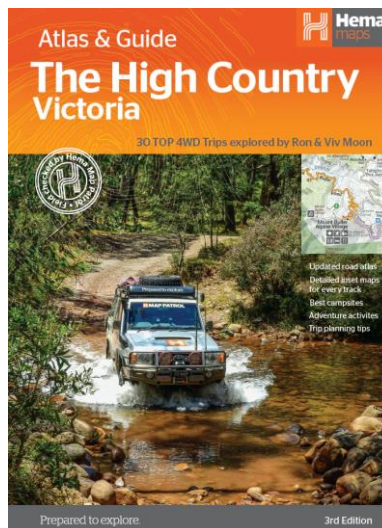
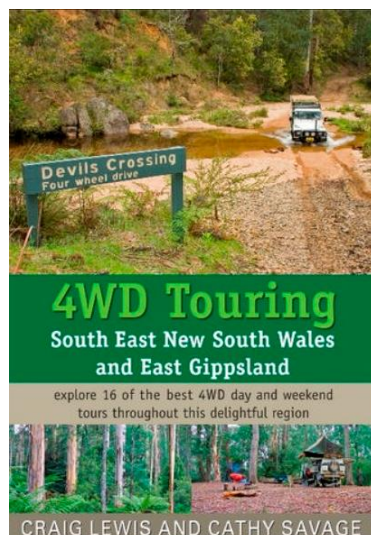
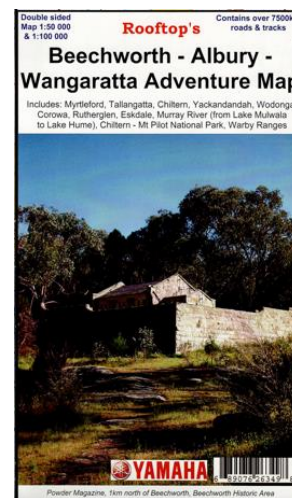
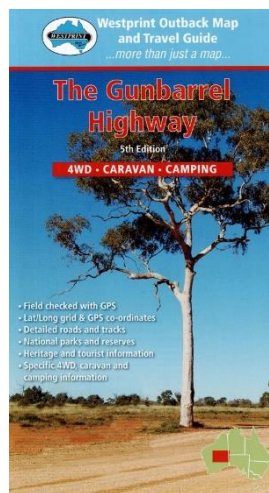




## The Meridian Line - Sunday 02.02.2025

“People rarely succeed unless they have fun in what they are doing.” – Dale Carnegie



### ***Hattah-Kulkyne Map Guide – from \$10.95***

Experience the breathtaking landscapes of Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, where serene lakes are framed by ancient river red gums, rolling sand dunes host enchanting mallee woodlands, and unique semi-arid grasslands stretch as far as the eye can see. This park is a haven for biodiversity, boasting over 200 bird species and a rich array of wildlife, including mammals, reptiles, frogs, and insects. Plan your adventure with our detailed topographic map, scaled at 1:75,000, which covers both Hattah-Kulkyne National Park and the neighbouring Murray-Kulkyne Park. The map includes detailed enlargements of Lake Hattah and Lake Mournpall, along with all the walking and biking trails, camping sites, and other key features. It also features fascinating insights into the park's history, ecosystems, and the range of activities available for visitors.

<https://meridianmaps.com.au/product/hattah-kulkyne-map-guide/>

### ***The Gunbarrel Highway – from \$14.95***

This map features the section of the Gunbarrel Highway explored and surveyed by Len Beadell in 1958, complete with GPS coordinates. It connects to the Canning Stock Route and Tanami Track, forming a popular circular route for 4WD adventurers. In addition to the iconic Gunbarrel Highway, the map also includes the Great Central Road and several interconnecting tracks within the Gibson Desert, making it an essential resource for exploring this remote region. This map includes detailed notes on history, explorers, points of interest, local flora and fauna, and is complemented by photographs of significant landmarks. These maps are clear and easy to read, featuring road distances, rest areas, caravan parks, and fuel stations.

This map specifically covers:

- Great Central Road
- Connie Sue Highway
- David Carnegie Road
- Leonora
- Laverton
- Glen Ayle Road
- Rason Lakes Road
- Western section of the Anne Beadell Highway
- Heather Highway

Perfect for planning your outback adventure, this map ensures you're well-prepared to navigate and appreciate the stunning landscapes and rich history of the region.

<https://meridianmaps.com.au/product/gunbarrel-highway/>

### ***Beechworth Albury Wangaratta Adventure Map - from \$11.95***

The Rooftop Map spans from Rutherglen to Hume Weir and Tallangatta in the north, and from Wangaratta to Myrtleford and Eskdale in the south, presented at a scale of 1:100,000. Beechworth sits near the centre of the map, with an inset detailing the Warby Ranges. The map highlights locations such as Corowa, Rutherglen, Milawa, sections of the Warby Ranges, Lower Ovens State Park, the Murray River (from Lake Mulwala to Lake Hume), and numerous towns and landmarks, including Tarrawingee, Eldorado, Springhurst, Everton, Wahgunyah, Chiltern, Mount Pilot National Park, Beechworth, Stanley, Whorouly, Barnawatha, Howlong, Nine Mile Historic Area, Albury, Wodonga, Yackandandah, Dederang, Mount Jack North, Gundowring, Tangambalanga, Yabba, and Noorongong. The reverse side features a more detailed map at a 1:50,000 scale, covering the area from Chiltern and Barnawatha to Wodonga, extending southward to Myrtleford and Whorouly South.

