

# SCOOTAVILLE Scootaville Old,--2024

A week or two before we left on our journey, we once again approached Xee Vang at Metcash (IGA) and asked if they could provide us with some items we could include in the little "show-bags" we give to the kids at the primary schools we visit. Once again they were very generous.



For several years now Xee from Metcash has generously provided us with colouring in books, coloured pens, drink bottles, money boxes and various toys which we bundle up and give to the little kids. Just to see the joy on those little faces makes it all worthwhile.

Many thanks to you and Metcash Xee, one day you should come with us to see for yourself the kid's excitement which is provided by your and Metcash's generosity.



Xee Vang presenting us with a ute load of toys and a very generous Gift Card which we could use to purchase food items along the way.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



From the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2024, those participating in Scootaville Qld for 2024 began to gather at the Heritage Precinct at Chermside to get together, meet others in the group, get to know their gear and get ready for the next 18 days when they will travel via country Qld up north to Townsville – a journey of 2,500km.



They would travel via and overnight (sometimes more than 1 night) at Warwick, Goondiwindi, Toowoomba, Caloundra, Gayndah, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay, Bowen, Ayr then Townsville.

We used the two buildings on the right (above), the centre building was once the Sandgate Drill Hall (1915) and the building on the right was once the former Chermside School (1900). The school building was moved to the site in 1997; the drill hall in 2000. Both were perfect for our use, thanks to Bev Isdale for the use of the school and to Brad Shillig for the Drill Hall.

The Brisbane North Hockey Club allowed us the use of their toilet/shower block, a short walk away and the Kedron Wavell Club was a just a quick 5 min walk for the fit ones among us. We used both – often.

On Thursday morning a few of us were bussed into town to Nibble Bike Hire to pick up our scooters and after a short briefing on how to operate the small machines, we rode back to Chermside ready to start the adventure.

The Kedron Wavell Club was very helpful to our cause, making a sizeable donation and allowing us to hold an excellent fund raising night on Thursday the 29<sup>th</sup> Aug in one of their function rooms.



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Trevor Gillmeister, Merv Hughes, Ian Healy and Pat Welsh gave of their time and held a very funny Q & A event on stage with Pat Welsh asking the questions and the other three telling of their hysterical and historical times when playing their relevant sport.



The very professional Australian Army Band from Gallipoli Barracks in Brisbane also donated their time and entertained for an hour or so while dinner was being served.



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After dinner and after the very funny Q & A, we asked Merv Hughes to put on his auctioneer's hat. A number of generous firms had donated items which we could auction and with Merv prepared to take on the job of auctioneer, we were assured of good returns,

Merv excelled, he sold everything at hugely inflated prices and we ended up with lots of cash. Merv, you're a champ.

Next morning, Friday the 30<sup>th</sup> August, we packed up, loaded the small truck with our gear, those riding selected their wheels, which they would keep for the remainder of the trip, everyone else climbed aboard our small bus and we set forth, our first overnighter would be Warwick, a 165km trip up on the plateau, but we had a few stops along the way.



We were very fortunate in having four serving blokes from No. 1 Combat Communications Squadron (1CCS) at RAAF Amberley join us and who agreed to stay with us for a week until we got to Gayndah. They drove 2 of their modified Benz G-Wagons, was great having them with us, they were an attraction where ever we stopped. Merv came with us too.

First stop was to be the F-111 display out the front of RAAF Base Amberley. A few riders from the Vietnam Vets Association Motor Cycle Club had joined us at Chermshire and had offered to lead us out of town and stay with us until our first smoko stop.



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At Amberley we all lined up in front of the F-111 for the pic where we were noticed by the Military Police who came over to see who we were and ask what we were doing. After we explained we were on a mission from God, all was well and they stayed on for a while for a chat.



Kedron Wavell RSL Sub-Branch had generously loaned us their Mitsubishi ute which we were going to use as a "Hungry Van." Each day Sue Trimmer and Bob Collins would set forth in the ute a bit earlier than the rest of us and after travelling about 100km, would stop, set up the urn and the biscuits and by the time we got there smoko was waiting. Very civilised.

They left the F-111 site before us and headed for Warrill View which was our first planned smoko stop. By the time we got there the water was boiling, the coffee, cups and biscuits were all set up and smoko number 1 was enjoyed by all.



After we'd smokoed, we set off again for the 85km trip up the steep Cunningham Gap to Warwick, leaving Sue and Bob to clean up. We thought this routine is going to work well.



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The very generous Warwick Show and Rodeo Society Inc. had allowed us the use of one of their buildings in which to overnight. We thought if it's all like this we're on a winner here.



That afternoon Merv had agreed to hold cricket lessons for some of the kids in Warwick. Andrew Bryson from the local Cricket Assoc got a bunch of kids together at the ground and Merv spent time with each individual passing on some of his vast cricket knowledge. Kids loved it.



That evening we dined at the Warwick RSL and next morning set off for the 200km easy and flat run to Goondiwindi. We decided to give Sue and Bob a day off, instead we decided to stop at the iconic pub at the little settlement at Karara, 50km from Warwick. Apart from the pub,



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there isn't a lot at Karara which owes its existence as being at the junction of the road in from Toowoomba.

We had a chat with the proprietor who generously donated a carton to our cause.



Dave Pedler and Dael Giddins receiving the medicine.



We'd arranged to have brunch at the Inglewood Café – another 50 odd km down the road. Peta Sutton, the owner of the café had set up a marquee, tables and seats for us on a vacant lot next to her shop and we had a leisurely meal before continuing on to our overnighter at Goondiwindi.



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The Goondiwindi Showground is owned by and administered by a trust and we couldn't get a freeby for the night but lucky for us Bill Brasington, the President of the RSL Sub-Branch came to the rescue and offered to pay the fee.

Thanks Bill and thanks to the RSL Sub-Branch.



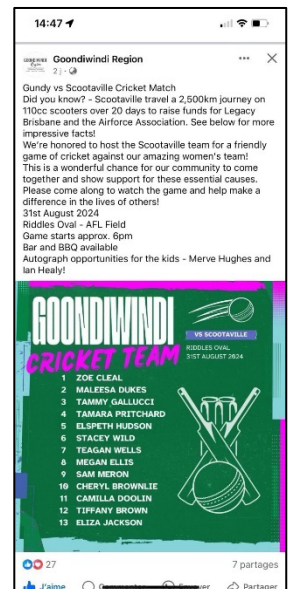
The pavilion we were offered was huge, big enough for us to house us as well as all our scooters, bus, truck, ute as well as the Air Force's G Wagons – which of course we did.

That evening, knowing we had Merv with us to bolster our energies, we challenged the Goondiwindi Ladies' Cricket Club to a game under lights to be held at Riddles Oval on the outskirts of town.

The ladies accepted our challenge, as knowing our average age was theirs plus 30, they figured it would be an easy win for them.

A large group of townspeople turned up at the ground to watch the game of the century, a barbecue was established and even with the obvious age advantage on their side, the ladies decided to cheat to ensure a victory for the town side.

They selected two ladies from the local Council to be the umpires for the game, with instructions to cheat as much as possible and so we wouldn't notice the obvious bios against us, they spouted moustaches á la Merv which they hoped we would interpret as favouring us. What gave the game away though, was the copious amounts of sandpaper they had secreted on their hats which they would make available for the lady bowlers.







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The ladies won the toss and decided to bat first and even with our non-secret weapon, Merv, in his capacity as captain of the good guys, and thundering down copious attacking balls, they still managed a respectable score. Unfortunately some of our team had difficulty staying upright while chasing a ball and had to retire hurt.

Then it was our turn. We took to the field but as most were aged some years on the wrong side of a half century, it seemed only proper to engage a runner. Young Wil Doolan, who as an avid cricketer, was watching from the side and when approached and asked if he would act as a runner for old legs he readily agreed. After only a few moments we quickly discovered Will could be far better employed as a substitute batter as well as a runner and he very quickly became the player of the match.



