

Our Journey to Victoria

April 2009

Succulent Get-Together, Victoria and D'Altons



Our route in blue, accommodation in red



Victorian flag

Forward

This journey was planned around a succulent Get-Together held at Hoppers Crossing near Werribee which is a few km NE of Geelong, cat country. Bev Spiller came with us.

We rented another Hertz car so we could have a look at a part of Victoria Marie had never seen and a portion I had seen when in my youth when I travelled with mum and dad on their way to Queensland.

I have entered the KM travelled that day in our rental car.

Prices for entry and tours at places I show as each and are pensioner/senior prices where possible.

In this book I have inserted some plastic sleeves which contain brochures and the like.

Technical details

I produced this book using OpenOffice.org (OOo) on my PC11 2.4GHz PC using both GNU/Linux and MS WXP operating systems.

Most of the photos were taken with my Nikon E4100 digital camera.

I edited a few images with The GIMP and Irfanview.

I printed with my Epson TX100 inkjet printer.

The filename of this document is;

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“and also PDF.

I plan to make a DVD movie which will have most of the 490 photos and video clips on it.

I dedicate this book
to my darling wife,
Marie, my fellow
traveller.

Departure

Wednesday 1st April 2009

We purchased all Virgin Blue flights over the Internet. I booked our Hertz rental and Harvey Travel Insurance at Harvey Travel Milton.

My weight was 58kg, our one and only suitcase was 21kg.

Our Silver Service Yellow Taxi arrived at 8.30am to take Bev and us to the airport.



Taxi to Brisbane Airport

Take off at 11.15am with clouds below until into Victoria where we again saw the dry scenery below. Victoria still in drought as is much of Australia.



Waiting at Brisbane Airport

Arrived in Melbourne at 1.20 pm but 2.20pm Daylight Saving Time.

We collected our Hertz rental car at the airport. Its (her) registration plate was WVQ628 which we nicknamed "Vicky". We were upgraded to a bigger car, a white Toyota Camry costing about \$20.00 less. We could

not get the usual Melway Melbourne map book similar to Brisbane's UBD book as I was told that Hertz no longer have them.

Bev again navigated our way to our Parkville accommodation, the Budget Park Squire Motor Inn on Flemington Road.

Cost for two nights was \$220.00 for the three of us.

Thursday 2nd April.

We caught a tram at a tram stop across from the Motel and got off in Bourke Street then another tram to the Carlton Gardens. So many frequent trams and cheap.



Waiting to enter

As usual we were about thirty minutes early and paid \$15.00 concession. Marie and I had previously missed visiting the Exhibition on two occasions in previous years.

Bev and Marie bought a few succulent plants at Paradisia Garden World. We walked and walked then into the lovely old historic Exhibition Building. Lunch outside and walked more so at 2.00pm we left and caught a City Circle free tram across the street.



Melbourne was having a heatwave.



John and Marie having morning coffee



A lovely old fountain with the Exhibition Building in the background

Victoria was experiencing more hot weather as I mentioned before so we sweated in the old non-air-conditioned free City Circle tram as we did an almost full circle of the city. Bev had not had a tram ride since the 1960s when Brisbane still had them running, a long time ago so she really enjoyed them which brought back many memories no doubt. At the end of a very enjoyable day we caught another 59 tram back home.



In the free Tram

Friday 3rd April.

Bev navigated us to Hoppers Crossing stopping on the way firstly at a plant nursery then across the road to a Bunnings where we had our morning cuppa. Next 100mt or so onward we stopped at a SafeWay store to buy milk, bread etc. We drove around in circles for the next hour or so, asking a couple of people where the Monte Villa



Marie and Bev

Motor Inn was but still had trouble until we spotted what

looked like a brick motel a few 100mt away. Well what a laugh, it is about 300mt from the Bunnings we had visited an hour or so ago. What a laugh!

It was a bit drizzly which didn't make things easier.

Arrived at the motel which was where the Get-Together was to be held. Marie and Bev were excited by this time.

The accommodation here cost \$300.00 for the three of us.

