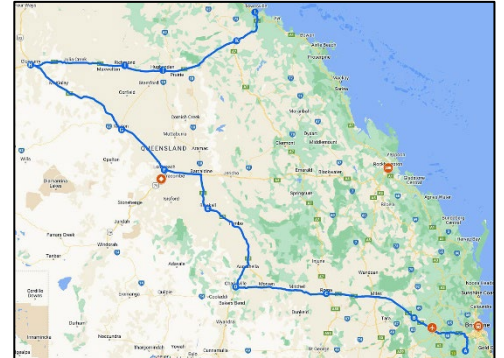


Scootaville 2023



Scootaville 2023.

On Thursday the 24th August, 31 men and women set out from Boonah, which is SW of Brisbane and headed off on an 18 day journey which would take them to and overnight in the following towns, Dalby, Roma, Charleville, Blackall, Longreach, Winton, Cloncurry, Richmond, Hughenden, Charters Towers to Townsville.



Most were ex-ADF personnel and they rode a mix of eight 110cc Honda and Suzuki scooters and one 160cc Kymco and although cruising between 80 and 90kph all the way, not one missed a beat, all performed perfectly, an amazing feat really when you think a lot of lawn mowers have a bigger engine. Says an awful lot for their engineering.

This year follows on from the successful 2022 event when participants rode from Rosewood, west of Ipswich, to Townsville via a slightly different route though back then on 125cc Honda CB motor-bikes. Last year we raised \$25,000 for our charity of choice – Legacy, this year we managed to raise \$30,200. We're already planning 2024 and intend to raise the bar once again.

It had been planned to leave from Ipswich but requirements dropped on our Association by Ipswich Council at the last minute, ie: provide a traffic management plan, a rubbish management plan, a sanitation management plan etc, left us stranded. We didn't have the finances, the know how or even the time to comply so we had to look for a departure point elsewhere. We had a frantic look around and thankfully, Beth Hern from the Boonah Showground welcomed us with open arms.

A week or so earlier, Kedron Wavell RSL Sub-Branch had loaned the Association their Toyota ute which was used to pick up a large supply of chips generously donated by Smiths Confectionary. Smiths had donated these as give aways to the young kids at the primary schools we were to visit along the way. These had been stored in my garage along with sleeping bags, blow-up beds, jackets, helmets etc – gear which would be required by the troops over the next few weeks.



SIXT had graciously granted us the use of a Toyota Coaster bus and a small truck and on the Monday morning it was back to my place to get the gear and truck it all out to Boonah.



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So, on Monday the 21st August, a few of us arrived at the Boonah Showground's dining hall, which had been allocated to us, armed with a ton of chips as well as a bunch of blow-up beds, sleeping bags, riding jackets, helmets etc, all of which had to be sorted and laid out ready for the arrival of the troops next day.



Our WOD, Ros Curran, took charge and after about an hour or so, barking orders left and right, she had the job done. She then declared an early stand-down, the workers selected their own bed spots, then it was time to cool off with a cold one or two at one of the local pubs.

Next day the little bus and the truck picked up the troops and their gear from the Kedron Wavell Services Club. Those riding were dropped off at Nibble Bike Hire in Newstead to pick up their little scooter – a piece of equipment they would get to know very well over the next few weeks, then it was full steam ahead out to Boonah.



We arrived at the Boonah Showground's Dining Hall about 1.00pm, equipment was collected, friends got together, bed spots were selected, beds blown up, made, gear stowed away. Excitement started to rise, at last it was on.



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And very soon this -



became this!



The interior of the Boonah Showground dining hall.

For most it was their first time at Boonah so they went exploring, the locale of shops, pubs and more importantly, the whereabouts of the shower and toilet block was found. That night via a unanimous decision, it was decided to dine at Simons' Tavern in Boonah, though a few with withdrawal systems suggested a sausage sizzle would have been preferable.





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After the troops had set up and established themselves, it wasn't long before John Broughton had his magic keyboard ready to go and started banging out a tune.



The following day, Wednesday, we'd arranged for a get together at the showground, several organisations were invited and the RAAF had agreed to bring their hot-air balloon, to park it in the centre of the arena and depending on weather conditions, take the local kids for a short ride.

The whole town was invited – but unfortunately, not a lot turned up. This was disappointing as organisations such as 1 Combat Comms Sqn, ADF Recruiting, DVA etc made the effort to get to Boonah, set up stalls to explain who they were, what they did and why they did it.

We thank them for their efforts.





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The balloon was a hit though. At first the weather was against SqnLdr Sam Wright and his very capable team, the wind was blowing a bit too hard and they had to wait for some hours before they were able to “pump” it up.



Initially they use a large fan to blow air into the envelope to inflate it then the big gas burner is attached and lit and hot air is pumped in, causing the whole thing to lift. Once it was up and running, the kids lined up for a ride and loved it.





The RAAF anchor the balloon by tying it to 3 vehicles arranged around it in a triangle, this is so it doesn't head off for unknown parts with a bunch of kids on board. The triangle shape means it can only go straight up (and eventually come down again) and not wander off when/if acted upon by a puff of wind. Neil Snudden took some video of the balloon being prepared, it shows the 3 anchor vehicles – and you can see it [HERE](#).



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While the kids were lined up, patiently waiting their turn in the balloon, a number of Scotavillens decided to take them for a lap or two of the arena on the back of a scooter.



Marie Henson doing laps.



Peter Roberts and a happy passenger.



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Boonah Lions had also set up a “stall” on the Wednesday and provided a sausage sizzle for those present and very kindly provided a very welcome breakfast for the Scootavillens on the Thursday morning.

A few days later, Tom O’Neil the President of Boonah Lions presented us with a cheque for \$350 as a donation to Legacy. This was their takings from their sausage sizzle, very generous Boonah Lions, thank you.



John Volke, who lives out that way and who has a wonderfully decorated Harley Davidson and sidecar, came to say hello and introduce himself.

John does a lot of charity work, joining toy and other fundraising bike runs whenever he can. His wife Sharon’s father was in the Army and taught soldiers how to ride motor-cycles during the war

They have a mural of the Beersheba Charge (WW1) air brushed on the bike and on the sidecar are the pictures of three soldiers, the first is of a friend’s great uncle who served





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in World War One, the second is of his dad who went over to New Guinea in the second world war and the third is a friend of John's who served in Vietnam.

John asked if he could ride with us for a while and offered to take Cathy, our chef de la résistance in the sidecar as far as Amberley.

Thursday morning came and it was time to leave Boonah and head for Dalby – our first overnighiter. WGCDR David Torrington, the CO of 35Sqn and Evan Cannard, the Sqn's WOFF, were kind enough to make the journey out to Boonah to see us off.

Evan is a keen bike rider himself, though he normally rides a bike somewhat larger than our scooters – he had great delight in telling us the starter motor on his bike is bigger than the engine on ours.

We thought we'd give him a thrill and let him ride one of ours, which he reluctantly did but after doing a few laps we nearly had to fight him to get him off it.



Evan had ridden his "proper" bike over to Boonah and joined us all the way back to Amberley where we had to stop in front of the F111 for the compulsory photo.



From Amberley it was out past the Walloon pub, once the favourite haunt for a Wednesday afternoon "sporty" then onto the Warrego Hwy and onto Toowoomba where Gary Graham, the President of the Toowoomba Air Force Association, had arranged lunch for us at the Milne Bay Army Barracks.



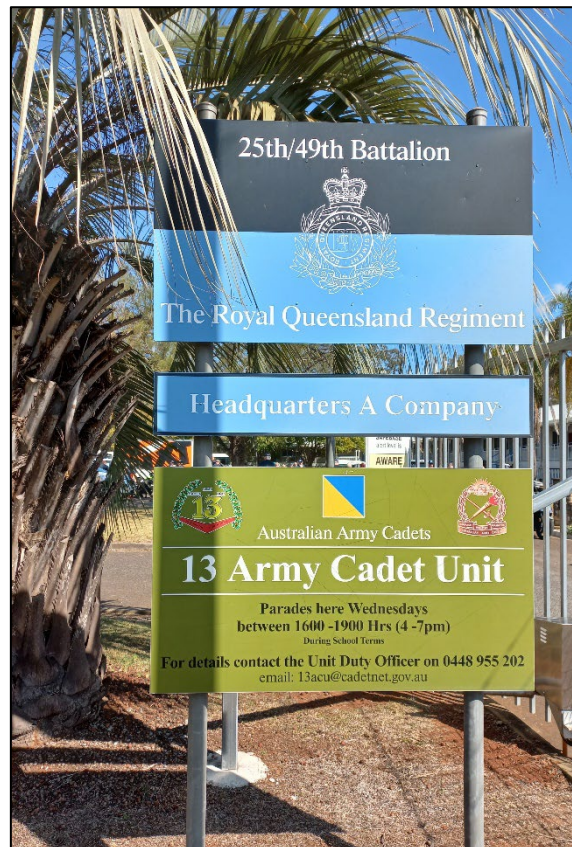
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On the 20th January 1875 the 8th Company, Queensland Volunteer Rifle Brigade was formed in Toowoomba, Queensland, in order to meet the defence needs of the newly independent state of Queensland. This unit would later become part of the 4th Queensland (Darling Downs) Regiment, although when the colonial defence forces were amalgamated with the Commonwealth Military Forces following federation, the unit was disbanded in 1902.