At the end of the game he was rightly shouldered off the ground.

But – even though the ladies had engaged two umpires who made several dubious decisions while standing, we out-cheated them – our Aunty Joy was the scorer for the game. It's in the book. We won!



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We must thank Eliza Jackson from the Ladies Cricket Assoc who organised everything, we had a fabulous night, great crowd, great food, great game, We'd love to do it again.

Next day, Sunday, it was off to Toowoomba, a 225km run down the Leichhardt and Gore highways. We set off at about 9.00am, with Sue and Bob leaving a bit earlier and by the time we got to Millmerran, 140km down the road, lunch at the ANZAC Memorial Park was waiting for us.

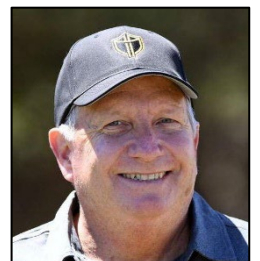
Very civilised indeed!



After lunch and a refuel of the scooters, we returned to the Gore Hwy and headed for Toowoomba, 80km further on and where we planned to stop for 2 nights.

The many hatted Gary Graham from Toowoomba AFA had arranged for us to spend the 2 nights at Army's Milne Bay Barracks. We arrived late in the afternoon and were allocated rooms in which to camp.

Ian Healy, who had been working in Brisbane during the week, drove up from Brisbane to join us and was given a special room at the Barracks from which he would do his weekday [SEN radio show](#) early on Monday morning.





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Army had allocated us the “Bunkhouse” in which to bunk down and immediately those who had seen a greater number of sunrises, immediately “bagged” a bottom bunk though all agreed that a solid bed with an inner-spring mattress, whether top of bottom, was a blessed relief from having to pump up and prepare a bed site.



That evening Gary Graham had organised dinner for us at the Barracks, the RAAFA and the RSL Sub-Branch provided a wonderful meal in the Mess room then it was a couple of quiet ones and off to bed.

Next morning (Monday) we were invited to Town Hall.





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Mayor Geoff McDonald had very generously invited all of us to Town Hall for a Civic Reception. We arrived via scooter and bus at 9.00am and for the next few hours were treated like royalty after which we lined up for the keeper pic. Thanks Geoff, it was greatly appreciated.

Later in the day, as we had arranged to play cricket against Toowoomba Grammar School, this time with Merv and Heals in our side, we reckoned we couldn't lose. Stupidly though, we hadn't learnt a thing from our game in Goondiwindi, several of our team kept face planting and had to be carried off.

Old blokes shouldn't play young games – lesson learned!



When you're really good at it, instinct kicks in – you never forget.



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Merv wasn't going to let Heals get all the glory, he was determined to show Heals where all the hard work in a game of cricket was really done - so he sent down a couple of sizzlers, but only a couple as what do they say "Age shall not weary them!" that might or might not be true, but it certainly won't let you do what you used to do.





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Merv and Heals signed a number of small bats which we left with the excited kids from Grammar. Unfortunately Heals had to leave us later that day to get back to work in Brisbane. Was great having him – even if it was for only 1 night.



That night we dined at Fitzzy's on Margaret St in the city before returning to the Barracks from where we'd leave in the morning for the downhill run to Caloundra.





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Channel 7 had contacted us and asked if they could do an interview with us when leaving. [We](#) arranged to meet a few hundred metres down the road from the Barracks but an over-zealous Council man had other ideas and sent us to an adjacent park. Click [HERE](#)

After the interview, Sue and Bob set off again, down the hill to Esk where we'd planned morning smoko. Esk is about 80km from Toowoomba and travelling in the ute they were a lot faster than us so when we arrived, once again the billy was boiling, the sandwiches were out and all we had to do was stop, park the scooters and tuck in. Which we did!



Not far from Esk is Somerset Dam – which provides Brisbane's water supply. The dam is built on the Brisbane River and is a favourite holiday spot and water sports lake. We lined up for a pic.



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Then after we'd left Somerset Dam we re-mounted our rides and headed for Kilcoy where the Kilcoy RSL Sub-Branch had prepared lunch for us.



The lovely and very busy May Wallace from Kilcoy Legacy and the RSL Sub-Branch had rallied the troops and together they provided us with a magnificent lunch.

Wal Shakoff and Ian Aves didn't need to be told twice that lunch was ready.







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The troops enjoying lunch at Kilcoy

After lunch, and a good look through the RSL's remarkable collection of memorabilia, we expressed our thanks to May and her ladies, reluctantly said our good byes, mounted up and headed for the final leg to Caloundra, 70 km away where we were to stay for 2 nights.

We had a bit of a problem obtaining an overnighter on the Sunshine Coast. The Nambour Showground was our initial choice but after showing us all their facilities they then hit us with a huge bill for the use of – so we looked elsewhere. Lucky for us Paul Sichter from the Caloundra Cricket Club got to hear of our dilemma and he offered us the use of the Club's indoor cricket building. This was perfect.





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There was plenty of room for us to spread out, a “carpeted” floor, shower/toilet block next door and the Club’s bar open and welcome. Thanks Paul and thanks Caloundra Cricket.

Next day was a free day and we’d been invited to tour the amazing Qld Air Museum, situated at Caloundra Airport.



The museum has the largest and most diverse collection of historic aircraft in Australia and it also has a large collection of aircraft engines, equipment, artefacts, photographs, uniforms and books.

On 2 June 1974 the Queensland Air Museum was inaugurated with the official unveiling of a Canberra bomber (A84-225) that had been purchased from a Government disposal. The aircraft was moved by volunteers from RAAF Base Amberley to be displayed at the Pioneer Valley Park, which was a museum at Kuraby in Brisbane's southern suburbs. The park was



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eventually closed and the aircraft was moved to a leased site at Nudgee on the north side of Brisbane. The collection began to grow when a Meteor was donated to the museum by the British Government and a Vampire and two Sea Venoms were acquired.

Due to the construction of the new Brisbane Airport nearby, the collection was forced to move to a temporary holding area on the airport site. Exorbitant rental costs at this location eventually lead to the museum being evicted and the resultant publicity resulted in an offer of a permanent home on the Sunshine Coast by the Landsborough Shire Council. On 14 June 1986 the collection was relocated to a site at Caloundra Airport with a newly built hangar. The official opening of the museum took place on 4 April 1987 by Mrs Ly Bennett, museum patron and widow of the museum's first patron, the late Air Vice-Marshal Don Bennett. Don Bennett was the Queensland-born founder and commander of the World War II Bomber Command Pathfinder Force. In honour of this, the road in front of the museum was named Pathfinder Drive.

Now with a permanent home, the collection continued to grow and in 1989 it was bolstered by an ambitious recovery expedition to Sentosa Island, Singapore where a Sea Vixen, Meteor and Hunter were purchased from a scrap metal dealer just days before their destruction. The aircraft were disassembled and successfully shipped to Australia, where they were restored and placed on display.

The Museum, which is run entirely by volunteers, currently has a collection of over 80 historic military and civilian aircraft set on two hectares. It is open from 10.00am to 4.00pm every day except Christmas Day. Definitely worth a visit.

You can see a short video on the museum [HERE](#).





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Mick Reinke (left) and Dave Pedler were given a conducted tour of the museum by volunteer Dave Dunlop CSC. Dave knows a thing or two about the aircraft in the museum, having retired from the Air Force in 2005 with the rank of Air Vice Marshall. It's because of people like Dave who give of their valuable time to act as volunteer guides that the Museum is such a success.



Merv had to leave us today, unselfishly he had given us a week of his time to help us raise funds for our charities and to brighten the day for a lot of cricket fans in outback Qld. Thanks Merv.

