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Day 8



Longreach has a lot going for it, it has a major airport and two major tourist attractions, the [Qantas Museum](#) and the [Stockman's hall of Fame](#) - it is well worth an extra overnight stay. While we have a free day there and you can visit any of those attractions you wish, the Council and the RSL Sub-Branch have a lot planned for us and we're sure you'll enjoy your stay in Longreach.

We're talking with Peter Coombes from Kingaroy Lions for them to provide dinner on the night of our arrival (at our cost) which will be provided on the show-ground, near our donga (below).

Click the pic to see the ablution block.





We've invited MP David Littleproud to join us a few kilometres out of Longreach and to lead us into town by riding one of our scooters and to then join us for dinner and one or two coldies. Depending on Parliament sitting dates/times, he has agreed to join us



As we've found all along the route, people have been refreshingly generous and Cornetts IGA store in Longreach is no exception, they have agreed to provide us with sufficient food for our BL to prepare breakfasts for us during our two night stay. The other meals are being organised by the RSL Sub-Branch.



The Council and the Longreach RSL are working on several events which will include the townsfolk and once we get their ideas we'll submit an application to the Air Force to try and get the Roulettes to Longreach, the birthplace of Qantas, for one of their amazing demonstrations. This could be a double celebration as Qantas also turns 100 on the 16th November 2020.

Could be a good time to be in Longreach.

There are some amazing people to meet and some amazing sights to see in Longreach, while there last month we spotted this bloke astride his rather large but gentle white bull. This large bovine was being led down the main street by the owner's trusty black and white dog which had the reins in its mouth. Locals just looked on as though it was the norm.



It certainly got our attention.

And of course, the local radio station has a unique way of decorating its front fence.



We just wonder who has the enviable task of uninstalling these appendages then affixing them to the fence – any vacancies?

After breakfast on the Monday, it is off to Winton.

There is not a lot to see on this section of the trip, apart from a lot of dead straight flat road. Like most roads out here there are many stopping bays and our BL will go on ahead and every 40 kms or so, will set up a refreshment stop. These times will also be a good opportunity to change riders. Dead straight roads can be boring and boredom can lead to inattention which could lead to an accident. We're trying to avoid that – the paperwork is a killer.





Lunch will also be taken on the road, our BL will select a safe spot at which to stop and will have lunch ready for us when we arrive.

About 14km before Winton, we'll turn left off the highway to visit the [Australian Age of Dinosaurs](#) exhibition which is about 12 kms down the road from the highway.

The Exhibition was incorporated as a not-for-profit organisation in October 2002 and originally was based at Belmont, a sheep station owned by David and Judy Elliott. In 2006 a rugged mesa and wilderness area 24km south-west of Winton known as "The Jump-Up" was donated by the Britton Family and the Museum relocated there in 2009. Today the Museum houses the world's largest collection of Australian dinosaur fossils and comprises a Fossil Preparation Laboratory, Reception Centre and Dinosaur Canyon. Future plans include construction of Australia's premier natural history museum at Dinosaur Canyon.



This is an interesting site and we've arranged a group tour of the exhibition as well as afternoon tea. Once again, a good time to change riders.



From the museum, it's a straight run into Winton where we'll stay in these pavilions at the showground. Click the pic to see the interior.





Ablution Block. This is a new block and will be finished and ready for use next year.



Once again, the Winton Shire Council has been most helpful and Jessica Greenaway, the Council's Director of Economic and Community Development has offered to organise dinner for us the night of our arrival. Jessica will also invite the people to Winton to come and join us, most of whom will want to try to work out why a bunch of silly old men and women would want to ride those funny little scooters all the way up from Brisbane when an air-conditioned car would be far more comfortable.



Winton has the [Waltzing Matilda Centre](#) and the [Royal Open-air Theatre](#) though whether we get time to visit either is debatable as the day before and the day after Winton are long ones.

The Royal Open-Air Theatre is one of the few remaining open air picture theatres in Australia still in operation.

Originally established in 1918, and purchased by the Evert family in 1938, the historic Royal Theatre offers a rare opportunity to enjoy the movies the old-fashioned way – laid back in canvas seats under the stars.

You can drop in during the day to wander through the Museum (via the Gift and Gem and the Opal Walk), or come on a Nostalgia Night, held every Wednesday from April through September.



The Open Air Theatre is now also home to the World's Largest Deck Chair.



John Broughton beside the chair.

Breakfast next morning will be prepared by our BL from food obtained from the local Spar supermarket. Garry Player, the President of the north Qld RSL, has kindly offered to provide breakfast for us at Winton and at Hughenden.

From Winton it's onto the Kennedy Development road for the boring 215kms flat and straight run up to Hughenden. The only exciting things to see are mile long road trains and the odd emu.

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We'll have numerous refreshment stops along the way with the BL out the front selecting appropriate areas.

