



Scootaville Qld, 2025

Sponsors.

A few months before we left on our journey to out-west Qld, we had a call from the management at the Kedron Wavell Club in Chermside who asked if we could call into the Club to see them. We agreed on a date and got together in the Club's Kitchen café.

Management told us they had been watching the evolution of Scootaville over the years and they have observed that our principles matched theirs, namely we both cared for the welfare of Veterans. Management knew we had expenses to cover each trip, hire costs for the bus, truck and scooters, food, fuel etc and they wanted to know if they could be the major sponsor for the 2025 Qld event to help cover those costs. This of course took us completely by surprise, but it didn't take long for us to agree.

A few days later we had an agreement where the Kedron Wavell Club would sponsor us to the amount of \$10,000. Marvelous generosity, we thank them hugely.



Then not long after, we were contacted by the management at Orica – one of the world's leading mining and infrastructure solution providers. Orica also cares for the welfare of Veterans and Veteran's families and they too offered to help us financially.



Would \$6,000 help with your expenses they offered, once again it took us less than a heart-beat to agree. We must thank these two most generous firms



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for their wonderful support, without them we would not be able to donate a significant amount to our two Charities, Legacy which cares for the families of wounded or missing service men and women who have suffered as a result of their service and also to the Air Force Association which has a program to care for homeless Veterans.

It seems once we finalise our accounts from the trip, we will be able to donate a total of \$24,000 to our Charities. That will take us to a total over \$100,000 donated since Scootaville first scooted off in 2022 – and we haven't started yet!

But we mustn't forget our other wonderful Sponsors.



Smiths Confectionery have been with us since day one, they are always willing to provide us with a great assortment of "chips" which we give out to the kids at the small primary schools we visit along the way. We spend an hour or so at a number of schools, only the small ones, where we tell the kids about Legacy, about the stupidity of war and how there are never any winners after a war, the kids get on the scooters, start and rev them, and we hand out chips.

The kids love it though how the teachers get them back into thinking school stuff after we've left is anyone's guess.

Right: Trev Benneworth with a most cheerful and helpful employee at Smiths in Brisbane. This young lady went out of her way to help us load all the chips. We had a full load this time which is good as we could take some to Victoria.



Another wonderful sponsor which has been with us since day one is Metcash. Metcash trades under a number of



names, one of the most well-known is IGA. Each year Metcash provide us with a huge assortment of items which we bundle up to give to the kids, items such as coloured pencils, balloons, books, stickers, drink bottles, toys etc, when we give them out the joy you see on those young faces makes the whole thing worthwhile.

Of course there are a large number of other Sponsors, unfortunately far too many to present here but one we must is the Kedron Wavell RSL Sub-Branch. KW RSL Sub-Branch are always willing to help and will provide us with a vehicle whenever one is available. This year they loaned us their Mitsubishi ute which we used as the "chuck wagon". When ever we left anywhere, this vehicle





would head off early and stop about 100km up the road, find a rest area with a table and set up the urn and food. When we got there the water would be boiling, the biscuits (donated by Arnotts, another sponsor) and cakes or sandwiches set out and we'd have a 30 minute break. Very civilised.

Another sponsor that definitely deserves a mention is the ADF. Army are always willing to help, this year they sent along the Army Pep Band which entertained the people at a number of towns at which we stayed. They also sent a Hawkai vehicle with us which was a great attraction, especially with the kids who were allowed to climb all over it.

Army also allows us to overnight at one of their Barracks, this year we had two nights at Milne Bay Barracks in Toowoomba – the opportunity to spend a night on an inner-spring mattress instead of having to blow up one's bed was warmly welcomed by all.



They also proved to be very good cooks and took over the farewell barbecue at the Kedron Wavell Club's car park and rolled out hundreds of sausages for a welcome breakfast.

So, on Sunday morning, 24th August, after the barbecue departure and with the Air Force Cadets lining the road and with two police on motorbikes leading the way, we set out from the Chermside Historical Precinct for our 19 day, 3,081km journey through outback Queensland. We were lucky to have several serving members from RAAF Amberley join us, but they rode big noisy bikes, not the petite little cruisers that we had.



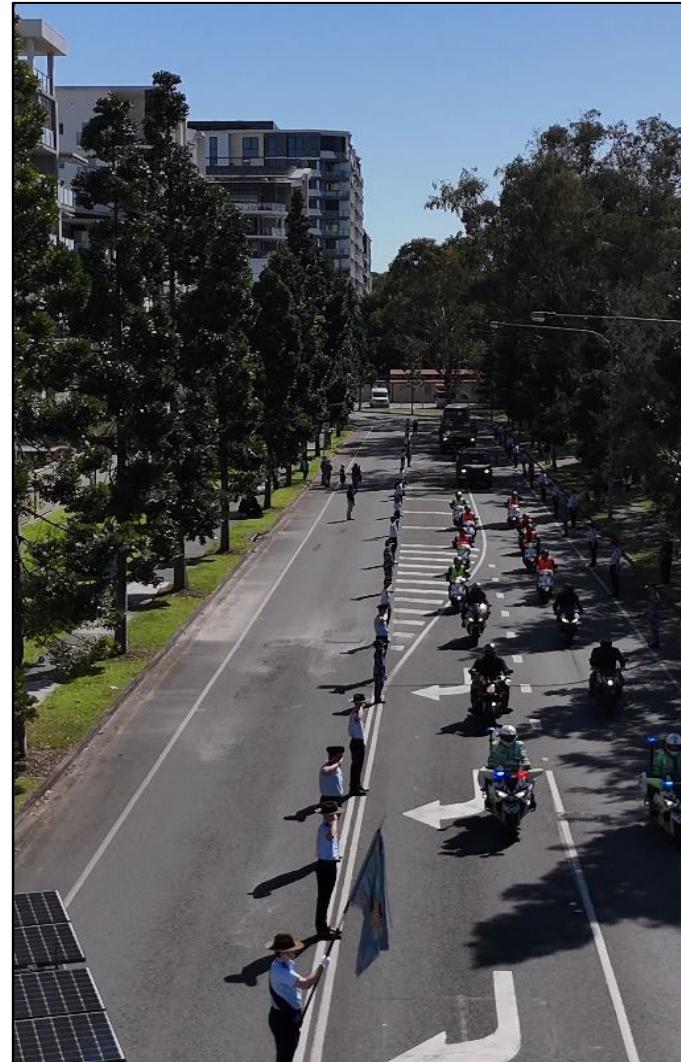
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We must thank the Air Force Cadets who did a wonderful job, lining the road and giving us the salute as we passed by on our way to Toowoomba, our first night's stop.

Unfortunately we had a mishap only a few kms from Chermside, one of our riders, no names but most know who he is, had a problem with the back wheel of his scooter, the tyre seemed to roll completely off the rim making the scooter uncontrollable. This occurred on the Centenary Hwy, where it meets the Ipswich Mtwy and our rider did a remarkable job staying with the scooter until it tossed him off. He was carried to hospital by ambulance where it was found he had severely damaged a leg and wrist. He's home now but doesn't think he'll be playing football for a month or two.

We have a rule where we stop every hour or so for a brief smoko and if needed for a rider change. Our first stop on day one was at the F-111 stand at the main gate to RAAF Amberley. The RSL Sub-Branch ute had gone ahead and by the time everyone else arrived, the urn was boiling, the coffee, tea and sugar was set out, cups were ready, smoko number one was underway and enjoyed.





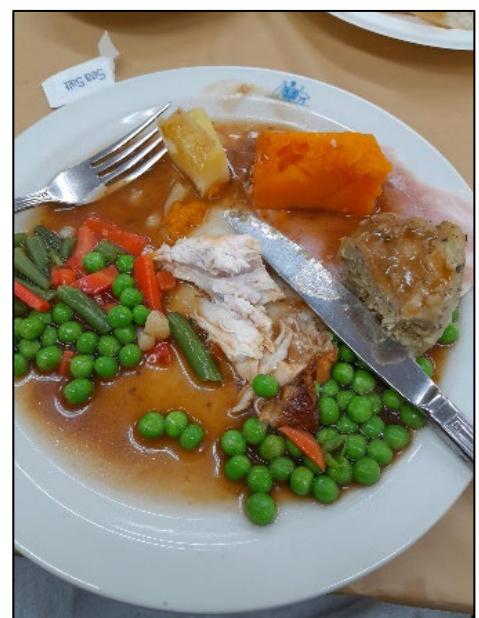
From Amberley it was off to Toowoomba where we were to spend 2 nights with the Army. Gary Graham from the AFA and RSL in Toowoomba had organised it for us and it was most welcome. On arrival at the Milne Bay Barracks, each selected a bed site though it was obvious no-one was keen to chance their luck with a top bunk, getting up there and safely getting back down again in the morning seemed too much of a risk. Balance isn't what it used to be these days.



