

councillor of Kilcoy, it is great to get everyone together. I hope that you enjoy it all. This region has so many 'hidden secrets'. It is the largest geographical region with the lowest population. I would now like to introduce you to Rob Storrer who will entertain you." Rob said, "Some of you may have heard me, and some may not. I will sing "I Come to Australia" followed by a more Irish one "Danny Boy". Following this Rob said that he would do one more then 'he would shut up'. He sang "The Wild Rover". With the night drawing to a close it was time for those who were not accommodated at the Farm Stay to head home while those staying had the most wonderful accommodation provide by Leonie and Steve of the Kilcoy Farm Stay. What a great place!! The Farm Stay is situated just ten kilometres from the farming town of Kilcoy along the Esk Kilcoy Road at Hazeldean, adjacent to Lake Somerset. This is just an easy eighty minutes drive from Brisbane and just an hour from the Sunshine Coast. At the Farm Stay you can enjoy the peace and serenity of the charming three bedroom fully renovated and self contained 1890s farmhouse and attached outdoor entertaining area which Leonie and Steve call the "Feed Lot". There is also a separate nine bed bunk house with linen provided. You can ski or fish nearby at Lake Somerset, visit local wineries, explore the three hundred acre farm or just relax and unwind on the veranda as you admire the breathtaking water and mountain views. Visit www.kilcoyfarmstay.com.au

Morning arrived very quickly on Tuesday, but it was very foggy. There was supposed to be a Sunrise Walk or drive to the 'Knoll' but it was so foggy that the sun never rose until about 9 pm. However, it was a wonderful morning with a wonderful breakfast cooked by Leonie and Steve and we were able to take a quick drive up to the 'Knoll' before we boarded



Leonie Shirley and Phil Close with surprise guest Craig Lowndes of Kilcoy



Susan Pratten of Winya Wines preparing for our wine tasting



Agg Dagan of SEQ Water gave a great overview of the workings of Somerset Dam etc.

Christensen's bus ably driven by Lenore (Christensen) who took us up to the Neurum Creek Bush Retreat at 268 Rassmussen Road, Neurum, situated at the foot of Mt Archer where we were met by the owner John Gavin. John said, "Sometimes we have six hundred campers here. There is always plenty to do here. We do not have many vans, mostly campers. They can bring their dogs, as we are a 'dog friendly park'. This is a great thing. We will be having a weekend soon to raise funds for Variety and we will make a donation to the kids. We will do a 'doggy weekend' where they pay \$45 and this includes a donation to the variety club. In October we will have another camping expo. It will be held over the road and people can bring their camping related items to show and sell. That night we have music and entertainment and we ask vendors to donate items. Some prizes given out are valued up to \$400 and as low as \$10, but it is a great night. The kids even love it here when it is cold as they still go swimming in the creek. We pump water from the creek into a settling tank for use in toilets etc. We have tank water for drinking. We do not have any cooking facilities but you can rent a barbeque and cooking utensils and hire a tent if needed. Occasionally some people come in a \$150,000 Winnebago and some in a \$10 tent; we treat them all the same." Phil Close commented that he had been to the retreat about ten times with Wine Tasting from Woongoroo. Neurum Creek Bush Retreat is a privately owned and operated business and as such you must register at the office upon arrival, whether you are coming camping, staying for the day or just wanting to have a look around the retreat. Simon and Tracey reside on the property so are never far away if you need them for help, or advice, whether it is with your camp set up or where to go and what to do on this property, or in the surrounding district. Their aim is for you to have a hassle free break, to enjoy your stay and to go home feeling that you want to go back and visit with them again. You can sit back and relax; taking in the natural beauty of this property with its abundance of bird life and butterflies, or you can be energetic and explore this one hundred and twenty seven hectare property. Walking alongside the creek or over the hillside tracks is a favourite with most visitors. Those that are fit enough can take the challenge of walking the mountain tracks or tackling the twin gorges. It is up to you; do as little or as much as you like!

