



## **FIVE DAYS IN AUTUMN**

### **SUNDAY 6 – THURSDAY 10 MARCH**

### **2022**

**DAY 1:** 19 members were more than delighted to get away for a few days on this Trade Travel tour, but a really early start from Penshurst was necessary. James from Palmers Coaches was our driver and, being another of Sydney's many, consecutive soggy days, the coach was loaded in record time and we were on the road by 6.45 am, with a very easy two-hour trip to Goulburn. With a few spare minutes up his sleeve, James took us past the Rail Heritage Centre, pointing out some of the gorgeous old buildings, then it was an hour's break with morning tea at the very popular Trappers Bakery. Coincidentally, the young guy serving us was from Penshurst! Fine rain as we left, and a couple of young guys, who'd taken off at speed, were looking rather sheepish after losing control and crashing (looked like a parent's car!) at the nearby roundabout. Fortunately, no-one else was involved. Despite showers, the countryside still appeared dry, lots of sheep and we passed a large windfarm before taking a detour to Gunning. Now 11 am and sunny, but we were still early so a quick drive through quaint Jugiong and a photo-stop on the hill overlooking this picturesque area. 37 km to Gundagai from there.



Located on Gundagai outskirts is the (tiny) Dog on the Tuckerbox, so another photo-stop here, before heading to the Information Centre in town to collect guides, Casey and Jacki, for a one-hour tour of the town. The highlights were a few minutes spent at the historic Railway Station, then the Rotary Hill Lookout (complete with horses) for wonderful views and, of course, passing the Murrumbidgee River which has been the cause of much heartache over the years with several severe floods. The most notable was in 1852 when the town was washed away and a third of the population (89 people) lost their lives. The last major flood was in March 2012. On return, we were given a few mins in the Information Centre to view Frank Rusconi's unique cathedral-in-miniature 'Rusconi's Marble Masterpiece'.

A substantial light lunch was at the Gundagai District Services Club and our group's photo was taken across the road in front of the gorgeous copper statue of Snake Gully folks Dad, Dave, Mum and Mabel. Nearby was Yarri and Jacky Jacky, a fabulous larger than life-size, bronze sculpture to commemorate the 165th anniversary of the Great Flood of Gundagai in 1852, celebrating their heroic work, along with other members of the Wiradjuri tribe, in saving some 69 townsfolk from the floodwaters.



It was now 2.30 pm, hot and time to move on. We joined the Sturt Highway and just over an hour later we'd arrived in Wagga Wagga, a huge place with a very impressive hospital. The Quality Hotel Rules Club, situated on the outskirts and just up the road from the correctional centre, was our accommodation for the four nights. All of our breakfasts and dinners would be here. Needless to say, after such an early start, we were exhausted and in bed early that night.

**DAY 2:** A beautiful day, very much in contrast to Sydney which was still suffering torrential rain. Today we would spend in Wagga Wagga, so an easy day. 7 am breakfast and departure at 8.45. James took us on a cook's tour, before collecting our guide Karen from Wagga Visitors Centre for a city tour. The largest inland city in NSW with a pop of 65,000, the name was originally derived from the local Wiradjuri Aboriginal language on whose land the city now grows. 'Wagga' means 'crow' and to create the plural, the Wiradjuri people repeat the word, translating to 'the place of many crows'. However, in August 2019, a new meaning was officially adopted in the city's first Reconciliation Action Plan and it now means the much happier 'many dances and celebrations'.



For the next hour, we covered a lot of ground, passing the beautiful St Michael's Cathedral (one of 25 churches in the area), the infamous Murrumbidgee River, Wollundry Lagoon and Civic Centre, driving through the main streets of Baylis & Fitzmaurice where we gazed lovingly at all the great shops (hoping to get back there in some free time), the railway station and at least three public schools including the attractive South Wagga Public opened in 1892. Making our way through the 22-acre Botanic Gardens, we felt incredibly jealous of the locals enjoying their morning constitutional in this lovely spot, and how wonderful that

this area is available to all 24 hrs a day. We passed Riverina TAFE, a high school and a large sports centre, before dropping Karen and spending a few mins in the Visitor Centre.

