



friendship force
VICTORIA & VANCOUVER ISLAND

Presents our Journeys from
Nov. 6, 2017 to December 2, 2017 to:



friendship force
PERTH



friendship force
MURRAY BRIDGE



friendship force
MOUNT GAMBIER

Day 1 – Nov. 6, 2017 – People arrive in Perth and meet Hosts

Day 2 – Nov. 7 2017 – Steve Ray, Perth

Day 1's main event is a combination of an introduction dinner and Melbourne Cup Day celebration. The Melbourne Cup is a horse race that everyone in the country watches. In fact in Melbourne it is an official holiday and the city takes the day off to celebrate and party. The rest of Australia also does a pretty good job of celebrating and we all did our part.



We all arrived around 11:00 to the wonderful home of Colin & Linda Allen, hosts to Gail & Glenn. For the last few years this lovely couple has opened their home to the club members on this day. Everyone was decked out in their best finery with many of the women sporting fascinators of all shapes and colours. Tables and chairs were spread through the home inside and out including a large tent on the grass tennis court. Inside was a large screen to watch the actual race. Over 60 FF members were in attendance.



At 10 minutes to post time all the ambassadors drew numbers for their horses. Each number matched a horse in the actual race. The race started and the crowd watched in anticipation to see who would win. At the end of the race the winners were announced.

All this day of celebrating for 4 minutes of excitement. Each winner and down to 4th place received their winnings which was pretty good as none of us paid into the pot!



Next lunch. A wide selection of food was available, brought by all the hosts, with the chicken and quiche winning the popular vote. Refreshments of all nature were available as the temperature was



around 36C for most of the day and we sorely needed them. Deserts of a delicious nature followed with the requisite Tea & Coffee.

After lunch wonderful gift bags were given out to all the ambassadors. An ingenious lightweight bag that folds up into a small pack held a variety of items.

Water bottles, brochures, the schedule and a laminated list of all the hosts and ambassadors and their phone numbers topped the list of goodies.



Later we staged our own horse race. Ron, our host had constructed a track and procured the steeds at the local Woolworth for our event.



Teams of 10 were created and the event was on. Rolls of the dice set the pace and again winners received a payout. I think everyone went home with some winnings between the two events.

Later after the cleanup everyone went to their respective hosts homes for a rest and further relaxation.

A great day was had by all.

Day 3 Wednesday, November 8th 2017 – Marilyn Ray

We started our day by taking the train with our host Daphne from their home near Burn's Beach into the city of Perth which was about an hour. We found the train system to be very efficient and comfortable as was the train system in Sydney.

We met up with our fellow journey members and hosts at the Perth Mint where we had an excellent tour of the mint. We saw how the gold was



melted and very carefully poured into a mold. The walls and ceiling are scraped down after every demonstration to collect back any traces of the gold remaining. After the tour we had the opportunity to see how much our weight in gold would be on a certificate. You could also have a 2\$ coin stamped on a certificate.



After the Mint tour we took a Yellow cat (a free bus) to Claisebrook where he had a lovely picnic of sandwiches, cookies and fresh fruit by the Friendship wall. The Wall had the names of all the previous Friendship Force groups which had visited Perth, including ours. Lots of photos were taken of group members here.





We then walked a short distance to the 2 ferries where we boarded for a lovely 40 minute scenic river cruise. Our skipper was a charming young man who thoroughly entertained us with the didgeridoo sounds of crocodile, kangaroo, kookaburra and others. It was a lot of fun. We arrived back to the Elizabeth Quay.

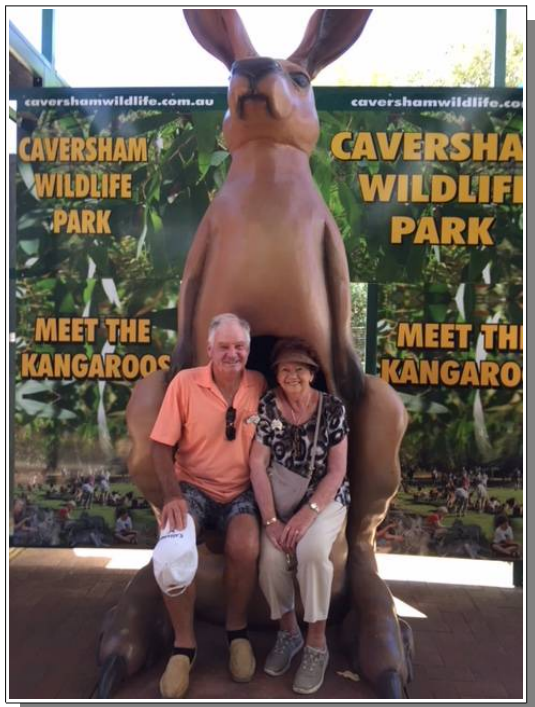
We walked to the Council House (like our City Hall) and welcomed by a Mayor's representative, Councilor Lily Chan and presented with a welcome bag. Our JC's Steve and Edith (from Belgium) each gave a book to Ms. Chan representative of their respective countries. There followed a wonderful reception with tea, coffee, savories and desserts.



Ambassadors were hosted by various dinner hosts that night. We were hosted by a lovely couple Bruce & Roberta (who is from Winnipeg) and had a most enjoyable evening in their home.

Day 4 – Brian's reflections on Thursday Nov. 9 2017

JC Daphney organized the FF troops effectively at Caversham Wildlife Park at opening time. Great park staff helped us to appreciate how sheep are managed and shorn. Later we got much satisfaction in viewing exotic birds and new-to-us animals like roos and wombats and emus and orderly school kids. Our hosts then provided a delicious burger lunch in a breezy picnic area. Special applause for Chefs Ron and Daphne. After separating from the gang, our superb hosts Caroline & Colin led us to the Oakover vineyard, managed by their friends, who helped us sample excellent wines in a gorgeous setting. The roast beef dinner at our new home, after a superb sunset, was a fine ending to another wonderful day around this huge and beautiful city called Perth.



Day 5 – Friday November 10 – Patrice Goyette

Another steamy day in Perth. Temperature was 36 degrees...not like Canada for sure.