We boarded the bus and went to Phil, Gail and Amanda Close's Woongoroo Estate at 35 Doyle's Road, halfway along the Neurum Road between Woodford and Kilcoy. Phil said, "We built this place for Amanda as she loves people. Working here, someone had to give up work, so it was me. Gail still teaches. We have a lot of activities here. We have the Lunch Time Theatrics where we begin with Morning Tea in Yowie Park then John McAulay brings the guests here at 10.30 am for wine tasting. They come here and get a part in a play after their wine tasting which lasts for about fifteen to twenty minutes. They have lunch, we sell some wine then they are taken home. I play the guitar sometimes and they all sing along. We have Mystery Car Rallies, too. Entrants pay \$30 entry fee for administration, trophies and certificates, visit five businesses and come back and answer a questionnaire over lunch, we choose the winners, and then we hand out trophies." We had a comprehensive wine tasting with Phil. He walked us through how to properly taste wine. He poured the wine into wine tasting glasses, told everyone NOT to do anything with it before he gave instructions to swirl the wine up the sides of the glass several times (the 'legs' this is called) and then you could smell the wine several times before taking it into your mouth and swilling it all around your mouth. He said that it was not necessary to always swallow the wine. As one person said, "I have been to many wine tastings in Queensland but have never had it explained like that before!" We all enjoyed a delicious morning tea after which Phil gave a demonstration of how the kelpie dogs keep the birds away from the grape vines. Quite amazing!! Woongoroo Estate is a boutique family-owned and operated 5,000 vine vineyard, wine operation and Cellar Door Café in the fabulous Somerset Region part of the Country Valleys. They also cater for Friday night dining but you have to book for these. Their website is www.yourweekend.com.au

From here we journeyed on through Villeneuve Road to the D'Aguiar Highway then up to Gary (Snow) and Sue Pratten's Winya Wines at 145 Sandy Creek Road. Winya Wines is nestled in the picturesque valley of Sandy Creek. It is just one and a half hours easy drive from Brisbane and only one hour from the Sunshine Coast. Snow and Sue ventured into grape growing in 1997 as an addition to their beef cattle property. In 2001 Snow and Sue were able to process their first vintage through renowned wine maker Craig Robinson from the Robinson Family, Ballandean. The result displays superb Queensland wines which are recognized in the area for their fine quality. Winya

Wines cellar door is open and visitors can enjoy fine wine tasting in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere and appreciate the breath taking view of the surrounding district. Winya Wines lies within the Somerset Regional Shire where owners Snow and Sue are members of the Somerset Valley Grape and Wine Association Inc. This group focuses on producing high quality grapes which are then made into superb Queensland wine. Snow and Sue have welcomed Black Angus to their cellar door. Upon arrival we found Snow assisted by Steve Shirley busy cooking some steaks on the barbeque. Wow!! What a smell!! This was Black Angus beef from their grain assisted yearlings. They also sell selected cuts on your request or you can also buy a side as a pack for \$6.50 per kilogram. It was great to be able to taste their wonderful wine, and sample their home grown beef while taking in the wonderful views. Some of our 'gang' also took some steaks home!! Winya is a three hundred and seven acre property with three acres of vineyard.

David Sutcliffe from Kilcoy Luxury Taxis took some of us back to Kilcoy in his modern MPV. Kilcoy Luxury Taxis Somerset Wine Trails cover a wide range of popular destinations including Fernvale, Kilcoy, Jimna, Kingaroy and much more. Tours can be made within twenty-four hours booking service and there is a maximum of six people per trip. The design of the vehicle is wheelchair accessible and is cost effective, especially for those travelling in groups. This way everybody can enjoy the comfort they deserve. You may also like to hire them for weddings or functions. If you would like more information you can contact David on 0458 562 646 twenty-four hours per day.

