

Travelling with our family visiting from Scotland during their visit to Australia.

05 – 20 April 2022

Tuesday 5 April 2022

Maree and I left Canberra this morning to start our four-day trek across to South Australia. We will arrive in McLaren Vale CP on Friday afternoon. Today we are only travelling a short distance, 330 kms to Narrandera where we are staying for one night. Tomorrow we will travel on to Tooleybuc for the evening. We had an uneventful journey today which is always a good start. Weather leaving Canberra was foggy but soon changed and by the time we arrived at Narrandera we had to change into t-shirts and shorts.

We stopped in Jugiong on the way across to Narrandera. Our favourite haunt, “The Long Track Pantry” closes on Tuesdays so we had to settle for our coffee and cake from the pub next door, the “Sir George”. This pub supposedly has a good reputation, but I personally found the food very lacking, and I would not eat here again. The Long Track Pantry business has nothing to worry about from the Sir George. I would have thought that with the Long Track Pantry closing on Tuesdays, would have given the Sir George pub an opportunity to really sell their own business as they have a captive audience. Obviously, they aren’t interested. The Long Track Pantry wins hands down.

Anyway, enough about that. Tonight, we will head off to the Ex-Servicemen’s Club for dinner. We have eaten there on previous occasions and the food has always been good.

Wednesday 6 April 2022

Before we left this morning, I managed to get some photos of the early morning sunrise as it rose through the local eucalyptus trees.



Narrandera early morning sunrise with reflection on Lake Talbot

We departed Narrandera around 09:00. We are heading to Tooleybuc which is 355 kms from Narrandera. We plan to stop at Hay on route and grab a bite to eat. From here it is just a couple hours' drive via Balranald to Tooleybuc.

The drive from Narrandera to Balranald is quite boring as there isn't a lot to see. This route is the start of Outback NSW. When we return in a couple of weeks with my cousin and her travelling companion, we will travel the Balranald – Hay route so they can experience the remoteness. They will have some interesting experiences during our travels from Adelaide to Canberra.

A bit of background to the town of **Hay**:

Hay is a town in the western Riverina region of southwestern New South Wales. It is the administrative centre of Hay Shire local government area and the centre of a prosperous and productive agricultural district on the wide Hay Plains.

Located approximately midway between Sydney and Adelaide at the junction of the Sturt, Cobb and Mid-Western Highways, Hay is an important regional and national transport node. The town itself is built beside the Murrumbidgee River, part of the Murray-Darling River system, Australia's largest.

Away from the river Hay is surrounded by flat, mostly treeless plains, predominately of grey clay and red earth soils. Saltbush shrublands was the dominant plant community at the

time of European settlement. However severe depletion of the saltbush has occurred after years of overstocking, damage by rabbits and the broad-scale agriculture of recent decades, particularly in areas along the river and proximate to irrigation canals. The plains surrounding Hay feature a complex system of shallow creek beds and dry lakes, interspersed by wind-created sand-ridges where Cypress-pine is often found growing.

We have now arrived in Tooleybuc, a small town located in the Western Riverina district of New South Wales with a population of around 277. The town is situated on the banks of the Murray River across from Piangil in the neighbouring state of Victoria. Now we are both relaxing until we head over to the club for some drinks and then dinner. They serve excellent food in this club.

As you can see Maree is doing something completely different – “Reading a Book”.



Maree relaxing and of course – Reading another Book.

Following is a photo of our view from the caravan in Tooleybuc.



Nice, neat lawns spreading out onto the native bush in the distance.

Thursday 7 April 2022

We awoke this morning to the sounds of the local birds singing away. Actually, I heard them when it was still dark thinking that daylight must be just around the corner since daylight saving had finished. But no. When I looked at the clock it was only 3am. So some of them wanted an early breakfast. So back to the land of nod for another few hours.

We awoke around 7am and this time daylight prevailed. So out of bed, dressed and time for a walk around the area. I spent about half an hour trying to find a bird that had an unusual song that I had never heard before. I finally located the culprit high in the gum trees but before I got a good look it decided to sneak away by flying off to the other end of the grounds. However, I got a good enough look to start a search on the internet, concentrating on the birds in the Tooleybuc area. With a bit of luck, I discovered my feathered friend was the Pied Butcher Bird. Birdlife Australia have this information about this species.

