

Beechworth, Victoria and Surrounds 11 - 17 January 2018

Thursday 11 January 2018

Today we started our week away by departing Canberra around 11am. The drive down to Beechworth was very pleasant. The weather was sunny and not too hot. We stopped at Holbrook along the way for lunch. The new roadhouse located at the second turn off to Holbrook has been well designed and offers a bakery as well as Mexican food. The bakery is owned by the same people that operate the smaller bakery in town (with the same name) but with caravan in tow it is easier to use the bakery located just off the Hume highway.

We arrived at our destination around 15:15. We are staying at the Lake Sambell Caravan Park. The park is very spacious, and we have a site that is very close to Lake Sambell. You can see from the images that the view is great. The park owners have given us the perfect spot; away from all the other vans and so it is quiet and peaceful.



Lake Sambell Caravan Park



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Lake Sambell Caravan Park

We decided that we wouldn't cook our dinner tonight but head into town for a pub meal. The park owners told us all the pubs served good food. Well unfortunately we will have to let them know that things have changed as the meal was less than impressive. And of course, I am going to tell you why.

We arrived at the Empire Hotel at 18:40, were seated quickly and then had to wait for around fifteen minutes before the staff took our orders. It wasn't overly busy with only about five tables requiring service.

Maree decided to have two entrees and she ordered the baked figs with goats' cheese, candied olives and walnuts and the seared scallops. I decided I would have the pork belly. Pricing for the dishes was \$20 for the figs, \$22 for the scallops and \$37 for my pork belly.

After waiting for around thirty minutes the baked figs arrived. Well after waiting for this dish we really did think we had picked a great place to eat. The figs were cooked to perfection and the candied olives were great. The olives started off sweet with a nice salty finish. The serve was quite large as well for an entree.

So, then the wait again for my main and Maree's seared scallops. The scallops arrived and there were three small items on the plate. My pork belly consisted of three small strips of port with crackling on top, pickled cabbage, and baked apples.

Well, my dish was a real disappointment. The pork belly strips (about 1/2 inch in thickness) started off tasting nice and then I had this burnt taste in my mouth. I check the bottom of the pork strip and they were burnt. I called the waitress over and she said she would speak to the chef. The chef said it was not burnt but just a dark hoisin sauce. Sorry, I said to the waitress,

but the bottom is burnt. She said she would take it back but then we would have had to wait another half hour for another dish. We had already been in the restaurant for over an hour. I said I'd eat it but I didn't appreciate the chef saying it was not burnt. I then tried the pickled cabbage and obviously that was out of a bottle and was not palatable at all. So other than a bit of pork meat and the small apple, that was all I could eat for \$37. So, people beware if you come to Beechworth and think you are going to have a traditional pub meal. You won't get it here and not for the usual pub prices. The entire evening with three drinks cost us \$99. So, we will be cooking our own meals from now on for this trip. Not a great start to visiting the region.

Friday 12 January 2018

After a very restful night we made a leisurely start to the day. After breakfast we went for a stroll around the park and came across the ducks going for a morning walk across the park.



Ducks strolling across the park.

We then decided to head out to Bright for the day. The area of Bright was quite busy with the school holidays in full swing. We had a walk around the town before stopping at a cafe for some lunch. The food was excellent as was the service. The pub last night could learn a thing or two from these business owners.

After lunch we visited a few shops and then decided to head back to Beechworth. Along the way we stopped at the Bright Berry Farm, but it was a bit disappointing as all there was was a counter where you could buy berries. We thought we may have had the opportunity to walk through the berry plantation.

From here we drove on to Myrtleford and made a stop at the butter factory. Unfortunately, the butter factory was closed as we arrived at 14:00 and the place did not open until 16:00.

So, we decided to head back to the caravan park and spend the rest of the afternoon lazing around. Tonight, we will be cooking a butterflied leg of lamb and roast potatoes in the baby Weber Q.

Saturday 13 January 2018

Today we headed off to Violet Town. Violet Town is located just off the Hume Freeway 185 km north-east of Melbourne and 30 km south-west of Benalla. The town was named by Major Thomas Mitchell, the first European to pass through the district in 1836. On his Australia Felix exploration he noted that the swamps and marshes in the area seemed to have a profusion of wild violets and named the district Violet Ponds. When the government laid out the village, they called it Violet Creek. Some of the early settlers thought there was more evidence of Honeysuckle than Violets and, for a time, the settlement was known as Honeysuckle Creek. Violet Town, however, persisted.



