

The Combined Probus Club of Wheelers Hill Inc.
THE VICTORIAN HIGH COUNTRY TOUR
19th to 24th May 2012

Commentary: Robin Bray and Ian Dale.

Photographs: Barbara Matthews, Val Dale, Ellen Stokes, Ellie Dolinsky and Robin Bray.

Day 1, Saturday, 19th May 2012
Melbourne to Bright.

Thirty three members and friends departed from Wheelers Hill Shopping Centre at 10.00AM in a very comfortable gold coach from Ballarat driven by Julian. We headed north out of the city via the Hume Freeway with an early lunch stop at a nice café in Seymour. We then re-boarded the coach and drove on to Glenrowan for a short stop to stretch our legs and check out local Ned Kelly history and to have a coffee. It was then on to Bright via the Great Alpine Way arriving at the award winning Ovens Valley Motor Inn, our accommodation for the next few days where we were met by our hosts Shannon and Simeon Crawley. After settling in to our cosy rooms we enjoyed our first dinner together in the roomy and warm dining room.



Our travelling group – Photographed by our driver, Julian.

Back Row: John, Robin, Lindsay, John, Bev, Barbara, John, Gordon, Peter, John, John, Ian.
Centre Row: Margaret, Millie, John, Barbara, Russell, Annette, Sandra, Barbara, Wendy, Sid, Val, Valerie.
Front Row: Ros, Peter, Norma, Helen, Ellie, Rosemary, Ellen, Dorothy, Iris, Freda, Margaret.



Peter and Valerie tucking into their lunch in Seymour.



Ellen is tempted by a nice slice of cake!



Robin and John finish off the 10th Anniversary cake.

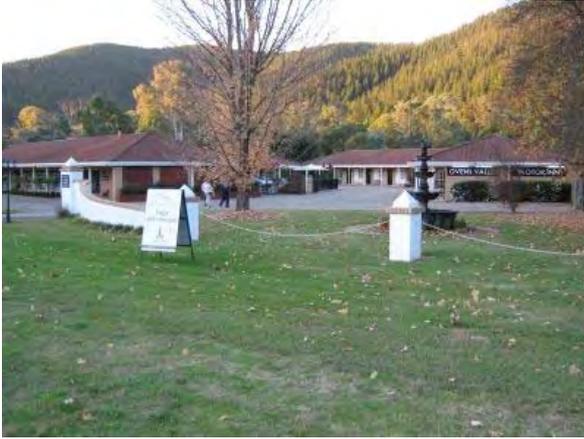


Iris on the strong arm of the law!



Rosemary, Bev and Lindsay, John, John, Sandra, Gordon Sid, John and Margaret beneath the statue of Ned Kelly in Glenrowan.





The Ovens Valley Motor Inn.



Settling in to dinner in the dining room are John, John, Norma, Helen, Margaret, John, Julian and Wendy.



Gordon, Sandra, Bev, Lindsay, Margaret and Sid.



Freda, Ellen, Ros, Dorothy, Barbara and Iris.



Valerie, Val, Millie, John, Ellie, Peter, Ian and Peter.



Rosemary, John, Barbara, John, Barbara and Robin.

Day 2, Sunday, 20th May 2012
The Berry Farm, Beechworth & Albury.

After a very comfortable night's sleep we were up the next morning for an 8AM full breakfast served in the dining room to be ready for a 9AM departure for our day of sightseeing. Our first stop was the Berry Farm on the road north towards Myrtleford. We were welcomed by our ebullient, funny and rugby loving hostess who was keen for us to crowd into her little shop containing berry goodies. Ian took the opportunity to add some notes to his list of 'Funny High Country' stories which you can read at the end of this report.



Peter wanders out of the Berry Farm shop. It was a bit chilly sitting outside listening to the Berry Lady.



Does Ian resemble 'Mal Meningaberry'? – Nah, Ian's hair is grey! All laughs with the Berry lady.



Val muses as Ian takes notes.



Freda shows off her bottle of local shiraz.

After visiting the Berry Farm we re-boarded the coach and headed into beautiful Beechworth. Here we met our local guide Pat who took us on an extensive tour of Beechworth learning about its history, architecture, interesting people and places of interest.



Pat shows us around historic Beechworth.



The town centre of Beechworth is full of history.



Inside the old Beechworth Sanatorium property. This used to be the men's quarters.

