When you feel confident and are ready to venture out onto Lake Alexandrina, I would recommend Narrung as the next destination. It has a jetty and a toilet and is a safe destination, it is also the start of an interesting bit of water called The Narrows which is the connection between Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert – this offers a fun side trip before returning to Goolwa or continuing with your cruise. There are no shops at Narrung so you need to take everything you need.

The next destination to try would be Milang which requires a crossing of a corner of Lake Alexandrina and is, of course, the starting point for the iconic ‘Milang to Goolwa’ yacht race which is run every January. Milang has a jetty, toilet, pub and a general store where you can re-provision and get a cappuccino. The jetty is not really boat friendly and most people choose to snuggle up in the little reedy island next to the jetty and just tie up to the jetty when they feel the need to stretch their legs or go to a ‘real’ toilet. You can expect a trip to Milang to take four to six hours depending on the wind.

Of course, you can always go the other Way from Goolwa and pass through the Barrage and enter the salt water and sail the last few kilometres of the River Murray before it reaches its mouth. If you cross over the mouth and keep going you are entering the Coorong and once you have avoided the sand bars and dredges around the mouth it is a nice sail down to Godfry’s Landing. Here there is a toilet and some poles to tie up to – bombproof and snuggled up against the sandhills. Also there is a track through the sandhills to the ocean which is a nice walk. This can be a busy place in summer as it is a designated speedboat destination, but by late afternoon all the speedboats have generally gone and everything settles down and this is a peaceful, private destination. Note you are moored in a national park and are expected to pay a camping fee and there are NO FIRES even below the high tide mark. Also, you are in salt water so it is tidal and even though the tide is only about a metre, you need to allow for it when bringing your boat close to shore.

And for those with an adventurous spirit and confidence in their skills and boat handling try crossing Lake Alexandrina to either Wellington (pub) or Boggy Lake (nothing)! A sail to either is about the same as a sail from Adelaide to Pt. Vincent – generally a full day on the water and, of course, a full day home. If you do this as a weekend cruise expect to be shattered by Sunday night!

And, as I said earlier, there are more notes on these destinations and other interesting places to visit on the club website – go and explore.

Thank you – any questions?