



Scootaville 2022. **01 Sept – 16 Sept.**

Scootaville was an event run by the Radschool Association with a three fold purpose.

1. To raise funds for legacy.
2. To visit and to showcase small towns in outback Queensland.
3. To allow a group of elderly ADF people to get together and enjoy each other's company while enjoying an organised tour of outback Queensland.

After a 2 year delay, Covid induced, on the 1st September, under the supervision of the Event's WOD, Ros Curran, a small group of people got together at the showground pavilion at Rosewood to sort all the equipment and have it ready for the troops when they arrived. Everyone began arriving on the 2nd, got to know their bedding, their riding gear, each other, the food situation and sorted each other out.



Initially the Association planned to make available a number of 50cc Mopeds for the group to ride from RAAF Amberley to RAAF Townsville. That was part of the initial plan which was formulated some 2 years prior but as time progressed, the plan had to be amended many times.

First up the RAAF weren't interested.

Initially it was planned to leave from one of the Squadron hangars on the base but that was knocked back, then the car park in front of the F111 was selected but that wasn't allowed either,



seems that's Commonwealth property and you need a permit to do things like that, all of which left us with a slight problem – from where would we leave!

We had been talking with Ipswich City Council (ICC) and when they got to hear of our predicament, they offered their Corporate Centre at the football ground across the river. This was perfect, large area, plenty of showers, heaps of power points, a kitchen, a secure area in which to park the scooters, we modified our plans.



The Ipswich Corporate Centre.



Interior of the Ipswich Corporate Centre.



Prior to all this, we'd had several meetings with Qld Police. We had to provide a street/road by street/road description of the route in order to obtain the required permits and with the departure point being different to originally planned, we submitted our change of details.

A couple of months before set off, ICC got in touch and told us that as we planned to leave in the first week in Sept we would clash with the Qld Rugby League finals – which meant, the Corporate Centre wouldn't be available after all, but the new Corporate Building at the Rosewood Showgrounds would. We drove out with a lovely lady from ICC to inspect it and found it ideal, so plans were amended again.



Rosewood centre.

We submitted a new set to Qld Police which must have stirred up a nest as they came back and told us there were now a few road changes, one of which was the section of the Capricorn Hwy between Biloela and Emerald. It was now out of bounds to us on Mopeds and we would have to go via the Dawson Hwy, via Banana, Rolleston to Emerald. We had submitted the Capricorn Hwy plans to them 2 years previously, but now they were not acceptable.

This caused a problem. We'd made plans with RSL Sub-Branched, Primary Schools, Councils etc to interact with them on our way along the Capricorn – we had to cancel all that and as we'd never driven the new route and had to submit it, road by road, street by street to Qld Police, about a month before our planned departure, we set off to drive and map it. We got about half-way between Kingaroy and Gayndah when we got a phone call from the Moped supplier telling us the Mopeds would not be available. We knew there was a hold up, Covid had held up their supply, they were in bond in Sydney but we were confident they would arrive Brisbane in time, but this phone call told us they would not be available at all. The supplier told us they were worried about reliability – they didn't want to have to do rescue 8s somewhere in outback Qld, so sorry, but it's a no go. We had booked and paid for overnight accommodation on the new route, but with this new news, we turned around and headed back to Brisbane with our tail between our legs,



So now we had a new route on which we'd never driven and a scoota event with no scootas. This was very close to pulling the pin time and if we were to salvage anything out of this "mess" first thing to do was find some scooters.

We came back to Brisbane and hit the phones. There are a number of firms on the Gold Coast that hire 50cc mopeds, but not to silly people who want to ride them from Brisbane to Townsville. We hit a brick wall there but found a firm in Brisbane (Nibble bikes) that had a couple but not the number we wanted. What they did have though was 10 Honda 125cc motor bikes of various ages which they would hire to us. With no other option – we took them.



So now Scootaville was Bikeville, but as the conveyances were 125cc and not 50cc, all riders would need to be licenced. So, what do we do with the people who wanted to come along but who were not allowed to ride. We had a couple of 12 seat buses which had been loaned to us by Kedron Wavell RSL Sub-Branch, but when we did the maths 24 seats were not enough. We dropped one and hired a 25 seater from Andy's Auto Rentals, near Brisbane airport, paid a deposit only to be told 2 days later the bus wasn't available. They returned our deposit but we weren't happy. With only a couple of weeks to go, we didn't have a bus but at least we had bikes. We eventually found another from Sixt, a firm which we found very good to deal with – we'll go back there.

With the bikes and bus ticked we notified the Police of our change in scooters to bikes, from non-licenced riders to licenced riders and they told us because of that there were





now no requirements, we could come and go as we pleased. Back on the phone, we notified all those that we had cancelled that everything was now uncanceled.

Things seemed to be running smoothly, everyone arrived at the Rosewood showgrounds, made their beds, picked a sleeping spot, tried on their gear, those riding selected a bike and the decision was made to hit the local pub for dinner.



L-R: Chuck Connors, John Sambrooks, Jock Young, John McDougall.

We had planned some events at Rosewood to see us off in style – but Murphy had other ideas, it poured rain. The Army, Fire and Rescue, Police, some Harley boys and the local RSL all turned up, for which we are eternally grateful, but the weather cruelled everything.





The local RSL people braved the elements and put on a bar-b-q breakfast for us, which was gratefully accepted.



26 Transport Sqn, based at Amberley, turned up with their heavy bits and their mascot as did the local Fire and Rescue people.





Our departure had been well publicised and we did expect families to come and see us off, the machinery was for the benefit of the kids, but the rain cruelled all that.



Ipswich Mayor Teresa Harding, was also good enough to brave the elements and come and see us off





On the Saturday morning, someone must have said a bunch of Hail Marys, as the rain stopped about 10.00am and we had a dry departure. John McDougall's trailer, on loan from the Kedron Wavell Services Club, was loaded with all the gear, then wrapped in blue taps to keep out the rain.



We were given a "Hose down" departure by the Fireys, then with the Police leading, followed by a bunch of great Harley blokes, we set forth.





Our first overnighter was to be Kilcoy. From Rosewood we travelled via Marburg, Fernvale, Somerset Dam, and Hazeldean to Kilcoy and as we'd originally planned the route to accommodate slow moving 50cc Mopeds, the bigger and much faster bikes meant we had less time on the road and more time to stop and look around. In the end it was very fortunate that the Mopeds were unavailable, the 125s performed admirably and helped make the journey enjoyable. With a bit of time on our hands, in order to defer a mutiny amongst the ranks, we had to stop at Fernvale for a pie-in.



It is noted far and wide that the best pies in the whole world are made and sold at the Old Fernvale Bakery and after everyone had had their fill, we headed for Kilcoy.

As we had planned the journey on Mopeds, we had allowed for a stop and rider change at Somerset Dam. Normally it would have taken us 90 mins to cover the windy and hilly Fernvale to Somerset section but the Hondas handled it with ease.

We stopped anyway, rolled out the biscuit tin and cold drinks esky and began to realise that this was going to be a fun trip.



May Wallace, the Vice President of the Kilcoy RSL Sub-branch had offered us their Memorial Hall in which to overnight. As was the case all up the line to Townsville, the local RSL Sub-Branches were magnificent, they got right behind the event, organised meals, helped with accommodation and raised funds which we passed onto Legacy.