They met up with other folk with much talking as expected. I think such gatherings are great! The three of us enjoyed a nice dinner in the motel's restaurant with some other Getogether people.

Of course I don't attend the gatherings/conventions other than usually the Saturday night functions so I visit places closeby.

Here are some photos I took at the Getogether.



Some plants on display



Attila Kapitany opening the Getogether



Ian Hay auctioneer



Auction money keeper



Attentive people

Saturday 4th April 14km.

Marie and Bev joined in with the others as I also did for a half an hour or so to take photos and video.



The Chirnside Park Football and other sports ground with cairn about Hume and Hovell



South Base Stone



They camped here in December 1824

I drove to Werribee and walked the nice little town. I took photos of the football ground on Chirnside Park and the photo of the cairn where there is a plaque showing that Hume and Hovell camped here in 1824.

Back home where I used the Motel's free PC to check my E-mails but more importantly to save my Nikon files onto my USB. I won't go into the technical details.

Sunday 5th April 21km.

Marie and Bev again attended their function while I wanted to find the "South Base Stone" which I had not heard of before so I asked the gatekeeper man at the hospital where it was but he had not heard of it either. So back to the Werribee Information centre where I was given a detailed drawing but on my return to the supposed location I could not find it.

The Info Centre showed moving pictures in past times and has been remodelled with a Time Capsule under the floor at the entrance which was set in 2001 to be opened in 2051. I hope it can be located and lifted successfully then.

Marie and Bev attended talks on both mornings in the function room then both afternoons went on coach/bus trips to various gardens so they had a good time.

I went to the B24 Lancaster Bomber Restoration/museum which was interesting.

That night I attended the special dinner which was great then upstairs to another function room where the auction was held. I left after 30minutes or so and watched more footy on TV.

We 'phoned the Fields and spoke to Maria and Grace, and Mate our budgerigar.

The plant duo packed their plants, Bev did what was necessary for the flight home tomorrow.

Monday 6th April 295 km.

Today we commenced our second part, that is to drive up north of the state to see the Murray River. To Swan Hill.

We took Bev to the airport for her flight back home to Brisbane then we headed west on the M8 Western Freeway and had morning tea at Melton. I intended to bypass Ballarat but missed a turn so ended up in the heart of Ballarat. Now travelling on B220 The Sunraysia Highway. Through Lexton where we couldn't find the toilets. The mornings travel was reasonably interesting with some hills and gullies.

From then on it was flat and still dry country for many days. But near Learmouth there are some hills which have a lot of wind power generators situated.

We counted about fifty, most were rotating but a few were stationary and we wondered why. These devices should/must be installed in many more locations in Australia to help the environment.



Wind power generators near Learmouth looking NW.

We had lunch at Avoca and also a drink for Vicky, 38lt at 125c/lt costing \$40.00.



The War Memorial

I think this was the first time I saw reference to the Boar War. It seems to have been forgotten perhaps because Australian soldiers were sent not representing



Opuntia Robusta

Australia but the various colonies such as Victoria, NSW, Queensland and so on.

Then a big planted patch of Opuntia Robusta cactus.

At St. Arnaud we booked into Motel St. Arnaud costing \$75.00. Then walked around the town and bought our groceries at an IGA store.

Another town with most of their buildings still remaining. I did another walk around the town and found the football ground Lord Nelson Park. This is the first time I can remember where the ground also has a horse trotting track around it. Note the reasonably green grass because the town has a special recycled water supply.



The footy ground and race track

Tuesday 7th April 167km.



War memorial at Gooroc

Sunny and warm. Now we were on C271 The Calder Highway. We came upon a war memorial at Gooroc, also a plaque about a State School was here from 1875 to 1931. We can't understand why a school was needed here in such a desolate place but there must have been a big population and many wooden houses which may have rotted away or demolished.



Two teddy bears TV picnic

Then a surprising roadside object, a teddy bears TV picnic complete with a picnic case with plates and cutlery.