Participants in the Scootaville Events have come to realise that they never have to worry from where their next meal is coming – or even if there will be a next meal. Although not complaining, some say all they seem to do, apart from blowing up and letting down beds, is eat. Toowoomba was no different.

The night we arrived the lovely ladies from the local RSL Sub-Branch and the AFA got together and prepared a magnificent meal for us not-yet weary travellers which we enjoyed in the Mess Hall. And to top it off, they did the washing up too.

Thank you ladies!





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Geoff McDonald, the Mayor of Toowoomba, had invited us to a Civic Reception, so next morning it was comb the hair, clean the shoes and onto the scooters and bus for the short trip to the Town Hall. Geoff welcomed us all to his town, thanked Army for bringing their Pep Band "up the hill" to entertain the townsfolk, after which we got together for the customary group photo.



With the official part of the reception completed, Geoff invited everyone to enjoy a most welcome morning tea. Must remember next time to skip breakfast as the food offered was wonderful, fit for Royalty. Some of us were looking for doggie bags.

We eventually said our thank yous to Geoff and his staff, got together at a small park next to Town Hall where it was time for Army to strike up the Band.



As well as providing music for Toowoomba, Army also had one of their vehicles on display. Military vehicles are always an attraction, people love to look at them, get in and on and touch them and the people of Toowoomba were no different.



Very well done Army, thank you.

By mid afternoon, as no-one required lunch, the general consensus was it was time for a nana-nap, so it was back to the bunks for a lie down.

That evening the Committee from the Toowoomba Sports Club had offered to provide dinner for everyone, so once again at about 6.00pm, it was time for the 5 S's, then into the bus, into town and into the Club.



Toowoomba Sports Club is situated in the middle of town and was established in 1992 as a joint initiative between Northern Suburbs Hockey Club, Toowoomba Brothers All-Whites



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Rugby League Football Club, Toowoomba Valleys Rugby League Football Club, Toowoomba Basketball Association, and Toowoomba Southern Suburbs Rugby League Football Club.

The meal they offered us was amazing, a huge steak with chips and salad followed by a “wow” dessert. Thank you Melissa – it was really appreciated. See you next year?



Next morning Gary Graham, the wearer of many hats in the Toowoomba region, had arranged for Channel 7 to interview us as we left town. We met Fergus Gregg from Ch 7 at a small park, not far from the Barracks.



Then it was time to finally leave Toowoomba for our next overnight stop which was to be Goondiwindi, 222km west.

222km is a long way when you’re riding a 110cc motor scooter. Although unbelievably reliable, they are not designed for highway cruising. Our little rides are much more suited to small inner city hops, not cruising the highways with the Harleys and Trumpies, yet they never cease to amaze us with their capabilities. 110cc is about one third the size of a can of Coke and as most of us could not be described as petite, with our weight on their backs they will sit on 85kph – 90kph all day, without protest. Amazing engineering.

Being designed for city use, the little machines do not have a huge range. Most cities have hundreds of service stations, most less than 4-5 km from each other so for city use fuel wasn’t a problem. When the 5 litre tank got a bit low, you just found a servo and filled up. When you have 222km to cover, fuel becomes an important concern.



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Each tank holds a minuscule 5 litres of fuel and normally the little scooters would cover about 200km on one tank, but that's when they are being operated at city speeds on level roads. We used them a little differently, we normally rode at close to full throttle and the terrain was never flat so in some cases we were lucky to get about 120km from each tank.

This of course meant we had to plan constant stops to refuel our little friends which was a good thing as it meant riders also had regular stops. We had arranged to stop every 100km or so for smoko so when we did, we did a fuel check. We always carried 40 litres in drums as sometimes servos were spaced further apart than our little friends could cover on one tank. Not a problem if you were in a car, truck or bus as 150km was nothing, but it was a big deal to us. Sometimes this necessitated fuel stops on the side of the road.



“Pinkie” Ryan (left) and Keith Porter topping up.

So on leaving Toowoomba our first rest stop was to be Millmerran, 82km up the road. Millmerran has a Memorial Park that has tables and chairs, the all important toilet and also a couple of servos so it was smoko for us and fuel for the scooters.

Sue Trimmer and Rob Collins, our much appreciated catering couple, had gone ahead, and when we got there the table was set. We all tucked in as though we hadn't eaten for two weeks, stories were swapped, some riders took a break, we refuelled and set off for Inglewood,



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another 68km further west and where we'd arranged to stop for lunch as by then we'd all be starving. Riding scooters is gruelling work – a person must eat to sustain oneself.



We had arranged with the Inglewood Hotel for them to provide us with a steak sandwich lunch, served in the beer-garden at the back of the hotel. As it was a warm sunny Queensland day, we decided to dine under cover instead of out in the open. It was nice to see "Swampy" Marsh (standing) who dropped in to see us.



After lunch, it was back onto the scooters for the next leg of the journey, the 90km run out to Goondiwindi but we weren't going to do it in one go. About 40km west from Inglewood is the



small town of Yelabon which is famous for its wonderful grain silos. We pulled off into the car park viewing area opposite the silos and out came the cameras.



The mural concept is titled 'When the Rain Comes' and portrays a young boy playing and cooling off in the Yelarbon Lagoon. In his hand, he holds a paper boat, destined to sail across the Yelarbon Lagoon, depicted along and over the shorter six silos.

The paper boat, crafted from historical newspaper remnants discovered in the old Yelarbon Jail, symbolises the region's rich history and the innovation required for future progress. The old Yelarbon Jail, situated within the local caravan park, also exhibits other mementoes from the town's past.

The project was executed in two stages, commencing in 2018 and concluding in February 2020.





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We left the silos for the final 50km easy run on the Leichhardt Hwy into Goondiwindi. Just before Goondiwindi, on the left hand side of the road, you'll find a series of large Easter Island type statues along with many other items, all made from discarded items.

Another stop – another photo opportunity.

There are five of these Easter Island type statues, known as Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Lot's Wife. Artist Angus Wilson, on whose property the items are displayed, started this off back in 2014 when he crafted the huge Australian Coat of Arms. You can see the size of this sculpture by comparing it to the couple on the bottom RHS of the pic.



We left the statues and in no time at all we were at the Goondiwindi Showground where we were to spend the night. Goondiwindi is one of the very few showgrounds in the country that charge us for the use one of their pavilions but thankfully, the Goondiwindi RSL Sub-Branch very kindly pay this for us. We thank them very much.



That night we'd challenged the Goondiwindi Ladies Cricket Team to a return match. We thrashed them last time we overnighted Goondiwindi and we'd like to do it again. Unfortunately,



the cricket ground was being used and not available but the ladies wanted to redeem themselves and proposed a game of lawn bowls instead – they weren't going to give up without a fight.

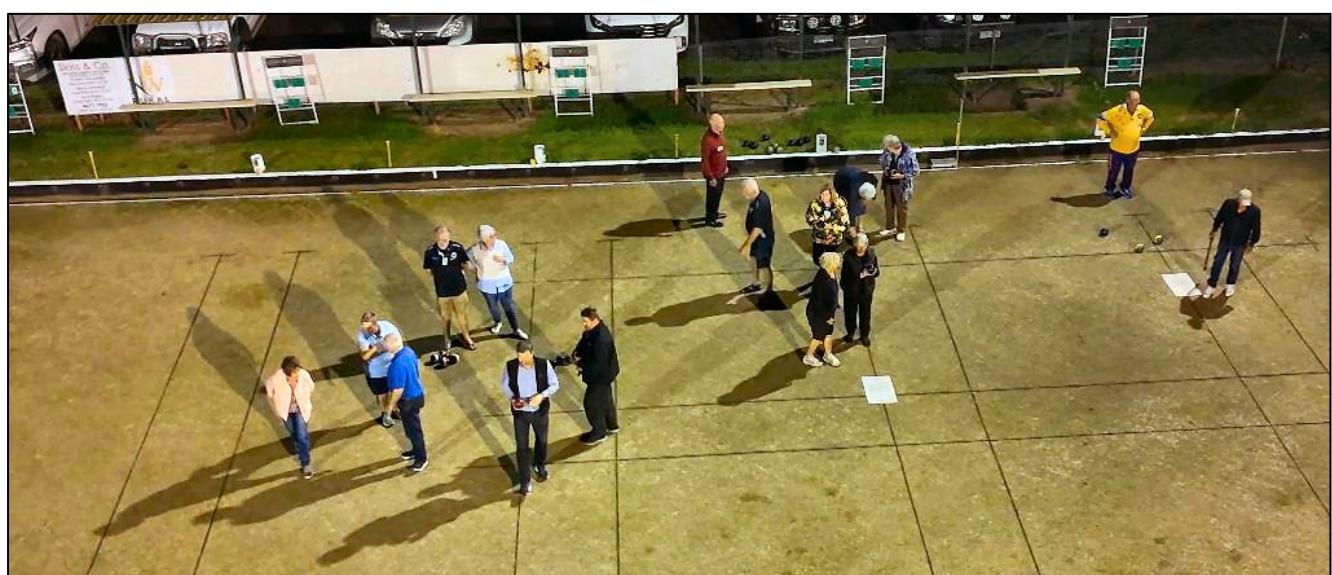
We agreed and a match was set for that night.