That night (Wednesday) was our last in Caloundra. we had dinner at the Caloundra RSL, which was only a short walk from our lodgings, then it was back to the ground and get ready for the big trip to Gayndah next day. The Caloundra - Gayndah leg was 285km in length but we'd planned a few stops to break it up.



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Our first stop was to be the bakehouse at Kenilworth to try out their remarkable pies. We decided to take the short cut to Kenilworth by going via Mapleton then down the Obi Obi Rd. Traversing the Obi Obi Rd is quite an experience, the downhill run is gravel and after heavy rain is subject to dangerous and deep gutters. The uphill leg is sealed and isn't usually a problem. Definitely not suitable for caravans or larger vehicles, the 3km very narrow and very windy descent drops 1,300 ft to the bottom of the hill.



We arrived at the Kenilworth Bakery which apart from serving up damn good pies also has a donut challenge. The donut looks more like a Subway roll, it's about 2 feet in length and weighs 1kg. It costs \$20 but if you can eat it all you get your money back and your name on a tin plate which is hung on the wall.





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We passed.

Next stop was at the Kilkivan Hotel, a further 105km up the road. From Kenilworth we had to return to the Bruce Hwy just south of Gympie, then about 10km north of Gympie once again turn inland.



We had a leisurely and relaxing lunch at the well-known hotel then mounted up again for our next stop, a further 80km to Ban Ban Springs.

BAN Ban Springs is a sacred sight for the Wakka Wakka people and was the first in Queensland to be formally recognised as an Aboriginal cultural heritage site.

A Wakka Wakka legend exists around the Ban Ban Springs site which states that the Rainbow Serpent surfaced there and spoke to the elders of the tribe, telling them about the secrets of the sacred waters and stories about the seven sisters, a mountain range not far from Ban Ban Springs. It's believed that Ban Ban was originally given its name by H. Herbert who borrowed the phrase from the local Wakka Wakka people which is known to mean grass.



For us it's a compulsory stop for a rider change and a paddle pop.



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From Ban Ban Springs it's an easy 25km run to Gayndah where we intended to stop overnight.



We were fortunate to have Dael Giddins with us as a rider. Dael comes from Gayndah and as she had spent some time on the local Council, who she didn't know wasn't worth knowing. Dael had spread the word that we were coming and we received a wonderful welcome to the town.



We were met on the outskirts of town by the Emergency Services people with their emergency vehicles and you have to wonder what anyone driving past would have thought.

Parked on the side of the road were fire and ambulance vehicles, military vehicles, a bus, truck and ute and a number of motor scooters. People must have thought it was a major disaster.

Click [HERE](#) to see the video of our welcome. Depending on your internet speed, it could take a short time to load.

As well as the Emergency Service people with their vehicles, the orange man was also there.



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Sean O'Toole being welcomed to Gayndah by Gay Dan - the Orange Man.

We thought it was marvellous, Thanks heaps Dael, we really appreciated it.





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Dael had arranged for us to overnight in the large Gayndah Showground pavilion. Once again facilities were perfect, plenty of room, toilets and showers next door and a covered area in which to park our scooters.



She had also arranged for the RSL Sub-Branch to provide us with a barbecue dinner after which we were entertained by the Gayndah Music Club. Gayndah was a great overnighter.



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Next day, Friday, the Air Force had to leave us. For the past week, apart from running many test programs with all their gear, they mixed in with us and even though, in some cases, there was a huge age gap, we thoroughly enjoyed their company. We only hope they can join us on future trips.

This leg was to be our longest. We left Gayndah at about 8.30am and headed off on our 360km trip to Tannum Sands, up near Gladstone, but before we left we had to have breakfast at the Big Orange. Their scones with jam and cream are legendary.



360km was too far for our little scooters to cover without refuelling and was too far for our old bums to endure their seats – so we planned several stops.



First stop was the small public school at Binjour, just 24km from Gayndah.



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We hadn't originally planned to stop at Binjour (it was missed when we did our trial run) but while we were in Gayndah several people suggested we should – so we did and we're glad we did. Nigel Davidson, the school principal, had all the kids at the school fence to greet us and we stopped out the front and chatted with the kids for quite a while, told them who we were, what we were doing and where we were going next.

Established in 1911 by a group of German immigrants, the school accepted its first 29 students in Sept 1913 and by the end of the year the student number had reached 37, 28 of whom spoke very little English.

Today the school has only 7 students, all happy contented little kids.

Next stop was the Reginald Murray Williams Centre at Eidsvold, a further 45 km down the road. Once again Dael had come to the rescue and had negotiated a discount entry cost for us.



Sue and Bob had gone ahead and had set up smoko in one of the Centre's shelter sheds so after we'd had a look through the Centre, it was time for a cuppa.

The Reginald Murray Williams Australian Bush Learning Centre was built to honour this great Australian and pay tribute to the bush skills and culture upon which the bush was founded.



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Visitors can learn about RM Williams' story, his bush skills, Indigenous artifacts, can view the Dot Hamilton cattle exhibition, be inspired with bush poetry, and appreciate the skills shared in a leathercraft workshop or demonstration. The Centre also has a modern gallery space and exhibits many talented local and travelling artists.

Eidsvold is the self-proclaimed 'Beef Capital' of the North Burnett and has a rich history of successful cattle properties, droving teams and record sized cattle sales. Eidsvold is also where Reg Williams chose to settle after leaving South Australia in the 1950's, seeking a challenge and settling on a property along the Auburn River near Eidsvold. His connection to Eidsvold is apparent still today, with reminders of his tenure in the small community's various stone buildings and numerous friendly locals sharing their stories.



His property 'Rockybar' is also his final resting place

We left the RM Williams Centre for our 75km ride up to Monto where the local RSL Sub-Branch had offered to provide us with lunch.



Two years back, when we passed through Monto on an earlier Scotaville run, the Sub-Branch then provided us with a wonderful lunch and invited us back whenever we could manage it. When we rang them a month or two before leaving, they insisted we stop there again – which of course we did. Monto RSL Sub-Branch is only a small club – but has the hospitality of a giant.

If invited we'd definitely call back again.



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After lunch, we refuelled the scooters then headed for our next stop which was to be the Wairoonga Aged Care Complex at Biloela.

Anita Black from LiveBetter Community Services in Biloela had been in touch with us, knowing we were passing through Biloela on our way to Tannum Sands, she asked if we had time could we call into the Aged Care Complex. Of course we could we said and we did.

We pulled into the Complex early afternoon to a huge welcome



Arthur Reeves meeting one of the lovely ladies from the complex.





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We were invited into the complex where Dave Pedler on his ukulele with Ros Curren's help, got everyone in song, Click [HERE](#), after which the Complex brought out a most welcome afternoon tea for us.





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Towards the end of our visit, we received a wonderful surprise.

The elderly people at the Complex had banded together, taken up a collection and presented us with a substantial donation towards our cause.

That was one donation we really appreciated, thank you very much!



Reluctantly we left the Wahroonga Aged Care Complex on Friday morning and headed for our two night stop at Tannum Sands.

Originally we had planned to stay at the Army/Navy Cadet complex in Gladstone, we had several meetings with the NCO I/C of the complex and everything was going well until a few weeks prior to our arrival, due to changed circumstances, we were told “sorry, we can’t help.” That really upset the apple cart.



Luckily Ros Curren lives in the area and she was on the job as soon as we got the news. She eventually got in touch with Mike Robbins, the Secretary of the Tannum Sands RSL Sub-Branch, told him who we were, what we were doing and asked if he could help or did he know anyone who could. Mike said he had a very comfortable hall, on the water front at Tannum Sands and he could make that available if we thought it would suit.

Would it ever?



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Tannum Sands is 25km south of Gladstone, and with a population of about 5,500 people has all the facilities you would want. Ros went and had a look at the hall and reported back that it was perfect – so we amended our plans and looked forward to staying there.