“The Pied Butcherbird, widespread throughout large parts of mainland Australia, is the familiar species of butcherbird to most people. One of the species’ readily recognised aspects is its beautiful, haunting, flute-like song which may be given throughout the day and sometimes well into moonlit nights. Once heard, the song is difficult to forget, and it has been described as ‘one of the finest in the world’. Added to this, Pied Butcherbirds also often include mimicry of a wide range of species in their repertoire.”



Image of the Pied Butcher Bird courtesy of Birdlife Australia

So, after completing this challenge it was time to cook breakfast for the two of us. After breakfast we packed up and started our journey, leaving Tooleybuc in NSW and heading across northern Victoria and into South Australia, stopping at Lameroo for the evening.

On route, after travelling for a couple of hours and travelling 150 kms (remember we are towing a 20 foot caravan so we have to travel at a lower speed) we decided to stop at the small rural town of Underbool for a coffee.

Well, I went to the bathroom while Maree went across the road to the “Pink Lakes Pantry” to order the coffee. Well, she was in for a surprise. Maree walked into the shop and found that there wasn’t much available. There were some biscuit products to sell and bags of ice – but no coffee. Not even a coffee machine, but Maree said the woman did offer to put the jug on, which was nice. She politely declined and came back to share the news with me – no coffee. Maree mentioned that the woman said there is usually a mobile coffee van in the street, but she had no idea where he was. So, we decided to give up and travel onto Pinnaroo and grab a coffee and some lunch there.

Before departing Underbool, I decided to walk over the railway tracks to get some photos of this small town’s grain silos and the rail siding where they load the grain train. I did check first before crossing the railway tracks to ensure there was no high-speed fast train approaching (yeh really!!). You would be lucky if the sheep walking along the tracks was prepared to move for anything. Anyway, here are the photos:



Underbool Victoria. Country railway town where grains are loaded for transport.



Underbool Victoria. Country railway town where grains are loaded for transport.



Underbool Victoria. Country railway town where grains are loaded for transport.



Underbool Victoria.

From Underbool we proceeded to Pinnaroo. Pinnaroo is an important stop as the border is protected by bio security officers to stop the prohibited import to the state of certain fresh fruit and vegetables. The standard procedure is to pull over at the quarantine station and allow the inspectors to check the caravan fridge for any fresh fruit or vegetable produce. They then check the rear of the car to ensure no contraband is hidden there. As we travel this route often, we ensure that we have no problematic products onboard. The main issue for SA is in trying to prevent the infestation of fruit fly being brought into the state.

After passing our biosecurity inspection we headed off to the small town of Pinnaroo proper to refuel and grab some lunch. It was a pleasure to refuel here as the price of diesel was the lowest, we have found so far on this trip, ONLY \$2.01 per litre. We have paid \$2.30 per litre in NSW. We used to pay \$1.30 per litre at the most on the trip from Canberra to Adelaide but the Ukraine crisis has escalated prices here as well as around the globe. The Federal Government has decided to halve the fuel excise they charge, but I disagree with that decision as it means the loss of revenue from the fuel excise means less money going to repair our roads. Short gain for the motorist but long-term pain for us grey nomads and other business that transport goods using our road infrastructure.

After lunch we continued to Lameroo. Lameroo is a town in the Murray Mallee region of South Australia located on the Mallee Highway 40 km west of the Victorian border (210 km east of Adelaide). It is primarily a service town for the surrounding rural areas, growing grain and sheep.

Tonight, we are staying at the picturesque Lameroo Lakeside CP. It is a very nice spot as you can see in the image below.



Our travelling rig parked in the Lameroo CP for the evening.

Friday 8 April 2022

We left Lameroo around 09:30 this morning and headed towards Wellington where we cross the Murray River on the ferry. It is a short crossing taking only a few minutes. Using this crossing saves quite a bit of mileage from having to drive via Murray Bridge and Adelaide before heading south to McLaren Vale.



In line waiting for the ferry to cross the Murray River in Wellington SA.