We were the first visitors to the WW Rail Heritage Station Museum nearby since Covid-19 began, and, with the lack of crowds and funds during those two years, volunteers Phil, Peter and Rob welcomed us with open arms. A talk first and morning tea, before a quick drive over the railway line to the heritage-listed station for a short tour. In 1874, the Department of Public Works, Railway Branch, accepted a tender for extension of the Great Southern Railway from Goulburn to Wagga Wagga. The station opened in 1879 as 'South Wagga Wagga', after the Main South line was extended from Bomen, 7.5 kilometres to the north, serving as the terminus until the line was extended to Gerogery in 1880. It was renamed 'Wagga Wagga' in 1882. We then spent time in the Railway Gang Sheds which are not large, but house an amazing collection of tools, old signs and railway machinery. Returning to the Museum, a lovely light lunch was provided by Robyn, Sue and Judy. Afterwards, like an excited bunch of kids, we hung around the property's back fence eagerly awaiting the arrival and departure of the twice-daily XPT. After a wave to the driver and a toot in return, it was 1.30 pm and time to leave.



Ten minutes away was the RAAF Wagga Aviation Heritage Centre near the gates to the RAAF Base. Here, we were greeted by Nigel and Lewis (or Louis) who pointed out the very recently painted water tower by Sam Brooks (titled 'Then. Now. Always') and the quaint open-sided corrugated iron church, before a walk through the Heritage Centre with two young female trainees. The centre was originally opened in 1995 as the 'RAAF Museum – Wagga Annex' to provide a focus on the RAAF's involvement in the Riverina and to provide access to the history and memorabilia of military aviation and military training. The facility was closed for building repairs in 2003 and re-

opened as the newly named 'RAAF Wagga Heritage Centre' in 2010 (now known as the RAAF Wagga Aviation Heritage Centre). As the last remaining Riverina World War II Base within a network of bases incorporating Narrandera, Temora, Deniliquin, Tocumwal, Cootamundra and Uranquinty, the centre represents the only repository for regional specific RAAF memorabilia. Memorabilia, photographs and documents on display are intended to represent the activities of the wider region during World War II and the subsequent activities at RAAF Base Wagga. Outside were several planes on display including a Mirage and a Canberra Bomber, but the F111 stole the show. We perhaps could have stayed longer admiring these, but they were located in the full sun and it was extremely hot!



Another twenty minutes to our last call of the day, the gorgeous 'The Wild Vine' (run by Nick and his wife Kate) where we spent a couple of hours very happily sitting under the trees, surrounded by grapevines and enjoying several generous wine samples plus an enormous afternoon tea. Such a delightful main building and grounds and ideal for a wedding or special occasion. We were absolutely spoilt here and were going to struggle with our impending dinner at the hotel. A little of the history taken from their website: Formerly known as the 'Wagga Winery', the vineyard started its life in 1987 when the first rows of Touriga were planted. The main building and cellar door were opened in 1990, after being lovingly hand crafted by local builder and character Don Smith. 6,000 Australian cypress logs were hand cut and carefully arranged to emulate a structure from the old-world colonial days.

Don was an avid collector and many of the building supplies for his creations were salvaged from buildings in the local area and surrounds: The slate in the restrooms came from the Wagga and Jerilderie courthouses; the main bar is a haberdashery counter from the old Huthwaite's department store; the cedar entrance doors are from the Prince of Wales Hotel in Wagga and the front windows are from the maternity ward at the Wagga Base Hospital. In 1997, after winning a number of wine and tourism awards, Mr Smith sold the popular venue to a local family. Unfortunately, 2012 saw massive flooding in the area which devastated many homes and businesses including the vineyard, but the local community pulled together to re-open the doors. Fast forward to late 2018, when Kate and Nick had a crazy idea. They had long admired the property and convinced themselves to buy this beautiful but tired little vineyard on the outskirts of Wagga Wagga. Fast forward to 2020, they have bottled their first vintage! Pretty amazing for a couple who had absolutely no experience when it comes to the vineyard and wine making. As they said, there is only one way to learn, jump in the deep end and paddle like crazy! This was definitely one of our tour's highlights, and, yes, we did struggle with our dinner that night!

**DAY 3:** Some showers. An 8.15 am departure and today would be spent in the Lockhart Shire with the first stop at Uranquinty to view their Interpretive Panels about the RAAF based there during WWII and the migrant hostel after the war. It was now quite wet, but the countryside particularly dry so the rain will be appreciated. A few minutes to The Rock and there was no doubt which of the several hills the town was named after! We would return here later, after a quick visit to the oldest village (1874) in the shire, Yerong Creek, where we admired the new water tower mural 'Through Their Eyes', designed and painted by Heesco – we would see more of his work later. The mural tells a story of the town's past with reference to their War veterans, their children, their racing past and their rural identity.