We arrived at Chantilly Blue where everyone was in awe of the beautiful décor of the old homestead so beautifully restored. Chantilly is situated at 25 Seib Street, Kilcoy out looking the picturesque 'Aston Park'. They make great 'merlo' coffee, serve home made gourmet meals 'with a touch of nostalgia', and they sell gift ware from many different places. Chantilly Blue is the innovation of owners Lorraine Tones, Lisa Jayne Lansdown and Judy Gleeson. While inside Chantilly Blue, everyone was busy chatting away and in walked one of the "Hidden Secrets" of the day - Craig Lowndes. Craig mingled with our group and sat with us at lunchtime. Craig lives at Mt Kilcoy on his property with wife Natalie and their son Levi and daughter Chilli. Craig is the three time V8 Super Car Champion - 1996, 1998, and 1999. He won the 1996 Champion Ship in rookie year, youngest ever series champion at age twenty-two, second champion ship in 2005 and 2006, third in 2000 and 2007. He has had thirty-four V8 Super Car Round wins, seventy-four V8 Super Car Race wins, twenty-one V9 Super Car pole positions, and four time Bathurst 1000 winner in 1996, 2006, 2007 and 2008. He is one of the nation's most popular sporting heroes. He made an early debut in Australian motorsport, competing in his first event at just nine years of age. Go Karting was the starting point for this talented youngster who quickly showed the potential to rise through the ranks, winning the national Formula Ford title in 1993 and the Formula Holden Silver Star Class in 1994. That success put him on the radar of prominent V8 Super Car Team, Holden Racing Team (HRT) with him earning a drive in the endurance races and finishing second on his debut at Bathurst in 1994. He joined HRT full time in 1996 and was an instant success. He took out his first ever championship round and went on to become the youngest ever Australian Touring Car Champion, before winning the Sandown 500 and Bathurst 1000. After an International Venture in 1997 he returned to Australia and quickly reasserted himself on the V8 Super Car scene, winning the championship in 1998 and 1999. In 2001 he made the most controversial move of any Australian race driver switching from Holden to Ford. After a hand full of seasons with limited success, highlighted by podium finishes at Bathurst in 2003 and 2004 he joined Triple Eight Race Engineering in 2005. A power house international, Triple Eight was a perfect match for him and he finished second in the championship that year. He narrowly missed out on the 2006 title, finishing second in a year which included his second Bathurst 1000 victory and was third in 2007 after another Bathurst triumph. 2008 saw Craig enjoy another impressive campaign, finishing fourth in the championship and helping Team Vodafone to their inaugural team's title. He and team mate Jamie Whincup also won a historic, third consecutive Bathurst 1000. 2009 was yet another strong year for Craig while Team Vodafone continued to dominate the series. Two event wins at Winton (Vict) and Barbagallo helped him to another fourth place in the championship. In 2010 Craig and Team Vodafone will join Holden and all eyes will be on the team and Craig to see if they can be as dominant on the red side. Craig had heaps to tell us all about his exciting career. We were treated to the most wonderful meal by the ladies of Chantilly Blue. It was also a great time for some of us to browse the wonderful gift shop and some found some great treasures to purchase. Craig was thanked for attending as it was such a great surprise.

We boarded the bus for our trip back to the Farm Stay. Once back here Lenore was thanked for her capable driving and we all hoped that she had an enjoyable day. Some of us took the opportunity to be able to go up the mountain to take in the wonderful views of Somerset Dam. The 'close to three hundred and sixty degree' views from here were breathtaking. There were certainly a lot of 'clicks' taken from this vantage point!! We then travelled to Somerset Dam in our own vehicles. It was here that we met Agg Dagan from SEQ Water together with Ross Tutin and Ellie Smith from the Esk Visitor Information Centre. Agg took us on a tour of the Somerset Dam wall and gave us some great information about the dam and surrounds with figures which were quite astounding, as to heights, volume years etc. He turned on one cone valve, then another so that we could see the volume of water which would be released when necessary. During the recent flood of the dam, four of these cone valves were opened for some time as well as some of the slush valves. He took us on a guided tour to see how the slush valves open and close. Quite remarkable!! We were also able to observe a plaque at the entrance to the dam in memory of four men who had died while the dam was under construction 1933 - 1942 and 1948 - 1959. This plaque was placed by their families in memory of Stanley Scaroni, Thomas Mulroney, Joseph Slater and Arthur Burgess. Another plaque there reads: "Somerset Dam is named after the late H P Somerset M L A, who was the first to suggest the use of Stanley Gorge as a dam site, and who rendered valuable service in warning Brisbane of impending floods. Unveiled by The Honourable G F R Nicklin, M M, M L A, Premier of Queensland 1958". With this tour drawing to a close, Agg and his partner Mel were invited to join us at the Catchment Café for afternoon tea. At the café we were treated to the most delicious afternoon tea by Lynda (Wordsworth). Lynda said, "One person came in here recently and said that he had been born in this building when it was a house. I get some amazing people coming in here from time to time." Phil said, "Thanks to all the operators and thanks to everyone for attending this day. I would like to move a vote of thanks to everyone." Dawn said, "Thanks to everyone for attending and thanks to the operators. Most of this has been 'out of their own pockets'. We hope to get some media coverage out of this." Leonie said, "Thanks to everyone who has supported this day. Do not forget the website release which is scheduled for 6th July at Fernvale Futures."

Christine Aitken