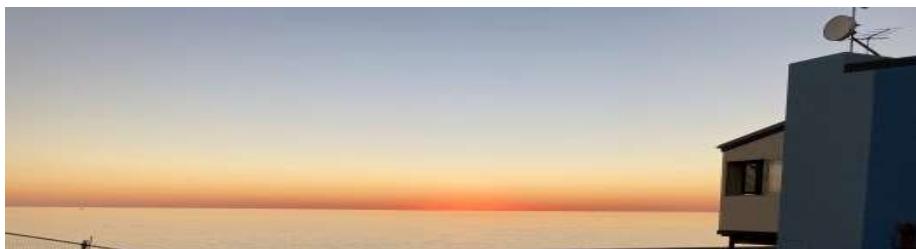
Crossing the Murray River on the Wellington Ferry

After leaving the ferry we headed to McLaren Vale CP, only stopping for a bite of lunch at the Strathalbyn Bakery. After arriving in McLaren Vale, we setup the caravan for our stay and headed off to see Dad and have some dinner.

Tomorrow we will do some shopping and prepare for the arrival of Maggie and Irene tomorrow evening on their Qatar Airways flight from Edinburgh via Doha. This is when the holiday really begins.

Saturday 9 April 2022

Quiet day waiting for the arrival of Maggie and Irene. They arrived on time and in good spirits but very tired of course. We left the airport around 21:45 and headed to Dad's place. After dropping off the two weary travellers we headed off to the caravan park for the night.



Sun set over St Vincent's Gulf. This was taken while having dinner at the West Beach Surf Lifesaving Club in SA before going to the airport to collect our visitors.

Sunday 10 April 2022

This morning we were up quite early as we had to take Maggie and Irene for their Covid PCR test. It is a requirement on entry to SA from overseas that the visitor must have a PCR test within 24 hours of arrival.

We were lucky, as when we arrived at the Christies Beach testing facility, there was only a very short line up. The only thing we didn't know was that they needed to complete a form for the test. The airport gave us a letter to get the test completed but they did not advise us or provide us with a form. This would have been useful and time saving for the testing staff.

So, after completing the test which took a total of about 20 minutes, we headed off to the shopping centre to get some breakfast and to allow Maggie and Irene to get some essentials they were craving for.

Well shopping and breakfast all done so it is back to Seaford Rise to see Dad. From here we went and visited my sister Denise and family so they could all meet Maggie and Irene. After a pleasant afternoon we decided it was time to go to the local hotel bistro for dinner.

This is when the drama began. Dad had a sore leg and as he was getting into my vehicle he slipped and fell backwards out of the car. Fortunately, I caught him but he did twist himself and we needed to lay him on the road with a pillow under his head. After we let him rest for a bit and checked for any obvious injuries (none) we decided to take him to the hospital emergency to be checked over. After being at the hospital for several hours and all tests and checks completed satisfactorily, he was allowed to go home. However, he does need to have an ultrasound of his leg to ensure there is no DVT causing the pain in his leg.

After the ultrasound, if the results are good, the Doctor advised he can travel. This means we can travel up to the Clare Valley as planned.

Well, that is all for now. Let us see what tomorrow brings. Night

Monday 11 April 2022

This morning we started out by taking dad to have his ultrasound. The results were very positive indicating there was no evidence of a DVT. So, it is off to Clare as planned. We decided to delay our departure until 13:30 as it is only a two-hour drive to the Clare Valley, 180 kms from dad's home.

We had a pleasant drive up to Clare passing through several wheat fields that were being prepared by the farmers for the next planting. There were several tractors working the paddocks and of course creating a great deal of dust as the area is very dry. This gave both Irene and Maggie the opportunity to see the large acreage of farms in the district and how arid our land can be.

After a short break along the way to give dad the opportunity to stretch his legs, we arrived at the Clare Valley Motel. The motel is set in a lovely area on the approach to Clare proper and is set high on the hills around Clare providing for some great views. Once settled into the accommodation and vehicle unpacked, Maree and I headed off to the supermarket to