In 1911, the Australian government instituted a compulsory military training scheme. As a result of this the 11th (Darling Downs) Australian Infantry Regiment was raised. With its headquarters in Toowoomba, it had a recruiting area stretching from Oxley in Brisbane to Roma and at its peak had an establishment of 1,450 men.

The buildings above were first constructed as a recruiting depot for the 11th light horse. At the end of the war in 1918 it became the headquarters and training depot for the 26th Battalion and today it houses ADF recruiting for the Toowoomba area as well as being the HQ for the 13 Army Cadet unit.



Gary had liaised with the Toowoomba RSL Sub-Branch and in conjunction with Army, provided the wonderful and very welcome lunch for us all.



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After lunching, having a quick look around the Barracks, seeing to nature's requirements, it was time to jacket up, hop on the scooters and head for Dalby, a mere 85 km away.

As was to be the case all up the line, the Dalby Council had granted us the use of one of their pavilions at the showground in which to overnight.

Local Councils out west were very generous and we couldn't have done what we did, couldn't have raised the \$30,200 for legacy, without their unwavering support. We offer them all a big thank you!





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After refuelling our scooters, then unloading the little truck, choosing a bed space, pumping up the bed, laying out the sleeping bag, a shower, it was time to crack open a Powers or three.

CUB had offered us a number of cartons of their reincarnated brew for us to quench a day's-end raging thirst and we must say it proved very popular. While they lasted, Powers became the beer of choice for the team.



We must also thank the local RSL Sub-Branches for their amazing support, without which this event could not, or possibly would not, have happened. Dalby Sub-Branch was a classic example. That night they provided a fabulous evening meal for everyone through Dalby Dan. It was so good many in the team wanted to stay a bit longer.





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Everyone was in such a good mood after that sumptuous meal that the WOD decided to give some dancing lessons. Here she's showing Arthur Reeves how to master the Pride of Erin.



It seems the word was out that we were coming to Dalby too, Dave Pedler (left) met up with an old mate - Alister Elrick.

Both were Air Force Radtechs though Dave was a Groundie, so really only half a Radtech.





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Next morning things were bit slow, the previous night had taxed a few though not Kiwi. He was up early, loaded his ute then cracked the whip hurrying everyone along. Today we had a school to visit.



60km west of Dalby is the little town of Brigalow (Pop 170). Brigalow doesn't have a lot, it has a grain silo, a public hall, a general store, a phone box and few km out of town a great little primary school.





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Very generous firms such as Smiths Confectionery, IGA, Coca-Cola and the Air Force had given us a large number of items which we bundled up into bags supplied to us by Gladstone Council and handed them (our “show bags”) out to the delighted and so well-behaved kids.



We called into a number of schools this trip and met a heap of kids, all lovely, all well behaved, all eager to learn, excited, imaginations in full gear, it was great to see them and their teachers, who although seemed terribly young when compared to us, (but who doesn't?) were caring, dedicated people, all respected by the kids. Australia's future is in good hands.





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We brought a few scooters in so the kids could hop on, start and rev the hell out of them, toot the horn, though a lot probably had and rode bigger bikes at home.

We enjoyed it as much as the kids did.

Then with lunch time fast approaching and Jillian O'Toole dreaming of a pie and peas, it was time to say our good-byes and head further west once again. Next stop was Miles, only a 40 min ride from the school.



We had arranged a tour of the Miles Historic Village on the eastern outskirts of the town after which we were looking forward to lunch in the Red Rose Café.





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Lunching at Miles – though no pies for Jillian.

If you're in that area, make sure you've got a few hours to spare and have a look through the museum. It is very well done, interesting and the staff are super helpful.

With a bit over 140km to go until our next overnighter, Roma, we decided to make the compulsory stop at the pink pub in Dulacca – just 45km further west.



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Dulacca is a bit bigger than Brigalow with a population of 190. It has a memorial hall, a rest area, a coffee shop, a Puma service station – and a pink pub!



We had a brief stop, a cool drink, a trip to the boys/girls room, a rider change then it was back in the saddle and attack the next 100km to Roma.

Coming into Roma from the east you pass the Big Rig tourist attraction which is a display of the history, the trials, the wins and losses, associated with the discovery of oil and gas in the region. Unfortunately we didn't have the time to do the tour.





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Roma RSL Sub-Branch had obtained the nod for us to use the Roma Recreation Centre Hall for our accommodation requirements. The hall is owned by Roma Council and used by PCYC and another sporting bodies and as it contained toilet and shower facilities, it was perfect for our needs. It was also “just over the road” from the RSL club where arrangements had been made for our dinner that night.



Roma is known for its bottle trees, many of which have been planted throughout the town, the largest of which is a tourist attraction. This huge tree, which has a girth of 9.5 metres and which still grows at the rate of 1cm/year, was found on a local property in 1927, dug up and moved to its current position. It is over 100 years old.

Although the trees are thought to have a hollow trunk which contains water, that is not the case. Water is held in its fibrous trunk but not as free water.



Johnno, who is our bucket basher, is also a damn good cook. Armed with a bunch of money, he went shopping at Woolies, filled a few shopping bags then returned to the RSL and knocked up the best hamburgers I’ve tried for many a moon. After they were cooked on the barby, there was a pile so high I thought they would be eating them well into next week, to my surprise they all went in no time at all.



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Johnno's burgers rule!!

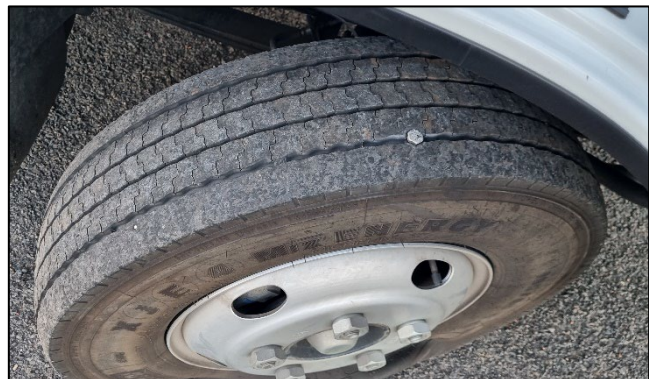
Dave Pedler had brought his trusty ukulele with him and intended to play a few tunes for the lovely Legacy ladies. He spent about 45 minutes playing for them, during which time they had a few requests and prompted him for a few encores. At the end of the night, when we were all leaving the ladies chased Dave and thanked him for his efforts.



After dinner, everyone lined up for the group photo, it was great to see several Legacy ladies who came to see us, enjoy Johnno's burgers with us and wish us well for the rest of the trip.

We were held up for a bit next morning. Our trusty little truck, which had picked up a nail earlier in its right hand front tyre, but which refused to say die, somewhere, somehow, decided to ingest a 3/8 bolt.

This couldn't be ignored, so we pumped 45psi into the tyre and with fingers crossed, drove around to the man who had it fixed and hanging in the spare slot in no time.



With the truck fixed and back at the hall, we loaded up again and headed for Charleville, a 267km journey further west. The roads out there, although all sealed, are a bit bumpy and as Isuzu builds their trucks with heaps of suspension travel, its passengers get tossed around a bit, though when compared to loading/unloading a trailer each day, who's complaining. We'll take the truck every time.



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We'd planned a rider change and a swim in the artesian pool at Mitchel which is about 90km west of Roma . Thanks to Darryl Betzien, the RSL Sub-Branch President, the Sub-Branch had arranged free admission and morning tea for us and we made the most of it.



L-R: Dave Pedler, Marie Henson, “Kiwi” Campbell.

The water for the pool comes from the Great Artesian Basin which is one of the largest underground freshwater resources in the world. It is Australia’s largest groundwater basin and lies beneath parts of the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales. It includes the Eromanga, Surat, and Carpentaria geological basins.

The Basin spans almost 1.7 million square kilometres which is over one-fifth of the Australian continent. There is around 65 million giga-litres of groundwater in the Basin which is enough water to fill the Sydney Harbour 130,000 times. (Click [HERE](#) to see a map of the basin). Water flows into the basin from run off from the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range. In some places it is 3,000metres deep below the surface and the water ranges from 50 to 350 feet in depth.

