

"You're the Guy with Parkinson's"

A POETIC JOURNEY
THROUGH NEW SOUTH WALES



BY WILL BOAG

Day 1 - Wentworth Falls to Dubbo

A strange feeling, at home in Australia but not feeling at home. We have been so used to just walking at this time of the year and, in foreign countries. There was a sense of mystery, learning about other cultures, and meeting some of their people. Now we are driving mostly, stopping at chosen places, walking some kilometres and ensuring that we meet a kilometre target each day.

However, we now have a chance to get to know our own country a little more, and the walks along two rivers today allowed us to breathe in a bit of Australia and to build up a familiarity with it. For me, a personal outcome of the virus, has been to force me to explore more of my own country, especially the rivers.

Our first river was the only sign of life in this seemingly deserted tiny village, with the apt name of Little Hartley sitting on the sunset side of the Blue Mountains, apparently content with its quiet anonymity. Another partly disused town called Capertee spoke of park walks but did not deliver, so we motored on.

Then it was the much alive, well kept town of Mudgee, that invited us on another river walk, after a tasty, cultural Aussie pie.

On the way now to Dubbo we became more enlightened re the Murray-Darling basin via the local radio station. We now realise it is extremely complex and informed us of cultures of a different sort.

The length of Australia's second longest river - the Murray, is lined with river red gums, the most common eucalyptus in Australia. What makes the tree interesting is its association with the water where its trunk may be inundated for months. Seeds are then washed to higher ground where they germinate to take root and grow, until the next flood submerges the new tree where the cycle begins once more.

The roots weaken with age and the trees become dangerous to humans and animals alike as their many limbs fall in unpredictable ways. Old rotten limbs and broken branches that we crawled over, provide nesting hollows for galas, sulphur-crested cockatoos, gang-gang cockatoos, cockatiels and various parrots.

While the Aboriginals have their uses for the red gum, the more recently arrived have their uses for the tree itself. Being hard and durable it keeps the trains on track, wharves in the water and buildings on land.

I continued my neuroplastic exercise which encourages the brain to create the possibility of new neural pathways, as we walked these other crooked crazy paths along the Murray.

Red Gum leaves are a vapour for general sickness



Lost Water

Our nature is always benevolent
Providing all we need right here on earth,
Resources rich and plenty - evident
So why at times there seems to be a dearth.
It happens cause we humans are so wasteful
When we've too much we throw excess away,
I wonder why we aren't a touch more grateful
Instead our kind provider we betray.
The Murray - Darling Basin beams a torch
On water - 'pollies' favour big donators,
For smaller farms - then the earth is scorched
Now look for work, no longer irrigators.
The earth provided water to meet all needs,
But couldn't meet the bribes, so lost their seeds.

Day 2 – Dubbo Zoo

I had to zoom my PD Warrior class today which goes from 1030 to 1130 and check-out time is 1000, so I have a problem. We thought we could spend time in Dubbo going to the zoo which we had heard good reports on so why not stay another night. We could then do the zoo in zoom and zoom in the one day!

It was easy to do our more than ten kilometres today as this very natural and accessible zoo is so widely spread and monopolised our attention. Cleverly done, this zoo has a very animal friendly environment, and it was often only at the very last moment that we realised there was a natural barrier between the cougar, lion, and us, their potential dinner.

A cold wind swept through us, as our first animal sighting soon brought us instant warmth. What an absolute delight these ‘popular insurance brokers’ are, and what a cosy chill ran through us when we saw the nominal ‘watch kat’ standing tall on sentry duty as only a Meerkat can. Soon some cougars were jumping between trees, hurdling and jumping on each other – their light entertainment before returning to meal patrol at the food gate.

Rhinos and Hippos reminded us that they are not medicine, and the zoo is very active in supporting conservation efforts in Africa and Indonesia. The nearly extinct Kenyan Mountain Bongos will be saved because of places like this zoo which also gives them the space they need to run and jump and prance once more. These deer-like animals with vertical white stripes quietly at ease looked to us now as friends, and not as a vicious predator

Another endangered resident is the Black-handed Spider Monkey, a visitor from Mexico. Locals join the zoo as well with the threatened Echidna, only one of two species of, wait for it!, monotremes (animals that lay eggs and also suckle their young). The list of dwindling animals goes on and includes the Przewalski horse from the Gobi Desert and the tiny Otter from South Asia.

All of the above are not only surviving, but growing substantially in numbers as some of the above have already had new babies this year, or are pregnant with the full intention of putting their extinction even further at bay.

A great experience for the both of us as we used the sometimes long walks between venues, to fast walk (it is not just for me because Corrie finds she feels much better after this pace of walk). We do however pause and talk to the animals.

A zoo ensures the animals' continued survival



Koala

Sometimes things happen when you least expect
They can be good or bad, it's not your choice,
For me, it comes from changes I correct
Or when I listen to another voice.

'Twas at the zoo in Dubbo towards the end
Just Koalas – all I want to see,
Said Corrie – “there is still some time to spend,
Let's go back and search another tree.”
He'd just come down to grab a bite to eat
A beautiful Koala, seen at last,
And on our own we had the perfect seat
To know they're rarely seen, an extra blast.
Now only two, because they have no food
I hunger less, and now no longer brood.

Day 3 – Dubbo to Lightning Ridge

It was supposed to be a three-rivers walk but ended up two rivers and a late night walk. The first river was the Castlereagh in Gilgandra (the town of 350 windmills and origin of the famous ‘coo-ee’ sound) which is part of the Murray-Darling Basin. As I was perusing the river, an older man with a tired ‘durry’ (smoke) threatening to burn a lip or two, said g’day. The g’day was a giveaway that he would be able to answer my question.

I told him that I heard on the radio that our rivers have flat bottoms while European rivers have v-shaped bottoms and this is not good for water storage, was this correct? “Yeah” he replied, “the water either runs away or soaks into the sand flats”. So yet another water problem we face. “Ave a good one mate”, he said, happy that he could put me right on my bottom issues. Whatever their bottoms, I find the water between sand flats, decorated with gums, a beautiful sight.

While the Murray has dams on it to control the flow, the Castlereagh has no dams and is therefore classed as unregulated. What may be a problem in regulating the river is the method they use to increase the numbers of fish. It is called re-snagging. There was a dearth of woody snags where breeding nests delivered high numbers of fish. At times however these are washed away and need to be replaced.

Local landholders get together with contractors to remove fallen timber and drag it to suitable sites on the river. The problem can be however, that the fallen timber from legal land clearing is often burnt to allow for more farming land, and more ease of farming that land. It is hoped that these fish are seen as part of a healthy river and that farmers would ‘let fallen timber lie’.

We passed through the town of Gulargambone made famous when the local government tried to close down the post office. In response the community formed their own and others followed. The river in Galargambone was a carbon copy and when full and so wide, is a mirage showing much more water than is really there.

By the time we got to Coonamble, the lush fields of wheat and other grain crops had turned into rich grazing pastures where sheep wore the coveted Merino wool and English breeds supplied the mutton. We sadly couldn’t find our river, so we waited until Lightning Ridge to complete our promised minimum walk distance of 10kms. The streets were poorly lit so I had a cognitive exercise to complete as well, as my ‘survival awareness’ increased with every fading step.

Re-snagging - a fishy maternity ward



Solutions hard to find

How often do you see a problem solved
To just then see another problem made,
The question now is which to be resolved
So time to do a necessary trade.
The reasons that solutions often fail
Is 'cause the bigger picture is ignored,
It needs some wisdom for this to prevail
The best solution is the last reward.
A healthy river here - the final goal
The breeding of the fish is the solution.
So logs are dragged to help fulfill this role
And this would be the farmers' contribution,
Solutions to a problem often abound,
Keep thinking, 'til the best one then is found.

Day 4 – Lightning Ridge to Bourke

'Everything's on the table', or that's what some would have us believe. But it was today. Our Lightning Ridge friend and family laid out a morning tea feast on a 'converted door' – 20mm deep, 300mm wide and over a metre long – I want one of those. We were then joined by the whole family (some of whom weren't there) watching from a photo in a converted window frame with their focus on the table.

We chatted about lots of things before leaving with our friend on a tour of his property, and opal mines which were also part of his property once. A guided tour around town was very enlightening ending with a tour of an opal shop with a delightful local. It was back to the farm, some untouched goodbyes, and a late leave. We had time for a one river walk along the unregulated Barwon at Brewarrina.

The Barwon-Darling corridor connects all the rivers, lakes and wetlands in the Northern Basin where it provides habitats in dry periods. Many native fish species are thriving there because of a unique plan involving an extensive weir, flanked by myriads of boulders below the overflow which formed a natural bridge while turning the escaping water into tiny creeks. To make up my minimum 10kms for today I will go for a late night walk around Bourke, who knows what I might see.

Well I didn't see him, but I did walk in the shadows of the Bourke Library where eight of his poems are hidden behind a pseudonym. The real Lawson was deaf and mostly drunk. The Bulletin, seeing his potential sent him to Bourke to get a taste of bush life and to curb his taste for alcohol. So a paint brush became his beer glass as he became drunk with creativity and adventure as he 'swagged' for a while.

Part of his 'swagging' included a two hundred kilometre walk in the middle of summer from Bourke to Hungerford which gave him a new perspective on life. A local poet was heard to say: "If you go through that experience in the middle of summer and in the middle of nowhere, with everything you rely on, on your back, there's an absolute isolation.

"The only way to find meaning in anything, in this 'stupid' endeavour' he said, "is to look for the really central, fundamental bits of humanity that we all share." Lawson's poem - Bourke, talked of this: 'There was nothing beautiful in ninety-one and ninety-two, save grit and generosity of hearts that broke and healed again, the hottest drought that ever blazed could never parch the hearts of men.....

