



# Desert Sky News

"It's All About The Experience – Yours and Ours"



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**O**ur Wilson's Promontory trip departure on 4th March was the first of two trips to this area.

The drive through the Grampians to Halls Gap and our overnight stop at the Kookaburra Lodge Motel enabled us to visit two of the lookouts - Reid's and Boroka, each with a great view, and further interest the next day in our drive past Lake Bellfield to Dunkeld, at the base of Mt Abrupt.

The **Thomas Montgomery Pavilion** known locally as The Rotunda, in the Mortlake Botanical Gardens provided a great lunch venue. Built in 1907, this building was dedicated to Thomas Montgomery, a local storekeeper, and man of some influence around the turn of the century. There is a busker festival in town on our next visit, so we may need to change our lunch venue!

We were fascinated by Camperdown's heritage and character. Many of the buildings date back to the mid 1800's. One of the most noticeable attractions is the Clock Tower



which extends 30 metres above the street in the centre of Finlay Avenue. This unique Gothic Style Tower was built in 1896-97 in the memory of district pioneer Thomas

Manifold who was killed in a hunting accident at the age of 30. Designed by local architect Michael McCabe, the plans were approved by Hampden Shire Council and Mr Manifold's executors in 1896. During the construction, the bricks and mortar were raised to work levels through the use of a hod which was raised by a block and tackle using a pony as power.

The total cost of the tower was 930 pounds. The clock mechanism is a fine example of a flat-bed turret clock movement which was made in England at a cost of about 450 pounds. Other examples of fine architecture include the Post Office and Court House.

With an overnight stop in Colac, we were well placed to meet the Queenscliff ferry next morning for a smooth 45 minute crossing of Port Phillip Bay to Sorrento, and our journey up the Mornington Peninsula to the South Gippsland Highway. The highway passes through the towns of Leongatha, Meeniyan and eventually Fish Creek!



**The Promontory Gate Hotel**, was our "base" for 4 nights, during which time we travelled

through Wilson's Promontory National Park as far as Tidal River, enjoying walks to Whisky Bay—(with sightings of the blue wren), Squeaky Beach, and the Loo-Ern



Track and footbridge to Whale Rock. A drive to the lookout on Mt Oberon gave a good view of the Promontory.

The following day we explored the coastal towns of Venus Bay, Inverloch and Cape Patterson before heading inland to the Coal Creek Heritage Village at Korumburra. The Village commemorates an era now past, when black coal was the life blood of Victorian power, and includes more than 60 exhibits on 30 acres of bushland. We were fortunate to have use of a "people mover" to take us over the site. A detour to Buffalo on the wayback to Fish Creek enabled us to

have a chat with local resident Colin, who mused that it was not uncommon some years ago to be asked by passengers alighting from the train, where the ski slopes were. They had obviously caught the wrong train, having confused this Buffalo with Mt Buffalo!



The **Strzelecki Ranges** provided another change of scenery when we visited

Agnes Falls (with some water!), and the Tarra Bulga National Park. The Welshpool road to the Park is very narrow and winding, but there are some wonderful views of tree ferns, giant mountain ash trees and ancient myrtle beeches along the way. We returned along the Grand Ridge Road to Welshpool and Port Albert.

The return trip home was via The Great Ocean Road (overnight stay at Skenes Creek) to Mt Gambier, then via the Coorong to Adelaide.



Above & Below: Whisky Beach—Wilson's Prom





**T**he Cooper, an oasis, is mystical in its atmosphere, moving in its beauty.

What is described by the term is not simply an intermittent stream of marginal dimension, but a natural phenomenon of immense size and extent, one of the miracles of nature, the breathing lungs and beating heart of the Australian outback.

This miracle of the Cooper resembles the miracle of human life, moving in a vast rhythm of denial and fulfilment, of death and rebirth. To understand the Cooper is to understand creative waxing and waning, to understand the cycle of life.

