

# Time Travel Australia

Our Business is in Ruins

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## Newsletter Winter 2012

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*Such is Life*, an Australian classic written by Joseph Furphy, was published in 1903. Writing through the eyes of fictional 'Tom Collins', Furphy's work was based on the trials and tribulations of the bullock driver as he travelled through the Riverina and Western Districts of NSW. In March this year members of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, planned a 'conference' to mark the centenary of Furphy's death. *Time Travel* had the privilege of organising the 'mini' conference as well as designing a short tour to visit some Furphy landscapes between *Hell, Hay and Booligal*. The Willandra Homestead was chosen as the conference venue and the tour was to go on to Balranald, Lake Mungo, Mildura and Broken Hill.

As luck would have it (bad luck that is), the floods of the Murrumbidgee, Lachlan and Darling put paid to much of our plan. While escaping flood damage, Willandra Homestead was inaccessible (and remains so) and several of the main roads through the Riverina were underwater as we departed. Our first detour was on day two when the Sturt Highway went under near Darlington Point. A quick detour had us back on track and we were off to Hay. We managed to get to Booligal and a little further upstream to one of the bridges across the Lachlan – close to a point where Furphy himself would have crossed with his bullock drays.

After a lunch of 'Denny' pies at the Booligal Hotel, we continued on to Balranald along the Sturt Highway where we were often flanked by broad stretches of water. For those who know the area Yanga, Paika and Waldaira Lakes are all full and a spectacular site. Billy and Pam were very pleased to see us at the Colony Inn at Balranald - Billy estimates that the floods had cost him \$20,000 in lost trade.

The conference portion of the trip was relegated to the Lake Mungo shearers' quarters. The weather was ideal and all went well – the Walls of China were at their finest, particularly when we climbed the dunes at Vigars Wells for a late afternoon view to the south.

After a splendid meal at Stefano's in Mildura, we continued north to Broken Hill on the Barrier Highway, not my preferred route but the road to Pooncarie and Menindee was still underwater. My roadmap showed a road house at Bremen and I

decided to have lunch there. While we did find something to eat (at least no one was ill, and they did have some ice-creams), I do not recommend stopping there. Or at least be warned, don't ask for too many things at once! I won't say anymore as I may defame the proprietor! Let's just say that the proprietor's daughter did her best to make up for her mother's lack of skills in the hospitality department.

Everyone had a great time in Broken Hill and the group even made their way on to the front page of the *Barrier Daily Truth* – a newspaper that serialised one of Furphy's books.

Some of you may remember Mark Sutton, an Aboriginal guide from Mutawintji National Park. 'Sutto' was at his finest and again did a great job taking us through Mutawintji. The regional art gallery has a very good permanent exhibition and had a number of works by Badger Bates on display during our visit. Coincidentally, Badger Bates is Mark Sutton's uncle and they worked together with NSW NPWS for some years.

We drove home via Wilcannia and Ivanhoe – this was as close as we came to Willandra Homestead. The amount of water flowing down the Darling at Wilcannia was staggering. The town itself did not appear to be in any danger of flooding (smart thinking to build it on the high side of the river) however the floodplain to the east was several kilometres wide.

To conclude, I must say that while we travel the world in search of exciting places, we must not forget all that Australia has to offer. Make sure you take the time to have a look around your own backyard as well – just look out for the Grey Nomads, there are a lot of them out there!!

Chris Carter



## A Taste of Vietnam and Cambodia

We had a small group of nine, led by the redoubtable Penny Heath, and if there were any problems (as there invariably are!) we were blissfully unaware of them as Penny steered us through South, Central and North Vietnam and on into hottest Cambodia. We cycled, we cooked, we ate, we cocktailed, we kayaked (some in uncertain circles), they shopped (we had some inveterate shoppers and there was hardly a shop, it seemed, that didn't require investigation), and we all had a great time. Aside from the shops we visited quite a fistful of temples, fish farms, a sheltered workshop, a local school, minority villages in North Vietnam, and in Cambodia an orphanage. We also met a friend of one of the group who told us about her involvement in Cambodia saving children, and particularly girls, from domestic slavery and the sex industry. A rather harrowing story made all the more resonant after visiting the Killing Fields outside Phnom Penh. It was often difficult to reconcile the differing facets of each country's history and culture, more especially in Cambodia - the Cambodians we met were such lovely, gentle people.

Our local guides all advised us that it was important to bargain when dealing with shopkeepers and the mobile shops that tended to follow us around. Not to do so could be seen as insulting and was part of their culture. Sometimes there was a problem in making ourselves understood - in the course of bargaining for the price of a haircut I suggested that as my hair was already somewhat sparse the price should be less, but it seemed that the barber interpreted this as asking for a short haircut. Still, \$5 for a haircut that will last me 2 months is pretty good value by my standards. Maybe 3½ months, now I look at it again.

There was one challenge we didn't have to face. We were to make a 12 km trek across paddy fields and we all dutifully brought our walking boots or hiking thongs with us for this event. However, our guide, Sinh, a truly delightful person, looked at our particulars just before we arrived and noted with horror practically all the group were the same age or even older than his parents. He immediately cancelled the trek and substituted a bus. While we loudly protested at this I suspect most were secretly relieved. We still wore our boots on the bus.

