

## **Bendigo Post Rort Tour – May 2010**

After a long breakfast at quill's restaurant, Post Rorters bid their Rort friends adieu and boarded the Dianna's Coach for the Bendigo Historical Talking Tram Trip. The seats on the tram were reversible so that one could always face the front. Some were slow to pick this up but after a few drills everyone had the changeover off pat. Some confusion did arise as to which side of the tram was which after the seats were reversed?? Was the Left side still the Left Side or did the Left side become the Right Side? Post Rorters should not be put to these tests so soon after a Rort.

Peter Dumont and his offsidiers gave a wonderful insight into mining with a tour of the Central Deborah Mine. The enormity of the project was well illustrated after the tour when we were shown a mine map and the tiny section we had explored. Seasoned miner 'Snowy' met us at the drill face with some tall tales and true. Lunch was enjoyed at the famous Bendigo Pottery Facility at Epsom. The afternoon was taken up with the museum tour, inspecting the heritage listed kilns, watching a skilled potter at work, visiting the gallery and the extensive range of product.

The nearby town of Goornong was next on the list for dinner and frivolities at Bickley's Barn. The Barn was a beautiful venue with mains and desserts etc to die for. Everyone had a 'See Food Diet' and used plenty of red and white to wash it down. Sadly the owners are retiring and our function was the last to be held there. Luckily we were able to enjoy the experience. The Barn is near the impressive property of John and Jill Farnham at Goornong. Entertainment on the trip back to Bendigo came via the Ron Clarke repertoire of hits and ballads. Ron sang, clapped and conducted up and down the aisle while Merrill sat quietly. Someone asked if he could sing something we all knew and quick as a flash Ron broke out in a chorus of Happy Birthday. Merrill remarked that Ron was a 'Treasure' and suggested that she should take him home and bury him.

Meanwhile back at the Van Park some of the Rorters who had not left yet joined for fellowship and watched some videos of the Rort taken by Col and Phyl Ramsay. Takes us back to last year's Rort – Wonder what ever happened to Jock Littler's Wyong Rort Karaoke Video?

A very much quieter Ron surfaced next morning for the Ballarat experience. Morning Tea was at the Ballarat Botanical Gardens followed by a quick trip down the Avenue of Prime Ministers. It was noticed, by most, that the newest bust along the avenue had been visited by many winged creatures. Before continuing, a short time was spent reflecting at the POW monument and searching for names of friends and loved ones.

Post Rorters were welcomed into the Eureka Centre in bright sunshine and ushered around a large painting depicting that memorable Sunday morning when the Eureka stockade was attacked. After intensive audition by our mediator many of us took on the roles of the participants embroiled on that fateful day.

Don Smith, the preacher, David McCullagh, the wealthy and influential squatter, Liz Hammond, the madam, Eddie Nunn, the Italian Miner, Colleen Lancaster representing the Chinese Gardeners, Denis Bradshaw, the Scottish Miner and Vivienne Bradshaw the Bobby to name a few. Vivienne was given a quick lesson in loading and ramming her gunpowder and inserting the shot. On being instructed to shoot the Scottish miner she refused the order, 'I cannot shoot him, he's my husband and need him'.

The original battle only took 15 minutes to complete, we took a lot longer – Next step was the Battle in Court – Our mediator, the Judge, Max Smith, the Defence, Peter Dumont, the Prosecution, Bob Ireland as Peter Lalor, Rita, the corrupt local Judge, and David Bidmade as James Bentley, the crooked ex con Publican. Julie Primmer and Elaine Dumont played the roles of Phoebe and the newspaper editor.

The proceedings ended in uproar with Anne Ryall demanding that her husband Peter's character stay away from Phoebe's tent and Eddie Nunn (the Italian miner, Raffaello Carboni) being accused of desertion in the heat of battle. Eddie defended his alleged cowardice saying that at the time he was busy in his tent 'a cookin' de fish and de chip'. The Judge's gavel sounded like a machine gun as he tried to regain control. Finally Peter Ryall finished his impressionable speech and Max and Peter (Dumont) summed up their cases and the miners were let off once again. Outside, meanwhile, the Ballarat sunshine had decided to hide, it had turned cold and had started to rain. Queensland seemed a good option until the organisers came to the rescue with plenty of coats.

Another heavy shower greeted our arrival at the Sovereign Hill but that did not dampen anyone's spirits - Sovereign Hill is the living museum of Ballarat's first golden decade. After lunch a full afternoon was spent exploring the village attractions before assembling at the United States Hotel for drinks. Many had enjoyed being entertained by a Bush Band earlier at the hotel. Dinner and drinks were served at the Universal Transit office before spending the rest of the evening at the Blood on the Southern Cross, Sound and Light Spectacular.

