

## Report on Grand Bard's Visit to Australia-March 2014

On arrival in Australia, I stayed with Bill (*Mapwyn Whel Ros*) and Gwen Phillips (*Ertach Penwyth*) at the Cornish Embassy in Mount Waverley, where many weary bards have stayed, to relax after the long journey from Kernow, before travelling north to Eaglehawk for the bardic gathering. On the evening of Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March I attended a barbecue in Maiden Gully, as a guest of Leanne (*Nanscarow a Bendygo*) and Rob Lloyd and met all the bards who arrived that day for a full weekend of events. It was very good to see everyone again after being with them ten months previously. Our hosts the Lloyds graciously entertained us and everyone caught up on the latest happenings in the bardic world in Australia. Many thanks to them.

The bardic gathering is part of the Eaglehawk Arts and Dahlia Festival and the whole town was alive with the festive spirit. The bardic part of the events was organised by the Cornish Association of Victoria, CAV, and thanks goes to June Whiffin (*Myrghwyn Treloar*), the secretary, for all her hard work. The headquarters were set up in the main street, where Cornish displays on Cornish themes were on show in a hall and several bards ran stalls selling Cornish ephemera. Computers were set up to help the people with their ancestral family trees. This is an important way to get people with Cornish ancestry involved. Most people know they are from Cornish stock, but there are some who do not realise their surname is Cornish. Tom Luke (*Colon Hag Enef yn Bendygo*) will tell you that the area of Eaglehawk, Bendigo and Ballarat is the Cornish Capital of Australia, full of mines from the gold rush and the landscape littered with engine houses and evidence of mining activity.

On Friday afternoon there was a bus trip around Eaglehawk to see the residences of important Cornish people. They lived in tents on arrival, then progressed to wooden houses and prominent citizens built beautiful houses for themselves when they became successful, using the iron tracery to decorate their buildings which denotes the area. We learnt about the Cornish immigrants and important events that happened to them. We ended the tour at the Crematorium where we had a virtual walk around several cemeteries in the area, where these pioneers now reside. It was a brilliant idea to sit in the air-conditioned chapel on a hot day and watch a screen showing all the graves and hearing their stories, using our eyes and not our legs! We ended the visit with afternoon tea. Many thanks to Bev Hanson from the Cemetery Trust for the talk, the research by Leanne Lloyd (*Nanscarow a Bendygo*) and the bus commentary by Rob Lloyd. In the evening we went to 'Meet the Cornish' and had a concert with Cornish items and lots of singing of Cornish songs. The President of CAV, Rev. Professor Robert Gribben gave a talk on the Royal Albert Bridge, which made me feel at home. As Grand Bard I brought Greetings from Kernow and was invited to join the community singing, led by Noel Carthew (*Map Caddy*) and Cornish bards. Goin' Up Camborne Hill and Trelawny raised the roof.

On Saturday, we had the Gathering, changing in the Town Hall and processing to the beautiful Canterbury Gardens across the road. As Grand Bard (*Steren Mor*) I led the proceedings and welcomed the Mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo, Clr. Barry Lyons, the local Member of Parliament, the Hon. Lisa Chesters and other guests. The weather was fine and the ceremony was done in a very dignified way by the Cornish bards and a credit to Gorsedh Kernow. The Lady of Victoria spoke in good Cornish and the dancers were excellent. Carlene *Woolcock* (*Dyskadores*) and June Whiffin (*Myrghwyn Treloar*), both barded the previous September in Kernow, were welcomed to the Victorian circle. We had tea in the Town hall and the bards lined the route and clapped me into the main hall. After tea there was a tremendous thunder and lightning storm and we realised we were very lucky to have held our gathering in fine weather. On Saturday evening we had the annual St. Piran's dinner in a local hotel, with the Cornish dressed overall in various tartans, showing

their love for Kernow. The dinner was sumptuous and followed by speeches on the stage. The President of CAV, Rev. Professor Robert Gribben, gave the welcome and introduced the Grand Bard (*Steren Mor*) for the keynote speech. I spoke about St. Piran and what we know of his relics as stated in church inventories of 1181 and the latest progress on the excavation of St. Piran's Oratory at Gear Sands, Perranporth. The audience was very appreciative and thanked me for making them feel part of the activities in Kernow.