At Kilcoy, May had ensured the Memorial Hall was open and available and made certain everything that was required was available.



Floyd Wilson, one of the experienced riders, wasted no time in setting up his site. Everyone was provided with an air bed, sleeping bag, pillow as well as riding jacket and helmet, all of which was carried in a duffle bag.

May and her committee had organised a wonderful evening meal after which it was compulsory to attend the bar for a debrief. WOD Ros Curran and her 2IC, Chris Dietzel, were taking notes while Marie Henson was just pleased to be there.



L-R, other side of the bench: Neil Snudden, Marie Henson, Ros Curran, Chris Dietzel, Ken Hey, Neil Barradeen, Kev Collins, Shane “Kiwi” Campbell, Allan O’Connor.
L-R, this side: Sandie Downes, Stu Welden.



In the morning, those that could, the “healthy” ones, fronted the dining area where May and her committee provided a healthy breakfast, then it was load up and head for Kingaroy.



No-one can leave Kilcoy without having their pic taken at the Yowie Park, at the bottom of town.

The trip, Kilcoy to Kingaroy, was only 107km, which would have taken at least 2½ hours on the Mopeds, now with the 125s, we expected it to take only 70 - 80 mins which was good as we had a few stops on the way.



First stop was Blackbutt, at the top of the range and about 40 kms from Kilcoy. We had planned a morning smoko at the hotel and even though that didn't eventuate, it didn't stop "Johnno" (John Saunders) from bailing up a few blokes with his magic bucket and soliciting some hard-earned.



From Blackbutt it was an easy 15km ride to Yarraman. We'd had several meetings with Prue Lewis, the Secretary of the Yarraman RSL Sub-Branch who had suggested we call into the Club Rooms for lunch. That seemed like an excellent idea to us.

Prue and her committee excelled themselves. They had planted Legacy collection tins all over town and apart from providing us with a wonderful lunch, presented us with a considerable sum of money which we were able to pass onto legacy.



Prue had also passed the word about town that a bunch of silly old buggers would be passing through, riding small motor bikes from Brisbane to Townsville and if you didn't believe her, just come to the RSL Hall about lunch time and see for yourself.



A lot did!

Prue (third from left) and her very capable ladies, provided a wonderful lunch (see [HERE](#)), and people started to wonder, if the next two weeks were to be like this, perhaps we should rename this event Chubbyville, the quantity and quality of food being offered to us was amazing.



To thank Prue for the RSL's contribution, Jillian O'Toole offered to take her for a wild lap of the main street on the back of the 125. Prue readily accepted and not knowing what she was in for, hopped on and hung on tightly. (Click the pic below)





A blonde dyes her hair brown. She then goes for a drive in the country and sees a shepherd herding his sheep across the road. "Hey, shepherd, if I guess how many sheep you've got here, can I keep one?" The shepherd is puzzled but agrees. She blurts out "352!" He is stunned but keeps his word and allows her to pick a sheep. "I'll take this one," she says proudly. "It's the cutest!" "Hey lady," says the shepherd, "If I guess your real hair colour, can I have my dog back?"

After reluctantly leaving Yarraman, we headed for the next stop which was to be Nanango, a mere 15km up the road. Chris Eddy and his mates from the Nanango RSL Sub-Branch had arranged afternoon smoko for us and once again we were met with an amazing display of food. All these stop-overs, from Rosewood to Townsville, didn't just happen, they were organised by the caring local committees, a lot of planning and thought went into them – for which we are eternally grateful.



Next stop, and our second overnighter was Kingaroy, peanut capital of the world and just 25km from Nanango. The amazing Craig Lucas, manager of the Kingaroy Show Society had offered us the use of two pavilions in which to bunk down and a third, which contained a kitchen, in which to prepare our meals.



Kingaroy is 1,450 feet AMSL and a few of the softies in our group found it a bit cold.





In no time at all, everyone had found their spot, blown up the bed, unwrapped the sleeping bag and had the bed ready to go. Then it was time to get some ice, chill down a few of Castlemaine's finest and enjoy a refreshing ale while watching the sun go down.

While some of the troops were enjoying the break, Cathy Yang and a small group of volunteers got busy in the kitchen and prepared the evening meal – a most appreciated curry. (see [HERE](#)).

Seen tucking in to Cathy's curry were (L-R:) Ros Curran, Neil Snudden, then patiently waiting, Geoff Spackman, Selwyn Hill, Marie Henson and Stu Weldon.





After dinner, John Broughton brought out the keyboard and entertained the troops until the WOD called "lights out".



L-R: Andy McCann, Dave Pedler (partly hidden), John Broughton, Allan O'Connor (standing), John "Sambo" Sambrooks (back to us).

In the morning, Crow FM from Wondai had their Rocket Rover call in to see us before we left. He arranged an interview with us with Shaz Birkett, Crow FM's delightful brekky announcer ([HERE](#)).



L-R: Damo Martoo (Crow FM), Trev Benneworth, Ros Curran (WOD), Ted McEvoy (Adjutant).



We got away from Kingaroy a bit later than originally planned and headed up the road towards our first stop for the day, Wondai – a short 30km trip. Dave Scrimgoer and the Wondai RSL Sub-Branch welcomed us warmly. A large number of members had gathered at the Sub-Branch to meet and greet us and the ladies had prepared a most welcomed morning tea. It was also great to see ladies from the local Legacy chapter and club members with “proper” bikes, who rode with us for a few Km when we left.



Some of the riders then gave some of the Legacy ladies a short ride through town.



Lead rider Marie Henson, with one of the ladies.



Andy McCann with Crow FM's lovely Shaz Birkett.

After an enjoyable hour or so, it was time to head off (see [HERE](#)).

A month or so back, Qld Police had also banned us from a large section of the Bunya Hwy north of Wondai. We had replanned the route to travel via back roads west of the highway and this new route took us through Wheatlands. As Wheatlands had a small primary school and as Metcash (IGA), the AWM, RAAF, Coca Cola and Smiths Confectionery had given us a huge amount of "give aways" we decided to keep this "detour" in the route. We then arranged to call into the school, meet the kids and give each of them a "show-bag" of goodies.



We'd planned school visits for two reasons, firstly to give the kids a bit of a thrill, give them a short break from school work, of seeing a bunch of small motor bikes, of being able to get up close and personal with the machines and for them to be given a 'show-bag". It was also to be a soother for a bunch of crusty old ex-Service men and women – and it seemed to have worked. Mixing with those great young and so well behaved kids, of seeing the genuine joy on their young faces immediately relieved any tension in the group. Everyone became involved instantly, adopted one or more kids, had them on the bikes, got the kids to start them, rev them – it was difficult to see who had the biggest smile, the kids or the oldies.



A great morning – enjoyed by all, though how the teachers were going to keep the kids out of the “show-bags” and get them concentrating on school-work again was a problem we’re glad we didn’t have.

We eventually waved good bye to the kids and their dedicated teachers and headed for our next stop which was at Ban Ban Springs, a 75km run. This was where we planned to have lunch which was prepared last night by Cathy and her willing helpers.