A very big day came to an end and nearly everyone slept all the way back to Bendigo.

Tourers experienced the calm and serenity of the Atisha Buddhist Centre and enjoyed the peaceful atmosphere. A guided tour the Great Stupa of Universal Compassion construction site followed. Atisha Centre guide Alan conducted the tour and Ian Green gave us a history of the planning, funding and construction of the 9 storey high Great Stupa. During the tour Cherie saw to it that we were treated to welcome smoko on a very cool but sunny morning. After a very relaxed morning the group adjourned to the nearby Marong Hotel for another sumptuous meal and fine beverage.

Mid afternoon saw us back at our accommodation for an afternoon of fellowship – In no time the Dianna and the coach arrived to take us for another hearty meal and plenty of pranks and frivolity at the Lynnevale Winery. The trip home was too short for any singing to crank up.

Heading north to the Border Town of Echuca on Thursday morning saw the tour realise a vast improvement in the weather. Morning Tea Vouchers were provided to sample the wares of the Beechworth Bakery. An Air Bag demonstration was the highlight, for those that drive Fords, at the Hughes Holden National Museum. The impressive display of Holden Models took us all down memory lane. A river cruise on 'The Pride of the Murray' finished the organised part of the trip to Echuca and the rest of the afternoon was set aside as free time for exploring the township.

Next on the agenda was a visit to the nearby 'Great Aussie Beer Shed. Owner Neil Thomas showed us around and entertained and educated us with his witty discourse on beer and the history of Australia. The boy's team definitely won Neil's Trivia Competition by a country mile. Our very diplomatic host Neil declared the result a tie. NP Bob Ireland answered most of the questions himself. Bob was definitely showing the signs of a misspent youth and it seems Neil may have awarded the girl's team some extra points for Rita's knitting. The Victorians must be expecting a cold winter – a second Melbourne couple were seen at it on the coach, knitting that is.

Time on the journey back from the Beer Shed passed quickly due to a fine performance led again by Ron, the Bus Conductor, with lead singer Bob Caldwell and backing from Dianna's CD player. Vivienne Bradshaw remarked that she had rarely heard worse backing singers (and Chook was not on the Coach) – a couple of more wines girl and you would have thought that the singing was brilliant. David Besson suggested that some song sheets and coaching would not go astray on the next trip.

Friday morning and local guide, Jim took us on a Bendigo Centre Historical Tour. Jim relayed to us the town's proud heritage as he took us around and through the stately buildings. The Gold Rush allowed the village to afford superb materials, architects and craftsmen. Our tour finished with a walk through the parks and gardens. Sadly, the gardens have been ruined, as is happening in many other towns, by a colony of Flying Foxes taking up residence.

Lunch was at the Bendigo Bowls Club and the food and refreshment were again, unexpectedly gratis.

The Bendigo Bank has built a state of the art building as its headquarters in Bendigo and it has gained International recognition for design and excellence. Our two guides convinced us by giving us access to the bank's workings that it was of a practical and efficient design.

Distinguished tourers (OBE's), such as Rex and Lois Smith and Eddie and Peg Nunn, joined in all the fun and we hope to see them at many Rorts to come. Bev Foss and Dorothy Knight missed some activities but came good by the end. Our New Zealand visitors, Bruce and Sue McConnon and Bill and Liz Hammond are now seasoned Post Rort Tourers and we welcome their good nature, humour and friendship. All ended well for Bill and Liz, everything went well with their buying and selling of their old home and their new home, solicitors, agents, banks, accountants etc. However Liz is a bit worried about the removalist and has invited the McConnon's down to help.

The week's events were sadly over too soon. Many stayed on to say their last farewells at the Bendigo Apex 40 meeting at the Ascot Van Park. The Park Owners went to a lot of effort decorating their hall for the function. The hard working Bendigo Crew prepared a superb meal for us, and as they did at every other venue they kept the cheer on tap and on the house.

A number of Bendigo Club Members were always on hand during the Post Rort Tour to attend to our every need. Practically every meal was catered for and any drinks were included – Kevin Harvey was never far from his cheque book to pay our bills. We appreciated the company and assistance from all of the Bendigo Club and especially from the following - Bob and Anne Caldwell, David and Wilma Bidmade, Peter and Elaine Dumont, Ross and Margaret O'Neill, Ron and Merril Clarke and Kevin and Shirley Harvey

The Rort was dubbed the 'Old and Gold' Rort but the favourite line on the Post Rort Tour was "Used to Be". Our Coach Captain Dianna enjoyed the trip as much as we did and we not only saw where everything is today but were also told where everything 'Used to Be'. You know, in those Good Old Golden Days. Always Remember - The Older we get The Better we 'Used to Be'.

Many Thanks Bendigo.