We arrived late in the afternoon, were greeted by Mike and a few of his RSL members who welcomed us to the hall, showed us the kitchen, where the toilets/showers were situated, where were the best shops, Bottle-Os, fuel stations etc and in no time at all we'd set up shop.





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Mike and his crew then further surprised us by providing a very welcoming evening meal. We knew we were going to love it here.



That night, the 6<sup>th</sup> September, was very close to the birthdays of two of our troop. Ian Aves was born a million years ago on the 7<sup>th</sup> Sept and Dael not so long back on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept. We got two identical cakes, hundreds of candles and wished them well.





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Early next morning those without head-aches donned the Dunlop Volleys and short shorts and made good use of the wonderful beach.

On Saturday night Natasha Cole GM of the Harvey Rd Tavern had invited us to the tavern for a fund raiser. Natasha had been running meat tray raffles for some weeks and offered us the proceeds. This was most generous of her and when we arrived at the tavern we found she had also organised a band to draw a crowd and entertain us. (Click the pic at right to see a bigger copy.)



Patrons were charged \$10 entry to the night, once again those funds were donated to us, and eventually Natasha donated the sum of \$6,400 to our cause. Thanks Natasha, very generous of you and of the Tavern.



Harvey Rd Tavern.



Some of the troops enjoying the night at the Tavern.



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Trev Benneworth, Suzie Lane, Ros Curran.

Apart from the last minute accommodation set back, Gladstone was a very successful stop for us. Ros had worked hard and found two wonderful benefactors. As well as the very generous Harvey Rd Tavern, mining group Orica also agreed to support our charities, Legacy and Homeless Vets.

Suzie Lane from Orica came to the Tavern to meet us to announce that Orice would make a donation of \$6,000. We were overwhelmed.

Ros had also been talking with Libby Cattomole from the Gladstone Regional Council. We were looking for a number of small bags we could use as “show-bags” when we visited the small schools. Ros knew Council had some as she lives in the area and had seen them, so she asked Libby if there were any spares. When told of our mission, Libby was only too happy to donate a number to us and also make a Council donation of \$1,500 to our cause.



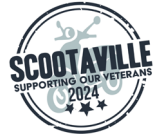
A very generous town, Thank you to everyone.

Next morning, Sunday, we said good bye and thank you the Tannum Sands RSL Sub-Branch and headed for our next 2 night stop-over in Rockhampton.

Instead of just heading north up the Bruce Hwy, we decided to head back inland and go via Biloela and Mt Morgan, a journey of 275km. A fair bit longer but definitely heaps more to see and we'd planned a few stops.



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We set off at 8.30am for our first major stop which was to be the RSL Club at Biloela. Once again we travelled via Calliope, Ros's home town so we had a short stop to say hello and meet her family.

John Rathjen, the President of the Biloela RSL Sub-Branch had invited us to the Club for morning smoko, an invitation we very quickly accepted with thanks. We arrived at the RSL Club late morning after a 120km ride from Tannum Sands and looked forward to the break and a nice cuppa.



Troops taking a break at the RSL.



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Leaving the RSL, we refuelled the scooters then left Biloela for Mt Morgan, a further 100km but where we intended to have lunch and spend an hour or so looking over the historic town.



Commencing operations in 1882, the mine became one of the richest gold mines in Australia, and for a period of time - the world. During its 99 years of mining, the area declared a total of 225 tons of gold, 50 tons of silver and 360,000 tons of copper.



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Those with a MC licence grabbed a scooter for a look around, the rest walked.

We pulled up at the Mt Morgan Police Station to have a look. Built in the late 1890s, it was originally built to serve as the town's Court House but over time has served as a police station, lockup and magistrates office and the District and Supreme Court. One of the main functions of the courthouse was settling mining claim disputes and up until 1990 it operated as a Mining Wardens Court.

It officially closed its doors as a court house in 1991 and is used today as the home base for Mount Morgan Police.



We met a couple of real nice people, the Mt Morgan coppers, who gave us a tour of the court house and filled us in on its history. Dave Pedler got shown the inside of one of the cells, much to Keith Porter's delight.



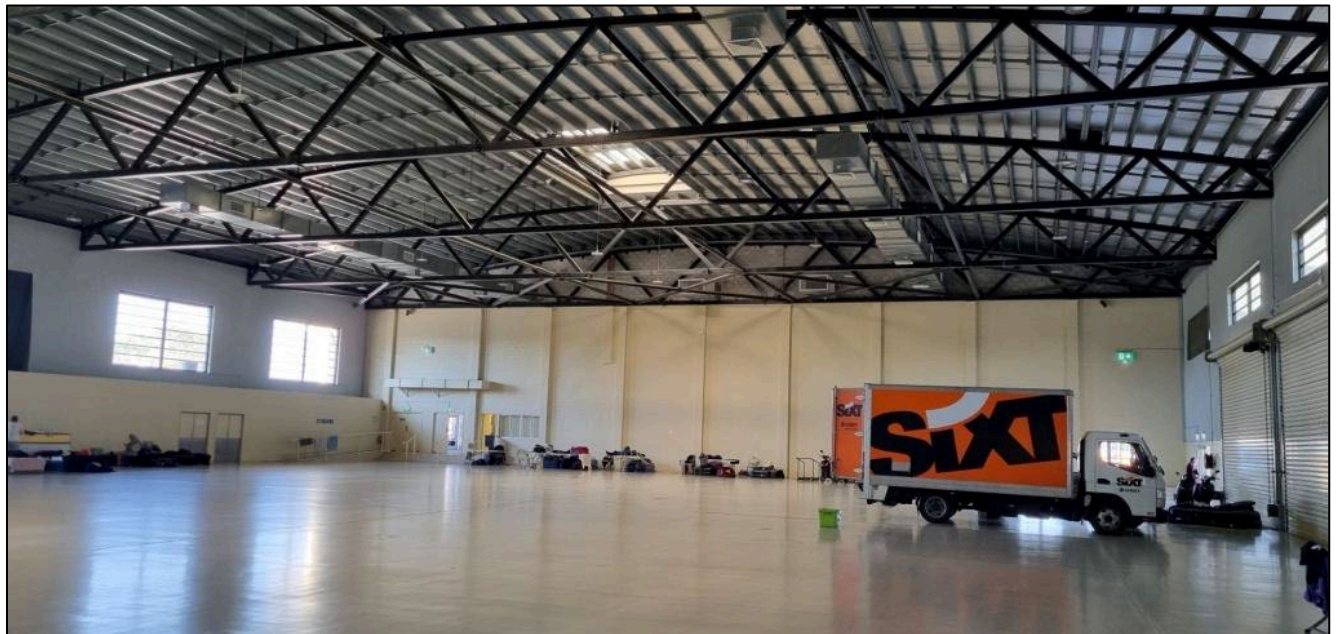
# Scootaville Qld 2024



Fascinating town, if ever you're in the area, set aside at least a couple of hours and have a look around. See [HERE](#).

After a bite to eat, a cold drink, we refuelled the scooters ready for the final 40km run of the day - down the hill to Rockhampton.

Rocky Council had allowed us the use of the Robert Schwarton Pavilion at their showground, a magnificent building with all facilities and plenty of room.



There was plenty of room in which to spread out, to park our scooters, our truck and to park our night baritone way down one end of the room.

Silence was bliss.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



We had a few things planned for the extra day we were in Rocky but they had fallen over at the last minute so it became a free day, some went sight-seeing, some went shopping, some washed their clothes, some just rested and our resident RAEME Ian Aves gave the scooters a service.