At lunchtime we left Pat, Julian and the coach and spent a couple of hours having lunch and looking at some of the interesting places we had seen from the coach. These included the Telegraph Station where telegrams can still be sent around Australia for delivery the old fashioned way. Likewise the old prison with its high sandstone walls, the Courthouse, The Gold Office and Treasury, The Chinese Protector's Office, The Warden's Office, The Bakery and the Chinese Garden. The autumn colours of the trees were spectacular.



Ian, Freda, Iris, Margaret and Peter.
Millie and John seated.



John, Barbara and Rosemary under the Golden Elm.



Robin outside the historic buildings.



The operating Telegraph Station.

Following our luncheon spare time, we had arranged to all meet at the Beechworth Honey Shop for a tour of this business which has been owned and operated by the Robinson family since the 1880's. We were taken through the museum section and shown in great detail how their honey is produced and marketed. It was a fascinating display and well worth the visit. Of course, we spent a little bit of money in the shop afterwards.



A live apiary display in the Honey Shop.



Intently listening to the audio-visual display.



Honey production is fascinating.



There's time to shop afterwards.



Freda, John and Margaret just love their honey flavoured ice-creams!

Whilst in Beechworth we were joined by Annette and Russell from the Ringwood Clock Tower Probus Club who would enjoy the rest of the trip us.

The plan for the rest of the day was to head to Albury for a buffet dinner and return to Bright around 8PM. As we were a little early into Albury we had time to first wander around the beautiful Botanic Gardens.



The four ladies just fit nicely into the park bench.

One of the beautifully coloured trees in the Gardens.

After a huge buffet dinner in the Albury Club it was back on the coach and drive back to Bright.

Day 3, Monday, 21st May 2012

The Alpaca Farm, Mt. Buffalo, The Green Tea Plantation.

The next day after breakfast we were off again this time firstly to the Bright Information Centre and then to Buckland Valley alpaca farm at the foot of the beautiful Mt. Buffalo.



In the Bright Information Centre.



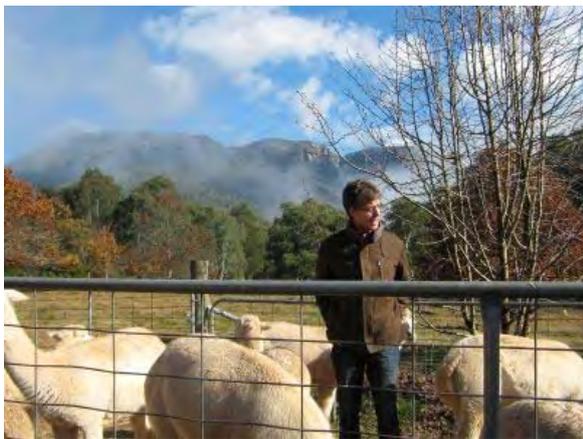
At the alpaca farm with the owner, Keith.



These animals are used by sheep farmers in their herds to keep foxes away from the lambs.



The alpacas are so cute and friendly they can keep your interest going for ages. But we eventually had to leave, but only after visiting the wool shop and having a cup of coffee too! It was then on to Mt. Buffalo.



Mt. Buffalo looms over the farm in the distance.



Gordon, Sandra, Robin, Bev and Lindsay at the lookout atop Mt. Buffalo.



A spectacular view from the mountain.



Rosemary, Ellen and Bev in front of the old Chalet.



Ros and Ellen have found a friendly parrot.



One of the beautiful birds on the mountain.



Ellie with friends John and Millie.



Ellie and Peter pose in front of the Chalet.

The drive up the mountain was windy and slow but extremely picturesque. Upon reaching the top we alighted and spent some time exploring the old chalet and bush walking before sitting down to lunch. Julian produced the picnic lunch from under the bus. Following a group photo shoot we headed back down the mountain arriving at the green tea plantation.



Farmer Colin explained how he and a Japanese investor had established the quality green tea plantation.



We listened intently to Colin's presentation then retired to his shop to sample some of the pure green tea.



John, Iris and Margaret trying the refreshing high quality green tea. It has a distinctive flavour.

After the tasting we had an hour to spare before dinner so Julian drove us back into Bright to have a look around the shops before arriving at our Motel.

Day 4, Tuesday, 22nd May 2012

The Apple Farm, The Red Stag Restaurant, Milawa Cheese Factory and The Gapstead Winery.

This morning we headed off to the National Trust village of Wandilagong and the Alpine Apple Orchard nestled amongst the foothills along the Ovens River Valley. Being early there was not much action to watch other than to purchase apples from a wide selection available in the shed. A couple of workmen kindly spent some time answering questions posed to them.



