

On Patrol August 2008

The camper trailer

Most of our travelling over the last month went into driving up to Charleville to collect the camper trailer previously used by Bill and Bronwyn Gray, and later by David Rodgers. Our sincere thank to these folk who left it in a very good condition – some camping gear and all!



Heila preparing tea at the camp kitchen

On our way from Charleville back to Victoria we spent some time in areas south of Hillston and west of Griffith down to the border between NSW and Victoria. We did so in request of the Superintendent, Stuart Bonnington, with a view to extend our patrol ministry into mid-southwest NSW (steering clear of areas covered by the South-west NSW patrol.



Sleeping in style under a dooner on a double that doesn't lose air in the middle of the night!



Reflections in the Darling River at Bourke



The beauty of the wattle

Mid-southwest NSW

Because of depopulation in those areas towns like Hillston, Googowi, Coleambally, Jerilderie, Hay, etc were left without incumbent ministry, let alone ministry to outlying properties.



Driving the plains south of Hay

Travelling through the barren plains of mid-western southern NSW takes your breath away. The distances are vast and the farms are miles apart. The drought left its mark on the landscape. Only closer to river beds and valleys are the yellow splatter of wattle to be seen, now in full blossom while about everything else is still in its winter sleep.

Patrol these areas is a definite possibility. Should we do it, or could it be covered by the South-west NSW patrol? We will have to come to an agreement. A grain grower in the

Mallee made a remark that made me think: *“In March-April and late October-November you will not get much*

sense out of the cockies in our part of the world. They are then into planting and harvesting.” It might be wise to, in these periods, do some patrols into NSW.

Birchip

Before we undertook our first real patrol – now fitted out with about everything we need – I attended a meeting in Birchip. This is part of a series of meetings nationally arranged by the Federal Department of Agriculture with a view to revise its Drought Policies. It was seeking the views and input of local communities. I made a presentation on behalf of PIM about our work and ministry to far-flung properties. It was well-received, and I hope that this introduction would have helped to introduce the Mallee patrol to the people.



The Red Mallee Bull of Birchip

Murray Valley Patrol



Salt swamp in the Mallee

Not many words could describe my emotions after the first day of patrol. Heila accompanied me and I really wanted her to experience the positive side of patrol work.

We headed west from Swan Hill towards Chinkapook (if nothing else, the names of the little communities sounds good!). Not knowing the area we just took the first road north at the first intersection. We could find no-one home after criss-crossing the maze of sandy roads! By lunch-time, now with a piercingly cold south-westerly wind in our faces, we still had not seen anyone. We headed north to

Mittyack and then again eastwards, and at last we saw a face – but we got as far as the veranda! The sun was heading for the horizon and my courage dropped southwards. We camped in Ouyen where I mapped out the route for the next day.

And until lunchtime, after we did quite bit fair bit of driving, we couldn't find a farmhouse. We were encouraged when we shared morning tea with a couple from Melbourne, now almost lost in the southern parts of the Great Victorian Desert. We gave them PIM reading and our card.



Deserted and forgotten

We turned back to Ouyen in search of a decent map, but due to privacy laws, not even the Department of Primary Industries could help us. We enjoyed lunch and headed west – again. We bumped into another couple – they were from Perth on a travelling holiday. They were now the recipients of our literature.

And all along I wondered what the Lord was trying to teach us.

The stop in Murrayville was good and our neighbour in the caravan park offered their electric heater, as ours packed it in. They got literature in exchange.

And then, as the new day opened up, so did God raise our hopes. The very first farmhouse was warm, friendly and hospitable – and Christian! We fellowshiped and prayed together. My spirits were up, and so were Heila's.

We made one after the next good contact and left numerous leaflets and cards at places where no-one was home. One fellow actually phone me that night and invited us to visit on a next patrol!



Once a castle ...

To top it off, the people of the last property were Christians too! And

they invited us to stop over with them. Christian fellowship is good, but if it is accompanied by a hot wood fireplace, a warm shower and a very meaty meal, what better can you ask for!



Many gallons has it held ...



This entrance to a farmhouse will cheer anyone up!



Beauty and memories forgotten



The promise of a good crop



No need for this anymore

Prayer points

- Pray for us that we will not be discouraged when things don't look so rosy!
- Pray that the grace of God will rest upon the crops, now reaching a critical stage.
- Thank God for some good showers in the Mallee
- Pray for the family who lost a young father through a fatal heart attack