

## **Mudgee Holiday – 2015**

Once again 47 eager U3A members headed off for a week exploring Mudgee and its surrounds. What a beautiful setting we had at Parklands Resort. The accommodation, meals, facilities offered, and staff were superb which made for a relaxing and enjoyable time after the day's travel. We also once again had a very experienced, entertaining and obliging coach driver. This is a very important factor in the trip being a success.

Our tour of Mudgee was very enlightening giving us the history of the town and how the many National Trust classified buildings still standing today were used in the past as opposed to today. The township of Mudgee was first reached in 1821 by George Henry Cox and is the second oldest settlement west of the Great Dividing Range. The town is very proudly presented by its current population and is a thriving rural centre with a town population of 12,000 and a regional population of 22,000.

The Mudgee Museum gave us an even further insight into the history of the area as we meandered through the many displays of historical significance. One very interesting display that was admired by all was the collection of over 200 dolls made over a period of 15-18 years by their creator Mrs. Steadson who wanted them to stay in tact and be housed in the museum for public exhibition. Each doll is on average 27 inches (89cm) high with the sewing being done by hand and on an old treadle sewing machine purchased in 1926. The machine is still working and also on display at the museum. Apart from the amazing example of craftsmanship and imagination there is a historical link in that the creator's family have lived in Mudgee for over 100 years.

The day trip to Hill End was amazing even for those who had previously done a trip to the town. The video shown to us in the hospital come museum now gave us an accurate account of the history surrounding Hill End. We were also given time to explore the many photos, stories and displays that are very significant reminders of how life was spent in the town during and after the Gold Rush. Lorraine, our tour guide and a 5<sup>th</sup> generation member of the Ackerman family who settled in Hill End went to great lengths to help us understand the hardships many faced during their time on the gold fields. Even though it was a hot day, that didn't stop her dressing in period costume to relive the past. As we walked around the town she was able to give us very reliable information regarding the remaining buildings and the remnants of those long gone. It was interesting to hear the local school built in 1872 is still operating and has never been closed during its 143 year history-amazing. Adding to our experience that day was the willingness of Lorraine to allow us to walk through her home. The Ackerman home as she calls it is the original home built by her ancestors. Her and her husband moved back to the area 20 years ago and set about restoring the home to its original state whilst living there. Each add-on has been maintained with each area restored to what it looked like in the past. The original flooring, walls and windows etc. remain today. We all marveled at her resilience to live in the home especially in winter with the gaps and cracks in the floors and walls. What an amazing woman with such a wealth of knowledge.

We journeyed to Gulgong the next day and enjoyed a town tour along the streets viewing the many clapboard and iron buildings with their unique verandahs some adorned with iron lace railings. The bends in the streets reflect the lines of the original tent lines from the gold rush. 130 buildings in the town are listed with the National Trust. We paid a visit to the Henry Lawson Centre that is a living memorial to one of Australia's greatest storytellers and houses a fine collection of Lawson's work from all parts of Australia. The talk covering his life from birth to death was very enlightening for many on the tour who heard some details unbeknown to them. Upon reflection, many of our members felt that his mother should be acknowledged for her very forward thinking for the times. Of course a trip to Gulgong would not be complete unless one visited the famous Pioneer Museum. The museum is so vast and full of so many historical displays that you would need many hours to explore all on offer.

Mudgee Honey Haven was a hit for everyone. We enjoyed our talk about their new product called Bee Power that was promoted to be "nature's superfood." If true and going by the number of people who bought the product we should see some very fit and healthy U3A members.

We enjoyed a tour of Goree Park famous for its champion horses and thoroughbred racing. Our tour guide is one of the stud's managers. She was very passionate about the stud and a wealth of knowledge about the heritage of the many horses we saw and how they managed the stud explaining what each section of the stud was used for along with their breeding program, the breaking of the horses roles of other horses used at the stud such as the orphans area. It was a very enlightening day and a beautiful setting for lunch before tasting some of the wines at the cellar door. Our tour guide told us the name of two of their horses racing on the Saturday after we returned to Sydney. I believe one of our travellers decided to back one of the horses and had a significant win for a small outlay. Well done and a good memory for the horse's names.

Of course no one should travel to Mudgee without taking the time to visit some wineries. As part of the tour we enjoyed some wine tasting and lunch at the Blue Wren winery. We also had the chance to visit High Valley Cheese a mere 150 metre walk from our Resort. The wines and cheeses offered for tasting were enjoyed by those who used some of their down time to visit. The opportunity to visit two more wineries during a free afternoon was offered to all travellers. These wineries were Pieter van Gent and Farmer's Daughters. Both wineries gave us a history of their winery along with an enjoyable wine tasting.

What a great week, full of sunshine, great company and experiences. Our journey home was very different; with rain and colder weather hitting the region and getting worse the further we headed home. Our morning tea stop at Leura was both wet and cold. However many on the bus still enjoyed the opportunity to explore the shops and purchase gifts for family and friends, especially our two oldest and veteran travellers, Dom & Maria. I also came across two other happy travellers who found a great sale on shoes for themselves, well done. Others just chose to find a nice café and enjoy a warm drink out of the cold and rain.

Please see the photos to help your understanding of this report.

We head to Wingham and the Manning Valley in 2016 which is an area Greater Western Region hasn't offered as a holiday destination in the 18 year history of organising tours for the Sydney U3A community.

Diana