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### **BOLDRE STILL AND BOLDRE**

**(November 2018)**



### **THE BRIDGE - NEAR ALBANY, WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

*The Reverend Canon Andrew Neaum became the “House for Duty” Anglican priest of the lovely Boldre Benefice in August 2013. The Vicarage in which he and Diana live is on the edge of the New Forest, a couple of miles north of Lymington in Hampshire. He is old fashioned enough a priest to visit his flock in their homes, but “house for duty” clergy are supposed to work only two days a week and Sundays, which means visiting everyone in the parish takes a long time. The following are the **November 2018** weekly ruminations, aired prejudices and footling observations that in the weekly pew sheet augment his visits and help keep folk in touch week in and week out. Earlier articles are available from the Article Page on this Website:*

<http://www.andrewneaum.com/articles.htm>

## (269) “This and That” - 11 November 2018

### “All Over Down Under” [4]

As boring as most sermons, surely, are accounts of other people’s dreams. Possibly because both concern what is unreal, in a material sense. Clergymen’s dreams then, if sermon related, would be doubly boring.

#### Dreams and Ravensthorpe Silos

In Albany, during a good night’s sleep in the most comfortable of our whole trip’s motels, I dreamt of visiting and talking to two unbelieving adult girls who had lost their mother. My journal comments laconically: “I got nowhere.” What does that mean? Even in a dream I wouldn’t set about trying to convert someone in extremis.

The journey east from Albany to Esperance is about 300 miles. Inland from the coast, the road crosses low-rainfall, Mallee-type, scraggy forest and scrub. Vast acreages of this have been cleared for wheat and canola crops, most of which looked promising as we sped past. In the distance, to the north, are the Stirling Ranges. Were we not focussed upon crossing the continent we would have dallied there. By Australian standards they are impressive. One of the richest areas for flora in the world.

We stopped briefly at Ravensthorpe. It is roughly the size of the first Australian village I was Rector of in 1985, on the other side of Australia in Victoria. The population a mere 600. We stopped to photograph Ravensthorpe’s three great wheat silos. They are strikingly decorated with 82 feet high murals of a local wild flower: *Banksia baxteri*.

The silo painting project took 31 days to complete, used 75 gallons of paint and involved countless trips up and down the silos in a knuckle boom. The artist, known as *Amok Island*, is based in Fremantle. Like Banksy he began as a graffiti and street artist.

He says of the Ravensthorpe silo mural: *Each silo side shows a different stage of the flowering cycle of this species of Banksia, only found between Esperance and Albany, from flower buds, to full bloom, to seedpods developing, drying out and opening. The animals are this species’ main pollinators; the Honey Possum and New Holland Honey eater. The artwork encircles the three silos infinitely; the final silo marks the beginning once again of the first, making a connection with the cycle of the seasons and grain farming processes this area is known for.*

In bright sunlight the murals were striking enough to invite us to break our journey in an otherwise unremarkable village. Though it is notorious too for the *Ravensthorpe Massacre*, where many of the local Noongar aboriginal people were massacred in revenge for what was then the lawful spearing of John Dunn in 1880 for raping a 13 year old Noongar girl.

#### Esperance

We arrived in Esperance as dusk fell, having phone booked ahead into rather more plebeian accommodation than that enjoyed in Albany. Only \$90 for the night. We had to venture into a rowdy bar to find someone to sign us in, but it was good natured, family rowdiness. Very Australian, we enjoyed it. Unusually there was no internet in our room. We sent off a necessary email from the hotel foyer, with raucous bar noise and jovial passers by to distract us.

A walk around the town’s sea front in the dark yielded nowhere enticing to eat. We returned to the hotel where, in the noisy bar, we had excellent fish and chips, in my case with a beer. It was all enjoyably companionable with families and children tucking into meals as well. We left as a karaoke evening worked itself into full swing.