Before our poetic journey continues, I will zoom in on my PD exercise class endeavouring to slow my PD journey down.

“It’s the bitterest land of sweet and sorrow, but if I were free I’d be off tomorrow out at the Back O’ Bourke”



Lawson

His deafness drove him into isolation
Which led him to his poetry and prose,
Amazing was his sudden transformation
His hearing and his prose did juxtapose.
He drifted in and out of homelessness
Attempts at suicide did not succeed,
All was left - a sense of helplessness
No longer did he know when he'd be freed.
Successful though he was, he had his issues
Hard drinking took his money and his wife,
With verbal and some physical abuse
And lastly a sad ending to his life.
Henry Lawson a great genius of the word,
Today his prose and poems, are finally heard.

Day 5 – Bourke to Wilcannia

The noise was deafening. I had wandered down to the Darling River for a morning walk. Momentarily standing to take a photo, I must have invaded their privacy. Hundreds of white cockatoos were screaming about what they scream about, loudly flapping their wings. It was as though the majestic gums had suddenly come alive attempting to persuade others of this miracle.

Many flew across the river still shouting while others stayed behind, a number of them quite small, with one romantic couple necking on a distant branch. I left them by the shallow and muddy Darling, its hostage boat stuck in its mud.

We're officially in the outback, I thought, as we left over three hundred kilometres of road dust in our wake. Thousands of multicoloured and multi-sized goats (there because they may be the only animals that eat dust) ignored us or ran gamely across our path as we motored by. Emus watched us on the wide red dirt roads, white corrugated ones, and those with long narrow ruts.

The dead 'roos' in the meantime had failed to see the signs warning of sharp dips, floodways and narrow cattle grids that kept us very aware of possible danger. Crows and smaller birds often left our path too late, but not so the stunning red tailed black cockatoos gathered on the roadside nibbling at the ground. Having a thing for these black beauties, I stopped dusting and walked out into the flat country's saltbush to watch them finally fly away, their red tails signalling the show was over.

Our cockatoo day brought me back to our time in Gilgandra where Corrie was listening to a program on wise birds. Giselle, the author of a beautiful bird book, put their age at 95 million years, saying they are not just intellectually intelligent but are emotionally intelligent as well.

At home now by a dry river – the Darling – (just a Billabong to attest that there once was a river here), the outback's most famous waterway. But now it is ill, suffering from over-allocation to the farmers, pollution from pesticide runoff, and prolonged drought. All of the above suggest that the only solution is long-term management.

Describing this unfortunate river, Lawson penned the following words: The skies are brass and the plains are bare, death and ruin are everywhere; and all that is left of the last year's flood is a sickly stream on the grey-black mud; the salt springs bubble and the quagmires quiver, and this is the dirge of the Darling river. I reflected on this doom and death on my late moonlight walk in Wilcannia.

The Murray-Darling watershed was muddied before the rains



The Cockatoo

If you're walking near an Aussie country river
Then listen for the squawking cockatoo,
It sounds more like a cockatoo mass slaughter
But no, this cry is easy to construe.
They're friendly and desire to have a cuddle
Get angry too when they don't get their way,
They chat a lot when they get in a huddle
And can be heard up to three miles away.
Dispersing seeds is one of their main tasks
So plants evolve as species now renew,
This crucial work ensures that nature lasts
Just one gift from this able cockatoo.
The cockatoo can often be annoying
Its clever habits we're also enjoying.

Day 6 – Wilcannia to Broken Hill

On the banks of Wilcannia's Darling we didn't even take our shoes off as we trampled through his lounge, sitting or dining room, not too sure. His bed and bath rooms were some distance away. He sat back in his wheel chair seemingly unperturbed by our presence as he ate his damper in his solar home, which did not preclude any of his very special Darling (or its original name – Baaka - which may soon make a very welcome comeback. River view.

He travelled to his take-away home by car (Holden of course). As a paraplegic he got out of bed (back seat of the car), by hauling himself out through the door by pulling a rope attached to a contraption on his roof, while his lounge chair came from the boot. We had a chat about his damper cooking expertise and left him by his fire. On the way back, determined not to invade once more, we took a wide berth, but would you know it, he was in his 'gum tree' bathroom and for a moment we were there with him.

The meddling media has caused a mythical Aboriginal problem in this isolated but friendly outback town. To prove their point the media published photos of Aboriginals standing around outside pubs in the main street to demonstrate the violence and local problems. We took the opportunity to see the other side of the story by walking around town and chatting to those outside the pub, more well behaved and quiet than most Sydney pubs.

From fully dirt to fully bitumen it seemed so slow at 110 but we weren't in any hurry as we pulled up at the only fuel (food and gas) place on our 200km journey. This had replaced our river stop because there weren't any, and it gave us a chance to have an unusual walk across this dry red dirt. We ate at this gas station, served by a young woman from Spain. Corrie was soon back in Europe conversing in Spanish with this adventurous 'extreme sport athlete' who loves to write. She now wants to write a blog as I do – 'a much safer sport'.

We are now in Broken Hill and continue to experience a genuine warmth and friendliness from everyone. With washing being done at our motel, it was a walk through 'a park with a hill' and then around town and back to Donna's motel, and besides the free washing, a decent drop in price because she liked Corrie. We had a huge room – the sort of place I could stay for a week but it will certainly be two nights, while wondering how many nights it will be for our lively wheelchair friend and 'where to' next for him.

Getting a feel of the red dirt



Resilience

Resilience – it invites exploration
A word that sounds so strong and self-assured,
It doesn't like the feeling of frustration
And can't abide the fact of getting bored.
It's waiting for the worst that life can bring
Prepared by misadventures of the past,
Knowing that there's time to cry then sing
And making hay right now 'cause it won't last.
Then when it comes you're ready for the action
You're made for this because you're very tough,
An independent noun you have no faction
You feel at home when life is very rough.
Resilience – it's often hard to find,
A sturdy heart, a strong, creative mind.

Day 7 – Broken Hill

One of the challenges we set ourselves on this journey was to fast walk for ten kilometres daily. I discovered this fast walking exercise after reading about John Pepper with PD who appears now to have no symptoms. I've been doing these walks for some years now and my symptoms appear minimal.

While Corrie does not have PD, she finds it (as I do) difficult now to walk at a slower pace, finding that it energises her, more than tires her. So we fit the walks in where and when we can, while trying to be socially acceptable to others at the same time.

The first walk was the 'while the clothes are washing walk'. I spent this time walking through the local park, up to the railway station (another home for cockatoos) and old buildings (such as banks, pubs, churches and many more). Only a quick glance of course, but their form and pristine condition entertained me on every corner.

Then there was the Silverton drive/walk twenty five kilometres out of town full of sharp 'dips' and 'floodways' and risky sheep. It was here we came across hills for the first time in a long time, nothing spectacular but after days of flatness it seemed unusual. The architectural delights continued in this, the initial hub before Broken Hill, and a pub that draws even the 'pub resistant' inside to its log fire. A few relaxed donkeys joined us on this red earth walk.

Our need for a salad drew us back to 'The Hill', where I went for my 'while Corrie's in Coles' fast walk and explored some suburban streets, seeing these small lanes with a dozen 'tiny house lookalikes'. Such a wonderful way of creating housing for all, and they look great.

The sculptors' walk, a more official route, took us up a red rocky hill to its very top. Up here, sculptors from Bathurst island, Georgia, Mexico, Syria Australia and the Tiwi islands lived in the open for some weeks, creating their own special sculptings, depicting sundials, people, animals and occupants of the sky.

The neighbouring hill was home to a cultural walk which led us beside a range of native plants, bushes, Aboriginal etchings and kangaroos. Once again our way of walking does not often lend itself to collecting vast reams of local knowledge. Maybe we'll do more of this on our return home.

Still, there are kilometres not done. So a good walk to the Barramundi shop, (a 'walking waiting time') for a well cooked fish - mission accomplished.

“They’ve got nothing I want”



Go for a walk

It's time to walk and clear the cobwebs out
It's free for all, also a free-for-all,
Not limited, that's what it's all about
For thin, for fat, on crutches, short or tall.
What e'er your limits you can have a goal
Increase a pace or two or even four,
It's natural for babies, why not the old
Out in the weather, or behind the door.
That pain that tells you just to stay in bed
Can be the one that needs to have a walk,
If not, then read about a walk instead
And then about your reading you can talk.
So never say that you have nil to do,
Go for a walk and exercise your shoe.

Day 8 – Broken Hill to Wentworth

We promised a friend that we would visit the ‘Silly Goat’ for a coffee but did not check opening times. So alas they were closed the day we were leaving, now who’s the Silly Goat? We had already changed our itinerary, which meant we weren’t going to Alice Springs, her home town, that she had briefed us on.

The flat soon turned into hills as we journeyed through the red earth surrounds of Broken Hill, heading for Menindee. This gorgeous and neat small town was a treat. We visited the tourist office to ask about the Menindee Lakes. She told us that we had missed the turn off so we cancelled all our appointments! and gladly back-tracked a few kilometres, after taking a short river walk.

Firstly it was Lake Menindee, a huge ‘dry at the moment natural lake’, but which was due for water replenishment from one of its man-made lake relations. On the other side of the road were three full natural lakes that filled Lake Menindee at times like this. We travelled round to three other smaller lakes which were also vast and full. The geographical size of these lakes is huge.