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We arrived at Ban Ban Springs, which is the junction of the Burnett and Isis highways and as the name suggests, it has a fresh water spring as well as a large dedicated rest stop which includes toilets, fresh water, a huge parking area, covered tables and seats, a service station and a well stocked general store/café.



The ute, driven by Kiwi Campbell and Cathy Yang, and which carried all the food, had gone ahead of the bikes and set up a table with lunch ready for when everyone arrived. As a testament to Cathy's skill as a cook, the food very quickly disappeared.





After lunching, it was back on the bikes for the 26km run into Gayndah – our third overnighter.

Boyd Baker, the President of the Gayndah RSL Sub-Branch and Dael Giddins, the very proud of her town Councillor, had organised everything for our arrival. What we didn't expect though was a police road block – all in good fun. The police pulled us up, breath-tested a few, gave us a stern reminder to eat our greens and to ring our mothers each night, then having put the fear of the Lord in each of us, the road block was removed, our visas were stamped and the big orange man stepped forth to try and soothe the atmosphere. Some of our seniors were still trembling with fear, thinking they might have spent the night in a police lockup but the Big Orange Man gave everyone a hug and all was forgiven.



L-R: Wal Shakoff, Neil Snudden, Ian Aves, Big orange man, Jillian O'Toole, Thanya Pattay, (in the background, Chris Dietzel, Ros Curran), Stu Welden with his hot Honda.

Gael informed us that Gayndah was the first town in Queensland to be gazetted – 7 years even before Brisbane.

She then pulled rank and insisted on riding one of the bikes into her town and leading us to our overnighter. Boyd and the RSL had pulled a few strings and had arranged for us to use the large pavilion at the Gayndah Showground.





This pavilion was perfect. It was huge, had a fully equipped kitchen, toilets and showers and under cover parking for the bikes. We were being spoiled.



Ever the ambassador of all things Gayndah, Dael offered to take our mob on a sightseeing tour. We all climbed into the two buses. First stop was the old railway station. It opened in 1953 to cater for a passenger service between Maryborough and Gayndah, but with the gradual sealing of the roads, road transport began to replace rail and it closed on the 31st December 2014.



Today the old rail-yards are used by caravanners as a camp site.



Yeah, thanks to the people who said it was ok to allow my pet to sleep on my bed at night.
My goldfish is now dead!

Gayndah is situated beside a large hill on which is Archers Lookout. Apart from being a favourite night time "cuddle spot" it is also an excellent day time lookout and led by Gael we headed for the summit to get a look at Gayndah from the heights.



We then returned to the showgrounds and after everyone had parked their bike, found their spot and made their bed and had a shower, it was time to quench a raging thirst. The big yellow Esky still held a bunch of cold Castlemaines so the roll was called and the load on the Esky was lessened.

That night the RSL provided a wonderful dinner then came a surprise.

Gayndah has a group of musicians who practice most nights in a hall not far from the showground. The unstoppable Dael had approached them some time earlier, told them that a bunch of silly old buggers would be passing through, raising funds for Legacy and would be overnighting at the showgrounds. "Would there be a chance you could move your practice night to the showgrounds".

For Dael, of course they could, and they did, and we were treated to a wonderful night's entertainment.



See [HERE](#).

Next morning, at Dael's suggestion, we headed for the big orange for a coffee and scone breakfast. Dael insisted that the big orange made the best scones in the whole wide world, so we had to give it a go.

We did and we have to agree with her.



After breakfast we lined up for the compulsory photo in front of the big orange, bought a bag or two of their juicy oranges then set sail for Mundubbera, 36km up the road.



David Roach is the President of the Mundubbera RSL Sub-Branch and we had arranged to meet him at the big train in the Bicentennial Park on the Burnett River for smoko. Unfortunately, Dael's scones had held us up a bit and we were late. Once again it was fortunate we were on the 125s and not the Mopeds otherwise we wouldn't have got there before dinner, but led by Marie who set a blistering pace, we arrived shortly after our expected arrival time.



Only in this stupid worlddo they have drive-up ATM machines with Braille lettering.



Once again the indomitable Kiwi had gone ahead, had set up the table, got the billy boiling, had the cups and coffee placed within easy reach, the Nice and Scotch Fingers unwrapped, oranges cut up, all in readiness for our arrival.

The park is situated on the Burnett River, next to the Mundubbera Durong Rd bridge (see [HERE](#)). It's hard to imagine that when the Burnett floods the water level is above the bridge. That's an enormous amount of water.

After everyone had had their fill, David Roach, on behalf of the Mundubbera RSL Sub-Branch, presented us with a sponsorship cheque for us to pass onto Legacy.

Mundubbera RSL Sub-Branch is not a big chapter and we thank them for their wonderful generosity.



It was then time to head north once again, we left Kiwi to pack the ute, our next stop was the Mulgildie State School, which is about 12km south of Monto.



Once again we had a bunch of 'show bags" to give to the kids and just to see the joy on their faces made the whole trip worthwhile.



Being an old bloke and not able to walk too far, Chuck got on the back of Leo the lion.



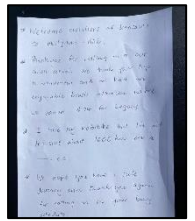


These are country kids and a small motor bike probably wasn't a novelty for them, some could probably ride as good as, if not better, than some of our riders, but we enjoyed their enthusiasm.





The kids then presented Ros and me with an envelope which contained a cheque for \$174 which the kids had raised themselves, a wonderful achievement. The envelope also contained a lovely hand-written note (right).



Click the pic at right to be able to read it.

Australia's future is in good hands.

It was finally time to move on. We had a lunch date with the Monto RSL Sub-Branch, but unfortunately, we were going to be late – again!

It's only a short drive from Mulgildie to Monto and the OIC Monto Police had arranged to meet us a few km out of town and escort us in under the red and blues. He was parked on the side of the road waiting for us and practically every car that approached us, before we got to the patrol car flashed their lights to us – warning of a nasty police radar trap. We thought it was funny!!

After a very public run up the main street, being led by the red and blue, we headed for the RSL Club Rooms. Guy Rauchle, the President of the Sub-Branch and his committee, had arranged a wonderful lunch for us. Thanks Guy.





Lunching at Monto. It looks like Steve Howie had just realised he had eaten an ice cream too quickly. Brain freeze has set in.



Jillian O'Toole, who tried to sneak back for seconds, receiving a stern warning from the Police – and was told to go sit down and be good.



After a wonderful break, it was time to mount up and head up the Burnett Hwy for our next overnighiter, Biloela, just under 100 kms away.

In 1924 it was planned to build a rail link to join Monto with Maryborough but it was never finished, stopping just 60 kms short of Monto. Prior to the cancellation, the railways had intended to build a station, which they called Lawgi, at where the rail eventually stopped. Gradually a town began to grow at Lawgi, a school was opened and a community hall was built. In 1955, when it was realised that the rail link out to Lawgi was not profitable, it was closed and the town gradually disappeared leaving only the community hall.

In 2003, artists Gary Latcham and Jo Lawrence painted the exterior of the hall with silhouettes of bottle trees against a sunset. The area is now a heritage listed rest area with toilets and showers and we stopped for a breather and a rider change.



From Lawgi, it was an easy 30 km run into Biloela where the Banana Shire Council had allowed us to overnight in one of the showground pavilions.





Part of the interior of the pavilion.

