

Travelling through Victoria, South Australia, and NSW.

03 July – 20 July 2021

Saturday 3 July 2021, Canberra to Beechworth, Victoria

Well, we left at around 07:30 this morning heading to Beechworth where we will be staying for four days. After an uneventful drive we arrived in Beechworth at around 12:30. We quickly checked in, drove to our caravan site, and quickly unhitched the van and headed off to Wodonga. We need to get a COVID19 test within 72 hours of crossing the border into Victoria and being Saturday, the testing location is only open until 4pm and then closes and does not reopen until Monday morning.

We arrived at the testing location around 13:15 and we were surprised to find only four other vehicles in front of us. So, after completing some formalities and getting the test we were on our way home within an hour. We were very surprised to get through so quickly.

The only other requirement is that we must self-isolate until we get the results of the test. Being in Regional Victoria and with it being a weekend, it may take up to 72 to get the results. Hence the reason we booked into the van park for four nights.

So, all is good and we do not expect any issues with the results. All we need do now is spend the isolation time revamping our travel plans. Originally, we were going to travel through NSW to the regional Victorian town of Mildura for a few days and then move onto Renmark in South Australia for a week. After this we were heading to the Flinders Ranges. Fortunately, Flinders Ranges is still achievable.

The reason we needed to change our travel route was the result of South Australia closing their borders to NSW and the ACT. So, we now need to stay in Victoria for 14 days so that we can cross into South Australia and continue our original travel plans.

Fun and games but at least we are on the road. Ciao for now.

Steve



Our travelling rig

Sunday 4 July 2021, Beechworth, Victoria

Today was a very lazy start. We didn't get out of bed until around 11:00. There is nowhere we can go until we get our results to yesterday's COVID19 test. So, it was just a lazy day staying inside the van. As it has been raining all day, there was nowhere to go even if we could go sightseeing.

Last night we thought we would get a delivery for dinner rather than me cooking a meal. Unfortunately, when we rang various options we found that either places were not open or if they were open, they did not do deliveries. We cannot leave the van site to collect take-a-way so I decided I would cook as usual, not much choice really. As it is raining here over the new few days, I haven't bothered to set up the BBQ so we are cooking inside. So last night I made a very enjoyable Chicken Tikka Masala dish with a side of steamed rice. That washed down by white wine for Maree and red wine for yours truly, made for a very enjoyable evening.

Today we have found a Pub that will do deliveries and their menu is quite extensive so we will use this option if we decide we want a change from cooking at the van. But tonight, we have opted for chicken schnitzel with a side of steamed potatoes and fresh veg. Washed down with several glasses of wine; of course.

Today Maree and I spent most of the day revising our travel plans until we can cross the border into South Australia. So, when we leave Beechworth on Wednesday morning (we should have the all clear by then) we have decided to do the following: Travel the East Victorian Silo Art Trail before overnighing in a small town in Tatong. The pub in Tatong has free camping so we will take advantage of that and have a meal at the pub to say thanks. From here we will then drive northwest to Echuca, Swan Hill, Robinvale and then Mildura. We plan on spending a couple of days in each of these towns and then four days in Mildura. Leaving Mildura, we hope to be able to cross into South Australia and continue our trip in line with the original itinerary I made for our travels. We can only hope.

So, keep coming back to see what happens next.

Steve and Maree

Monday 5 July 2021, Beechworth, Victoria

Some good news for a start. Late last night our mobile phones chimed indicating a message. The message was from VicHealth telling us our COVID-19 tests were Negative. Great news and that means no more cabin fever. So today we can get out and about.

Also, this morning when I checked the South Australian COVID-19 travel page I found further good news. South Australia has dropped the requirement for travellers entering from Victoria to have a COVID-19 test on day one. They are also letting in anyone from the restricted States and Territories if they haven't been in the restricted locations in the last 14 days. So, our decision to spend 14 days in Victoria before crossing into South Australia is paying dividends.

So, moving on. Today we spent a leisurely day starting with breakfast in the local coffee shop and walking around town looking at all the curio shops; then into Wodonga to buy some stuff and have lunch at a conveyer sushi bar. After lunch we drove back to Beechworth. After a relax and a walk around the lake we decided to go out for dinner as well. So absolutely no cooking for me. This is what holidaying is all about. Occasionally just doing nothing is all you need.

Until tomorrow; have a good evening, everyone.

Tuesday 6 July 2021, Beechworth, Victoria

Today we decided we would go for a drive down to Bright travelling through Myrtleford on the way there and then via Yackandandah on the return journey to Beechworth.

We have been too Bright and Myrtleford before but it is a lovely town so we thought we would travel there again for a few hours. We spent the afternoon wandering the streets and looking at the shops. The only frustrating part was to go into a shop you had to wear a mask. So, it was “mask on” then “mask off” repeatedly. Oh well a sign of the times, I guess.

After having lunch, we drove back to Beechworth via the small town of Yackandandah. We wandered around the town but most of the shops were closed, possibly as it was so early in the week. So, after a quick coffee we headed back to Beechworth. We decided to have dinner in tonight, so I cooked a simple dinner of pasta with pork strips and a roasted tomato and vegetable sauce.

