

PENSHURST RSL TRAVEL CLUB



covered

“Rediscover Woolyungah” was the theme behind the day tour to Wollongong on 21 June. This trip booked out almost immediately, so it was a full coachload, with driver George, that set off from Penshurst at 8.30 on a damp morning, following several days of wind and rain. It was a good run down the highway and, by the time we’d reached the Wollongong Botanic Garden, the showers had

vanished which was fortunate as there didn’t appear to be a seating area for morning tea. After enjoying a cuppa in the sunshine, there was time to roam around this lovely area.

The site was originally inhabited by the Dharawal Aboriginal people who remain the custodians of the land. After the arrival of Europeans in the Illawarra, James Spearing acquired 2,000 acres of land in 1825 which included the current Botanic Garden site. Over many years, there were several owners, with the estate being subdivided into farming and housing lots. In 1929, Arthur Sidney Hoskins purchased 75 acres of the land and, in 1951, he donated 46 acres to Wollongong City Council for the building of the garden. After more buying and selling, the area of the garden these days is around 69 acres (28 ha). The first plantings were in 1964 and the garden was officially opened to the public on 2 January 1971. It certainly is a delightful spot and, strangely, one that was only known to a few of us.



Then we were off to the Wollongong Head Lighthouse on Flagstaff Point. Completed in 1936 by the Dept of Shipping and Transport, it was the first new lighthouse in NSW since 1903, as well as the first fully automatic flashing light to be installed in NSW. It was built as a coastal light, but also to service busy Port Kembla to the south. Unusually, the old Wollongong Breakwater Lighthouse is nearby, but it was decommissioned in 1974. We had about half an hour to wander and take in the wonderful views here.



A couple of km from the city centre was the Builders Club and their extremely popular “all-you-can-eat” lunch was enjoyed by our group, before the short drive to the Science Centre and Planetarium, rebranded in early 2018 to be known as Science Space. This is located at the University of Wollongong’s Innovation Campus and there are over 100 interactive exhibits over two floors which we found a lot of fun. We were then ushered into their small theatre for an informative liquid nitrogen science show, before moving to the planetarium for a brief talk and a marvellous new 30-min film “Violent Universe”, definitely not suitable for young children!

Many of us hadn’t been to Wollongong in quite some time and were amazed at the development and how attractive the city is. It’s no wonder that people are flocking to live in the area. We’d had a most interesting day and, as well, been given the opportunity to learn something new!

Time to head home where our coach arrived around 5.15 pm.