After we'd unloaded the trailers, picked up our kit bags, selected a spot, blown-up and made our beds and had the walk across the lawns to the shower block, it was time for dinner. We decided to give cook Cathy the night off and instead headed for the Biloea Hotel. Prior to joining us though, Cathy headed for Woolworths to pick up supplies needed for the following days.



Woolworths, and IGA, had given us very generous gift cards which we could use to obtain supplies. Very generous indeed.





After dinner, it was onto the buses and back to the pavilion for an early night, tomorrow was looking like a busy and long day with the road between Biloela and Emerald being 317 km long.

Our first stop was the Dululu rest stop/camping area, 75 km away. The 125s covered that distance in an hour and it was planned to stop for a break and perhaps a rider change.



Some enterprising people had set up a food van at the rest stop, this didn't go un-noticed for long.

At my age, a trail of clothes leading to the bedroom means I dropped them on the way from the drier.

Next stop was to be Duaringa, a further 85km. Duaringa also has a small primary school and we had arranged with Andrew Clair, the principal, for us to call in and engage with the small kids. We had also spoken with Paul James, the OIC Duaringa Police for him to join us at the school with some red and blues and a siren or two.



Once again, the kids were a delight. Excited, well behaved, pleased to see us, eager to hop on the bikes, to start them, rev them, blow the horn and especially pleased to tuck into their "show bag." It was great to just stand back and watch them.



The kids hard at it checking out the contents of the “show bags.”



As well as tucking into the “show bags” being able to sit on and play with the bikes was also a huge hit. Is that a happy face or what??



With still a long way to go, we reluctantly left the kids and headed for Blackwater, 84km further west. We had arranged with Rebecca Avis, the manager of the International Coal Centre and Coal Mining Museum in Blackwater for us to stop for smoko and a rider change, which we did. Opened in 2008, the Centre operates as a non-profit organisation and is a major tourist attraction.



Floyd Wilson in one of the two huge drag-line buckets on display at the Centre.

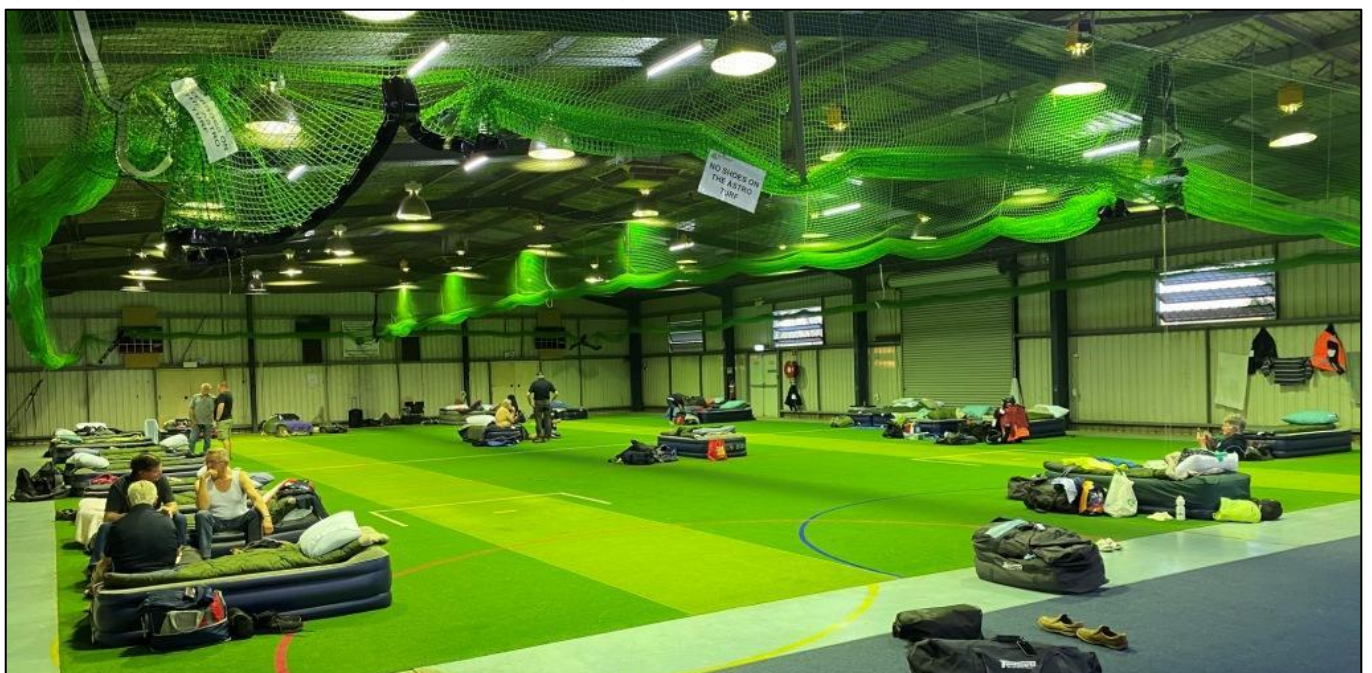


Coffees in the Centre's café went down well.



While the “young ones” had a good look around the Centre, the old blokes made the most of the break to just sit and relax. **L-R:** John Broughton, Geoff Spackman, Trev Benneworth.

With a further 76km to go to reach Emerald, our next overnighter, we didn't dilly dally too long in the Centre, those that wanted a break gave up their bikes and hopped in one of the buses, those that had rested donned the helmet and took over. Marie Henson wasn't allowing anyone on her bike, she reckoned she had it going just right and didn't want anyone mucking it up. She was going to ride it all the way – come hell or high water, and she did!





Emerald Council had offered us one of the showground pavilions, one that is as an indoor cricket arena. We planned to spend two nights in Emerald to recoup after the day's long drive and the facilities they offered us were perfect. The floor was soft and spongy, toilets and showers were next door and there was a long bench from which we could serve breakfast.



Breakfast was a "help yourself" affair.

Emerald Lions knew we'd had a long day and as their Club Room was also on the showground, they very generously invited us around for dinner that night. We readily accepted.





The Lionesses had decked out the clubrooms and prepared a most welcome meal while the Lions manned the bar which also seemed to be well accepted.



Debbie Shields, the President of the Emerald Lions Club, then presented Ted McEvoy, our President, with a sponsorship donation which the Club had raised from amongst themselves, a



very generous effort. Once again, we thank them very much. John "Johnno" Saunders was very quick to snavel the money and encase it in his magic bucket.



A few of the lovely Lionesses that spoiled us.

After a wonderful evening, we strolled back to our "lodgings" as the Sub-Branch had planned a big day for us tomorrow.



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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.