The RSL Sub-Branch, as well as paying for our accommodation, offered to put on a barbecue dinner for us at the Bowls Club, which they did and which was greatly appreciated.



Goondiwindi RSL blokes finishing up after a great barbecue.

After the meal and with stomachs full, it was down to the serious stuff. The Bowls Club doesn't normally open on a Tuesday night but they graciously agreed to open, switch on the lights and allow the grudge match to go ahead.





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It was a great night, very friendly, the bar was open, the beer was cold and the game was a lot of fun.

Unfortunately, and even though our Bike Boss, Sean O'Toole was the anchor player and overall highest scorer, at the end of the night we were told that we'd lost but we think there might have been a bit of underhand business involved. The local girls had recruited the Goondiwindi Mayor, Lawrence Springborg, into their team and we believe he might have had a "nod nod, wink wink" word or two to the official scorers. That means the scores are now one each, we won the cricket match fair and square, the girls cheated and won the bowls, we're looking forward to the third game which will settle the series.

Next morning it was up early, down with the beds, breakfast, hit the showers, pack the truck and head west for our next overnighter, St George, a 205 km trip. This time we had a few pre-arranged stops, one of which was a school visit at the small settlement of Talwood.

Talwood is 90km from Goondiwindi, it has a small school of 25 students and it fitted in perfectly with our arrangements. 90km is about the limit we ride without a break and with the school, Talwood was perfect.



We pulled up at the school at about 10.00am, parked the scooters, unpacked the "show-bags" from the truck and received a very warm welcome from the young and well-behaved kids. If you regularly watch the news you'd be forgiven for believing all kids are monsters. Nothing could be further from the truth, over the years we've visited a number of schools and always found the kids to be well behaved, courteous, happy, full of energy and with imaginations at full blast.

Talwood was no different.

The kids after been given their "show-bags" and being told a "story" by Paul "Nosey" Parker.





Some of the kids with their “show bags”

You might think that kids who live out west are not as fortunate as their big city cousins, you might think they miss out on a lot, don't have the same opportunity as their city brothers and sisters, miss out on sport opportunities, entertainment facilities, well if you think that we think you'd be dead wrong.

Kids out west are appreciative and still know how to play. They don't need mobile phones or computer games, or skate parks to have a good time – they have imagination. We watched them with the “show bags”, some of the small toys “became” steering wheels, aircraft, trains, things were appreciated, you'd have thought we had given them items worth a million dollars.

Great to see.

Eventually we had to move on, our next stop was at the famous Nindigully hotel – a further 88km west. The Nindigully hotel (“The Gully”) is one of Queensland's oldest hotels. The pub license was issued in 1864 after operating as shearer's accommodation for the Nindigully Station. From the late 1800s it was a Cobb and Co coach change over station and today, the pub still stands in its original condition and position, located on the banks of the Moonie River. It has become a favourite watering hole and camping spot amongst locals and travellers.

As it had been a bit over an hour since Talwood School had thankfully provided us with morning tea, we were of course all starving. Luckily the Nindigully Pub wasn't far away and we'd heard it provided a wonderful lunch.

We lunched.



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About to break the food drought at the Nindigully Pub.

After we'd lunched, had a quenching ale, a good look around, it was time to move on. St George was only 45km up the road and after the kms we'd travelled in the past few days, we were starting to consider a 45km run as "just around the corner" so we set out and in no time at all we were in St George.



Some months earlier, while planning the operation, we had trouble finding suitable or available accommodation in the St George area. We met with ex-RAAF local Gavin McGrath to see if he could suggest a facility and he advised the only suitable hall in St George was behind and part of the Anglican Church. We went to see Rev Louise Orpe who was only too happy to help. Louise offered us the Church Hall in which to overnight. Her generosity got us out of a bit of a jam.

Louise told us the Hall wouldn't be available until after 5.00pm as there was another group using it but after 5.00pm it was all ours. We got into town about 4.00pm so we had an hour to kill which we did very comfortably at The Australian Hotel on the river.

At 5.00pm we moved in, sites were selected, up went the beds, gear stowed away and very soon it was as though we'd been there for years.



Every day Paul "Nosey" Parker, ex-Navy, right, would put us all to shame. Most people were just content to have a bed on which to lie with the rest of their gear plonked on the ground within easy reach. Not Nosey, each stop he would blow up his bed then lay out all his gear in perfect order, right dressing his shoes at the foot of his bed. Ian Aves, middle, looking on thinking, "Navy must have taught them that – how to live neatly in the smallest of spaces".

We had lots of bosses, Camp Boss, Bike Boss, Food Boss, Drinks Boss, Truck Boss – next trip we should promote Nosey to Donga Boss, he could become the group's DI, train us how to "panic" a bed site. Wouldn't hurt!

That evening Terry Salmon, right, the Secretary/Treasurer of the St George RSL Sub-Branch, had invited us to the Sub-Branch where he said





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the bar would be open and the RSL and Rotary Club of St George ladies would put on a dinner we'd remember for ages.

We went and they certainly did.



The ladies preparing a wonderful "home-cooked" meal.



There wasn't a lot of talking being done, it was a matter of head down and enjoy the meal.

Thanks ladies, it was greatly appreciated.

We spoke with Win Salmon, who wears many hats in the Balonne Shire, one of which is President of the local Rotary Club of St George as well as being on the committee of the local branch of Toastmasters. In January this





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year Win was awarded the Shire's Volunteer of the year award. We jokingly told her with all that spare time on her hands she should come riding with us. She said she would love to but hadn't been on a bike for years.

Nosey overheard this and said "we'll soon fix that", he arranged to meet Win next morning and to take her for a ride on the back of his scooter.

Next morning, a jacket and helmet was borrowed, Win was decked out, she hopped on the back of the scooter and away they went.

The invite is still open Win, you'd be more than welcome.

What do they say – "All good times.....,"

It was now time for us to leave St George, cross the Balonne river and head for Cunnamulla where we'd planned to spend 2 nights.

This was to be a long day, 295km, but we'd planned several stops and once again, one was a school, so we reluctantly packed up and left the Anglican Church Hall for our next stop at the Bollon school



Leaving St George, thanks again Louise.



The Bollon school was 114km up the long flat road. There aren't a lot of hills out this way, be a perfect area on which to build an aerodrome but as we were on 110cc scooters, we weren't complaining. One thing there was a lot of though was goats – thousands of them. It's a wonder someone hasn't rounded up a million or two of them, surely they would be good to eat and they are just out there for free. Making more goats.

We arrived at the Bollon School about 10.00am, out came the "show-bags" and a ton of chips and we met the kids.



Bollon township is a bit bigger than Talwood, it has a population of 174 persons but the school is smaller, Bollon school, which first opened in 1885, has only 14 students but they were glad to see us and made us feel very welcome. Although only small, there is a huge amount of pride in these outback schools. Everything is meticulously kept, the kids all in uniforms, teachers devoted to their jobs, you can see it just by looking at the kids, they are all happy.

We reckon the country kids are the lucky ones.

The kids were assembled under a shade, we had a chat with them, gave each a "Show bag", and you could see the shine in their eyes as they tucked into the biscuits and chips. They then wanted to have a look at the scooters, so we got a few ready, had each on its stand with the rear wheel off the ground, the kids hopped on, started and revved them with smiles a mile wide.

We did have pics of the kids on scooters but weren't allowed to show them, shame as they were great little kids. We won't stop there again.