Tomorrow, we head off to Yarrawonga following the eastern Victoria silo art trail route. I should have some photos for you from that journey.

Wednesday 7 July 2021, Beechworth, Victoria

Hi there everyone. Well today did not go as planned. Yesterday when we were returning from Myrtleford, Maree asked me “what is that noise”. I said it is probably just the stuff I have packed in the rear of the car rattling. However, this morning I heard the noise, and it was a lot louder at low speeds and coming from under the territory. So, we left the van here in the Beechworth caravan park and headed into Wodonga to the local Ford dealer. The people here were very good and said they would have a look for us to track down the noise, but we would need to leave the vehicle for most of the day. That we were very happy to do as I did not want to start towing the van with this unknown noise.

Around midday Ford rang us to say they had found what was causing the problem. Apparently, the drive shaft in the later Ford vehicles is a two-piece item with a bearing and CV joint coupling joining the two parts together. In our case the bearing had gone, and oil was leaking from the join. Fortunately, we found this before any real damage had occurred. However, to fix the problem requires parts to be sent up from Melbourne which should arrive tomorrow morning. If the parts arrive as planned, then we should be on the road again by late afternoon Thursday. If the parts do not arrive until Friday, then we will depart late afternoon on Friday. So, the good news is we can have the problem fixed and be on the road again soon. The cost to do the work is \$1400.



The drive shaft on our Territory.

The central unit is the part that has developed the problem and will be replaced with the full drive shaft you see pictured.

We have also hired a car from hertz so that we can travel around while we wait for the repairs to carried out. So, everything is workable.

The caravan park is being very accommodating and letting us pay for a part day until we know whether we need to stay a further night, where we will just pay the difference. Also, our travel plans are not being disrupted as we are spending 14 days in Victoria to meet South Australian border entry measures anyway. We haven't booked any caravan sites in Victoria, so we are free to travel any route we so desire.

So tonight, we are going out for dinner as I need to relax after our busy day. We are heading off to the same pub we went to on Monday evening as the food was very good.

So, if we leave tomorrow, or Friday, we will stay at Tatong for two nights, spending the day in between travelling the eastern Victoria silo art trail as planned, and then return back to Tatong for the night. Tatong is a free camp at the local Tavern, and they also have water tank artwork. No power but we have the generator to run the aircon heating.

We will have dinner in the Tavern to say thanks for the free camp site.

Thursday 8 July 2021, Beechworth, Victoria

Well today we waited and waited before ringing Ford in Wodonga at lunchtime to see if the new drive shaft had arrived. The short answer was that it was due to arrive by TNT courier around 14:00. So, we waited again and then at 15:00 we rang Ford again to see if the car would be ready today. We were told that the drive shaft had not arrived, but it would be here tomorrow, Friday. Maree and I were so frustrated as we needed to let the CP know whether we would need to stay another night. The CP are fine with us staying as they know the issue we are dealing with. Maree and I were just annoyed that someone at Ford couldn't just pick up the phone and let us know that they couldn't fix the car today.

So, we are here for another evening and hopefully tomorrow we will be on our way to Tatong. They do seem confident that all will be ok by tomorrow. We have asked Ford to ring us and confirm when the drive shaft has arrived, and they have said that they will. I am not holding my breath, but we will see. I would like to be proven wrong. Our Ford dealer in Canberra would have kept us in the loop so I am expecting same from other Ford dealers.

So not much else to write about today. Hopefully better news tomorrow.

Steve

Friday 9 July 2021, Beechworth, Victoria

Well, we did receive the phone call this morning from Ford. The part has arrived, into Wangaratta and not Wodonga, and due to that miss delivery, TNT Couriers decided to take the drive shaft back to Melbourne.

Well not much anyone could do about that today other than Ford have decided for the part to be shipped to them to arrive Monday morning. Ford have also requested a second unit to increase the chances of at least one of them arriving by Monday.

Ford also helped to cut down our costs with the hire car, as we need a vehicle until the Territory is back on the road, by giving us a loan vehicle for free until the Territory is available, which hopefully will be Monday. So, we have a Ford Puma. We did ask for the nice lime green mustang that was sitting in the yard but that was already allocated. The car we have is a 100% better than the Hyundai Kona we hired. The Puma is a zippy vehicle, and all the bells and whistles are great as well. It is a pleasure to drive.

So, we are here in Beechworth until Monday at least. So tomorrow, we will drive one of the silo art trail routes we were planning to do when we had left Beechworth and now making it a round trip from Beechworth to Yarrawonga, Tungamah, St James, Devenish, Goorambat, Benalla, Tatong and back to Beechworth. Sunday, we haven't planned yet, but we will definitely be leaving Beechworth for a drive.

So, it is out for dinner tonight; hang the expense again and we are going back to the same pub. Great food so when you are on a good thing, stick to it. To finish the day here are a couple of images of the sunset we had this evening that we could see from our van.



Sunset over Beechworth



Sunset over Beechworth

Until tomorrow.

Saturday 10 July 2021, Beechworth, Victoria

Today we left Beechworth in our loan vehicle and drove the Eastern Victoria Silo Art Trail. A great deal of my information on the silos we visit is provided by the team at australiansiloarttrail.com.

