

Aboard Sengo

Kinquaid

Aboard Sengo

January 2017

Around Clare

Museums, Bike
Rides and Mining

3

Around Mt Gambier

Fascinating Geological
Natural History

11

House Renovations

Painting is a four -letter
word

23

Portland lighthouse



The Road Trip Continues...

We started the month bike riding along the cliff tops in Ardrossan, South Australia and we finished the month house painting in Montmorency, Victoria. In between we passed through 6 wine regions (sampling 2), saw 10 lighthouses (touching 4) and based ourselves in 8 very different towns.

Yorke Peninsula to Melbourne

If we drove directly between each of the stops we've stayed in January then we would have only travelled 1235 km, but having done a fair bit of exploring, making our stops bases (albeit short ones), we've probably doubled that. We have traversed through towns of geological and mining significance, visited coastal fishing towns, meandered through wine regions, cycled a rail trail and gone for scenic drives. We didn't get to do as much walking as we hoped as both of us came down with the 'dreaded lurgy' (at different times) making it impossible for some full-on exercise.

We also didn't have the best experience with mechanics and other vehicular professionals; firstly getting the wrong tyres put on Kinquaid and secondly having a 'claytons' service (the service you have when you don't have a service). Fortunately it all turned out alright in the end and Kinquid is now purring along as he should.



TIDDY WIDDY BEACH

We started the first day of 2017 with a bike ride. The sky was overcast but the temperature mild and we thought, as we had the bikes and hadn't used them, we would get some exercise. The formed pathway between the Ardrossan boat ramp to Tiddy Widdy Beach is around 5km long. We started half way in between and cycled the cliff tops to the quiet northern hamlet. I didn't even see a shop here. Of course, starting at the cliff top and arriving at the beach meant it was a uphill on the way back. The sun started to poke its head out on our return trip, and so did the birdlife, our passage being accompanied by playful honeyeaters back to camp.

Tiddy Widdy Beach was originally called Titty Witty Titty by the local Aboriginal people who used the area, with its three natural wells, for a meeting location with other tribes.



Cliff top track to Tiddy Widdy Beach



View back to Ardrossan from the cliff top track to Tiddy Widdy Beach

Clare

2nd January 2017



Clare Museum – The Old Police Station

The Clare Valley isn't all that far from Ardrossan and we left early, had a quick look around Port Wakefield (what we saw didn't inspire us), drove through Blythe (where frustratingly the vet was on leave (we were running out of cat food)) and arrived at Clare a couple of hours early. 'That's ok,' the girl behind the counter said, 'your spot is free'. We had booked the spot online and I will never do it again. I had opted for a drive through spot (thinking it would make it easier to get in and out) but (we think) the computer allocates in a set order. We had a fully exposed site that got mottled shade in the late afternoon and was still exposed to the hot sun between the branches until just before it slid below the horizon. This made outdoor cooking extremely uncomfortable until around 8pm or later - the days in Clare during our stay were extremely hot. The two sites next to us were just as exposed until mid afternoon when they got almost all shade and anything further down than that had a good amount of shade during the day. We watched as vans came and went - all to shady spots.

The early arrival gave us the advantage of plenty of time to check out the Info Centre, located conveniently next to the caravan park (where you can sample some local produce; cherries, olives etc)

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and have time to do an afternoon activity. *The Clare Museum* is housed in the old police building (the building has also been used as a hospital and private residence) that was built in 1850. At one stage the police cells were in the front room and the building location, a little out of town, was chosen because of the nearby well to water the horses. A few years later another building was built for police in the main street, apparently because it was closer to the 'action'. Like many museums we've been into this is a National Trust building and only opened on Sundays and public holidays. Officially this day was a public holiday so we turned up at their stated hour of 2pm and waited. No one official turned up but Terry from across the road saw us and asked if we would like a look. He has a key because of his proximity to the building and whilst not an official volunteer, he has had a bit to do with some of the exhibits. The building is literally stuffed with stuff; a lot of it belonging to residents, (or past residents) of the area and has some really quirky items - like a quirky little desk set (which is on loan and should be behind glass for its protection and not on a shelf where anyone can knock it over). There are interps boards on the walls with info about local prominent residents of old (all of which were very interesting) but the large (really large) info boards in the back room are above head height (not good to start with) but you are straining with the lights (which are original to the building in its normal mode of operation and have not been set up for exhibition viewing). In some respects there is nothing you can do about this unless you redesign the whole space; there is simply too much on display. The yard is filled with sheds that are filled with more stuff, in varying degrees of condition, interpretation and repair. Terry was enthusiastic and did a great job but I get the impression that not many people visit this little building. I guess this is the Clare Valley after all; most visitors are probably getting tiddled at the wineries



The Riesling Trail

3rd January 2017

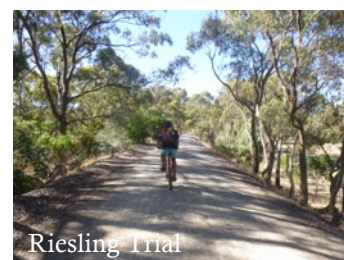
Instigated largely by the local wineries, the Riesling Trail (32, 34 or 35 kilometers depending on which brochure you read) was opened in 1994 and was the first walking and cycling trail (or one of the first, again depending on which brochure you read) in South Australia. It runs from Barinia north of Clare, south to Auburn (the 19km Rattler Trail extends south from Auburn). Not many cellar doors are on the trail itself but many are close by. We planned our ride on the distance rather than the wineries and the idea was to hit the end point first and then visit the odd winery and read all the interps boards on the way back. When we got to Watervale we decided a cuppa would be a good start, and deciding that **Annie's Lane** was unlikely to do coffee but the winery with the providor was, we headed off past the Watervale pub to **Shut The Gate**. We were wrong on the coffee front but spent some time tasting the wines (the winemakers only opened **Shut The Gate** in 2013 but had been making wines since 2010 and had previously both worked at the Crabtree Winery around the corner). Persius