## **Space litter**

The next day we had many, many miles to travel and so the varied delights of Esperance were ignored. In 1979, pieces of the space station Skylab crashed onto Esperance. The municipality fined the US \$400 for littering. The fine was paid in April 2009, when radio show host Scott Barley raised the funds from his morning show listeners, and paid the fine on behalf of NASA. A 17 year old local lad picked up a \$10,000 prize by being the first to deliver, in person, a piece of the space junk to a San Francisco newspaper.

## **(268) “This and That” - 4 November 2018**

### **“All Over Down Under” [3]**

I get up earlier than Diana, though she’s no sluggard. Our first conversation takes place as we don boots for our early morning walk.

#### **Passion and dalliance**

She has an organised and organising mind. Her subject matter is the day ahead’s tasks and events. I invariably respond with queries as to what to cook for our evening meal, subject matter for this weekly article or whatever sermon I’m obsessed with. She’s loving enough to engage with my passions and preoccupations, albeit briefly.

Cooking is as enjoyable as writing. Both occupations are creative, but cooking is also relaxing and therapeutic. While crossing Australia cooking’s place in my life was replaced by mere dalliance over what meals and snacks to buy. Article writing was replaced by longer than usual entries to my journal and the taking of photographs to complement them.

#### **Breakfast lunch and dinner**

Breakfast at home is a bowl of fresh fruit soup. A variety of fruits are blended with natural yoghurt and appreciatively slurped as we watch, through the window, birds breakfasting on our feeders. While travelling across Australia we joined the birds, settling for a selection of grains. My son had left a bin of very good, toasted muesli in the car. Not of the health-fascist, unsweetened sort, but just sugary enough to encourage joy and optimism for the day ahead.

For lunch we parked somewhere scenic, set up canvas bucket chairs and gobbled a pot of instant noodles. The crinkly sort. This was followed by a couple of saved motel biscuits with a mug of hot chocolate or coffee. It sufficed, because eating while driving is the one sure way to keep me awake. Throughout the trip Diana fed me dried fruit and nuts to save our lives. So we were never ravenous for lunch. Only for evening meals did we eat out or take in takeaways.

Our first night out of Perth and third in Australia was spent in Albany. It’s a substantial and lovely town on the southern tip of Western Australia . We arrived as dusk fell. For the only time on our journey we had left it late to phone ahead to book accommodation. We ended up in the most comfortable and pricey accommodation of the whole trip. A good walk around town on a cold, breezy, weekday night revealed nowhere suitable to eat out. A supermarket yielded an excellent curry to microwave in our apartment.

#### **Wild seas and dazzling beaches**

We allowed ourselves a couple of hours the next day to sightsee before heading east to Esperance. It was sunny, with a cold breeze. We visited ‘The Gap’, a deep channel in granite cliffs carved by the mighty waves of the Southern Ocean. The drop of about eighty feet to foaming, wild ocean is overhung by a platform that invites a thrilling attack of vertigo. The cliffs were once

joined directly to Antarctica, when Australia was a part of the supercontinent Gondwana. The wind on this exposed stretch of coast was wild and everywhere hazed with sea-blown mist and foam. There was also an impressive, wave-sculpted, granite bridge.

We then crossed a hill into sunnier, calmer and warmer weather to visit a defunct whaling station, now a museum. Set on a bay of dazzling white beaches it ceased whaling in 1978. From 1958, until then, 1,136 humpback whales and 14,695 sperm whales were caught and slaughtered. The station remained profitable almost to the end. Its whale oil was used by NASA and to make Swiss watches.

There was not enough time to explore the museum. Instead we had a good walk and look around outside before heading for the road to Esperance through and around Albany's many lovely bays. We stopped at an astonishingly white sand beach, and enjoyed road signs advising caution because of crossing turtles, and mallee fowl.

### **Goodbye tallow**

Vegetarian sensitivities seem to have done away with real soap. In our Perth Motel we were required to shower with a "Skin detox body bar".

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