<https://meridianmaps.com.au/product/beeceworth-adventure-map/>

### ***4WD Touring South East New South Wales and East Gippsland - \$34.98***

Discover Australia's Far South East with the Rooftop Map of Mallacoota to Merimbula. Covering areas such as Bombala, Eden, Merimbula, Cann River, and national parks like Ben Boyd, Croajingolong, and South-East Forests, it includes detailed features like walking and vehicle tracks, roads, watercourses, navigation markers, boat ramps, jetties, and more. Includes insets of Gabo Island and Mallacoota Inlet. Printed on durable, waterproof paper for outdoor adventures.

<https://meridianmaps.com.au/product/4wd-touring-sensw-east-gippsland/>

### ***The Victorian High Country Atlas & Guide - \$49.95***

Explore the Victorian High Country like never before with this ultimate guidebook, featuring the Top 30 4WD trips crafted by renowned off-road adventurers Ron and Viv Moon, combined with detailed topographic atlas mapping of the region. This includes 40 large-scale atlas pages (1:150,000). Alongside the maps, the guide offers an in-depth introduction to the region, tips for trip planning, and a wealth of information on must-see attractions and activities. The book provides comprehensive touring sections covering the unique areas of the High Country, including the Great Alpine Road, Alpine National Park, Snowy River National Park, and Baw Baw National Park. Each of the Top 30 4WD trips is grouped by locality, with detailed trip information such as difficulty gradings, distances, essential travel details, and complete route descriptions from start to finish. This guide highlights the High Country's



most iconic tracks, including Wonnangatta (via Zeka Spur), Billy Goat Bluff Track, Ingeegoodbee Track, Mount Pinnibar and Blue Rag Range Track

<https://meridianmaps.com.au/product/victorian-high-country-atlas-guide/>

## Meridian Musings

For many, early February marks the end of summer and the start of a new school year—along with all the chaos and stress that can bring. However, the reality is that summer is far from over and the hazards that the Australian summer can bring. Bushfires are again impacting the Grampians National Park and Little Desert National Park and their surrounds.

A quick note from Jo:

Thank you to everyone asking after the welfare of the old Westprint Mob. We are all safe and well. The photo is all the partners before Westprint became part of the Meridian crew. Bev & John (the Map Man & the logistics expert) and kids. Jo (oldest and wisest) & Graeme, Andrea & Wayne (the annoying middle kid), Craig (youngest – i.e. favourite) & Christine. Craig and Christine live closest to the Little Desert on the original settlement block that was John & Bev's and the original address for Westprint. Andrea & Wayne live a few kms further north. Craig & Wayne spent the afternoon and all night working on the fire and have probably gone out again. We think part of Craig's farm may have been burned but the only tangible loss will be some boundary fencing and sheep pasture. The afternoon wind change stopped the fire heading north towards Craig's home block and the front passed a few kilometres south.



We are all shocked and saddened by the loss of the Little Desert Lodge. It was the site of many Westprint camping events and where all our wedding receptions and milestone birthdays were held. It holds many dear memories.

We are glad that George, the resident emu of many years, left the Lodge a while ago by following a car out of the gate. I'm sure he will be around somewhere keeping tabs on visitors.



This is George at a previous fire in the Little Desert.

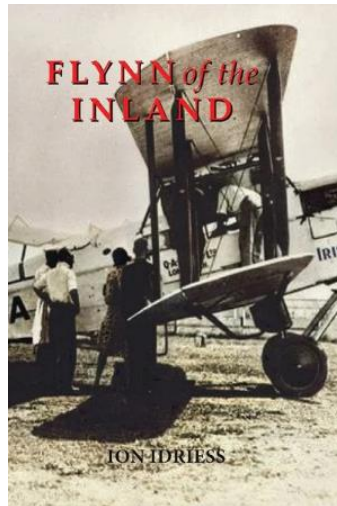
### **What's New To The Website**

There are quite a few new books which have been added to the website, but I thought I would highlight half this fortnight and half next fortnight but of course you are always welcome to check them all out at your leisure. Use the Sort by Most Recent search in Books.

<https://meridianmaps.com.au/product-category/books/>

#### ***Flynn of the Inland - \$34.95***

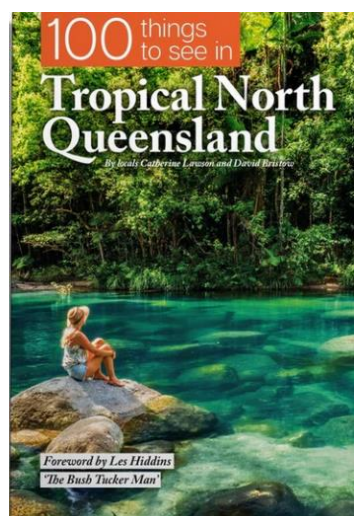
The story of John Flynn and his founding of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Australia's Outback during the 1920s is one of vision, determination, and innovation. Inspired by his travels on camelback across the vast and remote inland, Flynn dedicated his life to making his dream a reality. This book chronicles the development of an essential network centred on Alice Springs, from the days of camel travel to the advent of radio communication and aviation. First published in 1932, it is written by Ion Idriess, one of Australia's most beloved authors, who knew Flynn personally.



