

Lorraine's August & September Blog

Our house sit in Wollongong came to an end; we had 6 days to cover around 600 km, that meant we really had to put our running shoes on. Our hosts returned from the Isle of Mann, we were ready and packed to move on.

We enjoyed a secluded night in Wingello State Forest, not far from Belangalo (most of you will know the story).

A family of wombats joined around the fire at Wingello, not long after we had climbed the scarp past Mt Keira, and through Mossvale and Mittagong. We had been told when we got to Victoria, we would see lots of wombats, but no one told us they would be in form or road kill.

Our next night was in the village of Gunning, where we chased several caches. Gunning was "limit of settlement" for civilisation until 1820.



As we drove further west, we decided to call in off the Hume Highway for morning tea at Crisp Galleries, where there is a gift shop, gardens, and a gallery. We met the artist (Peter Crisp) who had been commissioned for glass works for a gift to Prince Charles and Camilla on their wedding. Peter

suggested we might like to wait around till 2.00 pm that afternoon, as he had Evgeny Ukhanov, a Russian concert pianist, arriving to give a piano recital.



Evgeny the Russian pianist played for us, behind him is the painting sold to the Vatican

We had planned to be in Gundagai that afternoon, but what the heck – it will still be there! 2.00 pm arrived, the guests arrived ... all fourteen of them – we made 16. Can't believe we sat in a tin shed, surrounded by etchings and oil paintings by an Italian princess, listening to a Russian pianist. (One of the paintings by the Princess Borghese had been recently sold to the Vatican)

After the concert, we were treated to a private viewing of some pretty impressive horse drawn buggies, from a hearse to a French cabriolet to a buggy that once belonged to Prince Phillip. Oh, yeah, the artist suggested we camp overnight in his car park!

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Yes, Gundagai was still there when we passed through, bought some meat and a pair of boots, and of course, visited the dog on the tucker box before moving on to Junee, were the Monte Christo Homestead beckoned us.

The house, built in the 1870s has only ever been owned by two families. The house is known to be the most haunted house in Australia.



While we did not see or experience any ghostly apparitions, we did enjoy the tour of the house and out buildings.

Our farm sit at Aspens Springs Farm Stay near Bright started in early September, our hosts travelling to Bali. Thankfully, we had the use of the warm and cosy house, given the snow nearby, and negative temperatures overnight.

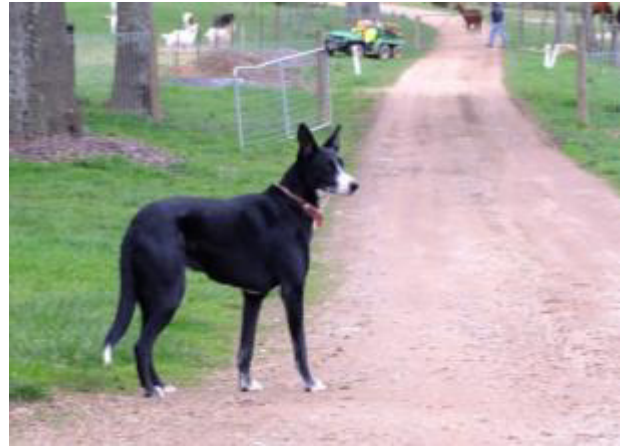


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Our charges were Homer the bloodhound, Liquorice the greyhound and Ruby the cat. Oh, also five geese, five turkey, five ducks about 30 chooks and three revolting pigs. Various sheep and goats, horses, highland cattle and an alpaca complete the menagerie. We helped out from time to time with the boarding kennels – both dogs and cats. We had duck eggs doming out of our ears, copious amounts of chicken eggs, and a freezer full of lamb, goat and ... rabbit. We had the fire going all day and night; thankfully there was plenty of chopped firewood. The property also had four holiday cottages, but not much for us to do with them, apart from take bookings.