We started by heading towards Yarrawonga, a Victorian Rural Town located on the Murray River 92 kms from Beechworth. This town is the start of the Silo Art Trail heading south towards Benalla. Heading in this direction the first town with silo art is the small town of Tungamah.

Tungamah is a town in the Goulburn Valley region of northern Victoria which also sits on the banks of Boosey Creek. The creek provides a nice water frontage and parkland for the town, as well as being a pleasing area for an overnight camp.

The Tungamah Silos were the first silos to be painted in Northeast Victoria. They were painted by Western Australia street artist Sobrane Simcock with stage one completed in February 2018.

The initial mural depicted dancing Brolgas on the tall concrete silos and the much-loved Australian Kookaburra on the short silo. She used 60 litres of paint, 142 spray cans and the entire project took eight days to complete.

Then in September 2019, Sobrane returned to paint around the Kookaburra to include the lovable Pink and Grey Galah, a Hummingbird, a cheeky owl hiding in the leaves, a Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo, two small wrens and a white Ibis, sitting in the thick foliage of a gum tree.

We took several photos of this artwork which follows.



Silo Art Trail – Tall silo with dancing brolgas and smaller silo with the sulphur crested cockatoo, kookaburra, pink and grey galah, hummingbird, two small wrens, white ibis and if you look hard, a cheeky owl hiding in the leaves.



Silo Art Trail – Silo showing the sulphur crested cockatoo, kookaburra, pink and grey galah, hummingbird, two small wrens, white ibis and if you look hard, a cheeky owl hiding in the leaves



Silo Art Trail – Tall silo with dancing brolgas

The next town we travelled to was St James.

The Grain Corp Silos at St James has a history dating back as far as the 1915-16 wheat season when 135,000 bags (405,000 bushels) were recorded as being delivered to the railway station. A record that was only exceeded once in the 1962-63 season when 421,439 bushels was delivered. This was an amazing achievement as transport was mostly by horse and wagon at the time.

The St James Silo Art – GJ Coles Story

In 1882 George Coles Snr married his wife Elizabeth and purchased his first store at St James. He soon opened a second store four miles away in Lake Rowan. They traded mainly farming equipment. Elizabeth and George's first son was born in 1885 and following tradition, they named him George James. George and Elizabeth would have 10 children, and all would attend school in St James. Tragically Elizabeth died in 1900 and in 1902 George sold his two stores and moved to Geelong.

But in 1905 George returned again and re-purchased the Northeastern St James and Lake Rowan stores. George James Jnr (GJ) helped his father in the store but left as he wanted to pursue new

methods of shopkeeping. A year later with George's health fading, he sold the St James store to his son GJ Coles.

In 1913 GJ Coles sold his St James Store and went for a trip around the world to discover the best ways to run a business. In England he studied the Woolworths 3 penny (3d) and sixpence (6d) stores and Marks and Spencers 1d stores.

Together with his brother Jim they opened their first 3d, 6d and 1 shilling store in Australia at 288 Smith Street, Collingwood. Sadly, Jim was killed in the first world war along with GJ's brother Dave. GJ himself was wounded in France.

Upon his return GJ opened another store with another brother AW Coles at 172 Smith Street, Collingwood. From there the business grew from 100 pounds in 1914 to 1,132 million dollars in 1972.

GJ Coles never forgot where he came from and returned many times to St James to visit family and friends. The company Coles also made a generous donation towards the St James Silo Art Project.



Silo Art Trail – Three of the four silos in St James, Victoria



Silo Art Trail – Three of the four silos in St James, Victoria



Silo Art Trail – George James Coles as painted on one of the silos in St James, Victoria. GJ Coles started the Coles empire.

The next town we travelled to was Devenish.

The GrainCorp Silos at Devenish in Northeast Victoria were painted by Melbourne Street Artist Cam Scale and are officially the 19th Silos to be included in the Australian Silo Art Trail.

Stage one which comprises the two tall silos was officially unveiled on Anzac Day in 2018, marked as a tribute to help celebrate the 100-year centenary of the end of the First World War.

The stage one artwork depicts a stunning image of a WW1 nurse and a modern female military medic in the Australian Armed Forces. This mural also depicts the changing role of women in the military and society in general.

Stage two on the short silos was officially unveiled one year later, Anzac Day 2019. This mural is a tribute to the Australian Light Horse. The Australian Light Horse were mounted troops with characteristics of both cavalry and mounted infantry, who served in the Second Boer War and WW1.

Fifty young men and women from the Devenish Community enlisted in the military services in WW1. At the time, that was one in six residents from this very tiny town. Cam Scale also wanted to honour the seven Devenish diggers that never made it home.



The Silo Art Trail – Silo artwork in the small town of Devenish



The Silo Art Trail – Silo artwork in the small town of Devenish

AUSTRALIAN LIGHT HORSE



THE CREATION OF THIS ARTWORK IS POSSIBLE THANKS
TO THE GENEROUS CO-OPERATION OF MANY PEOPLE



AUSTRALIAN LIGHT HORSE

Originating from the Mounted Rifles Corps, the Light Horse became extremely effective during the Boer War in South Africa 1890's. The Australians proved to be expert rough riding horsemen and good shots. Bush life hardened, they had a remarkable ability to find their way in strange country and use its features for cover in both attack and defence.