<https://meridianmaps.com.au/product/flynn-inland/>

### **100 Things to See on Australia's Coral Coast - \$29.95**

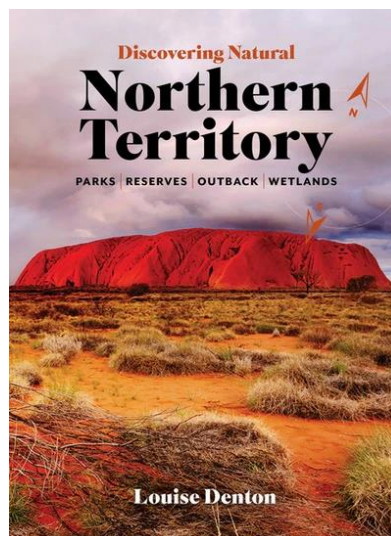
*100 Things to See in Tropical North Queensland* is your ultimate guide to the best of the Far North and the Great Barrier Reef—curated by those who call it home. This extraordinary region boasts the world's oldest rainforest, the largest living organism, and three UNESCO World Heritage sites—and that's just the beginning. Written by travel journalist Catherine Lawson and featuring stunning photography by her partner, David Bristow, this guide takes you beyond the typical tourist spots to discover TNQ like a local. Having spent over 20 years exploring their own backyard—by foot, 4WD, train, bike, and even aboard their sailing yacht, *Storyteller*—they share 100 unforgettable places and experiences. From hidden swimming holes and ancient rock art galleries to epic outback adventures, this book will inspire your next journey to the top of Queensland.



<https://meridianmaps.com.au/product/100-things-coral-coast/>

### ***Discovering Natural Northern Territory - \$34.95***

The Northern Territory is an outdoor lover's paradise—Australia's most iconic desert destination and a must-visit for anyone who loves the outback. Home to two of the country's most famous national parks, Uluru-Kata Tjuta and Kakadu, the NT also boasts dozens of lesser-known parks, each offering incredible opportunities for adventure. From breathtaking hikes and epic 4WD tracks to stunning lookouts, rich cultural sites, and unforgettable wildlife encounters, this book highlights the very best of the Territory's natural wonders. Packed with over 150 full-colour photographs and detailed maps, it's an essential guide for making the most of your time in the NT. A handy summary table also helps you quickly find the perfect spot based on facilities and highlights, ensuring you experience the best of this vast and extraordinary landscape.



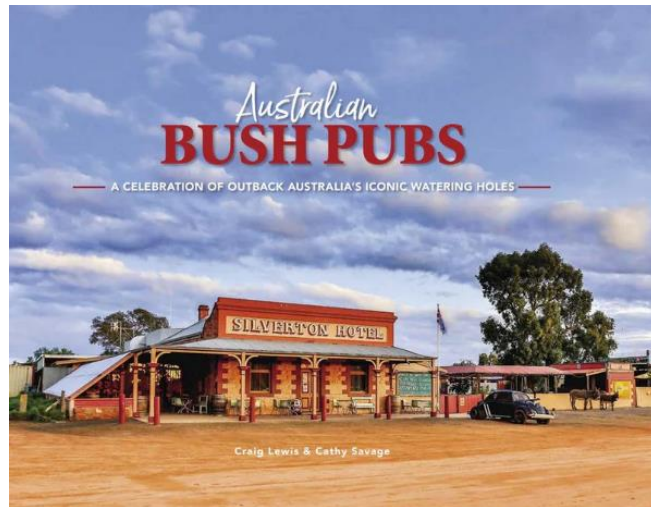
<https://meridianmaps.com.au/product/discovering-natural-northern-territory/>

### ***Australia's Bush Pubs - \$49.95***

*Australia's Bush Pubs* is a visual pub crawl through the heart of the outback, celebrating the character and charm of the country's most iconic watering holes. Lavishly illustrated with stunning full-colour photography, this book showcases a fascinating collection of historic pubs, from Queensland's legendary Birdsville Hotel to the quirky Silverton Hotel in New South Wales. Each entry includes a short history of the pub, along with tales of unusual events, famous patrons, and even a ghost story or two. This third edition introduces a handful of new pubs and updates the stories and images of old favourites. Covering every state and territory (except the ACT), this book is your guide to some of Australia's most



storied and beloved outback establishments. This is a great companion to ***Australia's Historic Pubs***.



<https://meridianmaps.com.au/product/australias-bush-pubs/>

### Seasonal Updates

Please be aware that road and Park closures are constantly changing and it is always best to check for changes before you set out.

For more regular updates on closures, please check our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/MeridianWestprintMaps> as we try to include warnings and advice as we become aware of them.

The latest Desert Parks Bulletin has been uploaded to our website. For this and other Desert Pass updates, please go to <https://meridianmaps.com.au/deserts-pass-update/>

Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service has extended its seasonal campfire bans. Campfire bans also remain in place for all national parks and reserves in the local government areas of King Island, Flinders, Dorset, Break O'Day, Glamorgan-Spring Bay (including Maria Island), Sorell, and in Narawntapu National Park.

On the 27 January 2025, four new bushfires started in the Grampians National Park. Some popular areas and visitor sites within the National Park have now been declared safe, and have now re-opened to the public. Check the following website before visiting: <https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/places-to-see/parks/grampians-national-park#change-of-conditions>

Little Desert National Park is closed due to bushfires.



The Beeripmo Walk in Mount Cole State Forest and Mount Buangor State Park is now open.