However not all was happy in this idyllic part of Australia where signs criticising government policy and cotton farmers were aplenty. Earlier, activists were wanting stronger action to avoid the death of this unique river land and wineries in S.A; the loss of sustainable agriculture in Victoria; and a complete rural economy collapse in NSW.

In the last few years the Menindee Lakes have been ‘bone’ dry and drinking water has been trucked in. They are therefore demanding that water trading must end in NSW and there must be an embargo on river diversion, flood plain harvesting and the pumping of rivers by irrigators upstream.

It was then on to the small very ordered town of Pooncarie, yet another town on what they call the ‘Darling River Run’. We pulled in to The Old Wharf Cafe where there was more antagonism especially against the QLD government who were holding the water back for their own use.

We took a long walk along the river, bathing in its beauty, as the many pelicans we saw were also doing.

We were confused by the different water levels in different towns and wondered why this was so. As we settle in to our new home right alongside this famous river we got one answer. The reason it is at full capacity here in Wentworth is from the back up of the water from the Murray (or Tongala) River.

We're just treading water



Are they even there?

We need some passionate people with a voice
Intelligent with no bizarre agenda,
Willing and able to make the better choice
Most likely it would be the female gender.
For too long now it's been the boy, his mates
It's criminal but 'pollies' make the law,
And for their friends, keep opening the gates
Instead of simply showing them the door.
There's water plenty for them all to share
If only they would take what is their due,
But greedy farmers take more than their share
And leave the others with some drops, a few.
So stop donations they will sure corrupt.
And bring on ICAC, they will sure disrupt.

Day 9 – Wentworth – Mungo National Park

An early walk along the Darling River (Barka) to its meeting with the Murray River (Tongala) was a great way to warm up to the world and for my zoom PD exercise hour. Our exercise trainer had a much more energetic trip in his 36 day kayak trip on the Murray, so it was great to share a bit of our journey on zoom. I wonder what he saw though and whether he knew the bad news of the Murray-Darling Basin as well as his own more positive experience.

Today, many of the basin's tributaries have run dry, while the main waterway is contaminated causing the death recently of one million fish, as farms and towns drown in dust as wildlife are starving and dying of thirst. So while we are enjoying the experience of visiting and walking alongside these once great rivers, it is peppered with sadness of what this great system of rivers is coming to.

To get to a heartland of Indigenous culture in Mungo National Park required a choice. It was a difficult one because both routes were unknown dirt roads and we had already been spoilt by over 100kms of good dirt roads.

We chose the shortest route which was a mixture of smooth sections but mostly corrugated. It took a lot of concentration but no mishap. Once there, at the edge of the giant but dry Mungo Lake, we let our shaken car rest. There was a quite high embankment of red and white soils covered with solid eroded sandy outcrops formed by the wind blowing this sediment up against this 'once-was-lake'.

It was here that Aboriginal remains called Mungo man and Mungo woman, from 50,000 years earlier, were found. The feeling here in what seemed the middle of nowhere was quite eerie but giving me a sense of wonder, so quiet, so meditative and on our own, on our very own. As we walked slowly back we could see the trails of vehicle dust witnessing other people who were now coming to make their interpretations of this ancient part of an ancient land.

On the way back we stopped by a walking trail and a more energetic walk through some unusually hilly parts of this rare region. Now we had another choice for our return journey. Our previous journey was not so comfortable so we decided on the alternate track. It was a very unpredictably rough road with holes, bad corrugation and dangerous grids. This meant a much slower trip so a bit of a concern for we didn't want to be driving on such a wild road after dark. We made it to the very welcome bitumen as the sky turned golden.

“What have you done to my country?” - Mungo man and woman



The Dying Darling

The Darling's dying, eventually it will die
The signs have been around for far too long,
One saddened look and you can only cry
Decisions made are far too often wrong.
Dead fish in millions is the shocking sign
And death by stratification in the weir,
Then green algae joined in this very crime
For deoxygenation soon the fear.
The goal must be to restore ecology
Indigenous must play a leading role,
Needs much more than a vacuous apology
And yet another thing from them we stole.
The Darling's in the ICU - it's sad,
The Hospice waits - for when it gets more bad.

Day 10 – Wentworth to Hay

It's official, the world, or at least Australia, is flat. In Australia's outback it is flat but it's also flat everywhere else especially in Hay, where its flatness is famous. On the way here I heard a local on the radio saying it was even flatter than the Nullarbor!

A short stopover in Mildura gave us a great venue (the Murray) for walking, which was around an island it had circumnavigated. As usual we end up finding that the best walks are where the people are not – the corona virus has changed our connection with others, but that's okay because we can listen and look more.

There were however a group of 'all age people' in yellow jackets who are being re-employed to walk round town sterilising all possible covid 19 catchment areas, one of the many new areas of employment created by this virus.

We lunched at a beautiful old homestead (a famous piece of art in its own right) that is part of the Mildura arts centre. As we were exploring this homestead, there was a shocking revelation. The two Chaffey brothers, who were the pride and joy of Mildura, had introduced the first irrigation system into Australia. Without them, we wouldn't have an allocation issue!!

In Balranald we found the Murray on its own and spent time keeping it company now that it had left its Darling. As you probably know the Darling is a Queenslander, and the Murray comes from Cooma way.

Now we're in Hay, arriving a little late for an adventure along the Murrumbidgee, but that will happen. This river was also born in the Snowy Mountains, and never lost its Aboriginal identity, so no need for yet another name change.

The Murrumbidgee is an important part of the Murray-Darling Basin. As with the other rivers they support huge wetlands with their vital breeding grounds for endangered animal species. Governments have programs underway to also maintain the world famous River Red Gums, as well as a wide variety of plants. Large dams built for irrigation purposes have inadvertently destroyed many breeding grounds while also changing the river's natural flow.

The water here is used for many and varied crops, but the highlight from north of Wentworth down to and past Mildura are oranges and grape vines. The production of wine is large here so visitors not being able to sample the wine because of Covid 19 have been left with a bitter taste in their mouths.

Covid has clipped our wings



The Murrumbidgee

Indigenous, the name is Murrumbidgee
They called it this because it is 'big water',
The connotation is that there is plenty
The honest fact though is the water's shorter.
Romantically it comes from Peppercorn Hill
In the Fiery Range of Australia's Snowy Mountains,
It flows through Aboriginal land with its free will
But now its life reduced to filling fountains.
No longer are there large spring snow melt flows
While many dams do suck the river dry,
And native fish are dying out it shows
Along with other life it makes one cry.
'Big water' now no longer lives its name,
'Cause governments are busy playing games.

Day 11 - Hay to Wagga Wagga

Our first hotel (the rest have been motels which I didn't think existed any more) tonight. It was good to stay in one of these majestic icons of the outback and these flat planes seem to be their roots. The motels have very little majesty, in fact they're mostly not pretty at all, but are very practical, especially when you have lots of luggage as we have. We are breaking out, taking unnecessary items, a response to our minimalist ways on a camino.

Back onto our narrow two-lane pre-motorway road, straight enough and long enough and vehicle-free enough to overtake a 'double dog' semi (with its additional trailer) – fifty percent of the time with their help – (a right hand blinker). I also get help from these drivers with directions, one told me they are safer to drive than without one. But when I see the back sway a little, I decide I'd rather be in front. For some time now these trucks have dominated the road scape, with a few local utes and even fewer tourists.

As we pass these extensive flat green fields that venture far off into the distance at times, we see very few buildings or station entrances as properties are still very large. We meet the very shallow Murrumbidgee (a tributary of the Murray) mostly in small towns along the way, but still the appeal of the mighty red gums (with a potential lifespan of 500-1000 years) still remains.

Narrandera provided us with our second river walk today and also our first picnic. While no-one else was in this delightful setting, we were joined by three magpies and one kookaburra while high above were flocks of cockatoos, as the sounds of a few unknowns could be heard. We had our normal town street walk, and as in Hay, these towns appear to be thriving, with no obvious businesses shut down.

Our evening walk along the Murrumbidgee in Wagga was yet another very different one. Its lower capacity reveals more of the beach in Wagga and while the beach is attractive (helped by the Red River Gums), I didn't think it would rate number nine on the Australian top twenty beach list.

It still surprises me that each walk is different: some tracks hug the waterways; others are high above; today's had a middle path; the undergrowth varies as does the wildlife; the waterways meander dramatically with some circling for nearly 360 degrees; and to my great surprise, the gums (mostly red) vary more than any other tree I know, so each river walk has its own distinct personality.

The Red Gum - a bird's favourite home



The Pub

The 'Aussie pub, an icon still today
Verandas up and down the whole way round,
Upstairs is where you sleep, downstairs you play
Also a lesser distance to the ground.
It's here where all sorts gather for a drink
Talk politics, it's called the old pub test,
It's where you chat with all sorts, or just think
Play darts or pool or simply have a rest.
While scarcely none are drinking in the day
At three, the tradies park their working utes,
The dogs do sleep, it's not a time to play
At six arrive the ladies and the suits.
Today there's still a pub in every town,
Where you can have a joke or sorrows drown.

Day 12 – Wagga Wagga to Braidwood

Outside our lodgings is a substantial levy bank that goes for kilometres around Wagga Wagga. This was built to prevent the Murrumbidgee from getting too excited when the heavy rains came to town. There is a hefty steel fence made from large steel girders that are dug deep into the ground, the wall being one metre high with the local water inhabitants drawn on the third of a metre wide wall.

It was a smooth introduction into this busy town and a great escape to walk or cycle next to a very low Murrumbidgee. We chose to walk the few kilometres into town enjoying the activity as though it was a witness to the previous inhabitants' past hardship.

