



## Scootaville 2022

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At about 2.00am on our first night in Emerald we were treated to the mother of all storms. The rain was so heavy that, as our building was all metal, it sounded like it was raining half inch ball bearings. We don't think anyone slept through it but the building didn't leak, no-one got hurt, the bikes got a wash and it certainly gave us something to talk about.



Next morning we had a free day. Most of the rain had gone, there was a bit of water lying about and we were looking forward to the promised day's activities.

Bryan Ottone, the secretary of the Emerald RSL Sub-Branch, had arranged for Emerald Coaches to pick us up early in the morning and take us 60 kms up the road to the Miners Heritage centre at Rubyvale. Normally the cost to hire a bus this size for a day, with a driver, would be about \$800 but the management, in their generosity, waived the hire cost, and the driver gave us his day too. The generosity of people all the way, from Brisbane to



Townsville, was outstanding and we are most grateful. It was a privilege to experience it.

There are a lot of nice people in this world.



Rubyvale is about 16km off the Capricorn Hwy. It contains an old mine that has been converted to a tourist complex and which now provides hour long underground tours. Bryan and the Sub-Branch had organised a tour for us and Emerald Coaches delivered us there mid morning.

Rubyvale, which is one of the world's largest sapphire mining districts, is one of the 3 towns that exist in The Gemfields, the other two being Sapphire and Anakie. You pass through Sapphire on the way to Rubyvale, both of which are still very active.

The Rubyvale mine to which we were going began life back in 1906 and continued to deliver up gems until 1984 when it was converted to a tourist complex.

We joined the tour and were led down a bunch of stairs into what must have been hell when it was a working mine years previously. Back then there were no stairs, no hand rails, no electric light, no safety gear. If you got a quid working one of these mines you certainly deserved it.





This is how it was once done, light would have been provided by one or more candles or a kero lamp, miners usually worked in pairs, one below doing the digging, the other on the surface hauling the rubble up in a bucket. A tough old life.

After we'd all had a look through the mine, had a look through the souvenir shop, had a look at some of the old gear scattered around the place, grabbed a coffee and a snack at the small café, it was back onto the bus and back to Emerald.

Back at the pavilion and after a shower and a brief nana-nap and not wanting to prepare the evening meal, we climbed aboard our two buses and headed for the Maraboon Tavern, possibly the favourite in Emerald. As we had found right throughout our trip out west, meals prepared at clubs, cafes and hotels were always huge, Mal Wilson ordered a meal of chicken wings and couldn't believe what he received.



Being the trooper that he is though, he wasn't going to let a ton and a half of chicken wings beat him – he fought and he won. Downed the lot!!

Next morning it was up early, SSSS, breakfast, pack everything up, (by now the air pumps in the beds had become an accepted noise), onto the bikes and buses and time to head further west



along the Capricorn Hwy to our next overnighiter which was Barcaldine. This was to be another long day, the road between Emerald and Barcaldine was 297km long and we had a few stops.

The first was Anakie. Anakie is the oldest town in The Sapphire Gemfields but has seen better days. It's a few km off the highway but we had to see it. We stopped in front of the old Anakie hotel which was closed in August 2018. As the Anakie gem-fields began to dry up, people moved on and there was not sufficient custom to maintain it as a business. Originally opened in 1902, it is now just another photo opportunity.



Ros Curran, Floyd Wilson, Jillian O'Toole, at the Anakie hotel. (And Floyd is not letting them go either).



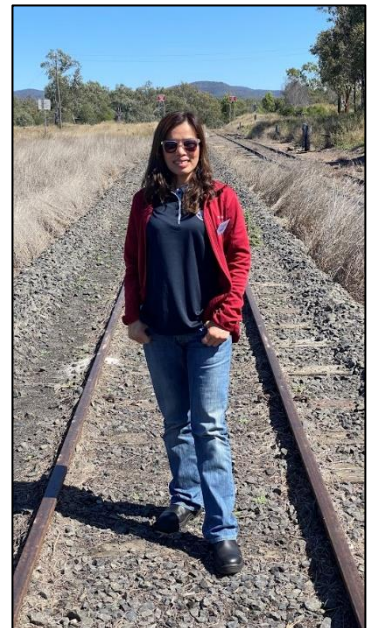
Next stop was Bogantungan, which is about 100km west of Emerald. Once a thriving railway town, back in the 1880s it boasted 28 hotels, several churches, numerous clubs and a racecourse, these days it is by-passed by the highway and is practically a ghost town. The old station building has been converted into a small museum and we did hope to have a look through it but couldn't find the museum keeper.



[SOME](#) people found other ways to amuse themselves though.