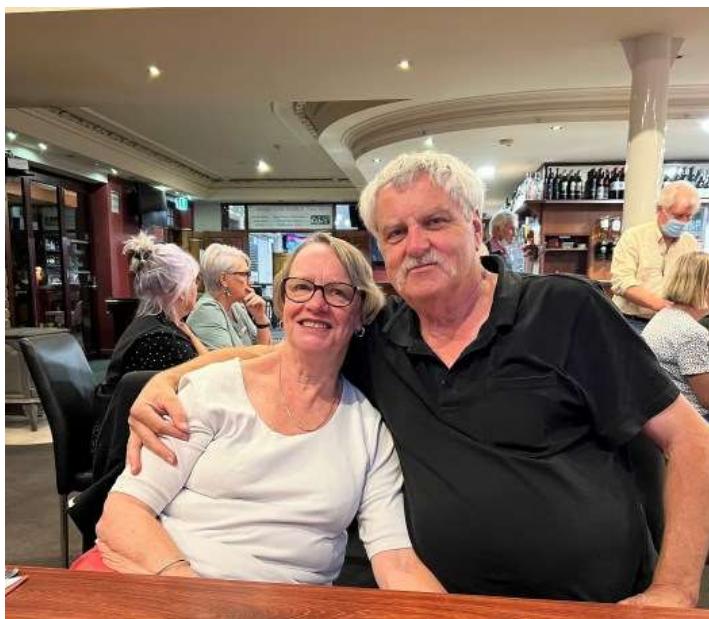
get some nibbles (we already had the wine in the fridge, of course) and to book in for dinner at the local pub.

After arriving back at the motel, Maree, Irene, and Maggie took their glasses of wine and headed for the gazebo to sit, drink and chat. Dad and I spent the time chatting in the room before I went out to top the girls wine glasses up. As the sun was setting it was time for the girls to return and get changed ready for dinner.

The pub bistro was very busy and caught the staff unaware as there were only two staff on duty to serve about 50 patrons that all descended on the bistro for dinner around the same time. Monday evening is usually very quiet. Anyway, we had a very good evening as you can see from the pics.



The five of us having dinner at the Bentley Hotel in Clare (I'm behind the camera as usual).



Steve and Maree at dinner at the Bentley Hotel in Clare

After dinner we returned to the motel and decided to have an early night. Tomorrow we will look at some of the local sights around the Clare Valley.

Tuesday 12 April 2022

This morning we packed up and started our journey home to Adelaide via some of the small towns of Lochiel, Balaklava and Owen that are in the Clare Valley.

Our first stop was Lochiel. This small town of about 50 people is located 40 kms west of Clare and is spread out over a larger area than you might expect from first appearances. Many South Australians have driven through Lochiel, but not many would know the town that lies to the west of Highway One is named after Lochiel Forest near Inverness in Scotland and after the Chief of the Cameron Clan. The saltworks to the north-east of the town mines the salt from Lake Bumbunga and is the major employer for the town.

There is a local myth that the lake is home to the Loch Ness Monster's cousin, Loch Eel, and we managed to see the creature rising out of the dry pink salt of Lake Bumbunga.



The Lochiel Monster rising out of the depths of the Pink Salt Lake Bumbunga

All jokes aside, this town is quite picturesque and the man-made eel is quite an attraction to get the tourists into town.



Maree with the eel.



Maree and the eel.



View of the pink lake from the eel. You can see Irene walking across the salt lake on the far left of the image. Maggie stayed in the vehicle with Dad.

Salt Formations

During the dry times, depending on the previous season's rainfall, many varied salt formations appear. Some are just varying thicknesses of salt formed as water is blown back and forward across the lake. Near the salt edge, 5mm salt layers push together forcing small ridges to form in a crazed pattern. Some grasses lose their 200mm seed heads during early summer and blow onto the lake. If water is in the lake at the time, salt will form on the delicate seed fronds. These formations can be as thick as your thumb and appear starfish-like in their thousands.

RIGHT: Some of the stunning shapes that can form in Lake Bumbunga. PHOTO: 2016 RHEA

Lake Bumbunga (Pink Lake) Information

Pretty in Pink

Lake Bumbunga is known for its pink hues, earning it the title of 'pink lake'. The colouring is caused by a chemical known as carotene, which is produced by the combination of halo bacteria and *Dunaliella salina*, the latter of which is commonly used as a natural food colour and antioxidant. Whilst the bacteria represents a hive of microscopic activity, few other life forms are able to survive in such a harsh saline environment.

Typically, the pink colouration in the water increases as the lake begins to evaporate from July to January. Water is needed for the lake to show pink, so visitors during mid to late summer and early Autumn can be disappointed as the lake is often dry. Despite pink being its most well-known form, the lake also showcases several other striking colours, including blue, white, purple, grey and brown, and - on many occasions - perfect reflections.