A surprise awaited us on the Yass side of town. The flatness at last came to its exclusive end as real hills came into view. Slightly undulating hills became roller coaster rides in some spots as we returned to our more familiar and interesting landscape.

The hills and corners provided a greater sense of the unknown, as well as a larger driving challenge – there were more things that could affect your attention and potentially cause an error. It was even a challenge guiding our car off the main drag especially if there was a concern of being in the wrong lane or watching for the turn off. Some say that being on long flat roads for too long can lead to accidents.

Our choice of town was Gundagai, just off the beaten track in its quiet short main street where we chose a coffee over a very diminished Murrumbidgee. As we drove into this country icon there were sculptures of a couple of Aboriginals and a canoe to highlight their heroic rescue of many townsfolk during 'The Great Rescue' in the floods of 1852 in Gundagai.

We side-stepped to Canberra where I visited a hypnotherapist relation of a Sydney friend. The catalyst was some months of poor sleep which I found annoying because it also affected my bed friend. The practitioner was excellent – highly capable, friendly, observant, totally client focussed and open for business.

The hills are getting steeper and the corners sharper and with many more cars on the road it is becoming more dangerous. Tonight brings us into the very wide main street of Braidwood – what forethought for the councils to build such wide roads with double the amount of parking. We look forward to exploring this amazing main street of Braidwood to discover what usage has been made of its great array of treasured buildings.

Yetti and Jacky Jacky for the constitution



Saving your enemy

They took to their canoes amidst the floods
Regardless of these huge and dangerous waters,
To rescue those, some treated them as duds
Whose friends were often victims of their slaughters.
Wiradjuri they were, these three fine heroes
Was Yarri, Jacky Jacky and Tom Davis,
They rescued sixty nine on top of 'fibros'
And never did you hear from them 'please save us'.
But Yarri and his mates were never rescued
No heroes came from colonising whites,
Instead them and their mates were badly screwed
Still subjugated with no human rights.
But now today they've got some restitution,
Let's hope they'll soon be in the constitution.

Day 13 – Braidwood to Mollymook

A morning walk took me down to a small creek where platypus are sometimes seen but not this time, and because private properties own the creek frontage, I walked the streets. A few oldies were performing unexplained exercises as the varied performances gave only a distant clue of its origin.

Our friendly host told us that Braidwood was struggling until a recent gold discovery. Now this place of beautiful buildings admiring each other across the widest street I have ever seen, appears to be thriving, though sometimes Saturdays can give an inflated view with many coming from outside just for the weekend. Corrie accompanied me on this busy morning as these old buildings performed much better than the old outside gym members.

We decided to add our support to some of the towns devastated by the recent bushfires, so we continued on to Mogo, a town often seen in the press. It appears it was quite a tourist town before and walking along its streets gave an impression of – ‘what fire!’. But talking to a young emotional waitress I heard that the external damage has been mostly fixed but the internal wounds are still there. A small creek flowed ignominiously to the rear.

A much bigger stretch of water at Depot Beach was showing off its assets in the form of exquisitely formed cliff faces that Corrie and I had camped near many years ago. I wonder why it is not more of an attraction but it could be the kilometre long stretch around a very rocky and narrow reef. This fascinating rock formation with its ‘reef balcony’ became part of our daily fast walk challenge thanks to coinciding with a very timely low tide.

We returned through ten kilometres of the stunning spotted gums with their clusters of white flowers and barrel shaped gum nuts looking more magnificent as they contrasted with their kin, blackened by the recent fires. Around the gums’ feet were masses of Burrawang palms that were quickly greening out the blackened undergrowth. A superb drive, pity we had no time to walk it.

Another walk near the beach of Mollymook brought a refreshing end to a varied day, with a meal at the local golf club, bringing us back to modern day reality. Entering the club many regretful faces were sympathising with this older unbooked couple. It was reservations only, so ‘eyes-raised staff’ referred us to two huge couches (one per couch), to await a cancellation or a new table.

Coastal Art and Beauty



A place of lasting memories

The first time we'd been back in twenty years
The first time we had pitched a tent together,
The first time in our tent, wombat appears
The first time we had really nasty weather.
The rock pools dotted along a stoney reef
The curving cliffs they waved to us I'm sure,
There was no chance for time to be the thief
I could have stayed all day, I wanted more.
Reminding me of times of pure romance
When matters not if you are rich or poor,
And to the end of love we could have danced
On this our wet and rocky dancing floor.
We hugged each other close, no need to talk,
And set off for, another, timeless walk.

Day 14 – Mollymook to Sydney

I missed the sunrise because the clouds wanted exclusive viewing rights, but the rain was finished so no need to get my poncho out for its first run. Another long reef walk round a cliff to a more private beach. After breakfast we drove to my new beach and continued the beach walk and another reef. A couple of swimmers, half a dozen beach sitters, a jogger and a few dogs including Koda, a young white Alsatian and his adoring mum.

The beach looked tiny until we actually walked onto its soft white shores, and it was one of those 'kilometres of sand beaches', so another vast rock pool platform and a crumbling rock cliff face were our highlights.

The next beach was Kiama which has been greatly transformed in the last ten years. A lot of new shops, houses and units, and a fascinating 'beside and below the road' exquisite row of old shops with a more contemporary atmosphere entertained Corrie for a while. It was then another fast walk through a delightful park to yet another reef. I'm not sure whether our luck was in with the tide out, or if it was like this with the tide in.

Up until 1810 the whole coastal hills were covered in rainforest and cedar brush. At this time ex-convicts, convicts and runaways (cedar-getters) with government approved licenses mindlessly knocked them down. This land was previously used for over 17,000 years by the local indigenous communities (a prime example showing how negligent we are with this treasured land). Remnants of what once was, can only be seen behind closed doors in Minnamurra.

The Kiama Blowhole escaped a similar fate primarily because it can't be cut down and sold. Instead the world's largest blowhole is a temporary fun place for over a million tourists thus being self sufficient in its own right. Early explorers were astonished by the deafening noise so Kiama is aptly named, meaning - "where the sea makes a noise". Water fills an underground chamber at the end of the tunnel building pressure, and when the waves subside, the pressure inside the chamber pushes the water up through the blowhole. Don't be in a rush though as you may wait a long time before it blows.

Charred trees stood tall beside us as we 'roadworked' our way along the Princes Highway. We are back in Sydney for Corrie's urgent dental appointment, but will leave on Tuesday to traverse the north coast before coming back on the last day of June, visiting parts of the state we missed on our earlier journey.

Footsteps



The Blowhole

The peaceful sea, it's what we love so much
It's stretching out across to the horizon,
Awareness lacking, we'll be out of touch
It's something that we need to keep our eye on.
But tiny noises speak when we are still
The rocky pools do move when you don't watch,
The lapping of the sea with tiny krill
And crashing of the waves goes up a notch.
'Tis then, the blowhole blows the water high
It's where the sea does make a mammoth noise,
A sound that pierces eardrums 'til they cry
The peace that was once there, it soon destroys.
The planet's largest blowhole once erupted,
The peaceful sea, once more it is disrupted.

Day 15 - Sydney

I walked a lot today because we weren't driving, it was such a beautiful day, and I had lots of energy, so I was able to double my daily target. It was a great start, for our next door neighbour friend was available, so we set off on an early seven kilometre walk around Balmain. He was great company and we had lots to talk about.

Later I walked in another direction to keep the beach theme and took photographs of what I call major Balmain beaches, a little like the Wagga beach which can only be experienced when the river is low, which is most of the time. In Balmain's case, it is when the tide is out.

It was lovely to catch up with some neighbours and other friends and spend time outside of a motel, but already looking forward to taking off again tomorrow after Corrie's tooth repairs and a car's bush repairs where a few nuts and bolts may need to be tightened.

On our repair day I browsed a book of Sydney walks. So I will take this time to briefly describe some of them. Manly to North Heads is a 10km circuit along rugged cliffs that peak in at little known sandy beaches. Then there is the more well known 12km return walk along dramatic cliffs from Bondi to Coogee. Taronga Zoo to Balmoral takes you for a 13km return walk through bushland, and a tiny beach with spectacular harbour views and a place of exotic animals.

A longer 20km walk takes you from Barrenjoey Lighthouse to Avalon, along a convict built track over dramatic headlands. A 12km circuit takes you through a section of the Great North Walk in the Lane Cove National Park. The towering Sydney red gums here are reminiscent of our walks along Australian rivers recently. A 7.5km walk rounds off inner northern Sydney walks through heath and woodlands.

Five delightful bays are found in the 11km Cowan walk further north, as well as the Bairn track to the Basin through secluded beaches over 11km. A little further north is a walk through eucalyptus forests on the 17km Bouddi coastal walk, and the 12km circuit of the Bidjigal reserve north west of Sydney.

In the south are two dramatic coastal walks. The first is from Cape Solander to Cronulla and then from Wattamolla to Bundeena, both just over 20km. A rugged challenging walk takes you 11km from Waterfall to Heathcote.

The pick of the Blue Mountains is a 9km walk from Glenbrook to Red Hands Cave; a 16km trek which is the Prince Henry cliff walk and a 13km meander to the Nepean gorge.

Dog Beach



Balmain beaches

A little beach with rocks along one end
At Callum Park where dogs go for a wash,
The larger one at Elkington is trend
Where doctors take their dogs, it's very posh.
There's Birchgrove narrow and triangular
And dogs again, an ordinary bunch,
A tiny one that's not that very far
Where one can sit and own the sand for lunch.
Then Thames is next, one dog will fill that space
It's hard to see, you may not know it's there,
And Colgate - large, to get there it's a race
With kayaks, boats and jetties, yours to share.
The beaches of Balmain, not very big,
But there is space for all, if this you dig.