Hughenden council have also been most generous with the mayor Jane McNamara offering us the use of the Stamford race course building as a shady area for a late lunch. Stamford is about 155km north of Winton and about 65kms from Hughenden. Stamford Races and Community fun day (horse racing) offers the best of country racing set in an outback rural setting and with 115 years experience under their belt, the Stamford races and Community Fun Day is a special event for the whole family.

The day includes a Stockman's Challenge, Fashions on the field, Foot Races, Family Entertainment, fun for the kids and of course the races.



The event attracts crowds of around 500 or more racegoers.



After lunch there is still a further 65kms of straight road to cover and the BL will once again set up a refreshment stop about 30-40km up the road where we can get a cool drink and exchange riders. We've asked Jane, who strikes us as a lady who will have a go at anything, if she'd like to meet us a few Km out of town and lead us in by riding one of the bikes.

That could well be on.

The Flinders Council at Hughenden has arranged for us to use a pavilion at the showgrounds in which to overnight. This pavilion is normally used as a sporting area and the floor is covered by thick foam rubber.





This is sure to be one comfortable night.

The Hughenden showground pavilion – click the pic to see the inside.



The toilet/shower block is situated on the northern (right) end of the building.



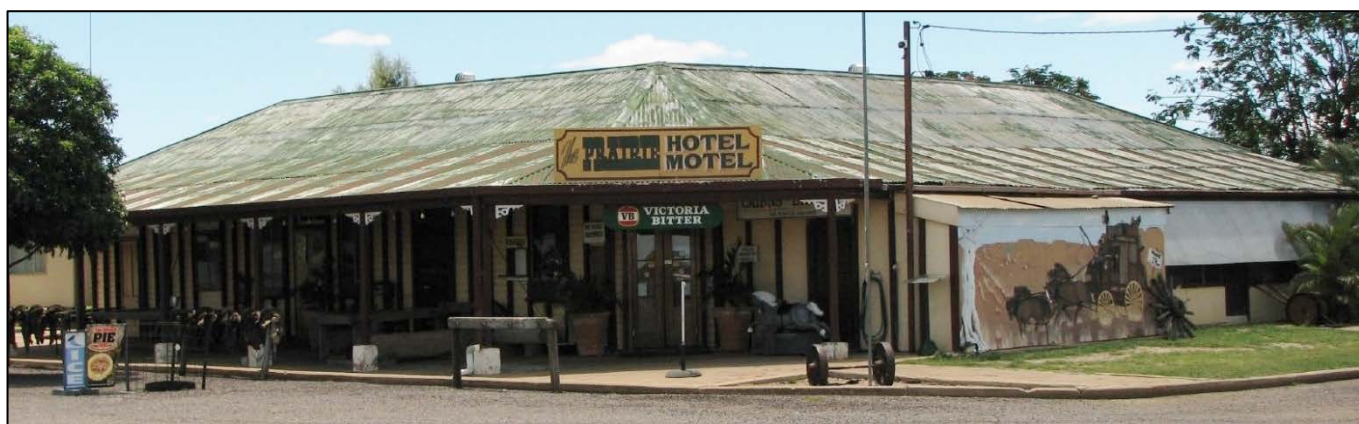
The day we arrive, after we settle into our digs, Mayor Jane McNamara has invited us all down to the lake, of which she is rightly proud, for an evening meal and to meet some of the



townspeople. This will be a “pay as you go affair” and we’re in talks with a Service Club to cater for the night.



After breakfast, prepared by our BL, it’s an early start for Charters Towers which is 250 kms east. First stop for the day will be at Prairie, a small settlement about 45km from Hughenden. The BL will have prepared refreshments but the hotel is an option should you chose.



Lunch will also be prepared “on the road” by the BL, and this will be taken at Torrens Creek, a rest area a further 65km from Prairie. BL will have had a refreshment stop 30 or so km back.





Afternoon tea will be taken at Baffles Creek, at which there is not a lot of life. Perhaps once an important stop over between Hughenden and Charters Towers, these days even the spotted dog has left. There is plenty of room for the BL to pull off the highway and set up ready for the armada.



After Baffles Creek it's onto Charters Towers for another two-night stop-over.

Originally planned as a one night stop, we were encouraged by Eileen Vogeles to stay an extra night as she says there is an awful lot to see in Charters Towers and we definitely couldn't see it all if we only overnighted.

So we will

Eileen says: "In late 1942 Townsville was the principle port for the Allied troops serving in the New Guinea campaign and Cleveland Bay between Magnetic Island and Townsville was an important assembly point for shipping. The RAAF had established a Base at Garbutt (Townsville airport) and a number of bases used by Australian and US were established between Townsville and Charters Towers. Between 1942 and 1945 the Townsville and Charters Towers regions became one of the largest concentrations of airfields, stores, ammunition depots and port operations in the South West Pacific Theatre.



Charters Towers was the closest inland centre that could provide strategic support and aircraft dispersal facilities for Garbutt, which was considered vulnerable to Japanese attack. The RAAF started work on a base at the Charters Towers town airport during January 1942. The airfield became operational during March 1942 with arrival of the first of four bombardment squadrons equipped with A-24 Dauntless dive bombers which had been intended for the Philippines. The group, which became part of the 5th Airforce, was later equipped with A-20 Havoc (or Boston) medium bombers. These aircraft were followed by the arrival of B-25 Mitchell bombers that had been intended for use by the Dutch in the Netherlands East Indies but were taken over by the Americans.