It was in the Middle East during WW1 that the Light Horse played a vital role. After surveillance and guarding operations initially, they went on to aggressive attacking actions that ultimately influenced political boundaries in that part of the world.

Horses were referred to as "Walers" being of NSW stockhorse origin, with thoroughbred and semi draught features giving speed and endurance. Many young country men took their own horses. 180,000 horses were shipped overseas in WW1. A significant number from the Benalla District.

Light Horse men as mounted infantry, fought dismounted when in action. Each regiment lived and fought as a 4-man section. In action, 3 would dismount and fight and the 4th led the horses to cover until needed.

An exception was the famous capture of Beersheba on 31st October, 1917. An open Cavalry charge at full gallop with their long bayonets held as a sword unnerved the Turks.

Another significant Light Horse operation was the capture of Damascus led by Lieutenant General Chauvel of the 8th Australian (Indi) Light Horse.

A source of pride for Benalla was the headquarters of the 8th Light Horse. Originally from the 8th Victorian Mounted Rifles, becoming the 16th Australian Light Horse from 1912- 1918. Reverting to the 8th Australian Light Horse from 1919-1940. The Military School of Instruction was centred at the new Drill Hall, Benalla in 1915.

Artist, Cam Scale completed the third silo at Devenish in 2019 by adding an excellent Light Horse mural to compliment his Military Nurses.



The information board about the Australian Light Horse at the Devenish silos

The next town we travelled to was Goorambat.

Goorambat is a town in Northern Victoria, 227 km northeast of Melbourne and 16 km north of the small city of Benalla.

At the Goorambat silo complex there are three painted silos, two short ones sitting back-to-back and one tall concrete one standing on its own. We could only get pictures of the silo showing the Clydesdales.

This silo artwork is a tribute to three Clydesdale horses Clem, Sam, and Banjo. He has captured the motion of these horses in gallop, feathers flying on their feet as they travel side by side in harness.

Banjo began his life at the Lavereen Stud in Goorambat where he was raised by Graeme, Bev, and Matt Trewin. He is from a family of horses that date back over 100 years. He moved from Goorambat to Toowoomba to live with the Martins where he was a Queensland Ploughing Champion. The Martins were chasing a working pair, so Banjo's brother Clem went to Toowoomba to join him there. He was a bit difficult to break in, but once he got the hang of it, the pair turned out to be highly trusted work horses and would work displays at the local museum. They also won many ribbons from the local shows.

Sam was bred by Dave and Nicola Martin at Coolibah Ridge in Toowoomba. Sam is the grandson of Banjo.



Silo Art Trail – The three Clydesdales on the silo in Goorambat



Silo Art Trail – The three Clydesdales on the silo in Goorambat

While in Goorambat we met up with a couple who asked us if we had seen the painting of “Sophia” in the local Uniting Church in town. We hadn’t and we hadn’t realised there was this artwork in town. So, following the couples’ directions we headed off to find the church.

The following information was provided to us by the Benalla Visitors Information Centre.

“Sophia’ came into being in 2017 when the Uniting church community in Goorambat were approached to host a mural inside the church itself as part of the Wall-to-Wall festival. The mural had to be relevant to the culture and ethos of the church community and of a quality that would enhance the church precinct. ‘Sophia’ was painted by well-known street artist ‘Adnate’.

After some concept images were discussed with Adnate it was suggested, inspirationally, that the subject might depict ‘Sophia’ the female aspect of the Holy Spirit. This tradition draws on the spirit of God as it manifested in the Old Testament times and the post Pentecostal period”.