Day 16 – Sydney to Bulahdelah

We took Corrie's toothache as an opportunity to also bring the brand new red rally car into the pits. The pits however are in Mortdale, so it's like another rally in itself. A clean bill of health on the inside but extremely dirty on the outside – a sign maybe we could take on board to enhance our performance as well. It had to wait in line for a while so a walk round this industrial area was different to what I'm used to, but a walk's a walk.

On return I was just in time to get on Zoom for my exercise class, but it wouldn't work. Here we are, driving thousands of kilometres into the depths of the state with no internet problems, then arriving in a big city and can't connect.

My dentist, who was wondering what to do with Corrie, rang me to say my bridge (a tooth one) had arrived, did I have time to come in. This was a great excuse to not be angry with the computer, so a short walk to join Corrie at the dentist, then on the road again.

Close to Gosford and a warning signal advised us of tyre air pressure problems. We pulled in to an 'air station' and rang our 'pits man' who realised that because of my urgency to have our rally car tuned, he forgot to return the inflated tyres back to normal. Fifteen minutes more of electronic service advice and letting excess air out (of us and the tyres) had us on the road again to see family on Brisbane Waters.

The dark saw us into our new home for the night. Bulahdelah is the western access to the Myall Lakes National Park - the largest natural freshwater lake system on the NSW coast. The diverse ecosystems include extensive headlands, wetlands, coastal dunes, rainforest and coastal lagoons, complete with rich plant communities and interesting wildlife.

A magnificent site is the four hundred year old Grandis Flooded Gum - the tallest tree in NSW standing at a height of seventy six metres and twelve metres in diameter. There is a taller tree in the forest but it is not accessible - doesn't sound fair.

Our first complete motel with food, fuel and frosty drinks. And outside we have a mountain? – excited to test our climbing skills tomorrow morning. But there are questions: My glutes aren't happy so maybe a heavy drug tomorrow; my low BP wants me to faint if too exhausted; and my irregular heart beats sometimes call for the famous pill in the pocket. Apart from that, I am confident, and it sounds a lot more dramatic than it really is, which will hopefully raise our blog ratings.

Balance is everything



The Worimi

The Worimi, a mild and harmless race,
They took in convicts who escaped the crown,
That shot them as they would a dog - disgrace
While others, they would mock or simply drown.
Before these murdering swine had used their boot
These hunter-gatherers had stroked the hand,
Daisy Yam, Gooseberries and Fern Root
Were delicacies, from this once promised land.
Canoes were made from trees called stringy bark
With paddles made from seasoned strong hardwood,
And spears of Lily, Myrtle and ironbark
All there for fish alone they meekly stood.
The convicts captured in amongst the trees,
Will ne'er forget this tribe, so keen to please.

Day 17 – Bulahdelah to Port Macquarie

What? An old bloke like you going to climb Mount Alum? And, I said, 'my old wife is joining me too'. Nah, it wasn't really like that but there was an intimation that we would both be found dead on the track the next day. The two teenagers at our lodgings looked around frantically for paper and pen (as though I might drop dead before I even started). They wanted to be part of this trek no matter how it turned out.

So they drew a rough map: right, then left behind the school (probably the one they had left recently), then right again where you see dug up dirt, and there is the last mountain you will ever climb. Their mum, who owned our room, started all this, when I asked if there was anything exciting to do in Bulahdelah that was out of the ordinary. She also cooked us a meal, unusual for a motel, and gave us a bottle of wine and home made biscuits, especially unusual. It was more difficult to explain my unusualness however, when she enquired why, in the moonless night, would I be going down the highway for a walk.

In the morning I bought croissants from the bakerie, asking the server what the word 'Alum' meant – she felt embarrassed that she did not know so I told her I would find out. But I would first visit this much talked about sacred mountain. It was quite flat as we entered this vast sacred site where two carvings on two huge trees served as an enticing entrance. It soon became steep and Corrie struggled with her breathing, so we slowed down. She rested a little and eventually made it the whole way. Meantime my fears from the night before had vanished. I was 'on' with my medication, hydrated and feeling energised.

Obviously there had been a fire here, but the recovery had been remarkable. The ground cover of ferns hid the blackened earth with Australian Grass Trees and palms scattered between huge boulders that had slid from the top, some balancing improbably on each other. Narrow cliff pathways and rock covered paths led us to the top. We find it unusual that no matter how difficult the walk, when you are excited, or you have distractions, it's not so difficult.

As we skipped through this beautiful piece of nature, the sunlight was dancing on the trees with images constantly changing. It was a delightful adventure and we would have liked to share it with our two young map drawers. But the bakerie's croissants drew us back, and now the young server will no longer be embarrassed, as she now knows what Alum means. So the word Alum, on its own, means phosphate and is good for gardening. It also means 'purification of water'.

Anytime is a good time for a walk



Change

It's happening everywhere as we progress
As freeways simply bypass country towns,
For businesses we see a marked regress
They need to change to lift the locals' frowns.
A new identity is what they need
Attracting those who have a quid to spend,
Ensuring sales are mostly guaranteed
They need to now create another trend.
So what to do when life bypasses us
As progress takes a swipe at our careers,
We seek a new identity, no fuss
Removing those unnecessary fears.
And just as Bulahdelah embraces new,
Just have a go, cause you can do it too.

Day 18 – Port Macquarie to Bellingen

A dinner with old friends whom we had not seen for a while was very joyful, as we swapped stories and joked and laughed like a group of naughty teenagers. They also shared bits of knowledge about Port Macquarie, one that caught their eye was a kilometre of painted rocks around the rocky coastline. As I was on my morning 'beach and rock platform' walk, I read many of the rocks. Generally they were about happy families, death of friends, cartoon characters, and bits of philosophy.

So yet another beautiful beach drifting on to a brief reef platform jutting into the sea, with rocky outcrops causing waves to part company. As I climbed a higher platform, a narrow u-shaped beach hid behind a rock wall. Further round, another bigger delightful beach. A long return walk and Corrie and I found another hideaway. One kilometre from town this busy cafe hidden between residences was our breakfast venue. A walk around town and we were on our way.

The direction was Crescent Head. We travelled along the canal-like Belmore River with a narrow grass area between it and the road. Some places on the narrow road (usually small farms on these extensive flood plains) had taken over the grassy area, mown and landscaped it – delightful, and now it's as good as theirs. We found a rare 'public' grass strip at the tiny town of Gladstone with a few stunning buildings – a special place.

Moving on to the desolate town of Jerseyville – no shops and no-one – we were entertained by pelicans who chatted quietly on a beached tree on the much bigger Macleay River, with others on the smaller Belmore tributary. This was a special discovery for us, as the only company we had was scattered rainfall, and this flood prone area had thin layers of water lying all over which I imagine was the result of a built up high water table.

It was then on to the pretty and larger town of South West Rocks. A high peninsula with silhouetted trees peering out over yet another reef surrounded headland. As I started toward the breaking waves, I noticed the colour of the rocks were quite golden (at the previous beaches they were mostly a darker charcoal colour) with a two metre wide sandy inlet completing the picture.

We had come to the end of a most precious day, as cockatoos chatted noisily, a flock of another white bird with black beaks flew overhead, as the pelicans sat quietly in conversation.

A symbol of life



Along the Belmore

There's a little stretch of gold along the Belmore
That's worthy of a poem to sell its wares,
This quiet river reflects its peaceful shore
A place to meditate or say your prayers.
'Twas Gladstone first that caught our curious eye
Its stunning buildings from another time,
Then Jerseyville, no shops, no passers by
Just pelicans - their home, it's so sublime.
I've talked of corners and what's round the bend
Not much at all, that's where its beauty lay,
This past romance you need to take your friend
Before discovery does come one day.
Its beauty is - there's not a lot to see,
I hope this vision lasts, that is my plea.

Day 19 – Bellingen

“Bellingen is all about restaurants, there’s not much else here, and they’re very expensive”. Not really what we wanted to hear from our tourist information person. “But outside there are lovely walks”, she said, as though just realising she was being recorded by the government. “There is a long pier at Urunga where you can walk out to sea and see every kind of ocean folk”. If the cameras were rolling I would prefer to stick with the Bellingen beauties.

So we decided to help her by taking on her role. We’ve heard of the ‘promised land’ “are there any walks here that we could do – trees, rivers, landforms”? We got some mixed responses – “the PL is closed for repairs to a bridge but parts are open”. Feeling the camera is happy with the Bellingen information office we asked about Urunga. She knew about that and was very excited about looking at fish through glass. I looked anxiously at the camera again and thought it would be okay to discuss Dorrigo – “lovely walks in the national park”.

We had a bit to think about as we sought lunch. After hearing about local prices, we bought lunch at “Cafe de IGA”. But just before our special lunch, I was waiting at the sign that said ‘stand behind the line until you have a space’. When the fifth person disobeyed this and went to move into position, I assertively pointed to the sign. After a confused discussion with this angry man, an IGA man told me the sign was referring to the checkout!

As I choked on my pie, we headed off to the ‘promised land’, a glorious part of the world. Stunning steep green hills rolled towards a distant mountain range as the ‘Never Never’ Creek wove its way through these manicured fields. After a few kilometres we shed our car and walked through beautiful rainforests, falling over rocks to peer round corners for a bit of magic water displays. We walked around, and to and from town, as well as a ‘rolling hill walk’ around the sixteen acres our motel is located on.