A derelict house

A few km north we drove on C261 to arrive at Swan Hill at 11.30am and after visiting the big Information Centre booked into the Budget Paruna Motel, \$87.00 per night, we booked for two nights. We 'phoned John and Lyn but Laena informed us they were both in Adelaide. The motel is one block away from the Murray Valley Highway which heads SE to I think Wodonga.

I walked to the Swan Hill Railway Station and checked out The Big Murray Cod.



Railway track in centre of the main street

Then lunch at Whicheproof in a little café where a railway track runs down the centre of the main street. It would have been a very busy town in the past.

Many towns in the past century had a railway line to transport goods which was one of the main points of communications.



Railway worker of the past



The Big Murray Cod

Wednesday 8th April, 41km.

We drove to Lake Boga which is about 11km east which was once a great lake for fishing, water sports and tourists up until about 2006 but is now completely dry. A terrible disaster for the town I believe caused by the drought and man made decisions. What I didn't know until a few days ago, Lake Boga was the number one service place for sea planes during WWII.



Dry Lake Boga looking north

The WWII Museum was not open just then so we drove around a few streets and found the footy ground then a concrete structure in a paddock. I walked 100mt to it and thought it may have been a WWII bunker of some sort.



Doug and Marie patting a ferret



Marie patting another ferret



WWII radio communications bunker

As I had walked back to the car, two men and two boys in a utility arrived. I asked the man what the bunker was and he told me that it was the main radio communications “building” for the main bunker which now houses the museum which I visited later. One of us mentioned rabbits which led him to show us his ferrets. I have told Marie for nearly fifty years I had my own ferrets in Officer in Victoria, as a school boy and used to go rabbiting with them.

Marie had a enjoyable time and so now she knows what I had talked about so often.

The man, Doug asked if we would like to see what they do with the ferrets, “yes” I said. We followed him in Vicky for about 100mt, nearer to the bunker. They put a couple of ferrets down some rabbit burrow holes and fitted a wire structure over the hole and within a minute or so one rabbit came out and was trapped in the wire gadget.



Marie patting a white ferret

Very interesting for me also, as it brought back memories of my childhood.

Back to the Lake where the Catalina Flying Boat Museum was open here at what was the lakes edge. The museum is in another bunker here as used during the war with a multitude of items and a video show which was very interesting.



A Catalina Flying Boat with parts missing due to restoration



Kaiser Panorama Theatre

Back to Swan Hill for us to visit the Pioneer Settlement Museum which is similar to the one in Caboolture near Brisbane. It's on a tributary of the Murray River called The Little Murray with a lot of River history there.



Kaiser Panorama Theatre



The Pioneer Settlement street

We enjoyed many things which included what we were told was the only operating Stereoscope Theatre in the world. We have all looked through the hand held stereoscope thing at some time where one puts a card with two same photos into the holder then look through the eye pieces to see a photo in 3D.

This one has about fifty viewing places which rotates to show various photos in 3D. The scenes are of places in Europe. What a magical thing this must have appeared to people in the 19th century. Our entry into the Settlement was \$16.50.

Another very interesting place for us was the musical house where we saw for the first time an old 78RPM one sided record which we have a few of but in this case it is about 6mm thick. Two women showed us working musical machines which are best seen on a DVD I will produce.



A wonderful old music machine

Then another reminder of my youth as my first job was as a telephonist with a small board about the size of this one.



A past telephonist at a switchboard



Our Swan Hill home with Marie patting the motel dog

When we returned to our motel I asked the motel owner to check if there was accommodation in a Budget in Echuca. There was and he booked us two nights.



Swan Hill's main street from the clock tower round-about

We had dinner at the RSL.

Thursday 9th April, 168km.

After passing by Lake Boga again we saw other smaller lakes that had water in them. At Kerang we enjoyed our morning coffee. The clock tower at the main round-about has a plaque which states that a woman school teacher died while saving a student from drowning somewhere.



The clock tower with plaque about the teacher who drowned saving a student

We were still in Victoria's irrigation area where there are many open waterways which in time will be replaced with pipes to lessen water evaporation.



