

# Goolwa Goes Gay

By Hector Lightfoot (aboard Captain Sturt houseboat)

Today, Sunday, February 11, 1951, was Goolwa's big day, when they turned on a great welcome to the whaleboat crew enacting Sturt's epic journey down the Murray River.

The town itself was decorated with colored electric lights, flags, and the shops, decorated with bamboo palms and tree foliage. A fine, new cairn was erected on the bank, where a landing was prepared for the whaleboat.

The boat was due to arrive at 11 o'clock and before that time there were thousands of sightseers lining the banks of the river and in every point of vantage.

Every conceivable sort of craft was cruising on the river and a number of them went several miles upstream to escort the whaleboat in to the landing. A small row boat was manned by boys decked out in period costume to impersonate the whaleboat crew, called the junior whaleboat crew, and put off to go up the river to meet the big boat. These lads must have got a big kick out of this.

When you looked up the river you could see the flotilla of boats coming downstream like an armada and the view along the crowded banks with the river sparkling in the sunshine made a wonderful picture.

Goolwa certainly looked the part today. A procession came from the town, headed by a brass band, and composed of residents dressed in period costume, top hats, crinolines, beards and all complete, an ox team, and aborigines in their

ox team, and aborigines in their corroboree paint, who put on a war dance after the landing.

The landing was safely effected amid a great reception by the crowd and the crew was officially welcomed, speeches made, and medallions presented to the members of the crew as a memento of a great occasion.

The crew, which was composed of Army officers, had given up their annual leave in order to make this great contribution to the jubilee proceedings, a very fine gesture on

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their part, as it must have been an arduous journey.

A thanksgiving service was held and another service was held at night. The crew were afterwards taken to the barrage near the Murray mouth and regaled on beer and chicken sandwiches. The afternoon was given up to water sports, speedboat racing, etc.

And so we reluctantly say "Farewell to Goolwa" after a very picturesque and colorful day enacted in perfect weather.