



The World's most popular Sport. We need it at Avoca!

Table tennis has been an Aussie family institution since anyone can remember. Most people at some stage in their life, usually as a kid, have held a bat and had a crack. Whichever house in the street had ping pong became the place to hang out with your mates. As I write this a gang of young teenagers have just walked home from the beach and started up a rowdy game on our back deck. How nice it is to not have to nag 'get off your screens!'

Last Monday night at the Avoca Beach Community Association meeting I suggested establishing a not for profit community space in Avoca for table tennis somewhere. Coincidentally Avoca Beach's scout leader, Peter Oliver, was present and said the scout hall could be a suitable venue.

This wouldn't be the first time table tennis was played there. Around the turn of this century local resident, David Livingstone, ran the very popular Avoca Beach Table Tennis Invitational tournament four times a year at the scout hall. It was a well organised blokey

event that occurred on a Saturday night, apparently a chance to escape the wife and share a few beers with mates. However, once in 2001, I managed to get a foot in the back door and discovered some serious hotly contested sweaty ping pong action, all vying to take out the coveted A division prize. The reigning champ was an optometrist from Kincumber, Nicholas Altuneg, and nobody could get near him.

I joined the fray, desperate to flex my feminist muscles and beat them to a pulp. Made it through to the B division grand final but after a hard fought, expletive ridden 5 game match, lost to a better player.

To relive the glory, a few years ago my 12 year old son and I signed up to a Thursday night competition run by Central Coast Table Tennis Association at Niagara Park. It was fun but what struck me most was the number of aged players, 70+ and several sprightly 80+ years old absolutely ripping. One elderly man had suffered a stroke in his sixties, paralysing one side of his body. His neurosurgeon recommended table tennis to help



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rehabilitate both his body and his brain. One handed, he was an unstoppable brick wall of skill and I never managed to get a game off him. We eventually had to give the comp up as getting home at 11:30pm on a school night wasn't sustainable but it did feel like we'd stumbled across the secret fountain of youth there.

There are many other physical and mental health benefits of table tennis, the most played sport in the world thanks to China. Low impact means less injury and there are even studies indicating improvements in dementia patients after playing the sport. Some people with a disability, including wheelchairs, can still enjoy table tennis.

Another benefit is mindfulness which is something we can all use, especially our kids. With so much technology and distraction, attention spans are limited. Table tennis requires focus, judging the speed and direction of the ball, planning your next shot, assessing your opponent's weaknesses and keeping score.

The game is also very socially interactive and inclusive as it's one of the few sports where age is no barrier to skill level. My lovely 83 year old neighbour John Sheehan and I occasionally enjoy a hit around and the kids join in too. It's also a fantastic way for the family to connect over a game. There are not many sports where all ages can play together so easily.

Despite our love of the game, life gets in the way and we rarely find the time or sometimes space for a hit. If there was a regular local table tennis event it might make it easier to factor into our busy lives and help bring all of the budding young and old ping pong champs out of hiding. And of course, give the kids something to do other than look at their screens or get up to mischief.

Hopefully we can get some games up and running soon at the scout hall, check out www.pingpong.org.au for information. If anyone would like to help, donate equipment, be kept up to date or register interest to play please email hello@pingpong.org.au

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ABCA President's Report

A snapshot of Avoca? Last Saturday morning I drove past Heazlett Park and a cricket game was in progress, the tennis courts were in full swing and the lake was full of a variety of paddlers. Kids were fishing under the bridge. In the centre of the beach Avoca Board Riders were hosting the Kings of the Coast surfing competition and closer to the surf club a host of keen young life savers were completing a demanding two hour training session. The volunteer life savers had just set up for the first patrol of the weekend and the 'Lizards' were having their ritual coffee post swim. The coffee shops were full and the dog walkers and runners were out. Avoca Beach is an amazing place!

On behalf of the community, I would like to congratulate Council and the contractors on a job well done with Stage 2 of the Foreshore construction. Our beachfront has been transformed. It is beautiful, practical and user friendly. Project engineer from Central Coast Council, Harry Nour has been receptive to concerns (many unfounded) throughout and the contractors headed by Mitch, have been willing to make minor adjustments on the run. We all hope those pesky rocks in the beach sand will be a temporary problem and Council are well aware of this minor irritant. Enquiries reveal that on the western side towards the fish shop those five little garden beds will soon house trees, Tuckaroos, for shade and a softening effect.