A view of the Alpine's packing shed and orchard.



Lindsay and Peter asking questions.



Some of the very colourful foliage in the valley.



Time to wander around the apple orchard yard.

Then it was off to visit a deer and emu farm and partake lunch in their Red Stag Restaurant near Myrtleford.



John and Millie at the Red Stag restaurant.



Enjoying sandwiches for lunch at the Red Stag.



We were given a very humorous talk about the history of the property and its wildlife.

Then we went into the yard to mingle with some very friendly animals much to everyone's delight.



Sandra patting the docile deer.



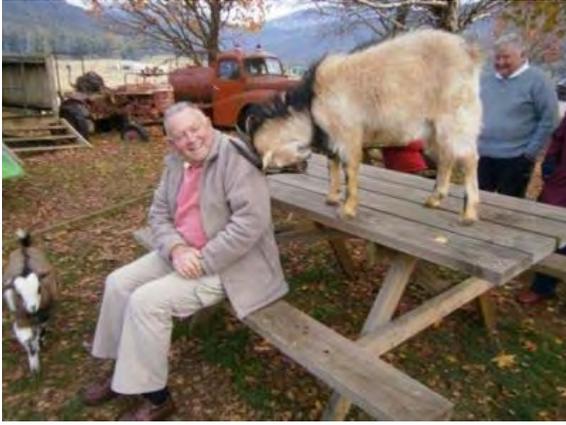
John is happy whilst the goat stays on the other side of the fence.



Sid, Rosemary and Dorothy with the baby goats.



Dorothy pats the goat confined to the picnic table.



Ian decides to accept the goat's challenge to test out their relative strengths. Who won? It was just fun!

After lunch we headed further north to the Milawa Cheese Factory for a sit down tasting of a range of delectable cheeses laid out for our pleasure. We were given a rundown of the selected cheeses before tasting. It was still a bit too soon after lunch, but never mind, we managed to make a good job of the fare.



Barbara and Ian at The Milawa Cheese Factory. The platters were filled with beautiful fruit and cheeses.



It was lovely sunny afternoon to sit, chat and nibble the cheese presented for our pleasure.



Ellie, Gordon, Sandra and Ellen.



Bev and Lindsay.

As if we hadn't sampled enough wares today, we finally descended on the Gapsted Winery for a tasting!



The Gapsted Winery.



Some of the grape vines.



We were given a talk about their wines.



Then into the tasting room for samples.



John likes a red.



Peter, John, Wendy and John sampling a wine.

We finally retired to the Motel for dinner and afterwards some of us enjoyed a game of cards or the new dice game of Zilch recommended by John and Barbara.



Margaret, Ros, John and Freda playing cards.



Barbara, Barbara, Rosemary, Robin and John playing Zilch.

Day 5. Wednesday, 23rd May 2012

Harrietville, The Lavender Hue Lavender Farm and The Mountain Fresh Trout Farm.

Our final full day in the Ovens River Valley started with a drive to Harrietville and our first stop was the Lavender Hue Farm where we were met by the unforgettable Verona. Verona is the quintessential hostess, full of fun and information and a patter which never stops for a breath. What a lovely lady! Following a detailed information session on lavender Verona and her 'quiet' hubby served up tea, coffee and lavender scones – delicious.



The Lavender Hue Farm.



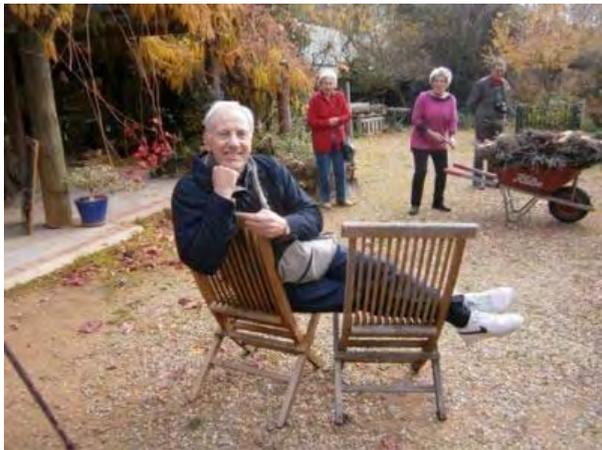
Verona's farm shop and restaurant.



Verona relates the history of the property...



... and we all listen intently.



John decides to take a break.



There is little that Verona doesn't know about lavender.