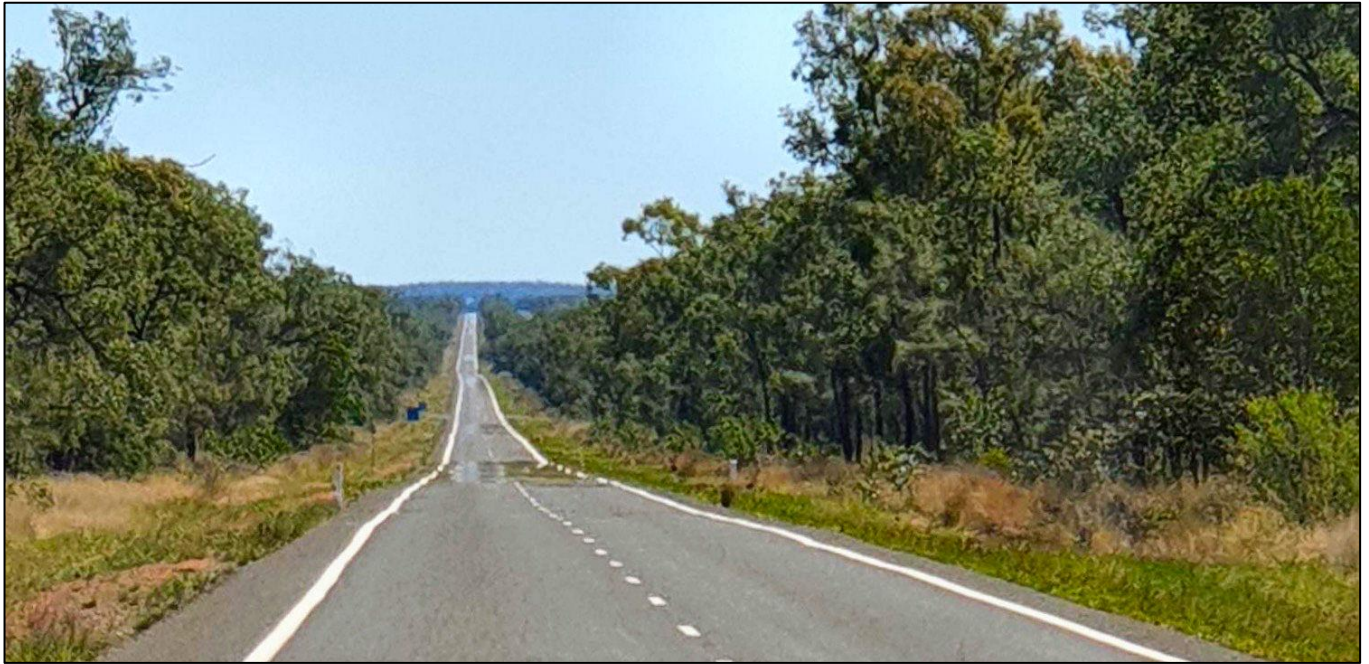
Thanya Pattay, who came out from Thailand to join us, on the line at Bogantungan. Thanya, who is a doctor, is an excellent rider and it was lovely having her with us – we just hope she can find time to join us in 2023.

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-blaek	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.

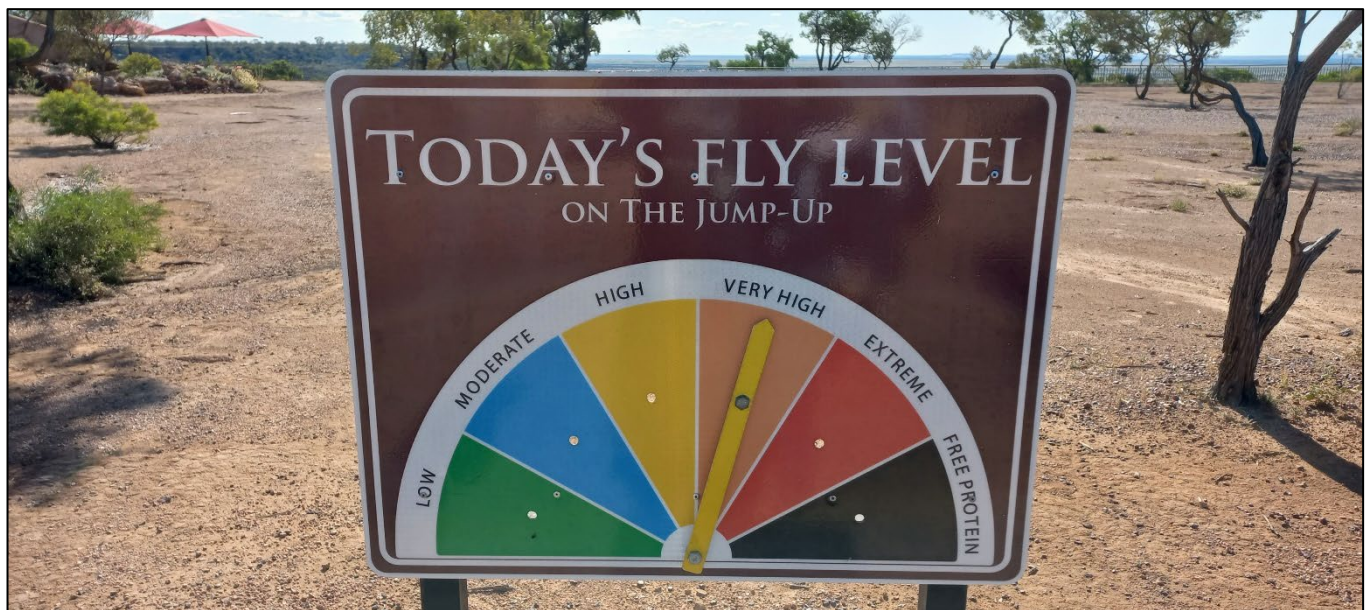
Australian Age of Dinosaurs was incorporated as a not-for-profit organisation in October 2002 and was based at Belmont, a sheep station owned by David and Judy Elliott. In 2006 a rugged mesa and wilderness area 24km south-west of Winton known as "The Jump-Up" was donated by the Britton Family and the 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.

Scootaville 2022

After turning off the highway, we climbed the “Jump Up”, what the locals call the hill on which the museum is situated, parked and walked towards the reception/café area, with our mouths closed.



We had decided we would like to do one of the Museum's tours, so we sat and enjoyed the view while waiting our turn.





As we were a bit short on time we only did the 30 minute fossil prep lab tour – and we feel this is a tour for the dedicated fossil connoisseur only. Personally, we didn't get a lot from it, except to say we've done it.



After the tour, we headed back down the "Jump Up", stopping for a photo then it was onto Winton, where once again the Winton Council had generously granted us access to a pavilion on their showground.





The Winton showground pavilions.



We were lucky at Winton as the showground had a large covered area where we could park and give the bikes a service.

That evening we decided to dine at the famous Tattersalls Hotel. Tatts, as it has been known since it was built in 1885 was originally a single-storey building, a second storey was put on some time between 1910 and 1914, but nobody is sure exactly when. Briefly, its name was changed to 'The Combo', but most people have always called it The Tatts. The pub has had many owners over its lifespan, each leaving their mark without detracting from The Tatts' integrity.



Tattersalls Hotel, Winton.

We loaded up the two buses and headed for the Tatts for one of their fabulous gigantic meals.





Winton Mayor, Gavin Basket, gave us some of his valuable time and went out of his way to join us. He also offered to show us around his great little town.



Mayor Gavin Basket, Ken Hey.

Next morning we met Gavin in the main street and as promised, he hopped on one of our bikes and led us on a noisy tour of his town – see [HERE](#). After stirring up the locals, Gavin suggested we do a tour of the town's magnificent Waltzing Matilda centre, the first museum in the world dedicated to a song, which of course we did.