Thanks also to Lindsay Cunningham for the fantastic job done in crowd funding for the new flag poles. Over 70 people donated in impressively quick time in a great community collaboration. Thanks go to our treasurer, Ian Carruthers, for managing the finances.

It doesn't stop there, the ABCA has been a part of the quest for an ANZAC memorial rock to be placed in the garden bed to the east of the surf club. It is hoped it will be a significant, permanent memorial to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

The rock is as local as you can get, it was dug up on the beachfront when the contractors excavated during the



Stage 2 beachfront works. Thanks to David Benson for spotting the rock and coming up with the suggestion, for Lindsay for his dealings with Council, and of course to Gary Hore for being the driving force behind it all. Gary's ex-army, he issues the orders and we all follow!

Bob Pickett's proposal to donate a sizeable portion of land to the community is still alive. We continue to support Bob and if it comes to fruition it could be the most significant thing to happen to Avoca in a generation. Negotiating with Council on an appropriate use of the site and the Council land next to it, is the key. This is a venture well worth what is turning out to be an epic struggle for Bob and I congratulate him on his perseverance.

What will Avoca look like in 20 year's time? In my eyes, an important function of this association is to ensure what is very special about Avoca Beach is not lost to haphazard development that sees our village character disappear. Council is in the process of drawing up a 20 year plan for the Central Coast. Obviously, this will not be a one size fits all approach and it is important that we let them know how we'd like the future of Avoca Beach to be. The ABCA is working on it. Any suggestions?

Finally, it's great to have a packed room at our bi-monthly meetings, with so many people taking an interest and contributing. See you at the next one, 2nd December!
Steve Fortey

Editorial credits: Mike Rubbo: Editor | Julie Pickett: Advertising, Proof reading

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Seismic testing off the Central Coast – NO JOKE!

Seismic testing is becoming a hot topic for the Central Coast and rightly so.

While 2D seismic testing has been conducted for decades in the waters of the Offshore Sydney Basin that stretches between Sydney and Newcastle, the next round of testing will be 3D, and the difference between 2D and 3D will blow you out of the water – literally. Like, you will have to get out of the water so they can do it, but I'll get to that.

The 2D testing conducted so far has been relatively limited, involving one boat, covering an area of 10km² off the coast of Swansea. It used one airgun in a stationary position for one day. Following 2D seismic surveys in 2016 and then again in 2018, commercial fishermen reported mass fish and lobster kills in the area around the testing and dramatically reduced catch numbers in the following months.

Now, 3D testing is a different kettle of fish all together. It involves 30 airguns trawling an area of 1,000 km², (including the waters off the Central Coast), for 1 month, setting off explosions every few seconds, 24 hours a day. The purpose of the explosions is to use acoustic sources to create a vibration that can be interpreted to reveal geologic features underneath the seafloor, helping oil companies determine where to locate their oil or gas rigs.

The Offshore Sydney Basin has been dubbed by geologists as “petroleum mining’s next big thing” and it has been estimated that the waters in the Sydney Offshore Basin have enough liquid gas to meet the entire states energy needs for 20 years. If the 3D testing proceeds and finds the gas that they already believe to be present, we could see exploratory rigs and ultimately permanent rigs directly off our beaches in the next year or two.

Seismic testing has been linked to damaging effects on marine life. Research has shown that seismic testing can injure and kill marine animals, impair communication and navigation in whales and dolphins, and has been linked to mass stranding’s and death. It kills plankton (the basis of the marine food web) up to 1.2 km away from the blast. As the testing will be conducted on our Continental Shelf, not out in the deep sea, us humans will also see it, hear it and potentially feel it.

In other parts of the world where seismic testing is conducted this close to the shore, divers, swimmers and surfers are asked to leave the water during the testing. Its hard to imagine that in 2019, we could be asked to get out of the ocean so that an oil company can send a blast through it that kills and maims. In many parts of the world, including the Unites States and recently New Zealand, it has been banned due to its known impacts on marine life. So why is it an option here?

Both the state government and local government have objected to the proposed 3D seismic testing off our



coast, with all Councillors from the Central Coast Council unanimously voting against the proposal for 3D testing on two occasions. However, this is not enough. The Federal Minister for Resources Matthew Canavan is the determining Minister and Asset Energy currently has a federal licence to conduct exploration off the Central Coast under the Petroleum Exploration Permit (PEP11). This licence is however pending environmental and safety approval from the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environment Management Authority (NOPSEMA).