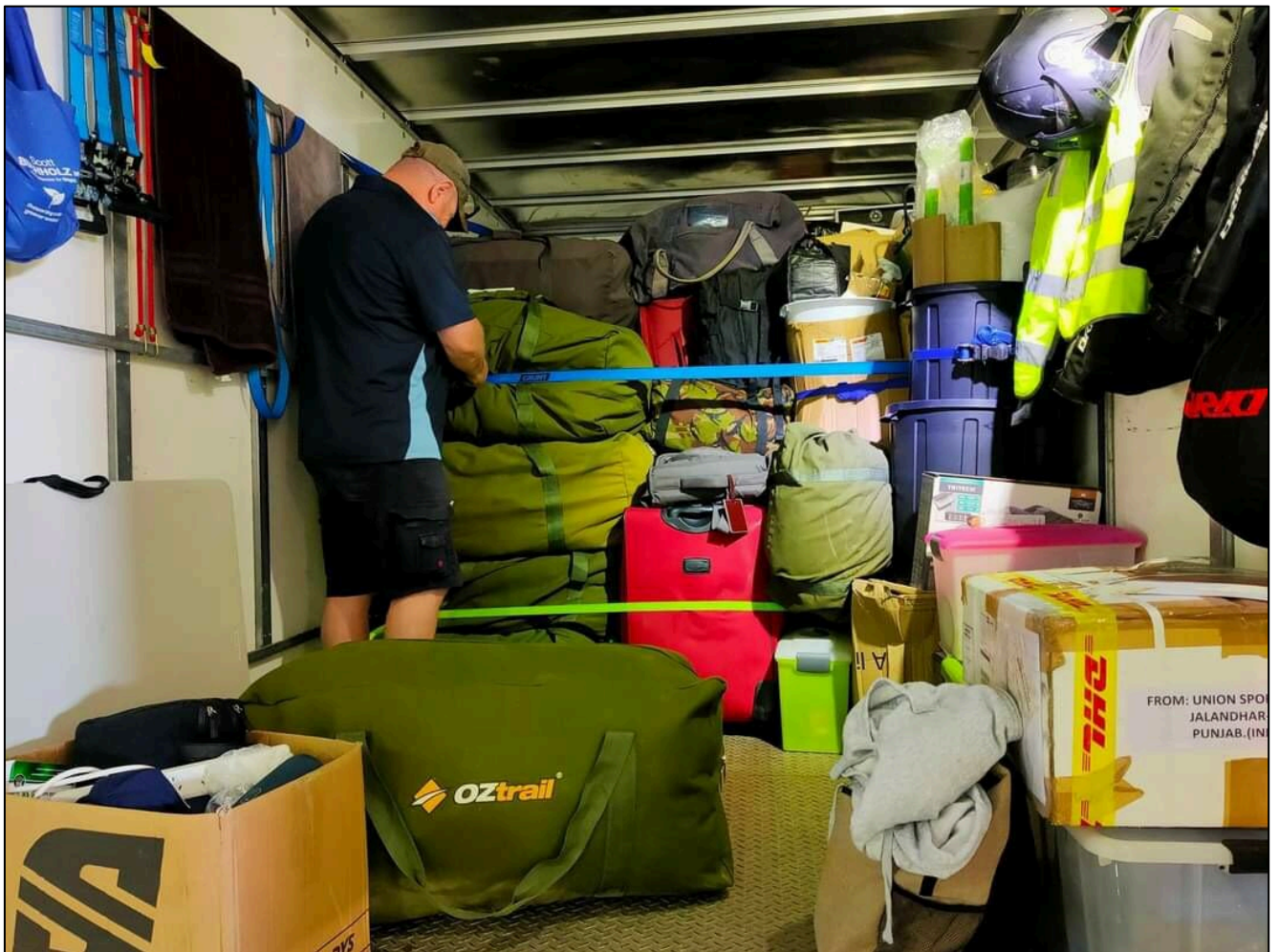
# Scootaville Qld 2024



We were fortunate on this trip, we had a person doctor, Mick Reinke, and a scooter doctor, Ian Aves. We were as safe as houses.

We were also lucky to have a load doctor with us too. Every morning that we left somewhere, Kiwi Campbell, our load doctor, would climb into the back of our little truck and as people would dump their belongings on the tail-gate, Kiwi would grab them, sort, stack and tie everything down. Everything had a place, everything was secure and everything arrived at the next stop-over in the same condition and in the same position as it was when we left.

We were lucky to have him!



For evening meals we alternated between the Rocky Leagues Club and the Lion Leigh Pub, both of which were a stone's throw from the pavilion and both offered good and cheap meals.

The Club's pokies weren't the best though.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



Rocky's Lion Leigh Pub.

Next day (Tuesday) was also going to be a long one, 345km up the Bruce Hwy to Mackay but once again we'd planned fuel stops and people stops, the first of which was to be Marlborough, 105km north.

We'd planned a smoko and a fuel stop but when we got there our servo was being renovated, there was no fuel and no food. We made do with what we had in the ute and luckily there was another servo a few km up the road where we filled the scooters and our two 20lt drums, then it was onto the St Lawrence School – a further 75km.





# Scotaville Qld 2024



The town of St Lawrence is located 6km east of the Bruce Highway and is situated on a vast bay known as Broad Sound, a bay noted for its large tidal range (up to 9 metres (30 ft) in the summer). It has a population of about 245 people.

The school has had a chequered life. Originally opened in May 1871, it was completely destroyed by a cyclone in January 1874 and had to be rebuilt. (Climate change?). A new school building was officially opened in June 1938 but was completely destroyed again on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2007, this time by fire. A mobile classroom was transported from Brisbane as the school's permanent replacement.

Unfortunately the population of St Lawrence is declining which raises concerns about the viability of this great little school.



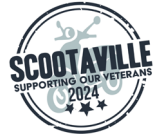
A week or so before our arrival, Caroline Rasmussen, the principal of St Lawrence School, had told the kids we would be coming, who we were and why old people like us were on the road on silly little scooters.

Teachers, kids and parents went to a lot of trouble and made us feel most welcome. When we arrived we were greeted with a huge and very friendly reception from all the kids, invited in and presented with a fabulous morning tea.





# Scootaville Qld 2024

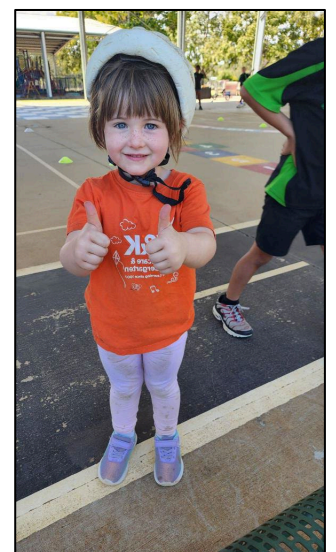


Phil Green enjoying the wonderful hospitality given to us by St Lawrence School.



This little lady, not yet old enough to attend the school, wasn't going to miss out on any of the fun, not when there was cordial to be drunk, cakes and biscuits and heaps of chips to be eaten as well as lots of motor scooters to see and hop on.

Seeing happy little faces like that makes it all worthwhile for us.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



After we'd morning tead, we brought in a few of the scooters to show the kids, some of whom would probably have had bigger bikes at home. Didn't matter, they enjoyed it as did we.

It's great to see "country" kids who can have a good time and amuse themselves without having their heads buried in a mobile phone.

I'm sure country kids enjoy life more than their city cousins. Country life is similar to what we enjoyed in the city many many moons ago. Progress?



We then brought out the "show-bags" and gave one to each of the kids. You would have thought we were giving them an electric scooter or some other expensive present, their excitement was infectious - we all felt happy.



# Scootaville Qld 2024





# Scootaville Qld 2024



Before we left we had a look over the school.



Pride of place, in front of the school and in full view from the street is this wonderful Memorial which commemorates those who served in WW1. Built in 2019, it is lovingly looked after by the kids.

