



Darling Downs Discovery Tour



Warwick was the destination for our last Trust trip of the year and Val had organised another interesting two days exploring our heritage.

We left Brisbane early and were all ready to enjoy our morning tea at Aratula Motel then travelling to "Glengallan" Homestead for lunch and an inspection of the once-elegant two-storey building. "Glengallan" was built for John Deuchar a young Scotsman who had emigrated to Australia in 1839 to work as a stockman on the Darling Downs. He worked hard and prospered, eventually forming a partnership with Charles Henry Marshall to lease "Glengallan" in the early 1850s, living in the cedar homestead until his marriage to Eliza Lee in 1857. On their extended honeymoon in Europe and Scotland, John purchased prime merinos for "Glengallan," forming the basis of its famous merino and shorthorn studs, one of the finest in the colonies. John wanted a house to match his stature as a wealthy landowner and in 1867 the great stone house was built. It supported a lavish lifestyle where visitors were always welcome and parties were a regular occurrence. John Deuchar may have been a visionary but he was no businessman and failed to make allowance for the vagaries of the Australian climate. He was insolvent by 1870 and was forced to move his family to Warwick. He died two years later.

Charles Marshall returned to England and the property was passed to W. B. Slade, a distinguished philanthropist and Anglican then to the Gillespie family and then back into Slade hands. Oswald Slade sold the property to the Smith family but bequeathed the house to the Church of England to be demolished and re-erected at the Slade School. That didn't happen and the house was left to the mercies of wind and weather and wandering sheep and was a crumbling ruin when it was rescued in 1993 by the Glengallan Homestead Trust. A Federal Government Centenary of Federation Grant was enough to get work started and dedicated volunteers continue the long and arduous job of restoration.

Dinner and overnight at The Gunya Motel in Warwick was very pleasant and, after a good night's sleep and a well-cooked breakfast, we were ready to face another fascinating day. First call was at Pringle Cottage, a sandstone treasure close to the centre of town and built around 1870. Included in the precinct are "The Emporium," Shepherd's Hut and the "Daily News" Printery. Built as a private residence by Scottish stonemason John McCulloch, it has been used as a school from 1898 to 1908, converted into flats, then eventually purchased by the Historical Society. Now operated by volunteers and helped by grants from the National Estate Funds, the museum features a priceless collection of furniture, household items, machinery and bric-a-brac representing more than 130 years of family life in the district. The home-made morning tea provided by the volunteers was delicious.

One of the ladies from Pringle Cottage became our guide on a tour of the city. This gave us a chance to appreciate what a beautiful, prosperous and well-cared-for city Warwick is. The many old Queensland houses are particularly enchanting. Our tour ended at the "Abbey of the Roses." This three-storey freestone building began life as a Sisters of Mercy Convent in 1893. The Convent catered for the education of young Catholic women for nearly a century. The need for boarding school accommodation declined in the 1960s and the last boarders left in 1972. Sisters in residence declined also and in 1987 the Order decided to sell the property. Purchased in 1989 by the Sophia College Trust, it was used as a tertiary institution for four years and was then purchased by Hugh Hamilton. Following an extensive repair and restorative effort to bring the building as close as possible to its original condition, it was reopened as a function centre in 1995. It is now operated as function centre and B & B, under the guiding hand of Amanda Moroney. We had a delicious lunch in the chapel, under the ornate woodworked ceiling and four stained glass windows depicting the four evangelists.

Amanda took us on a tour of the building and gave us an idea of the rather spartan life of the nuns and their charges over the years. The sparsely-furnished nuns' "cells" have been converted into prettily-furnished guest rooms and the bathrooms also have a dainty floral motif. A large room at the end of the upstairs hall which was once the Sisters' community room is now the Bridal Suite, furnished with antiques and a large mahogany four-poster bed.

On our way home we made a quick stop at Aratula to check out the antique shop and the fruit shop and enjoy a cold drink or ice-cream before climbing Cunningham's Gap. Valerie had once again given us all a most enjoyable short holiday and Allan did an excellent job of driving us safely.

Jane James