Learning public transit and appreciating the efficiency of the Perth system. Now seasoned traveler so keep to the left on escalators to avoid the commuter rush up the stairs, look left when crossing the street and so far have avoided being creamed by cars!



Experienced an informative tour of The Kings Theatre by seasoned tour guide Brian. Beautiful building built in 1904 by Canadian Thomas Molloy who went on to become a very prominent builder in Perth . We then toured the museum and I discovered our own Kate Mailer behind the ticket booth...scalping tickets to the next performance.



Lunch at the Barre cafe was very nice and another chance to appreciate the Perth sweet tooth (yummy chocolate cake or carrot cake).

Walking off lunch to the The Bell Tower followed a downtown route through great architectural buildings and Christmas decorations. That felt strange given the weather!

The bell tower was wonderful with a young musician called Steve giving a humorous tour of the history of the tower and provenance of the bells. We all had a chance to ring the bells and luckily none of our crew ended up in the belfry.

Perth has a fine, free public bus system in the downtown area so we hopped the bus to Kings park. A spectacular park overlooking the city. Great walking through gardens themed regionally. This park really gave a terrific overview of the geography and trees and flowers in Western Australia.

We finished our day with a tour of the river district and a fine meal at Char Char. We are so lucky to be staying with our fun, curious and resilient hosts, Caroline and Colin Beard. And we are learning all about Aussie Rules football.



Day 6 – Saturday, November 11, 2017- Gail Wainman

The morning found us driving out to the Kalamunda History Village Museum. It was a step back in time to the late 1800's, early 1900's.

It was a remarkable restored and resurrected village depicting life during these early times. The settlers were first enticed by the hardwood lumber industry. Jarrah trees were harvested for their beautiful and strong wood products.



Because Kalumunda was at the top of a hill, a zigzag railway had to be built to export the timber.

Settlers also discovered that fruit trees grew well in the area and we witnessed a working fruit sorting machine from days gone by.



The highlight was listening to a fellow who volunteered at the museum talk about his memories of the area from bygone days. He was quite passionate about what his ancestors had accomplished and gave us a thrill by letting us sit in and firing up a restored bus so we could imagine what it must have been like to get around a few decades ago.

After our return home we were all treated to wonderful hosted dinners.



Day 7 – Sunday, November 12, 2017 – Glen Wainman



Sunday was a free day. We had a leisurely morning with our hosts and experienced a wonderful breakfast eaten and cooked outdoors.

We drove to Fremantle (aka Freo) and explored this interesting area.



As this was our final day in Perth, our farewell dinner was held in the basement of a wine cellar. We had a catered dinner where we experienced a few fun games and the requisite farewell and thank you speeches.



The crowning touch to our evening was our debut performance that included all things Canadianna including shirts, hats, a slide picture show of our great land and our impeccable singing of the Canadian greats of “This Land is Your Land”, “Fière Jacques”, “Oh Canada” and “Waltzing Matilda” for good measure.



Day 8- Monday, November 13, 2017 was a travel day from Perth to Adelaide.

Day 9 - Tuesday, November 14, 2017, Melbourne Australia, Kate Mailer, Scribe

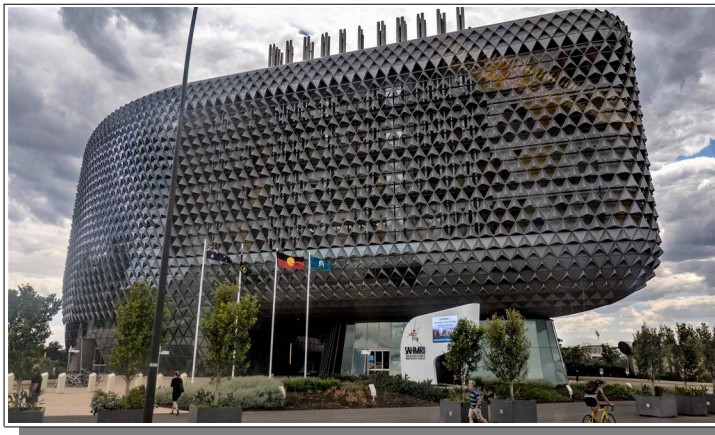


Well, first about our accommodation: the Hotel Grand Chancellor on Currie was a splendid old hotel – and it had big rooms!

We started our first day in Adelaide by touring the many booths in the Central Market, seeing cheese, coffee, veggies, meat, fish, and sweets. What made this market stand out for me was the large number of non-Anglo Saxon shops offering weird and

wonderful foodstuffs – wish we had some of these shops in Victoria BC.

Following was a tram ride (free!) which passed the newly constructed University of South Australia, then the Cheese Grater ... er, a building labeled SAMRI (devoted to medical research), then we whizzed past a very large and again newly constructed New Royal Australia Hospital.



The end of the tram trip was the Entertainment Center, a very large place, indeed.

Next a downtown Adelaide walking tour to an opal shop and past a memorial to the Australian men and women who died fighting during World War I and all the dreadful conflicts – up to the present day – which followed. On the memorial was a note that 35% of Australian males, aged 16-44, volunteered to fight in WWI. Given the small population of Australia at the time, this is a remarkable number.



The day ended marvelously with a meal of REAL Australian food: meat pies, coleslaw, green salad, and a sponge cake dessert – all generously provided by our friends in the Adelaide Friendship Force – what a wonderful, generous group they are!

Day 10 – Wed. Nov 15 – Laura Hill

Today we met our Adelaide hosts who organized drivers to take us on a tour of the wine country, the Southern Vales, just outside Adelaide. Among our wine tasting destinations was d'Arenberg, run by fourth generation members of the Osborn family. They are branching out to provide a venue for a restaurant, and a destination for the community to eat, drink, admire the view, and/or get down to business. To that end they built the dArenberg cube, a startlingly modern piece of architecture that was to open before the end of 2017.



Also, on the hillside, we saw a large sculpture of founding family members embedded as fingers of a hand. Very creative, a find by Caroline, our enterprising driver for the day.

Chapel Hill and McLaren Vale wineries also provided tasting experiences, followed by a visit to an olive oil producer where tasting of flavoured oils and olives was a nice surprise. Many wineries had small shops, and often showcased talented local artists. We treated our driver to lunch, a small token of our appreciation.