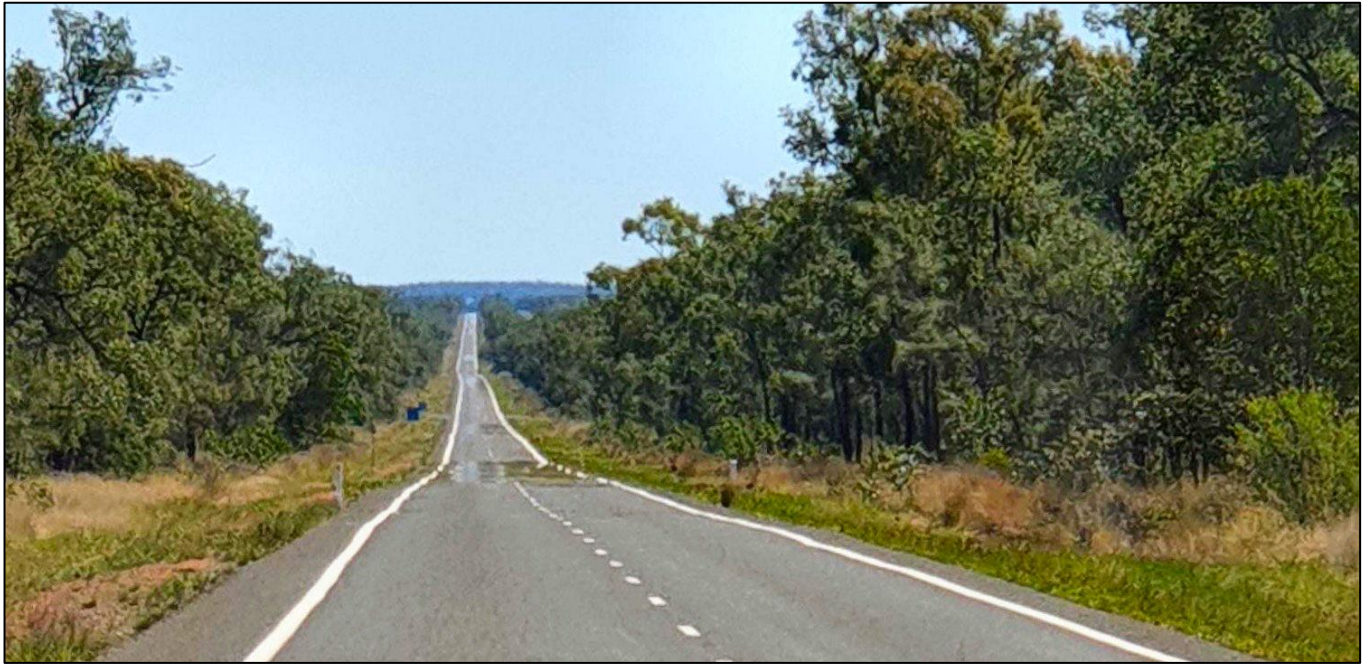
Thanya Pattay, who came out from Thailand to join us, on the line at Bogantungan. Thanya, who is a doctor, is an excellent rider and it was lovely having her with us – we just hope she can find time to join us in 2023.

Bogantungan was the site of a terrible rail accident back in 1960. The Midlander train which ran from Winton to Rockhampton, fell into a creek when the bridge over which it was travelling collapsed. Seven people were killed and many others injured. See [HERE](#).





Our next stop, where we intended to have lunch, was Alpha, a further 60km along the 'straight as a die' highway.



Once again, the ever dependable Kiwi had gone ahead with his ute full of goodies and had set up the barbecue and urn next to the railway line so when we arrived lunch was ready to go and being the well trained ADF people that we were, we knew how to form a nice orderly Mess line and to line up without pushing in.

I think we all agree, Kiwi has to be a definite starter on Scootville 2023.





**Clockwise from the left:** Chris Dietzel, Chuck Connors (partly hidden), Kev Collins, Ros Curran (steamed out), Wal Shakoff, Sandie Downes, Mick Rogers, Marie Henson, Jock Young, Neil Snudden.

**Out the back L-R:** John Broughton, Dave Pedler.



Alpha is a small town which possibly owes its existence to being close to mid-way between Emerald and Barcaldine, making it a natural stop-over for road travellers. It is also situated on the Longreach to Brisbane rail line with the Spirit of the Outback train stopping at Alpha a couple of times a week.

After lunching and giving Kiwi a hand to pack up, we headed for our next stop, Jericho, an easy 50km further west.

No nonsense coffee guide			
Long-black	Black coffee	Flat white	White coffee
Cappuccino	Frothy coffee	Latte	Milky coffee
Espresso	Miniature coffee	Machiato	Milk topped coffee
Mocha	Choccy coffee	Tea	Not coffee



We were all tonguing for a cold drink or an ice cream when we got to Jericho but we found that Jericho works on outback Queensland time – the only shop in town was closed – “back in 5 mins” the sign said, then 40 mins or so later, it opened, but it was worth the wait.

Jericho is home to a ‘walk-in” movie theatre, situated in the main street (the Hwy) it has an overhead screen, projection box and speaker stands exactly the same as a normal drive-in, except you walk in, bring your blanket and folding chair and sit on the grass and watch a movie. We thought it a fabulous idea.



