



5W Gathering - Sydney / Canberra / Blue Mountains, 6-16 October 2012

Once again our Australian members displayed their own wonderful brand of down-under hospitality. As well as myself, I am actually an Australian who lives in New Zealand, there were visitors from Queensland, NSW, Victoria, Western Australia and all the way from Germany.

Our sightseeing started with the ferry to Garden Island for exploring and a sumptuous morning tea followed by lunch at Salthorse Café. Some chose various ferry rides from there, myself and 5 others caught the ferry to Luna Park, walked to the northern end of the beautiful Sydney Harbour Bridge then walked all the way across it – only just over 1 kilometre – a lovely sunny day with fantastic views up and down the harbour – AND IT IS FREE!

Another day found us on a beautiful sunny day in two groups on the fabulous coastal walk from Tamarama Beach to Bondi Beach and we all ended up together for coffee'n'cakes at Iceberg's Bistro. We had a nice walk, then to catch the bus to the infamous The Gap at Watson's Bay, where we bought our take-away lunches to eat looking out over the harbour. More ferry rides after.

Everyone up early next morning and in to Central railway station to take our Murray's Coach for the pleasant three hour drive to Canberra. 5W members there greeted us enthusiastically at a meet and greet afternoon tea at the home of Jo Walker, with all the kangaroos and wild birds in attendance too.

Three Days in Canberra – because of the colder and sometimes wet weather, normal plans were jiggled around a bit but we all managed to spend time at many sites there, including Floriade, Parliament House, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra Glassworks, the High Courts Artwork Collection and sitting in of cases proceeding, and my favourite The Australian War Memorial where an assistant helped me research my fathers war records. Our wonderful hosts were just great at delivering us to our chosen destinations and joining in where possible.

On the last night we had a great meal at a local club when other members were able to join us too. We returned by train the next day. Luckily we had another fine day as we all made our way to the Sydney Tower Eye with its fantastic views all around.

Next we were all on a ferry to Fort Denison Island with its Martello Tower, here the tour guide gave us a very good insight into the lives of the prisoners then told us of its importance to the defence of Sydney. Back at Circular Quay we found the Monorail for a ride, then coffees before our trains back home.



Monday 15th more excitement as we all boarded the train to Leura at the Blue Mountains, morning tea was at "Bygone Beautys", such an interesting place, well worth a visit. We then caught the Hop On/Hop Off Bus for sightseeing. I loved Echo Point, The Three Sisters, I even did the walk down the 100 steps to the bridge between them. The 5W ladies there were great to meet too, they would love to have visitors.

Tuesday 16th we all met at Circular Quay for 11.40 a.m. ferry to Taronga Zoo landing then a short walk to Athol Hall for our wonderful Farewell Lunch.

Fond Goodbyes to so many friends that I had previously met at other Gatherings, or who I had hosted or been hosted by them in the past, and to all of my new friends too. I am sure we will meet up again somewhere, some time.

Warm 5W regards to all, Norma, New Zealand but definitely Australian and still house sitting all over the world – "Living our dreams"