An open waterway

Note the dry parched land which is what we saw for a few days.

We arrived at Echuca at 12 noon and went straight to the big Information Centre. Then to G.J. Coles for more supplies before checking into the pre-booked Budget Big River Motel \$175.00 for two nights. We decided to try to stay for another night which was successful which cost \$100.00. Remember it was Easter time and school holidays.

We visited the Port Area that is called Heritage Walk. This is where paddle steamers and other craft docked to load and unload wool and other items in the 1870s until the railway line was built but after 1900 the railway traffic put an end to river traffic. There are various attractions with buildings as they were in the 19th century, a little like Swan Hill's Pioneer Settlement. One place we enjoyed was Sharp's Magic Movie House and Penny Arcade where we paid about \$12.00 and were given about twenty pennies, real Australian currency until 1966.



Marie spending a penny

We also bought some wine in bottles at a wine shop which of course was an old business place.

These we used in the various machines. It reminded me of when we were in Glenelg last year, 2008 with penny arcade machines.



Another machine

Back home we were surprised that the motel did not have a telephone in our room and I gather not in the other rooms as I asked the owner where the nearest one was and he told me just around the corner opposite the hospital. We 'phoned the D'Altons and the Fields. I had to dig out some sixpences and a piece of wood to get it to work.



Looking eastward on Murray Esplanade

Good Friday 10th April, 179km.

We drove to Tongala, Kyabram where Vicky had another drink, 40lt at 124 c/lt \$50.00.



These are the murals outside the Tongala milk factory

Near Kyabram is this water irrigation system run by solar energy. We saw a lot solar systems on all sorts of things.



Seven solar panels operating this irrigation system

Onto Rushworth for morning tea. We were here because we saw an Australian movie made in 2006 called "Valentine's Day" about a football club finally winning a Grand Final.



The Rushworth Post Office

The movie company filmed the footy match in Healsville and used actors not the Rushworth players. They borrowed various things from the club. The only part that was filmed here apparently was in the Court House. I was a bit disappointed.



Rushworth Courthouse where the court case was filmed

We drove about another 7km southward to Whroo which was a fairly big gold mining town in the 1860s. We visited the Whroo Miners Retreat which is the Information Centre where I purchased a DVD about the past Whroo.

On the way back to Echuca we passed a few vineyards, this one is Seppeltsfield.



Seppeltsfield

Back home at 3.00pm.

Easter Saturday 11th April, 107km.

We had arranged by 'phone that we would visit Robert Field who was one of the first people from who Marie she purchased cacti in the 1960s when she first became interested in them. She was excited as we drove about 50km to Tennyson, south of Echuca to see his cactus garden.



Marie and Robert Field in his cacti garden

The cacti is growing through the roof of an old mudbrick building.

was born here. He won many races here and abroad. We saw many cyclists during the few days in this area. He became a MLA for the seat of Corio in 1949.

The Oppy museum is in the Railway Station which I was going to visit but it was closed so I would try tomorrow.



The Shamrock Hotel in Rochester



The Sir Hubert Opperman statue



Marie

Still sunny and warm we went back to the Port area where I left Marie to walk the shops while I wanted to see the Murray River and the big high wharf. I think most people know that the dock was built on high stumps to cater for the big floods that happened occasionally. The whole area is about the historical history of Echuca.

I paid about \$10.00 to walk around the wharf. I was not going on any of the paddle steamer cruises which cost more.



Cacti through the roof



The old wharf

On our way back we had lunch in a little café at Rochester across the street from the lovely old Shamrock Hotel. Rochester is known for the fact that our Australian cyclist named Hubert Opperman OBE, nicknamed Oppy,

There is a lot to see on the wharf which was very interesting. Another of my photographic interests are railway stations. I took many photos of stations but have not put them in this book except this one which was the old Echuca Wharf Station.



The Echuca Wharf Station

On the Murray River were the paddle steamers and other craft, small motor boats and the like travelling back and forth.



River craft

Here is another view of Murray Esplanade.