(spelling not confirmed) the house cat, was there to greet us (well sort of as he was doing what cats do (lazing about)) but I did get a little pat in on the top of the head. When we left **Shut the Gate** we headed off to **Annie's Lane** for the coffee but headed off into their 'museum' before indulging. The museum is a couple of rooms dedicated to the history of the winery and the characters that are important in its development. There is not a huge amount of stuff here but you get a good picture of the history of the property. The small area dedicated to describing cooperage is a waste though; the interps is on a side wall, small, and you cant access it. Heading back to the front desk for a coffee and perhaps some wine tasting we discovered the area was now full of other tourists so we decided to give it a miss. We rang **Pauletts Wines' 'bush de vine'** cafe to make a booking for lunch and I had to leave it to them to work out when we would arrive when I explained we were on bikes. We cut out the hill leading back to the rail trail by following the main road but added a few extra hills into the mix by trying to take a short cut, (that wasn't), getting lost and ringing the winery to explain our predicament. They had a good chuckle and promised a glass of iced water would be waiting for us.

We eventually made it – very hot and exhausted. We spoilt ourselves with a full indulgent lunch. The food is delicious, creative and incorporates produce from their native food garden. The prices are good too. The trip back was a breeze and the pedals were hardly touched on our way down the hill back to the rail trail. And we did stop at all the interps back to the back of the Showgrounds, where we had originally accessed the track.



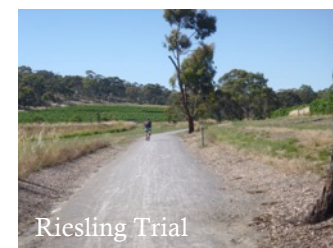
At 'bush de vine' cafe



Riesling Trail



Riesling Trail



Riesling Trail



Riesling Trail



Persius (sp?): Shut The Gate



Annie's Lane

Burra – 4th January 2017

Copper was discovered along the Burra Burra Creek in 1845 and at the time the mineral rights could only be purchased by special arrangement from the Government. Two groups vied for the ownership of the land bearing the mineral lode and jointly purchased the rights, dividing the lode bearing land between them. The southern mine didn't bear much ore and closed in 1851. The northern mine became Burra's Monster Mine and was worked with traditional methods until 1877. The townships that spread around the various mine locations have retained their original names but are amalgamated into the current extended settlement we call Burra. In the 1980's the open cut method was applied to rework the Monster Mine site to below the ground water table. The *Burra Passport* is the way to see all buildings that are on the historic tourist trail (you get a key that allows you into some sites) but when we were there the two main museums weren't open. The cost was cheaper but still \$25 which may seem a bit steep. You can spend a day walking (and driving) around Burra's history this way but it is quite tiring in the heat.

The majority of workers in the early days of the mine were Cornishmen and they brought with them some of their own traditions. To keep within the spirit Andrew indulged in the traditional Cornish Pastie over lunch; vegies in one end and stewed apple in the other.



Redbank Conservation Reserve

Redbank Conservation Reserve lies 15 km from Burra and is apparently one of the richest megfauna sites in Australia. *The Landscapes of Change* walk is around 5km long and shows an example of the Goyder Line (where the average rainfall is 10 inches, anything north of that is usually too dry to support crops). It was mid to late afternoon when we arrived at the reserve, it was extremely hot and we had no provisions so we didn't go for a walk, instead doing a few minutes of brief bird watching along the red banks of the gorge.



Meningie and The Coorong 5th – 7th Jan

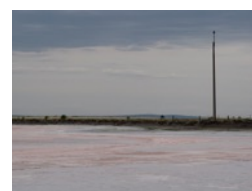


If you are into bird watching and/or coastal dune landscapes and you can get past the smell of an overflowing camp toilet, then you will probably enjoy The Coorong. Clearly some seasons are better than others for spotting birds as it is a breeding spot for many migratory species. We only stayed in Meningie for three nights and the weather was variable, switching between horribly hot and horribly windy, so the main part of our days were spent hunkering inside the van with the air conditioning. However, we made several small excursions out of shelter and managed to see 42 species of positively identified birds (and a lot more unidentified species; they were either too fast, too shaded or too far away). There is a 'bird trail' brochure and we followed this for our first excursion. The idea was to follow as much of the trail as possible, stop where the bird symbols were (and at any other spots that looked hopeful) and then perhaps have lunch at Narrung before crossing the ferry at the top of Lake Albert (24 hours and free) and heading back to camp. At Meningie the sign to Narrung is big and green and

is the size you would expect to have a reasonable sized town. Well, it may have been at one stage but the only obvious store near the corner has clearly been closed for years, and we were heading to Raukkan before we realised we had passed through the town. Turning around

before hitting the centre of Raukkan (an aboriginal community) we didn't realise that the Raukkan church is an historical landmark and on the current \$50 bill. So at this stage, we didn't get lunch and we didn't see the local landmark. Just on the other side of the ferry crossing is a cleared area the size of one car on the side of the road. Here there are three interps boards and a non-descript walking track through a turnstile heading towards the Point Martin lighthouse. This is the only inland lighthouse in Australia. I didn't realise that this cleared area on the side of the road was all we were going to get as I expected the car I saw near the lighthouse further up the hill to be in a car park. Once we drove past however we realised this was private property and the walking track was probably the only access. We were however at this point getting very hungry and the priority was the drive back to Meningie to get lunch.