Rising in the Great Dividing Range of eastern Queensland, the Cooper's waters flow for more than eight hundred miles.

Slowly, from a billion rivulets and gullies the waters ease their way westward and southward, giving birth to rivers named the Barcoo and Thomson.

Gently but irresistibly the sweet waters move westward towards the burning sand and rock wasteland of the interior. Their course is marked by interlaced channels, water holes and lagoons, lakes and swamps, and by deep, sandy beds of creeks shadowed and bordered by magnificent red gums and Coolabah trees.

Tragically, Burke and Wills died of starvation in this world of plenty.

## Channel Country Update .....

Water has started trickling into Lake Eyre via the Warburton - Kalaweerina Channel, although it is too early to gauge how much of the floodwaters in the Channel Country will enter the Lake. The combined waters of the Diamantina and the Georgina rivers fill Goyder Lagoon, which drains to Lake Eyre by the Warburton.

During floods, the area to the north of the Lake is a maze of channels and lakes, but the main flow paths are along the Warburton and the Kallakoopah, which branch and then rejoin near the Lake. Another branch, the Kalaweerina, enters the Lake independently.

An update from Julie at The Cooper Creek Homestay in Innamincka: - the causeway over the Cooper is open, although it is expected the water level could rise within the next two weeks. There is abundant birdlife!

We are looking forward to our 9 day trips to Birdsville/Innamincka and the Channel Country, and our 7 day trip along the entire Strzelecki Track with 3 nights in Innamincka, allowing plenty of time to enjoy the Cooper Creek and surrounding areas.

## Something to think about !!.....

In anticipation of more water flowing into Lake Eyre, we have organised a 5 day "**Lake Eyre and The Warburton River**" trip. This is based on the popular 2000 trips, and includes an optional plane flight from Marree over the Lake Eyre area., 2 nights in Mungerannie with cabin/camping option, and a daytrip to Kalamurina and The Warburton River.

The Oodnadatta, William Creek region also received good rains in January/February, with The Painted Desert and roads around Mt Barry being temporarily closed.

We have a "**Painted Desert**" trip departing 28th April to this area, and it includes accommodation in an underground motel in Coober Pedy!, plus we visit The Breakaways, Cadney Park, Woomera and Roxby Downs.

For a shorter trip, the 5 day **Mungo and Hattah- Kulkayne National Parks** trip is most enjoyable. Our 4 nights motel accommodation in Wentworth enables pleasant day trips to the National Parks, as well as a look around Mildura (Australian Rose Garden), and boat cruise through Lock 11 on the River Murray.

**Or.....5 day Echuca/Moama and The Barmah Wetlands** staying 4 nights in Moama and visiting the historic Port Echuca. Nowhere else in the world can you experience such timeless, natural beauty and peace as when you are gliding through the World-Heritage listed Barmah Wetlands aboard the MV Kingfisher.

## CHRISTMAS 2006.....

### EUREKA.....WE .....STRUCK GOLD

This Xmas we went "Wendour...ing" on Desert Sky's Big Bus And had a very special time - All done without a fuss Yes, Xmastime in Ballarat was packed from morn 'til night..... The show, "Blood on the Southern Cross" an absolute delight.

A train trip out of Daylesford, Sovereign Hill, the Tangled Maze.... Robert's tour of Ballarat all worthy of great praise A memorable Church Service, a fun filled Xmas dinner.... Father Xmas and that night's gathering - this trip a xmas winner.

'Twas five days of fun and laughter in a city famed for gold.... And one we will remember 'til we're very, very old. The accolades for Desert Sky make you our Number One Please add our names to next year's list - We'd really love to come!!

© Jill Penberthy 2006

**What's  
News?****Birdsville Hotel still for sale despite offers**

The iconic Birdsville Hotel in Queensland's far south-west has failed to sell, despite attracting worldwide interest.