Barbara, Sandra and Gordon.



Lavender scones have been served.



Barbara and Rosemary tucking in to the scones.



Dorothy takes a bite.

After leaving Verona and her hubby to mind the lavender farm we drove to the old gold dredge pit outside Harrietville to view the lake, now called Tronah Lake after the old mining company, left by gold dredging operation from over 50 years ago. Then it was into Harrietville next to the stream for a picnic lunch.



Val, Robin and Ros on the bridge at the lake.



The dredge pit is now an algae filled lake.



The Dredge Buckets Memorial in Harrietville.



A picnic lunch next to the coach.



Lindsay and Bev at the old gold stream, Harrietville.



John and Barbara M's beaut cappuccinos.
(Just had to include these, aren't they great!)

After lunch we drove around the corner to visit the trout farm run by Peter and his staff. Our intention was to catch the meal for 26 of our company for their dinner tonight. The rest had ordered beef pie.



Peter shows us his trout and salmon ponds.



Typical fish being raised.



Peter tells us how he collects the fish eggs and raises the fingerlings in the large vats.



Most of us try our hand at fishing.



John's successful.



So is Ros.



Barbara shows her catch.



Rods and lines were everywhere.



Sandra has one too.

Following our successful fishing trip we drove back to Bright where we again spent a short time perusing the shops. Later a few caught the coach back to the Motel whilst others walked the short distance back, either along the old railway path or by the riverside.



The results of the catch prepared for dinner.



It went down with little remaining.

After dinner Vice President John made presentations on behalf of our group to Barbara and John for organising this terrific outing. Thank you both for a great trip.



John congratulates Barbara and John.

Day 6, Wednesday, 24th May 2012
Bright to Melbourne.

The following day we woke to misty rain, the first of our trip. How lucky we have been to have the best week for our trip weatherwise. We set off as usual heading for a morning tea stop at Euroa and a lunch stop at Seymour again. As we headed south the rain became more constant. As we neared our destination John made a presentation to Julian on our behalf in appreciation of his safe driving and being a great guide. We arrived back at Wheelers Hill around 3PM. What a great trip. Thanks again John and Barbara.

Now read on below for Ian's "High Country Autumn Stories".....

HIGH COUNTRY AUTUMN STORIES (by Ian)

MAY 2012

Saturday 19th saw a GOLD bus from Ballarat leave the Jells Park Shopping centre with 30+ excited travellers on board with Julian at the wheel. We welcomed John & Millie S, Gordon C, John P, Barbara G, Helen W and later Russell & Annette O.

Disclaimer :- From this point on any relationship to individuals with similar names is purely coincidental. No correspondence will be entered into !!!!!!!

Lunch saw us at a Seymour Tea House where they tried to feed all of us with minimal staff. Norma H ordered lunch - John H got his roast beef roll with LOTS of chips instead of his beef pie with LOTS of chips !

Ellie D stated that "Peter was funny but then he met me!"

She also said "I look after Peter but who looks after me!"

Peter D suggested that if we want to go to the Munich Beer Festival we should go before December 12 as the world will end then according to the Aztecs (possibly 21st).

Valerie R said Peter R is so into football "but it doesn't interest me as I have seen it all before!"

Sunday 20th. Why did Margaret P need to wear sunglasses to breakfast after the night before?

John H requested, and was given, a hug by the lady at the Bright Berry Farm.

Ian standing next to a Mal Malinga Berry scarecrow and Rosemary commented that he was looking a mirror image.

After buying a couple of jars of Berry Pepper Jam who got a free jar of jam for being a Smart Ar**.

Is Robin B getting forgetful ? He tried to put the toaster away – in the fridge!

At Beechworth Historic Precinct Russell and Annette joined the coach.

At the Beechworth Honey Shop tour Freda had no chair so sat on Ian's knee. Later in Albury as we were walking in shopping precinct, the only shop open was a Pharmacy. Val D said that's good if you want a pregnancy test kit and as quick as a flash Freda said "I only did it once and it was only for a minute !" she then realised what she had said.

The secret is out- Iris turned 89 on 12th May.. Congratulations...

Who were the good Samaritans who chased one of our ladies back to the bus with her coffee?.

Something missing on the bus – Barbara M suggested it was probably a Hypochondriac, this was quickly corrected to Kleptomaniac.

Iris crossing the road in Albury – puts her arm into John P's and says to Margaret "can I have your man?"