Our second bird watching trip was late the next afternoon (at the end of an exceeding hot day) along the small marked section on the bird trail brochure to the south east of Meningie. We added more birds to our list before heading to the pink lakes north of town. I was hoping to stick around for sunset over the lakes but the cloud was so thick that it didn't seem to be worth the wait. Of course



about 30 minutes after we got back to camp the sun came out and the sunset was magnificent. Unfortunately I was not in a position to take photographs of it.

Meningie and The Coorong cont...

Birdman of the Coorong

South Australia only lays claim to one bushranger – and he rode on the back of an ostrich! John Francis Peggarty was born prematurely in Ireland and grew to stature only of that of a small child. He learnt to ride ostriches in South Africa and became a thief when he returned to England, spending time in jail before travelling to Australia where he continued his ‘profession’. Rumour has it he often flaunted his stolen loot, wearing the gold chains of his ill-gotten gains around his neck. The last person he tried to rob confronted and shot at him. The ostrich he was riding died and John was obviously wounded leaving a trail of blood heading off to thick scrub. Because he was armed the shooter didn’t wish to pursue him and retreated, reporting the incident to police authorities instead. John Peggarty was

never seen again and legend has that his remains are somewhere on The Coorong; with about a million dollars worth of jewelry around his neck!



Me on an ostrich – fortunately not a real one!



Bird list-42 out of the 200 plus species listed for the area

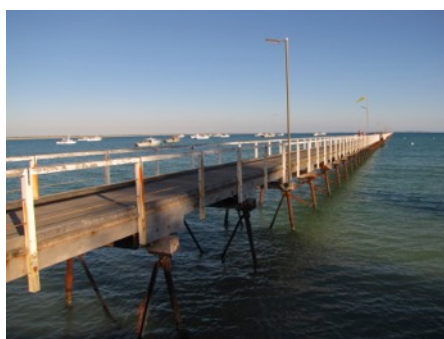
- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Pelican | 23. Australian kestrel |
| 2. Masked lapwing | 24. Richards Pippit |
| 3. Siver gull | 25. Blue Swamphen |
| 4. Caspian tern | 26. Rainbow lorikeets |
| 5. Crested Tern | 27. Reed Warbler |
| 6. Black Cormorant | 28. Tree Martin |
| 7. Pied Cormorant | 29. House Sparrow |
| 8. Welcome Swallow | 30. Pacific Black Duck |
| 9. New Holland Honeyeater | 31. Musk Duck |
| 10. Great Egret | 32. Bronze-wing Pigeon |
| 11. Royal Spoonbill | 33. Australian Pratincole |
| 12. Mudlark | 34. Banded Plover |
| 13. Magpie | 35. Brush Wattlebird |
| 14. Galah | 36. Swamp Harrier |
| 15. Corella | 37. Various honeyeaters |
| 16. Starling | 38. Shellduck |
| 17. Intermediate Heron | 39. White fronted Chat |
| 18. White Faced Heron | 40. Eastern Rosella |
| 19. Hardhead | 41. Green Parrot? |
| 20. Teal | 42. Back faced Cuckoo |
| 21. Cape Barron Goose | shrike |
| 22. Black Swan | |



Beachport Jetty

Beachport - 8th Jan 2017

Beachport wasn't in our original plan as an overnight stop, we were headed for Robe, but in the middle of the school holidays the overnight fee for a caravan park in Beachport was \$20 per night cheaper. The recommended caravan park was going to see if they could stretch the rules with regards to pets and dates but didn't get back to us so the only choice was the Beachport Caravan Park. The reception was welcoming and bubbly and I admit they did give us what I requested, a shady spot, the only issue was it was a small site and by the time we got it even across the van the land was that compacted that the area under the jockey wheel wasn't deep enough to put the jockey wheel on. We requested another site. A couple of options had no room on the roads and one spot was exposed to all the weather. The only real option was to be jammed in between two other campers but we had a wall to protect us from the weather. Andrew backed the caravan up hill, and we went to unhook- only to have exactly the same problem – but from the opposite set of circumstances. In the end we used the car jack to jack the van up enough to put the jockey wheel on and took a deep breath. At least our neighbours were friendly (both Victorian).



On the way to Beachport



The old Cape Jaffa lighthouse (built in 1872) was been removed from the Margaret Brock Reef. It opened as a museum on the Kingston SE beachfront in 1972

A current Cape Jaffa light with the memorial to the seafarers and fisherman, and lightkeepers of the southern coast.



Robe's Obelisk



Around Robe

Robe's Obelisk was built in 1872 on Cape Dombey to aid navigation and store rockets used in the rescue of foundering ships. In June 2016 the local Council decided that it was too costly to maintain, blocking it off from the public, and the erosion around it means it will eventually fall into the sea. Unfortunately the Council have blocked off the cliff top walks around it as well.

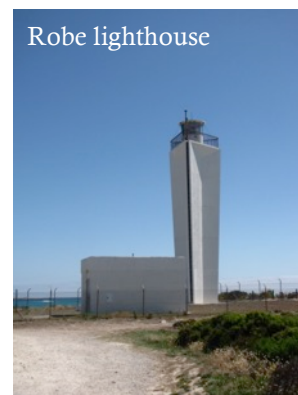


Robe's Obelisk

Day trip to Robe – 9th January 2017

We spent most of the morning making phone calls trying to organize a car service but at 1030, after booking into Portland (because Mt Gambier couldn't fit us in early enough) we left to go exploring. Robe is around thirty minutes drive from Beachport so it didn't take us long. The info centre shares the space with the local library and this is problematic - the small interp area with lots of photos in it (half of which was blocked off) is next to the children's section of the library so forget about trying to concentrate. We picked up a couple of brochures and headed out for a walk along the main street. The main street is lined with lots of historical buildings and some significant ones have little blue plaques on them outlining their individual history. These form part of a marked walking tour. Two wineries have outlets here (no cellar door) and there are plenty of eateries and gift shops. We popped into one winery outlet and discovered the person behind the counter was actually one of the local artists; some of her sculpture is prominent in the town. We visited the marina, had a chat to a traveling yachty, and had a light lunch at the marina café before returning to Beachport via the back road; dirt and, in some places, uncomfortably corrugated.

