

THE HISTORIC PORT OF ECHUCA

19TH- 23RD of May, 2024.

(Comments Julie Matthews)

Photos Julie Matthews, Jan Bouckley (Trade travel) and Judy Simonds)

Remember you can expand photos using your browser ZOOM feature or with your fingers on your phone/ tablet.



Day 1 - Sunday 19th May

On this chilly Sunday morning twenty excited travellers boarded the very comfortable coach with our favourite Trade Travel driver Rodney & our tour host Jan. Keith & Jenny surprised us by coming to see us off & soon we were en route to Echuca / Moama in northern Victoria. Our first stop was at Seymour for morning tea & to do the Vietnam veterans commemorative walk. It features 106 amazing glass panels of historic photos, bearing over 60,000 names of all Australians who served in Vietnam, as well as real life memorabilia, a tank, helicopter, personnel carrier & artillery pieces, all set in a lovely park amongst tall spotted gums. En route we enjoyed seeing many wall murals in Benalla from the bus.

At Goorambat we had a lovely 3 course lunch prepared & served by the local community group in the Mechanics Hall. Goorambat is known as "the small town with BIG ART" & there we saw our first silo art, by renowned artist, Jimmy Dvate who also painted the amazing mural of "Sophia" in the tiny local Uniting Church. Our next stop was Devenish to see their trio of silos, depicting a WW1 nurse, a modern female medic & a tribute to the Australian Light Horse. The silo art at St James depicts the history of wheat farming in the area with one silo featuring a portrait of Sir George Coles who grew up there & took over its Northern General Store from his father, & eventually expanded the business into the supermarket empire we know today. Tungamah's silos are a lovely display of the local birdlife.

Arriving at our motel, Cadell on the Murray, after 5pm, we all enjoyed our barbecue dinner eaten indoors. Light drizzle accompanied us on the short walk back to our spacious rooms & this was the only rain we experienced throughout our entire trip.



Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commemorative Walk, Seymour



Silo art Goorambat by Jimmy Dvate, Clydesdale horses.



Silo art Goorambat by Jimmy Dvate, Barking Owl.



Lunch prepared by locals at the Goorambat Mechanics Hall.



Goorambat Uniting Church.



"Sophia" mural in tiny Goorambat Uniting Church.



Devenish - War-themed silo murals.



St James - Story of Sir George Coles on these silos.



Our accommodation at Cadell on the Murray.



The silver marker on the tree shows the flood level in November 2022.

Day 2 - Monday 20th May

Today began with a visit to the Great Aussie Beer Shed & Heritage Farm Museum. It was a walk down memory lane with a truly amazing display of so much Aussie icon paraphernalia, household items, farm machinery, old cars, as well over 17,000 beer cans from Australia & overseas. So many collections!!! Their current pride & joy is the CUB Carlton Draught promotional dray once pulled by a team of Clydesdale horses, which "hung up their reins" in 2018.

We then returned to Echuca & had free time to have lunch & explore the main street with its many lovely historic buildings. Next was our visit to the Echuca Historical Museum which was originally the local police station, until 1969. Local guide Gwen then came on board for an interesting bus tour of the early settlements of Echuca & Moama. In 1854 Henry Hopwood was the first settler & "father" of Echuca, while John Maiden was the founder of Moama in 1845. These twin towns, with current populations of 15,000 & 7,500, are Australia's paddle steamer capital & home to the world's largest fleet of operating riverboats.



Group photo at Great Aussie Beer Shed.



C.U.B. promotional horse dray.



Beer can aeroplanes.



Chance meeting of local greyhound "Barkley," outside Echuca Historical Society Museum.



Group leaving the museum.



Local historic buildings included this River Captain's Cottage 1870's.



Site of John Maiden's punt & inn.



Group photo at Picola's silo mural of "Superb Parrot" with other endangered fauna.

Day 3 - Tuesday 21st May

Travelling east of Echuca, we first came to the tiny town of Picola, home of a beautiful silo mural featuring flora and fauna from the Barmah National Park. Hot coffees at the local hotel were very popular. Our next stop was Cactus Country, Australia's largest cactus garden, located in Strathmerton. After strolling through some of their 12 acres we were treated to a fabulous Mexican meal. The highlight was their stunning cactus cake & cactus ice cream, made using specific cactus fruit from their garden. Several members bought cactus plants from their nursery.

In Nathalia we visited the Barmah Forest Heritage & Education Centre where we learnt how this largest River Red Gum Forest was formed 20,000 years ago. The early population expanded rapidly such that the resources (River red gum timber, fish, bird life, etc) were overused & endangered. However Barmah State Park was established in 1987, & then legislated as Barmah National Park in 2010, thus ensuring the future health of this beautiful floodplain forest.

Arriving in Tongala our local guide, renowned local artist Murray Ross, came aboard to provide wonderful insight into more than 50 street art pieces & murals which bring the local history to life. Thanks to Murray & other local artists donating their time & talent to brighten their community, this small town was winner of Australia's "Best Street Art Trail" in 2022.