Another tour highlight was next, the 100-acre Marrocka Emu Farm, another beautiful spot in rolling hills in The Rock area. The owners, Ian Marston and his wife, supplied a generous morning tea and gave a talk and tour of their property, one of the very few emu farms left in Australia. In fact, the closest to them is in Yarrawonga, Victoria. After being many years in the Defence Force, Ian purchased his property in the early 1990s and, realising that he had to go down a less traditional farming route, he thought he'd try ratites (emus). Everything went well for a while until bird flu hit which put a stop to production for five years,

then things picked up suddenly. Very popular with artists for carving and dot painting, they sell 300 blown eggs per year, emu feathers are sold to a Riverina craftsman who supplies all the plumes to the Royal Australian Armoured Corps and the big-ticket item is the wonderful emu oil which is used for health and beauty. 100ml of pure oil sells for about \$500! Ian keeps a couple of hundred birds at a time with two males to every female. They lay 10-20 eggs a year, that's twice each five-month season, approx. May – September. Taking us to a shed, Ian showed us the incubation room with 1,000 eggs produced last year! Such an interesting place and we reluctantly left for The Rock township just before midday.

According to the Aussie Towns website, it is claimed that if you stand on the top of The Rock itself, which rises 364 m above the surrounding plains of the Riverina, you will - at least in theory - have an uninterrupted view all the way to the coast of Western Australia. Well, none of us was willing to climb up there to check, but we did perk up when we were given 30 mins to walk through this very pretty village and pay our respects at the Gallipoli Panels located in the Avenue of Honour. The town was extremely quiet as far as people were concerned, but the corellas were a different matter – there were hundreds of them!



Departing The Rock, we passed a huge grain storage facility and also a small observatory. According to the Charles Sturt University website: Charles Sturt, in collaboration with Lockhart Shire Council and The Rock Progress Association, officially opened The Rock Regional Observatory on Friday 18 February 2022. The observatory will be used for educational astronomical observation and research activities for residents and visitors. The facility can be used by the general community and educational institutions to encourage interest and research in astronomy. Charles Sturt has contributed to the project by providing in-kind access to the University's telescope and additional astronomical equipment as well as educational and research access.



Next was Milbrulong and a brief photo stop at its water tower Rosella mural, painted by famous Australian muralist Scott Nagy and completed in June 2020. When the population of Milbrulong was asked what they wanted on this mural, they voted unanimously in support of a Rosella bird themed mural as they felt it reflected the town's identity and recognised the benefit of tying into the nearby Lockhart water tower. Also, Wiradjuri elders have confirmed that Milbrulong is their word for 'Rosella'.

Once in Lockhart, we were given a light lunch at Steve's Bakery which was nice, but staff seemed a little disorganised. A quick walk around the shops before visiting the extensive Green's Gonyah Museum & Doris Golder Gallery. There was a lot to see both inside and out and, fortunately, the showers held off. The Lockhart Shire website says of Doris Golder's amazing wool portraits on display: Made from 100% wool! These amazing pictures are created using washed and combed natural wool and are the only pictures of their type in the world. Washed, combed and undyed, renowned local artist Doris has been using naturally coloured wool to create an amazing array of landscapes and portraits since the early 1980s - from Slim Dusty and Greg Norman to Bob Hawke, Tim Fischer and many more famous faces. Patience was a very important factor in creating these art works, where Doris may have spent all day putting wrinkles on a face. Each portrait took approximately three months to complete (not full time). Doris spent over 14 years successfully creating these rare pieces of art, during which time over 30 portraits were completed.



We were joined by a local guide, Dorothy, for the Lockhart town tour/sculpture and heritage trail. For an approx population of 1,000, the town has great amenities including a hospital, swimming pool, and school with a range of K-12 which runs a horticultural plot in a separate location. We were able to photograph some of the town's metal sculptures – with around 20 high quality farm art sculptures on permanent display. Many of these are award-winning National Farm Art pieces from Lockhart's Spirit of the Land Festival, a celebration to the resilience of those who live and work on the land, created from recycled farm materials and reflecting the natural elements of the land.