Pigeon House Mountain Didthul walking track in Morton National Park on the South Coast has recently reopened, following repairs and upgrades due to rainfall damage.

Birdsville Inside Track - Closed due to flooding until further notice.

Birdsville Track - SA Border to Mungeranie 4WD High clearance only.

*Disclaimer: These events were correct at the time they were added to the Meridian Line; however, this may have been some time before the actual event. Please make your own enquiries before travelling to an event.*

## What's On

If you have an event which you would like to see included in the What's section, please send me the details at [rochelle@meridianmaps.com.au](mailto:rochelle@meridianmaps.com.au).

**1 February Lunar New Year Festival at Bendigo Chinese Precinct** in Victoria. Join the party at Bendigo's Dai Gum San Precinct and welcome in the New Lunar Year of the Snake. This free family event features Cultural Community Performances, The Bendigo Chinese Association Lion Team and Lunar New Year Stories.

<https://bendigochinese.org.au/events/>

**16 February Victorin 4WD Show** at Lardner Park in Victoria. Explore a wide range of exhibitor products such as 4WD accessories, vehicle modifications, camping gear, off-road camper trailers, fishing equipment, navigating, foods and maps.

<https://lardnerpark.com.au/event/victorian-4wd-show/>

**22 – 23 February Community Bank Tumbarumba Tumbafest** in Tumbarumba, NSW. A 2 day music, food and wine festival held in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains which features a food alley and market area, wine stalls, children's entertainment and a main stage.

**2 March Jerilderie Fun Fair** in New South Wales. Oodles of free family entertainment, free activities and our night will conclude with a free outdoor cinema screening ! There's also food vans, market stalls galore and live music

<https://www.facebook.com/events/7359415754070117/>

**7 -9 March Brighter Days Festival** in Victoria. The Brighter Days Festival is a 3 day family friendly fundraising event held annually on the Vic Labour Day weekend at Pioneer Park, in the beautiful north eastern Victorian township of Bright. It raises money for a variety of children's charities.

<https://www.brighterdays.org.au/>

**15 – 16 March Darling Downs Heavy Horse Festival** in Queensland. A two day celebration of the Gentle Giants that helped build this great nation. The Clydesdale, Shire, Percheron and Draught Horses along with Gypsy Cob, Drum Horses, Donkeys, Mules and working Bullock teams that helped clear the land, till the soil, plant and harvest the crops and haul the loads.

<https://heavyhorsefestival.com.au/>

**27 – 30 March FabAlice Festival** in Alice Springs. Celebrating the iconic 1994 Priscilla Queen of the Desert film, the festival is a unique 4 day showcase of drag, family and cabaret events, celebrating the diversity and inclusivity of the magnificent Red Centre.

[www.fabalice.com](http://www.fabalice.com).

## **Reader's Stories**

### **Do you have a story?**

A break in the series of multi day hikes in Australia to enjoy a story that highlights the highs and low of road trips. This trip, sent in by Ted aka Wily Wanderer, has it all – rural towns in NSW, magnificent sunny weather, torrential rainfall, historical landmarks, sensational silo art, kindness of strangers and the inevitable 4WD breakdown. The only question left was will the car make it back home and will it live to see another road trip.

Articles for this newsletter can be emailed to [rochelle@meridianmaps.com.au](mailto:rochelle@meridianmaps.com.au)

### **2021 IS HERE ALREADY**

Well Christmas 2020 has come and gone. It was a good one with plenty of family coming and going. On the Monday we sat down 20 for lunch. All family. It was great. But that was then and this is now and the new year is shining bright. There's just the two of us at home now and we've done the tidying up, caught up with the maintenance, done the lawns and edges, sprayed for spiders and the drive for weeds. What now? The 'Cruiser was serviced just before Christmas and I've checked the brakes on the van. Let's go for a run.

We'll start at Tamworth, at Andrew's place, where his home acres have been transformed from drought conditions to almost jungle. With rain after a dry

spell it's always the weeds and spikes that grow the fastest. We arrive on the Friday of the Australia Day "non long weekend" and have four full days to relax or help out around the place. As it turns out, the weather had turned up the heat and every day after work it was necessary to take on copious quantities of liquid. Which we did. We cut grass, chopped weeds, tidied up, and on the whole, spent some good quality time together.



On the morning we left Tamworth it was hot early. With all the doo-dahs we have, the caravan was well established, clothes line, shade sail, etc and by the time it was all packed up and ready to go, the Sun had that bite to it that said there's more to come. We'd been watching the weather forecasts and this heatwave had been predicted, with a big low pressure belt forming across South Australia pulling all the heat out of the Centre down to the south east. All this hot air had to pass over us before it got blown out over the Tasman Sea.

Being in this situation makes us question the wisdom of touring in the summer months in rural NSW. But there's always a change a-coming. It's just a matter of 'when'. We make Gunnedah and set up in a free camp under the big old gums alongside the Namoi River. The camp site is called "The pig hole", but the council has slashed the grass and it's a level site and it's shady, so I don't know why they call it that.