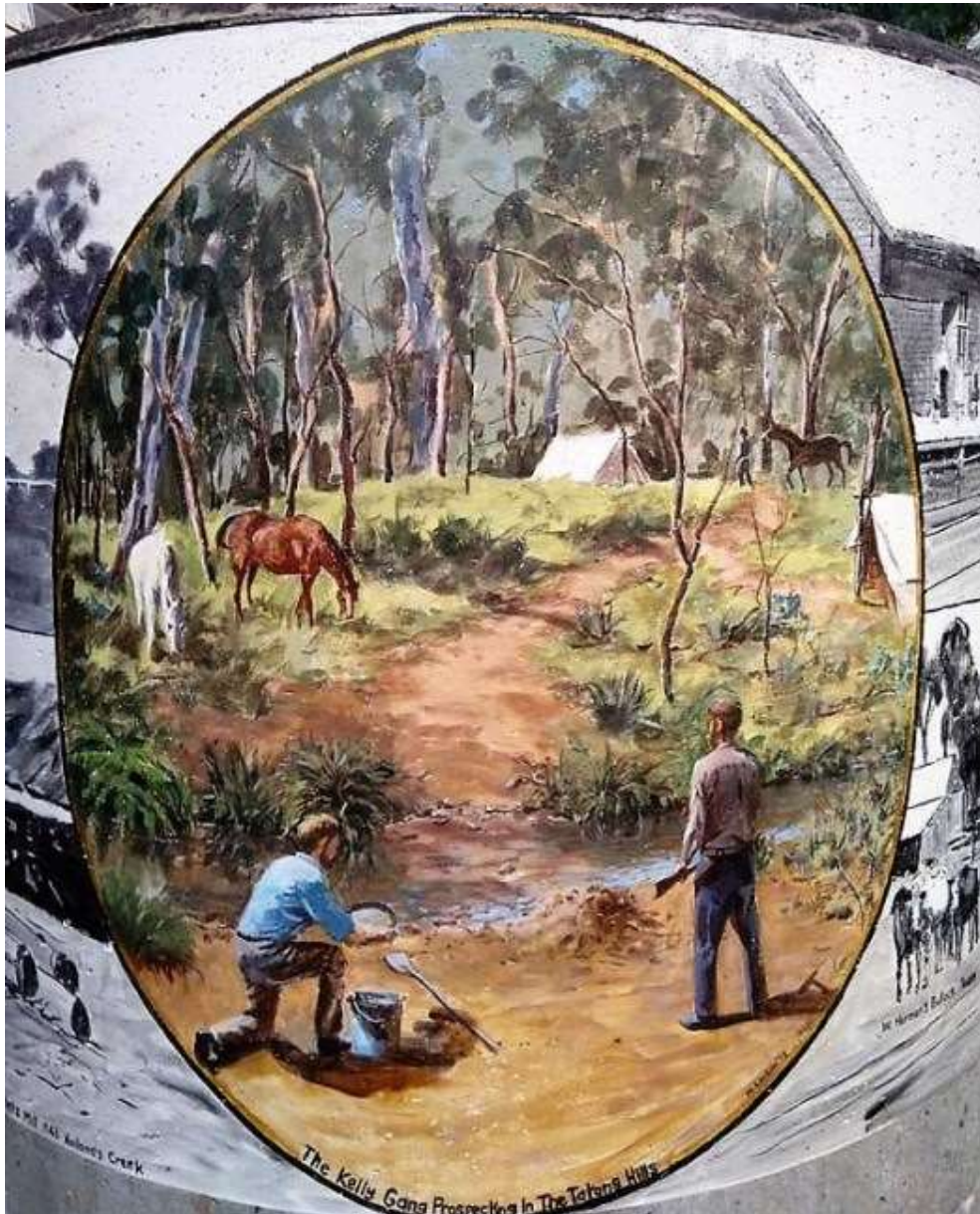
When we arrived at the church, we found that the church was closed due to COVID-19; however, a wire screen door with a large cut out in the gauze has been installed, and although the door is locked, you can see the painting clearly and also take photos, which of course we did.



Painting of "Sophia" in the Uniting Church in Goorambat, Victoria

From Goorambat we travelled further south to Tatong to see their water tank artwork and to have lunch at the local Tavern. The Tavern is 132 years old, as stated by the publican, and is nicely done out with a large log fire, that was burning fiercely but unfortunately not putting out a great deal of heat. The food was excellent and while dining we met a couple who had just hired a caravan for three months to try out the grey nomad lifestyle. They were on day two of their journey and Harry had a lot of questions re caravanning which we were more than happy to answer, if we could of course. So, after a lengthy conversation, some great food, we said goodbye to our new friends and drove back to Beechworth.

We had a great day. We are staying in for dinner tonight and cooking an easy Indian butter chicken recipe with a side of rice. I always pack my herbs and spices when we travel.



Silo Art Trail – This painted water tank is titled “The Kelly Gang Prospecting in the Tatong Hills” It was painted by Michael Larkin, a local to the Tatong area and commissioned by Pedro Schroder, the Tatong Tavern owner. The water tank is in the Tatong Tavern Gardens and a must see.

Sunday 11 July 2021, Beechworth, Victoria

This morning we headed off to Benalla to have a look at the street art and drive out to the Winton Wetlands.

After arriving in Benalla, we stopped for lunch at the local bakery before taking a walk around town. Unfortunately, being Sunday most of the town was closed so we jumped into the car and headed out to the Winton Wetlands.



Winton Wetlands



Winton Wetlands

The Winton Wetlands are an ephemeral wetland system made up of 33 individual wetlands. The wetlands are fed by inflows from rain events higher in the catchment and from local surface runoff. The water bodies within the Reserve constantly lose water through evaporation; especially during the hotter months, when the water level can drop rapidly, and about one year in eight will completely dry out. The flooding/drying cycle is a natural event for all such wetland systems and is the source of their rich ecology.



Winton Wetlands view from the wetlands dam wall.

Monday 12 July 2021, Beechworth, Victoria

Well, the good news is we have the Territory back with the new drive shaft and we are set to head off to Echuca tomorrow morning. However, there was a saga to this today.