On the Sunday we had a service at the Eaglehawk Uniting Church and again the Grand Bard (*Steren Mor*) was invited to bring Greetings from Kernow. We enjoyed Morning Tea afterwards and in the evening there was an informal dinner at the Manchester Hotel. On Monday morning we said our goodbyes and I went to stay with Tom (*Colon hag Enef yn Bendygo*) and Libby Luke (*Rosen Wyn Bendygo*) at their house in Bendigo. The next day we travelled to Canberra where, as Grand Bard (*Steren Mor*), I had been invited to Parliament House for lunch on the Thursday and to attend Prime Minister's Question Time with Tony Abbot and to be acknowledged in the house by the Speaker, Hon. Bronwyn Bishop in the House of Representatives. On the way to Canberra we took in a lot of the sights including Glen Rowan where Ned Kelly was shot aged 26 years. He was hunted by the police for killing two policemen and wore armour to protect himself. He eventually was gunned down by being shot in the legs. To some he was the Robin Hood of Australia. We also saw the statue to the Dog on the Tuckerbox.

Canberra is the modern capital of Australia and as such the buildings are amazing. It was planned as a landscape garden and from any of the surrounding hills one sees sweeping green spaces around a huge manmade lake. A vast fountain shoots a stream of water into the air and a huge modern carillon houses bells which ring out over this magnificent landscape. The new Parliament house is on a hill and its roof is covered in grass to merge it into the landscape. Inside there are vast halls and staircases of marble everywhere. I felt very honoured to be there. The lunch in the members dining room was delicious and had glass walls overlooking the capital and looking toward the War Museum on the opposite hill, with an avenue leading towards it. We enjoyed all the artwork especially the picture of the first Parliament when the Prince of Wales, later George V opened it and was entitled on the painting as the Duke of Cornwall! We met a political presenter on television, Barry Cassidy, who could be described as Australia's Andrew Marr. He was very interesting and described another painting of Queen Elizabeth's visit to Parliament with lots of faces of all those present and showed us where he was in the press box as he was a press reporter at the time. He was a very busy man who chose to give us some of his time and it was much appreciated. After leaving our cameras and belongings outside, we were allowed in the chamber, but I was allowed to keep the civic plastron on. It was very exciting waiting for your name to be called out, as the Speaker did it in batches between questions. Many thanks to Tom and Libby Luke who arranged this amazing visit and to be so honoured in Australia. We did much sight-seeing in Canberra and it is truly a worthy capital. We thank Bob Bolitho, a former Hansard reporter and cousin to Tom, who showed us around the Parliament building and gave us a conducted of Canberra, over two days.

I then returned to Ballarat to stay with Joy (*Benneth Lowen*) and Jeff Menhennet, who laid on a dinner in their lovely home for me to meet the members of the Ballarat branch of CAV. Last year we had a wonderful lunch together and it was great to see them all once again. Jeff and Joy (*Benneth Lowen*) have restored a church misused as a sheep shearing shed back into a church again at Berringa, which used to have a population of 7,000 but now no-one lives there, as the miners moved on in search of more gold. Jeff bought land for cattle grazing purposes and this church was on it and had been the church where Joy went to Sunday School. It has been a labour of love and their daughter got married there. We had a moving service there on the Sunday with the ladies of the

church and CAV members from Ballarat and Joy (*Benneth Lowen*) playing the organ. A big wish of mine, to go there, was fulfilled. On Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March, I went to Leanne (*Nanscarow a Bendygo*) and Rob Lloyd to stay and meet their family. The children all greeted me in Cornish thanks to their Cornish speaking Grandpa, Rob, and we had a tasty barbecue with them all. On Thursday I spent time in the Bendigo pottery which for a pottery teacher was brilliant. The next stop was Melbourne again with the Phillips in preparation in my role as guest speaker at the monthly meeting of CAV in Melbourne. The speech was about the Role of the Grand Bard and the latest things I have on my bardic agenda. We completed the day with a farewell dinner. On the Sunday I had a trip on the sight-seeing bus around Melbourne, re-visiting all the places I saw last year. On the Monday I flew home! My huge thanks to all the Cornish bards, all the members of CAV and all the people in Australia who gave me hospitality and a wonderful time. See you soon!

*Grand Bard, Maureen Fuller – Steren Mor*