Anyway, it's hot. The temperature has been creeping up from 30\* when we left Tamworth and it's going to climb all day to about 37\* around 5pm. But we are not deterred. We have all the gear. Out with the generator and on with the air conditioner. Boy, it had some work to do. But all these mod cons are for giving us comfort in the scrub, and it went well. Until just after six when it ran out of fuel. It's still hot. I put the last of the fuel in the tank, only a couple of litres, and the bloody thing wouldn't re-start. I left it to cool (ha) while I slipped back into town to fill the small fuel container with fresh petrol. Back at camp I top up the

tank with fresh fuel and pull her over. And pull her over. And pull her over. She won't start. It's still hot. I'm getting blisters from the starting cord. Finally it sparked up. Eventually it ran. Thank goodness. By then I was in bad need of cooling myself! So it ran for the next few hours while we watched the TV weather showing a Southerly roaring up the coast. The temperature in Sydney and back home at Lansdowne had dropped back into the twenties.

Just before dark the wind came up. You could tell there was a change coming ..... the end of the heatwave? ..... the hot air blustering back and forth, dust devils picked up on the flats and the old eucalypts threw off leaves willy nilly. After half an hour of indecision the mass of hot air was blown away and replaced by a steady sou-westerly. We were straight back down to 28\* and had a cooler night to aid a camper's sleep.

We'd done our running around town when we first arrived with the car air-con going flat out. We'd done the sightseeing and shopping, cashed in the empties and spied out the newly painted silo art. Very impressive. One silo tower depicted an effigy of local heroine Dorothea McKellar and on the other tower is the famous verse, "I love a sunburned country".

In the morning the breeze had turned to the south east and was cool. We'd made jokes about our next stopover at Coolah. Surely it would be cooler at Coolah! The southerly wind was right on our nose this day and pushing against it did awful things to our fuel economy. And just to prove a point, when we came over the hill to Coolah township the surrounding hills were awash with low, wet, misty clouds. Some of the coastal rain is blowing inland and the temperature difference in 24 hours is more than 12\*.

At Coolah we take advantage of the free camp area supplied for self contained vehicles by the Sporting Club. We drive in by the bowling greens onto the golf course and reverse in to the boundary fence at the back of the clubhouse. It's not a very big town but the main street is busy, and the local bakery is doing good trade with pies and cappuccino. It takes all of five minutes to have a look around town and we take the turn-off to "King Togee's Grave", 3 km. Straight into the timbered hills we go looking for the signage for this historic grave site. I'd read earlier that King Togee was the head of the local Aboriginal group when the first settlers arrived in the area. One of the Kamilaroi, or Gamilaraay tribes, he was helpful to the newcomers and eased a lot of tensions between blacks and whites. When he finally passed away, the pastoralist of the area had a stone inscribed over his grave, and it is said that the local tribes left the area for up to three years, apparently in mourning. We travelled four kilometres and couldn't find the site. On returning to town, a closer look at the faded brown and white tourist sign said 31 km. The "1" and the "k" were almost touching. At least that explained why we couldn't find it.

Coming south from Coolah we're heading for Mudgee, but as we cross over the Golden Highway there's Dunedoo just 10 km down the track and we've



heard that they've recently had their silos painted. We'll have a look. At Dunedoo the main street runs straight and parallel to it is a park and gardens, then a big wide parking area, then the railway, all side by side. The parking area is long and wide, big enough for buses, caravans and big trucks too. And at the end of it stands the big silos. Hereon is painted a depiction of the famous racehorse, Winx, a locally bred champion, complete with jockey and a triumphant owner. It's a job well done. On the other side of the silo is pictured the black swan, for which the town was named.

Out of town the way we come in and we shortly take the turn to Gulgong. This is the town famous for being on our ten dollar bill. An interesting place and full of significant history. The high kerbs are still the original stone and the old streets are so narrow that it's difficult to pass. This is the main reason why the traffic is detoured around the town centre and having the van on the back there's no way I'm going through town either, and we pass by and head on towards Mudgee.

We hit the showground and find a power box along past seven other vans. There's green grass and plenty of room. The clouds have come in again and it's starting to rain lightly. This town is a-buzz. I can remember back in the 1970s, with better cars and improved roads, Mudgee became within the magic three hours from Sydney. Land here was sub-divided, advertised widely and a lot of small acreages were sold to Sydneysiders. Grapes could be grown in the area and vineyards sprang up everywhere. Nowadays the area is recognised as a major wine producer with dozens of vineyards and growing a wide variety of grapes. The town itself has grown substantially and a host of trendy, innovative people abounds. We enjoy our stroll around town taking in the mix of the old and the new, including buildings, motor vehicles, and even people.

Relaxing at the van Saturday afternoon and we're aroused by a loud voice close by directing a vehicle back. Fair dinkum, there's a bloke directing his wife in the motor home back in right alongside of us and over our water hose. "Hold on" I say. Then I get, "What's the matter? It won't hurt it". "It won't hurt it if you don't run over it", was my reply. I unplug our water from the tap and pull the hose in while she reverses in. I thought this is not a very good start with a brand new close-up neighbour. And he's got mates coming. Another van, a fifth wheeler and a bus! They all come and pile in close to us ( to get the power outlet, I suppose), and they've all got little dogs. Oh well, we're leaving tomorrow.

Sunday morning and it's time to go. We're taking a slightly longer route to pass through the small village of Lue and look in on a pottery and porcelain display. We exit Mudgee through the centre of town and take the turn to Lue. As we pick up speed the white centre-line suddenly starts to look a bit blurry as it passed by the car. What's going on? The I realise the blur is coming from

under my bonnet! I can't tell if it's steam or smoke but luckily there's a clear shoulder and room to pull off the road. I call for Chris to jump out quick and grab the fire extinguisher from the van, I turn off the engine and pop the bonnet. As the extinguisher arrives I lift the bonnet and .... thank goodness ..... it's only steam. Not a disaster, just a hiccup. It looks like the radiator has given up the ghost. We call the NRMA.

