

Cornish Convoy by Derek Trewarne – 21st September 2013

On a cool Monday morning at 8:30am in late May, seventeen eager travellers with a Cornish connection gathered in the Kadina Tourist Centre Car Park. Having just attended another very successful Kernewek Lowender, they were ready for a new adventure – to follow the route taken by their intrepid forebears, the Cornish miners in the early 1850's who travelled from Burra north of Adelaide to the gold diggings in Central Victoria.

After an initial briefing from our intrepid leader, Moira Drew, we set off for the old copper mining town of Burra. We paused en route at the site of 'Ninnes' named after Thomas Ninnes who established a stopping place for the bullockies in 1885, and stopped at the remaining section of the old bullock track to Kadina, thence on to Lochiel where we had morning tea and a brief talk by local historians Kathy and John Nicholls about the history of the district and the opening up of the route from Clare to Burra.

Those of you have travelled in a Convoy will know it can have its moments, but we reached Burra without incident and proceeded to the impressive old Town Hall for lunch. We had time to check out the various displays etc., at the Town Hall and historian Ed Fuss gave a most informative talk about the history of copper mining in Burra and the importance of the industry to the economic development of South Australia in the 19th century. Another local historian Julian Ratcliffe, took us on a guided tour of the town. The housing of the old mining families was of particular interest, particularly the "Dugouts" in the bank of the Burra Creek!

From Burra, we proceeded due south to Black Springs, stopping briefly at the original settlement and old cemetery before continuing along the old Adelaide Road through Springfield and Marrabel to Kapunda passing through some most attractive sheep and wheat country. We enjoyed a most convivial evening meal at the North Kapunda Hotel then off to our comfortable cabins at the Kapunda Tourist and Leisure Park.

Tuesday proved to be a beautiful day, cool but a bright blue sky above and we proudly posed for a group photo at Mac Kernow, the giant statue of a Cornish Miner. At this point we said our goodbyes to Michelle and Brian Tresidder who were staying on at Kapunda and Jan, Keith and Phil Lokan from SA who were also leaving our tour group to return home for other commitments. From Kupunda we made our way through the Barossa Valley before stopping for a cuppa and to take in the wonderful views from the escarpment on the Tungkillo – Palmer road. Callington was our next stop where we had picnic lunch at the oval, viewed the remaining buildings at the Bremer Copper Mine site and had a brief look at some of the Cornish old miner's cottages.

We stopped for photos of the stark remains of the Hartley Methodist Church in Chauncey's Line Road. Surveyed by W.C. Chauncey in the early 1850's, this road followed the easier

gradients between Hahndorf and the crossing over the Murray at Wellington. Superb views of Lake Alexandrina on the way to Wellington where we had afternoon tea in the Old Court House before crossing the Murray on the Punt. From Wellington we travelled almost due south through generally scrubby country but were rewarded with glorious sunset views over Lake Albert. We pulled up stumps at the Meningie Caravan Park, a lovely spot beside Lake Albert which is filled at its mouth neat Narrung from Lake Alexandrina. Pelicans abound in this lovely spot. Tea that night was in the Meningie Hotel 9(which has amazing deserts) where we were met by local historian John Boundy whose Cornish forbears arrived in SA in 1848. He kindly donated a copy of his family history to the CAV. An interview and pictures by local Journalist ultimately led to a very informative article in the local newsletter, the "Lakelander"

Diary extracts provided by Moira heaped us build up a clearer picture of the early treks and by now it was becoming evident how important the availability of fresh water was to the overlanders as the route followed the Coorong, to take advantage of freshwater soaks. We stopped for a cuppa at the Salt Creek Roadhouse, the main centre for the Coorong and drove south before turning inland at Taratap Road making our through a series of low ranges interspersed with low flat area a common feature in this area. We stopped at Blackford one of the early accommodation houses near a creek. Peter England at the Blackford property gave us a brief history of the area and allowed us to take pictures of the old buildings. Off again, this time along a gravel road to Reedy Creek, another watering point and then east to Naracoorte. A visit to the "Sheep's Back" Museum where we were welcomed by the local historians. A fine lunch was provided and pictures taken and story about the "Convoy" later published in the "Naracoorte Herald".

On leaving Naracoorte, we followed the Wimmera Highway through Apsley, once a significant north-south, east-west crossing point and the location of the original "Border Inn" then Edenhope or Lake Wallace as it was once known and a regular camping spot, to Horsham. This route closely followed that of the early overlanders. After dinner at the Horsham RSL, local historians Lindsay Smith and his son Dale, kindly opened the Horsham Historical Society building for us where we learnt about the early days of Horsham and had a guided tour of the premises.

From Horsham we travelled north along the Henty Highway before leaving the highway and turning east towards Longrenong, one of the earliest large holdings in the area, then on to Glenorchy with the Wimmera River on our right and occasional glimpses of the Grampians in the distance. We stopped beside the river at a street sign showing the route from Mt Alexander to Adelaide and another for the Gold Escort route. Following a photo stop of the site of the 1847 "Four Post Inn" (now a grassy paddock and home to a Shetland pony), we drove to the other side of the river to a delightful picnic spot where, despite light rain

falling, we enjoyed our morning tea. At this point we had another farewell, this time to Bill and Gwen Phillips who were returning to Melbourne for a family birthday celebration.

The Convoy continued on along the northern side of the Wimmera River travelling east towards Campbell's Bridge, before stopping a short distance from Glenorchy to inspect a river ford crossing. We passed through Greens Creek, Joel Joel and Crowlands before joining the Pyrenees Highway near Eversley and on to Elmhurst, having crossed the Wimmera River several times. Now raining steadily, we opted for a more direct route via Avoca and turned off at Bung Bung through to Talbot with occasional misty view of the Pyrenees Ranges. This is the area of Daisy Hill, the site of one of Victoria's earliest gold finds by Shepherd Thomas Chapman. It was still raining and getting colder so having bought our lunch from the local store in Talbot, we found a park shelter to have our lunch and Robyn Crocker gave a brief but informative summary of the area gleaned from her family research. Chris and Dunkley decided to take their leave of our Convoy to head northward and home to NSW.

Leaving Talbot, we took the Majorca Road passing along McCallum's Creek then Rodborough Road passing over the Tullaroop Reservoir. We were now crossing a high plain with extensive views eventually passing a property called Plaistow, settle by the Joyce family, who once supplied hay and sheep for mutton to the passing diggers. We re-joined the Pyrenees Highway near Newstead and continued on to Castlemaine and the site of the Mt Alexander/ Forest Creek goldfields, concluding our journey at the Portals of the old Castlemaine Market, now home of the Information Centre and gallery. A last group picture to signify journey's end then a farewell coffee in a café across the road, all in all it had been a wonderful experience.