We swapped stories with a few people today, a bit more social than usual, but mostly brief encounters. Now it’s dinner time and despite the information officer’s advice, we found many restaurants and cafes are not yet open. It was exercise time today, as I zoomed in to PD exercises in Sydney. The trainers often concentrate on our weak points, such as, ‘extend your fingers more, lift your left leg higher’, and today my wife reminded me to ‘sit up straight’ to limit the effects of both PD and Osteoporosis - she is my home trainer.

The Promised Land



The Promised Land

The Promised Land is closed, the word is out
The bridge, we're told, is under restoration,
But other parts are open for devout
And those that also yearn for recreation.
Music floats and wafts throughout the valley
Inviting feelings of creative thought,
We need our promised land, no time to dally
'Cause wasted time, we've already bought.
So what's our promised land and where to find?
Is it when we die and worries cease,
Or are we there? but to it we are blind
Or maybe meditation finds us peace.
So if our promised land is sometimes closed,
The bridge may have collapsed, because we dozed.

Day 20 – Bellingen

My morning pre-breakfast walk was around the quite substantial 16 acre property owned by the motel (we learnt the boundaries the hard way by trespassing on a neighbour's land). I've found that to complete my more than 10km daily walk, having a couple of kilometres under my feet takes the edge off the target.

We're following the 'Waterfall Way' today which will take us to the huge waterfall at Ebor. A large rainforest, which we will explore on our return, shrouded an array of anxiety-provoking 's' bends. These twists and turns nestled into the daunting cliff face, leaving a high cliff wall on one side and a deep cliff fall on the other. This nine kilometre long drive is scarily called 'a crash zone' (not sure whether this referred to its potential or its actuality).

Up into the pretty town of Dorrigo where many shops were closed (these days it is difficult to know the reason). As is common in country towns there are many coffee houses, and I say this because some of them look like former homes. On the weekends they look like bustling affairs but it can be deceiving.

We continued on to our huge waterfall, which was falling strongly because of large amounts of nocturnal rain. It was a stark contrast to see a waterfall surrounded by fire ravaged trees, the other contrast being the green growth on many of them. A few people today, so much greeting and therefore a larger focus on distancing.

It was soon back to Dorrigo National Park at the top of the 's' bends. A beautiful 6km walk took us through tall stands of gracious gums, and spectacular strangler figs with numerous ferns of all types. On our way to the forest falls there was more interaction on a narrow track. Corrie and I decided to stop with our heads facing outwards as we passed others. A lot of 'hello's', 'thank you's', and 'how are you's' competed with the numerous small talk of whip birds, water fowl, butcher birds and others, often echoed by cheeky lyrebirds.

A delightful afternoon in one of nature's special places. Back down this 'many cornered road' my focus was mostly on this steep downhill crash zone. The other focus was on one of those constant interchanges we have with each other and that often used phrase 'how are you'? It's a caring phrase but often it has little to do with the other's health and more just a common form of politeness.

Tonight we will dine at 'Corrie's pub' in the main street of Bellingen. Well, it was her dad's, but she lived there.

Our home



The Federal

The Federal was a pub in Bellingen
Its owner passed away some time ago,
In nineteen forty nine it all began
A little girl, no memory to show.
If she had, she'd see her mum and dad
Behind the bar just pouring beers and talking,
To local folk, some happy, some were sad
The little girl picked up her cat, went walking.
She hugged the cat even closer still
As men would stagger out not looking good,
The beer no more providing any thrill
She saw all this, alone, as no girl should.
A shame that life would have to be this way
A little kid no longer, she's okay.

Day 21 – Bellingen to Yamba

A final walk along the Bellinger River was a lovely way to say farewell to a lot of Corrie's distant childhood memories of her dad's majestic hotel in the town's main street. We leave the high steep slopes of the rolling green hills joining the rainforest mountains of Dorrigo to the lush valley below. Dorrigo is situated on the Dorrigo Plateau looking out on the impressive views over the Bellinger River. The trees of the town are glorified as its streets are named after its many stunning timbers: Cypress, Mahogany, Ash, Tallowood, Rosewood, Hickory, Myrtle and Kurrajong.

Urunga is our next stop where the three kilometre boardwalk sweeps out over the tidal Urunga lagoon then on to the beach. It was however, Covid unfriendly, as we leant over the side to gain our social distancing on a metre wide walking track. But when we saw hordes coming the other way we fled. Maybe it was because it was Sunday but what an opportunity to extend it a little and make it 'Covid one-way'. If so, what a gorgeous walk it would have been over a wide lagoon heading out to sea.

Woolgoolga was next and what a change this town has seen over time. Well known for its large Sikh population (with their impressive temple) who monopolised the banana market until a glut saw them just as successful in the ever growing blueberry market. A couple of 'loose rock reefs' add to its beach attractiveness as a young family swam in the reef's protection.

Grafton probably deserved more of our attention but smaller places were on our agenda as we followed one of this town's main assets, the Clarence River. While controversial sugar production stretches along its breadth, there were little pieces of gold. One of these was the enchanting 'unheard of village' of Ulmarra which has time standing still with its special car ferry and old bookshops.

Many other uncrowded special places tickle the edges of the Clarence, a bit like our experience of delightful unseen Gladstone on the Macleay River, the cultural heart of the Macleay valley coast. The Macleay, with its 26 tributaries runs over rugged landscapes and gorges creating spectacular waterfalls as though to celebrate its status as the world's second fastest river.

My poem reflects the rare beauty of a simply stunning waterway as it drifts with calm purpose through an unspoilt landscape. Let us hope that at least such a bit of paradise remains this way.

Destruction can come from calmness



The Clarence

The River Clarence, so beautiful and calm
It meets the pristine Wooli, how divine,
Idyllic is Ulmarra's riverside charm
Its ancient port is stepping back in time.
The planet's oldest flora, just like gold
With prehistoric trees on walking tracks,
The east coast's longest river so I'm told
It ends in Yamba town where nothing lacks.
A drive along the Clarence speaks to me
A place to wander with your bestest friend,
A place that time forgot - tranquility
A place to be at peace with your life's end.
A little bit of heaven we have tasted,
A moment on the Clarence never wasted.

Day 22 – Yamba to Ballina

I am going for pre-breakfast walks without 'pre-walking Parkinson's medication' now, so am walking closer to fifteen kilometres daily. It's a little experiment to see how I am travelling free of medications and I was surprised by my good mobility. It was great finding our way up the rugged reef to view a large natural pool edged with that shiny green that only moss can do. A walk along one beach over that steep Yamba hill to a pretty cove was invigorating, where the tide prevented us from walking out to sea to a rocky outpost.

Feeling a little too relaxed I took too much time slowing down to the 80 speed limit which this nice man had celebrated with his blue light. After a brief chat he said there will be a request for funds in our Balmain letter box on our return – ouch!

Back along the bountiful Clarence River was a delightful alternative river drive to the 'trucking highway'. A sign to Brushwood and Cowper could not be ignored. Brushwood had a hotel and the longest no thoroughfare road I have ever seen – I think a 'tired of people having a peek person' had erected this uninviting notice.

Another resident had planted thorny bushes on this mown river bank, that meant cars could not be parked and food could not be eaten in this idyllic spot. They couldn't take my phone though so, as unobtrusively as possible I took some gems. On the way out, another gem was the wonderfully ancient Cowper General Store, closed forever due to no customers.

Soon it was Maclean in the heart of sugar country which may have been the main reason for the bustle in this compact town built round a delightful s-bend. A middle aged aboriginal greeted me just as I was coming out of this delightful 's' before he ventured down into a small group of fellow countrymen in their secret place in the mangroves. In return, I asked how his day was going – his answer: "beautiful, just beautiful mate".

These small towns are on flood plains and like Wagga, have a substantial grass wall on their river side to prevent probable flooding of their towns, while simultaneously providing an attractive sort of natural looking border. It would be difficult for some to delineate these walls from a natural ridge. Also they face the challenge of less visitors, but there is then the delight of less traffic as the new dual highway opens in the near future. So as you can clearly see, 'less is not necessarily less, especially when it leads to more'.

Iconic



Just beautiful

“Beautiful, just beautiful me mate”
Maybe it was the Cowper General Store,
And was it closed or opening very late?
I waited, it’s a perfect place to draw.
A pretty cove then, just around the corner
Along the reef where things are blown apart,
Is this the place perhaps a little warmer,
A pretty cove where you will find his heart?
But then a rocky outpost holds the way
Then Brushwood with its tiny railway station,
That fills the train with wheat near every day
Maclean with sugar satisfies the nation.
“Beautiful, just beautiful me mate”,
That’s what it was, God only could create.

Day 23 – Ballina

A driving-free day today which is a regular weekly event. Since Tuesday is my 'zoom exercise day' starting at 10.30, we need to stay an extra night in the same place, because lodging departure time is 10.00. I also 'zoom' on Friday but it finishes at 10.30, and so far our hosts have given us that extra half hour. This means we can walk more on Tuesday, so I was able to move into the 'twenty kilometre zone' and I'm feeling it a little more. Also, with more kilometres, it moves into my 'off' time, meaning the medication is losing its effect as I walk. However it is interesting to observe how I can cope during that time – quite a notable difference.

As you can see we like to walk, and this is helped by the fact that lots of shops are closed – most because of the virus, and therefore the streets are nearly people free. The walkways are open, very wide and extending for many kilometres around most of the town uninterrupted by private property. Bikeways are excellent, as are the riders, who unlike anywhere we've been, ring their bell on approach.

So today we were just short of circumnavigating Ballina, mostly along the Richmond river with 'pelican islands' speckled along this very wide body of water. Pelicans compete with dogs to become man's best friend as they (the men) stood on one of the many and varied tiny to small beaches cleaning fish (pelicans' best friend).