HOMER



LIQUORICE



PORTIA – A PIG IN MUD



STEVE & JIM – A COUPLE OF TURKEYS

We enjoyed the town of Bright, joined in at the pub each Friday night for Trivia and won a meat tray. Bill and Phyll, (Phyll is Lesley's Sister) play regularly, along with Bridgitte (Jim & Lesley's daughter), so we joined their table. Bill is an actor, who studied at NIDA with Jon Garret and Belinda Giblin, and



even worked with John Cleese on the original "Life of Brian". We were also invited to the local Lions Club for their meeting. There was another traveller giving a slide show, and thought we might be interested.

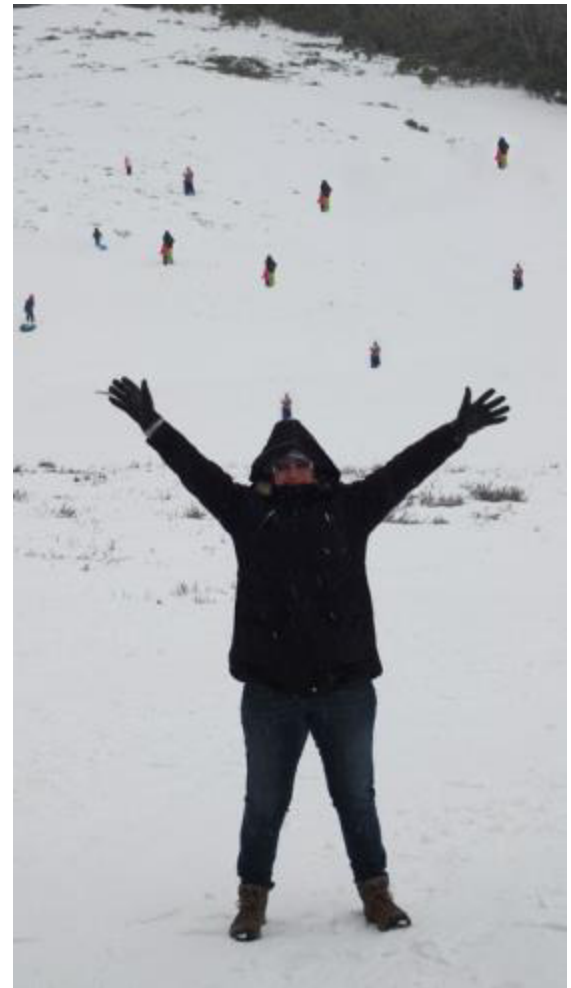
As we had not seen John's son Adam for a couple of years, we arranged to meet his in Eurora,

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which is halfway between Bright and Melbourne. Pleasant drive down, followed by lunch in the pub. It was great to catch with him.

Our first venture into the snow was to Mt Buffalo. Not a major resort area, but very pretty and close to Bright.

We drove up in the snow, enjoyed watching tobogganers, met a couple from Bright who shared their picnic table in the snow, then shared their lunch table with us at Dingley Dell Café. We walked in the snow which was quite an experience for me, tried to find a snow cache – but it was buried.



The clothes we wore were sufficient, thermals and waterproof hiking boots, thankfully. We had to hire snow chains, but were not needed, despite driving in the snow.

Our next trip to the snow was to Dinner Plain. Why Dinner Plain, well over a century ago, the cattlemen used to use the area to rest and graze their cattle. They would stop here for midday dinner. Again, we were compelled to hire chains, and even though 2wd were required to put them on, because we had a 4wd, we did not have to use them. When you drive the Alpine Way in winter, you are required by law, and for insurance purposes to carry them.

This delightful village, at around 1700 metres, in winter is covered in snow.

It feels like you have walked into a northern hemisphere Christmas card! We walked the village, watched the novice skiers on the training slopes, and laughed at a girl who came



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off her toboggan – her excuse, she was from Queensland – Sorry, that is our excuse!



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One of our day trips (we call them Sunday Drives) was to Beechworth and Eldorado. Eldorado boasts the smallest pub in Victoria, and the largest gold dredge I have ever seen.



