

SURF BOATS

THE MURRUMBIDGEE RIVER TRIP

In October 1999, 90 Avoca club members set out on a challenge to retrace Charles Sturt's epic journey of 1829 in search of an inland sea. He was commissioned by government after three years of drought.

After leaving Sydney with a bullock team, dray and whale boat he eventually launched the boat at Balrannold under sail and oars the crew reached Goolwa South Australia in 33 days and finished after 80 days back up stream to their base camp starved and exhausted.

Rowing the Richard G boat with sliding seats we started our journey roughly 800km upstream from Sturts party at the junction of the Murumbidgee and Tunit rivers on Mingay station just out of Gundagai. After 3 weeks of rowing with 90 people aged from 5 – 70years old, backup power boat for crew change and the ground crew looking after us, we made Balrannold where Sturt had started his river journey.

Thanks to our major sponsors Chris Blakeway with *Country link* and Barry Robertson *Holden*, this part of the journey was an unforgettable time for all with town arrivals and changeover of crews along with beautiful people we met along the river properties who supported us and put us up in shearers quarters or river cabins.

In the year 2000 we stayed home for the Olympic games then in 2001 we completed our adventure with a team of over 100.

After one day of rowing from Balrannold (Sturts depo) in his words we were spat out into a Broad and noble stream (the Murray river). This part of the journey being the actual river trip that Sturt completed in 33 days with our team doing the same in 31 days. With so many stories and wonderful friends we made along the way we were welcomed by south Australian premier at the time at the mouth of the Murray Goolwa.