There is hope though.

Community group Save Our Coast has collected a combined paper and online petition with 52,000 signatures against the proposal and have been lobbying the federal government for 18 months, helping to instigate an Australia wide senate inquiry into the effects of seismic testing on marine life. While this does not officially halt the 3D seismic testing off the Central Coast, it has resulted in a delay as there is an expectation that Asset Energy should refer to the results of the inquiry during the preparation of their Environmental Plan. We need to pressure the Federal Minister for Resources to ensure that Asset Energy do wait for the results of the inquiry.

I would like to thank the local convener of Save Our Coast, David Abrahams, for information, in addition to the tireless work that he and his team have been conducting on our behalf. If you are concerned at the very real possibility of having seismic testing in our waters and gas and oil rigs off our coast, go to saveourcoast.org.au or chat with them at the next Avoca Beach markets to see what you can do. Also keep an eye on their webpage for the next screening location of South Fish, a short film produced by Patagonia on seismic testing.

“Australia is the world’s largest gas exporter, we simply need to supply our own nation first from the vast fields already producing before exporting it” David Abrahams. We need to start a ground swell that makes the Federal Government stop and listen. By Kristy McQueen

Avoca Farmers market. Wednesdays 4-6pm at the Bowlo.



It's an interesting thing to witness when a need is tapped effectively.

That's exactly what is happening with our new local farmers market here in Avoca Beach.

Who knew there was craving for a local supply of fresh food? It seems there is a change happening, not only in our small beach town, but in many pockets across the land. People are wishing to know where their food comes from, wanting to support their local farmers and happy to pay a bit more for food that's been picked that day, with less chemicals in the produce.

Like Minds café brought new energy to Avoca six or so years ago, with produce swaps and compost talks, it truly became a hub for sustainability. A separate market wouldn't be possible without the connected community they had drawn together.

I decided to see if something like this could really take off. After thinking of a few venues, I realised our local Bowling club was the perfect location with great parking. Would they be interested? At first they were reluctant, but then something clicked with them, and I was told we could use the covered ramp down to the entrance of the club, a spot that shelters us from direct sun and yet still allows the afternoon light to filter in.



The event, is on each and every Wednesday from 4 – 6PM. You see the same faces, getting to know each other, all the while filling cloth bags and baskets with fresh food. The farmers, who don't travel far to get there, spread out their goods each week on the trestle tables as eager customers rush in to get the best picks of fresh vegetables, meats, eggs, honey, granola, cheese and even edible flowers! The popular bread lady usually has a line snaking up through the crowd, selling out of her glorious sourdoughs for which you have to come early.

As Facebook and Instagram spread the story, the Coast News came to see what the fuss was about and broadcast a video on their 5 at 5 weekly show. The core driving factor of the event is the need to lower food mileage and support local producers who respect the environment and are ecologically enhanceive. We're so honoured that our Avoca Beach Bowling Club is supporting our market, excited to see it solidify as a weekly ritual in the community, a shopping day that is quick and easy, no trinkets no nothing, just wonderful food to take home and put on the table. So please, come on down and check it out! A community farmers market is nothing without its community.

Ellen Rubbo

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Surfing history at Avoca Beach



I guess if you're a keen surfer, walking into Avoca Beach Surf all the major brands on display, you might spot something else which makes the shop special. Being no surfer, I didn't, but was fascinated when told by Darren Dean what to look for. Before that, I found out that Darren used to be a bank manager, and whilst a surfer and long-time member of the Avoca Board Riders Club,

he's never been in the board business before and so it's a big plunge for him and his wife, Sharon.

So, what's so special? Well, above our heads, clipped to the walls, is a growing museum of significant surfboards from Avoca Beach. There are boards from current world tour surfers, Adrian, "ACE" Buchan and Wade Carmichael. Also, boards from previous world tour surfers, Shane Power and Ross Clark Jones, and a Nirvana surfboard from the late former world amateur champion, Mark "Sanger" Sainsbury. But Darren's prized possession at which he points in the photograph, is an original McCoy Laser Zap. This board, revolutionary in the early 80s being very short and manoeuvrable, was specially made for the world-famous spray designer, Richard "Snowy" Mollard. Snowy worked for Jeff McCoy in the small surfboard factory around the corner on Cape Three Points road near where the new units are being constructed and Ludo's now is.