ABOVE: Lake Bumbunga in full pink bloom from above, looking north east, reflected against the coastal town in the bottom of this image.

LEFT: An artistic impression of the microalgae, *Dunaliella salina*, which is responsible for the pink colour in the natural chemical process which turns the lake pink in certain climatic conditions.

Lake Bumbunga (Pink Lake) Information

From here we headed southeast to the small town of Balaklava where we stopped for lunch. Balaklava is one of the main agricultural townships in this area, with the state rail network

connecting grain silos from Balaklava, Owen, Nantawarra, and Long Plains to Adelaide. Balaklava is based around the beautiful River Wakefield and offers many lovely old buildings.



Maggie took this pic of the three of us, Stephen, Maree and Dad (93 years old).



A great pic of Dad giving a salute. At 93 he is doing well.

After a nice lunch from the local bakery, we headed down to the small town of Owen to check out the silo art trail.

Owen is a rural community in the heart of the Adelaide Plains and was first settled in about 1865. The countryside surrounding Owen was once largely given over to sheep and cattle grazing. However, since the early 1990s the area has become better known for cropping (wheat, barley, canola, beans and, more recently, olives). The Adelaide-Balaklava broad-gauge railway line passed through Owen and the railway yard is marked by concrete grain silos typical of this region. You can see the images of the silos below and the detailed artwork.



Silo artwork in Owen SA



Panoramic view of silos with Maree, Maggie and Irene reading the artwork information



Silo artwork Owen SA



Silo artwork Owen SA showing the farmers bagging wheat.



Silo artwork Owen SA showing the same farmers bagging sand as part of the ANZAC forces in Gallipoli, Turkey during WW1

Information about the grain silo artwork in Owen SA

Thursday 14 April 2022

Today is Dad's 93rd birthday and we have nothing planned other than dinner out tonight at a lovely seafood restaurant. The restaurant, Café 88, is located at 88 Victor Harbour Road Old Noarlunga and is where we went for Dinner. My nephew works for the owner of the restaurant and at the Sea Chest Seafood outlet located at the same location. My nephew has significant input to both sides of the business.

The restaurant (Café) is a 'must visit'. The seafood is of high quality and each dish is very well prepared. The restaurant also uses a tablet ordering system which is excellent. Lowers the interaction with staff which is useful during this covid environment.

You can see below all of us enjoying our evening celebrating Dad's birthday.



Dad's niece Maggie and her friend Irene celebrating Dad's birthday at the Café 88



Maggie's friend Irene and Maree celebrating Dad's birthday at the Café 88



Maggie, Irene, Maree, Beau, Dad at the party.



Dad and Beau at his party



Dad, Maggie, Steve and Maree at the party.



Irene and Maree at the party



Steve relaxing between drinks at the party

Friday 15 April to Saturday 16 April 2022

The last two days we have taken it easy. Friday, we drove along the coast, stopped to take some photos, and then had lunch at the West Beach Surf lifesaving Club. They serve very good meals at the club, and it is very close to the West Beach caravan park where we have stayed on previous occasions.

Saturday, we drove across to Parafield Gardens to visit my brother and his wife so that our visitors could meet them as Maggie has not seen them for several years. After a leisurely visit and a lovely lunch, we made our way back to McLaren Vale. Tonight, we all decided to have a relaxing evening, so Maree and I returned to the caravan.



Coastline of St Vincent's Gulf



Coastline of St Vincent's Gulf



Irene visiting from Scotland with St Vincent's Gulf coastline in the background



Panoramic view of the St Vincent's Gulf coastline



Maggie and Steve with St Vincent's Gulf coastline behind

Sunday 17 April to Monday 18 April 2022

Sunday we just lazed around making it a complete rest day.

Monday, we drove around the Fleurieu Peninsula. this involved driving through the towns of Aldinga, Willunga, Sellicks Beach, Normanville, Cape Jervis and then on to Victor Harbour.

Images taken while at Sellicks Beach:



The Fleurieu Peninsula coastline taken from Sellicks Beach



Steve with his angels, Irene and Maggie taken at Sellicks Beach



Maggie, Maree and Irene with the Fleurieu Peninsula coastline in the background.