The two drive shafts ordered by Ford (the original order and a second to ensure that at least one arrived) were delivered to Wangaratta instead of Wodonga for a second time. The courier for both deliveries was TNT, so goodness knows what is wrong with the TNT systems. Ford in Wodonga sent a driver down to collect the drive shafts in Wangaratta and they had the work all done by 16:00 this afternoon. As it really is too late to leave Beechworth, as it is getting dark and due to kangaroos and wombats on the roads in this area at night, we have decided to head off around 09:00 in the

morning. We will head to Echuca via the towns of Violet Town, Colbinabbin, and Rochester. Both Colbinabbin and Rochester are part of the silo art trail that we are covering in Victoria.

Anyway, we didn't do anything else today as we waited for news on the vehicle. So tonight, for dinner it is homemade vegetable soup with crusty bread and wine to celebrate that we are again on the road.

Tuesday 13 July 2021, Beechworth, Victoria

Today we left Beechworth to continue our journey to Echuca, a town situated on the Murray River. We travelled through Violet Town, Colbinabbin and Rochester visiting the silo and street art in these towns on the way.

I have uploaded all the images of the silos and street art. The images follow the description below of the two towns that we visited.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RAILWAY IN THE COLBINABBIN DISTRICT:

The original German settlers established farms along the Mount Camel Range, (the top of the hill to the west of the township) and built a school, a post office, and a community hall to serve their families.

In August 1881 a Colbinabbin Railway League consisting of farmers agitated for a railway line to enable the transportation of produce and livestock to Melbourne, in 1913 construction of the line was completed.

It extended from Rushworth to Colbinabbin West of the Cornella Creek costing \$42,970 for the 121 miles of track. It took sixty men to build one mile of railway line per week. The line was extended to the current site of the silos.

The Colbinabbin West community realised that it would be impossible to run the train tracks up and over the hill to the town, so we decided to establish the township in a more suitable location down on the plain, to be known as Colbinabbin East. Thus, Colbinabbin Village settlement established in 1893 and by 1913 was a bustling township. This is the present site of the township.

The first trucks of grain left Colbinabbin Railway Station in February 1914.

ROCHESTER

Rochester is a small country town in Victoria approximately 180 km north of Melbourne. The Campaspe River runs right through the town which forms part of the Murray-Darling basin. It rises in the wooded hilly terrain of the Great Dividing Range and then descends through undulating foothills, emerging onto the wide, flat riverine plains of northern Victoria.

The waters of the Campaspe River were disrupted. Environmental flows are important to maintain threatened vegetation communities, aquatic life, and habitat for terrestrial species, such as the threatened swift parrot and squirrel glider. The ongoing effect of declining river flows causes loss of habitat for species of flora and fauna resulting in a decline of population for wildlife.

Jimmy D'Vate, one of Australia's most well-known mural artists, chose to paint the GrainCorp Silos at Rochester. Whenever Jimmy takes on a commission, where possible he will always try to feature local endemically threatened species and in this case, he chose the Azure King Fisher and the Squirrel Glider.

On the tall silo is a wrist-winged Squirrel Glider. He has a home range extending from Bordertown near the South Australian/Victorian border through southeastern Australia to northern Queensland. This species thought to be extinct in South Australia since 1939 until a genetic test confirmed their continued inhabitancy in the area.

On the shorter silo is the Azure Kingfisher with its combination of royal blue plumage on its upper parts contrasting with its orange under parts, makes it one of the smallest and most dazzling kingfishers in Australia. It inhabits the vegetation beside waterways and other wetlands. He kingfisher is perched on a branch alongside the Campaspe River.

COLBINABBIN Silo Images



Silo Art in the small Victorian town of Colbinabbin



Silo Art in the small Victorian town of Colbinabbin



Silo Art in the small Victorian town of Colbinabbin



Silo Art in the small Victorian town of Colbinabbin



Silo Art in the small Victorian town of Colbinabbin



Silo Art in the small Victorian town of Colbinabbin

ROCHESTER Silo and Street Art Images



Silo Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Silo Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Silo Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Rochester Street Art



Street Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Street Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester





Street Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester





Street Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Street Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Street Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Street Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Street Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Street Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Street Art in the small Victorian town of Rochester



Street Art in the small Victorian town of Roches

Wednesday 14 July 2021, Echuca to Robinvale, Victoria

We arrived at Echuca last night after visiting the silo art trail on the way. We only stayed in Echuca overnight as our main places that we want to visit are Robinvale and Mildura, although Mildura is just going to be an overnight stop before we make our border crossing into South Australia at Yamba.

The drive from Echuca started off very wet and with the rain drizzling for the first couple of hours. The trucks passing us were kicking up a lot of dirt and water, so the van and car were getting quite dirty. You can hardly tell the Territory is red.

By the time we reached Swan Hill the rain had eased and as we pressed further north towards Robinvale the weather cleared up to blue skies.

We checked into the caravan park and the proprietor checked our border passes and that we had taken our covid test as required by the border pass. He was satisfied with the papers and evidence they told him.

Our site in the park is right on the banks of the Murray River, on the Victorian side of course. You can see how nice the view is from the van.



Our view from the van of the Murray River in Robinvale



Our view from the van of the Murray River in Robinvale



Our view from the van of the Murray River in Robinvale



Our view from the van of the Murray River in Robinvale



Maree taking in the view from the van as she relaxes reading her book in Robinvale.