Ian Aves thought he'd prefer the back stalls instead of the grass.





The school called today and said "Your son is telling lies"  
"Well" I replied, "he must be really good at it because I don't have any kids."

After a good look around Jericho, it was back onto the road for the final 90km to Barcaldine, our next overnight stop.

Once again, the very generous Council had given us access to a pavilion on the showground and on arrival we wasted no time setting up our bed spaces.



With everything set, beds made, bodies showered, clothes changed, it was time to put the feet up and bring out a few nibblies and the big yellow esky and enjoy a cold one.





We enjoyed dinner that night at the Union Hotel/Motel, a short 5 min walk from our lodgings, then after enjoying one or two with the locals, it was back to the pavilion for a reasonably early night.



Barcaldine is home to the Tree of Knowledge, the reputed birth place of the Australian Labor Party. The poor old tree is not what it used to be, back in 2006 someone with a gripe against the Labor movement poisoned it. What was left of the tree was preserved and an award winning structure was built around it and at night it is lit up to represent a full tree.





Our next overnight was Ilfracombe which was only 81km away so we had time to have a look around Barcaldine before heading off. Barcaldine is home to the Australian Workers Heritage Centre and with time on our hands we had to have a look.



The Australian Workers Heritage Centre is one of Outback Queensland's premier tourist destinations. Spread across over two hectares of beautifully landscaped gardens surrounding a tranquil billabong, the Australian Workers Heritage Centre presents a wide variety of exhibits capturing the spirit of Australia's workers.





Entry to the Centre is normally \$20 per person but as we were on a mission from God, raising funds for Legacy, the friendly staff gave us a very favourable admission deal. We thank them and if you're ever in Barcaldine we strongly suggest you visit the Centre.

On Saturday morning, after leaving the Centre, it was just a short walk to the Barcaldine Bakery for a 'top up' then it was time to head north again, to Ilfracombe, where we intended to stay 2 nights. Originally we had planned to spend two nights in Longreach, a further 27km but a rodeo had also planned to perform at the showgrounds the same nights as us, so we had to find alternative digs. Councillor Tracy Hatch came to the rescue and offered us the Ilfracombe sporting complex – which was excellent. As it turned out, rain had made the showground arena ground unsuitable for the rodeo and it was cancelled anyway.



Our accommodation at Ilfracombe sports complex. Very comfortable.



We were lucky we had John Broughton on the trip – no shortage of entertainment when John's around.

Ilfracombe is one of those “must stop” places on the Landsborough Hwy. Apart from the historic and well known Wellshot Hotel, it also boasts the “machinery mile” which hosts a wide range of machines, ranging from standing engines to earthmoving machinery. The machinery mile is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, it's free to stop and look and there's no time limit.





Part of the machinery mile.

We had a free day while at Ilfracombe and a few decided to ride out to the Jindalee Operational Radar Network (JORN) Radar site which is about 30 kms south of Longreach, down the Thomson Development Rd. JORN is an over the horizon radar network with transmitters at Longreach, (Radar 1), Laverton in WA (Radar 2) and near Alice Springs in the NT (Radar 3). The receiver for the Longreach transmitter is at Stonehenge about 130km south west on the Thomson Development Rd and the control centre for the whole network is at RAAF Edinburgh. It operates on HF.





L-R: Chris Dietzel, Neil Snudden, Ian Aves, David Pedler, Floyd Wilson, Annabelle Reidy.

Longreach has two major tourist attractions, the Qantas Founder's Museum and the Stockman's Hall of Fame. While some did the JORN trip, others did the Qantas and/or Stockman's Hall of fame tours.



Qantas Founders Museum.



Stockman's Hall of fame.

Others did lunch.



**Clockwise from the left:** Cathy Yang, Sue Trimmer, Jim Zekants, Geoff Spackman, Jock Young.





On the Monday it was time to head for our next overnight stop - Winton, a further 205kms. We decided to do a coffee when passing through Longreach and John Saunders (Johnno) and his minder, Jillian O'Toole, took the opportunity to wave the Bucket in the main street.

Johnno was the purveyor of the Bucket and at every opportunity, whenever we stopped, he would grab it and harass the locals, soliciting funds for Legacy.

He did a magnificent job too, raising the majority of the \$25,000 we were able to present to Legacy at the end of the day.

We've booked him for Scootaville 2023.



After coffeing and a final look around Longreach, we loaded up again and headed north, our next stop was the Australian Age of Dinosaurs, the turn off to which is about 12km before Winton.





The Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History is a world-class organisation and home to the world's largest collection of Australia's largest dinosaur fossils.

Australian Age of Dinosaurs was incorporated as a not-for-profit organisation in October 2002 and 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 the March of the Titanosaurs exhibition at Dinosaur Canyon. Future plans include the construction of Australia's premier natural history museum.

The Museum is a non-profit organisation which draws support from across Australia.