Maggie, Maree, and Irene with the Fleurieu Peninsula coastline in the background. I guess they must have thought this was a model shoot



Maggie and Maree at Sellicks Beach Viewpoint



Fleurieu Peninsula coastline taken from Sellicks Beach looking north towards Willunga.

After leaving Sellicks Beach we headed further down the coast to Cape Jervis. Cape Jervis is a small port where the ferry leaves to journey across to Kangaroo Island. The journey takes about an hour to cross the strait to Penneshaw.



Cape Jervis Kangaroo Island ferry arriving at Cape Jervis. You can see the other departing ferry in the distance.

Following is a photo of the Cape Jervis Lighthouse. Built in 1871 the Cape Jervis light, at the entrance to St Vincent Gulf, displayed a fixed white light. It was manned until 1927 when it was also converted to an automatic acetylene system with a revolving light, with 14 miles. Built at the tip of the Fleurieu Peninsula, the light safeguards the Backstairs Passage, between Kangaroo Island and the mainland. It was replaced in 1972 by the present light which stands alongside the foundations of the original.



Cape Jervis lighthouse guides ships through Backstairs Passage, between Kangaroo Island and the mainland.

After leaving Cape Jervis we headed down to Victor Harbour where we strolled around the town and stopped for a lovely lunch at the Hotel Crown. The food and service at this hotel was excellent and is highly recommended. After lunch the girls went shopping while Dad and I went back to the car to wait for them. Shopping couldn't have been too great as they returned to the car about 30 minutes after leaving them.

As we were all tired from the journey along the coastline we decided to head back to Adelaide and have an early dinner at Dad's place.

Tuesday 19 April 2022

This morning the girls went off to the local shopping centre to see what they could find to buy. Meanwhile I took Dad to his medical appointment. This afternoon I drove the girls around several McLaren vale wineries. Although McLaren Vale is world renowned for its production of excellent red wines, many of the wineries also produce some excellent whites. So, we headed off to four wineries this afternoon. We went to Pirramimma, Wirra Wirra, Shingleback and finished at Chalk Hill wines.

The girls tried the wines at Pirramimma and Shingleback and enjoyed the wines at Pirramimma more than Shingleback. At Chalk Hill's winery the atmosphere was completely different with an inviting atmosphere.

Following are some photos the girls took at the wineries.



View of Pirramimma Winery



View of Pirramimma Winery



Wirra Wirra Winery

WIRRA WIRRA

AUTUMN IN THE VINEYARD (March - April - May)

- As vines are deciduous fruit trees, they experience an annual cycle culminating with the maturation of the fruit in Autumn. From late Summer to Autumn the grapes will change colour and soften, develop sugar and develop the colour and flavour we look for to make our wines
- Our harvest period in McLaren Vale will typically run from mid-February through to April. During this time, we hope to (and often do) experience an Indian Summer with fine and sunny weather well into Autumn.
- When we come to pick the grapes, we'll use either a handpicking crew to hand pick into a tractor, which will deliver the fruit to the winery, or use a machine harvester. The advancements in machine harvesting technology has meant we can machine pick grapes with little or no compromise to quality and ensure our grapes are at their best for winemaking
- Once the grapes are all harvested, it's time for the vines and soils (and vineyard staff) to relax and take a deep breath. After harvest it's normal to see leaves start to turn, change colour and fall off. This is a normal cycle for the vines and the start of their dormant period over winter
- Autumn is an ideal time to prepare the vineyard mid-rows for winter operations, deep rip and aerate to reduce the effects of tractor compaction
- By Autumn our compost from the previous year has matured and it's an ideal time to spread this vital input to bring the life to our soils before the winter rains

Wirra Wirra Winery



Wirra Wirra Winery girls under a tree.

And the last winery of the day was the best, as far as being able to relax, take in the views and drink to your hearts content – Chalks Hill Winery. This is a very good commercial setup. Not sure if the wines are great but the views are.



Chalk's Hill Winery



Chalk's Hill Winery

Wednesday 20 April 2022

Today was another leisurely day but we did go out for dinner so we could all be together before our departure to Canberra tomorrow. Here are some photos from our dinner at Cafe 88.



Dad enjoying his wine with Denise and Murphy



Maree and Dennis enjoying the evening



Stephen and Dad enjoying the evening.