Eventually it was time to go. We still had 180km ahead of us but we'd arranged for our "foodies" to go ahead and set up shop in a rest area about 65km from the school. By the time we'd arrived, everything was in place and we enjoyed a 30 min break.



After smoko, we refuelled the scooters from drums, packed the vehicles and headed off for the 114km easy flat run into Cunnamulla.

We had decided to include the two towns of Cunnamulla and Thargomindah into this Scootaville event. Some months earlier both towns had copped it when the heavens opened and drenched much of the outback in a terrible flood. Cunnamulla survived much better than Thargomindah, thanks to a large levee that had been built some years earlier and most of the town itself remained dry. But not so Thargomindah. Thargomindah went under and stayed under for several days. We thought it would be nice if we could bring a little bit of joy to their lives, so we asked Army if the Band could accompany us further west, which they would, and we got together a bunch of barbecue necessities and off west we went.



The Warrego River that flows through Cunnamulla - which regularly floods.



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The roads out west of St George are not well used, traffic is light but the roads themselves are good. We're lucky, we are a huge country with a small population yet our roads are wide, regularly maintained and very good, there are rest areas along the way, mobile phone service might only be available from Telstra but it's there, we don't have a lot to complain about.

One thing there is a lot of west of St George is a huge population of wild and healthy looking goats. While on the road, about every 10km or so, you come across a group of about 10-20 goats, luckily they have more sense than kangaroos as they don't tend to race across the road in front of cars, you rarely see a "road-kill" goat. We can't understand why someone hasn't/doesn't round a few thousand of them up where they could end up on our plates. Nothing like getting your stock for free.

We arrived at the Cunnamulla showgrounds late in the afternoon and very soon settled into the pavilion graciously allowed us by the Show Society.



Our accommodation, Cunnamulla Showground.

We planned to spend 2 nights in Cunnamulla and after beds had been set up, those that rode took off on the scooters for a tourism look around town, one spot that was visited was the weir not far out of town. This weir keeps the river level high and attractive as it flows past the town.





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Next morning, after a hearty breakfast, we started to get ready for the town barbecue. We had spoken with Mayor Suzette Beresford some weeks earlier and we had offered to provide a barbecue for the town just to let them forget those terrible floods. Mayor Beresford offered to provide the physical barbecue while we provided the others. We got together a stack of sausages, onions, bread and sauces, all thanks to the generous gift card given to us by IGA and late in the afternoon we set up shop. The Army had also agreed to follow us out to Cunnamulla and perform for the town while we barbecued.



The troops hard at it barbecuing.



The Army Band hard at it banding.



The troops with Mayor Beresford at the Cunnamulla Fella.

Next day it was time to leave Cunnamulla and head a further 200km west to the town of Thargomindah, once again keeping an eye out for wild goats and this time also for wild emus.

We were lucky in that there was a small town called Eulo only 68km west of Cunnamulla which boasted a great little pub. We decided to make it our first stop. In 1886, the pub, called the Queen Hotel, was originally built and operated by Isabel Gray and her husband. Back then it was known not only as a hotel but also as a store and butcher shop. Gray, often called the "Eulo Queen," gained a reputation for her ability to "enrapture her male counterparts" with opals, which she used as currency.

The current hotel was built in 1954, replacing the original structure which no longer exists. During the opal mining era, the hotel was and still is, a central part of the Eulo township.





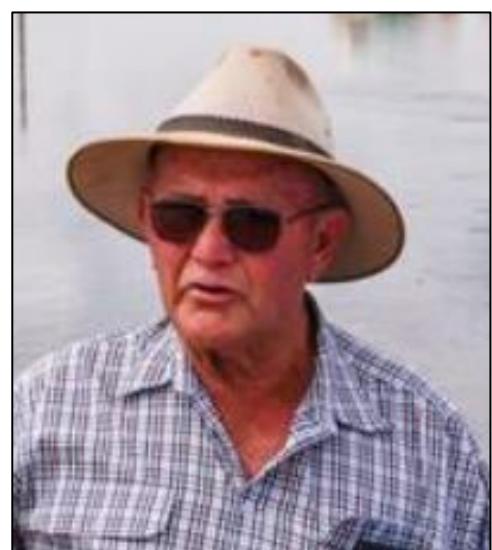
The hotel is operated by Adam and Prue Brancher. Adam is ex-Army and lovingly maintains a wonderful memorial out the front of this hotel. Adam had prepared a welcome morning tea for us after which it was back onto the scooters and a further 75km ride west to a roadside rest area where our foodies had prepared another welcome morning tea. No-one was going to go hungry on this trip.



After another coffee, a hand full of biscuits, a walk around, trip to the toilet, it was back onto the bikes and into the last 53km to Thargomindah. We were lucky that Mayor John "Tractor" Ferguson had agreed to meet us a few km out and ride one of our scooters back into town.

John led us into town, we did a few laps up and down the streets then headed out to the golf club where we were to spend two nights. The Army Band joined us.

Originally we had been allocated the town's shire hall but the recent floods had affected the building badly, inspections had found it was full of mould and not fit for use in any way.





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The Shire Hall. The blue tape line next to the wheelie bin, shows the water level through the town at the height of the flood.

The golf club was a few km out and unfortunately the floods had seriously affected the grounds - but the building was in good shape and we were very thankful for its use. And it didn't take us long to set up.



As we had in Cunnamulla, we held a public barbecue in a public park in Thargomindah and the Army band entertained the locals before also joining the barbecue.



Ace snag roller, Ian Aves, hard at it, being professionally helped out by onion man extraordinaire, Rob Collins.

We had a free day in Thargominday and decided to do some exploring. Two points of interest that we had to see were the old Hospital and the hydro electric scheme.



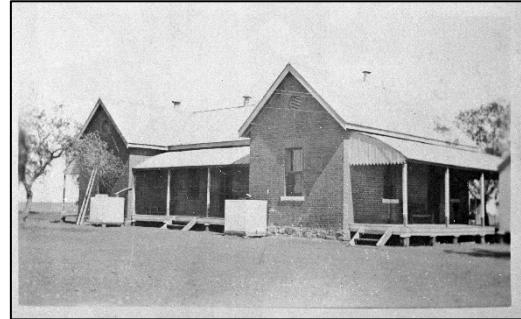
The old Thargomindah hospital.



The Hospital was built in 1888 of locally produced unfired Mud Brick. The bricks were made from black soil on the banks of the Bulloo River just south of the town, at the site of what was the Chinese Market Gardens. After the bricks were moulded (in the machine now situated at the front door of the Meathouse), they were laid out to dry and covered with Yapunyah leaves. During this process, roaming animals often left their imprints. In the hospital itself, there are footprints of dogs, cats and emus preserved on the walls. Once the leaves were sufficiently dry, they were ignited and the bricks were "FIRED", changing colour from mud grey to red. Many of the town's buildings were built from this local brick, however, only four of these buildings remain.

There have been three distinct phases in the life of this building. The first stage includes the first 55 years of Hospitals history, during which the building provided a vital service to the community for two important reasons. Firstly, because it was a Hospital, it supplied essential medical assistance to Australia's pioneers. Secondly, it gave people in the town and the wider Bulloo Shire a sense of security, which is important for a remote community in what can be a harsh and dangerous landscape. The Hospital helped to encourage people to move west and live the Australian pioneering dream.

The second stage in the Hospital's history began in 1942 when a Flying Doctor Base was established in Charleville. This increased the community's sense of security and meant that a resident doctor was no longer a necessity in Thargomindah. During this period there was also a significant change to the Hospital's management when the reins were passed from the Thargomindah District Hospital Committee to the Cunnamulla Hospital Board in 1946.



The third stage for the building began in 1976, when a new Thargomindah Outpatients Centre was opened in Dowling Street. For a time the old brick building was privately owned by the Howard family, who eventually sold it to the local Council that rented it out as residential flats. These flats were not well maintained during this time and it is only thanks to Terry and Vonda Smith, who purchased the building from the Council in October 1995 and began renovations, that the building has survived and remains in such a well-kept condition today. Terry and Vonda not only restored the old Hospital, but they re-established its central position in Thargomindah as an Outback icon. In 2006, the building later became the Bulloo Shire Councils Tourism Office until 2013 when the current Visitor Centre was built in Dowling Street.



Thargomindah early hydro power plant.



In 1891 drilling commenced on a bore to supply Thargomindah with water and in 1893 an exceptionally good supply was struck at 808 meters (2650 feet) with the water at 84 degrees Celsius. The bore was the source of energy for Australia's first hydroelectric scheme to produce street lighting when in 1893 Thargomindah's streets were lit by means of a generator coupled to a water turbine driven by the bore's natural water pressure.