After dropping off our guide, we spent time at their beautifully-painted water tower mural in the CWA Park in the centre of town. It depicts a flowing waterfall and shows off the area's flora and fauna, and was painted using freehand spray cans, by artists Scott Nagy and Janne Birkner (aka Krimson) in just over two weeks. It was officially opened in October 2018. On the outskirts of town and before the 45-min trip to Wagga, we were able to photograph the Pioneer Memorial Gates plus more metal sculptures. Our hotel excelled themselves with a great dinner that night.



**DAY 4:** Cloudy, but fine. Departing at 8.15 am, it was an easy 45-min trip to lovely Coolamon and the Fire Station Museum with its proud owner, Chris Berry, delighted to show us around. For such a small building, it housed an amazing selection of fire memorabilia, most of which were collected by Chris. A quick walk downhill to the Coolamon Cheese & Café for a talk, sampling and morning tea, followed by a look around the unusual heritage-listed 1909 Up-To-Date Store where the remarkable Lamson Cash Railway System was demonstrated, a museum housing farming machinery etc, and The Mavis Furner Collection, an exquisite collection of over 200 crochet garments, accessories and photographs. On the Coolamon Shire website it says that the store was originally divided into several different departments which included grocery, ironmongery, crockery, drapery, mercery, millinery, haberdashery, clothing and footwear. In fact, it is true that anything and everything, from a plough to a piano, could be purchased from here!



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By 11.45 am, we were back on the road, this time to Junee. Lots of sheep and grain-growing on the way. At the supposedly-haunted Monte Cristo homestead overlooking town, we were greeted by Olive the owner who is getting on in years, who talked about her home and how she has run the place single-handedly since her husband died (which would be particularly difficult, even for the best of us). She introduced her daughter-in-law who runs the adjacent Doll Museum, and we were taken through both properties, one small group at a time. Wikipedia says: Constructed by local pioneer Christopher William Crawley in 1885, Monte Cristo is a double-storey late-Victorian-style manor, with the Crawley family remaining in residence until 1948. The house then stood empty under the care of several caretakers until 1963, when it was purchased by Reg and Olive Ryan, who restored it to its current condition.



A quick drive down the hill to the Licorice & Chocolate Factory, located inside a picturesque old flour mill, for a substantial lunch and, sadly, limited shopping time in their great shop. Staff were very accommodating, but there was only an hour here to eat, shop, toilet and photos - a bit more time would've been good.

Back on the Olympic Hwy heading towards Wagga, Wollundry Grove Olives was the next venue for an enjoyable talk, tour, tasting and an olive oil freebie each to bring home. Joo-Yee Lieu, the co-owner with her husband Bruce Spinks (absent today), was ably assisted by her friend Cassandra (who is also a judge in the olive oil industry). Their website says: Since the plantation was established in 1998, Wollundry Grove has developed as one of the most significant olive groves in the Wagga Wagga Region. The 2000 olive trees were planted on a traditional grove layout, with access to supplementary water from the rural supply pipeline. The current owners took over the business in 2010 after many years in the grain and seed industry. Wollundry Grove has undergone an intense makeover and upgrade with the replacement of its oil processing plant. Increased efficiency and the reduction of waste water has meant that the grove can now accommodate the needs of smaller producers and local groves to convert their olive fruit into fresh extra virgin olive oil. As well, the processing shed complex has been expanded with a sales and tasting room, plus cool room and oil storage areas will be extended.



Leaving there at 4 pm, it was only a few mins back to Wagga and, situated in the city's Civic Centre complex, was their Art Gallery and National Art Glass Collection, due to close for the day, so a bit of a rush to tour these. Their Facebook page says: Wagga Wagga Art Gallery inspires a vibrant and innovative arts culture. We engage with our local and global communities and we support artists regionally and nationally. Designed by Melbourne architect Garner Davis in 1999, the Art Gallery includes seven exhibition areas including the home of the Margaret Carnegie Print Collection which consists of over 1200 original prints by some of Australia's foremost artists. The Glass Gallery houses a world class, nationally significant collection of contemporary art glass, featuring approximately 500 pieces. Over 40,000 people each year visit these exhibitions, events, educational and public programs and all are free to the public. Too tired to walk, a small group of us chose instead to relax outside admiring the peaceful Wollundry Lagoon and its ducks.