Robe lighthouse



Historic buildings in
Robe's main street.



Beachport – 10th January 2017



Beachport lighthouse

Plan A was to tackle the walks around Beachport today to get to know the local area. These ranged from 5 minutes to 45 minutes but Andrew had woken up with a sore throat, the start of a cold, and didn't have the energy for much activity. We did tackle the 5 minute walk to the lighthouse but then went on the Bowman Scenic Drive around the coastline instead. The drive was created in the 1960's by the local Rotary group. Lunch was back at the caravan and the afternoon spent heading east; popping into Millicent for a coffee and cake at Que Sera, a lovely looking stone building which along with an old church is associated with the nursery on Davenport Street (near Woolies), before a stroll around Lake MacIntyre (Andrew felt a bit better at this point). The drive home was via Southend, stopping at Cape Buffon and the jetty before fish and chips for dinner back at the caravan

Southend

A very quiet little fishing and holiday hamlet at the southern end of Rivoli Bay.



Cape Buffon



Southend Jetty

Lake McIntyre

Lake McIntyre lies just 2 kilometers west of Millicent. One of the birds purported to be seen on Lake McIntyre is the Freckled Duck. This bird is on my bucket list but alas we didn't see one here



Mt Gambier

11th – 14th January 2017

It was a leisurely start at Beachport, leaving at 0930 and arriving at the caravan park at Mt Gambier around 1100ish. The proprietor tried to upgrade us as the park is predominantly an ensuite park but we stood our ground. The allocated site was shady and the site next to us was a site that is rarely booked so we could park our car out of the way. The park itself is quiet, despite the Riddoch Highway being just the other side of fence.

After an early lunch we headed out to suss out tyre options. The tyres on our car are a size bigger than stipulated in the specifications but the size stipulated is hard to get – even the size on the car is not an overly common size. We tried five places – and booked in with place number four. At the Info Centre we picked up a couple of itinerary suggestions before heading to Umpherstone Garden Café for afternoon tea.

The itinerary suggestions from the info centre had handouts for trips to the north, east, south and west from Mt Gambier. We based the next few days exploring on these.

Umpherston Sinkhole Gardens

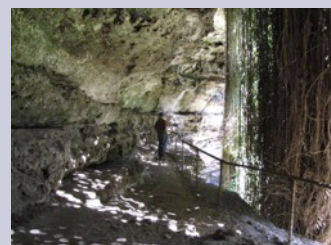
Sitting outside the café at the gardens looking toward the sinkhole you face an English style garden, with tall trees and shaded open grassed areas; an area reminiscent of many city gardens. Look slightly to the left however and you are confronted with reality. The dominant olfactory experience isn't the coffee or the warmed up chocolate muffin; it is the sour smell of sawn timber as the gardens are surrounded by the Carter Holt Harvey sawmill on three sides and the Princes Highway on the other



The Umpherston Gardens were created by James Umpherston in the 1880's as a cool place to relax on his farm - then outside Mount Gambier. The sinkhole at the time was a third full of water and a boat was used to ferry attendees from the path down across to the created islands.



After a succession of owners the land was bought by a sawmill in 1958, and James Umpherston's lovely homestead (The Cave) was demolished in 1964 – and every possible square inch of his farm turned into a timber yard. In the 1970's the sawmill's social club decided to try to rejuvenate the neglected gardens.



The water table has dropped because of the use of aquifer water in the town and there is no longer a lake in the middle. The local council became the owners of the gardens in 1995.

Vines hang down all the way from the top and there is the odd fern (one without its fronds) but I was expecting something more exotic/creative/tropical. The majority of the plants in the bottom are hydrangeas. Native bees have nests in the karst holes (and there are warnings about these) and overhangs provide cool walking areas. And a bbq and picnic table under one overhang provides an inviting place to have lunch.



Southerly Exploration

12th January 2017

As Andrew was still suffering from the 'lurgy' of sorts the steep 900 metre track up Mount Schank, 12 kilometers south of Mt Gambier (and the second stop on the suggested 'Tour to the South' itinerary), was forgone for potential smaller walks on the coast. Our first task at Pot McDonnell (proclaimed the rock lobster capital of Australia) however was to find a coffee shop. Picanninies was recommended and didn't disappoint: gluten-free cakes and Andrew says the coffee was reasonable. We then headed to Northumberland Point and admired the view from the site of the old lighthouse (the new lighthouse is further inland and not accessible), the target pit of the old gun club (the range closed in 1950) and the beaches where fairy penguins come home to roost at night. A visit to the 'Maritime' Museum after this took up the next 1.5 hours.



First stop on the southern itinerary: Little Blue Lake. It was too cold to swim.



Second stop on the southern itinerary: Looking into the caldera at Mt Schank



View from Cape Northumberland



Cape Northumberland is the southern-most point in South Australia.

The Port Macdonnell Customs House is believed to be the only building in South Australia that concurrently held the customs office, the police station (including 4 cells), the courthouse



Port Macdonnell Customs House

and the post and telegraph office and residence. The building was built in 1883 and was still operational as a police office until 1958.



Port Macdonnell Jetty

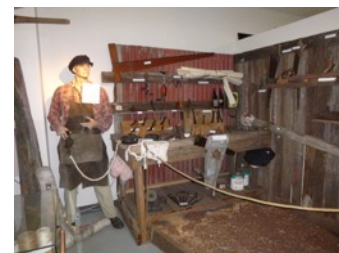
The museum is mooted in some cases as a 'maritime museum' and some cases as a 'Port McDonnell district and maritime museum'. We were expecting just maritime exhibits and so were a bit surprised that about half of the display space is taken up with the history of the town. Not that that disappointed me, the development of the town was interesting, although some of the exhibits need some work and a bit more information.