Most of the water in the basin is about 200,000 years old but some reservoirs are thought to be nearly 2,000,000 years old. Water temperatures range from 30–100 °C across the basin with the water from the deeper bores being almost at boiling temperature because of the immense heat and pressure at such depths.

Most of the towns and properties in the area plumb the Great Artesian Basin as their main water source. These bores are all around 1.2km deep from where the precious water thrusts its way to the surface, emerging at a temperature of about 80°C. It is cooled to about 40°C before being reticulated into the town supply. In some areas it has a distinctive H₂S smell, but the locals get used to it very quickly.



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If allowed to stand for a while, the smell goes and some say it is then the best tasting water ever.



After those that wished had enjoyed their time in the pool, Darryl's "morning tea" was brought out, much to the enjoyment of all. Jillian O'Toole made sure she didn't miss out.





After we'd smokoed, dried off, re-dressed, said our thanks and good-byes, refuelled the scooters, it was time to head off again. Dan Willett, one of our riders and an ex-copper had heard of a memorial to Police at Arrest Creek – not far from Mitchell.

A monument commemorates members of the police force who fought the bushrangers throughout Australia. The memorial is at the site of the Kenniff Brothers arrest. We decided to go and have a look.

The Kenniff Brothers are said to be Australia's last bushrangers. In 1902 Police Constable George Doyle and Station Manager Albert Dahlke were hunting the brothers Patrick and James Kenniff over the theft of a pony. They came upon the brothers at Lethbridge Pocket in Queensland's Carnarvon region and were murdered. A reward was offered for the Kenniff's capture and they were caught after three months on the run at Arrest Creek near Mitchell. There's a tree in Augathella where the brothers are supposed to have tethered their horses – see [HERE](#).



Patrick was hanged at Brisbane's Boggo Road Gaol in January 1903. His brother served 12 years in prison.

Click [HERE](#) to read the inscription on the memorial.

We left the memorial and headed towards Charleville, about 180km away. We'd decided to break the journey with lunch and a rider change at Morven, a small community about half way there. Morven doesn't have a lot, 199 residents, a school, community hall, a church, a shop and what interested us, a pub – Sadlieir's Waterhole.

Morven is thought to be named after a mountain and town of the same name in Scotland. In the 1960a, Captain T.J. Saddler and his wife arrived in the area and camped on a deep



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waterhole in the nearby Hamburg Creek. This waterhole was later to become Morven's water supply and provided irrigation for a large Chinese market garden. It now only fills after heavy rain. A hotel was established near the waterhole to service the Cobb and Co. Coach route, passengers, drovers and bullock drivers all took advantage of its relative comfort. By 1887, Morven had three more hotels, a railway station and school.

As the town grew the waterhole could not supply enough water and bores were sunk into the Great Artesian Basin.

In 2016 the Moren Hotel was destroyed by fire and shortly after, eight local families decided to band together and build a new one. The result is Sadleir's Waterhole, built on the site of the old hotel.



As was the norm, on leaving the Police Memorial, we rang the hotel to advise them of our estimated arrival time to allow them to have lunch ready. We got a shock! A few months earlier on our "check" trip, we had spoken with the owner and chef at the hotel, had agreed on a meal and a price and advised them of our arrival date and approx. time. In the period between our earlier trip and our group arrival, the hotel had been sold but unfortunately the previous owners did not tell the current owners of our expected arrival. (This experience was to be repeated further up the line)

No lunch.

We had a chat with the new owners who apologised and advised he would have something ready for us when we arrived. He didn't have a lot of time as we were only about 75 minutes away. When we did arrive, we were treated to a hamburger and chips – when you consider there's no shopping centre closer to Morven than 90km away and the hotel normally doesn't



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expect a group of 30 people to drop in unannounced – with minimum staff it was a pretty good effort.

After lunching and a rider change, it was back in the saddle and off to Charleville where once again, a generous council had allowed us the use of a pavilion in their showground.

We planned to spend two nights, (Saturday and Sunday) in Charleville.



The pavilion was huge and we were able to drive our small truck inside and unload. People went looking for power-points to blow up beds, power C-PAP machines at night and when everyone had settled in, it was very close to beer-o'clock so it was time to check out the RSL.

We'd preciously liaised with the Charleville RSL Club and they had agreed to support us while we were in town and help us raise funds for Legacy. After the ride from Roma, we planned a quiet night. The RSL Club provided us with a welcome dinner and after a few drinks, it was back into the bus and back for an early night.



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Sunday came and after a hearty breakfast, a few went for a walk down the main street, some checked out the WW2 museum at the airport others were content to do nothing, just relax. Later that day we were to pick up Merv Hughes from the airport. Merv had graciously given up his time to join us, to stay with us for a few days and help us raise funds for our charity – Legacy.



Merv flew in early Sunday afternoon and we were at the airport in force to welcome him. Most “grew” a look-alike moustache to get in the mood though the years had toned Merv’s down quite a bit and it isn’t as dark as it once was.

Chris and Maream Dietzel with their recently “grown” moustaches.

After meeting the troops and grabbing his gear, Merv boarded the bus and we took him back to our digs and introduced him to Scootaville life. After getting and unpacking his gear he couldn’t believe what he’d volunteered for, blow up beds, sleeping bags, bunking out in a great big open shed with a bunch of men and women mad enough to ride 110cc scooters for thousands of kms. For a short while he must have





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been thinking of grabbing the next plane out but it didn't take him long to get into the swing of things.

That night it was back to the RSL Club, though this time everyone was rested, fit and healthy and ready for anything – and the Club didn't disappoint us. We were ushered into a private room and served a great meal and were lucky enough to have Merv address us and recount a few tales from his time on the pitch.

After dinner, we all returned to the general area of the Club and Merv did the rounds, chatting with anyone and everyone and before they knew it, those people were popping notes into Johnno's bucket.

We were all looking forward to the next few days with him.



Monday morning came and Merv began to realise there was a bit more to this Scootaville life than he'd realised, every morning you had to let down your bed, roll up your sleeping bag and try and stuff it back into its holding bag, wander some distance for the customary SSSSS, then try and stuff everything into the large canvas carry bag and carry it to the little truck where our temporary load-masters would load it.



John Mac – where were you when we needed you?



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We had a 300km run to complete on the Monday, Charleville to Blackall and this included another school in which to call, this one in Augathella, about 85km up the road. So we got away early.

After refuelling at the BP at the turn off to Augathella, we arrived at the school mid morning. Merv was an instant hit with the kids, very soon he had them eating out of his hands, they gathered around and listened to every word he spoke, than stood for the customary photo – a definite keeper.



We then brought in the scooters and of course the kids got on them, started them, revved them, played with the controls, tooted the horn, all with smiles a mile wide.

Great to see!





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After the kids had scootered themselves out, we took them onto the school yard and gave them their “show bag” after which we were invited to an unbelievable morning tea, prepared by the school.





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Prior to starting off on our journey, John Broughton had bought a number of Rosemary seedlings, one for each school we intended to visit. After we'd enjoyed their magnificent morning tea, John presented one to the school, telling the kids the significance of wearing Rosemary on memorial days and asked them to plant and carefully care for the seedling.

After leaving the school, we set forth again in a northerly direction heading for Tambo where we intended to lunch at the Royal Carrangarra Hotel. This hotel sits on outback Qld's oldest licenced hotel site. A William Coverly built and opened the first pub in Tambo in 1863. It was named after the settlement, "Carrangarra" which is an aboriginal word meaning a feasting and resting place. The hotel was also the site of the first postal service in Tambo with Cobb & Co. coming into Queensland in 1863, with the hotel being one of its first stopovers.

The hotel has burnt down three times. A Mr E. Parr came into possession of the hotel in 1922 and rebuilt the current building after it had burnt down in 1954 for the third time.

New owner Ben Casey took over the hotel in 2018 and hopes to provide a hotel that gives patrons a fun, safe and memorable experience of outback hospitality. It also serves up damn good pies, much to Jillian O'Toole's delight.



The "Carra" is also home to Ben's Chicken Races, which has been described as "the best night on our trip, possibly ever!". 7 nights a week from April 1st until October 31st, at 5pm, Ben's ladies race around a track, entertain the masses and raise money for charity.

Ben kindly put on a midday show for us, he auctions off his chickens, which are dyed a different colour so as to ID them, with all the auction money going into kitty. When all chickens are "sold", they are placed in a ring, a small radio-controlled car containing a cup of feed is also placed in the ring and set off. The chickens of course chase the car keen to get to the feed. They do several laps and finally there is a winner, the chook which first crosses the finish line.



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The lucky person who had bought the winning chook gets half of the money in kitty with the other half going to charity. Ben kindly donated this half to Legacy.