Murray Esplanade

I met Marie as arranged then drove along Dickson Street to take photos and video of Victoria Park which is the home of Echuca's Football Club and ground.

Easter Sunday 12th April, 113km.

Still sunny as we set off to Bendigo.

But first we drove over into NSW to Moama Markets which was just over the river, the mighty Murray.



Marie inspecting the succulents and cacti



Saw art

We had our morning coffee there.

This stall had an interesting show of art painted on saws.

We left Moama and NSW through Echuca driving on the Northern Highway B75 which we travelled on yesterday and past Rochester arriving at a little town called Huntly. We stopped at a garage sale although it was really a vacant block of land sale market where 90% of the “stuff” was on the ground.

There wasn't much of interest there except on a table was a book. Does the reader remember the “Coles Funny Picture Book”? It is in bad condition, no cover and many pages missing at the back but I bought it for \$5.00.



A garage sale on the ground

We were on the outskirts of Bendigo which we have visited in the past but I don't remember that it was this big.

We booked into another Budget motel, this time The Oval Motel which is across the street from the Queen Elizabeth Oval, home of one of Bendigo's football clubs.



Our tram at the Chinese Joss House end

Being Easter in Bendigo means the Chinese Festival takes place. We walked the streets where there were a lot of people enjoying the hot sunny day.



Goldfields Touring Route sign

Two nights cost us \$186.00. We drove to the city centre which is only 1km away and caught one of the Vintage Talking Tram Tours which was most enjoyable. It travels along the Calder Highway which becomes High Street then into Pall Mall then McCrae Street, Napier Street, Nolan Street and finishes in Lucan Street. It then does the reverse.

We did not walk the 1km to the Joss House so stayed on the tram.



Rosiland Park

We went into part of the Chinese Garden and Rosiland Park and as the reader can see it is colourful and green. In the background one can see the Old Bendigo Post Office which is now the Bendigo Visitor Centre.

Back home I asked where I might be able to get my Nikon digital camera images and video files off it. The young woman owner, Olivier said I could use their laptop to do the job. I had a little trouble doing so and so she helped me which I appreciate very much.

We drove back to the city centre and had a very nice Chinese meal at the Khong Dynasty restaurant.

Back home we saw the big fireworks from our room and also from the balcony above us. It went on for half an

hour or so. They were assembled and lit from the centre of the footy ground.



Fireworks seen from outside our room

Easter Monday 13th April, 8km.

The final big event of the Easter event was to be the Parade along Pall Mall at 10am so we drove down to the city again but many of the streets were blocked off so we returned home and parked Vicky then walked the 1km or so to Pall Mall. There were already hundreds of people waiting behind the barriers not all standing but many sitting on folding chairs.



Children in races before the parade

We got our position on the steps of the War Memorial. I visited the Information centre again this time down in the basement to see the free museum and display of the Post Office before Federation. This included a morse code sender and printer setup.



Jesus on the cross in the parade



The South African war memorial

The parade lasted about an hour with all sorts of floats as well as the Chinese Dragon which was at the end of the parade.

Tuesday 14th April, 168km.



Vicky outside our room

More petrol for Vicky, 41lt at 119c/lt for \$50.00 before we left Bendigo.



Autumn soon at Castlemaine

Still on the midland Highway A300 to Castlemaine where we had morning cuppa at a cute little place called the Tea Rooms.



The Tea Rooms, so feminine



Two dogs in their transport

Castlemaine was another gold town so is very historic. Marie checked a couple of shops out while I walked around. We came across the two dogs in a motorised wheel chair.

This is Faulder Watson Hall which opened in 1893 which is now also the Castlemaine Information Centre.



Dances would have been held here

We arrived in Maldon at 12 noon.



Looking northward through Maldon

From now on the grass was much greener and the highway and roads were not straight with some small hills. From Maldon C283 then C285 to Daylesford which is a town with hot springs so people go there for health reasons.

The country is quite stony and rocky so the farmers have made fences from the rocks and so at the same time cleared the land.