The sign on entering Violet Town

In 1846 the Royal Mail Hotel was opened, and the village began to grow but it wasn't until the discovery of gold in the north-east of the state - which produced large numbers of itinerant prospectors who passed through the area - that the town expanded to include three hotels, a bakery and a school. In 1873 the railway arrived, and the village moved closer to the line. As the town grew the floral theme was adopted for the streets so now there is Cowslip, Tulip, Daisy, Dahlia, Crocus, Hyacinth, Lily, Orchid and Rose Streets.

On the 7th February 1969 Violet Town was the site of the train collision between the Sydney Melbourne overnight express passenger service, the Southern Aurora, and an Albury bound goods train. The Southern Aurora was scheduled to stop at the crossing loop to allow the Albury bound goods train to pass. However, the driver of the Southern Aurora had suffered a heart attack and the Southern Aurora proceeded through the crossing loop into the path of the goods train. Nine people died in the collision. Details of the crash can be found at: <https://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/such-was-life/violet-town-railway-disaster/>

The images are of the Violet Town Hotel.

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Violet Town Hotel

From Violet Town we travelled to Shepparton for a look around the town before making our way back to Lake Sambell Caravan Park. Tonight, for dinner we are having Peking duck. I am cooking the duck in the Weber Q but as it is raining quite heavily, we will be eating inside tonight.

Sunday 14 January 2018

Before starting today, I have to say that late last night we had a fog come through the caravan park. It started at dusk and increased into the evening.