Ros Curran had bought the winning chook, she pocketed \$280.00



Pub owner Ben Casey with Ros and the winning chook.

You can see the race [HERE](#).

Apart from having the Carra hotel, Tambo also is the home of the famous Tambo Teddies. Back in 1992 wool prices had crashed and the district was in the grips of a drought. The community of Tambo was challenged to come up with a new industry to sustain the economy of the little town. A brain storming session during a workshop developed the idea that Tambo could assist the wool industry, encourage tourists and create employment by making unique teddy bears from wool pelts and stuff them with wool.

Popular opinion said it wouldn't work, but after many laughs, three women; Mary Sutherland, Charm Ryrie and Helen Sargood, decided to bite the bullet. After many frustrating months of designing and planning, the first Tambo Teddies were ready for sale in February 1993.

The impact and enthusiasm of the public was overwhelming and the business grew to employ over fifteen part time workers. Tambo Teddies takes pride of place in homes all over the world and the famous teddy bears have made the little town of Tambo the 'outback Teddy capital of Australia'.



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After more than twenty years sewing bears and managing the business, Mary Sutherland, the only remaining director decided it was time to retire. Wishing to only sell to a local, Mary was delighted when three more local ladies decided to purchase this iconic business

The new owners, two teachers and an arts and cultural officer took up the reins of Tambo Teddies in 2014. Since then, Tambo Teddies has been renovated, won a national competition and state awards and provided gifts for Royalty, Premiers and Ministers.

Merv with 2 of the ladies who produce the award winning Teddies.



Our next stop, and overnighter, was to be Blackall – a further 100km up the track. Craig and Emma Scholes, who contributed so much at Blackall, offered to show us around their property, Northampton Downs, which is about 30km south of Blackall.

We called in and Craig gave us the Cook's Tour, with a good look at the old Northampton shearing shed which is over 100 years old. Northampton Downs was part of the large Hampton station which once covered a large area of land from south of Tambo to Blackall and was split on half by two brothers to create Southampton and Northampton and them into some smaller blocks over time. In its day a record was broken by 59 shearers, the men put 9,370 woolly ewes through in 8 hours and 15 minutes with hand shears – an average of one every 3 and a bit minutes. Amazing!. When machines came, it changed to a 15 man stand shearing shed.





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By the number of stands and down-tubes in the old shed, the Blackall area was once a huge sheep area but today most are all gone. Because of the large number of wild dogs in the area, farmers have diversified from sheep to cattle.

Today the shed sits unused.



We left Northampton Downs and continued on to Blackall where once again the local Council had offered us the use of a pavilion in their showground. We intended to spend 2 nights in Blackall as Emma and Craig had plans! We were looking forward to this stop.



We arrived Blackall late in the afternoon, found the showground and our allocated pavilion, unpacked our trusty truck, set about finding a spot then make up our bed sites. By now we had started to work as a team, no longer was it necessary to allocate "jobs", people just



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gravitated to a particular task. Some in the truck unloading, others in a “conga- line” passing the gear into the pavilion, others stacking it inside.

It worked well.



Once settled, some took it easy, others went for a dip in Blackall’s artesian pool.



L-R: Dan Willett, Dave Pedler, John Broughton

Others broke out the esky while Emma and Craig thankfully organised a welcome barbecue dinner for us, after which it was time for a “sing-along.”



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L-R: Dave Pedler (on ukelele), Bob Anderson (on guitar), John Broughton (on stool drum) Allan O'Connor (on chair).

We awoke next day (Tuesday) to the smell of a wonderful breakfast being cooked by Emma and the local RSL Sub-Branch – bacon and eggs, a very welcome change to our normal toast and cornies.





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Emma and the RSL Sub-Branch had planned a busy day for us. First up Merv had agreed to meet with a bunch of kids from the local schools and to give them a talk on cricket. Emma had a better idea, she organised the kids to get together on one of the local parks and Merv, very unselfishly devoted a couple of hours giving each of them cricket lessons, much to the delight of the kids.



Click [HERE](#) to see Merv giving lessons.



After Merv had gone around and had a personal chat to most of the kids, we got them all back into the shelter and handed out bunches of chips which had been given to us by Smiths Confectionery. This seemed to go down well too.

After the kids had chipped out, Merv gave them a small talk and they were then marched back to school, though how their teachers hoped to get them to concentrate on schoolwork for the rest of the day was anyone's guess.

Click [HERE](#) to watch Merv's final talk to the kids.

In the corner of the park is a life size statue of a circus elephant. This was donated to the Blackall and Tambo community by Robert and Bernice Perry to honour the memory of Robert's ancestors who began the original Perry Bros' Circus in this area in 1889.

You can read more about it [HERE](#).





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We left the kids and headed for the famous wool scour which is just a few Km out of Blackall where we were to receive a guided tour and lunch.





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This is an amazing complex and definitely worth a visit if you're in the area. They crank up some of the machinery and you can only imagine the noise (and the danger) experienced by the men who worked in there all those years ago.

Click [HERE](#) to see some of it operating and click [HERE](#) to see the history of the site.

After lunch, we decided to do a tour of Blackall before heading back to our digs for a nana nap. Emma and Craig had a big evening planned for us – a nana nap was a must.

First stop was the old water bore on the outskirts of town.



Back in 1885, Blackall became one of the first towns in Queensland to drill for water. Even to this day, the town's water supply comes from the Great Artesian Basin. Drilling commenced at this site in 1885 because the town dam constructed in 1878 and a well sunk in the Barcoo River were unable to provide adequate water. Owing to difficulties - suspected to be financial as well as technical - drilling was suspended for a time then finally the bore was completed in 1888. The water was brackish and a second bore was commissioned. The water from the Pioneer Bore continued to be used for domestic purposes (including drinking until the drought broke in 1902) and was used for wool scouring.

The display highlights the importance of artesian water in the story of Blackall's development as a viable township and celebrates the contribution of the early drillers and other workers to this Pioneer bore.

Next stop was the Black Stump. There are a number of places around Australia which insist that they are the true location of the black stump. The case for Blackall is explained in great detail on the sign at the site.



The sign reads: "This historic site permanently marks the original Astro station established in 1887 by the Surveyor-General for the purpose of survey, based on the principal meridional circuit traversed around the town of Blackall. The circuit around Blackall was 27 miles square and contained an area of 729 square miles. The surveyors placed their theodolites on the stump for latitude and longitude observations. The stump was used rather than a set of legs because the theodolites used on such observations were of a large size.

This Astro station was used as part of the principal survey to fix the position of principal towns extending from Brisbane to Boulia via Roma, Charleville and Blackall. It was designed to establish the points of important centres with which the survey work of the whole colony could be connected and enable the mapping of Queensland on a more accurate basis. It was considered at the time that the country to the west of Blackall was 'beyond the black stump'. This piece of petrified wood replaces the original stump which was burnt out."

Having sightseeing we headed back to the showground for an hour or so on the "Bestway" after which it was a brisk walk across the grassed arena to the hot showers, on with clean duds then into the bus and off to the Blackall Bowls Club for the evening's festivities.

The Blackall RSL Sub-Branch and the Bowls Club, led by the unstoppable Emma Scholes, had arranged a fabulous, and profitable, evening in favour of Legacy. They had scoured the



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town and had amassed a huge number of items which they had then put up as the prize in a huge raffle. This was drawn on the night and the lucky winner walked away with enough items to start a shop.



Merv Hughes and Craig Scholes ready to carve up the spit roast.

They had also begged, borrowed or stolen a number of beef butts which had been rolling over gidgee charcoal on the spit or some hours and which smelled divine – we could hardly wait..

Emma had promoted the event throughout the town for some time and a good crowd turned up at the Bowls Club, firstly to see, wonder about and perhaps pity the bunch of silly old people trying to ride tiny motor scooters from Brisbane to Townsville and secondly to support that wonderful charity – Legacy.



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Blackall Bowls Club.

They also had a number of items which were auctioned off by professional auctioneer Jeremy Barron from Nutrien Ag Solutions, who did a wonderful job. One such item was a cricket bat signed by Merv which initially went for \$700. Matt McLean who bought the bat donated it back to be auctioned off again and this time it was bought by Mitch Barge.

It went for another \$700 – very generous people out west.



Eventually the night was done, as is usually the case these days, age overcame enthusiasm and people started to wander off towards the comfort of the Bestway blow-up. After the takings were counted next morning, it was revealed that the Emma and the Blackall RSL Sub-Branch had contributed \$5,000 towards the fund. A wonderful effort.

Thank you!

John Broughton, who had brought his home on wheels, didn't have the blow-up, let-down problems the rest of us had, his bed was always ready and waiting.





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Next morning we were destined to head off once again. We woke again to the enticing aroma of bacon and eggs being cooked on the Blackall RSL Sub-Branch's barby a go-go, something we could very quickly get used to.