A good Samaritan pulls up to see if we're okay. He pulls in and immediately runs down a red reflector road marker. No problem. Just stand it up again. We thank him for his offer of help .... we have the NRMA coming. Two other separate groups pulled in to offer assistance. One very helpful and friendly lady even showed us where we could park the van close by if we had to have the vehicle towed. Finally the NRMA man shows up and we agree that the top tank of the radiator has split and she's losing water. I fill the radiator up full and put the cap only half on so as not to build up pressure. Then I hightail it back to the showground, with the NRMA man following. I wonder what other people think when I drive in and reverse the van back into the very spot we'd left just a couple of hours before. Then I reverse the morning's get-go and go through the routine of setting up all over again. I have from the very helpful NRMA man the name and address of a radiator repair man who has a shop out in the industrial area. I'll give him a call tomorrow.

Being Sunday there's not a lot happening and we spend the afternoon playing Up-words and Rummy-o, psychologically settling in for a long wait. At seven in the morning I have the water topped up again and drive out to the industrial area. The radiator man says we need a new one. It's that simple. He can have a new one here in the morning , but, he's flat out today and has a big job on for Tuesday. We agree for me to leave the 'Cruiser with him and , if he gets a chance, he can start pulling it apart.

He gives me a lift back to the showground and we wait the day out. Next day we walk to town, get a bit of shopping, have a bit of a look around and catch a cab back to the van.

There's two missed calls on the phone. One of them says the car is ready. Wow! That was quick! I immediately call for a taxi. Walking to the gate to get my lift, I bump into the radiator man. He's come to pick me up! So we wait at the gate for the taxi to say 'Thanks, but no thanks', and give the driver \$5 for his trouble. Back at the workshop, the new radiator had arrived about 9 am, and the previously booked job was cancelled. My job was done ASAP. The radiator bloke turned out to be a Toyota man. He owned a couple of 'Cruisers and had travelled widely in his 'Troopy'. He and I had both travelled some of Australia's legendary tracks. He'd done The Great Central and The Canning Stock Route and we'd both done the Birdsville, Poeppel Corner, the Tanami, the Plenty and the Gulf Track. We'd both been camping at Ayers Rock in 1981/82, in the days when you could camp right by the Rock. He showed me

photos of himself 4WD-ing in Capertee Valley with 4WD magazine publishers. A bloke who knew his way about and how to fix things.

I felt so lucky to have gotten out of a break-down situation so smoothly. Firstly, we weren't far from town. Then the always-helpful NRMA man, and we found a bloke who fixed us up and got us back on the road in nothing flat! I love this country!

We left Mudgee on Wednesday, the same as we had done on Sunday, only this time we kept going. We turn at the pottery sign at Lue only to find it closed, seemingly like so many places during this damned pandemic. The Lue road takes us through the towns of Kandos and Rylestone before re-joining the main highway at Capertee. We're travelling on the western side of the Divide and there's plenty of ups and downs, and some spectacular scenery. This road runs along the western side of the Capertee Valley. One of the travel brochures from Mudgee tells us that this valley is the world's second largest 'canyon'. Another says second largest 'enclosed valley'. Whatever, it's pretty big.

We turn off to Portland to view the painted silos. Ten kilometres of ups and downs brings us to the village in the hills. The silos are massive. Eight silos standing four by two, with the huge mural simply, but masterfully, depicting one of the old men who used to work at the cement works. It's really good art work and there's plenty of off road viewing area because it's the old factory grounds. The cement works is closed now, but in years gone by, most of Sydney and suburbs were built with the cement from Portland. I can't help wondering where it's coming from now.

After photographs we mosey on down to the showground and park on the grass for a bite of lunch. We feel we have seen most of town just by driving through, so we head for our next stop at Bathurst. From Portland we find a bitumen back road towards Sunny Corner and meeting the Great Western Highway at Meadow Flat. These are lovely place-names but in bad weather this is where the highway is most likely to be cut by snow. But by coming this way we have effectively cut off 40 km of main road travel.

On approaching Bathurst I'm amazed to see how much it's grown since I was last here. Well, not Bathurst so much, but Kelso, on the approach. There's shops, factory outlets, big retailers, traffic lights ..... and traffic. The showground is just past the bridge over the Macquarie River and we pull in to the gate. There's a caretaker here and they take things seriously. We hand over \$30 for a site and get the lecture on park etiquette, noise, dogs, leave by 10 am, as well as the Covid no hugging or cuddling rules. Though there's seventeen vans here there's miles of room and it's all grassed and prickle-free. We check out the grandstands, the stables and the racetrack. There's horse training going on here. Training? They tie the horses up to a frame and

tow it behind a motor vehicle and the horses are forced to run the circuit at the pace of the vehicle. Makes me glad I'm not a horse!