Thargomindah became one of the few places in Australia that enjoyed the benefits of reticulated water and electric street lighting.



How was it that this isolated community revelled in modern luxuries that much larger towns and cities would not enjoy for decades? The answer lies in Thargomindah's location above the Great Artesian Basin which is an underground water resource in which large volumes of water are trapped in layers of permeable sandstone between layers of impermeable mudstone. The water can be millions of years old and is under considerable pressure.

Many years ago a spirited townsman named Patterson, while on a business visit to Brisbane, purchased an electric light plant, and this he installed in his store. It was such a success that hotels and stores applied to be connected. In time private dwellings were seeking the same privilege; indeed, there was such a demand for the light that the Bulloo Shire Council decided to purchase the plant. This was done, and with many additions it was duly installed in the bore area and worked by bore water power.

The plant is still in excellent working order.

Next day we decided to return to Cunnamulla while the Army Band decided to head north to Quilpie. We agreed to meet up again in Charleville in a few days. As we did on our way west, we stopped again on our way back east at the Eulo pub for a breather and smoko.

Eulo is not a big place but during WW2, a local shopkeeper built an air raid shelter to provide safety for the locals in the unlikely event of an air raid. It's still there today.





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We had a quiet night in Cunnamulla with our in-house cookie, Sue Trimmer, spending time in the well kitted out kitchen and providing us with a hearty meal.



Next day was an easy 198km run up to Charleville. We got away at about 8.30am hoping to stop at the small 7 pupil school at Wyandra - about 100km up the road. Wyandra Public School began as a provisional school in 1898 and was officially established as a state school in 1909, after the town of Wyandra grew with the completion of the railway line in 1897. Today, it is a multi-age co-educational school that serves students from Kindergarten to Year 6.



We arrived about 10.30am, unloaded the goodies from the truck and met the kids.



President of the Radschool Association Inc, John Broughton, chatting with the kids who were delighted with their "Show-bags".

Next to the school; is the "famous" Australian Post Office which has more lives than Felix the cat. Rebuilt after a storm in 1877 and again after a fire in 1952 when the postmaster accidentally dropped a cigarette among the mail bags, the Post Office has become the major attraction in the small town.

Run by the Gray family, it is also the local general store and also houses the old jail house and old barracks. It has become a unique stop over for travellers.

It also sells great Paddle Pops.





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Dave Pedler "escaping" from the old Police Cells at the Wyandra Post Office.

After we'd had a good look around, we set out again about midday for the final 100km run up to Charleville. 70km up the road we came across the Angellala Creek Bridge explosion site which was Australia's largest transport explosion. On the 5th September, 2014, a truck carrying 52 tonnes of ammonium nitrate crashed, caught fire, and detonated, causing a massive blast felt miles away. Miraculously, no lives were lost, but the event destroyed bridges, injured eight people and left significant debris. Today there is a memorial on the site on the Matilda Highway where visitors can learn about the event.

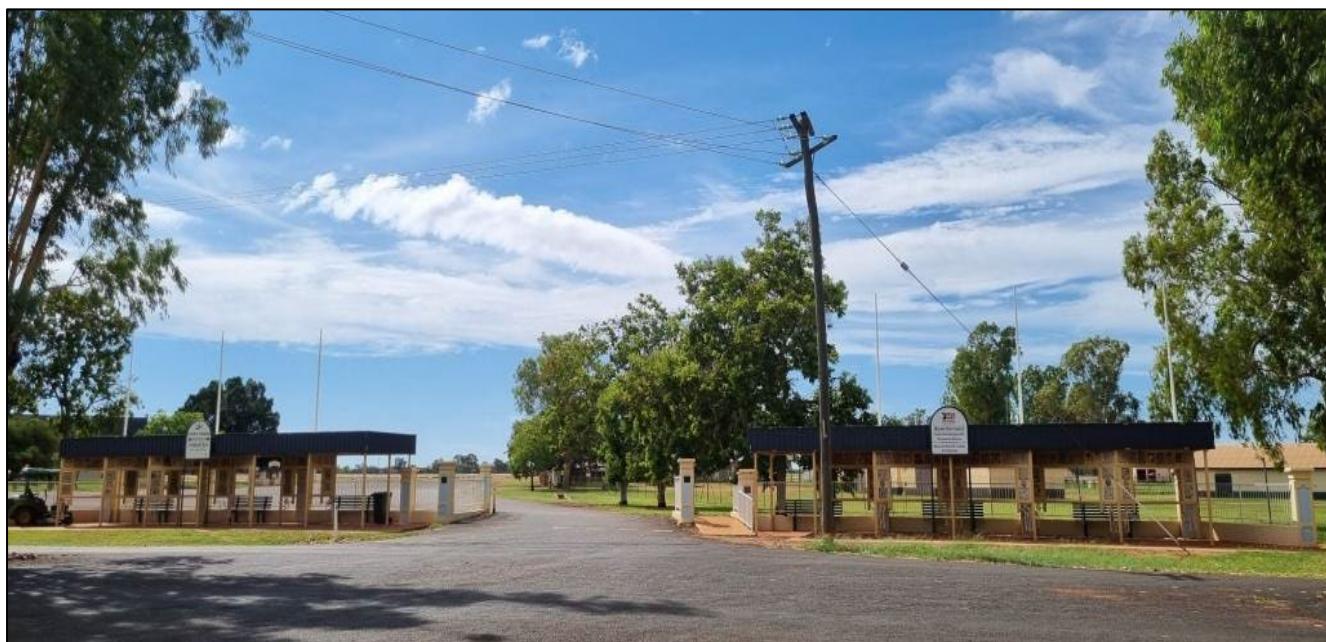


All that remains of the road bridge after the explosion.



All that is left of the old rail bridge.

We left the Angellala Creek explosion area and headed north to Charleville where Mayor Shaun "Zoro" Radnedge's council had allowed us the use of their showground. We planed to spend 2 nights in Charleville.





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Mayor Zoro welcomed us to a very spacious pavilion, there was enough room to house everything, truck, bus and scooters.



And very soon all our gear was unloaded from our trusty truck, beds blown up, stuff sorted and we were all ready to party.



By now we had been on the road for nearly 2 weeks and as our duffle bags could carry only so many changes of clothes, we were rapidly running out of clean clobber. It was time to hit the laundromat. We've found most outback towns have a laundromat tucked away in a side street, possibly to service the huge number of nomads that spend time on the roads, so after setting up the bed site, it was into the bus with a load of dirty clothes and off to do some washing.





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With a bag full of clean clothes now beside the beds, it was time to have a look around Charleville. We had met up with the Army Band who today were playing in the main street so we decided to go and have a look. Army had set up on the veranda of the Charleville Historic House and Museum, which just happened to be across the road from the local bakery, a win win situation. We were being very well fed and entertained at the same time.

The Army are very clever here, people tend to think Armies are just made up of guns and bullets. Their presence at community events and ceremonies helps break down barriers, making Army feel more approachable and relatable to everyday Australians. Their performances not only showcases musical excellence, but shows Army is made up of normal, though very talented men and women. Through music, the Band fosters a sense of connection and goodwill, reminding everyone that the Army is an integral part of the community.



That evening we had arranged to hold a fund raising raffle at the local RSL Club. We had been to Charleville on a previous occasion and found the RSL to be very supportive of our cause, they allowed us to sell tickets to their customers and then hold a noisy raffle draw.

Mayor Zoro, who is also very supportive, had agreed to join us for the raffle and personally congratulated each winner. We must thank both the Mayor and the RSL for their wonderful support.

Charleville is one of those towns which are very welcoming. You feel good being there.





Wednesday was a free day and there is a lot to see in Charleville, so those that could grabbed a scooter and went touristing. The rest talked our wonderful driver, Pattie, into getting behind the wheel of the bus and taking us on a tour. One place that is a must see is the WW2 Secret Base Museum which lives at Charleville Airport. This building preserves the history of the top-secret US Army Air Forces (USAAF) base established there during World War II, featuring original buildings like the Qantas Hangar and the secure Norden bombsight shed, alongside interactive exhibits showcasing secret missions, wartime life and the strategic importance of the remote outback location for Pacific operations.



During WW2, Charleville served as home to a crucial United States Army Air Force base that played a vital but long-hidden role in the Pacific Theatre. During the war, this outback community welcomed 3,500 American servicemen who operated across a variety of different military units, conducting classified operations that would significantly impact the war effort. The entire township was sworn to secrecy about the top-secret military operations taking place in a building that still stands today. For years, the full scope and importance of this base remained unknown to many, even those who call Charleville home.