At the end of the afternoon, we went to meet our Adelaide hosts at Angela's holiday home not far from the ocean for an impressive pot lunch dinner. A perfect end to a beautiful introduction to Adelaide.

Day 11 – Thursday. Nov 16 – Steve Ray

We leave Adelaide by chartered bus and arrive in Murray Bridge about 2 hours later. At this point Peggy Mueller from FF North Bay, Ontario joins us for the week. We arrive at the City Hall where the Canadian flag is raised and will fly for the duration of our visit.



We all meet the mayor and have afternoon tea. Then it is on to tree planting. Each visiting FF group has a tree planted in their honour in a local park. A great way to plant friendship. It was a bit wet that day.



The long day comes to an end with a welcome BBQ hosted by Jack & Jill Reddins the EDs for the exchange. As Jack used to be a veterinarian trussing up the pig for the BBQ was not a big deal.



Unfortunately we almost burned down the house in the cooking part. Still it was tasty !!!



After we put the fire out, we all settled into a great event in the car port. As you can see it was a bit cooler here. We all received our goody bags and a great meal, with slightly over cooked pork.

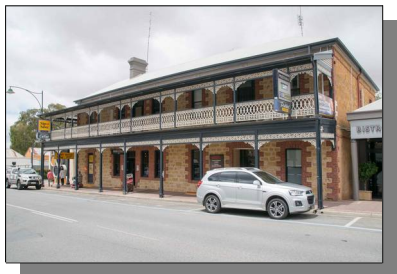


Day 12 – Friday, Nov. 17, Murray Bridge – by Jim Kubas, FF Winnipeg

Jack Redden, a retired veterinarian and host coordinator for FF Murray Bridge, wanted to showcase innovative entrepreneurship in agriculture in the Murray Bridge area. Our first stop this day was in Mypolonga to visit *The Home of Aussie Apricots*, a family business run by Paul and Kathy Prosser. They specialized in dried apricots and various apricot confections such as chocolate covered apricots for sale locally and in Adelaide. We watched a video of the development of their business, toured their operations, and enjoyed samples of their products. We were impressed by their ingenuity in overcoming business obstacles and their hard work in growing and diversifying their business. Also, we were introduced to water management and its importance in South Australia, an issue often repeated. In Australia, water is a scarce and expensive resource not to be wasted.



On the way to lunch in Mannum, our hosts Jan and John Berger drove us to see some Murray River sites, including a ferry crossing.



Lunch was at the Pretoria Hotel, a typical small town Aussie pub with a covered balcony on the second floor, a walkway underneath, local brews on tap and enjoyable meals.

In keeping with the agricultural theme, we next visited a water buffalo milking operation run by Cory Jones, whose family were long time residents in the area. His initial herd of about 70 water buffalo were imported from Italy. Their milk is shipped to Melbourne and made into high quality mozzarella cheese. We couldn't get close to milking barn as rains that morning made the mud roads messy.



Next, we visited Andrew Oksbjergs who ran a goat milking operation as well as veal operation that used excess milk from the goats. Andrew used technology to enhance his operations in areas such as solar power and breeding programs.



Andrew Oksbjergs and Jack Redden

After the farm visits, our hosts took us to see Murray Bridge's dock area. Later that night, Elizabeth and Leon Cameron hosted a dinner for us.



The Proud Mary



Black swans on the Murray



Birds by the Murray: a cormorant, two pelicans and gulls

Day 13 – Saturday, November 18, 2017 – Diane Kubas

There are over 70,000,000 sheep living in Australia in 2117, down from 150,000,000 a few years ago. On Nov. 18, we were fortunate to visit the sheep station of Allan and Sue Piggott near Taillem Bend in South Australia.



The Piggotts own and operate Illoura Rams. The Piggott family has played a leadership role in the sheep farming industry and for nearly 80 years and three generations, this family has been breeding prime lamb sires at Illoura. Through genetics and DNA records, the Piggotts have developed a breed of sheep known as White Suffolk that have fast growing lean lambs with short dense wool free of dark fibres and clean wool free faces.

The genetic information for each lamb is stored on an electronic chip with a tag that is used to quickly identify and track salient growth characteristics. The Illoura flock continues to grow and in 2017, 1350 stud ewes were mated and nearly 2000 lambs were DNA test and tagged. Detailed pedigree records for every sheep born and bred at Illoura go back over 30 years.



After a sheep shearing demonstration and a tour of the property via tractor, we were treated to a lovely lunch in the garden patio at Piggotts home which consisted of lamb done 3 different ways, roast, grilled chops and sausages, as well as other many other delicious items.

In the evening we took a dinner cruise on the Captain Proud up and down the Murray River, entertained by Maxine K. and some of our ambassadors.



Day 14 – Sunday Nov 19 – Nancy Makepeace



Today was a Flexy Day, with time in the morning to relax with our hosts.

After lunch we went to the Town Hall to see a local production of Chicago. As we entered the

lobby, we were offered a glass of sherry. We mingled with ladies of the Red Hat Society and admired a few 1920's style dresses worn by audience members. The performance was wonderful. Amos, the betrayed husband, won the hearts of the audience.



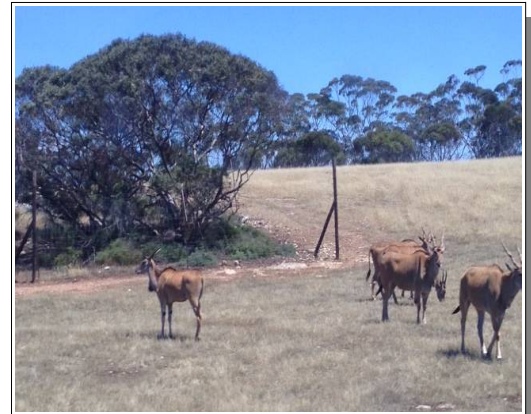
Day 15 – Monday Nov 20 –Tom Makepeace

We made our way to the Monarto Zoo by 9:00 am on Nov 20/2017. The driver/hosts and guests were all there on time and set to go on a 50 passenger bus at 10:30 for a guided tour of the largest zoo in



Australia. The whole group saw lot of new animals as it featured animals from all over the world. There were lots of photos take by the group and lots of discussions. We were impressed to learn that a good percentage of

the work was by volunteers. The area is also home to a lot of native forest and plants as well, so it is doing a lot of good work related to the ecosystem.