Most of the current interps (particularly in the maritime area) are not professionally done but is consistent, clear and informative. centring on the ships lost at sea in the area; their make/model and specifications; their cargo; the circumstances of their founding/breaking up/sinking, the results of salvage, auctioning of their contents or hulls, and in some cases the enquiry results stipulating who the authorities thought was to blame and 'punishment' if any.

At the base of each ship's interps (or in some cases groups of ships) is flotusm and jetsum from the wrecks of the actual vessels. One 'booth' concentrates only on the *Admella*, foundered in 1859 with 59 lives lost (in the day it was supposed to have been unsinkable). 24 people survived hanging onto the wreck for over a week with no provisions. Only one woman survived and all of the children that were on board perished. The interps for this booth is modern (modern display boards) and there is detail of the passengers, crew and rescuers given. An audiovisual presentation outlines the saga in a song but the full video apparently incudes interviews as well.

At the end of the museum there are some general booths; one of a shipwright's shed; and this gave me a start when the shipwright started talking. One booth was of the captain of the Jane Lovett who is listing who and what is on his ship to (believe it or not) 'Smithers.' I am not sure if the blacksmith talk was triggered by a sensor (I hadn't heard it before) but the captain was just a repetitive loop which was a bit disconcerting as you could hear it before you got to it. The sound of seagulls greet you when you walk into the museum and probably goes on for a bit too long (Andrew was threatening to shoot them at one point). There is a small note to recognise the traditional owners on the table where the visitor's book is but you won't see this if you don't go to sign the book at the end.

Overall, whist the 'interps' for most of it is very old fashioned and a bit primitive, I actually think they got the info right on the ships in terms of content – you don't want too much and it gives you a nice overview. The township stuff could be a bit more organised. Somehow I got waylaid upon exiting by a new member of the community who had just joined to help with the museum and she asked me what I thought. A few minutes later I met the woman who coordinates it, pointed out one bit of interps that didn't make sense, told her I thought the amount of info was about right even if it was presented 'a bit old fashioned' I also told her I like the size of the font for the substance (the font for the newer interps boards for the *Admella* is smaller). It appears that the boards are going to be updated so with a bit of luck it will look a bit spiffier. It also appears they have funding to do something appropriate with the lighting – at the moment they just have the fluorescent lights in the room's ceiling and nothing exhibit related. Exhibit related lighting would be terrific but the place wasn't dingy and there was reasonable lighting throughout. Overall the display gave a good background to Port MacDonnell and the shipwreck history along the coast.



We left the museum and instead of choosing one of the picnic areas a couple of streets back in reserves to have lunch we chose a shaded picnic table on the foreshore. This was a bit of a disaster as not only was it windy (we had to have our bowls of salad behind the insulated bag) but the wind was freezing. Not a pleasant experience at all. After lunch we drove to Carpenter Rocks, where again we sat overlooking the bay for only a few minutes because the wind was so cold. We finished the afternoon with a quick look at the Cape Banks lighthouse and a drive back to Mount Gambier.



The bay at Carpenter Rocks



Cape Banks lighthouse



Cape Banks lighthouse



View from Cape Banks

Around Town

13th January 2016 (Friday)

It rained in the morning. We were waiting for the tyre place to call us to let us know the tyres we had ordered had arrived so we didn't leave the caravan until around 1030. After dropping off the car (and picking up the loaner) we made our way to the Lady Nelson Visitors Centre, a building with a fibreglass replica (used to be a wooden one but that rotted out) of the Lady Nelson, the ship captained by Lieutenant Grant when she was the first to sail through Bass Strait from the West. Captain Grant named Mount Shanck and Mount Gambier from her, the first he named after the designer of the Lady Nelson, Captain Shanck, the second he named after the incumbent governor of South Australia. The museum is sectioned into five small areas, the first starting with under the sea, then wetlands, then landscape, some aboriginal and some geological information. After visiting the museum at Port MacDonnell this one is definitely modern but it had some issues. The first gallery is short, has soft vinyl reliefs of ancient sea creatures (which I loved to touch as I headed through dropping vinyl kelp) and interps is written directly on the wall. The lettering is large enough but the interps is around the curved wall and in one case I think a little too high. Outside, the locals have painted the species that would have been present in the wetlands before the Europeans drained them. This looks great but the disconnect is that most of the drawings have common names; a couple however have scientific names and look a bit odd. There is also a plaque here explaining about the midden. The midden is at the other end of the walk and the info plaque there makes no mention of middens. Unfortunately we were overtaken by a woman and her two loud kids (although she was just as loud trying to help them with the 'treasure hunt' that is given to children). A holographic interps section (apparently about 10 minutes long) depicting missionary Caroline Smith and her relationship to the (now extinct) local aboriginal tribe was not isolated from the galleries either side of it so by the time I got to the area to sit down I had heard most of the presentation (as well as not having been able to concentrate on the previous interpretation). There is a neon volcano that lights up as you move past it and I think this exhibit is all about wow factor for children as a drawing would have done just as well. And in the geology room at the end some interps is written in white text (this I don't mind) but on bright red background – which is extremely hard on the eyes. The final gallery is on the discovery of the area and the Lady Nelson. Having been in the other replica (the one based in Hobart that that actually sails) I was a bit disappointed in the fake fare. It was not the most relaxing experience.