It is definitely a must see attraction.

Other must see attractions at the Charleville airport include the Royal Flying Doctor Centre and the Cosmos Centre making the Airport a destination which deserves several hours of attention.





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Next day, which was a Thursday, we had a 300km run up to Blackall so it was up early, a quick tub, breakfast, pull the beds down, load the truck then head off up the Matilda Hwy. The scooters didn't have the range to cover the 300km without a fuel stop so we planned a couple. First one was to be Augathella, 80 km from Charleville. After topping up the scooters at the BP on the highway, we headed into Augathella which is bypassed by the Hwy, for a morning smoko.

We were in for a wonderful surprise here. Robyn Pedrina had been to our favourite bakery in Charleville the day before and ordered a huge assortment of delicious cakes which she produced at the Augathella stopover, much to everyone's delight.





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Although not all were eaten at the stop over, those remaining were lovingly and carefully loaded back into the bus and the cartons were regularly visited during the rest of the day.

Thanks Robyn, that was wonderful.

Next stop was to be at the Royal Carrangarra Hotel in Tambo, a further 120km up the Matilda Hwy but unfortunately we had an accident about 20km out from Augathella. One of our riders left the road and travelled through the long grass on the right hand side of the road for a considerable distance before eventually falling off the Scooter. He suffered considerable rib damage as a result of the fall and as he lay on the ground unable to move an ambulance was called. The ambulance came from Augathella and carried him back to Augathella from where we believe he was transported by air to Toowoomba then to the PA hospital in Brisbane for further treatment. How or why he left the road is unknown, some think he fell asleep while riding, possibly after the hearty smoko we had at Augathella not long ago, whatever, we think it will be a long long time before we can coach him onto a scooter again.

The broken scooter was loaded into the truck and eventually we got going again, though we were not going to make our stop in Tambo on time for lunch so we rang and advised we were going to be late and wouldn't have time for a chicken race either. We'd stopped there before and it was here that we discovered they make the best pies in the whole wide world.



We didn't get a pie this time but we did get a great lunch and it was here that we met up with Terri-Ann Eden-Jones and Terry Brennan who had driven up from Brisbane and who intended to stay with us for a few days while we were in Blackall.

Was great to see them again.





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After lunch, we refuelled the scooters and headed for the final 100km up to Blackall

We arrived at the Blackall showground late in the afternoon and as we'd done more times than we'd like to remember, unloaded the truck, found our gear, selected a spot in the room, made up our beds, stowed the gear then settled in around the big white esky.

Next day it was warm so several of the troops decided a dip in the artesian pool was in order. Not a lot of people know that in 1885 Blackall was the first town in Queensland to sink a bore into the Great Artesian Basin, providing naturally hot, mineral-rich water at around 58°C. The local Aquatic Centre features pools and spas filled directly from this bore, providing a unique thermal bathing experience offering relaxation and health benefits for locals and visitors.



From the bottom left, then clockwise are: John Broughton, John Barber, Maddy Ryan, Ian Aves, David Pedler.

Later in the morning, most of the troops headed off into Blackall to do some investigating, some scootered, some walked, some talked Pattie into cranking up the bus.



Rob Collins and Pattie Bradford about to sit under Blackall's Tree of Knowledge and pour forth some "knowledge."

The Black Stump, hidden away in one of Blackall's back streets





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That night, as he had done previously, Craig Scholes organised a barbecue evening for us which was held at the local Bowls Club. We had a great night, raised a few dollars, had a wonderful meal and of course a few coldies to lay the dust.





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L-R: Johnno Saunders, Steve Collins, Wal Shakoff, Paul Parker - enjoying a few coldies.

Next morning, which was a Saturday, the old routine clicked in, showers, breakfast, beds let down, gear packed, truck loaded, scooters checked - it was time to hit the road. Today was an easy run, only 100km up to Barcaldine. We said our good-byes and thank yous to Terri-Ann, Terry and Craig and by 9.00am we were on the road.

Not far from Barcaldine we were met by Rob Chandler, the mayor of Barcaldine. Rob is an avid bike rider and he offered to ride one of our scooters into Barcaldine. It wasn't hard to find a volunteer who offered up his scooter and with our bike boss, Sean O'Toole looking on, Rob was kitted out with safety gear and away we went.



Rob led us to Barcaldine's Rec Park, of which he is immensely proud and explained it to us.



The Barcaldine Rec Park is a 1.1km long lake built in compliance with International and Australian water skiing standards and designed for a wide range of water sports. It will encourage broad community participation through the provision of wide-ranging activities like water skiing, rowing, fishing (it will be stocked with fish for competition and recreation events), sailing, dragon boat racing, jet skiing, wakeboarding, triathlons, open water swimming, canoeing and kayaking. The potential range of activities provides opportunities for participation for a broad range of people across the community - men, women, boys and girls, across the entire age of the population from 5 to 105.

This facility will significantly broaden the scope of local sporting and recreational activities on offer and provide the opportunity for communities across the region to be involved and provide an area where families and communities come together with an emphasis on fun and participation rather than competition. The facility is approximately 1km from the Barcaldine town centre so it is in easy walking distance for the local community and will provide large areas for cars and trailer parking. This project meets a strong regional need for a year-round water infrastructure facility and will allow grassroots community sport and recreation clubs to grow across the region by providing a purpose-built site with first-class facilities where they can participate in water based activities all year round.

After the Park, Rob led us into town, we did a lap past the Tree of Knowledge, the birth-place of the Australian Labour Party, then onto the showground where his council had allowed us the use of one of their pavilions.

In 2006, a disgruntled individual poisoned the original 200 year old ghost gum which had been added to the Qld heritage register back in Oct 1992. It was under this tree that the workers of the 1891 shearers strike met and under which the reading of the Labor Party manifesto was read in 1892.



An arborist declared the tree dead on 3 October 2006 and the ALP offered a reward of A\$10,000 for any information that would help identify those responsible. The remains of the tree were removed on 29 July 2007 and a new memorial on the site of the remains of the original tree (costing about A\$5M) was officially opened on 2 May 2009.



This memorial is beautifully lit with lighting during the night, giving the illusion that the tree is still living. There are also interpretive panels and a sculpture that celebrates the leaders of the 1891 Shearers' Strike and the history of the Labor movement.



We were familiar with the pavilion in the showground, having stayed there back in 2023 and it wasn't long before we'd selected a spot, blown up the bed, sorted the gear and found the big white esky.

Barcaldine is a town of 1550 people and at the height of its days there were 12 hotels in its main street. Today there are 5 operating hotels, most of which have had a chequered life having been burnt down and rebuilt at one stage in their lives. We decided to try the Shakespeare Hotel that night for dinner.

The Shakespeare hotel began life in the small town of Jericho, it was then known as the Shakspeare after its original owner George Page Shakspeare. In 1886, the family dismantled their hotel and moved it to Barcaldine following the railway line which was moving out from Rockhampton to the terminus in Barcaldine. The hotel was unusual in that it was a 2-storey timber building with a verandah overhanging the footpath. The other hotels of the day were one-storey. In 1924, the timber building burned down, suffering the same fate as many other Barcaldine hotels before it. It was rebuild in 1925 as the brick building which still stands today. In the early days it was the hotel of choice for businessmen or commercial travellers. A tie had to be worn at all times and in its glory days the hotel was declared to be equal to any hotel in Brisbane.





We enjoyed a great meal and also a few cold ones while John Broughton found a piano and provided entertainment for the night.

Next day was another long one - 315km over to Emerald, so it was planned to get away by 8.30am. We hit the road a bit earlier and planned our first stop at Jericho which was 87km east. This was to be a smoko stop. Our "foodies", Sue Trimmer and Rob Collins had gone ahead and by the time we got there the billy was boiling, the cakes and biscuits were set out and we smokoed like royalty.





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Next stop planned was Alpha, a further 55km east where we refuelled the scooters, grabbed a snack from the servo shop, then loaded up and headed for our next stop which was Bogantungan, another 71km east and where our foodies had lunch planned.

Bogantungan which is now bypassed by the Hwy, was a booming railway town in the 1880s, serving as a crucial terminus for the Central Western Railway as construction pushed west across the challenging Drummond Range. You wouldn't know it today but it once boasted 28 hotels, several churches, numerous businesses and sporting clubs and a racecourse.