It was then time to pack up once again, and head for our stop-over in Mackay - about 160km further on. We refuelled the scooters from our drums, but before we left we were advised to have a look at the St Lawrence General Store. St Lawrence is one of the oldest towns on the coast of Queensland and was originally built to service the Customs Office that operated from the Port of St Lawrence.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



All long gone of course, but the general store is still there and when you enter it's a step back in time. We had a look, their Cokes were cold, their ice creams frozen, their Mars bars were great and the Bowser still worked. Nothing wrong with that.

Memories!

We headed back out to the highway, turned right and set off for the final 160km leg for the day. We had planned to stop at the Sarina pie shop but St Lawrence School had filled us up so much, for once a pie was the last thing on our minds so it was off to Mackay non stop, where we intended to spend 2 nights.

John Edwards, the Deputy President Central Qld District (RSL) had been very busy prior to our arrival. He had organised a barbecue dinner for us the night we got there and he'd planned several events for us including visiting two primary schools a few Km out of Mackay, Homebush School and North Eaton School. We were looking forward to that.

The very generous Mackay Show Association had allowed us the use of one of their pavilions at the showground in which to spend the next two nights. Once again, the pavilion was huge, big enough for us to house our vehicles and our scooters. John met us, helped us set up, got the barbecue going and told us his plans for tomorrow.



Greg Williamson (Mayor), welcoming us to Mackay.

Mackay was also where Army was to join us. We'd spoken with Army in Townsville and asked if they could send a Bushmaster vehicle and crew to join us and visit several schools with us, allowing the kids to explore the vehicle.

Of course they could.

We must thank Army for their wonderful support on this trip. They provided us with accommodation on several occasions and have now agreed to have a Bushmaster and crew stay with us until we arrived Laverack Barracks in Townsville in 4 day's time.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



The Bushmaster arrived Mackay and joined us in the pavilion.



Kaden Tadd, Greg Williamson (Mayor), David Hughes, Takara Mitchell.



# Scotaville Qld 2024



Next day (Wednesday) we had planned to visit two schools, Homebush Primary and North Eton Primary. These schools were west of Mackay, Homebush about 25km to the south west and North Eton about 30km west south west. Obviously the full crew couldn't do both schools so we split into two with one group doing each school.

We tossed a coin and North Eton got the head – so they got the Bushmaster.



North Eton State School was established in 1895 to educate the children of the North Eton sugar-mill workers. The mill closed in 1988.

Arthur did his best to interest the kids in the scooters but he was on a losing side, the kids wanted to “play” in the big Army truck.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



The other group went to Homebush.



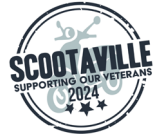
The Homebush State School opened in June 1889 and was also built to serve a community that grew up around a sugar plantation and mill. Sugar definitely ruled back then.



The kids were seated under the shelter and given their "show-bags" – which as usual, went down a treat.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



It was then time for the group photo after which the school produced a very welcome morning tea, to which the kids were also looking forward to.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



After the school visits, the two groups returned to the showground for an easy afternoon. Most just relaxed but some did some strange things.

Mick Reinke went seen running around a path which seemed very strange to us, he wasn't being chased and all the scooters were serviceable.



That evening, John Edwards had arranged for us to have dinner at the Duke of Edinburgh hotel in Walkerston, a small township about 15km west of our showground. We all climbed into our trusty bus, with Kiwi at the helm, and we set off.



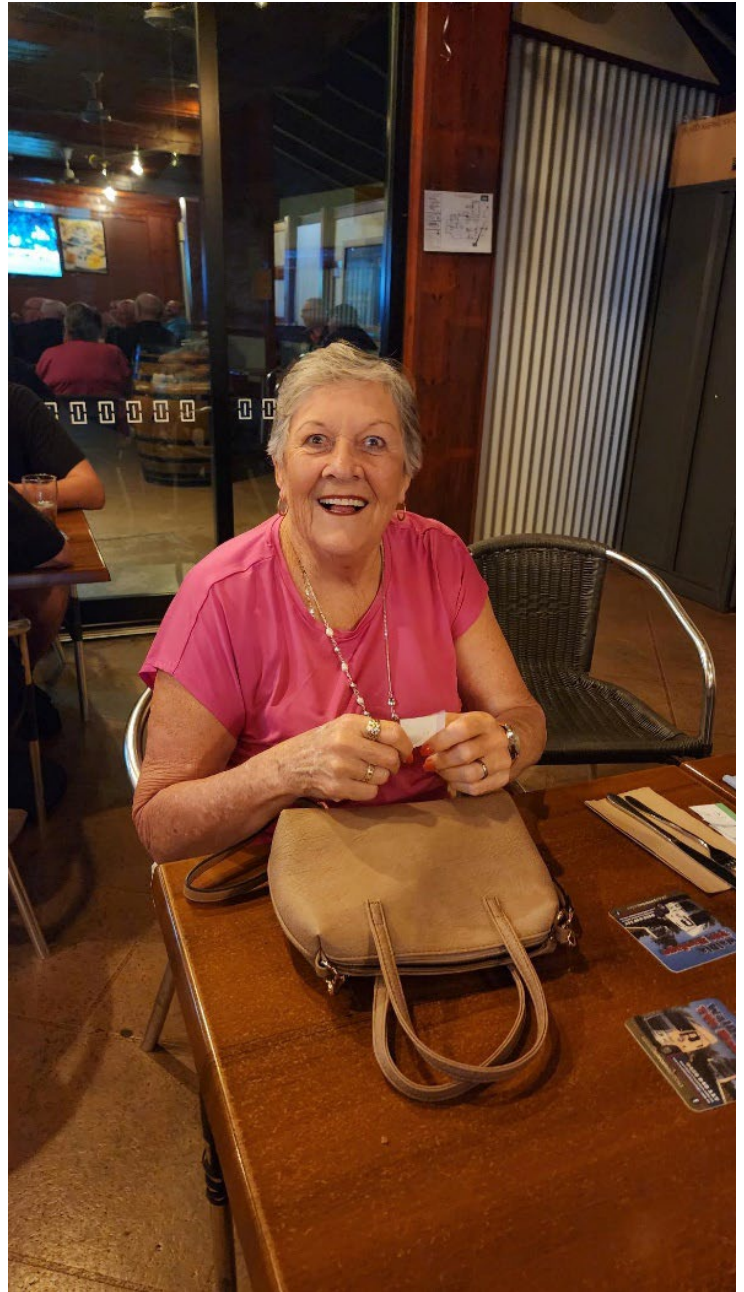


# Scootaville Qld 2024



After dinner we introduced the hotel's patrons to a Goose Club. A Goose Club is a fund-raising event that originated in PNG back in the 1960's, it's a raffle with a difference which includes everyone in the premises in which it is being held, is comical and can raise substantial funds for the organiser.

One of the "lucky" Goose Club winners.



Next day we had a 200km run up the Bruce Hwy to Bowen, but we had a stop along the way. The Pindi Pindi school, only 60km from Mackay, was expecting us to call in and the kids were keen to climb all over and inspect the big Bushmaster.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



Pindi Pindi State School is a primary school for boys and girls which opened on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 1928. When we called it had 19 students.

We were welcomed to the school by Principal Kristy Martin and presented with a welcome certificate that had been produced by the kids.

It now resides pride of place in our office.

Thank you.



The kids were most appreciative of Army bringing one of their Bushmasters to the school and allowing the kids climb in and all over it.