After we'd all breakfasted, showered, un-pumped the beds, packed everything away and loaded the truck, it was time to take a few pics and say our good-byes.



The workers L-R: Terry Brennan, Emma Scholes, Merv Hughes, Terri-Ann Eden-Jones, Craig Scholes. Orica were one of our major sponsors – for which we are very grateful.



The troops then lined up for the farewell pic, with Trev Benneworth and Merv Hughes on the scooters.



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Those that were riding jacketed and hi-vised up, mounted their trusty ride, then with a final wave it was time to head for Longreach, our next overnighter.

Thanks Blackall, a fabulous time.

Longreach was 214km away, a journey we expected to complete easily as we had two stops planned, one at Barcaldine for lunch, the other at Ilfracombe for afternoon smoko. Barcaldine was about an hour and a half "up the road" and we had picked up a number of cooked chooks and lovely fresh bread etc from the local IGA and intended to have chicken sandwiches for lunch. "Kiwi" Campbell and Sue Trimmer headed off early in the ute with all the food with the intention of setting up at the Barcaldine Recreation Park on the lake and having lunch ready for us when we arrived. Things didn't quite go quite as planned.





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We know they are damn good at Rugby Union, but for some reason Kiwis aren't all that au fait when looking for a large body of water. Kiwi and Sue set up shop in a small shelter in a field beside the very busy Landsborough Highway with traffic roaring past every minute. But it didn't matter as they did an excellent job with the sangas and all disappeared very quickly.

After lunch we decided we'd go and have a look at the Rec Park anyway as someone thought they sold ice creams there - we went and they did.



After a short spell, it was back onto the scooters and off to Ilfracombe. We were now back on familiar territory having completed this part of the journey last year. On the scooters, Ilfracombe is only an hour away from Barcaldine and is well known for its [machinery mile](#) and more to our liking, the Wellshot Hotel.

Years past, when Ilfracombe was the centre of huge sheep stations, it had 3 hotels. The Wellshot, which was built in 1890, is the only one left. Another at the time was the Railway. The Wellshot began life as the Withersfield hotel near Anakie, a small town situated east of Emerald and once known for its gemstones. (We visited Anakie last year too). It was transported to Ilfracombe by bullock and cart in 1890 and renamed the Wellshot.



Owned now by Tracy Hatch, it's one of our favourites, we had a few nights at the [Ilfracombe sports ground](#) last year and got to know the wonderful staff and the hotel reasonably well. It was like coming home again.

We parked our bus out the front and set aside an hour or so in which to get to know the place again.

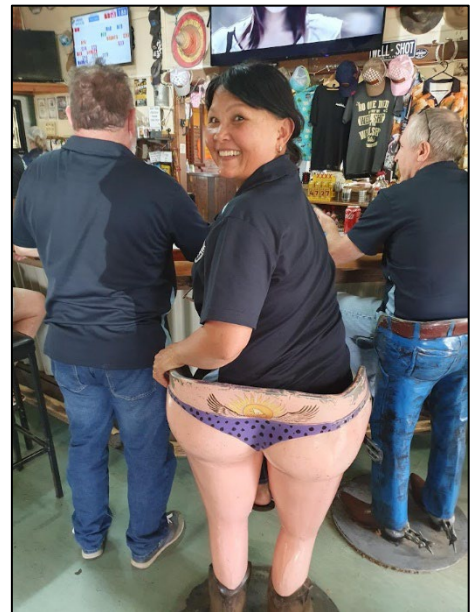


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The Wellshot is well known for its most flattering bar stools. Marium Dietzel shows us why!

Then after “Johnno” had done the rounds with the bucket it was time to press on, Longreach being only a further 27 km west.





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We were given a huge pavilion at Longreach, thanks to their generous Council and this allowed us to spread out a bit. Very soon all you could hear was the sound of beds being pumped up, then with gear unpacked, bed sites made up, toilet and shower blocks examined, it was time to take a breather. We'd planned two nights (Wednesday and Thursday) in Longreach as there was a lot to see and do.



Gavin Ballard, the owner of the Birdcage Hotel, had offered to provide us with an evening meal and some fund-raising fun afterwards, so that's where we headed that night. The meal was excellent but the expected crowds didn't eventuate but with Merv's help we did raise some money for our cause.



Next morning we had been given the OK for a tour of the Jindalee Operational Radar Network site (JORN) which is about 30km south of Longreach.

JORN is a connected series of three remote over-the-horizon radars one of which is located in Queensland, the other two are in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.



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This state-of-the-art defence system provides wide-area surveillance at ranges of 1,000 to 3,000 kilometres and plays a vital role in supporting the Australian Defence Force's air and maritime operations, border protection, disaster relief and rescue operations. JORN works by refracting high-frequency electromagnetic waves off the ionosphere to 'see' objects thousands of kilometres away that are invisible to conventional radars because of the curvature of the earth.



JORN is controlled and operated by the Air Force from the Battlespace Surveillance Centre at its once sleepy little Rookies training base at Edinburgh in South Australia. Each "site" comprises a transmitter site with a receiver site some distance away. We were to have a look over the transmitter site. While of interest to some of us, a few decided they would rather stay in Longreach and watch the grass grow, so we split into two groups, one onto the bus and down to the JORN site, the other did the shops.

Greg Mead from BAE which operates the site, gave us an excellent look through the workings, after which we were treated to a sumptuous lunch in their rec room. Technology has come a long way since we worked with 6BM8s.

JORN is a typical FIFO site with the crews spending 2 weeks on the job and a week home. The transmitter people are lucky in that they have only a 30km road trip to the airport whereas the receiver crews are a further 130km "down the road".





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We left the JORN site at 1.00pm as we had to get back to Longreach as sadly Merv was leaving us today. He had work commitments in Brisbane next day so had to be on the 2.30pm Longreach/Brisbane Qantas Link flight.

Prior to seeing him leave, Neil Snudden and Ros Curran snuck in one last photo.



Then it was time. We loaded the bus and those that couldn't find a seat grabbed a scooter and we headed for the airport.

As far as we were concerned, over the past few days Merv had transitioned from an "Australian legend" to a friend. He always found time to chat with us, always helped raise funds for our cause and was always the gentleman and was never flustered by people asking for an autograph or a "selfie".

He was always happy to oblige, always with a big smile.

Great bloke!

We hope he can find time to join us next year when we hold the event in Queensland and in NSW.





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With the Qantas Link Bombardier heading south, we headed back to our lodgings as tonight was to be a big night too. We'd booked an evening's river cruise on the Thomson River (no PEE in Thomson) with Outback Pioneers. Later in the afternoon they sent their large bus to pick us up then transport us a few km out of town where we were all loaded onto one of their boats and had a great cruise up and down the river where they served cheese and bikkies and we served Powers and Great Northern.





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The Paddle-wheel tourist boat of the other company.

After the cruise it was back to Outback Pioneer's depot on the river to watch a movie, to hear a bunch of well told bush yarns then to enjoy some bush tucker - all in great surroundings, then after we'd heard a bunch of yarns, had our fill, had a good look around, it was time to hop back on the bus and head for "home". This was our last night in Longreach, tomorrow it was off to Winton.

Next morning it was up, have breakfast, a SSSSS, let the beds down, pack the truck and head off. The day before we'd arranged to pick up supplies before we left as it's 180km up to Winton and that's 180km of not an awful lot. From our trip last year we knew of a rest area about half way so we once again asked "Kiwi" and Sue to head off early with all the supplies and have lunch ready for when we arrived. This they did and we lunched in comfort.





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We arrived Winton only to find the promised pavilion wasn't available as it had been declared "non-safe" for camping due to fire restrictions. Luckily the Winton weather was perfect, so we set up home under a large awning at the showground and bunked down "out in the open". As we still had access to showers and toilets and a kitchen area in which to "fix" breakfast, it wasn't a problem.



That evening the Winton Council had arranged a street closure and Mayor Gavin Basket and Helen Fogarty, the Council's Family Support Officer, donned the aprons, fired up the barby and set about rolling hundreds of snags.

There were quite a number of people in town that night and Johnno scored well with the bucket.





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Council had arranged for local band “The Generation Gap” to entertain us and entertain us they did. Set up in the main street they were damn good and played into the night and had most people up on their feet. At one stage our WOD along with Dave Pedler conned the band into playing the Nutbush which got nearly everyone nutbushing. We’re thinking the Nut Bush could rear its head in future Scootaville events.





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Thanks Gavin and Helen.

Next day, Saturday, was going to be long and hard. The road between Winton and Cloncurry is 350 km long, straight and even could be described as a bit boring. The country out there is as flat as a tack and there isn't a lot to see. 350km in a comfortable air conditioned car, with cruise control and the radio going is not all that bad, but on a 110cc motor scooter, with a fuel tank providing a range of 220km, it is a damn long way.