While the pelicans thrive, the native Richmond River Cod became extinct in the mid 20th century. This was due to habitat degradation and gross overfishing, a sad indictment of our continued environmental negligence. I am unaware of present day conservation efforts but hope that the endangered Perch are front of mind.

Towards the end of the day (and that is the real end) - when the sun is heading west, we walked out on the seawall to watch dozens of dolphins. At first their smooth grey oily bodies slid through the wavy water, with a few catching a wave, then just two or three would shoot out into the air to the chorus of 'wow's' and 'woo's' from the dozen people who made the trek.

There seemed to be one very large school of these beautiful mammals who appeared to be just simply enjoying, what I might call, their passion. Well known to have a high intellect along with a good level of emotional intelligence, I will make a loose suggestion. Might they be an example of a mammal, naturally doing, what only some human beings are 'trying' to achieve through conscious action.

Symbols of Sacrifice



Walk for Life

I like to walk, it's what I do all day
My go-to exercise, it is the best,
I rarely stroll, they say it doesn't pay
So brisk or fast and then it is a test.
For Parkinson's, it's been a boon for me
Instead of shuffling, arms not moving much,
A longer stride, arms are much more free
You're just an older guy without a crutch.
I've read it stops your neurons fading fast
And stops you getting terrible back pain,
Your muscle memory, it does seem to last
There's nil to lose, but there is much to gain.
And unlike other sport there is much more,
A new experience - outside the door.

Day 24 – Ballina to Murwillumbah

We're on our way to the third border that won't let us in, so fortunately for us we don't need to get in, there's plenty for us to see in NSW. We took as many backroads as we could to Byron Bay for glimpses of beaches and headlands.

Byron was bigger than we imagined. The downside, especially now, is the large amount of people that you have to avoid – the upside is the greater array of food and coffee outlets.

I was also amazed at the multitude of parking meters, not just on the beach but up to a kilometre away. The downside here, that I see, is the concern of having to remember to get back on time, or it may stop you extending your time when you find other things to do – the upside is locals have more access to parking in their own town and this extra income would limit future rates increases.

Oh....and the Byron toilets... a voice tells you how to open the door, how to close it, and then it gives you a ten minute time limit, inferring that you should put your book away. If you don't move, then it assumes the toilet is vacant and the door opens - not a good look.

We spent our time walking south along the great expanse of grassy areas where there were few people. We continued in a circle around Byron, grabbed a coffee, then back to our car which was in 'no meter territory', therefore we could walk and enjoy it as well.

In contrast, the quiet town of Mullumbimby was next, and the first thing that we saw as we approached, was a mountain range with a standout mountain that had me reaching for my camera. What a spectacle is Mount Chincogan as it looks down not just on this town but many others that also stand in its vast shadow. It was back to a one (primarily) street town situated on the muddy (today) narrow hidden Brunswick River (which starts here by the way), very accessible to the public so a great place for lunch and a long walk.

We nearly touched the Queensland border as we hugged the edges of the very congested and built up town of Tweed Heads. We stayed on the edges and moved on to Murwillumbah, our home for tonight. The Tweed River here is mostly privately owned (ie. houses that front the river) so we made the most of the small amount of public access to stretch our busy legs once more.

Alternate exercise and entertainment can be had by taking a 20km paddle. Many bird species can be seen as well as Mt Chincogan and the Nightcap National Park Range.

Location is important



Light needs Dark

Mount Chincogan does cast its shadow dark
On Mullumbimby where it's usually light,
And there you'll find a fascinating park
Was Nightcap, where there was a 10 year fight.
Preventing logging was their early goal
And it was called the three year rainforest war,
The loggers tried to kill the forest's soul
While activists did risk their lives once more.
The Tweed volcano known as Mt Warning
Erupted here 23 million years ago,
Resulting in the whole of land transforming
As the burning ashes slowly flow.
'Twas then this temperate rainforest had formed,
And the rain forest sub-tropical that day was born.

Day 25 – Murwillumbah to Lismore

Mount Warning was one of our two main goals today. A three kilometre walk to the top of this mountain had a sense of a volcano about it. A little research shows it was once part of the Tweed volcano, and is supposed to be stunning. Sadly it was closed. At least we were able to drive for some way along the beautiful rainforest valley, across its darkened river. We drove a couple of kilometres down from the '\$3300 penalty No Entrance Gate' then walked up and back to that same gate. I think a potential rock fall was the main culprit for keeping us out. A beautiful drive was had all the same.

Back to Murwillumbah to aim for our second goal and we were told the gallery was closed, but just for a half hour lunch. So we achieved a third unspoken goal – lunch on a balcony overlooking Mt Warning, so we could at least pretend we were there. There were also a range of artists showing their wares, eg. some unusual bird and plant paintings. But the main artist was the person the gallery was named after, Margaret Olley – an artist we knew little about until a good friend gave us one of her prints.

It was not just her busy colourful oils that enchanted us, but also a short video of her with brush in hand painting in her home in Sydney, and the fabulous re-creation of many of her rooms, in this gallery. Very moving. Her house was a studio, with all the usual purposes of rooms in a house playing second fiddle to her great passion – art.

We travelled more back roads through towns such as Uki and the rainbow town of Nimbin and finally Lismore. As we were driving and looking at the rolling hills of the wider Murwillumbah region, and walking in yet another rain forest, I started to think of a poem for today; one soon came to mind.

Looking at some beautiful photos of her paintings, I read an accompanying piece. Margaret had asked a friend to pick up one of her final works, I think, to be photographed. Alas, the next morning Margaret died. It reminded me of a school friend who was living in France, and after reconnecting with him around fifty years later, I visited him and his wife. We spent this special day together with his beloved dog, ate a superb dinner at a French restaurant with his wife in a quaint French village with the promise of spending more time with each other and looking through his special art – French prose. The next morning we received a teary call from his wife. We would not spend that time with him - her husband, my friend, had died.

The Magpie - the people lover



Margaret

A gallery was built, it was her home
Was replicated, how she would have known it,
The objects in her house they were a poem
A painting too 'cause we were duly shown it.
She loved to paint, still life, especially rooms
Amongst the flowers that Margaret brought alive,
No people in her pictures, one presumes
She liked the objects more, they seemed to thrive.
But then she went to study art in Europe
She drowned in drink and serious depression,
Then some years aft' with drink she had a break up
No longer would there be any transgression.
While Margaret showed no people in her paintings,
So many people gave her such high ratings.

Day 26 – Lismore to Glen Innes

Roadworks have been a large feature of our trip so far. Sometimes the roadworks are longer than the non-roadworks where it seems to be a giant resting yard for machinery. I was wondering in not one of my sanest moments, whether there was a town called: 'Roadworks'.

Lismore took us to the huge big dipping hills, but this time the greenery was not so obvious hidden by fields of tall dry grass.

Along the backroads the blackened trees were getting plastic surgery, now being graced by many long green shoots, preparing for future battles or just happy to hide the evidence. It's difficult to tell whether towns are thriving or not. Cafes are thriving, but apart from people purchasing necessities, there seems to be little movement.

Along the pretty backroads we passed closed up villages until we reached the relaxed town of Drake. Its 'Lunatic Hotel' was invaded by bikers who were staying over, large wagons and trucks. Across the road, there was our chosen coffee place where we pulled up next to a 4-wheel drive. The engine was running, a large black dog sat smiling behind the wheel, while a smaller dog ran round on the back seat, smiling at us in anticipation of the driver putting it into gear.

Further on there was a closed general store, a few broken houses and a place selling everything. Walking the back streets I was greeted by a large quietly spoken dog, a Jack Russell running everywhere, and a three-legged Scottie, while as I walked on the lunatic side a large white dog shouted at me to stop or else. For a moment I thought the dogs had hijacked the town as I recalled a sign on a gate in a similar sized French village - "Faire attention, chien lunatique".

Then it was Tenterfield which apparently was greatly involved in the writing of Australia's Constitution. I'm not sure whether that was as successful as first thought to be. More exciting for me was the sight of Australia's hugest 'Cork Tree'. After seeing plantations in Europe which had their largest trees at about a fifth of the size, I wondered if they've compared it with the world. Our lunch by a small creek in a large park under a shady tree over a tiny beach was delightful.

Such a short trip to Glen Innes but a huge drop in temperature, we hit the minuses for the first time. We lodged in an ex-bank. It was a great investment with our large ensuite, a huge lounge room with a log fire, a good size kitchen, and no-one else – divine. And sitting on the couch with us is a quiet little dog called 'Dandan' whom we are minding while his mum and dad go out to celebrate dad's birthday.

So what, all drivers forget



Roadworks

I know of towns that do have similar names
In NSW there's Black and Baker creek,
And Dalwood too, one could play many games
While Back Creek wins, it's on a six name streak.
But 'Roadworks' comes up every single day
Repeated often entering this town,
The speed will vary all along the way
While on the drivers' face you'll see a frown.
There's often signs that folk are working here
Or trucks desire to wander round and round,
There is no pub, so it's here they have their beer
And always they'll be digging up the ground.
So why is 'Roadworks' the favourite village now,
Especially knowing the roads just had a plough.

Day 27 - Glen Innes to Gunnedah

I've never been given the keys to a bank before so I'll treasure them greatly. A delightful place to spend a night, and apart from the owners, we were the only ones there. They were delightful – so friendly, helpful and considerate. I would highly recommend their place for anyone who wants a lodging experience, not just a room. And for us, the lodging was the main part of our quick visit plus a lovely park and a main street full of architectural beauties.