In the afternoon people broke off with their hosts to see other things. Nancy and I went to see the Bourassa dam, which has a whispering wall. You could whisper at one end of the dam wall and be heard clearly at the other end. We had an outdoor picnic at a wayside history area. We also saw a large tree under whose roots and limbs a family of 16 had lived for a number of years.



The evening meal was being hosted, out on a hobby farm by Andrew and Bozena.

It seemed quite out of the way but was located on beautiful hill side with a 180 degree view of the valley and a 360 degree view from a hill not far

from the home. Part of the home was hand crafted of local rock and was beautifully done. Bozena also had great garden and produced her own honey. We also had an overland 4



wheel drive to see wild life.

The sun set from the hill was great, and when darkness set in it was time to make our way

home after another great day.

Day 16 – Tuesday November 21 – Stephanie Sorensen



We took a break from all the farm animals today in order to experience another side of the local farming products — wine. It was a late start to the day so I had time to wash and hang out my clothes prior to being picked up. No one seems to use automatic dryers here. I can't hang my clothes outside at my condo. They tend to dry quickly here due to the arid and hot climate.

The winery had several types of both reds and whites to try. We all enjoyed them. Australian wines are generally quite well

respected and I found two to purchase. Upstairs we had a private room for lunch decorated with very nice Aboriginal art works. The lunch was delicious with a variety of appetizers to share. The mains were delivered by a method I had never previously experienced called “alternate drop”. This means that two different dishes are distributed equally with every other person getting the same dish. If you don't want what you get, you can try to trade it with someone next to or across from you. We had a chicken pot pie or braised ribs. Very fortunately, the person across from me was willing to share, so I was able to taste both tasty dishes.



I then had time for a rest and time to retrieve and iron my clothes. In the evening we attended a local Rotary Club meeting as the Host Coordinator belonged to the club. The purpose was to introduce Friendship Force to their members. We were very carefully mixed with them by having places marked “Visitor” to sit so that we could not just huddle together. We seemed to do a good job of mixing. Our Ambassador Coordinator, Steve, gave an excellent presentation about Canada.

One of the ways the club uses to raise funds for their projects is to “fine” members for various things. In this case, members reported good news and then dropped a dollar in the pot. Additional issues were pointed out to the others that resulted in a “fine”. Unfortunately when I fined for having Trump, I had no coins — only a \$50.00, and Trump was not worth that!

Day 17 – Wed. Nov 22, 2017 – Peggy Mueller



Today our group traveled into SE Australia prime cattle country to the beautiful Nalpa Cattle Station.

Owners Phil, Mary, and Jamie Withers gave us a wonderful tour of their property which included a drive via a causeway to Pomanda Island near the head of Lake Alexandrina.



Phil and Jamie explained their Shorthorn cattle operation as we got an upfront look at part of their herd. A lovely steak BBQ lunch was enjoyed by all.

Later that evening back in Murray Bridge we met to enjoy a potluck Farewell dinner at the beautiful home of Neville and Marie Mueller. It was lovely evening and we were able to eat outside on their back patio with a spectacular view of the river and their beautiful roses.



A number of Murray Bridge FF members that we had not met previously were able to join in the festivities. Our group performed a number of fun songs which included a background video of Waltzing Matilda which the Aussies were happy to join in the singing.

It was a perfect end to a great week.

Day 18 – Thursday Nov. 23rd. – Steve Ray

Leaving Murray Bridge and on to Mount Gambier.

Jack and I stopped to pick up some sunglasses (sunnies) from the site of last night's party. Also on the way to the bus we stop to pickup 10 copies of last Tuesday local paper with the article about the FF visit. We arrive with maybe 5 minutes to spare before the bus. Goodbyes are said and we are off.



The bus is very comfortable with reclining seats and USB plugs for everyone. After 1.5 hrs we stop at a BP gas station for a lunch break and then we are on the bus again. 2.75 hours later we pull into the Tourist Info center at Mount Gambier. We are greeted warmly by our hosts and then drive to their home. Time is spent unpacking and getting acquainted with our hosts.

We then all travel to a hall where a great potluck supper takes place. We are again fed until we explode and drive or walk to the theater at the City Hall.



Here we experience a wonderful concert from the students at the James Morrison Academy of Jazz. It was great to be part of students final concert of the year and we all enjoyed the music.

The perfect end to the day.

Day 19 – Friday, November 24th 2017 – Marilyn Ray

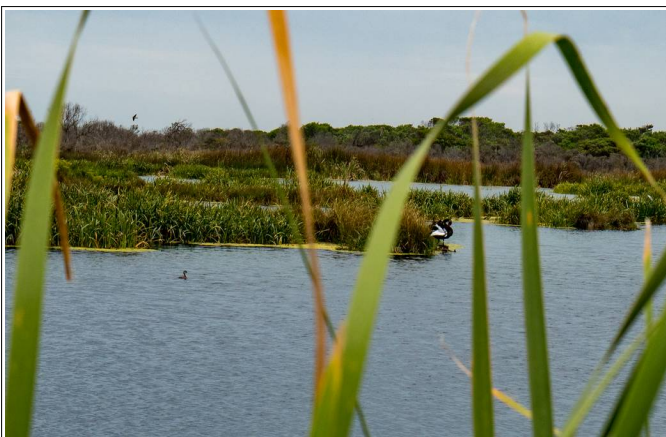
Today the sun is shining and looks to be a beautiful day in Mount Gambier. The Ambassadors and Hosts met at the Lady Nelson Museum and Tourist Centre. The ambassadors went with their hosts in cars and did some touring in the area to see local sights. Our host Marg took us to a lovely town called Dartmoor. We followed the Dartmoor Heritage Trail where there we saw lovely wooden statues all depicting war related scenes.



They were very interesting and just over the bridge there was a fantastic trunk of a tree which was transformed into nursery rhyme characters such as Three Little pigs, 7 Dwarfs all around the circumference of the tree. There was a lovely Historic house, horse trough and flume there as well.