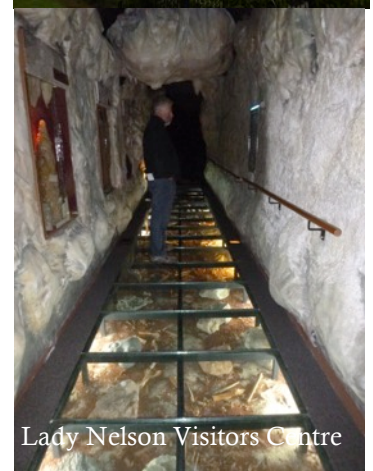
It was lunch time when we emerged so after a quick bite to eat and a quick shop, we headed back to the tyre place to pick up our car. All done and dusted (or so we thought) we headed off to the Cave Garden in town and the Riddoch Art Gallery. It wasn't until we were shopping for vegies for dinner that I actually noticed we didn't have the tyres on that we had ordered.



Lady Nelson Visitors Centre



Lady Nelson Visitors Centre



Lady Nelson Visitors Centre



The Cave Garden in the city



The Cave Garden in the city

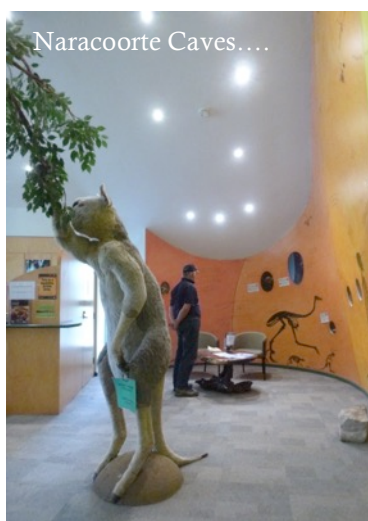
Northerly Exploration

14th January 2016

While we had been recommended to the reported beauty of the Tantanoola Caves, a short drive west of Mount Gambier, we chose a more scientific tour at Narroacorte's

World Heritage area. This meant we travelled north and having booked the early Fossil Tour online meant we left early in the morning. The ticket office/ interps centre at the caves complex incorporates a representative cave system with models of ancient animals, animated heads, voices and breathing. There is a very large koala and the biggest goanna you will ever see. The cave system leads down hill and the final room has information presented by Flinders University. The boards on the wall however are too dark (there is not enough lighting) but the information is presented in a more user-friendly way on tv screens; although only one of the three was working.

The Victoria Fossil Cave tour leads the tourist down into the cave that helped list the area under World Heritage. The cave was discovered in 1852 when searching for bat guano and it was used for recreation and picnics until Grant Gartrell and Rod Wells slipped through an 'impossibly tight' gap in 1969 and discovered the most significant pile of Pleistocene bones (the cave has bones from 300,000 to 15,000 years ago when it was sealed) in Australia. 5000 catalogued specimens have been excavated here from an estimated 5000 tonnes of sediment. There are a couple of 'cave' formations but this is not a pretty tour. Instead you are told about the discoverer, the bones, the evacuation techniques and the research that put Naracoorte on the map. Researchers have to apply to dig on this site and permission is rarely given.



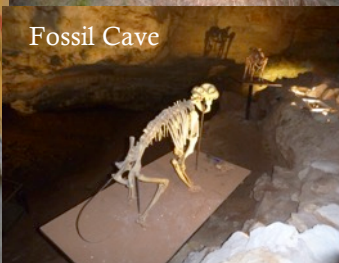
Naracoorte Caves....



Interps Cave



Fossil Cave



Fossil Cave



Fossil Cave



Diprotodont – the statue, not me!



The weather was cold and windy when we emerged from the cave tour and the planned afternoon of bird watching at the Ramsar listed Bool Lagoon was quickly cancelled. Instead as our trip back to Mt Gambier included a trip through the Coonawarra wine region we did a bit of wine tasting; cellar doors are inside and out of the wind.... We visited four wineries, made a few limited purchases (including some magnificent cabernet grape jam from Boc Winery) and arrived back at the caravan around 10 hours after we left.

Portland

We booked three nights in Portland and ended up staying five. As Portland is not that far from Mt Gambier, we arrived around lunchtime and had the afternoon free. A walk from the caravan park along the cliff top toward town found us at the Info Centre, and after an afternoon cuppa we investigated the marina. The marina is relatively new, not very big but has a couple of spots for visiting yachts; one spot conveniently on the outside t-head of the dock. After chatting to a local yachty - who had just arrived back from the afternoon's race - we were invited to drinks at the Yacht Club. Waiting for the yachties to clean up and get the club open we were entertained by the bay's resident seal. Clearly he is used to being the centre of attention and whilst he is obviously well fed, perhaps not all of it is of his own catching; he was patiently waiting adjacent the fish cleaning facilities of the small jetty adjacent the boat ramp (where there is a notice not to feed the seals).



Caravan park resident

Monday 16th January 2017. When we dropped the car off for a service in the morning we reiterated that it was a 4wd notification issue on the dash panel we were concerned with. When we picked the car up five hours later (after a walk around Fawthrop Lagoon (created when the Wattle Hill Creek was diverted when the weir was built) and the Maritime Museum) all the mechanic could tell us was that we had a problem, (no kidding), he didn't know what it was and he told us that they'd tried driving the vehicle up the adjacent hill and it wasn't going into 4wd. 'Oh ' we thought - that was useless really. He'd done a basic service (apparently) but not dealt with the problem we originally booked in for.



Fawthrop Lagoon

Portland Maritime Museum

The Maritime Museum at the Portland Information Centre is small but we spent over an hour and a half here. What held our attention were two videos; the first on whaling (which was heart rendering) and the second was a documentary on the building of the Portland Weir/breakwater. Other exhibits of interest here are the whale skeleton, and one of the first rescue boats along the local coastline.



