

THIS AND THAT (279) All Over Down Under [14]

Most Australians live along the continent's edge. Its five major cities are coastal. Only Canberra, the federal capital, deliberately and self-consciously is not. The harsh interior is important for minerals, hard-won agricultural products and treasured outback myths that help Australians define themselves. As a home it is shunned by the vast majority.

A D Hope in a famous poem speaks of
*..... her five cities, like five teeming sores,
Each drains her: a vast parasite robber-state
Where second hand Europeans pullulate
Timidly on the edge of alien shores.*

The back o' Bourke

Our long trip's final stopover was the far north west NSW town, Bourke. It typifies the outback. The Australian equivalent of the *back of beyond*, is the *back o' Bourke*.

At this time of the year it will be as hot as hell there. As I write it is 46C. On 4 January 1903 the temperature reached 49.7C, the highest ever in New South Wales and near to the highest ever anywhere in all Australia. When we were there it was beautifully cool.

Situated on the Darling River, Bourke is a small town of about 2000 souls. A good proportion of them are Aboriginal. We walked along the river in the dusk, after settling into a motel. Though sluggish, stagnant and green, its eucalyptus treed banks provided pleasant strolling.

The Murray Darling river basin drains as large an area of mother earth as any river system in the world. Sadly, though, there's usually far too little water to drain and the Darling in the present drought is in poor condition. The growth and death of algae on sluggish rivers deoxygenates the water. This kills life, especially fish, often suddenly.

The Darling flows mostly over plains. Its average gradient is little more than an inch to the mile. I was once called upon to do some relief work in a town flooded by the lower reaches of the Goulburn River in Victoria. Here too the river's gradient is all but nothing. In warm, cloudless, sunny weather it was eerie to wade through imperceptibly flowing, slow millimetre by slow millimetre rising, flood water, as it crept inexorably closer and closer to inundating homes and businesses.

Henry Lawson

The fine Australian poet and short story writer Henry Lawson was sent by his editor to Bourke to get a taste of outback life and to curb, hopefully, his heavy drinking. He spent six months there at the age of 25. The harsh realities of life in the bush had a profound influence on his life and work. He claimed that to know Bourke was to know Australia. He was a realist on outback life, not a romantic, unlike Banjo Paterson. Of the Darling River Lawson wrote:

*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.*

Luncheon with a carcass

Our final destination was Tamworth. There my son Peter resides in a most welcome and comfortable dwelling which he is soon to leave to live in Albury on the river Murray. As we continued westward the countryside became more and more agriculturally productive, better grassed and treed. We stopped by the roadside for our last and usual pot noodle lunch. Only when we had set up our chairs and settled down ourselves did we notice the desiccated carcass of a kangaroo nearby. An unpleasant companion, though too sundried and ancient to smell. It was bushflies not the carcass that made for a speedy stop.

Tamworth is a large regional town of 60,000, notable for being the first town in Australia to install electric street lights in 1888. It is also notable for being the Country Music Capital of Australia and for an esteemed resident, one Peter Geoffrey Neaum the enabler of our 3,116 mile car trip. We returned his car in good condition and enjoyed his amiable company for a couple of days before flying to Tasmania.

All Andrew Neaum's weekly articles are at: <http://www.andrewneaum.com/>

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TODAY: THIRD of EPIPHANY 20 JANUARY 2019

St Nicholas' Chapel Pilley: 8.00am Holy Communion BCP

St Mary's South Baddesley: 9.30am Holy Communion CW

St John's Boldre: 10.30am Family Service & Children's Club

St Luke's Sway: 6.30 Choral Evensong

For Prayer This Week

Peace. Calm heads and wise counsel in our own Government. Christian Unity. Vicar of Brockenhurst applicants and selectors. Our Parish Council and community leaders. **Prayer requests:** Jessie Austin, Jean Broomfield, Colin Erne, James, Libby, Rachel, Sarah. **Rest in Peace:** Andrea Young

Activities This Week

Wed 23 Jan - 10.30am Communion St Nicholas' Pilley + coffee

Wed 23 Jan - Bible Study Ph. 07786194282 for venue & time

Thu 24 Jan - 10.30am Vintage Fitness. Seated exercise to music at St Nicholas' Pilley & refreshment

Fri 25 Jan - 12.00pm St John's, funeral: Andrea Young

NEXT WEEK: FOURTH of EPIPHANY 27 JAN 2019

St Nicholas' Chapel Pilley: 8.00am Holy Communion BCP

St Mary's South Baddesley: 9.30am Matins

St John's Boldre: 10.30am 'Australia Day' H C & Kid's Club

St Nicholas' Chapel Pilley: 6.30 Choral Evensong

Dates for the Diary 2019

Sat 19 Jan - 5.30pm Winchester Cath. Farewell Bp Jonathan

Sun 27 Jan - 10.30am St John's, Australia Day

Sun 27 Jan - 6.30pm St Nicholas Chapel, Xian Unity Evensong

Wed 30 Jan - 11.45am St Nicholas' Chapel, Mission Meeting

Fri 1 Mar - 2.30pm St John's, World Day of Prayer

Sun 3 Mar - 10.30am St John's: Africa Sunday & Vicarage lunch

Mon 4 Mar - 7.00pm Vicarage, Lent Study 1

NB 6 July: Fete 2019 in diary please! Offers of help?

HOME CARER AVAILABLE

Professional female carer available. Contact the Vicarage.

NOVA FORESTA CLASSICAL PLAYERS CONCERT

Sat 26 Jan 7.30pm: St Mary Magdalene Church New Milton.

Handel, Pachelbel, Warlock, Telemann and Handel.

Tickets £10 available from OXFAM New Milton or online at

www.ticketsource.co.uk/nova-foresta-classical-players

AUSTRALIA DAY AT ST JOHN'S

Sunday 27 Jan at 10.30am we hold our **Australia Day Service**

to celebrate our links with that fair land. Encourage friends with Australian connections to come along with you.

CHRISTIAN UNITY

This is the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*. **Evensong next Sunday, 27 Jan, 6.30pm, at St Nicholas's Chapel, Pilley**, will be on that theme. Tatiana Macaire will be our preacher.

SUNDAY 3 MARCH - AFRICA SUNDAY & LUNCH

We celebrate Africa on Sunday, 3 March. Personal connections to be acknowledged during the service. Let us know of yours. Afterwards an **African Luncheon** at 12.30 in the Vicarage. The food and wine South African. Offers to help and take part? Tickets for lunch (limited by the size of the Vicarage): £15. Please contact the Vicarage if you'd like to attend. Profits to our work in Rwanda

THANK YOU

Many thanks indeed to the St Nicholas Singers who as well as delighting us with beautiful concerts have donated to St John's £1000 to enhance and further our musical endeavours.

ACCOMMODATION NEEDED

Reasonably priced accommodation is needed for a respectable single lady. Contact the Vicarage.