We stopped at a park on the Nelson coast where we had a great view and saw information on protection of wildlife area projects such as the proposed Ramsar Wetland protection and Livingstone Island Restoration, a staged project between Parks Victoria and Nelson Coastcare. Then we drove to a beautiful beach near Donovans, SA where we met up with some of our fellow travellers and kicked off our shoes to enjoy ourselves in the ocean. This beach was at the mouth of the Glenelg River and is a lovely safe beach populated by many families in the summer.

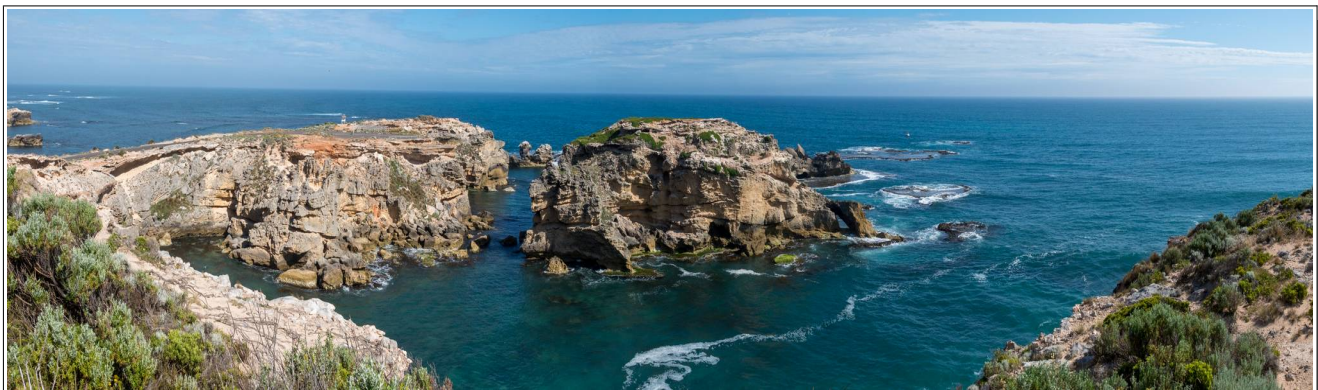


We then went to the Piccaninnie Ponds Conservation Park. The wetland is generally shallow although some parts of the system drop to a depth of 110 metres below the surface. Diving and snorkeling is allowed by permit only.

We continued to Port MacDonnell and had lunch at a restaurant called Periwinkles where we had a delicious lunch and afterwards some went shopping at a nice store close to the restaurant or some chose to just walk along by the water and enjoy the beautiful scenery. We all then headed to the Port MacDonnell Museum where we saw many interesting things.



We then started back for Mt. Gambier but stopped at a number of spots along the coasts for amazing view points and beaches with interesting rock formations such as Rhinoceros Rock, Camel Rock.



Day 20 – Saturday November 25 – Brian Grover



On our second full day in Mount Gambier we returned to the Lady Nelson Discovery Centre for a tour. Quite a comprehensive museum with a thorough depiction of local history, geology and environment.

We especially enjoyed two elements there:

- the full size replica of the original HMS Lady Nelson, a modest survey ship (weighing only 60 tons) which first sailed to Australia from England in 1800
- the 3D meeting with ghostly Christina Smith, who explained her experiences as a European settler in the 1800s



Then we had a “barbie” at the local Umpherston Sinkhole (now a gorgeous sunken garden) in a pleasant local park with free-to-use BBQs, on which our hosts prepared a high protein lunch with lots and lots of meats. This event was co-hosted by members of the Casterton FF, which is based in a very small town nearby – just a few hundred people, mostly farmers. Yet they seemed to have a larger and more active club than ours in Victoria. How is this possible?



Our host Kevin Harradine had worked at the nearby lumber mill and knew the sinkhole intimately, having worked on the installation of the stairways to its bottom. He recalled an area of the cave where possums used to live, and sure enough, out popped a cooperative possum for a photo! Another unexpected advantage of being hosted by local folks who really know their hometown.



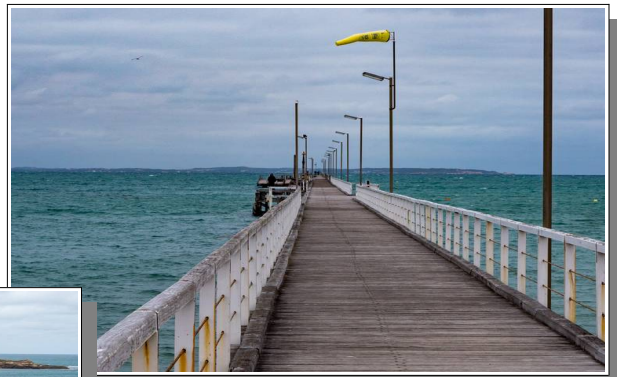
Tonight our hosts prepared a pizza dinner (yummy), then we played cards. Turned out that none of us really knew the rules of euchre, but the good local wines made us indifferent to this minor glitch.

Day 21 – Sunday November 26 – Patrice Goyette

A leisure day, so we slept late and discussed options over a hearty breakfast. Hosts Judy and Kevin suggested driving south and east towards the coast. They took us to some of their favourite places, including the Princess Margaret Rose Caves near the Gleneig River and National Park in the SE corner of South Australia – a great river for canoeing.



Then into “Mexico”, as they derisively refer to the eastern neighbour State of Victoria, to visit the tiny



coastal town of Nelson. Further east we visited Cape Bridgewater with its huge wind turbines and nifty beach, then Portland. This visit gave us a preview of our subsequent bus trip along the Great Ocean Road.

Tonight we offered to make dinner for our hosts, which gave us the

opportunity to shop for groceries at Woolworths. It’s always interesting for us to see where and how local folks get their food supplies. No big surprises in Mount Gambier - actually a shopping experience similar to home. After enjoying chicken Marbella we played some more cards, with a much better idea of how euchre is supposed to be played. The team of two competitive males were once again allowed to win by their partners.

Day 22 – Monday, November 27, 2017 – Gail Wainman



Our day started off with a visit to the City Aquifer System which is fed by the Blue Lake. We had lunch in the nearby park with catered Subway sandwiches. We walked to City Hall and witnessed the planting of a rose in our honour which was followed by an official welcome from the Mayor and tea reception.