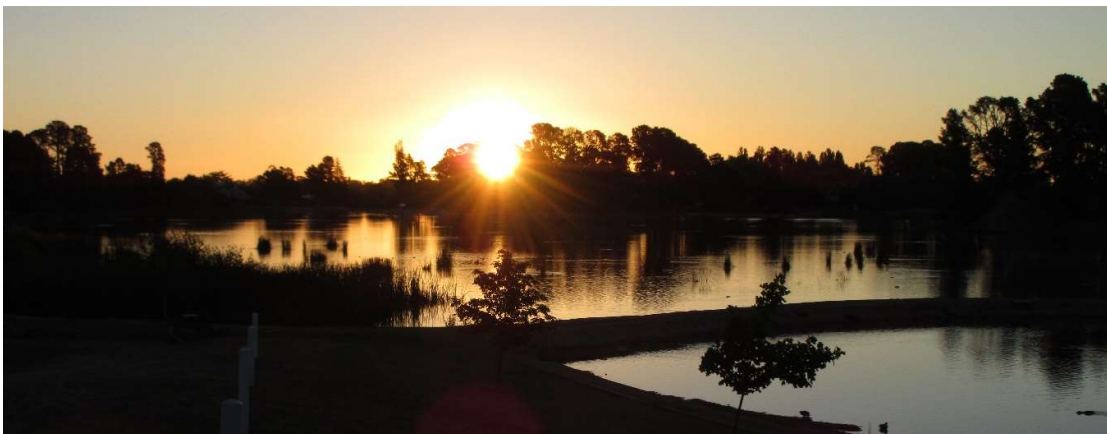


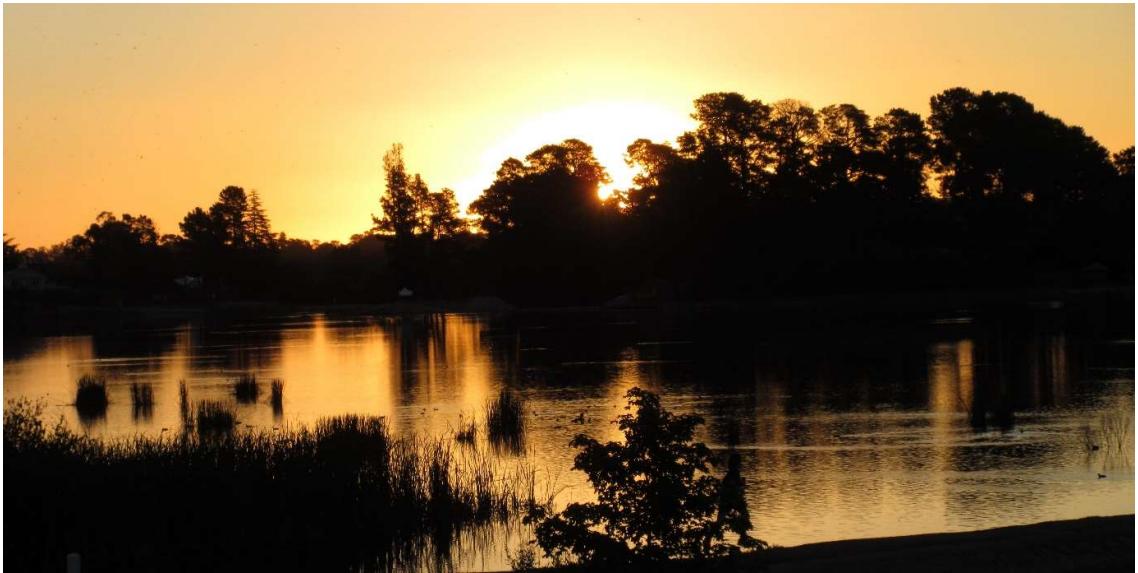
Start of the fog over the lake

Around 22:00 it was a real pea souper and then about ten minutes later a breeze came through and there was no sign of the white blanket that had covered the park. It was interesting to watch during the evening. The picture shows the start of the fog before the night took over.

Today we decided we would stay in Beechworth and walk the streets and checkout everything available to the tourist. There is a lot to see. The weather today was clear, no rain and quite warm. As there were clear blue skies all day, we had a really great sunset this evening. The blog today is to show you some images of the sunset I took this evening as Maree and I enjoyed our evening meal watching the sun go down.

Following are the images of the sun setting over the caravan park at Lake Sambell.







Monday 15 January 2018

Today we had another lazy day with a late breakfast before deciding to head off to Lake Buffalo and have a picnic lunch. Lake Buffalo is located approximately 50 kms from Beechworth.

Lake Buffalo was completed in 1965. It features a 33-metre high and 635 metre long earth and rock fill embankment with a gated primary spillway and outlet works within the dam wall. The Lake has a catchment area of 1,062 square kilometres and holds 23,504 megalitres of water. The Lake is located on the Buffalo River with other major tributaries including Catherine, Dandongdale, and Rose Rivers along with the Yarrara Bula Creek.

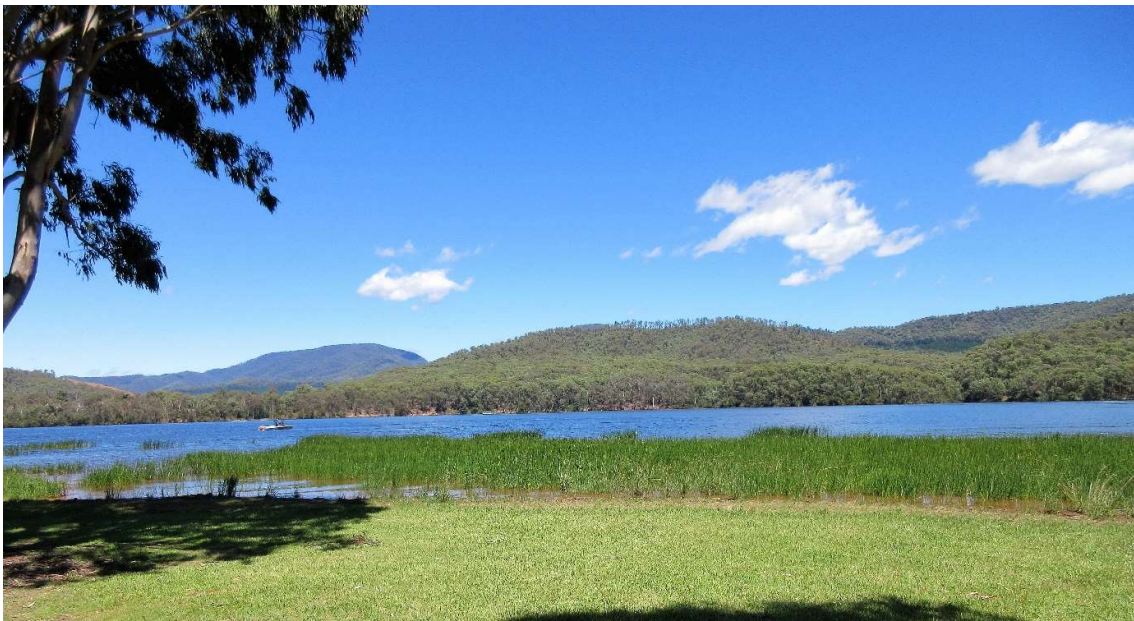
The Lake initially supplied a thriving tobacco industry in the Ovens Valley but now supports an array of agricultural activities including traditional farming, nuts, berries, grape vines, and more recently green tea.