While in the vicinity of the Museum, we had a look at the public Roll of Honour which commemorates those who served in the Boer War, WW1, WW2, Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Another stop was the North Gregory Hotel; known as the 'Queen', she's been a Winton resident since 1879. This is where, in 1895, Banjo Patterson unknowingly premiered Australia's now unofficial national anthem and was where secret meetings forming Qantas were held.





The local saying about Qantas is that it was conceived in Cloncurry, born in Winton and grew up in Longreach.



The Winton chapter of Qantas begins when the birth of Qantas was announced in Winton on the 16th November, 1920 with the initial registration of the company – Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services Ltd. Subsequently, the first Board Meeting was held at the Winton Club on the 10th February, 1921. Later in 1921, the Winton Shire Council became the first local authority in Australia to support Commercial Aviation after subsidising by half the cost of establishing a landing field in Winton, to the sum of £20.

The main headquarters of QANTAS was eventually shifted to Longreach, as a more logical location.

What was the best thing before sliced bread?

Winton was where we experienced two (minor) mechanical problems. One of the bikes had a slow leak in the rear wheel and we decided to get it fixed before leaving town. We called into Tuff Tyres in Winton to have it fixed and were delightfully surprised when the owner decided not to charge us – he too knew someone which Legacy had helped and this was his way of saying thank you. The other, as we headed out, one of the bikes developed an engine miss. We found the spring that holds the side stand in its retracted position had gone soft with age and as the stand vibrated up and down it operated the engine cut-out micro. A bit of duck tape and we were on our way again.



Ian Aves diagnosing the little Honda which had an occasional miss – with Kiwi Campbell playing the Flight Sergeant.

Our next overnighter was Hughenden, 215km north east along the Kennedy Development Rd. Previously known as the Hann Highway, it is an important connection road linking areas such as Boulia, Winton and Hughenden and is fully sealed apart from a 10km leg just out of Winton. This part of the road is being upgraded and is accessed by a packed earth detour.

As this was a long leg, we planned to have lunch in the old school building at Stamford – 155km north. The building is now used to house a sports club and we had contacted their committee for permission to stop over, which was given and they planned to meet us on arrival. Unfortunately, due to the problems we had with the bikes we were running late and with the very sketchy phone service out there, we were unable to let them know of our delay. When we did arrive we were delightfully surprised to find they had prepared lunch for us.



We were sorry we missed them.

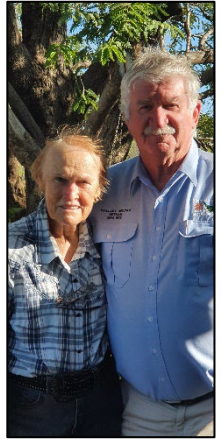


After lunch and a rider change, we pushed onto Hughenden, a mere 60kms away.

One nice thing about egoists is they don't talk about other people.



Hughenden is the home of Cecily Paul AM - a remarkable woman. Cecily, who saw 80 some years ago, still lives on her cattle station about 10km out of Hughenden. Apart from driving her car she still drives a cattle truck and has only recently given up teaching dancing in Townsville, – a four hour drive, each way. A talented musician, she is still on the committee (Secretary) that organises the 3 day Hughenden Country Music festival, as well as the Hughenden Country Matrons Club.



We arranged to meet Cecily a few km out of Hughenden and Marie Hansen would give her a ride into town on the back of her bike, See [HERE](#)

Unfortunately, there was some mis-understanding and we didn't get to see Cecily after that, we would liked to have had dinner with her that night but that wasn't to be. We're going back in 2023 – we'll right that wrong then.

Once again, as was the case from start to finish, in Hughenden we received very generous hospitality from everyone. The Flinders Shire Council made a couple of pavilions available to us along with a well equipped kitchen area and Hughenden Lions organised an excellent dinner for us that night by their beautiful lake.





Dining - compliments of Hughenden Lions.

We had a wonderful surprise while at dinner that night, Charlie Wooten, the President of the Hughenden RSL Sub-Branch, presented us with a cheque for \$500 for us to pass onto Legacy. When you realise his Sub-Branch has only a handful of members, this donation is magnanimous. We thank them very much.

This world certainly does have some wonderful people.



Trev Benneworth with Charlie Wooten



We decided, as we were here, we should have a look at the Porcupine Gorge – a 60km each way ride out of Hughenden. As had been our custom each morning, we refuelled all the bikes and support vehicles and set off. Up until now we had been lucky, there had been a few minor scrapes but so far the bikes had remained relatively unscathed – that was about to change.

About 50km from Hughenden, when in the National Park, Floyd Wilson met a kangaroo head on. One minute the road ahead was clear, the next instant he had a kangaroo in his lap. Luckily, Floyd is an experienced rider and he managed to keep the bike upright, he was a bit shaken but thankfully unharmed.



We don't know who got the biggest shock, Floyd or the kangaroo, one minute the roo was happily crossing the road, the next instant it was in Floyd's lap doing 80kph heading north. Floyd managed to pull the bike up, the roo untangled itself and was last seen heading for the hills.

The bike suffered the most, the head-light was smashed, a few other bits were broken, but with some delicate work with duck tape it was back in business.

Another incident, this one not so serious, occurred when a bunch of cattle decided the grass was greener on the other side of the road and took off in pursuit in front of a few of the riders. Luckily it was relatively open ground and the cattle could be seen and there was plenty of time to stop. When the coast was clear we took off again and arrived at the unbelievable Porcupine Gorge.





Over hundreds of millions of years, the Porcupine Creek has carved into the landscape and formed this huge gorge.



Jim Zekants and Cathy Yang

Annabelle Reidy.

Where Annabelle is standing, the floor of the gorge is 40 metres down. In the wet season the small stream becomes a raging torrent which over time has cut its way into the surrounding rock. The gorge stretches for 27km through the countryside and until you are within a few metres of it you wouldn't know it was there as all the surrounding land is dead flat.

Click [HERE](#) for info on the gorge.





L-R: Jim Zekants, Jillian O'Toole, Ted McEvoy, Chris Dietzel, John McDougall, Floyd Wilson, Wal Shakoff.

After a good look around, we headed back to Hughenden, refuelled again then headed east for Charters Towers, our next overnight – 243ks away. This was to be a 370km day, a big one.

40km down the road we stopped at the little Prairie State School to spend some time with the kids. As we'd been out to Porcupine Gorge, we were running much later than originally planned. Principal Maggie Glynn had the kids ready for us and once again, the kids were a delight, happy, well mannered, eager to chat with a bunch of old people and once again, keen to hop on the bikes and tuck into the “show bags” we had for them.







Prairie State School's motto is: '**Truth Conquers All Things**', and this belief is the foundation of all things at the school. Its old fashioned values of hard work, courtesy, good manners, honesty, helping the community and at all times trying your best are highly valued by all in the Prairie State School community – and it shows.



Prairie State School was opened the 14th April 1894 making it one of the oldest schools in Queensland. Today the township of Prairie has a population of approximately 50 people. In the 1870's, Prairie was a main horse change centre for Cobb & Co. Coaches which ran from Pentland and followed the Christison track to Hughenden. Prairie is part of the Great Northern Railway Line that links Townsville and Mount Isa. Several hundred men, many whom were Irish immigrants, worked on this line and some settled in the area. The Prairie of today is a much quieter place.