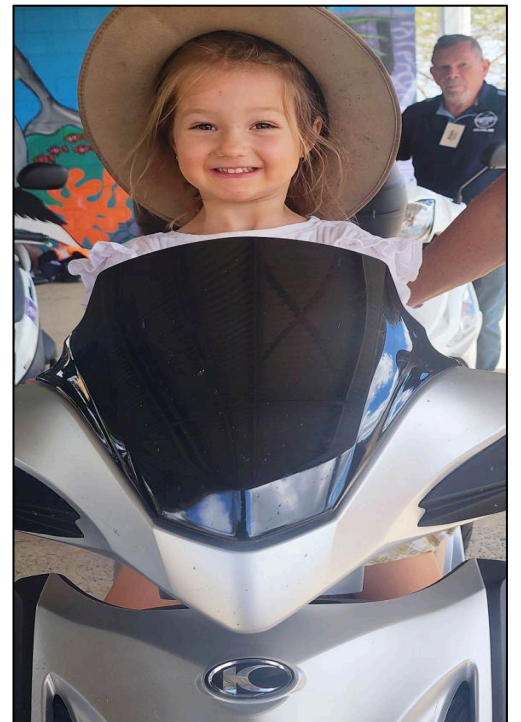
# Scootaville Qld 2024



They produced a "Thank You" certificate which they presented to David Hughes, the "Boss" of the Bushmaster crew.



Then it was time to crank up the scooters and give the kids a ride around the school grounds.







# Scootaville Qld 2024



Army then opened up the Bushmaster and the kids flocked to get into it, aided by "Besty" and the Bushy's patient and very helpful crew



Then all lined up for a pic.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



After they had had their fill of the Bushmaster, the kids returned to the covered area and we brought out the show-bags.

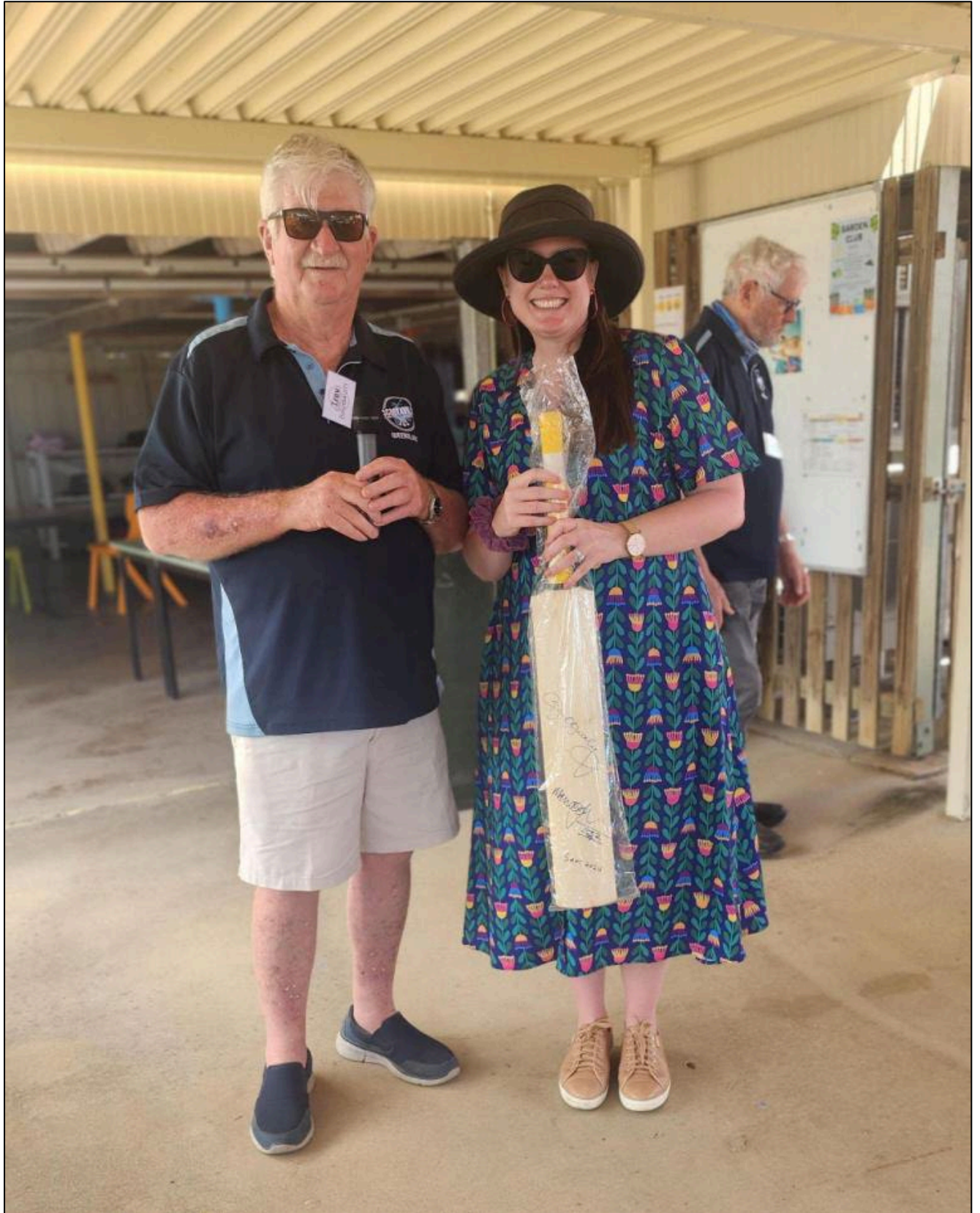




# Scootaville Qld 2024

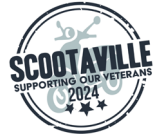


Pindi Pindi, although a small school, actively promotes sport, especially cricket, so we asked Merv and Ian Healy if they would sign a bat, which they did, we then presented it to Kristy for her to keep as a cricket artefact.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



Kristy then surprised us by bringing out a wonderful morning tea. We didn't need any asking to participate.



After we had enjoyed our morning tea, said our good-byes to Kristy and the kids, we set sail once again for the 130km ride up the Bruce Hwy to the mango capital of the world – Bowen.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



A few km south of Bowen, at the Bowen tourist information centre, sits the big mango. Practically everyone who drives past stops for a photo – we were no different. Besides, they sell the world's best mango ice cream, we had to try that too.

After enjoying one of their super ice creams, we continued into Bowen to the showgrounds. The Bowen Pastoral Agricultural Association had allowed us the use of one of their pavilions for which we were very thankful, we pulled up, unloaded Kiwi's truck, found a spot, made up our beds and had a short break before heading out for dinner.



Mick Reinke, a native of Bowen, knew Bruce Hedditch the owner of the Larrikin Hotel and when told who we were and what we were doing, Bruce offered to provide dinner for us. We all hopped into our bus, with Kiwi at the wheel, and we offed to the hotel.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



Bruce had set aside a section of his hotel for us where we enjoyed a few drinks before Bruce introduced snacks then dinner for us. Thanks heaps Bruce.



While at the hotel we were invited to have a look over one of Bowen's tug-boats that was tied up at the wharf. These tub-boats, owned and operated by Engage Marine, service the Port of Abbot Point about 25km north of Bowen. Abbot Point is Australia's most northern coal export port. The tugs, of which there are 3, leave Bowen and steam to Abbot Point where they stay for several days, with the crew living on board. They then return to Bowen for R&R. There is usually one tug tied up at Bowen, on crew relief with 2 on the job.

We only had a 115km run north to Ayr next morning (Friday) so we readily accepted the invitation.

The tugs tie up at Bowen jetty which is also the home of "Little Mango". It also contains a souvenir shop.



Bowen was the first port established in North Queensland. The settlement was officially proclaimed in April 1861 and named Bowen after Queensland's first Governor, Sir George Ferguson Bowen. The township of Bowen quickly grew to support the northern pastoral industry as a strategically placed supply centre.

Bowen needed a jetty to function effectively as a port. It was located in a sheltered bay widely recognised as an excellent natural harbour however, passengers and cargo had to be



# Scootaville Qld 2024



transferred from vessels to shore by punts and then carted across tidal flats. A long jetty extending past the mud flats and shallow water was needed to overcome this problem.