In July 1942 the northeast-southwest runway was sealed and the north-south runway was metalled. The Main Roads Commission used local mine tailings for the runways prompting a US



press report that they were 'paved with gold'. Charters Towers airfield served through most of 1943 as a US Fighter and Bomber Command Replacement Training Centre.

During mid-February 1943 the Department of Public Works received a requisition from the US Army for construction of a gun firing range, or bore sight range, platform at Charters Towers airfield to test the accuracy of aircraft fixed armament. The concrete gun firing platform was designed with an adjustable metal plate set in front of the concrete block to take the nose wheel of aircraft with tricycle undercarriages. A steel gantry frame with a sling was positioned on the platform to lift the tail of fighter aircraft with tail wheels. The bore sight range extended about 360 metres to an earth mound, or butt, in front of which a target was set. The bore sight range is the only known example of its type in Queensland with an adjustable nose wheel platform.



The compass swinging platform also existed by November 1944. Aircraft were pushed onto the platform and aligned with each of the 16 main cardinal points of the compass, starting with north. Variations in aircraft compass bearings were noted and compass magnets were adjusted. The RAAF resumed responsibility for the maintenance of the airfield in May 1944. It was classified as a 'reserve aerodrome' in June 1944 and most of the US facilities at the airfield were turned over to the RAAF in December 1944.

A hill to the south of the town still contains numerous bunkers left over after the war as well as offering an excellent view of the town and surroundings (See [HERE](#)).



Charters Towers, was also well known for its gold, being first discovered in 1871. A rush of 'fortune seeking' men quickly followed and by the end of 1872 some 3000 people inhabited the new field. The alluvial men left early on for the Palmer River discoveries, but the hard rock miners remained, seeking the gold in the deep veins underground. Literally 100s of shafts were sunk during the lifetime of the field and the ore raised was processed through many large treatment batteries. Many of the shafts can still be seen.



During the period 1872-1899 the place changed from a rough settlement with bark and calico buildings to a thriving City of some 25,000 inhabitants. The City, by that time, had properly formed streets, some wonderful houses and many grand public buildings lining the two main streets.

A plentiful supply of water for domestic and other purposes was pumped to the town from a Weir in the Burdekin River about 9 miles to the north. Underground electricity was also supplied to parts of the main town area.

It is estimated that 6,000,000 ounces of gold was won in the first 40 to 50 years of the life of the Towers. All religions were strongly represented on the field and in 1890 the miners could quench their thirst in no less than 65 hotels registered on the field. Sports, music and the arts all had fantastic followings. It was said that everything you might desire could be had in the Towers. There was no reason to travel elsewhere for anything. This is why the town became known affectionately as 'The World'.

The decline of mining following World War 1 also saw a decline in the population. The town then became the supply centre or hub of the then Dalrymple Shire as well as the educational centre for students from all over North Queensland."

Our accommodation in Charters Towers will be, as usual, at the showgrounds. We haven't been able to get in to check out the facilities just yet but will do so in February. We've been assured they will definitely suit our purposes



We also invited Robbie Katter MP, the State member for Traeger, to meet us a few miles out and to ride one of the scooters into town, then to join us for dinner that night and perhaps a quiet one or two.





Eileen and Ken Hey, an old RAAF metal basher, are working on our meal requirements and trying to line up a bus and driver which will give us the royal tour of Charters Towers, we'll let you know the result as soon as we hear.

We can be assured things are in good hands.

After breakfast, served at the showground and prepared by the BL, it's an easy run down to Townsville. We'll stop at Mingela for morning tea. 48km from Charters Towers we take the turn to the right and about 1km down the road is the Mingela Hotel.



Morning tea will be served at the hotel.



After Mingela, its a further 36km to the Reid River rest stop where the BL will prepare lunch. Food for lunch would be provided as a result of the generosity of the Charters Towers Woolworths store.



After Reid River, it's non stop to Townsville where we'll end the epic journey at the RAAF Base. We've asked Phillip Thompson MP, the Federal Member for Herbert, to meet us a few km out and to lead us into Townsville by riding one of the scooters. We've also asked the RAAF if a number of serving men and women could also meet us out of town and help us celebrate the 100th anniversary by riding our scooters to the base.



We reckon after 2,100kms, everyone will be more than happy to surrender their transports and enjoy the relative comfort of the air condition bus and allow the uniforms to complete the trip.

We haven't heard back from Phillip Thompson yet but the RAAF has agreed to ask for volunteers - shouldn't be too much of a problem getting them we reckon.





We've had a meeting with the RAAF at Townsville and they are keen to join and help us celebrate the anniversary. They will organise a barbecue welcome for us on arrival and we're talking with them about accommodation, this looks exciting and we'll have more on that later.





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