We leave the officious \$30/night showground in the morning. There's storms forecast to be coming ... soon. But when we stop at Blayney it's 32\* and humid. Cowra is our target and we push through town to the showground. Once again, grassed level sites with power and water for \$20/night. We set up the van and have a look around town. The sky is getting darker and the storm is imminent. We'll see the sights tomorrow but for now it's back to the van and batten down the hatches. The sky is dark, low and rumbling, then come the first big drops. Just one here and there, half a cup-full in each. Then nothing ..... but it hadn't gone away. Twenty minutes later it was bucketing down and the wind was ripping at the awning. There was so much noise. Wind buffeting, heavy rain on the van, and the bloody awning flapping as to self destruct.. This can't last long. But it did. It backed off for a while then came on again just as strong from the opposite direction. The awning flogged so hard it snapped a stay and I needed to go out in the downpour and re-attach a guy rope. Finally the wind eased off ..... and it just rained.

The next day made 30\*. Strange weather. Hot under cloud, even hotter when the sun breaks through, but with a fresh breeze from the north. It's sightseeing day. We went and looked over the site of the old POW camp which housed over 2,200 prisoners during WW2. The suicidal breakout attempt, staged here by the Japanese prisoners in 1944, was the biggest land action on Australian soil during the war. Four Australians died and hundreds of Japanese were killed or wounded during the breakout. There is nowadays a mutual society between the peoples of Cowra and the descendants of the Japanese uprising. And we saw the beautiful Japanese gardens. Five hectares of gardens and lawns and fountains and paths and bridges. We took a golf buggy and drove around the garden's paths spying out the hundreds of different species that have been planted here. It was a job to dodge the ducks and their ducklings who were revelling in the water features. Then we saw the 'Peace Bell'. It weighs nearly half a tonne and was cast from melted down coins that were donated by the UN. It hangs outside Council chambers and is rung in unison with other 'peace bells' around the world on special commemorative occasions. Everyone is invited to give it a ring and consider the values of world peace. This is the only 'peace bell' sited outside a capital city and was presented to Cowra in recognition for the towns efforts in reconciliation.

I'm worried about the old 'Cruiser. We've already replaced the radiator and now she's developing a whine in the transmission. And it's gotten worse since Mudgee. Transmission problems sounds expensive to me, but the real worry is getting it back home and not having it self destruct along the road somewhere. Fingers crossed.



That afternoon the weather cuts loose again. Strong wind gusts, heavy rain and purple/black clouds down to the treetops. It settled down to a steady rain overnight and was still at it in the morning. It's no fun packing up in the rain but it has to be done, and we needed to take on water because the next stop has no facilities. It does feel rather odd, standing in the rain with the hose going filling the tank.

Leaving Cowra in the rain and wet we travel slowly. On one of the rises affording a view to the west, we can actually see a line of blue on the horizon and virtually the edge of the rain cloud. Sure enough, we soon break into sunshine. Before pulling into the camp site at the old railway station at Grenfell we take a turn around and have another look at their painted silo. It doesn't disappoint. This is definitely one of the better ones. This is Chris' old home town and there's plenty to catch up on. After setting the van up and a quick shop we have a nice lunch with Betty, Chris' cousin, at her house. Betty recently joined us on one of our wanderings in her 'mini-bago', (as I call it). There being much to catch up on, lunch lengthened to consume the whole afternoon. And the next day we're back at Betty's place again for lunch and a very pleasant afternoon with a bunch of Chris' old school mates and friends. When we return to camp we have the park to ourselves. There were twelve vans in camp last night but they've all moved on. Suits me.

I always have a rough itinerary and there are a few more places to visit, but with the 'Cruiser starting to whine it might be best to turn our heads for home. We need to get her back where she can be worked on and we can be at home during repairs. Basically no one wants a breakdown a long way from home. We'll be travelling slowly, even slower than usual, so I take the minor roads where I can. We head through Gooloogong and Canowindra to Molong, but from there on it's all highways. They'll just have to get past as best they can. We by-pass Cassilis and pull in at Merriwa where we can free camp up alongside the bowls/golf club. It's only been a six hour drive but I haven't gone over 80 all the way and I'm a bit weary at this stage, and this is probably about the half-way point on the trip home.

We leave in the morning after coffee and fuel. Also after taking the pointy pliers to the burrs in the soles of our shoes and checking the dog's feet. We don't want to take those burr-seeds back to our place! An uneventful trip, another six hours, brings us back to Lansdowne and home. The whining coming from under the front of the car doesn't seem to have gotten any worse, or are we just getting used to it? The good news is that she's got us home and I've booked her in to the fix-it man to have a look at her next week.

Safely back at home I contemplate how lucky we have been. The radiator problem was close to a major town and readily fixed. The vehicle got us home again even with a developing problem in the transmission. I look back on all the other trips where we have just pulled in to the servo and filled up, and

when she's empty we just pull in and fill up again. And again and again. We don't even lift the bonnet. It's a reminder that even with good equipment, things can still go wrong. But then, that's life.

Thinking forwards, this old 'Cruiser better get fixed soon because it'll only be five weeks and we'll need her again. Easter's coming, and the music festival at Hartwood, cancelled last year, is on again. After Hartwood, Wily has another tour planned for a large part of NSW, taking in the Southwest Slopes and Plains, the Central West, and north towards the New England area.

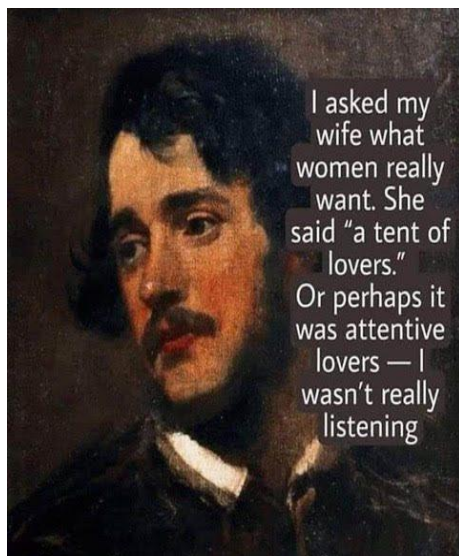
But that's another trip ..... and another story.