Luckily we were able to divide the trip into quarters, there were 2 very interesting hotels along the way, spaced 100km or so apart and there was a welcome rest area about 65km from Winton which had been set up next to a strange and lonely bunch of hills.

We set off early on the Saturday morning with 40 litres of fuel in drums on the back of the ute and planned to stop at each.

Once again, we asked Kiwi and Sue to head off first and asked them to set up morning smoko at the rest area. When we got there mid-morning, the billy was boiling, the biscuits and fresh fruit were set out on the table, cups, tea and coffee was ready and we tucked in.



The rest area, between Winton and Cloncurry, is called the Ayrshire Hills Rest Area. In the middle of a huge flat area, there are several ancient eroded hills covered in stunted Gidgee trees. Most people just stop out of curiosity, why are they there? they look like they are the remains of long gone small volcanoes.

Click the pic to see a video of the area.

After we'd had our fill, satisfied nature's wants, packed up and loaded the ute again, it was time to head to our next stop which was the Blue Heeler Hotel, a further 100km up the straight as a die, but good surface road.

The Blue Heeler Hotel in Kynuna is an 1860s staging post for Cobb and Co. coaches and has a rich history immortalised in the famous Australian ballad Waltzing Matilda as it is here, it is claimed, that the bush poet Banjo Paterson first performed the tune, a claim however shared 180Km down the road at Winton's North Gregory Hotel.



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Folklore has it that the owner of nearby Dagworth Station, Bob Macpherson, told Banjo about the suicide of the shearer Samuel Hoffmeister beside the Combo Waterhole, 22km south east of the pub. It is said Hoffmeister had a last drink at the Blue Heeler. This story inspired Paterson to write "Waltzing Matilda". A sign on the wall declares the Blue Heeler to be the place where the song was first performed.



Inside the Blue Heeler, with the Banjo Patterson story on the far wall. "Johnno" Saunders the photographer.

Every wall in the pub contains someone's name. The idea being you pay a few dollars to the publican, he/she gives you a special pen, you find a clear spot and write your name. The money goes to the flying doctor.



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A few months ago we'd called into the hotel on our last "check" drive and had spoken with the owners and organised a light snack for us when we arrived. Unfortunately, in the time period between back then and when we arrived on Saturday 02 Sept, the hotel had been sold and the old owner forgot to pass on the info of our arrival to the new owner. Didn't matter, we all bought a drink, had a good look around, changed riders, refuelled the scooters then hit the road for the next stop, the "Walkabout Creek" hotel at McKinlay, 75km further NW.





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This historic pub, which was built in 1900 and licensed in 1901, was once the Federal Hotel and stood closer to the highway – see below.



When it was chosen as the hotel for the movie Crocodile Dundee, it was temporarily renamed “The Walkabout Creek” hotel then shortly after the movie became a box office hit (1986) the pub was sold for \$290 000 and permanently renamed and promoted as the town's tourist attraction. It was shifted from its original site to where it is today in the mid-1990s.





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For lunch we'd previously organised a pie and chips so as to soothe Jillian O'Toole's cravings, we weren't disappointed, then after lunch, it was back on with the jacket and helmet, back on the scooters, a final pic in front of the hotel and it was off, another 100km down the road to Cloncurry



We arrived Cloncurry late in the day on Saturday the 02 Sept where, due to the hard slog up from Winton, we intended to stay 2 nights. Council had allowed us the use of the PCYC hall in which to stay and we didn't waste any time parking the scooters, unloading the truck and setting up our bed sites.





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The PCYC hall was just over the road from the Leichhardt Hotel and as we were all looking forward to an early night, over the road for dinner it was.



Next morning was free, there was an event planned for the afternoon, so the troops went touring. Not far out of town, just off the road to Mt Isa, the Chinaman Creek has been dammed to form a lake which, apart from supplying water for the town, is ideal for swimming, fishing, water skiing, kayaking, paddle boarding and more! The dam was built in 1994 to take advantage of water flowing from Chinaman Creek and the Cloncurry River

The council has built extensive facilities at the water's edge.



Click the pic above to see video of the lake.



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Later that day we had arranged with Council to hold a barbecue in one of the town's parks and to invite people from Cloncurry to come and enjoy a wonderful lunch, to meet the silly old buggers who had ridden 110cc scooters all the way from Brisbane and to toss a dollar or two into Johnno's bucket.

Ernest Henry Mine had agreed to provide the wonderful lunch, which they did and MMG mine had agreed to provide prizes to the person(s) who would be voted best dressed. The townspeople had been invited to come dressed to represent the Royal Flying Doctor.



Ernest Henry sent in several staff from the mine who set up a great steak barbecue which looked and smelled to die for. They went to an awful lot of trouble, sourced and prepared food, set it out ready to go – but no-one came!

We enjoyed it and really appreciated it but we felt sorry for Ernest Henry, they were doing their bit for Legacy but unfortunately in vain.

Another group that turned up to do their bit for Legacy was 51 Battalion Delta Company led by Major Graham Rorie and WOFF Rick Leeman. These Army Reserve people came all the way from Mt Isa to do their bit for Legacy, a 120km trip each way, but like those from the mine, they too were disappointed at the very low roll up. The local Cloncurry SES also send along a couple of members, along with some gear they normally use with the intention of showing it to the public. They too were disappointed.



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We had spoken with staff from the local IGA store earlier in the day, asked if they were coming to the barbecue that afternoon and they expressed surprise, saying they hadn't heard anything about it. We hoped that wasn't an omen – unfortunately it was.



A couple of local kids, like kids everywhere, were fascinated by the machinery brought across from Mt Isa.



At the end of the day, after everything had been packed up and cleaned, everyone got together for a photo, the Army and SES left for their 120km drive back to Mt Isa and we headed back to the PCYC.



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Neil Snudden got the drone back into the air to have one last look at Cloncurry. You can see it [HERE](#).

That night, as we had a school visit in Julia Creek next day, it was pack the bags with the goodies and get them ready. We'd done this a few times now and had a system and with all hands on deck it didn't take long.

Next morning it was up early, SSSSS, breakfast, pull the beds apart, load the truck, then back on the scooters and head east. Our next overnight was Richmond, 285km east along the Flinders Hwy. We'd gone as far west as we intended this trip, now it was all east. As Julia Creek was about 140km east, on the Flinders Hwy, we anticipated reaching the school about 11.00am.



As usual, the kids were marvellous. Happy, appreciative, fun loving – with attitudes like that, all these kids can surely look forward to a bright future, makes you feel good just meeting them. We are indeed a lucky country.

Here Arthur Reeves shares his ride with a lovely young lady while below Bob Anderson (left) and Chris Dietzel share theirs.





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After the kids had started, revved, tooted, stopped the scooters, the school invited us to a wonderful morning tea. We didn't need to be invited twice.



After we'd morning tead, all the kids were assembled at one end of the shelter and we brought out the "show bags" and gave one to each of the kids, though boss teacher forbade them opening the bags until they were back in the class room. Discipline in the ADF is nothing compared to here, although bursting at the seams and still with a smile on their faces and even though having a peek inside, not one opened their bag.



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Then to our surprise, all the kids stood and sang for us – it was lovely.



Reluctantly we had to leave as it was another 150km to Richmond. We refuelled the scooters then headed off, expecting to get to Richmond about 4.00pm. On arrival we picked up the keys to the Council Hall from the Council Chambers, backed the truck up to the back door, unloaded, found a space, made up our beds then had a nana nap as Council had planned an evening for us.



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That evening Council had arranged an evening for us at the Kronosaurus Korner.



Kronosaurus Korner is Australia's premier marine fossil museum. It showcases nearly 1,150 unique fossil specimens from digs close to Richmond, including the 100-115 million year old remains of extinct marine reptiles, fishes, ammonites and squids that once dominated Australia's ancient inland sea. While fossils of extinct marine reptiles were found in the area during the 1860s, the catalyst for developing the museum occurred in 1989 with the discovery of the spectacular 'Richmond Pliosaur' on a property called Marathon Station near Richmond. The 'Richmond Pliosaur' was recognised by palaeontologists for representing one of the best preserved Cretaceous marine reptile fossils in the world.

Three months after the excavation of the 'Richmond Pliosaur', the skeleton of Australia's most complete dinosaur, *Kunbarrasaurus leversi*, was also found on Marathon Station. This



discovery cemented Richmond as one of Australia's most prolific fossil localities and spurred an unprecedented amount of fossicking in the region. Over 150 local residents and high-profile palaeontologists held a meeting in Richmond to discuss the development of a museum to prepare, conserve and showcase the growing number of newly found fossils. The proposed museum would also serve as a research hub for visiting palaeontologists and a tourist attraction for the region.