There are many things you can do here both on and off the water. Lake Buffalo is surrounded by bush walking, bird watching and hiking areas. You can also cycle your way through the alpine valleys, and you can swim in the lake. We noted several water skiers on the lake enjoying the blue skies and the calm waters.

Following are images of the area we visited today.



Lake Buffalo, Victoria



Lake Buffalo, Victoria



Lake Buffalo, Victoria



Lake Buffalo, Victoria



Maree at Lake Buffalo, Victoria



Maree at Lake Buffalo, Victoria



Lake Buffalo, Victoria



Lake Buffalo, Victoria



Lake Buffalo, Victoria

Tuesday 16 January 2018

WOOLSHED FALLS

This morning we headed off to Woolshed Falls which is located in the Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park. The area was once the centre of one of the richest goldfields in Australia, where up to 8,000 prospectors camped along the banks of Spring Creek, in search of their fortune. The falls are about twelve minutes by car from Beechworth. We were able to view the cascading falls and take a self-guided walk around the alluvial gold workings. There is an observation deck which affords excellent views of the falls.



Woolshed Falls, Beechworth Victoria

CHILTERN

From the Woolshed Falls we headed to Chiltern. The town of Chiltern is located just off the Hume Freeway between Wangaratta and Barnawartha in north-eastern Victoria. The town grew significantly from the 1850s with the gold mining boom. This boom eventually subsided with all mining operations ceasing in the early 1900s. A legacy to Chiltern's mining days are the well-preserved historic buildings which are built around the town's main road junction of Main Street and Conness Street and includes the Dow's Pharmacy built in 1860 and Gilmour's Corner Store built in 1890). The images we took are of the buildings located in Conness Street.



Dow's Pharmacy in Conness Street



Buildings in Conness Street

RUTHERGLEN

We then travelled on to Rutherglen. Rutherglen is located between Yarrawonga and Wodonga, approximately 10 kilometres from the Murray River and the small state border town of Wahgunyah. In the early to mid-1800s the area around Rutherglen and Wahgunyah was an important grazing area. The discovery of gold in September 1860 saw the town of Rutherglen spring up shortly afterwards with several churches built and a school and the post office. After the gold rush, Rutherglen eventually achieved prosperity as an agricultural town, subsequently establishing itself as one of Victoria's most important wine producing districts.

COROWA

Travelling from Rutherglen to Corowa we passed through the border town of Wahgunyah where we crossed the Murray River using the heritage-listed John Foord Bridge. Corowa is a substantial and historically significant river town which is primarily a service centre for the rich agricultural lands on either side of the Murray River. The prosperous district is a mixed farming area with the cultivation of wool, cereals, and grapes being complemented by an abattoir, sawmills, and cellar doors.

After visiting Corowa, we took a slow drive back to Beechworth. This evening we enjoyed butterflied lamb marinated in Greek spices and herbs and slow cooked on the baby Weber Q.

Wednesday 17 January 2018

Today we started our journey in Wangaratta. We took a short walk around the town and enjoyed an iced coffee at one of the local cafes. From Wangaratta we headed down to Ned Kelly country in Glenrowan. We had a leisurely walk around the town taking in the sites and the museums available in the locality that was the site of the final siege and capture of the Kelly Gang in 1880.

Maree's knee was giving her some grief today, so we made it a short day of walking and headed back to Beechworth for lunch and a for Maree to rest her knee. Maree is scheduled for her full knee replacement surgery on Monday 22 January. Following the post operative six-week rehabilitation period she should be in a great position to start enjoying the walks we have planned on our future travels.

Today is our last day in Beechworth and tomorrow morning we will head back to Canberra.