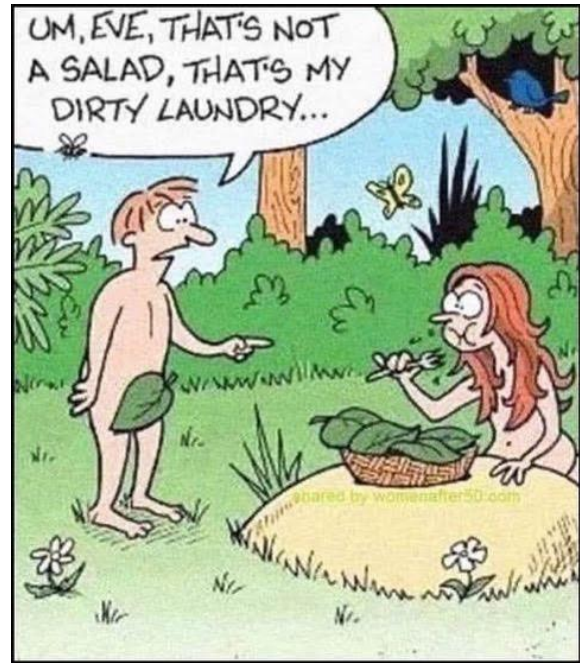
Safe travels.

And don't let the grass grow under your feet.

## Meridian Mirth

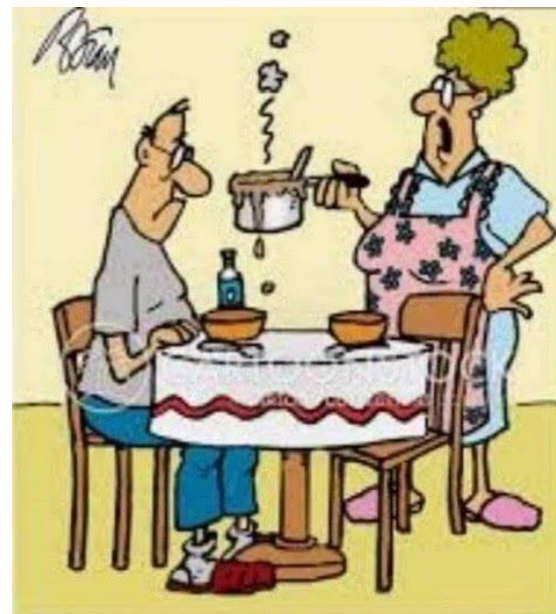
Thank you to Vince and Simon for sending in these jokes. Hope they were able to bring a smile to your face. To share your jokes, please send them to [rochelle@meridianmaps.com.au](mailto:rochelle@meridianmaps.com.au).





## Practical Advice:

If all the toilets in your house are occupied and you are waiting for one to be free, switch off the wi-fi.



"AND FOR YOUR DINING PLEASURE THIS EVENING WE ARE OFFERING TWO CHOICES: TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT!"



John walks to school with his mum every day. When they pass the house next door, their young Doberman starts barking. Further up the street a small terrier growls. There are three poodles in the house on the corner that yap away. John hates dogs and gets more and more nervous about going to school each day. To make John feel better, his dad decides to walk him to school. As they pass the Doberman it just lies down and stares at them. The terrier doesn't even leave its kennel. When they get to the house on the corner the poodles don't make a peep.

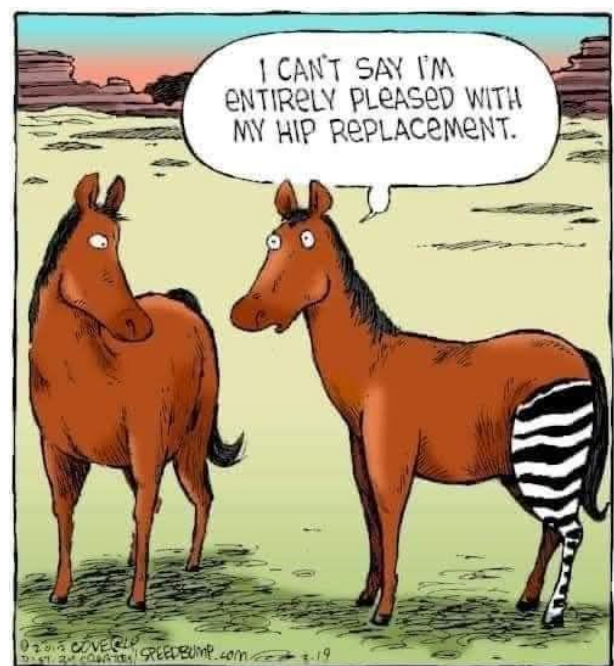
"Wow, Dad!" Arnav says. "How do you do it?"

"It's simple," Dad says. "I'm wearing my Hush Puppies!"

A young boy was doing some handiwork with his father. When it came to putting a picture on the wall the father said, "I'll do this one... You're like lightning with a hammer!"

The boy said, "Wow, is that cos I'm so fast?"

"No, it's because you never strike the same place twice!"





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