We then experienced a viewing of the video “Volcano” which explained the geographic evolution of the area. It was narrated by a well-known Australian actor.

On our way home we stopped in at a grocery store called “She’s Apples” to purchase fresh produce for the dinner we cooked for our hosts. Glenn also bought an Akubra hat which is a pressed felt hat made from wild rabbit fur. Apparently 70,000 wild rabbits a week are culled from the outback to make these hats.

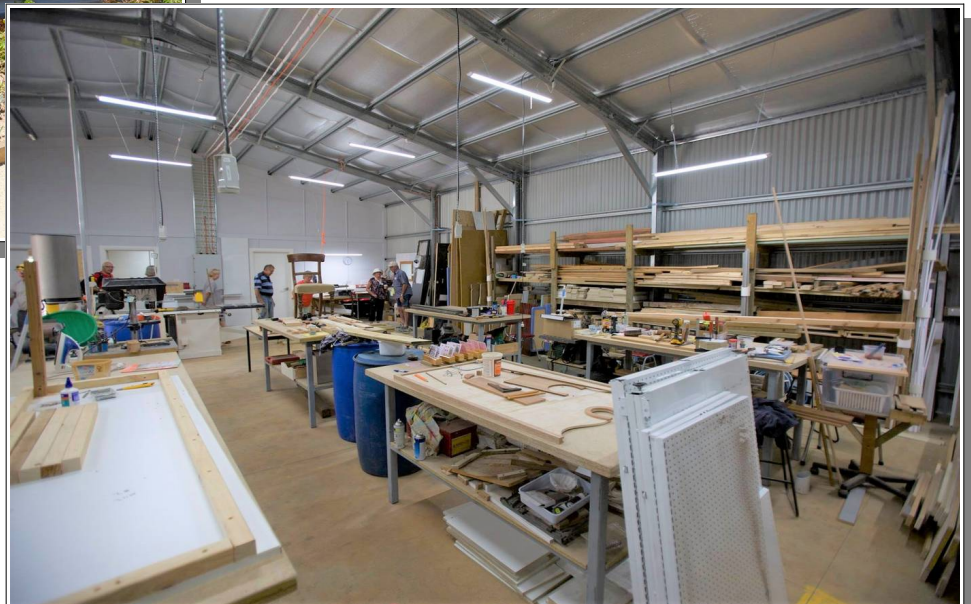
We had a lovely dinner with our hosts, Anna Guenther & her host. A good time was had by all.

Day 23 – Tuesday, November 28, 2017 – Glenn Wainman

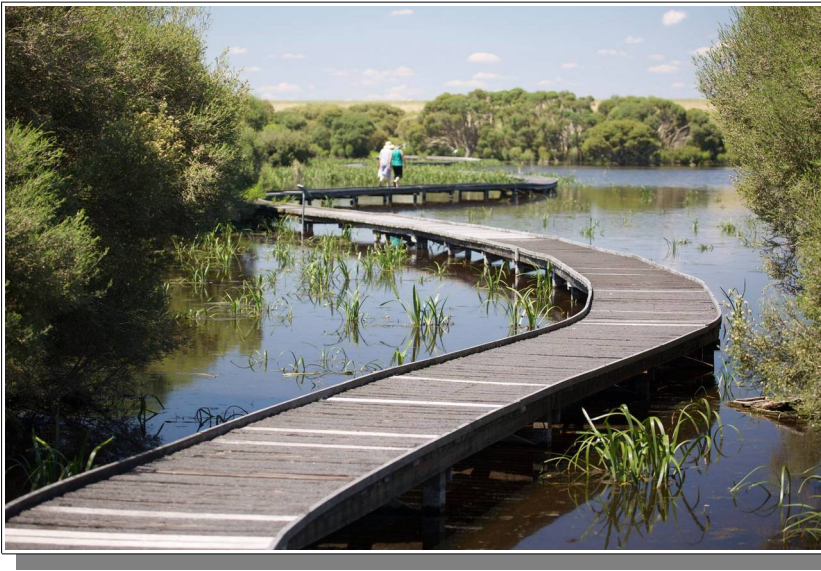
We had an early pick up at the Lady Nelson. Julienne hired a bus and drove us to the Naracoorte Caves and Fossil Cave. This is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and we had an exceptional guide and learning experience.



We had lunch at a “Man’s Shed” which is a relatively new concept. It’s basically a drop-in centre for men (women are also welcome) where they can come for a coffee and a chat. There is also a very big work area filled with all manner of woodworking machines and other interesting tools for hands-on projects. The Man Shed appears to fill a gap for men who are retired. It helps fill their days and stay connected to the community.



After lunch we were driven to the Bool Lagoon for a walk around.



The main walkway was closed because there were too many snakes that day. Some brave souls took a walk on the shorter walkway.

On our way back into town we stopped at the Rymill Winery and the Balnaves Winery for samples and sightseeing.



All in all it was a very hot and interesting day.

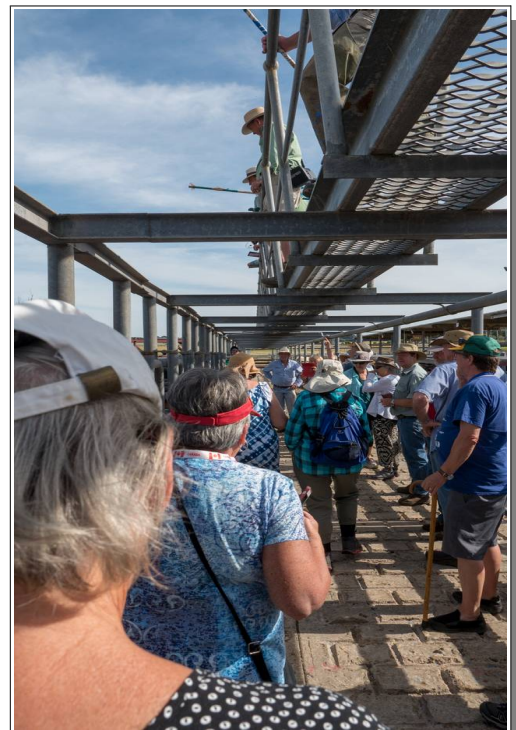
Day 24 – Wednesday, Nov 29, 2017 – Laura Hill



Up early today as we head out to the Sale Yards for a hearty breakfast. We are going to witness a cattle auction, a completely new experience for a city girl. The first whiff makes a strong impression, and instills a new respect for cattle owners and their labour force.