A rock fence



A lovely street scene at Daylesford

We intended to stop the night at Woodend so when we arrived there and visited the Woodend Information Centre the woman said there wasn't much accommodation left in the area, remember it was Easter but try a motel a few KM south. We drove off but missed the turn and ended up on the Calder Highway A300 again but decided to keep going and check out Gisborne, Victoria not New Zealand.



Our last stop before John and Lyn's home

Somewhere about here we stopped for more petrol, 41 lt at 119 c/lt for \$50.00.

We found the Gisborne Motel costing us about \$75.00.

Wednesday 15th April, 73km.

This was we think the quietest accommodation we have ever been in not counting RCI Resorts. It is on the old highway. We drove back into the town to check our directions when I took this photo which shows that it became cold during the night and rained and very windy.



Gisborne, Victoria

After a few KM on the old highway we entered M79 but drove off it to get onto the smaller road through Bulla where we stopped for our morning cuppa at a petrol station.



Melbourne in the distance

We soon were driving past the Tullamarine Airport and took the Western Ring road M80 to arrive at John and Lyn's home in Greensborough at 10.30am.

I used Laena's PC to download my Nikon camera image and video files.

Thursday 16th April.

Back to the cold weather as it was 10c at about 8am.

We needed a bit more instruction of what directions we would need when we depart to the airport on Monday so John came with us and directed us. Then we went to the big Savers store and St. Vincent de Paul's store in Greensborough.

John lit a wood fire in the sunroom. Memories of my school days.



Joshua's new car

Friday 17th April.

John took Marie to a plant nursery where they purchased some plants for his gardens. Tonight John lit a wood fire in the lounge.



At the back of their home



One of their visiting possums

Saturday 18th April.

After breakfast I helped Joshua to see if we could fix a problem with his car's electronic door locking system. We took the inside panels off both front doors. I could only guess that one of the little control boxes was faulty.

After lunch I drove to the football ground near the town centre but nothing on so I went back home.

Lyn was Laena's driving instructor for her first night driving.



Another fireplace in the main lounge



Night driver, Laena

At 8pm Lyn had arranged with her brother Peter in Reading, England to a computer/phone hookup. This is called VOIP. We all talked to Peter, Kathrine and their adopted son of three years old for about 30 minutes.

Sunday 19th April about 25km.

The last time we were here in 2008 there were a lot of bell birds in the bush behind their home but very few now. I intended to buy a Sunday newspaper so walked to hopefully the local IGA but missed a turn so went back home then drove there, Vicky found the IGA no trouble. I cleaned out Vicky ready for our departure tomorrow.

We decided to use another suitcase which Lyn lent us to carry our extra "stuff". We only had one suitcase between us so we could have another one but at a cost.

Lyn cooked and prepared another lovely dinner and with Joshua present opened a bottle of wine and toasted to him his 21st birthday which will be in July.

Happy birthday Joshua!



A lovely dinner

Monday 12th April.

We departed about 9.30am and drove to Greensborough and filled up Vicky's petrol tank costing 28lt at 119c/lt for \$32.80.

At Hertz the man warned us that in future we should fill up petrol in cars closer to the airport otherwise we would be charged more. In the past we filled up near Greensborough without any extra charges but times are getting tougher.

Total km I drove in Vicky was 1465km.

At Virgin Blue check-in our main suitcase weight was 18kg and the extra one 15kg which we had to pay \$20.00.

We had our morning tea/lunch in a café where these three clocks took my eye. The left one shows Kyabram, the centre one Geelong both at 11.53am and the right one of Warrnambool showing 10.53am.

Our flight was on time at 2.00pm.



Three time clocks



I think the Werribee River is below

A few minutes from take-off we saw what I think is the Werribee River and this hilly country is near Melton and Bacchus Marsh where we had driven days earlier on to Ballarat. The photo shows how parched the land is.



Home sweet home

We arrived home in a taxi driven by a very friendly driver.

If required I can send the text only version by E-mail my address is;

jcdalton@paradox.com.au

or I may put it on my Web site at:

www.paradox.com.au/~jcdalton

Thank you May 2009.

John C.E. D'Alton



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