In 1865 the Department of Harbours and Rivers commenced construction and it was completed in May 1867. It's 855m in length and is 4.2m wide.

We arrived at the jetty early on Friday morning and rode out to the tugs. Because our group was large, we were split into two and spent an hour or so being shown over that remarkable vessel.



Eventually we had to leave the tug-boat and head up the Bruce to Ayr for our final overnighter before we got to Townsville. But we had a school to visit on the way.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



About halfway between Bowen and Ayr is the small settlement of Gumlu. It was originally established as a railway station and gradually a few settlers started to build homes and live in the area. A school was built in 1913 and it was this school that we were going to visit.



Once again, the Army Bushmaster was a huge hit with the kids, they were in it, on it and if allowed would have been under it.

Even the real little ones wanted to check it out.







# Scootaville Qld 2024



And it wasn't just the little ones ...

Then it was time to bring out the scooters.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



Takara Mitchell (Left) and Hayley Laidlow (right), asked if they could have a ride around the school grounds - of course they could.

After the kids had had a ride the barby was cranked up and we were presented with a wonderful lunch.



Andrew Toms hard at it on the barby. Nothing like eggs and bacon on a barby to make some real good smells.



Jillian O'Toole didn't need to be told twice – lunch was ready!.

It was then time to thank Thomas Harrington, Principal of Gumlu Primary School, for putting up with us for so long and for the wonderful lunch.

Before we left we lined up a group photo.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



Eventually we left the Gumlu school and headed off for the last easy 50km run up to Ayr.

When you think of Ayr, you think of sugar. Large scale cultivation of sugarcane began around 1879 with the formation of the Burdekin Delta Sugar Company which established a plantation called Airdmillan. In 1883 the Airdmillan sugar mill was built but both the mill and the plantation became financially unviable in 1885 after the repatriation of kidnapped South Sea Islander labourers.



Of the 532 Islanders brought to Airdmillan all those years ago, 128 or 24% had died by 1885. The "Blackbirding" practice of kidnapping or forcing Pacific Islanders to work on those sugar cane plantations in very poor conditions and for very low wages, is a section of our history for which we should not be proud, however it was done and can't be altered. History should always be remembered but definitely not always repeated.

In the 1890s, Airdmillan was subdivided and today much of the town of Ayr is located on what was once part of the Airdmillan estate.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



Ayr Mayor, Pierina Dalle Cort had been very helpful to us in obtaining accommodation facilities and she agreed to meet us a few km out of town at Plantation Park for a get together, for a cuppa and then for a ride into town on the back of one of our scooters.



Plantation Park is on the southern side of Ayr and is a popular stop with public toilets, barbecue facilities, the Burdekin Information Centre, a play centre and plenty of parking for cars and caravans.



We lined up with the Bushmaster for our final pic on the road.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



After we had all lined up for the group photo, Ros helped Pierina into a jacket and helmet in readiness for her ride into town.

Pierina then hopped on the big scooter, behind Jilly, one of our better riders, then off they went, through town and then out to the showground.



We left the Park and arrived at the Ayr showground, were allocated a very roomy pavilion, selected a spot, made up our beds and got ready for the night's activities.





# Scootaville Qld 2024



Another lady in Ayr, who had been very helpful to us, was Di Pickering. Di is ex-RAAF, used to live in Brisbane, was very involved in the WRAAF Association and also the 2 Sqn Association and after her husband Doug died in May 2022, she moved to Ayr to look after her elderly mum.



We rang Di some months before we started Scootaville Qld and asked if she could help – she'd love to she said.

Di put us in touch with John Robinson, the manager of the Ayr Memorial Club and Elliot Grant, the VP of the RSL Sub-Branch, both of whom were only too happy to help. They offered to hold a meat tray raffle for us and suggested we get to the club about 5.30pm that night (Friday) have dinner then get involved in the raffle.

We arrived at the Club, which was packed, the meat tray raffle tickets were sold in no time and after having a great night we left far better off than when we arrived. Thank you!

Next morning (Saturday) was our last, we only had a short trip (125km) up to Townsville then it was all over, but – as we had a lot of time on our hands we thought we'd like to have a look over the old WW2 radar station at Charlie's Hill, a few km back from Ayr, near Home Hill.



Built in 1943 by the Air Force after the bombing of Darwin (March 1942) and Townsville (July 1942), it was one of twenty radar installations established along the north Queensland coastline.

These days most of the equipment has long gone but in its day it was an impressive site.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



The Station utilised British Advanced Chain Overseas (ACO) equipment and operated in the HF band at 42.05 megacycles per second. There were two 186-foot (57m) wooden towers, which were assembled in kit form and which stood approximately 100 metres (330ft) apart, supporting the transmitting and receiving aerials. The equipment was housed in two above ground semi-circular bomb-proof igloos constructed of reinforced concrete. The eastern igloo housed the receiving equipment whilst the western igloo housed the transmitting equipment. These are still standing.

Other facilities, that no longer exist, was a camp-site of huts, mess and toilet facilities and a power generator. These were constructed at the base of the hill on the north-western side. The site was maintained and operated by a radar unit made up of members of the RAAF and WAAAF. The radar units were usually small, numbering around 35 personnel. The station was operated for 24-hours a day with the shifts usually divided into three eight-hour shifts - day, evening and night. Each shift comprised three-four people - one recording the incoming messages, one working on the plotting table, one operator, and a fourth person to operate the telephone.

During a shift the personnel would rotate every two hours, to help break up the monotony of the work. The RAAF staff, who lived on site, maintained and operated the station. The WAAAF staff, who worked as operators, plotters, and recorders, were on site during daylight hours only and were accommodated in the hotel at Home Hill.

Following the surrender of Japan in August 1945 the Station ceased operating on 1 October 1945 and the equipment was dismantled and removed. It is now maintained by the Burdekin Tourism Association as a local tourist attraction.



We managed to get all the scooters into the old receiving station igloo before we headed back to Ayr for a morning tea that Di had organised for us at the Chill Café.

And what a morning tea it was. Most agreed it was a leg up from a snag in a slice of bread.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



Then it was time to head for Laverack Barracks in Townsville. We arrived mid afternoon, were signed in and allocated a block in which to spend the next 3 nights but before we said our good-byes to our Army mates, we lined up for our final pic together.

Great bunch of people, we hope they enjoyed being with us because we certainly enjoyed having them.







# Scootaville Qld 2024



As they have done before, Army certainly looked after us, we had the run of a block along with its shower/toilet block, wash-room with washing machines and driers and most importantly, proper beds with clean sheets and pillows.



We had 3 nights at Laverack as we couldn't get the scooters out to our good friends NQ Freighters until Monday morning. Once again, NQ Freighters had generously agreed to carry the scooters back to Brisbane for us – free of charge. But – while we still had the use of the scooters, some grabbed them and did a bit of touring, some just went to town and walked along the Strand, some caught the ferry over to Magnetic Island, some climbed Castle Hill.



Some walked the Strand and bought some healthy food.



Some caught the ferry over to Magnetic Island.



# Scootaville Qld 2024



Most nights we bussed into the Townsville RSL for evening meals, then on Tuesday morning, after doing a panic of the block at Laverack Barracks, we boarded our trusty bus and headed south. We would overnight at the Criterion hotel that night and arrive Brisbane on Wednesday afternoon the 18<sup>th</sup> Sept.

We had been away for 18 days, the scooters had covered a total of 2,736km without missing a beat and we raised \$25,000 which we were able to give to our charities. A successful trip we thought.

We must thank the ADF for their huge assistance in helping us with this event. We must also thank the 4 blokes from RAAF Amberley who joined us from Chermiside to Gayndah and the 3 Army Soldiers (2 men, 1 lady) who joined from Mackay until Townsville. The ADF might be a bit short on personnel but the ones they have are bloody good!