Our introduction takes us for a walk past the Bulls who are stomping and spraying the occasional brown residue on their unsuspecting visitors. We prefer it when we go "upstairs" to view cattle being auctioned, a mysterious process initially, but we caught on.



By mid-morning we are ready to move on to the pine forests. Canadian Douglas Fir have been the most productive in a successful lumber industry in Mt Gambier. We watch enormous machinery harvesting pine row by row, leaving room for reforestation. The temperature is rising and we need to pack. This is our last day in Mt Gambier, finishing our journeys from West Australia to the limestone caves, and I am sad to leave. It has been a relaxing week, interesting sights, warm hospitality, and wonderful memories.



The day ends at the Silver Birch in a rather elegant dining room for a farewell dinner. A great send-off to our next adventure with Outbound Billy, who will take us down the Great Ocean Road. One more sleep....



Day 25 – November 30th. – Steve Ray

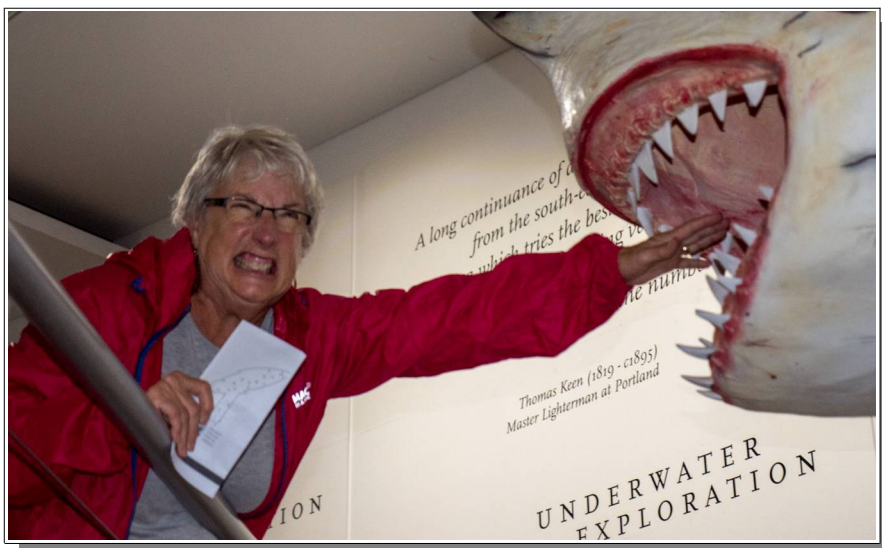
Today we said goodbye to our hosts from Mount Gambier.



We met up with “Out Back Billy” and set off on the Great Ocean Road. First place we visited was the Discovery Bay Marine National Park. We saw some interesting coastline and wind turbines. In Nov. there is a massive growth of Krill that feeds many marine animals off this coast.

Our next stop was at the Portland Maritime Centre. We viewed many displays about the whaling industry importance to the area.

Patrice got a bit too close to the exhibits.



Lunch was in the quaint seaside town of Point Perry. Everyone split up and went to a variety of restaurants.



Then we visited Cheese World where everyone had a tasty sample, or two. Luckily you could also purchase wine so parings were created to be consumed later.



Finally we reached the Bay of Island Coastal Park. One of the first areas was the Bay of Martyrs where we walked the sands where many a ship was wrecked.



This area is the 4th. most visited place in Australia and you could really see why.



Day 26 – Friday, December 1 – Great Ocean Route – by Jim Kubas
Travel from Port Campbell to Melbourne with Outback Billy, our guide and driver.

This day we traveled the Great Ocean Route. Arguably, according to Outback Billy (whose actual name was Peter), this is Australia's most visited tourist site with the visitor peak now occurring at Chinese New Year. Previously the peak time was the Christmas holidays.

The day started with a shared breakfast at our Port Campbell accommodation. Steve Ray bought ample rations which we shared. We had our choice of fruits, yogurts, cheeses, and cereals with milk, juice, tea and coffee with toast and jam.

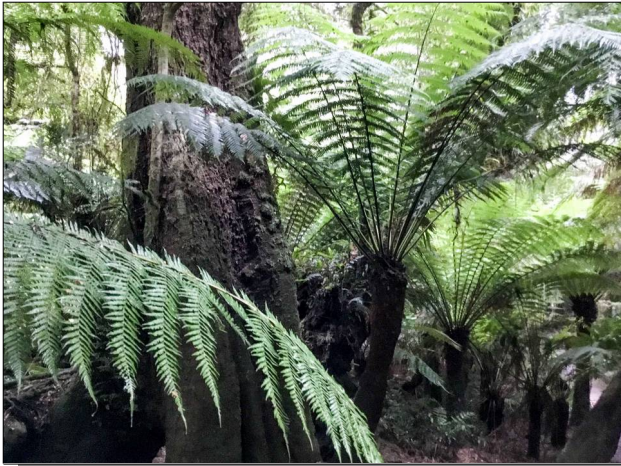


After a short drive, we stopped at Loch Ard Gorge in Port Campbell National Park. The gorge was named after a clipper ship which was wrecked in 1878. The story of the two wreck survivors arose from valiant efforts of Tom Pearce, a ship's apprentice to save passenger Eva Carmichael; 54 others perished. Today, this area is noted for its rugged coastline and magnificent scenery. Some remains of the wrecked Loch Ard still exist and are protected in a marine park

Our next stop, after another short drive, was *The Twelve Apostles* which are rugged monumental limestone stacks rising from the ocean formed by erosion of the coast over millennia. Although called The Twelve Apostles, the stacks do not have a biblical connection and there are only nine. Seven are on one side of the headland and one of those stacks has almost disappeared due to erosion. Two stacks are on the other side. The area is noted for its underwater diversity of plant and fish life as well as its great coastal scenery.