We think the kids enjoyed us calling in, we know we definitely did. We might see them again in 2023.





Our next stop was a lunch break at the Exchange Hotel at Torrens Creek, a further 45km from the Prairie State School. We had forewarned the proprietor of our arrival and pre-ordered lunch and although there was only he and his lady running the hotel, lunch was perfect.



After lunching and having a break, we loaded up again and headed for Charters Towers, a further 158km, where we were to spend 2 nights.



The unofficial Mayor of Charters Towers, Ken Hey, had organised for us to stay at the PCYC and Sgt Paul Ansell, the club manager gave us an excellent rental, for which we are very thankful. The club was perfect, plenty of room, a fully equipped kitchen, toilets and showers, plenty of parking and was close to everything in the city.

Thanks again Paul – hope to see you again in 2023.



We were fortunate to have Charters Towers Mayor, Frank Beverage, an experienced biker himself, hop on one of our little bikes and give us a tour of his wonderful town.

Charters Towers, a town they call 'The World' was born to the sound of thunder and flashes of lightning. In 1871, Hugh Mosman, George Clarke, John Fraser and horseboy Jupiter had been prospecting away to the south of what is now Charters Towers when their horses scattered during a fierce thunderstorm. It was while searching for the horses next morning that gold was discovered.

The party returned to Ravenswood to register their find which they named Charters Towers after the Gold Commissioner W Charters and Towers because of the conical shaped hills in the vicinity of the discovery.



A rush of 'fortune seeking men' quickly followed and a small settlement named Millchester formed on the water at Gladstone Creek. By the end of 1872 some 3000 souls 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. Charters Towers rather than Millchester soon became the main settlement. The goldfield did not reach its peak of gold production until 1899. 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. Literally 100s of shafts were sunk during the lifetime of the field and the ore raised was processed through many large Treatment Batteries. 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 I saw the population shrink and the town become the supply centre or hub of the Dalrymple Shire as well as the educational centre for students from all over North Queensland.



Charters Towers was once a financial hub and the second largest city in Queensland. The Stock Exchange began trading in this arcade in 1890 and continued operations there until 1916. It enabled the buying and selling of shares in mining companies, investment or speculative. The evening call was open to the public and hundreds would crowd in the Arcade to be part of the occasion.

Built in 1888, the Royal Arcade housed a number of shops and offices but when the Stock Exchange closed due to the rapidly diminishing returns from the gold mines and decreased population, the Arcade fell into disrepair but was saved from demolition in the 1970s by the Charters Towers and Dalrymple Historical Society. It was later transferred to the National Trust.



VENUS BATTERY

THE HUB OF GOLD FEVER

Important DATES

- 1871 Gold first discovered in Charters Towers
- 1872 Venus Battery was built
- 1877 Charters Towers is declared a town and main ad. administration centre
- 1919 Venus Battery becomes state owned
- 1942 Venus Battery ceases operations
- 1946 Electricity is installed and operations recommence
- 1985 Restoration works undertaken by the National Trust Charters Towers
- 2002 The Battery is redesigned as a tourist attraction and currently forms part of the Ghosts of Gold Trail

Hugh Mosman and his prospecting party first discovered gold in Charters Towers in 1871. This was to be the catalyst for the gold rush with people from far and wide flocking to the countryside hoping to make their fortune. As the demand for crushing increased, the first permanent stamp mill, the Venus Battery, sprang into operation. Today, the Venus Battery is a popular tourist attraction and is the oldest remaining and best preserved battery in Queensland. Take a tour and learn about the methods used in gold recovery and imagine the heady days when the surrounding landscape would have been the very hub of gold fever.

VENUS BATTERY HISTORY

The Venus Battery was built in 1872 along the banks of Gladstone Creek, just seven months after the first discovery of gold. Throughout its working lifespan, it produced more than 15.5 tonnes of gold until its final operation in 1973. The early days started out quite modestly with only five head of stamps in operation, but as demand increased, that number totalled 35 head of stamps. The mill was originally privately owned until the state government bought it out in 1919 but kept it running as a custom or public mill for small miners. As World War II approached, operations ceased and didn't recommence until 1946 when electricity and urgent repairs were undertaken.

EXTRACTING THE GOLD

The method of extracting gold is similar to that used in 17th century Europe. Gold is separated from quartz or ore by crushing the stone and passing the pulp over inclined tables covered with blankets to collect the gold. The Venus Battery today has four 5-head stamp batteries for crushing and timber blankets that drain to three Wilfley tables and six berdan pans. Copper plates were used to amalgamate the gold for easier collection.

VENUS BATTERY TODAY

In 1985 restoration works were undertaken to develop the Venus Battery as a tourist attraction. Today, it is part of the Ghosts of Gold Heritage Trail and offers visitors an intriguing insight into the gold rush of the 19th century. Guided tours are available daily, with the fascinating shows documenting the story of the Battery's working life and the methods used for extracting gold being highlights of the tour.

GLADSTONE CREEK

It is thanks to the steady flow of Gladstone Creek that the Venus Battery owes its existence. Water is essential in the process of extracting gold and fueling steam engines so a steady supply was a valuable commodity, especially in the dry outback of Queensland.

MILLCHESTER

Within a month of Mosman's claim in early 1872, a settlement sprang up along the banks of Gladstone Creek and the first areas of what was to be the Venus Battery were pegged. By the end of the year, over 3000 people were living in tents and many businesses had set up shop. It was the administrative centre for two years until it became apparent Charters Towers was to be the more permanent settlement.

CHINESE MARKET GARDENS

The gold rush was a time of multicultural diversity with the Chinese being the largest foreign group, not just on the gold fields, but in business as well. Many tended their own market gardens along the banks of Gladstone Creek to sell their produce in the communities. The fresh vegetables grown by the Chinese gardeners and the 'cures' available from Chinese herbalists provided a significant contribution to community health in and around the gold fields.

For more information and a detailed brochure contact:

CHARTERS TOWERS VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE
 74 Mosman Street, Charters Towers Qld 4820
 Tel: 07 4752 0314 Fax: 07 4752 0315
 E-mail: tourinfo@charters-towers.qld.gov.au
 Web: www.charters-towers.qld.gov.au

When gold bearing ore was mined, it had to be crushed to extract the gold. The Venus Stamp Battery, which was built in 1872, was the second permanent mill built in the area and is now the oldest surviving battery in Queensland.





As it has been a popular tourist attraction since 2002 – we had to do the tour.





By 1889, Charters Towers was producing 1/6th of all of Australia's gold and Queensland became the most productive gold producing colony in Australia. It was hard, noisy, dirty and very dangerous work - what do they say about the good old days?

And what is it about “**No entry**” signs that attracts Marie Henson.



Mayor Frank Beverage gave us a tour of the town's old City Hall building which was built at the peak of the Charters Towers gold rush in 1891, originally for the Queensland National Bank. When the bank was closed in the early 1940s, it became a workers' club established by the Trades and Labour Council. This was not a success and in 1948, the property was acquired by the Charters Towers City Council and used as the City Hall. Situated at the corner of Gill and Mosman streets, it occupies a most central position and is one of the architectural ornaments of the town.



Can an atheist get insurance against acts of god?