Well fed harbour seal



Well fed harbour seal

Portland...cont

It seems gannets are the newly promoted tourist attraction in town but you need to be alert to the small road signs indicating where they are and follow a roughish road by the side of the Portland Aluminium Smelter (whose future at the time was uncertain but by the end of the month the nervous town residents could breath a sigh of relief). I was disappointed. I was expecting more. There is a fence blocking off access to the gannet rookery itself. You can walk right next to the gannet rookery near Auckland in New Zealand (to the point if you stretched your arm from the path you can just about touch them). Perhaps if we had turned up when the guide is on duty (three times each week) we may have got a closer look.



On Tuesday 17th January we drove back to Mt Gambier to fit the tyres on the car that we had originally ordered. I had caught Andrew's lurgy so didn't have the energy to do the planned walk around Mt Gambier's famous Blue Lake. We had a late lunch at Nelson on the way back, grabbing a hamburger at the general store, having missed the Tuesday river cruise by an hour and the pub by a couple of minutes.



The Blue Lake



Overlooking the inlet at Nelson – peering inland



Overlooking the inlet at Nelson – toward the ocean

Cape Nelson & ... 18th January 2017



Cape Nelson lighthouse

Plan A was to walk the Enchanted Forest (a 45 minute lineal coastal walk amongst Moonah trees and Bower Spinach vines), visit the Cape Nelson lighthouse, have a cuppa at the lighthouse café and then head across to Cape Bridgewater. The café wasn't open when we arrived and instead of waiting around for the café (and the guided walk) we did another short walk (the Sea Cliff Nature Walk).



Enchanted Forest

In the afternoon we headed for Cape Bridgewater - visiting the Petrified Forest (limestone formations once thought to be ancient trees), enjoying a cuppa at the Beach Café, visiting the Bridgewater Lakes (freshwater lakes lying a few kilometers from the main beach) and admiring the limestone karst caves on the escapement above the road at the Bridgewater Lakes access



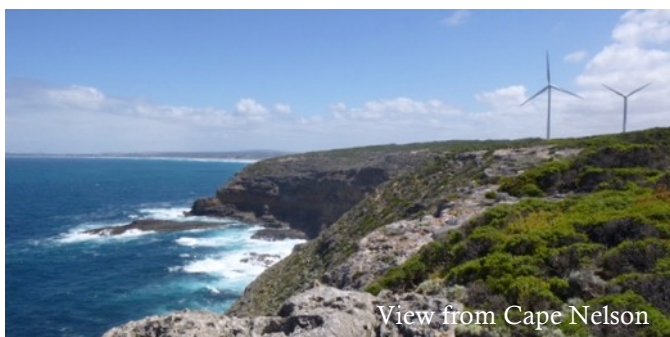
Sea Cliffs Nature Walk



Cape Nelson lighthouse



Cape Nelson lighthouse



View from Cape Nelson



Sea Cliffs Nature Walk



Sea Cliffs Nature Walk

Petrified Forest



..... Cape Bridgewater



Bridgewater Lakes



Petrified Forest



art Formation above Bridgewater Lakes



Bridgewater Lakes



Café on Cape Bridgewater beach

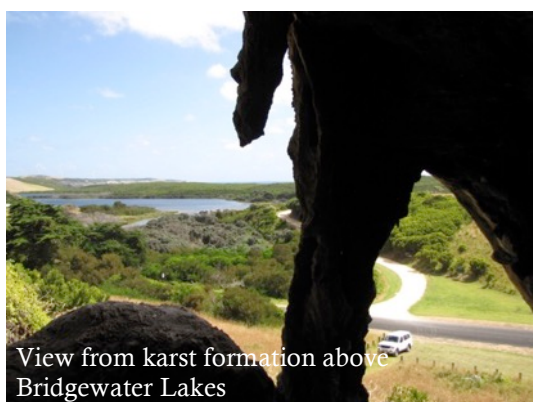
The only 'iconic' thing we didn't do at Cape Bridgewater was either walk to or take the boat trip to the seal colony. We didn't think we needed to; we'd had our seal encounter in Portland Harbour



View from karst Formation above Bridgewater Lakes



Near Petrified Forest



View from karst formation above Bridgewater Lakes



View from karst formation above Bridgewater Lakes

Warnambool

Flagstaff Hill – 19th January 2017

Flagstaff Hill is marketed as Australia's most Awarded Maritime Heritage Centre and is a recreation of a hodge-podge of buildings from an 1870's maritime village. Excepting the bottom lighthouse (the top one was built from the bricks of the lighthouse moved from Middle Island) and the guns and emplacements (the history of these is fascinating), none of the buildings are original, instead being replicas of the types of buildings you would find in the townships of the day. The buildings do have a link to the area's maritime past though, some if the materials in their construction have come from the wrecks of 180 unfortunate ships sunk along Victoria's Shipwreck Coast.