The hotel was put on the market late last year. Co-owner Jo Fort says offers of up to \$5 million have not been enough to entice them to sell. "It is business as usual and, yes, initially I was a bit disappointed and then I realised that not everyone would have the same vision as me for the outback and sometimes you just have to wait," she said.

"Until that day comes, the hotel will stay on the market, but we'll keep something that we really love until the right person comes along or the right company comes along.

"We're not in a hurry to leave ... we fully realise the capacity of our hotel and its drawing power and the fact that it is an Australian icon. Sometimes business in the outback has a little way of sorting itself out and I think there will be a sale of the Birdsville Hotel in the future, but it may take a bit of time."

**RM WILLIAMS WAY**

A major tourist route into South Australia's world renowned Flinders Ranges has been renamed in honour of celebrated outback identity and businessman RM Williams.

The direct route from Stanley Flat via Spalding, Jamestown and Orroroo, previously known as the B80, was last month renamed RM Williams Way.

RM Williams Way will not only take in RM Williams' birthplace of Jamestown (1908), but also services much of the country where he began his legendary career in leather work.

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**Just for  
interest****Opera at the Woolshed  
Rawnsley Park Station**

**Sunday 22nd April 2007 2pm**

- Bel Canto Opera Company .  
Enjoy stunning opera Arias, Duets & Ensembles at the Woolshed Restaurant set against the background of Rawnsley Bluff in the Flinders Ranges.  
Concert includes popular arias, duets & ensembles from La Boheme, Carmen, Magic Flute, La Traviata, Don Pasquale & more!  
Buffet lunch of Bush Tucker "Continual Grazing" from 12 noon.

**A**rkaroola is South Australia's newest official 'location'. As of 8 February, 2007, Arkaroola has been declared an official geographical place with it's own post-code, 5710. Although this postcode is shared by others (mail is sorted at Port Augusta) our new address is now simply, Arkaroola Village, S.A. 5710. It would have been nice to have announced that Arkaroola is SA's newest town, and a new postcode, but this is the next best thing!

**T**he Chairman of the South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) Board, Mr Bob Foord, has announced the appointment of Andrew McEvoy as the new SATC Chief Executive. Mr McEvoy, who is currently the Director of Industry and Organisational Development at Tourism Australia, will take up the role in June 2007, following the departure of outgoing CE, Mr Bill Spurr.

**T**he iconic Mungerannie Hotel on the Birdsville track has been sold. John and Genevieve Hammond have decided after 11 years to move to the tropics of North Queensland. The new owners are Pam and Phil Gregurke.

**Itinerary for  
2007**

<b>Birdsville/Innaminka (9 days) - \$1875 pp</b>	July 15 August 14
<b>Coonawarra—A Brilliant Blend! (5 days) - \$650 pp</b>	November 3
<b>Clare Valley &amp; Dares Hill Circuit (2 days) - \$295</b>	June 19
<b>Cooper Creek/Innaminka (7 days) - \$1450 pp</b>	July 3
<b>Echuca/Moama &amp; The Barmah Wetlands (5 days) - \$820 pp</b>	May 31
<b>Explore Mungo National Pk (5days) - \$820pp</b>	May 19
<b>Flinders Ranges/Arkaroola (5 days) - \$925 pp Including "Ridgetop Tour"</b>	September 20 October 18
<b>Gawler Ranges (5 days) - \$785 pp</b>	September 4
<b>Kangaroo Island (4 days) - \$825 pp</b>	November 13
<b>Lake Eyre &amp; The Warburton River (5 days) - \$825</b>	April 10
<b>William Creek &amp; The Painted Desert (9 days) - \$1670 pp</b>	April 28
<b>Yorke Peninsula &amp; Innes National Park (4 days) - \$590 pp</b>	November 24

**Personalised 4WD Tours**

**Coongie Lakes & Cooper Creek**  
7 days Tuesday July 31

**Sky Trek & Flinders Ranges**  
5 days Tuesday May 15

Other personalised tours in 4WD vehicle arranged by request

## Our 12th June 2006 Mungo Trip

When I saw the Desert Sky Ad,  
The Mungo National Park trip didn't look too bad.  
It was a place I had wanted to see,  
So I thought that this was just the tour for me.  
Early on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 7:30am at West Beach seemed too soon  
To go and meet a motley crew,  
On a tour that's the sort of thing you do.