Entering Cactus Country, Strathmerton.



Tour host Jan with 3 characters & various cacti.



So many types of cacti of all shapes & sizes!!



President Phillip & wife Dianne, awaiting our delicious 3 course Mexican meal.



Local artist Murray Ross involved the local school children in this 3 - piece tennis mural, which features some well known celebrities.



Among the 50+ murals in Tongala is this beautiful mural dedicated to our Vietnam Veterans.



One of 7 murals in this recently completed outdoor art gallery on a previously vacant block.



Guide Joel entertained us as he told us about the early history of Echuca.

Day 4 - Wednesday 22nd May

Today began with a guided tour of the Port of Echuca with Joel our animated guide who gave us a great explanation of the early history of Echuca which in 1870's was the 3rd largest port in Australia & was the main shipbuilding centre for the river transport industry. We then boarded the paddle steamer "PS Canberra" for a leisurely 1 hour trip down the Murray. Over the years PS Canberra, has had a few face lifts & is the oldest river boat in the Murray River Paddle steamer fleet, having celebrated her century in 2013.

Lunch at the Echuca Hotel was enjoyable & many of us later indulged in ice cream cones while basking in some welcome sunshine!

Rodney then drove us to the small township of Lockington where our passionate guide Joe explained the recent setting up the local Lockington & District Living Heritage Complex. So many memories were evoked as we explored a huge range of historical artefacts donated by local residents. These included so many everyday items in our homes, for everyday living, many tractors, farm machinery, old cars, a restored cable tram, etc, etc.

Another great day, & dinner that night was our last together in the Riverpoint dining room.



Rodney & Jan at the steam display shed at Port of Echuca Precinct.



On board our paddle steamer "PS Canberra," a relaxing 1 hour cruise on the Murray River.



On board our paddle steamer "PS Canberra," a relaxing 1 hour cruise on the Murray River.



Passing under the rail bridge & old road bridge.



Joe our guide is passionate about what his town Lockington & District have achieved in their Living Heritage Complex.



Their restored cable car is among the many historic items in their amazing collection of almost everything!

Day 5 - Thursday 23rd May

Heading homewards our first stop was the town of Rochester & thanks to Val alerting us to the relatively new Iddles Lane mural, our first stop was in the town centre. This wall is a great tribute to "Good Cop," Ron Iddles. At just after 9am the town was quiet & as the last few of us were returning to the bus we shared a friendly hello with a local couple walking by, who just happened to be Nancye, Ron's sister, & her husband! Rodney invited them to come aboard for a brief chat....what a surprise chance meeting! We then continued on to see Rochester's 3 delightful silo murals which feature local endemically threatened species. As in many other parts of this region it was hard to imagine that much of this town was under water in the November 2022 floods.

The Gargarro Botanical Garden project was our next stop, a tourist destination which also involves & benefits the surrounding communities. Donations, grants & a great design have led to the ongoing development of this unique regional garden of native flora & geometric water features. Their "Green Thumbs" nursery, fully staffed by volunteers, opened in October 2021, while May 2023 saw the Grand Opening of the contemporary cafe & community hub. Many of us enjoyed supporting the nursery by purchasing plants & the cafe was a perfect setting for our much appreciated morning tea.

Further on, Colbinabbin's 5 colourful silo murals depicting the history of the area, were all a photographer's delight. Tahbilk Winery, Victoria's oldest family owned winery & vineyard, offered antipasto platters & wine tasting for lunch... as well as cellar door sales before our departure. At Nagambie we enjoyed the opportunity to take a photo of the Black Caviar statue near the lake & a last stroll before the homeward stretch.

With a large moon on one side of the bus & the sun setting on the other, we had time to reflect on our wonderful time together, with our excellent driver Rodney & Jan, our lovely host, who had become our friends. Gathering up our luggage & small boxes of plants it was time to say goodbye. Many thanks to Trade Travel for organising such an interesting & enjoyable time for us all & thankfully everyone returned home fit & well! Perhaps more adventures in 2025 await those of us who are keen to explore more of our amazing country.



In Rochester, 3 more silo murals of ...



... threatened fauna by Jimmy Dvate



Ron Iddles Lane in Rochester.



Ron's sister Nancye & husband Ross spoke to us briefly, after a chance meeting



Gargarro" Botanic Garden Project... well worth visiting!



. Many of us including Gwen & Val enjoyed seeing the many plants propagated in the Green Thumbs nursery.



Eleanor, Ann & Julie leaving the Garden Café.



Four happy men after their morning tea.



First 3 silos of stunning colourful silos depicting the early history of Colbinabbin.



Silo 4 of stunning colourful silos depicting the farming history of Colbinabbin.



Silo 5 of stunning colourful silos depicting the more recent history of Colbinabbin.



One of the many irrigation channels we saw in the region (captured in the painting above the red truck on 4th silo)



Black Caviar statue in Nagambie.

Another
fabulous
Trip.

Produced using a standard template from our Website.