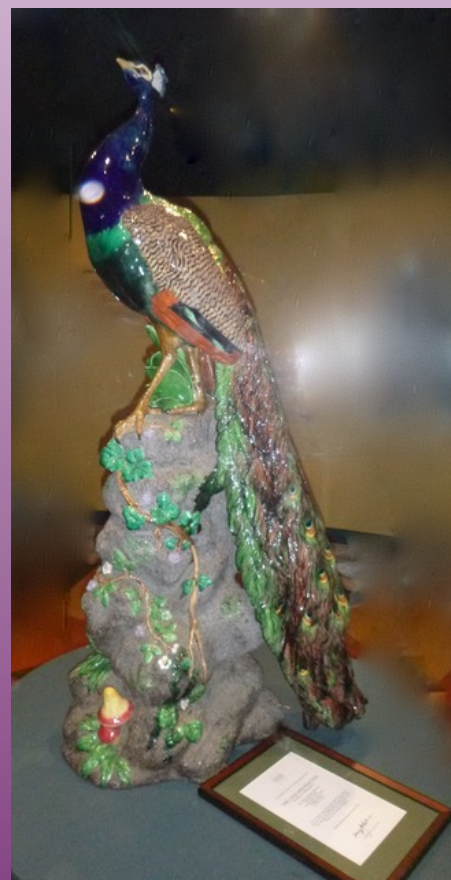
The concept of 'Maritime' however seems a little over stated. There is a 'pond' enclosing several small, and only partly complete boats, a couple of sunken anchors and one sunken boat. The boats in the enclosed water area are original boats but sitting in freshwater. The 'Reginald M' has a plaque stipulating it has just been renovated with a new mast. The mast is no longer there and the poor boat is in need of a lot of love. It sits under the (highly publicised and marketed) nightly sound and light show, and gets drenched with freshwater and her port side does not get enough daily sun to dry out. The Shipwright, who Andrew used to work with around 22 years ago, is beside himself and is desperate for help to help restore and maintain the boats but the museum is a not for profit organization and is not putting the money aside or providing him with extra bodies to help.



Flagstaff Hill from the balcony of the coffee shop at the Information Centre/Flagstaff Hill entry

The famous *Loch Ard* peacock.

The only 'object' to survive from the *Loch Ard* shipwreck on 1st June 1878 was this Minton porcelain peacock (believed to be on its way to the Melbourne Exhibition of 1880). It washed up on the beach two days after the loss of the ship and the only damage was, apparently, a small chip on its beak.



Warrnambool Flagstaff Hill



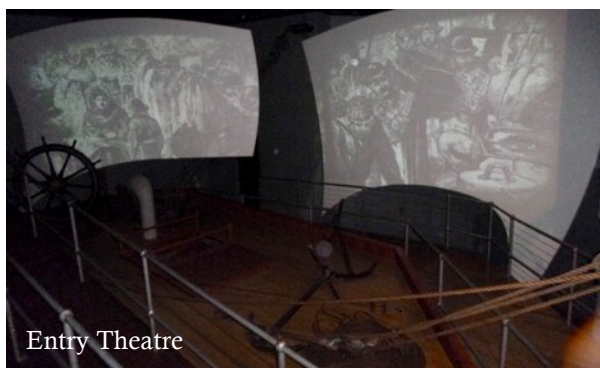
The entry into Flagstaff Hill is through a theatre, the presentation in which is images on a couple of screens in the shape of ship sails. The presentation is narrated by an immigrant reading from his diary of his journey to Australia. Unfortunately the curators went a little bit too authentic and the narrator has quite a strong accent. The accent is probably accurate but it is so thick you can't understand it. Presentation over, the museum you travel through before entering the replica site provides general and specific information regarding the Shipwreck Coast. We waited around for the guided tour but left it a few minutes after it had started. The guides are volunteers dressed in costume but in this case the interpretive ability wasn't great and she was starting in the museum going over the *Loch Ard* wreck' (and being (ex) Victorians we were quite familiar with this story). It was going to be too painful to wait for the outside walk.

The flow of the museum is a little confusing and some of the interactive devices weren't working. The interpretation in the replica buildings wasn't comprehensive either. They could do a bit better in providing more history and organization in each site.



View of bottom lighthouse

View from top lighthouse; built from material from Middle Island lighthouse



Entry Theatre



'Loved this presentation method

The *Reginald M* is 'dying'. The plaque next to 'him' says he is undergoing a refurbishment including his new mast. Clearly this was a long time ago; years of lack of maintenance and daily swamping with water from the sound and light show are taking their toll. The shipwright wants him moved to a dryer position



House Renovations

The vacancy of our rental property in Montmorency (which unfortunately was the result of chucking out a non-paying tenant) gave us an opportunity to freshen it up for the first time in 15 years. This included cleaning down the walls and a lot of sanding before starting to give the inside of the house a nice new coat of paint. The smoke infected drapes left by the last tenant were removed and areas where water had obviously got in (but were unfortunately not reported so became quite damaged) were also investigated and repairs applied. New carpet was ordered for two rooms, a new light fitting purchased where an old one was damaged beyond repair and handymen employed for a myriad of jobs we either didn't have the time to do, didn't want to do, or couldn't do due to lack of expertise. In order to save around \$4000 Andrew decided he would paint the inside himself – the outside we left to professionals. Other jobs that were on the list at the end of the month were; fix the fascias, tidy the garden, fix a gate, repair window fly mesh, replace blown globes, and re-caulk the timber floor.



Pine Hill Caravan Park

Pine Hill Caravan Park, just outside Lilydale on the Warburton Highway was the second choice for our stay in Melbourne – but turned out to in most circumstances be the better choice. The only issue was distance from our rental house, which we didn't realise we would be renovating at the time of booking. Pine Hill is predominantly a live-in/long term caravan park but it is the quietest park we've stayed at. The managers are terrific, the facilities, although old, feel comfortable, and there is a small area for vehicles with pets (the undeveloped area on the eastern side). The location of the site was under the shade of three trees so that the van was fully shaded from about 1pm. We came for a few days but were still there at the end of the month.



I just can't win....After spending the last couple of months battling ants in my plant pots (and losing one of my orchids to the little beasites when they decided to construct a nest in it) I had thought the battle was over. I did get rid of the ants – to be finally been beaten by ***** rabbits who, overnight, managed to strip my herb garden to thin and bare sticks!

A big thank you this month to Yarra Valley 4WD. We took Kinquaid to YV4WD to check out our dashboard problem – and they fixed the (simple) problem immediately. They also discovered our 4WD *was* working and that the fuel and air filters hadn't been changed. Just what did the service centre at Portland do? – clearly they didn't give us a service!