Howard and Jenny didn't seem too bad,  
Nor did the passengers that they had.  
It was just a bit of a hunch  
That they seemed to be a friendly bunch.  
The trip started in a subdued way  
But got livelier later in the day.  
The weather helped because it was good  
And people talked and joked just as they should.

Soon the many K's and long day were gone  
Helped on the way by sandwiches, drinks and a scone.  
The dinner at the Services Club was very good  
And friendliness began to bud.  
Our Lake Mungo trip was carried out in a pleasant way,  
On another lovely sunny day.  
The scenery was really excellent  
And we were informed about what the formations meant.

The visit to the China Wall,  
Was for me the best part of all.  
There were birds around you see  
And those creatures really interest me.  
The road back provided a ride that was rough  
And driving for Howard was really tough.  
With skill and concentration he coped  
And we came back as safely as he had hoped.

Once again dinner was a pleasant do  
And as for laughs we had quite a few.  
To beat the smart comments it was a job,  
Especially those coming from ex A.B.C. Bob.  
Our 3<sup>rd</sup> day's outings began in the Perry Hills of Sand,  
With ice and low light they looked rather grand.  
When Howard helped me up the dune,  
We almost both got buried far too soon.

From there we went to Wentworth Jail,  
Interest in that type of place will never fail.  
The Inland Botanic Gardens Chapel, Rose Gardens and other  
flowers,  
Was our lunch stop and interesting outing for a couple of hours.  
A brilliant sort of ruse  
Then took us on a river cruise.  
Of interest there were mirror like reflections for starters  
And birds like Terns, Cormorants, Grebes and Darters.

There were also lots and lots of Gulls  
And river craft with painted hulls.  
We heard about old time boats and river trade,  
While passage through the locks was made.  
On our last sightseeing full day,  
We went down Hattah Kulkyn National Park way.  
A track to an old-timers grave made a pleasant walk,  
As above many birds began to talk.

Waterholes and magnificent River Red Gums were there,  
Birds came down for our lunch to share.  
Apostle birds, Ring-necked Parrots and Choughs were they,  
Butcherbirds, Magpies and Ravens were not far away.  
We headed for home on a cloudy day,  
With morning tea near Lake Victoria and Rufus River on the way.  
Our final lunch complete with lazy wind and cloud on a median park  
Was taken in the town of Remark.

Our group was reduced by two at Loxton  
The rest of us to home by the Sturt Highway would soldier on.  
From Waikerie down few passengers were awake  
Until reaching Blanchetown for our final break.  
We thank the crew for their outing choices,  
With Howard controlled by two female voices.  
We have all had good food and a lot of fun,  
So thankyou Jenny and Howard for a job well done.

© Bill Mountain

### a GEM of a story.....



When visitors first come to Mortlake they are greeted by a sign claiming Mortlake as the Olivine capital of Australia. Olivine is a mineral formed in the area more than a million years ago deep under the earth's crust, and is today used by the local Shire as a road surfacing material. Large pieces of the rock are called bombs and are usually egg shaped with a rough, pitted surface similar to the outer casing of agate. When cut open the sparkling green Olivine crystals are found. Mortlake is known to have the largest deposits of Olivine (pronounced oliv-een) in Australia. Olivine is a gem made up of sparkling green crystals which can be found in the Mount Shadwell Quarry and is used in construction or made into some very attractive jewellery (including olivine "ants"!).

#### From our shop! -

- Copies of our DVD "Celebrating 10 years" are available at \$10 each.
- Desert Sky Tawny Port \$8 bottle
- Set of 6 Desert Sky place-mats \$20
- Quality engraved pens \$5