With approval from Richmond Shire Council, the Strand Theatre was selected as the site for the Richmond Marine Fossil Museum. The building had originally been used as a movie theatre but had subsequently been converted into a storage area for animal feed. The museum opened in 1995 following major renovation work to the building. It was initially operated by a dedicated group of locals and a volunteer organisation called Friends of the Museum.

The museum was subsequently renamed Kronosaurus Korner Information Centre during a redevelopment phase known as 'Stage 1'. Funding for 'Stage 1' included \$200,000 from the State Government and \$300,000 from Richmond Shire Council. Kronosaurus Korner Information Centre was named after the iconic 11 metre long marine reptile Kronosaurus Queenslandicus of which a full-size replica was installed outside the museum. Expansions to the museum also included a new visitor information desk, gift shop and cafe.



Ros Curran taking it easy in the jaws of the Kronosaurus Queenslandicus



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Richmond Shire Council took over full management of Kronosaurus Korner Information Centre in 1999 and shortened the name of the museum to Kronosaurus Korner. It is operated as an incorporated body with a board of directors consisting of the local mayor, councillors and one town member.

This new management system coincided with the expansion of several new galleries during a redevelopment phase known as 'Stage 2'. This included the opening of the Cannington Gallery in 2010 (funded by BHP Billiton) and the Rob Levers Gallery in 2012, named after one of the founders of the museum.,

We arrived to be greeted by Deputy Mayor June Kuhl who led us into the museum where a wonderful buffet-style dinner had been arranged for us. This lovely young lady was there to help, walking around amongst us, offering us food and telling everyone that her “grandma” made it all. If that’s correct, thank you grandma, you excelled and a big thank you to your lovely young grand-daughter who did an excellent job.



After we had had cleared the table, in record time, we were ushered into the theatre to watch a movie on the history of the area, then given carte blanche and allowed to look over the magnificent museum.





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As we were about to leave, we received a wonderful surprise.



Deputy Mayor June Kuhl presented Johnno, our Chancellor of the Exchequer, with a wonderful cheque for \$970.00. Council had conducted a number of raffles and raised that sum from the community. We thank them very much!



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June suggested before we leave in the morning that we ride a few km out of town and have a look over the 'dig' site where a lot of the fossils had been found. After being intrigued by what we saw in the museum, we just had to, so it was an early pack up and we headed a few km north to the well signed dig site, parked the vehicles and the bikies went exploring.



The dig area is a bit of a moon-scape, it's an open dig, anyone can have a go and you can see it's been "looked" over quite carefully.

After we'd spent an hour or so at the "digs" it was time to head further east to our next overnighter – Hughenden. After Hughenden we would be back on familiar territory as we'd spent a night there last year. We thought this would be an easy run, only 115km across to Hughenden so there was no rush to leave the "digs" but when we got back into Richmond we were met with a "Road Closed" sign.



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Unfortunately, there had been a major accident and the road was closed. We waited a while then they opened the road with a diversion around the accident. We set off.

When we got to the accident site, we were diverted onto a rough track which ran along beside the railway line, this went for about a km or so and eventually we got back onto the highway.



We arrived Hughenden late in the afternoon and once again the generous Council had allowed us use of the Showground Pavilion. No need to go exploring here, this was all familiar, we knew where everything was, the showers, the kitchen, where to park everything, we settled in and cracked open the esky. The Powers by this time had long gone but there was plenty of Great Northern for the die-hards and Coke for the goffer scoffers. Every town in which we'd stopped, Johnno had approached the publican in each hotel, told him/her who we were, what we were doing and miraculously our beer supplies would be replenished.

I don't think we had to buy a carton the whole time we were away – thanks to Johnno.

That night, which was a Tuesday (which meant there wasn't a lot happening in Hughenden), the wonderful Jenny Murdoch had arranged for the publican at the Great Western Hotel to open his kitchen and provide us with a meal.

We boarded our bus, driven by our chief pilot, Patti Bradford and headed back into town. The hotel had set up a private dining area at the back of the hotel, the meal was great, the beer was cold, what more can you ask for?





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Dinner at the Great Western, Hughenden.



And even though it was a quiet night, it didn't stop Johnno parading the bucket and picking up several dollars along the way.



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Early in the morning Neil put the drone up to have a look over Hughenden. You can see it [HERE](#).

From here down to Townsville it was familiar ground though last year we didn't have a look through the Flinders Discovery Centre, this time we did. Council once again obliged and we were given free access and the visit was certainly worthwhile. The display had recently had an upgrade and an expansion and if you're ever in the area it's definitely worth a look.



After the Discovery Centre a few went to have a look through the FJ Holden Cafe





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This is an amazing café, apart from good food, it contains all things FJ Holden, relics, stories, photos and if you're a Holden fan you have to go and have a look. Once Mark Lucas, who owns a 1948 series Holden, found out about it we couldn't get him out.

Before we left Hughenden we decided to give Jillian O'Toole a thrill and buy her a pie. We'd been told that Holden's Bakery made the best pies in town, (they were right), so we right-dressed the bikes and bought her one. They looked so good we all decided to have one.



Having morning smokoed and with 250km to go, with a school stop in the middle, we set off for our next overnighter, Charters Towers.

250km was far too long for our little scooters to tackle without a break so we decided to stop at the Exchange Hotel at Torrens Creek – 90km down the road. We had made it a long stop last year and back then were looked after very well by the owner so it was a surprise to find new owners this time. Lots of hotels change hands lots of times out west it seems.





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After a refreshing drink, a few riders changing their ride for a seat in the bus, we set off again, next stop was the Pentland School – a further 50km.

We didn't have a lot of goodies to give away so as well as giving away what we did have, we'd arranged to cook a barby lunch for the kids. The school provided the barbecue, we provided the goodies. Jillian O'Toole was ecstatic, another sausage sizzle, she could hardly control herself.



Sue and Kiwi cooked the snags while we all stood around and watched, then the kids lined up and in no time they had all gone.





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Our chief Pilot, Patti Bradford, who had donned the lion uniform along with our WOD Ros Curran, set up the “give aways” on a bench, after which the kids lined up to get theirs along with a bunch of chips. Seemed to go down well.



Smiths, IGA, the Air Force, thank you for giving us those items to give to the kids, it's a shame you can't see the joy on those little faces yourselves, it certainly makes our day!



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The local copper, a lovely bloke, joined us too, he and Dan Willett, an ex copper, swapped stories. We met hundreds of lovely people on this trip, you have to believe that the world is full of nice people, unfortunately it's only the minute minority that "try" and muck it up sometimes. It's good to be alive.





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We refuelled the scooters from the two Jerry cans we had on the ute then set off for Charters Towers but before we left we decided to have a look at the old jail. Click the pic to read the sign.

With the PCYC out of bounds, we spoke with Kerri Forno who manages the Goldfields Sporting Complex and as she had very generously allowed us to stay there, we arrived, backed the truck to the door, unloaded, set up, cracked open the esky and had a breather. This was heaven, plenty of room, showers and toilets under the one roof – and air conditioned. Thanks heaps Kerri.



That night we did a “Ghost of Gold” tour on the Hill. Mayor Frank Beverage welcomed us, which was nice, then we were given a talk by Amanda Stevens from the Information centre on how and when gold was first discovered at the Towers, after which we were shown an explanatory film. Normally there is a small charge to witness this tour but Charters Towers Council generously “shouted us”.

Thank you.

After the tour, with nothing else planned for the night, we decided on a pub meal, luckily the Enterprise Hotel was just over the road and still serving dinner and as we’d eaten there last year we thought we’d give it another go – which we did.

Next day was free so it was time for a bit of sight-seeing. Ken Hey took us down to the Weir which is not far from town and which holds back the Burdekin River. Apart from providing the town with water it’s also a nice spot to visit with barbecue facilities and a play-ground for kids. It is also a good spot to try your luck with a rod and reel, the river holds Sooty and small-mouth Grunter, Catfish, Sleepy Cod and Barramundi. There is a boat ramp about a km up-stream from the weir where you can water ski, jet ski or just go sailing.

Great spot.

Water from the weir is pumped the 17km back to Charters and stored in the large reservoir on Towers Hill from where it is piped down to the town.



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Floyd Wilson at the Burdekin Weir Park.



Ian Aves at the weir, probably thinking to himself, "The toilets are way back there – wonder if anyone is watching" – but we could be wrong.

ZZZ



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After the trip to the weir it was time to celebrate Ian “Bestie” Aves’s birthday.

Ros Curran had spent hours in the kitchen and came up with a cake which was so good you would have thought she had bought it from the Cheesecake Shop.

We all wished him all the wellst - then tucked in.



After celebrating Ian’s luck in reaching the fine old age of 57, it was time to present our awards. Every year we present some of our Scootavillens with an invaluable award to acknowledge their outstanding ability in a particular field.