Ngatanwarr in the Great Otway National Park was our next stop. This area is a temperate rain forest and is also known as Mait's Rest Rainforest Walk.



The walk is named after Maitland Bryan who once patrolled the area by horse during WWI and afterwards. Mait's descendants still live in this area.



Ngatanwarr is a gully enclave of lush tree ferns and ancient giant Myrtle Beech trees. For tens of thousands of years the local Aboriginal people known as the Maar lived in this area and had a spiritual and cultural connection with this forest. Our walk through this forest was truly awesome.

We stopped for lunch in Apollo Bay. We then drove to a forested area to view wildlife where we spotted some koalas and sulphur crested white cockatoos. Afterwards we passed through Lorne, Anglesea and Torquay which are renowned surfing areas; then onto Geelong where we passed under the Great Ocean Route commemorative arch (which marks the start of the route when travelling from Melbourne).



In Geelong we visited the Narana Aboriginal Cultural Centre which contains an art gallery, shops, artist studios and audio-visual and artifact displays. Around the complex were walkways with emus and wallabies close by.

Throughout the day Outback Billy played Australian themed music and other tunes often related to the area we were passing through.

We ended our day's travels at our hotel in Melbourne. Another great day!!!



Day 27 – Saturday, December 2, 2017 – by Diane Kubas

Last Day – Farewell to New Friends

On this final day, the remaining ambassadors met four members from the Melbourne Friendship Force Club at the Visitor Centre in Federation Square. After introductions, our group was led on a wonderful walking tour of Melbourne which included many highlights such as St. Paul’s Cathedral, several of the famous lanes, the Block and Royal Arcades, Bourke St. Mall, the State Library and an introduction to the free tram system. We stopped for coffee along the way and ended our tour at Melbourne’s Art Centre where we had lunch in the restaurant at Hamer Hall.



To end our shared time together we met for dinner at the Peking Duck Restaurant in Chinatown for some good food, more laughs and to present a small thank you gift to Marilyn and Steve Ray for planning and organizing our fabulous Friendship Force journeys in Australia.





NEW FRIENDS: Steve Ray, Jill Redden, Marilyn Ray and Jack Redden getting acquainted after the Rays, from Canada, arrived in town. **Photo:** Nick Grimm.

Friendship Force explores our region

Murray Bridge

A GROUP of international tourists are spending a week bunking with locals, having a unique experience of what the Murraylands has to offer.

Canadian Friendship Force members from the Victoria and Vancouver group were greeted by their local

hosts at the Murray Bridge council building on Thursday morning after making the trip from Adelaide. Having seen Sydney, Perth and Adelaide, Victoria and Vancouver group president Steve Ray said the group were eager to see the region.

"My wife Marilyn and I haven't ever been here before and we're really looking forward to getting out of the cities and exploring this wonderful place," he said. Jack Redden from the Murray Bridge Friendship Force said, while Thursday was a settling day, the Murray Bridge group had plenty

for their visitors to do.

"We're heading to Monarto Zoo, a winery in Langhorne Creek, and plenty of agricultural experiences," he said.

"That's what we are here and we want to show our guests that."

—NICK GRIMM

Groups share in grant funding

BY NICK GRIMM

Karoonda

THE Karoonda Farm Fair and three of the town's sporting facilities will benefit from injections of several thousand dollars.

The District Council of Karoonda East Murray (DCKEM) awarded several community groups funding through the 2017 Community Grants program:

- Karoonda Farm Fair: \$5000 to attract lifestyle pavilion guest speakers
 - Karoonda Cricket Club: \$5000 towards a 6x9 metre shed with a roller door and access door, used for football and cricket storage.
 - Karoonda Bowling Club: \$1250 for a safety upgrade for the club switchboard
 - Karoonda Districts Football Club: \$1150 for conference facilities
- Farm Field Manager, Ray

Burdett congratulated the successful grant recipients and said it was important to support local clubs and events that were generally run by volunteers.

"We appreciate the hard work and effort put into the community by these clubs and groups," he said.

"If you look at the Farm Fair event, it attracts thousands of people and delivers significant economic opportunities into the region each year."

"Council is delighted to offer this support to such an important event on the Karoonda calendar," Mr Burdett said.

Mr Bald said the continuing support of the council toward the event was greatly appreciated.

"It's a wonderful community event and we have to keep on giving the public new events and guest speakers they want to see. This



FRIENDSHIP FORCE VISIT: Mount Gambier Mayor Andrew Lee, Victoria/Vancouver Islands Friendship Force club coordinator Steve Ray and Mount Gambier Friendship Force member Julienne Feast plant a new rose bush outside the council chambers to mark the visit to the South East.

Picture: JOCELYN NICKELS

Canadian friendship force group leaves mark on Mount Gambier

JOCELYN NICKELS

A NEW rose bush was added to the garden outside the Mount Gambier Civic Centre on Monday to signify a visit from overseas Friendship Force club members.

Travelling from the Victoria/Vancouver Islands in Canada, the group of 15 ambassadors has spent the past week exploring the South East as part of their Australia exchange.

First visiting Perth, Adelaide and Murray Bridge clubs, the Blue Lake city marked the end of their six-week trip with a range of activities organised around the region.

Group coordinator Steve Ray said the visit has been excellent with many opportunities to learn about the history of Mount Gambier.

"I'm really impressed with the city and its surroundings - we'd love to come and live here," he said.

"We have met a lot of interesting people and visited many sites, including the Tantanoola Caves, Beachport, the Port MacDonnell museum

and the Main Corner.

"Plus the weather has been fantastic, it is always nice to get away from the cold weather in Canada for a bit."

Pleased the group had enjoyed their time in the South East, Mount Gambier Friendship Force coordinator Marg Doody said they were excellent guests.

"The exchange has been great and we have had lots of good feedback from our guests on the activities planned and leisure time offered," she said.

"Steve has done a great job with his ambassadors and I hope they enjoy the rest of their stay."

This is the final hosting for the Mount Gambier group this year with plans to host visitors from Albany (Western Australia) and Lime (Peru) next year with outbound journey's to Bundaberg, Queensland and two clubs in New Zealand.

Anyone who is interested in joining the club can make contact through the Mount Gambier Friendship Force website or on 0438 388 367.