Thursday 15 July 2021, Robinvale, Victoria

Well, this morning started off interestingly. We were walking through the park when Maree received a phone call from the park office. The park owner had received "a dob in about us." The people next door to our site complained they heard me coughing and reported me to the park owner and that we were from interstate. The owner rang to confirm no issues and he knew from our paperwork that all was ok, but he needed to check. We explained that it was my "usual cough" and the medical background for my cough. He was happy and very apologetic that he had rang us. His wife said to me that he should not have bothered and respected we were doing everything correctly as shown by our paperwork and attitude.

We mentioned to others in the park, and they were amazed. The most common response was "why didn't the complainers just approach you instead." I said I agree. It is getting to the stage that you cannot cough these days without having to offer an explanation.

Later on, we drove to the Robinvale shops, and we passed a police car that was parked on the side of the road monitoring people entering Victoria from NSW as they came over the bridge crossing the Murray. The turn off to the van park is the last turn before you get to this bridge. The police officers noted our registration and assumed we had just come over the bridge. They pulled us over and were very friendly, as were we, and we explained we had just come out of the caravan park and not over the bridge. Our border pass and accommodation receipts showed we had been in Victoria since 3 July, and we showed we had had the covid negative test result as required. They were more than satisfied and apologised that they had not seen us come out of the caravan park street rather than over the bridge from NSW.

We said that we respected and supported the work they were doing and being stopped was certainly not an issue for us. We had a quick general chat then we left for the shops. An interesting day until this evening where things changed dramatically with border closures.

South Australia have closed their border to Victoria subject to testing requirements on Days 1, 5 and 13. That is not a problem, but we cannot meet that requirement to allow us to enter the Finders Ranges; the main purpose of this trip. Also, we have no location to isolate for the three days needed to get the covid test result as caravan parks are not taking isolation bookings, which is fair enough. So reluctantly we will be heading home to Canberra. We will leave Robinvale in Victoria on Saturday and take two days to get home.

Friday 16 July 2021, Robinvale, Victoria

Yesterday I mentioned that we had to cancel our trip into South Australia as the border was locked down to Victorians requiring covid tests on Day 1, 5 and 13. This was reported by the media. But once again the media screwed that up. South Australia's border lockdown was - to anyone entering from Victoria - a "prohibited entry." So, if we thought we could have met the entry testing requirement we would have been refused entry as stated on the South Australian covid travel website. So do not rely on the media, go to each State's covid website, and get the facts there. It paid off for us.

We decided to leave Robinvale this morning and drive to Narrandera in NSW where we are staying for two nights. From here we have decided that we will drive up to Orange for before heading home to Canberra. We have always been threatening to go to Orange but never seem to get there. On this occasion we will. We will take it easy while in Narrandera and we will visit the water tank in the town that has been painted as part of the Water Tank Art Trail.

Saturday 17 July 2021, Narrandera

Today was a leisurely day. We took a drive out to Leeton which was only 28 kms from Narrandera. A nice town but other than making it a coffee stop, not much else to see. So, we returned to Narrandera and went to the local water tower to check out the artwork.

In the artwork, if you look carefully, you can see more in the painting than first meets the eye. Following is the information about the artwork on this water tower in Narrandera.

Firstly, Narrandera is a town in the Riverina Region of New South Wales which sits at the junction of the Newell and Sturt Highways adjacent to the Murrumbidgee River.

The theme for the Narrandera Water Tower Art comes from the team spending time chatting with the community and the inspired work of Narrandera artist and Wiradjuri man, Owen Lyons, whose artwork inspired the symbolic concepts for the mural.

The Stories behind the designs include significant icons for the Narrandera Shire Community. Images of the artwork follow the text below.

The Lizard

The name Narrandera is derived from Narrungdera, the name of the Wiradjuri clan that inhabited the land where the town now rests, meaning 'place of many lizards,' referring to the Eastern Bearded Dragon.

The Koala

By 1950 there were no koalas in this region after succumbing to poison and the gun. Hunted for the fur export trade and likely to have been impacted by poisons and traps set for rabbits.

In 1972 the community established a reserve on the edge of town on the Murrumbidgee River. Three females and one male were the first to arrive, with further adults introduced over the following two years. This tiny number has grown into a healthy population of hundreds, spreading to both sides of the river. They now inhabit forests up to 100 km from Narrandera.

The Tiger Moth Airplane

During World War 11, the No. 8 Elementary Flight Training School was established on the site of the present airport at Narrandera. The Tiger Moth was the plane of choice in which 3,818 young men were trained in the elementary stages of flying. An album of photos and memorabilia and a flight-capable Tiger Moth is housed in Narrandera at the Bashir Park.

The Paddle Steamer

From 1858 steamers were a frequent sight on the Murrumbidgee River, a river known for its navigation challenges caused by varying levels, sandbars, fallen trees and branches known as snags.

The 75 tonne Wagga Wagga carried wool and stores between Narrandera and Hay for 40 years before it sprung a final leak and was retired and run aground by its captain.

The Oakbank Brewery Tower

This Narrandera landmark stands 30 metres high on the north bank of the Murrumbidgee River and it signals the early prosperity of a developing town. The brewing industry had its heyday between the

1890's and mid-1920's. The factory then produced Webster's Soft Drinks which was a well-known brand in the region and beyond. The tower is now part of a private residence.