Inverell provided a wonderful boardwalk track along what would have been a creek, but a simple reservoir wall made it appear more like a canal. Not only did it provide the town with the sense of a river, it also provided a renovated home for the town's platypus. I continued to walk along this windy, busy track. At the same time Corrie was doing the main street walk at a bit slower pace, picking up special bargains along her merry way.

Then it was off to the small town of Delungra which heralded the news that the memorial for the Myall Creek Massacre was not far away. A simple red (for blood) winding track in the shape of a snake, took us on a five hundred metre walk where reflections of the massacre were on rocks next to trees high up on a grassy hill not far from the Myall Creek homestead.

Bingara was next, and then up from the flats into Mount Kaputar (part of a large mountain range) where we were feted to a special rock formation, twenty one million years old. They are called the 'sawn rocks' because they look like square organ pipes that have been sawn from the cliff face above. It was then a visit to rock remnants of an old glacial formation.

A lovely car-free and hill-free road coming back to an expression of the long straight roads of the north west but this time heading for Narrabri and finally Gunnedah.

Today I saw examples of that much used word – resilience. First is the resilience of the koalas who struggle against the developers in places like Glen Innes and Gunnedah. Cafes that hang on in hope that the other businesses return one day, otherwise their jobs may go forever. The rivers that still survive despite undergoing decades of gross human mismanagement, and the millions of fish that die because we inadvertently, however one could say intentionally, poison their wild river home. Despite all this, it is difficult to believe that many of these fish survive.

I love my wine



Aboriginal Mother

Eliza Dunlop, a great poet forgotten
Her 'Aboriginal Mother' makes you cry,
The Myall Creek Massacre was oh so rotten
Where hell itself went very much awry.
Eliza felt it all, absolute terror
She wasn't even there, it mattered not,
It must have been an exaggerated error
How could a human being have such rot.
She heard the cry, a child decapitated
A wounded father crawls in groundless hope,
The killers far from being satiated
With one hand kill, and with the other grope.
A spear, a knife, an ever sweeping sword,
I doubt the human soul, could be restored.

Day 28 – Gunnedah to Mudgee

I'm trialling some different approaches to my medications and documenting results. In conjunction I am noting changes to my energy states on different levels. The primary reason for this documentation is because I will be seeing my neurologist next week and I'd like to be a little more prepared than usual.

One different approach is an unmedicated walk prior to breakfast as I'm finding I can manage this quite well. I'm concerned about taking too much medication because of resultant symptoms. The good news is – I am managing more kilometres, the downside is just that – I experience more down time. More questions for the 'neuro'.

Unfortunately my early morning walks are coinciding with colder weather as we move southwards, although it is invigorating, so possibly makes up for my lower dopamine levels. Today we left a very quiet closed up Gunnedah (we were one of only two guests), heading south to Mudgee (this time to stay).

We took the backroads again through vistas of rich green flat lands which I could cast my eye over safely because of the paucity of traffic. Through lots of tiny towns, such as Mullaley with a pub and a service station with tiny house accommodation. British backpackers were working there as bar tenders and shop assistants, fulfilling their visa obligations.

Then it was on to Tambar Springs where a friend of mine used to teach at a tiny school. Tambar Mountain hovers over this village that was home to the largest known marsupial, a large wombat. Coolah with its controversial black stump was next, followed by Dunedoo which wants to promote itself with a statue of "The Big Dunny" - no shit! Then it was on to the old gold town of Gulgong, thriving in its uniqueness, where nearly every building in its main street has good reason to grab your eye, especially Australia's oldest operating opera house.

Finally Mudgee, where thirty days ago we walked its river banks – so a refreshing start – and now deeper into the cool of winter had us linger less beneath its rugged hills where the Cudgegong River has been uniquely successful in protecting its fish: the Perch and Cod.

I've had a very successful nearly ten years (myself) with minimum medication. The walking, physical and cognitive exercises, I like to think, have held off more invasive treatment methods. The poem I have today echoes some of my thinking, and maybe that of many others about symptoms and treatment methods.

Reflection time



Levodopa

'Levodopa' - the first drug you will take
A form of dopamine you just feel good,
Hallucinations, mood swings and psych state
Might make you crazy and misunderstood.
The 'agonist' brings headaches and obsessions
Then suddenly might send you off to sleep,
And sex and gambling soon become impulsions
While dyskinesias can make a leap.
With 'glutamate', may faint or have blurred vision
There's memory loss with 'anticholinergics',
'Inhibitors', the worse can be depression
And falls and dyskinesia it predicts.
If you've had Parkinsons for many years,
Then side effects, become your greatest fears.

Day 29- Mudgee to Wentworth Falls

We leave the busy, seemingly prosperous town of Mudgee. I usually judge a town's prosperity by its numbers of coffee shops, and this town has lots. Maybe this isn't scientifically acceptable, so I'll listen to a long term country friend of mine who says it's to do with Mudgee's growing wine industry and its proximity to Sydney today, and walking around town I see evidence of this with many motels, and hardly a space free for another car.

Then it was over some mountains, along cliff edges with inadequate safety barriers through gorgeous valleys and Hargraves, a tiny humble town on a hairpin bend as a mountain joins a valley to our main destination – Hill End. And what a contrast. There was a handful of people at the town's one coffee shop, one drinker at its one pub, no-one at its only store during our two hour stay, and two of us walking the six kilometre walk to a lookout over some foothills from our mountain top. Once again my research study is numbers limited and the one coffee shop was full!

We were not to be disappointed at our 'river of the day lunch spot' on the small quick flowing Turon River, as it caressed the stream's coloured stones close to its surface. A little island looked on as the sun offered up tiny glints of light. This small performance was just below the seemingly desolate town of an old mining town called Sofala. With its score or two of houses, Sofala seemed more like a city than a country town when compared to Hill End, except there were about a dozen folk in the only place open in town. There was no apparent coffee shop.....but I won't go there.

On our way out of Sofala, destination – Wentworth Falls, we headed up another mountain listening to a song I love – "Stairway to Heaven". In anticipation of reaching heaven in just a short time, I was excited. It was only on post reflection, but what we did see at the top was what I would call – a small plateau. I can't remember seeing my definition of a plateau anywhere on this trip.

Then it was through the famed Wollemi home of the recently discovered but ancient Wollemi Pine which we didn't give due respect to, but there'll be another time. A walk through the quiet but peopled streets of Lithgow, brushing the outdoor museum which is Little Hartley, then up to Mount Victoria that cops the first western bushfires, then on to Wentworth Falls and partly along a snakelike ridge on the north - eastern side of this peaceful but bustling town.

Our journey plateaus out



Cultural Ignorance

At Wentworth Falls there is a little history
Our Wentworth helped to find a route across
The mountains and they did, another story,
That made the local people very cross.
The settlers came and took up all the land
Destroying sacred and their social sites,
Their food was gone, they didn't understand
This was their land but now they have no rights.
No choice they had or they would simply die
So attacks they made and food was duly taken,
Some locals killed but no-one did decry
A war began cause both sides were mistaken.
The ignorance of culture caused these wars,
Today the same still happens, on our shores.

Day 30 – Wentworth Falls to Sydney

On our final day it was great to be in our little shack in Wentworth Falls. With the sun rising in a gap left by the greyish clouds, the Magpies were the first I saw and heard as I ventured out into a grey cool morning. I think I could happily listen to the exquisitely unique song of the Magpie all day.

As I stepped out on the road I didn't see, but heard my most favourite laugh ever – the laugh of the Kookaburra. Known for their laughing calls at dawn and dusk, the bird was nicknamed "the bushman's alarm clock". Some get a feeling of being mocked especially when they are 'out of towners' unaware they are making silly mistakes. It is known however that Kookaburras gather at sunrise and sunset to announce their territorial boundaries.

The Kookaburras' loud laugh softens to a quiet chuckle during the mating season, as the males try to calm the breeding females. These family oriented birds mate for life and occupy the same territories for at least a year. Siblings help around the house by incubating the eggs and later feeding the young. On return I saw, but didn't hear, the ten silent Cockatoos as usual on the pointy end of the top branches of a favourite tree of theirs next door. I was happy they were silent as it could destroy memories of those other sounds.

I zoomed into my PD training class then another much longer walk around Wentworth Falls Lake which we love. This lake was originally created by damming Jamison Creek to supply water for the steam railway. It is now home to native fowl, fish and water bugs. Sculptures of seed pods of plants native to the lake have been sculpted from local sandstone. They have taken the trouble also to position the sculpture of the living plant it relates to. Back home for our Balmain walk before a three hour supervision session on working with couples.

The journey was an unusual one with driving and walking, but it mostly worked for us. The exploration of the towns by walking through their streets, the walking along the rivers, and through the forests, while having a break from driving was a unique experience which I loved.

As on other trips your comments and emails are really appreciated and it does feel as though you are there with us.

We travelled around 5000 kms and walked over 350 kms and felt happy that we have by accident been able to see a lot of our own State and get a greater feeling for the land that is our home.

'Til our next journey have a great year.

The sun sets on our adventure



The Birds were there

The birds were there to meet us at the Falls
The Kookaburras laughed – no need for talk,
Our Magpies, one of our most favourite calls
White Cockatoos – their criticising squawk.
We talked of empty towns, while others rocked
Of stunning buildings only used for show,
And burnt out paddocks, others over stocked
The rain forests that always seem to glow.
And bridges of all sorts with some not there
Their creeks and rivers with their varied traits,
And all of these create a ‘walking fair’
In NSW – can’t visit other states.
The sun has set on yet another walk,
Now to rest, and then with friends we’ll talk.