On 26 February 1960, Bogantungan became the site of one of Queensland's worst train disasters. The Midlander passenger train, heading east to Rockhampton, passed over the flooded Medway Creek, just west of the town. The bridge collapsed when the train was partly over and a number of carriages dropped into the water. Sadly, four passengers and three crew were killed, and 43 people were injured.

Not much is left of the once thriving town apart from the original Refreshment Room, built between 1916 and 1924, and the water tank, believed to have been built in 1916.





Our foodies had done us proud, when we arrived lunch was waiting.

After lunching, then cleaning up, repacking the chuck wagon, we moved on again, next stop was to be Anakie, 55km east. We wanted to check out the old pub that we'd heard had been resurrected.



Anakie, also now bypassed by the hwy, is famous as the historic heart of Australia's Sapphire Gemfields, booming after sapphire discoveries in the 1870s, developing as a crucial railway town (station opened 1884) and serving as a centre with schools and services. The Anakie Hotel, which was established around 1902 with the Sapphire Gemfields mining boom, was a historic hub that closed in 2018 but has been reborn and reopened in April 2025 as Sparrows Perch. The pub was named after Sparrow, who was a miner and also a disgruntled patron who once blew up the front section of the hotel with gelignite.



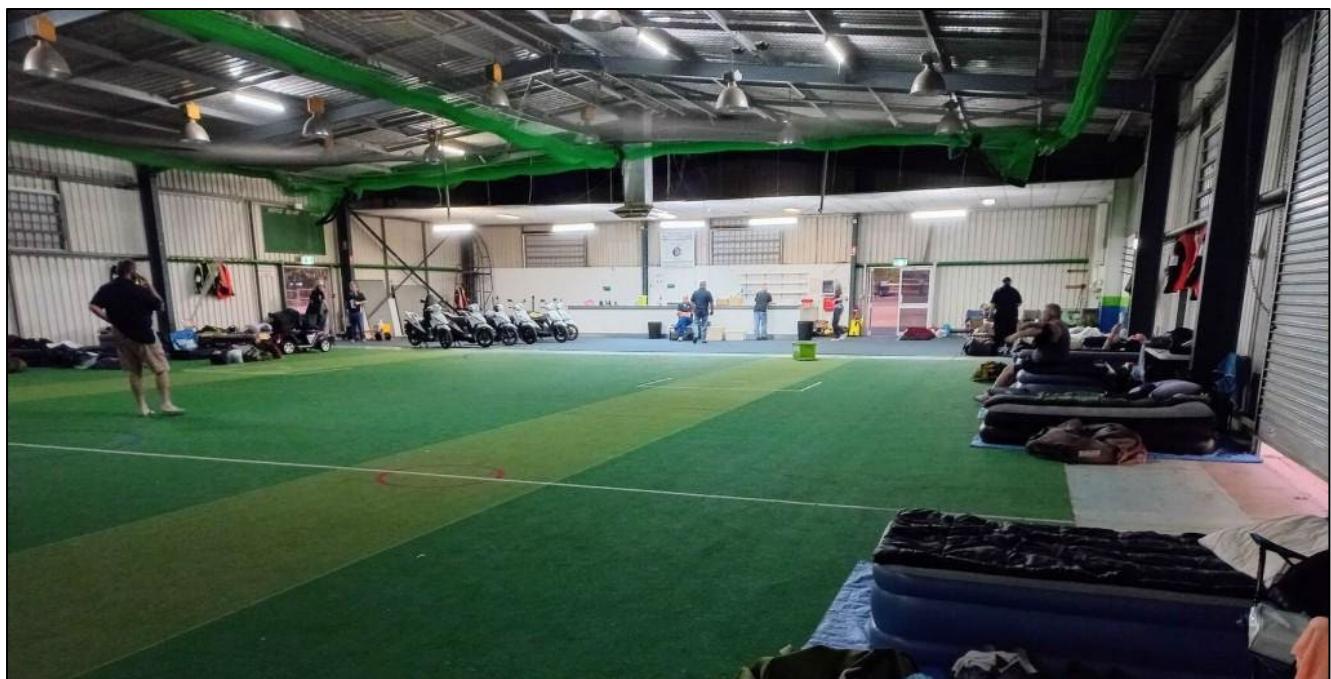


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We had a cold one, a chat with the locals, a good look around and eventually we had to leave as it was getting late and the final 45km awaited before we got to Emerald.

We arrived Emerald late in the day and looked forward to a quiet night. We were given use of the same pavilion we had used 2 years ago - it was like a familiar home-coming. This building is used for indoor cricket and has an artificial turf floor, much nicer than bare concrete. We wished we were staying 2 nights.



We decided to dine at the Maraboon Hotel that night. We had used the Maraboon Hotel in previous years and always found it excellent so it was our hotel of choice again. We attempted to book a table earlier in the day only to find it 98% full. We did manage to get several wooden tables in the "beer-garden" which suited us fine.

Sunday the 7th September just happened to be the day, some years previously, that our chief of staff, Ian Aves, took his first breath. Born a mere 59 years ago, Ian was spending another birthday on the road - we had to celebrate. The ladies in our group, who can do these things far better than men can, went shopping and found a lovely cake which they spirited away into the hotel's kitchen from where it was produced after we'd all finished dinner.

The candles were blown out, the cake was cut, we all had some and wished Ian many many happy returns..





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JB who doesn't have a bike licence, but who wishes he had, thought he'd try out one of the scooters. It was on the stand, the bike boss had the keys, the engine wasn't running but JB said it felt good!



Next morning it was up early again as our run down to Biloela was another long one, this time 315km but we had planned a few stops. We were on the road not long after 8.00am heading for our first stop which was at the International Coal Centre at Blackwater, 75km down the road.





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The Blackwater International Coal Centre operates as a limited non-profit organisation. Money for the running and maintenance is provided from admissions, sales of souvenirs, catering, room hire, cinema sales, sponsorships and donations. The main purpose of the Coal Centre is to exhibit a unique view into the operations and history of Australia's coal mining industry through its interactive Museum. Additionally the centre features three conference rooms, an auditorium, 3D Cinema, award-winning landscaped gardens and Cafe.

We'd stopped there on previous occasions and found it a great place for a stop over, the coffee was great, the food was great, the staff were great, the souvenirs shop was great, the museum was great - we spent a great 30 - 45 mins there. Dave Pedler spent a while in the souvenir shop and bought a lovely pink hand-bag?

Very nice!



After coffeeing and leaving the Coal Centre's shop, we lined up for the compulsory photo in one of the huge drag-line buckets, then it was stop at a servo, top up the scooters than back on the road for our next stop which was to be at Duaringa, a further 85km.



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There's not a lot out that way, not a lot to see, just a lot of straight flat road and lots of mile long coal trains but occasionally you do see things that you really notice. Because that part of Qld is made up of good black coal, they need big machinery to get it out of the ground and sometimes that machinery needs to be replaced. Not long after leaving Blackwater we were pulled over to let two huge pieces of machinery pass. Some of that stuff is so big and so solid you'd think it could never wear out, but it does. We'd love to have a look over the factory where they make that stuff.



We continued onto Duaringa which doesn't have a lot but it does have a huge BP servo which has a shop, a cafe, a toilet, tables and chairs - in fact just about everything we needed. We stopped, refuelled scooters and body and soul, had a toilet stop, walked around a bit then it was time to continue on.



Next stop was to be at Dululu, another 82km down the road. We'd stopped there before and knew it had everything we wanted, a huge rest area with toilets. Dululu sits on the junction of the Burnett and Leichhardt highways and sees a lot of traffic, it has a hotel and offers plenty of room for campers. We stopped, opened the truck to get at the cold drinks and of course, had the compulsory toilet break.





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Paul Parker went into the toilet but found he couldn't get out. Someone had popped a padlock on the exit door and poor old Paul was stuck. We all thought it was funny - we don't think Paul did. Being ex-Navy he should have known never to trust RAAF people.

After he promised not to bash the lot of us we let him out.



From Dululu we had another 75km of flat straight road to cover before we'd get to our next overnighter which was the showgrounds at Biloela. While at Dululu we topped up the scooters from the Jerry cans and we intended to cover this 75km without stopping, which we did.



We pulled up at the showground, unloaded the truck and before long everyone had set up home.



That night we were wonderfully looked after at the Biloela RSL Club.

Next day we had a 245km run down to Gayndah and once again we had planned several stops, these to give riders a break, to top up the tanks and meet wonderful people along the way.

