

Andrew's Australian Adventure – Week One



As promised, The Edinburgh Reporter continues to monitor the progress of Andrew Dickson, the 60-year-old Edinburgh man who is cycling across Australia to raise funds for the Craig Gowans' Memorial Fund and Radio Lollipop, and the good news is that Andrew has finally managed to take a shower! This will also come as a relief to an ex-pat from Brisbane who, after reading about Andrew's adventure in The Edinburgh Reporter has generously offered free accommodation when he eventually arrives.

After spending Monday 20 August stocking up on last minute necessities, Andrew met Krista and Valarie from Australia's Radio Lollipop at the children's' ward of Fremantle Hospital, and did a telephone interview with their studio in Perth.

The following day, he set off from Bathers Beach, Fremantle on the Indian Ocean. As he followed the cycle track by the side of the river, Andrew was stopped by an elderly man who asked if he was from Scotland after spotting the Saltire fluttering on his bar bag. The man had previously stayed in Balerno and "Worked at the Watt", being Heriot-Watt University at Hermiston. He was even wearing a Pringle sweater.

Andrew then took National Highway 94, which runs alongside the railway and the Golden Pipeline (which pumps water from Perth into the interior) incorporating a long, stiff climb with unfortunately no hard shoulder. This meant Andrew had to stop at most of the parking lay-bys and wait for the breaks created by the traffic lights further back, before he eventually he reached Mundaring, his first camp in Australia.



Being winter down under, it gets dark about 6pm at this time of year, so it is important to have the tent up by 5.30. The soil next to the road is dry clay hard which breaks up when the tent peg is pushed in which could be a problem.

Things went OK overnight, and it was back into Mundaring for a quick tidy-up in the local Men's public loo, sparing no expense, before getting back Highway 94 going east. This road is excellent for cyclists with a metre-wide hard shoulder, although the huge lorries and trailers apparently take some getting used to.

An unexpected bonus is the bounty of exotic birds including parrots, cockatoos and parakeets which are colourful as well as vocal. Andrew is confident that he can now identify the red-tailed black cockatoo.

Already Andrew has seen various historical landmarks and met some interesting and generous people, as well as discovering that it really is a small world.

During his journey, he passed the spot where three truckers were killed in December 2007 during a major bush fire, and later camped at the memorial rest area. He also encountered the world's longest fence.



At Tammin town office/library he was made very welcome by Gabrielle and her colleagues Hayley and Myra. By pure coincidence Gabrielle previously volunteered with Radio Lollipop at Princess Margaret Hospital, Perth, dressing up as a clown in the cancer and burns ward(s) being one of her lasting experiences. She kindly gave Andrew a badge for [Bravehearts](#) an organisation dedicated to the prevention and care of children subject to sexual abuse, and fed him plenty of tea and cakes. While at the Merredin Visitor Centre he was served by a girl with a familiar accent; someone who had just moved to the town from Buckie on the Moray coast.

On Sunday, while taking a well-deserved break in Coolgardie, he met two couples from the Adelaide area who were gold prospectors, out with their metal detectors. By this stage however, although everyone was too polite to mention the fact, Andrew realised himself that a shower would not be the worst idea.

The target for the day was Kalgoorlie. Thankfully the roads were quiet, although some of the biggest loads he had ever seen were out and about. After an 84 mile ride, Andrew reached the town in mid-afternoon and thankfully found a Backpackers' hostel where he finally managed a shower, some laundry, and plenty much needed 'rear end' cream.



Whilst so far, the daytime weather has been pleasant, the night time under canvas is less so, but the cold has been the least of his problems as Andrew explained:- "It was positively freezing during the night. Where was my 5 season bag? I had to wear leggings and socks on my hands in the morning when I set off cycling.

"One night, I found what I thought was a suitable camping spot about 20 miles east of Southern Cross. The ground seemed OK, the pegs went in OK but then, what's that? One and a half inch ants!!!! Quite a few of them. Now if camping and there's critters, try to find their front and back doors. Also, don't upset the locals, especially if one can come back with a thousand pals. These ants could have been harmless and vegan even, but at that size, I wasn't taking any chances and went somewhere else."

Andrew was also keen to mention one person in particular whom he met during lunch in Kalgoorlie.

"I would like to say a big 'Thank you' to a lovely lady, Diane Foster of the Lunch Bowl, who very kindly donated 10 dollars to the kiddies cause. Diane, please take care and

thank you again".

Anyone wishing to contribute can do so at virginmoneygiving.com/bikingacrossaustralia

The Edinburgh Reporter will provide regular updates on his journey, but anyone wishing to follow this remarkable man's progress more frequently can do so at <http://bikingacrossaustralia.blogspot.co.uk/>