Darren has recently been in touch with Jeff McCoy who although retired, still makes one surfboard a day. "Jeff rang me two days ago", reports Darren, "and invited me up to his home at Byron Bay. We're in negotiations now for me to stock McCoy surfboards in our shop which would be fantastic!" Sounds like, the real McCoy, to recoin an old saying. The couple have only been in the shop since March and of course it's been quiet over winter, and so good luck to Darren and Sharon for the coming season and the ones beyond. Mike Rubbo

Salt Hair Collective. Serious recycling

This is Sara Pearson's first business. She's worked for others in hairdressing for 12 years straight out of school but reaching 27, she wanted to set things up the way she liked. So she took over what was Ruffles, 40 years in the same location, and decorated in all shades of purple. Sara has taken the interior back to a cool muted grey which customers like, she says. Most of Ruffles clients have continued with her she's happy to report. Perhaps they're attracted by the ecological angle as well as the skills of salon staff.

"We are a sustainable salon," she explains, "95% of what would go into landfill we recycle. Each waste type has its own bin. The metal from our tubes and spray cans earns money, a surprising amount, which goes to Oz harvest. The longer hair strands go to make wigs for kids with cancer or alopecia. The short trimmings go to make hair booms used for soaking up ocean oil spills of all things. Plastic from our shampoo bottles is melted down for park benches and glasses frames. No chemicals go down the sink. They are all scraped off the bowls and recycled." It sounds all very sensible and very appealing to many customers I'm sure. Good luck to Sara and Salt Hair Collective in Avoca beach.



A community hall for Avoca



We have been plugging away at our community hall project. As readers of this newsletter will know, we lost the opportunity to move what was St. David's Church from Cape Three Points road to a new location. We did manage to salvage some beams, now in storage, which we think of as priming the pump for a new hall.

Jane Smith who was mayor until recently, came to visit and was shown the two sites that we have in mind, one where the skateboard ramp used to be beside the Oval and the other west of the Scout hall. The first, though tight, has the advantage of some existing parking and a central location. The other is a lovely piece of land tucked away out of sight on the lake's edge. Walk it and have a look!

The mayor promised that council would get back to us

before the end of the year as to their preferred site. So that's progress

Meanwhile we've been visiting other community halls to see how they're run. The historic Kincumber School of Arts Hall at the roundabout, built in 1914, is council owned. We spoke to Margaret Hardy who runs it. Council ownership means that all revenue from rental is passed over the Council and they are responsible for upkeep and repairs. It sounds like a pretty good system but Margaret reports that it's very hard to get news from Council as to how they're going financially. Also, the hall is plagued by the problem of very little parking which cuts down the activities it can be used for. Like most halls, a big part of its use is for yoga and dance classes.

The Davistown Progress Hall is owned by the community. This makes for greater flexibility but also a lot of work. The manager, Jenny McCulla, says that she finds herself doing something on the hall almost every day. They have a committee too, kept busy with bookings, upkeep, et cetera. The hall has no parking problems with excellent parking out front. It is a dynamic part of the community with a huge range of activities going on. Would we have the people prepared to run a hall if we owned our own hall? That's something we would have to canvass. Also of course how we would raise the money for construction?

Having a community hall for a range of activities can be a great plus. Imagine table tennis going full swing twice a week and competitions with neighbouring halls. Great! But we have to take very seriously the responsibilities that go with running a hall. We need to survey how much use it would actually get if we push ahead. Mike Rubbo.

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The Energetic Artist!

Jon Ellis is a wild painter to watch. He rushes in and then retreats from his canvases, his brush strapped to an extension device which allows him to jab and slash from afar. This way he keeps the whole composition in the eye as he paints. He loves to paint outside in all sorts of weathers and inaccessible spots, making racks for his bike or scooter to carry wet canvases. He still takes classes outside but these days, ease of parking, some shade and toilets close by, are pluses for his older students

In the photos you see Jon at work beside Avoca lake. He's very uncompromising in his style, starting always from outdoor inspiration, coming home with sketchbooks and then working in his studio to basically satisfy himself. If others like the work, which they often do, that's great but it's not the be all and end all.