Margaret says" you can have him all night if you want"-Iris says" I wouldn't go that far" – Margaret says "neither would John!"

At midnight Norma H walked into a cupboard door. At least that is what she claimed wasn't it John ?

Monday 21st. Early this morning (sunrise) Iris took a walk to the Pages room to get her water bottle opened. No water in your tap Iris?

On to the Bright Visitors Centre then to the Buckland Valley Alpaca farm.

Our driver Julian had a mind of his own in relation to morning coffee stops !

Why did 14 people forget their warm coats before heading to Mt. Buffalo at -1 degree.

At the Alpaca farm Sandra asked "what are men ones are called ?" They are called Macho.(Females-Hembra)

When asked how do you tell a female Barbara M said "you look at its bum!" The owner said "actually we look for the ear tag in the right ear. It is easier that way!!"

Iris upset a female one and got a fright when it lashed out and kicked the fence in front of her.

At the summit of Mt. Buffalo John H found a bolt and asked Julian if it was off the bus. John said it was out of the blue ! He also had a rock which he said he found in a hard place !

Barbara M says her John is no good at cooking or odd jobs . Val D said he must be good at something if you married him. Barbara replied "well he did have a motor bike" Mmmmm.

Tuesday 22nd. Wandiligong, Nightingales Apple Orchard then Red Stag Deer Farm. On to Milawa Cheese Factory and Gapstead Winery.

Passed the Wandiligong Pub and Julian commented that they had a Bra throwing competition there and the winning bras were hung on the railing. Julian said first prize was a Booby prize.

Freda at the apple orchard asked "do you sell apples here ?"

Meanwhile Valerie R pointed out to the owner the noxious weed she found growing there.

Who were the 3 people who left the café in Glenrowan without paying for their coffee ?

Our lovely relaxing trip has definitely given Robin a sense of euphoria. Apparently he had a VIVID dream that the ASX had risen 1100 points in one days trade.

Only in your dreams Robin.

Poor starved Lindsay did not realise that if you wanted you could have two eggs plus bacon, tomato and sausage at breakfast as for three days he only got one lonely egg....

Margaret P is a good sport as she was overheard telling Freda that she could play with John tonight if she likes.

Who ordered coffee and paid for it but walked out to go shopping before it arrived ?

Some of the ladies on the bus commented that the aisle seems to be getting gradually narrower. Then one made a "Freudian slip" by saying the aisle was actually getting fatter !

Which wife did not allow her hubbie to buy his favourite baguette after tasting the French cheese at the cheese factory ?

Who took the leftover blue vein cheese in his pocket for supper ? (as if we needed it!)

Why was there an Emergency Paramedic Ambulance on standby during our cheese tasting?

Wednesday 23rd. Harrierville and Lavender Hue Lavender Farm and Mountain Fresh Trout Farm.

Which Dorothy went walking on her own without her mobile phone against her daughters express wishes.. We do not know....

At the Lavender Farm there were two seats but Iris (89) would not sit down as they were for "old people". Iris told us how Porepunkah got its name. Seems there was a much loved aboriginal called Punka and one day he had too much of something and fell into the river and drowned.. The townsfolk gathered and kept muttering "poor Punka, poor Punka" BOOM BOOM.....

Each night John H hogged the seat near the fire until a reserved sign was placed there thanks to Isabella. Beverley B was adamant that there would be no story about her -UNTIL- at Harrierville she fell into the freezing stream ...Poor Bev...Poor Bev.....

John H said anyone who wants breast stroke lessons see Lindsay for bookings.

Was Bev starting to train for the London Olympics ?

On to the Trout Farm. They use a tiny amount of Clove Oil in the water to partly anaesthetise the trout to handle the girl ones and milk the eggs.

All the men wanted to know how many litres they could buy ,(Clove oil not eggs).

So to the fishing with poles. Freda caught her first fish ever and Ros caught our first fish for dinner (26 needed).

Barbara W took the honours for the most but some had to go back as they were too BIG.

Wendy gets the prize for the only plastic chair caught (she thought it was a crocodile).

Presentations were made tonight to John and Barbara with our very special thanks for organising such a superb fun tour.

Thursday 24th. Homeward bound with lunch stop at Seymour.

Freda suggested we could buy Subways for lunch-we could have long ones like men wear in New Guinea and throw them over our shoulders (Ask her - I just report what is said.)

Julian was thanked by John W for his expert driving and navigating some 1450 km during the week and was presented with a thank you envelope just prior to arriving back at Wheelers Hill.