Wheatbelt Wanderings: Kulin, Corrigin and a Tank of Regret



We rolled out of Yanchep National Park at 0950 on Friday. It would’ve been earlier, but some drongo about Michael’s size forgot to fuel up the night before.

Happens.

That put us on the longest drive since February. We’ve kept to 100-200ks for the past few months, so today’s 350 felt like a proper outing and a good test. We had a quick leg-stretch at Westdale, a long and lazy lunch at Brookton, and a top-up at Corrigin on the way through.

A few words on Corrigin

If you've never been, Corrigin is a Wheatbelt town about 230ks east-south-east of Perth, born when the railway pushed through in the early 1900s. Despite looking a bit unkempt and dusty, it's got a lovely old-school main street and a real sense of humour.



It's famous for its dog cemetery, where locals have been laying their faithful farm mates to rest since the 1970s. In 2018 the town also snagged a Guinness World Record for the most dogs in utes in one place. Over 1,500 of them. Honestly, it's kind of hard to think of a more Australian way to make history.



The Tin Horse Highway

Between Corrigin and Kulin, the roadside paddocks fill up with galloping horses and riders made from old drums, wire and farm scrap. It started as a bit of fun to promote the Kulin Bush Races, and it’s become a proper local tradition. Slow down and have a gander. The locals clearly had a ball building them.

Kulin

We rolled into Kulin about 1530 and plugged straight into power and water after a week off grid at Yanchep. Bliss.

Kulin impressed us last time. Neat as a pin, though nearly everything was shut when we came through, except the community-run pub. We’re happy to report it’s still going strong and the tucker’s still good. It’s run by five locals and a couple of backpackers, and they’re doing a cracking job. Kulin is also home to the Bush Races, a huge country

weekend each October that draws thousands of visitors from all over the state.



Last visit we missed the museum, a mix of machinery displays and a working men's shed. It also covers one of the country's longest-running Ford dealerships, which sadly folded decades ago — lots of works in progress and it could do with some TLC, but we understand volunteers are not thick on the ground. Particularly in a small town. Michael's dad spent half his working life in sales and service management with a couple of Ford dealers, so this time we did the tour, and it hit a flood of nostalgia.

The giant waterslide wasn't open for another week, so we missed the view from the top and the big slide down. Shame, really. Next time. Not!



The great Kulin waterslide story

Which brings us to the slide itself, and honestly, it’s a ripper of a yarn.

It all started with the kids. When the Shire asked locals what the town needed, the young ones asked for a slide at the pool. The council went one better and found a monster of a thing for sale on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast.

The funding came courtesy of a local farming couple, Phil and Kath Freebairn. Phil served on the Shire council for years, and the pair left a bequest to improve Kulin’s sporting grounds and swimming pool. That legacy has paid for a fair bit around town, including the recreation centre, and it helped bring the slide home. Add in the cash raised by the Kulin Bush Races over the years and you’ve got a town that quite literally built a waterslide out

of generosity.

The slide was snapped up for a bargain $25,000. Then came the hard part: getting it home. A band of volunteers set off across the Nullarbor with four trucks and five trailers, loaded the whole lot in sections, and hauled it thousands of ks back to the Wheatbelt. Then they put it back together again.

The result is 182 metres of slide and about 18 metres of height, billed as the biggest in regional WA. It’s a long way from the coast, but plenty of folk now make the trip just for a go. Not bad for a town of a few hundred people.

The lay of the land



There’s a tidy little caravan park at one end of town and an RV stopover at the other. In between you’ll find:

- the pub (plus a coffee shop inside it)
- a Foodland (it was an IGA, and for sale, last time we were here)
- the post office
- a very large Mitre 10
- a café

- a few ag dealerships and farm suppliers to round out the CBD

What’s next

Tomorrow we’re away with full tanks and full batteries, heading for the south coast: Hopetoun and Fitzgerald River National Park. Stay tuned.