Jon started very young in England. There was just one memorable print on the wall at home, Constable's *The Haywain*. That painting, and a man on TV who taught sketching, got him started. He was asthmatic and so wandering the fields sketching in the lovely local countryside, suited him better than sports. At school, lucky for him, a young art teacher, Trevor Boyd, swept in with the enthusiasm Jon craved.

He's still in touch with Trevor and, when he had a show at the Gosford regional Gallery at the beginning of 2019, Jon had Trevor on a video link giving a talk about those days and the promise he saw in the young Ellis. A high point of his school days was when he painted a large topical mural on Kennedy's assassination, a montage of found images. His principal thought it was terrific, and basking in the publicity, helped get Jon into a good art school.

Graduating, it suddenly dawned on him that there was no money in art and so he went into film animation, lucky enough to work with a great American animator, Ken Harris, who had brought to life the original Pink

Panther and Roadrunner whilst working at Warner Bros. Jon's British boss, Dick Williams, had brought Ken over to London to animate the title sequence for the sequel, the *Return of the Pink Panther* starring Peter Sellers. Lucky, Jon found himself assistant to this legendary Ken, working as an in-betweener, meaning he filled in the drawings in sequences created by clever Ken. Jon's claim to fame came when Ken couldn't get Charlie Chaplin's rickety walk quite right, Chaplin being one of the legends in the sequence. Ellis demonstrated the famous walk across the studio floor. In it went and because of that Jon and Ken were firm friends ever after. He was about to become more than Ken's assistant when the father of his Australian girlfriend, Karen said, "Come back Australia with us, Jon, I'll find you work in a film I'm getting up." His boss, Dick, urged him off. "I'll hold your job. Go before your tied down with a mortgage and kids." Jon never went back to the London drizzle.

At first in Australia he cleaned the maternity ward at Crown St. hospital, remembering the day when the huge polisher he claimed he could manage, almost got away from him. It was like a hovercraft on a leash and it nearly took out a young mum coming down the corridor with her bub in arms. Jon animated for a bit in Australia but he really wanted to paint. In those days there were commercial galleries that would give you a run and Jon, although not a very good self promoter he claims, had a string of one-man shows, his confident impasto, a bit like Soutine, finding favour.

Now, it's much harder so he mixes canvas time with teaching twice a week at the Gosford Regional Gallery, and several days a week behind the counter at Eckersley's art supply shop. But he's happy with his work these days, feels he's never painted better, working to satisfy himself, feeling that if you're true to yourself, absolutely true, others may like what you do. Mike Rubbo.



Fancy free in Squats!

Ah, to be a young Australian traveller in the 70s! In 1969, Brian McDonald met the marvellous Liz, “beautiful, smart and Dutch” in a Casablanca youth hostel. He can’t imagine what she saw in him, he says, but judging by the photo here, the aristocrat at his lamppost, he had potential. Now, living on the Round Drive, Brian works on his memoirs, his memory jogged by his photos .

Liz, he remembers, liked him enough to drag him back to Holland, he supplying a green Volkswagen Kombi. They found themselves squatting in Amsterdam in a colourful Jewish quarter, with thousands of abandoned houses. It was pretty well organised with a squatters committee which allocated you space and if you were lucky, a working tap. They scored both a tap and a toilet. Then, from Willem, the Danish/ Dutch demolisher, they got glass for the windows. Some people kept warm with candles. Brian and Liz made gourmet meals on a 2 burner camping stove. To wash they went to a public bath.



Brian was an illegal but Liz, solid citizen that she was, kept the authorities at bay. I originally wanted to tell Brian’s story when I saw his photographs of the squat interiors which looked to me like Vermeer paintings . Fifty years old, the colours still bright, I hope this article leads to a show of his superb photography of the day. All his life Brian has worked with cameras. He was assistant on the Classic Aussie movie, They’re a weird Mob, for example.

In Amsterdam, the couple survived as market traders. Liz had found a hand cranked Singer sewing machine, able to handle thick material, and began modifying thrown out stuff for the markets. The Dutch bourgeoisie at the time were in the mood to throw out all sorts of old tapestries which Liz cut up for jackets and bags. Then there were leather coats available due to changing times and tastes. The Dutch had worn long leather coats, such as you see on Brian in the photograph, for cold winter bike riding, but now that people were

getting cars , they were throwing out these coats with such stylish potential.