There weren't any real disasters. One member of the group took a trip one night on a scooter-taxi, riding side-saddle through the milling, chaotic throng of traffic and arrived, hair on end and somewhat windblown, declaring she now knew the true meaning of fear. Another time we were turfed off the speedboat on the way from Phnom Penh to Chau Doc, a 4-hour trip. It was all quite sudden, 40 minutes into the journey the boat suddenly veered off to the distant bank where another speedboat was moored, filled, at

first glance, with what looked like oversized lobsters peering out of the windows. The long and short of it was that 'our' boat took a load of rather hot and disgruntled tourists back to Phnom Penh and left another group of hot and disgruntled tourists (us) moored in the sticks sweating it out in a broken speedboat (the crew did try to buy us off with a can of beer). When 'our' boat returned 2½ hours later (after some rather unsuccessful renditions of half-remembered recitations and poetry to keep our spirits up - we didn't quite sink to 'Land of Hope and Glory') we found the steering had broken. The crew promptly put our bags in the 'good' boat leaving us in the broken one, tied the two boats together and tore down the Mekong with both boats' engines at full throttle with water pouring in the windows. Having arrived in Chau Doc in total darkness four hours late, we were given the bum's rush by the local guide when he took us to a local greasy spoon for dinner. He failed to impress us the next day by providing lunch in an almost windowless room one wag aptly dubbed 'The Interrogation Room Memorial Restaurant', though the food itself was better than the previous night's. The redoubtable Penny took matters into her own hands by declaring that we would definitely not be having our final dinner at a restaurant of our guide's choosing, a decision we all supported wholeheartedly.

We probably ate more than we should have - it was difficult not to with the variety of tempting local dishes on offer - but any excess weight we may have put on we freely sweated away. It rained on three occasions only, a thunderstorm with a light shower at the Killing Fields (which seemed quite appropriate), and downpours on the last (free) afternoon when we were mostly packing or swimming or cocktailing or turning over the hotel shop just one more time, and the next day on our return to Ho Chi Minh city to catch the plane back. We had great weather, great company, great places to visit and a lot of laughing. One of those truly memorable tours.

David Parkinson  
May 2012



Cooking class - Hoi An : Photo: D. Parkinson

## Tours – 2012

No tours are being offered for later this year. Ian Fraser's tour to Ecuador is fully booked and I have been contracted to lead a private tour to Peru.

## Tours - 2013

### **Tasmania: A Girl's Getaway**

9 days February, 2013

Led by Genelle Carter & Katrina Hansen

Join a small group of women as we take you on an indulgent, delectable and heavenly journey. Revitalise with divine daily yoga and meditation, Refresh your senses with wonderful scenery. Renew your desire with sumptuous food and wine.

From chocolates and raspberries, to cruising on Wineglass Bay, from Freycinet Peninsular to Salamanca Markets and the ever evocative MONA, Australia's largest private museum. Indulge in the culinary delights of 'Stillwater' one of Tasmania's most talked about and most highly awarded Restaurants and cook up a storm in Hobart with Gourmania Food Tours.

### **Pyramids, Temples & Tombs:**

#### **Mexico, Guatemala & Belize**

21 days March 2013.

Led by Christopher Carter

The tour will present the cultures of Mesoamerica – from the Prehistoric through the Colonial to the present. Highlights include Mexico City – one of the largest in the world; the art of Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo; the imposing ruins of Teotihuacan; the Mayan cities of the Peten – Palenque, Yaxchilan, Lamanai, Tikal and Calakmul; Colonial Antigua and beautiful Lake Atitlan; the colourful markets of Chichicastenango; and snorkelling on the Barrier Reef of Belize.

While this tour will have an archaeological theme, we will enjoy much more including the wildlife of the tropical jungles.

### **From Pides to Pergamon**

#### **Classical Turkey:**

Two tours of 21 days September & October 2013

Led by Chris Carter (Sept) & Penny Heath (Oct)

Experience the Byzantine and Ottoman splendour of Istanbul, including the bazaars, mosques, ancient palaces and the seraglio of the sultans. We will tour the battlefields of Gallipoli, birthplace of modern Turkey and an Australian legend; explore legendary cities of the Aegean coast, from Troy to Pergamon and Ephesus; explore the wonders of Cappadocia.

As with previous tours, we will spend six nights cruising the Mediterranean on a private chartered yacht. We will also experience a range of Turkish cuisine from simple home-cooked meals, making your own pides through to the finest restaurants.

Due to the popularity of this tour last year, we will be running two tours in 2013 – one in September and one in October. The first part of the second tour will be led by Penny Heath.

### **Ecuador and the Galapagos**

#### **23 days November 2013**

Led by Ian Fraser.

Due to the popularity of the tour this year, we have a waitlist for 2012 that will fill the 2013 tour should all offers be taken up. If you are at all interested in doing this tour, please let us know and we can add your name to the list (no places will be guaranteed at this stage). Places for the tour will be offered in early 2013 based on registrations of interest held at that time.

**Please contact Chris or Genelle if you have any questions or require further information for any of the tours. We will be overseas from 18 June until 25 July so responses may be slow.**

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If you have any news that would be of interest to our readers, feel free to forward items, snippets of news or photographs to the address below for inclusion in our next newsletter.

Chris Carter

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Pagoda of the Heavenly Lady, Hue: Photo: D. Parkinson