L-R: Floyd Wilson, Ian Aves, “Kiwi” Campbell, Ros Curran, Johnno Saunders, Patti Bradford, Trev Benneworth, Allan O’Connor.



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That night the Heritage listed Civic Club hosted us for dinner with Ryan James, the Lions Club Secretary, organising the meal. We'd been there before too, having had a good night there last year.



Built in 1900, it was used as premises for an elite men's club. It reflected the interests and leisure activities of the many influential men involved in mining, commerce and the professions who were its members and patrons. The establishment of such a club in Charters Towers, at the time the richest of the North Queensland mining fields, demonstrated the importance of this city at the turn of the century.

The Civic Club, as it was known from 1907 onwards, enjoyed an era of prosperity until 1920, when there was only one mine operating in Charters Towers. The decline of the industry invariably led to a decline in population, so much that by the end of the First World War, the number of people living in the area had halved.

The club continued as a source of recreation in the city following and remained a (boring) male preserve until 1980 when the membership base was expanded and women were invited to join.

Although a quiet night, not a lot of people used the Club that night, a usual we were made very welcome.



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We were in for a very nice surprise too – Elvis popped in, chatted up a few of the girls then sang us a few songs.





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Elvis, who some say looked a lot like Mark Lucas, hit the stage, along with two lovely helpers and sang us a few of his best known songs accapela.

All agreed it was fantastic that Elvis would bother to join us on our fund-raising tour without charging us and hoped he's be available when next we went touring.



Elvis with his two lovely helpers, **L-R:** Marie Henson, Mark "Elvis" Lucas, Maream Dietzel.



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Next morning, which was Friday the 8th September, we woke early, breakfasted, packed and cleaned up, loaded the truck and reluctantly headed further east to our last stop - Townsville. Today was our last day, we'd travelled hundreds of kms, met lots of wonderful people, seen some fabulous sites, raised some money for Legacy, got to know each other a lot better and had a helluva good time.

But now it was all over.

We set off for Townsville and Ken Hey had arranged a smoko at Donnington Airpark which is a private airport and is on the Flinders Highway, about 50km west of Townsville. As it's next to the "town" of Woodstock, it is sometimes referred to as Woodstock Airport. Prior to leaving Charters, Sue and Kiwi went shopping at Woolies and bought a selection of nibblies which we intended to enjoy at the airport.

DONNINGTON AIRPARK
Townsville's Satellite Airfield for
Sport, Recreational & General Aviation

**ENQUIRIES WELCOME RE: HANGARAGE,
FLYING TRAINING & OTHER OPERATIONS**

3467 Flinders Highway, Woodstock QLD
ALL MAIL TO PO BOX 10, AITKENVALE QLD 4814

The airport is 250ft AMSL, has one grass runway of 3,018 feet in length and lies 11/29.



Sue Trimmer preparing smoko at Donnington Airport. Mike Gahan in the background checking the Enroute Supplement!

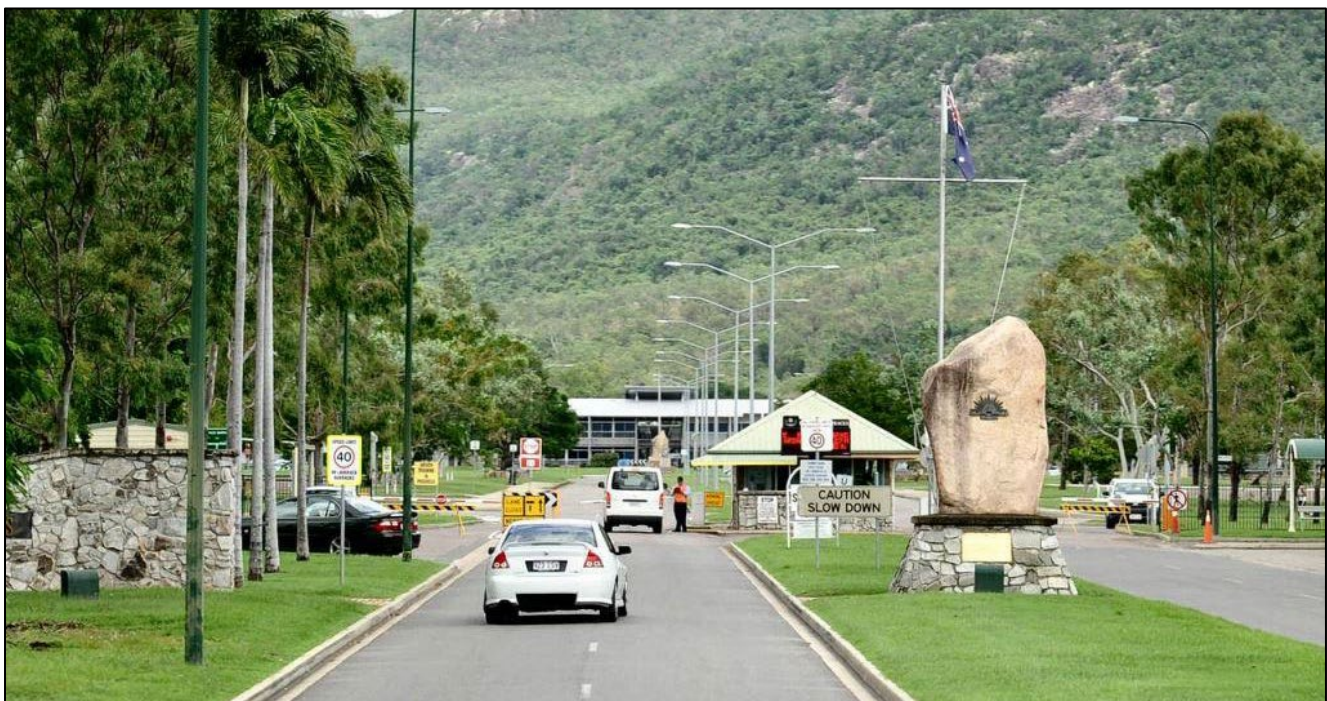


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Chris Smith, who runs the airport, telling us some of the history of the airport.

We left the airport and very soon arrived at the gates to Lavarack Barracks in Townsville, our home for the next few days. Thanks Army!.



FFFF



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Our home for a couple of days at Laverack Barracks, how lovely it was not having to blow up a bed but having civilised facilities like sprung beds, sheets, a shower/toilet block a few paces away, washing machines, driers – it was wonderful.



We enjoyed a fabulous meal in the Officers' Mess too, with not a sausage in sight.

GGGG



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Saturday morning, as we didn't have to take the bikes out to NQ Freighters which would transport them back to Brisbane for us until Sunday morning, those who could ride grabbed a bike and went exploring. The Chief Pilot loaded up the bus with those that weren't riding also went touring. Some went over to Magnetic Island, a lot went up Castle Hill for a good look out over Townsville.



L-R: Alyn "Hawkeye" Hawkes, Mark Lewis, Ros Curran, Ian Aves, Arthur Reeves, Bob Anderson, Patti Bradford, Jillian O'Toole, Cathy Yang.



As close to a RAAF base as we got

HHHH



We searched all over Townsville for this sign - Cathy Yang had to have a pic of it, we found it eventually.

That night it was all back into the bus and off to the RSL for dinner. We had Kev Rosser join us, another Radtech A, which helped lift the quality of the evening.



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Sunday morning, riders hopped on their scooters, the Chief Pilot hopped in her bus and we all went out to the NQ Freighter depot in Bohle, a western suburb of Townsville to deliver the scooters.

For the second year NQ Freighters has taken our scooters back to Brisbane for us, we drop them off one day and in no time at all they are back in Brisbane, practically before we get back. Very generous of them - we thank them very much.





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When the scooters arrive Brisbane they are delivered to NQ Freighters' depot on the south side of Brisbane. Asset Towing help us out there, they pick up the scooters from the depot and deliver them to Nibble Bike Hire in Brisbane, there are some very generous and lovely people in this world.



Sadly Monday morning came and it was time to leave. We packed, some went their own way, some by train, some by air, the rest climbed aboard the Chief Pilot's buss and off we went.



Chief Pilot, Patti Bradford, doing a pre-flight before setting off to Brisbane.



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Patti had arranged for us to stop at her sister's place in Ayre for morning smoko. What a welcome, we were made to feel like Royalty, the ladies had a wonderful spread set out for us, fussed over us, didn't want us to leave.



Patti (centre) with her two sisters.

Unfortunately we had to, it was a long way down to Rockhampton where we intended to spend the night then onto Brisbane on Tuesday.

It was a fabulous trip, we had a great team, saw some great people and towns, raised \$30,200 for Legacy – and we're going to do it again in 2024. If you want to come, put your name down.