Germany was full of horny GIs who would come to Amsterdam on the weekend, heading for the red light district and wanting to look groovy. They loved the leather coats. So Liz and Brian did a roaring trade from their flea market stall, both in the leather work and the colourful hippie regalia that Liz worked up. The area was full of characters. Herman, a huge German, had a trumpet slung around his neck which he would blast aggressively, scaring the living daylights out of everyone . Herman made wearable jewellery out of bent silver spoons. Then there was the tall American, John, dressed in an Indian shirt. possibly a draft dodger, who claimed he was the illegitimate son of the Rockefellers. Brian thinks he had “f...ck off” money from the family, which kept him on the road and out of Vietnam. “A lovely guy but a little Lost.”

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A squat interior with a Vermeer look



Brian McDonald today

Another squatter recycled bits of abandoned Citroen 2CVs (Deus Chevaux = 2 horse-horsepower) affectionately known as ugly ducks. He would have three stacked on the street, vertically like dominoes, ready for stripping. They were a legendary car, the 2CV. Dating from 1948, the design brief had been to create a car, "as simple as four deck chairs under an umbrella that could carry a basket of eggs across a ploughed field without any breakages." The ride has a strange bouncy feel, unlike any other car. Brian had some troubles with his Kombi, it not being properly registered, but the green machine was a great way to carry their colourful stock on which they often slept.

Liz was an absolute whizz at both marketing and making, and Brian was pretty good himself. But then the authorities wanted to build a Metro underneath the squats and from time to time, there were police raids. But a hidden World War II siren would blast a warning, loud enough to wake the dead and move the living into the street.

Today, Brian is happy in our beautiful Avoca whilst Liz lives south of Sydney, very much in touch. How about that photo show, Brian and memoirs too?

Mike Rubbo

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It's the 20th anniversary and John Mitchell was doing it again. In 1999, he and a group of friends from the Avoca Surf club, retraced Charles Sturt's voyage along the Murrumbidgee and down the Murray. Back then, John's party covered 2000 km in seven weeks. Sturt had been commissioned to look for a mythic inland sea which they never found, their 1830 exploration ending in marshland and sand dunes at the mouth of the Murray

Now it was time to do it again, John felt, or at least part of the journey. Were they still up to it? The party was smaller this time only about 40 people from the club, many in their 60s. They used a famous surfboat, the Shirley Kelly, 40 years old, which had been restored by Craig Kelly and named after his Mum who was active in the ladies auxiliary.

They started the row at a station just outside Gundagai. There was plenty of water in the Murrumbidgee and were averaging around 40 km a day in the first days with sixty-year-olds at the four oars and the sweep in the stern, keeping them clear of sunken trees. Tired at the end of the day, there were fabulous meals under the stars cooked onshore by Dave McClellan and Slim Peebles.

What had changed since 1999? They found the river in pretty good shape contrary to the bad news we've been getting. Platypuses were spotted and fishery inspectors they met along the way, told them that the Murray cod were coming back even though the carp, which nibble at the banks and cause erosion, are still a terrible pest.

Wayne Kemp was "the man of the match," says John, though he was not actually rowing but on a ski skimming

along beside the surfboat. Wayne had a drone and, flying it overhead, he scouted campsites, and got shots of the Shirley Kelly from the air. (see photo)

Teams of rowers would be at the oars for three or four days and then leave. By the end of the nine days, John was getting short of strong rowers. He was down to a team of 16 year old girls, predominantly the daughters of Kelly and Chris Hayes who managed around 15km a day. It got to be a hard slog, and so when the party got into the wine country, at Darlington point, it was time to say, "enough." No doubt the decision was helped by Denise De Poli. Denise was on the first row. Now living in Griffith, she came to meet them with some good reds.

It was a much shorter row than last time. They didn't even reach the Murray. But the trip set John thinking. He believes it would be very good if the Murray would be restored for river transport. It could take trucks off the roads and revive the river ports. The problem is not a lack of water, according to John, but the environmental policy of leaving trees where they fall in the river, making navigation treacherous

In the old days the river was patrolled by so-called Snagging Steamers, boats with powerful engines and strong winches which found and pulled out snags before they could become hazards. That was on the Murray. The Murrumbidgee is not suitable, John explains. It's a lazy, ambling river, taking 3 km to cover 1 km as the crow flies. John and I thought about a movie we might make, the pros and cons of bringing the Murray back as a transport river. Sounds like an intriguing topic. Mike Rubbo.

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