Charters Towers played an important role during WW2 and Mayor Frank Beverage took us on a tour to show us what remains of those troubled times.

In late 1942 Townsville was the principal port for Allied troops serving in the New Guinea campaign. The RAAF had a base at Garbutt and a number of bases used by Australian and US aircraft were established between Townsville and Charters Towers. Between 1942 and 1945 the Townsville and Charters Towers region 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 ordered commencement of preliminary work on the Charters Towers town airport early in 1942, with the grading of three temporary landing strips for use while the main aerodrome was under construction.

The airfield became operational during March 1942 with arrival of the first of four bombardment squadrons of the US Army Air Force 3rd Bombardment Group (Light), 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.



Mayor Frank Beverage explaining the aircraft gun firing range.

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 such as the P-40 Kittyhawk. 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.



Towers Hill also played an important role during WW2. A total of 29 concrete bunkers were built on the hill to store bombs, ammunition, explosives and detonators, now the Hill is an important tourist attraction for visitors to Charters Towers.





Standing L-R: Ken Hey, Wal Shakoff, Neil Snudden, Andy McCann, Jock Young, Chuck Connors, Marie Henson.

Seated L-R: Alan O'Connor, Geoff Spackman, Trev Benneworth, Thanya Pattay, Sandie Downes.



And being the highest point for miles around, why not stick a few aerials on it.



Then before we knew it, our two day stay at Charters Towers had come to an end but before we were to leave, the magnificent Civic Club invited us to spend an evening with them and Charters Lions Club offered to provide dinner in the form of an Ozzie barby. Thanks to them both, an enjoyable evening.



The Civic Club is a heritage-listed club house at 36 Ryan Street, Charters Towers. It was built in 1900 and was added to the Queensland Heritage Register on 21 October 1992.

In the year when the mushrooming goldfield became officially a town, a group of mining men began meeting informally at a hotel. Later, they were to call themselves the Londoners' Association. In 1885 the association purchased land on which to build their own clubhouse and the premises were opened in May 1900 and provided a bar plus comfortable and well-lit rooms





L-R: Neil Snudden, Ros Curran, Trev Benneworth.

Neil was the bike master for the event and from day 1 kept a close eye on riding habits and the serviceability of the bikes. Ros was the unflappable WOD and had a knack of fixing problems before they occurred. Two indispensable people who made the event so enjoyable, so safe and kept the whole thing running like clock-work.

Initially membership of the club was exclusively male and comprised many of the city's most influential men. In 1907, it was renamed the Civic Club.

At the Civic Club we were joined by Robbie Katter, the Qld MP for Traeger and Eileen Vogele, the local Legacy representative.



The Club remained a male preserve until 1980 when women were admitted during a period of rejuvenation when its membership base was broadened. The Club is now one of the few surviving examples of its type in a country town.



That evening it was time to honour some of our close friends for their meritorious service.



L-R: **Ted McEvoy** for his melodious evenings, **John “Johnno” Saunders** for worrying a ton of money from the unsuspecting public, **Cathy Yang** for keeping us marching and **Marie Henson** for being the keeper of keys and showing us you can sleep with your Honda.

Next morning it was time to head for Townsville, our final destination, an easy 148km away. We decided to stop at Reid River for lunch – about half way down the road.



Once again, Jock Young was in his element, Jock had become quite skilled at onion flipping and it was woe-betide anyone who dared to try and take the spatula from him. “Get out” he would roar as soon as we would stop, he’d dart for the bag of onions, and humming quietly to himself,



it would be skin, slice, oil, onto the barby, flip, flip, flip and very soon the onions would be ready and smelling lovely and Jock would sit back with a satisfied grin on his face.

Sadly for him though, this was his last hurrah, on the road cooking was finished, the show was all but. What to do? We ate our onions in silence, feeling Jock's pain, then Geoff had a brilliant idea, as a show of our gratitude we all tossed in and shouted him a cold can of no-sugar" coke. Hurrah!!

A British man was killed by a shark while honeymooning in Australia. Reports say he didn't suffer for too long as he'd only been married for 5 days.

It was Friday and after lunching, we cleaned and loaded up the barby for the last time, then headed for the run down to Townville. Army had offered to accommodate us for the weekend at Lavarack Barracks, which was super generous of them, and we looked forward to a bed that didn't need blowing up, to a shower we wasn't a hundred yards away and the possibility of having access to washing machines that didn't gobble up 2 dollar coins like a Beagle into Pal.



Arriving Lavarack Barracks.

Army had offered us one of their transit blocks on the Base, an offer which we gratefully accepted. After a brief stop at the Pass Office we worked out a simple system for arriving and departing the base, we had previously given them a list of all our names and vehicle types with registrations



then all the gate guard required was a brief showing of an ID that matched their list and we were granted access. Simple.



Transit block.



The welcome beds that awaited us.



We paid our respects to LtCol Chris Johnson, the CO of 3rd Battalion at Lavarack and as it happened the Officer Mess was hosting an interesting evening. Chris kindly invited us.



Although there wasn't a "No Entry" sign in sight, Marie found the Kombi Keg very early in the day.



And with a few days to spare, most went sight-seeing. One of the best ways to see Townsville was from Castle Hill. Definitely worth a trip.





Most people had made their own arrangements on how to get home from Townsville, some lived there so there wasn't a problem, some were going by plane, some by train, some driving their own cars and a few had decided to head south in one of the buses. The bikes had to be returned to Nibble Hire in Brisbane and as there was no-one stepping forward to volunteer riding one, we had arranged to have them freighted back.

Once again we experienced the generosity of some wonderful people. We approached NQ Freighters for a quote and were pleasantly surprised when they offered to take the bikes back to Brisbane free of charge as their donation to Legacy. We must thank them very much.



NQ Freighter delivered the bikes to their depot on the south side of Brisbane. We thought we'd need a few "volunteers" to ride them back to Nibble Hire in Newstead but once again, generosity came to the fore. Asset Towing volunteered to bring them from Carole Park back to Brisbane. It took them 2 trips as they could only fit 5 bikes on the back of their truck but they did it, and we thank them very much.

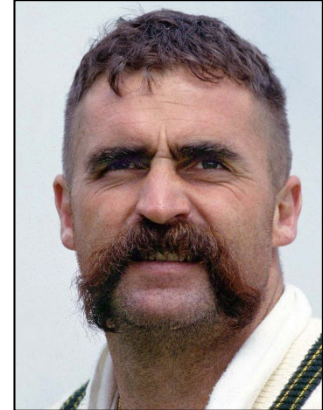




And that was Scootaville 2022. We're going to do it again in 2023 and every year after that. The route in 2023 will be different to 2022 (see [HERE](#)) and of course most of those that braved 2022 will want to be part of 2023.

2023 will be a bit different too. We have confirmed our negotiations with USQ and they will send along several of their senior media students who will record the event from start to finish, bring all the data back to the Uni where it will be edited and made into a 60 minute program for showing on TV.

We've also been in touch with Merv Hughes and Merv has agreed to be the public "face" of the event and will try and join us somewhere along the route.



We do have a few spare spots and if you'd like to be on the 2023 tour, please fill in the form below and send to us. If you want to come as a rider you will need a motor bike licence,

Imagine life without beer.
Now slap yourself and never do it again.