The River

The Murrumbidgee River has many stories to tell of Wiradjuri survival, colonial settlement, development of farming and irrigation and the genesis of a town. The river and its related waterways; Bundidgerry Creek; Lake Talbot; the Narrandera Wetlands; along with its Red Gum Forests and beaches, are much loved places for those who call Narrandera home.

The artwork

The artwork was completed by four artists who used 120 litres of paint and took 11 days to complete the mural.



Water Tower artwork in Narrandera NSW



Water Tower artwork in Narrandera NSW

Sunday 18 July 2021, Narrandera – Coolac

This morning we left Narrandera for Coolac. We took the back roads, leisurely passing through many small towns before arriving in Cootamundra. Cootamundra is best known as being the birthplace of Sir Donald Bradman AC, the Australian cricketer universally regarded as the greatest batsman of all time. Although he never actually lived in the town and his parents left Yeo Yeo (some 18 km from Cootamundra) when he was two, the town celebrates this connection with the “Sir Donald Bradman Birthplace Museum, the home where “The Don” was born”.

We popped into a small cafe for lunch and while waiting to be served, in walks three of Maree’s walking companions. Maree walks with our local pharmacy walking group twice a week and we were surprised to see the three walk into the same cafe. So, we had a chatty lunch before heading off to our destination for the next two nights: ‘Coolac Cabin and Camping’.

We were about nine kilometres from Coolac when Maree suddenly realised, she must have left her handbag in the cafe in Cootamundra. So, while Maree tried to ring the cafe to let them know, I tried to find a place to do a U-Turn – not the easiest thing to do on narrow country roads with a 12.5 metre rig. By the time I had us heading back to Cootamundra Maree was talking to the cafe who confirmed they had her handbag in safe custody.

So, with handbag collected we headed back to Coolac.

We chose to stay in Coolac as we wanted to avoid Gundagai as Gundagai has been listed as a contact point on the current NSW Covid outbreak. It is a lot easier being able to say honestly, when asked, that we have not been to any Covid hotspots.

Our Coolac location is a lovely private farm stay with powered sites, camp kitchen, ablution blocks, games room and more. The location is excellent with sites in the bush with all you would expect with the natural sounds of bush life. I will take some photos tomorrow so you can see the place. Although it has all the facilities a caravan park has, it is far superior as you are camping in the bush as though you are free camping. Maree spent the afternoon playing cards with the other campers in the Games Room. I just sat around chatting with the other campers while they played cards. We had an enjoyable afternoon. And as it was cooks night off, we just decided to fry up a couple of snags on bread rolls, with some nice wine of course.

Monday 19 July 2021, Coolac, NSW

Today we awoke to the gentle sounds of light rain and the sounds of wrens chirping around the van. There must have been about 15 of the female wrens around the van and only one male, the bright blue wren. It was interesting watching the birds moving around the bush. Anyway, we spent the rest of day at the farm camp and met up with others staying here to play cards. The cards started at 15:00 and finished around 19:00. Maree was playing a variant of UNO, and I was playing crib with another member of the group. A fun afternoon.

Anyway, I have a few shots of the farm stay where we are staying. As you will see a beautiful place to stay in the local bush with all the benefits of a caravan park without actually being in a caravan park. Magic.



Our site



The Farm Stay



The Farm Stay



Glamping Accommodation at the Coolac Cabins and Camping Farm Stay



Glamping Accommodation at the Coolac Cabins and Camping Farm Stay

Tuesday 21 July 2021, Coolac – Canberra

We left the Farm Stay at Coolac and drove the last 136 kms reaching home at 11:30am. The weather on route was dry for the first 30 minutes and then it started drizzling which continued until we reached home.

So, although we did not get to do everything we had planned for this holiday, we both had an enjoyable time and we met some genuinely nice people, especially at the Farm Stay in Coolac. I strongly recommend this Farm Stay – everything a caravan park has to offer without being in a caravan park. The Farm Stay is located 5 kms from the Hume Highway taking the Coolac exit which is also the exit to visit the new Mobil Service Centre to refuel or have a bite to eat. It also has grocery items available allowing us to replenish supplies while we were staying at the Farm Stay. Very convenient as it saves a drive into Gundagai or to Cootamundra.

Join us next time when we travel in the caravan. Our next trip is scheduled for December 2021 where once again we will attempt to cross the border into South Australia.



Fire Pit area at the Coolac Cabins and Camping Farm Stay

SPECIAL NOTE: Unfortunately, the planned route to South Australia travelling through the Flinders Ranges, Clare Valley, Adelaide, and Port Elliot did not eventuate. South Australia closed their border to travellers entering from Victoria 24 hours before we were due to cross their border from Robinvale (200 kms away) due to COVID outbreaks escalating in Melbourne. The recent outbreaks in Victoria, NSW and South Australia affecting our travel started with the irresponsible travel of people known to be infected. This was our second attempt to get to the Flinders Ranges. On both occasions COVID issues have prevented our travel plans. We will try again next year.

Cheers. Steve