**DAY 5:** Fully boarded for our trip home and departing at 8.15 am, it was another beautiful day, but a close call with a small kangaroo on the Olympic Hwy as we headed north-east - interestingly it was the only roo seen on the entire trip! By 9.30, we'd arrived in Cootamundra, meeting up with our very pleasant guide, Yvonne, who led us through the Captains' Walk featuring over 40 bronze sculptures of former Australian cricket captains located in Jubilee Park. Morning tea at the coach, then with Yvonne leading the way in her car, it was a quick look at the outside of Bradman's birthplace before running out of time.





By 11 am, we found ourselves in Murrumburrah (a twin town with Harden) and the Light Horse Memorial, our meeting point with guide Lorraine. She explained things well, but unfortunately it was so noisy with passing traffic taking a short-cut through the town, that a few of us didn't hear a word she said. A feature of the town is this memorial to the Australian Light Horse regiment, its origin in Harden-Murrumburrah by the establishment on 28 August 1897 of the 1st Australian (Volunteer) Horse by 34 men from the district. The two large bronze statues depicting Trooper Bradford, one of the original volunteers, and J A Kenneth Mackay, prominent in the development of the 1st Australian Horse, were the work of sculptor Carl Valerius. Mr Valerius was there to talk with us about Australia's greatest warhorse 'Bill the Bastard', but sadly (and rather embarrassingly) we had to leave and there was no time to hear his great stories.

Just down the road was Harden and the Harden-Murrumburrah Flour Mill with its beautifully painted mural by Mongolian street artist, Heesco, completed in early 2021 and the 46th work of art on the silo trail. The image depicts the mill's history and the golden grain that delivered prosperity to the region. A few mins here to take photos,



before Lorraine returned us to Murrumburrah, stopping outside the WhichCraft & Coffee Cottage (not on the itinerary), a 19<sup>th</sup> century building with crafts for sale filling several rooms. Lovely volunteers and, after being starved of shopping opportunities on this trip, we had the best 20 mins here with many buying up big in that short time. Apparently, their cottage's scones are great too, but our preordered lunch was waiting. The craft cottage is highly recommended for any future Trade Travel trips. A wonderful lunch at the quaint 1861 Light Horse Hotel followed.



Our guide told us that, in former times, Murrumburrah was considered the 'posh' part of town and Harden was the 'working man's end'. However, the story taken from the Aussie Towns website, is: Although there are two towns - Harden and Murrumburrah - the reality is that there is no clear point where one town ends and the other begins and the Burley Griffin Way runs in a single, wide road through both places. Why two towns? The site of the town of Murrumburrah was identified in the 1840s. When the railway arrived in 1877 a new station was established a mile from Murrumburrah on flat land in the location that became known as Harden. Harden was the railway station. Murrumburrah was the town. This is an agricultural area with both the rich local soils and the cool, dry climate being ideal for wheat, oats, canola, lupins, mustard oil seed and cold climate fruits including nashi pears, cherries, strawberries, peaches, nectarines, prunes and apricots. The local economy is driven by agriculture with both towns operating as service centres for the surrounding district which also includes large grain-storage silos, sheep, cattle, horse studs and vineyards.



At around 1.20 pm, we headed directly for home, with just the one stop in Berrima, Harpers Mansion where we were greeted by John. By this time, the only thing we could think of was a trip to the bathroom and the volunteers here were very accommodating, offering their one toilet for us all to use. However, there was enough time to look around the home and the National Trust website says: Overlooking the township, Harper's Mansion was built by James and Mary Harper soon after 1834, when they bought



land in Berrima. James was the only son of William Harper and Margaret Morgan, both convicts. A grand vision derailed by a 19<sup>th</sup> century financial downturn, Harper's Mansion and its colonial-style furnishings stands on two of its original 100 acres. At one stage, the home was owned by the Catholic Church, but, after decades of use and neglect, it was restored by the National Trust from 1978 and opened to the public in 1985. Its two acres of gardens made for strolling (but it was cold and damp and sadly we were out of time) are full of cool climate heritage plants and feature one of the largest hedge mazes in Australia which would've been great fun.

Following was an uneventful trip and we arrived in Penshurst by 6 pm. Robyn and Gary won the Lucky Seat Prizes and clever Annetta was the 'Guess the Km' winner – she guessed 1450 and the actual total was 1452! A huge thank you to Trade Travel, our organiser Elizabeth Northcott and James for the very long-awaited and enjoyable five-day escape to the country! Also, many thanks to Chris and Ron Warner who made a most welcome contribution to the photos, many of which are here and on our website.