Beechworth is a beautiful historic town where Ned Kelly was tried for his bushranging. We visited Beechworth about 20 years ago and stayed in the Tanswells Hotel. Has not changed much – we had lunch there this time.

I have started crocheting tartan rugs, with a decision to donate to nursing home where ever we might be when it is completed. My first one, completed in Bright was donated to the Aged Care Facility, Hawthorne Village in Bright. I received a beautiful letter back from them thanking me for gesture. The pattern for the tartan came from an old Women's Weekly – found on the internet and is no known "clan". My next one is an Australian tartan.



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John spent a lot of time “sticking” between repairing the galleon that he gave to Adam for safe keeping and the jinker he has been working on since before Christmas. The jinker almost finished, will go to the museum in Gatton when completed. We left the jinker in Adam’s care while we travel Tasmania – and forgot to take a final photo.

After saying farewell to Lesley, Jim & Bridgitte, we called into Nug Nug reserve for our first night back in to Freedom camping, checked out Lake Buffalo for a couple of caches, and drove up to Powers Lookout where Happy Power, the bushranger use to hide out. Pretty special lookout! Another overnigher at Tomei Reserve, part of a historical village the showgrounds that survived the fires of 2006

While we were visiting Mansfield, we had our final visit to the snow at Mt Buller. Another



interesting drive, love walking in the snow, but it was a bit scary when we went up in the chairlift, and the operator told us to “walk that way, just follow the lights” to get to the hotel. Some of the lights were out; we were walking in a white out, and, apparently, across ski slopes! We did find the hotel, fortunately, but were told later that the operator should not

have directed us across the snow. We did enjoy a strong whiskey at the hotel. While we enjoyed the village, thought that Dinner Plain was better.

After leaving Mansfield, and visiting the pretty town of Jamieson, where we waked part of their heritage trail, we travelled along logging tracks through villages of Kevington and Woods Point, the area being known for gold mining in the early days; both Kevington and Woods Point having historic hotels (we love these old pubs). We continued along these tracks till we made our way into Marysville, another town that was devastated in the 2009 fires.



Now the town is modern, still a lot of house blocks have not been rebuilt, and you can still smell the ash in the air. There is a very moving tribute to the townsfolk at the Visitors Information Centre; so for someone who only watched the fires and aftermath television media, I left the town feeling quite moved.

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The Dargo pub had been on my bucket for years, so made the detour, drove up the narrow winding road from Sale.

We were offered a free camp behind the pub, beside the river, so stayed for a couple of days, watching bikers come out of the hills (a popular place for dirt bikers), several sessions at the historic pub, and checked out the museum.

The area was developed for the gold mine at Grant nearby, Dargo being the service town. Another Bucket List ticked!



We found the little fishing village of Port Albert, which apparently has the best fish and chips in the state – the verdict is still out on that, but they do have a really interesting Maritime Museum, housed in the old bank.

Phillip Island, a bucket list item for John, was checked out. We visited the interesting Churchill Island, where Samuel Ames, the former Mayor of Melbourne lived in the 1870s, and enjoyed the heritage farm and house.



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We also saw our first Cape Barren Geese Phillip Island reminded us of Norfolk Island, with rolling green hills, falling into the ocean.

Mornington Peninsular was visited, but when we found out we had to pay around \$58.00 per night for an unpowered site, we turned around and found a caravan park with better rates. We did not go back onto the peninsular.



We caught the ferry from Sorrento to Queenscliff, and on arrival, found the Queenscliff Fort where we spent several hours in howling winds doing the tour of the site.

We had a caravan park booked at Werribee South which is only about 20 minute drive from Adam's house at Sunshine, so we were on hand for his house warming party.

Nearby to Werribee is a WWII bomber Liberator that is being restored, and the Point Cook RAAF Museum and the Werribee Mansion, all of which were visited, between visits to Adam to help him with his house warming party.



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House warming party over, and a date looming for a ride on a big ship, we said farewell to the mainland for our visit to (next month's blog)