We got away at about 8.30am with our first stop planned at the Lawgi Hall rest area, 30km from Biloela. A railway town was planned for the location and when the line reached the area several homes and a school were built. The railway was originally planned to continue onto



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Monto but it was never completed and Lawgi became the terminus. However, the railway line was not profitable and the section from Thangool to Lawgi was closed in 1955. As a result, the township gradually disappeared leaving only the community hall.

The Hall has been decorated with a mural which represent the local area and it has become a favourite stop over as a rest spot and photo opportunity.



We left Lawgi and continued onto Monto, 65km away, where the RSL had offered to provide smoko for us. We had stopped at Monto RSL before and always found them most welcoming and we looked forward to seeing them again.

We arrived about mid morning, were warmly welcomed and provided with a wonderful smoko after which it was time to sit back and relax for a while.





And it didn't take JB long to find a piano and bash out a few tunes.

We reluctantly left Monto and headed for our next stop, the RM Williams Centre at Eidsvold - a further 75km along the Burnett. Our foodies had gone ahead and set up lunch in one of the shelters that dot the ground and by the time we arrived, the billy was boiling, the sandwiches were made, the cold drinks were ready - all set out ready for our hungry group. After lunch we had a look through the wonderful centre.

The Reginald Murray Williams Australian Bush Learning Centre (RMWABC) was built to honour this great Australian and pay tribute to the bush skills and culture that the bush was founded upon. Here visitors can learn about RM Williams' story, bush skills, Indigenous artefacts, 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, where he is at peace in the quiet bush outside of Eidsvold.

We left Eidsvold and pushed on towards Gayndah where we were to spend the night. Gayndah was an easy 80km further down the Burnett and we expected to get to the Gayndah RSL hall by early afternoon. We had one final stop before reaching Gayndah though, and that was at the small school at Binjour.



Back in April 1911, the local community, the majority of whom were German, requested a school be established. Their request was approved and a school building was relocated from Wondai to its current site. The building was extended with a rear verandah and opened on 15 September 1913. By 26 September 1913 there were 29 pupils, increasing to 37 by the end of the year. As many of the settlers in the area were German, many of the children could not speak English. Today the school has a total of 7 students, of different ages and in different classes. The teachers do a marvellous job being able to differentiate the kids and teaching different kids at different levels, sometimes in the same room. The kids don't seem to mind, as you find out here, they were just a happy little bunch of kids who treated mixed level schooling as the norm.

We stopped, met the teachers and kids, asked the kids if any would like a pack or two of chips, (silly question) followed by another, who would like to hop on one of the scooters and start it and rev it. A big YES to both of course!!



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Scootaville Qld 2025.



We eventually left the school and headed for Gayndah a mere 20km away. We figured we'd be there in about 15 mins, beds made and perhaps a nana nap before dinner.

Dale Giddens had other ideas. Dael had arranged a wonderful welcome for us on the outskirts of Gayndah and insisted on hopping on one of the scooters and leading us into town. Anyone who has ever tried to talk Dael out of something soon learns "Don't try!". We gave Dael the use of a scooter and with the Police leading, off we went.



Dael led us on a few laps of the town then took us to the RSL hall where we were to spend the night.





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Dael and the RSL really looked after us, not only had we plenty of room to bed down for the night but they supplied a wonderful evening meal for us and arranged for the local Gayndah band to entertain us as we ate.





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Nosey's lovely wife Peta joined us at Gayndah - she thought she was in for a treat, Nosey had other ideas, instead of a kiss he gave her a tea towel. We bet that went down well!



Unfortunately we could spend only 1 night in Gayndah - next day it was time to move on, our next stop was Kingaroy, not a long day, only 165km, so with a bit of time to spare we decided to breakfast at Gayndah's Big Orange which has, we can confirm, the world's best scones. So it was pack up, panic the building then stop at the Big Orange for a hearty and healthy breakfast.

Well, some of us did



At the big orange we lined up for the compulsory photo, said good by and thank you to Dael and off we went to Kingaroy. We weren't going to do it in one go either, we had a few stops planned, the first of which was Ban Ban Springs. The Ban Ban Springs stop has become a bit of a ritual over the years, it is now a compulsory Paddle Pop stop, for most of us anyway, there's always one who demands to be treated a little better and is not satisfied unless he is treated with a drumstick.



Next stop was Goomeri. Patti Bradford, our Bus Boss, had warned her sister, who lives in Goomeri, that we were coming and just happened to mention we could possibly be a little hungry by the time we got there. Were we in for a wonderful surprise. Patti's sister had commandeered a sheltered area and set out a magnificent meal that looked too good to touch. But touch it we did.





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Very soon there were a lot of empty plates and what was left made most us wish we had a "doggy-bag" as the food was too good to leave, but eventually we had to move on - we thanked Patty's sister for providing such a wonderful spread and we thanked Patty for having such a wonderful sister and off we went for our next stop which was the Cecil Hotel in Wondai.



Some of us were a bit rusty with their navigation skills and led us into the wrong town - no names, no pack drill, but his initials are Sean O'Toole.





We'd arranged to stop at the Cecil to have lunch - a mere 30km further on, though how anyone would be able to eat anything after that huge morning tea we'd just had was anyone's guess, but we stopped, we sat and we ate. Riding scooters is such energy sapping work.

After "lunch" we waddled out to the vehicles. some to the scooters, the lucky ones being able to retire in the bus, and off we went for the final 30km to Kingaroy. The Show Society had granted us the use of a large pavilion and we soon had the truck unloaded and with bed spots selected, our little "homes" were set up.

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On arrival at a site each afternoon, everyone hops in and helps get things done, no-one has to be told or asked to do anything, people just gravitate to the job and it gets done in no time.

Well, nearly everyone!



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Later that afternoon, after everyone had built their home and the esky had been produced, it was time for "Prize Night". We usually keep notes during the event, noting each person's good and some not so good points and after classifying some of these points into different categories we arrive at a winner in each category and award a prize.

Dave Pedler was awarded one such amazing prize, which we know will adorn the mantle piece at his home for years to come, however it wouldn't be fitting for us to tell you why he won - but of course we will, he was the only contender in the "Drop the Scooter" category.





That evening, Steven Reynolds, the Secretary of the Kingaroy RSL Sub-Branch, had arranged for the RSL Club to provide us with a much appreciated dinner. Steven is ex-Navy and retired with the rank of LCDR, (that's SqnLdr in the real money) our Navy bod, Nosey Parker, kept telling us he wasn't surprised, he said the Navy is considered the senior service because it gets things done and its members are the kind and helpful types.

We have to agree, the meal was wonderful, thanks Steven and thanks RSL Club.

Next morning was our last one on the journey. We had a 202km run down to Brisbane then it was all over. Sadly, we packed, cleaned out the pavilion, thanked the Society for its use, those that were riding found their ride, the rest joined Patty on the bus and off we went.



No-one leaves Kingaroy without stopping at the Peanut Van on the outskirts of the town - and we were no different. We stopped, bought enough different varieties of peanuts to last until forever, then mounted up and headed for stop number one which was to be the Yarraman RSL, a short 65km down the road.



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We had stopped at Yarraman on a previous occasion and even though it's only a small Sub-Branch it punches way above its weight. There is something about small sub-branches, because of their small size they are personal, always willing to help, nothing is a bother. Jo Hurley, the Secretary of the Sub-Branch, opened the building for us and she and her wonderful ladies had prepared a smoko that you would only expect from a huge club. They had spent a considerable amount of time and money in preparing it for us and we thank them sincerely for it. It was lovely meeting Jo and her lovely group of helpers.

This time we were also able to meet Jane Hodgkinson. Jane is the owner of Wild Horse FM station, a local station that broadcasts from a studio in the main street of Yarraman. We'd spoken with Jane on several occasions over the years but until now had not managed to meet.





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Time marched on and eventually it was time for us to continue on, we lined up for the farewell pic, said our thank yous again and continued down the D'Aguilar Highway to our next stop, the Kilcoy RSL.

Kilcoy is also a small Sub-Branch and once again punches way above its weight. We had stopped there previously too and always found them most willing to help in any way possible. This time the ladies had got to work and provided us with a wonderful lunch, a chance to refresh, to walk around and look at their displayed memorabilia and just to meet and talk with some wonderful people.





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Another Scootaville done and dusted. Unfortunately we had a couple of mishaps, we're looking at ways to prevent that in future, more on that later. We're planning the 2026 event already, next year it will once again finish in Townsville where we'll have an event that will include the Cowboys NRL Team.

If you think you'd be able to come just fill in the form here
<https://radschool.org.au/Scootaville/Participants/ScootavilleParticipants.htm>

It's not binding, it just gives us an idea on how many are thinking on coming.