



FLORAL FIESTA

The Clarence Valley Ramblers made Grafton's Jacaranda Festival the focus of their 14th Mini Rally.

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The annual Jacaranda Festival held in Grafton, at the end of October, is the oldest floral festival in Australia. In 2016, this celebration turned 82 years old and the Clarence Valley Ramblers (CVR) chapter held their 14th Jacaranda Mini Rally in conjunction with the festival.

Grafton is a city of trees and the streets glow with the purple of the jacarandas during the festival. In the early morning hours the streets are a purple carpet until the town awakens and starts to use them. Visitors, in great numbers, can be seen taking photos of the spectacle. In See Park, the purple of the jacarandas is complimented by the yellow of the golden rain trees.

The CVR mini rally attracted 123 units and 212 CMCA members. Visitors came from all eastern states, as well as South Australia. Feedback at the end of the rally suggested a great time was had by all who responded. The festival provides activities and entertainment for the week, while at the greyhound

track the CVR volunteers had prepared a full week of tours, trade talks, games, jigsaws and nightly entertainment in the large undercover area.

The rally was opened on the Sunday afternoon with a Welcome to Country, capably done by Terrie Lowe, followed by the delightful display of Indigenous dancing by the South Grafton Primary School group.

ON TOUR

The tours were very popular and three extra buses were hired to cater for the overflow. Three town tours saw President Bob strut his stuff with great information about the local historical buildings and tree lined streets. Ample opportunity was given for photographs to be taken at all the right places.

On Tuesday morning, two buses made the trip out to the Wahgungurry Alpaca Stud Farm. Everyone on the trip thoroughly enjoyed the presentation, along with the two baby alpacas roaming among the group to be patted, and the old spinning wheel being used to spin



Clockwise from top left: The purple jacarandas are the focal point of the festival; barbecue breakfast cook up; the races kept the crowd entertained; entrants at the Melbourne Cup Hat Parade; the ever-popular disc bowls.



the wool. Our host Pauline put on a fabulous spread for morning tea, along with the help of some friends, and showed a range of alpaca products that were available for purchase. The tour then continued to the Lawrence Museum where items and buildings from the rural area are well displayed for all to see.

Another tour took in Yamba, featuring the Clarence River Fisherman's Co-op, where we were lucky to see the last catch of fish and prawns for that morning being processed first hand. The tour continued to the Tru Blu Prawn Farm to see how prawn farming operates. A quick trip around Yamba saw our tour have a most fabulous meal at the Maclean

Pub before heading to some of the secondhand shops and op shops of Ulmurra.

Also on the agenda was the blueberry, raspberry and rose farm tour. At the blueberry farm we were able to walk among the bushes and watch the pickers at work.

COMPETITIVE EDGE

Tuesday was Melbourne Cup Day and we had many winners and gridders among those who went into the sweeps. In the afternoon the geriatrics from the CVR strutted their stuff, with mock horse races being the order of the day. The first race, the galloping geriatric gee gees, saw many a walking stick being used inappropriately and some using their wheelie walkers,

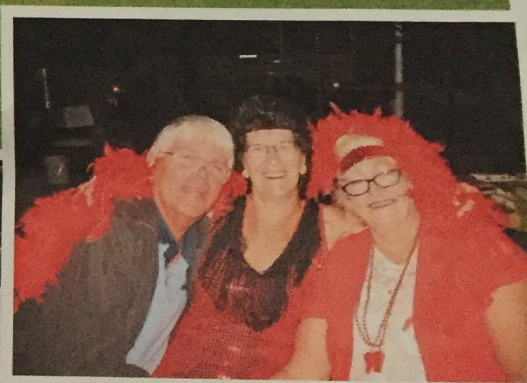
but to no advantage. The rolling of the dice determined the winner even though Margie, at the rear of the field, used intimidating language to gain an advantage. Don Ferguson blitzed the field with some good dice throwing on his behalf.

On Wednesday afternoon nearly 100 visitors took advantage of the free entry tickets donated by the Clarence River Jockey Club to the Family Afternoon Races. Some were winners, but quite a few came out even or with small losses. However, all had a ball and enjoyed the racing, especially those going to the races for the first time.

On Tuesday evening the Jacaranda party joined us for a sausage sizzle. The queen and princesses delighted the crowd with personal conversation, moving among the tables and Kim Cooper entertained us with some country and western songs, which got people up and dancing.

Other evening events included a trivia night, with about 100 members racking their brains for the answers. The winning table were science whizzes, answering every science question correctly and nominating the topic for double points. Thursday was the Roaring





Clockwise from top: Rally attendees set up camp at the local greyhound track; colourful costumes at the Roaring '20s evening; the Clarence Valley Wanderer workers take a well-earned photo break.

'20s night and everyone got dressed up to the nines. The Big River Jazz Band were great entertainers and there was lots of fun, laughter, singing and dancing.

On Friday night, 150 of us tried our luck at the monster meat raffles at the Grafton District Services Club, with quite a few successes. After an excellent meal, many convened on the banks of the Clarence for the Venetian Carnival and fireworks display.

Our disc bowls were played and we thank the visitors who helped to do the draw. Early risers could join in the tai chi presented by Anna. Finska got a few people into the swing of things. Many won raffle prizes offered each day and on the Saturday night big draw.

FUN FOR ALL

It was an excellent week, with so many wonderful visitors from among our CMCA fraternity. Many

have indicated their intention to return, with one club hoping to put it down as their regular Oct/Nov outing. If you haven't been before, our first timers numbered over 50 this year, and many are planning on returning next year. If you haven't been for a long time, then we can promise you a full program to enjoy in 2017. So come and join our mob in October.

The registration form for the Jacaranda Festival Mini Rally is on the back of this month's flysheet and will be available online. Contact Lorraine on 0437 047 440 or at cvrjaca@gmail.com for any information. 