

24 – 27 May

Batemans Bay to Cassilis and back

We ride the Bells Line of Road, The Putty Road *AND* the Errowanbang Road!

On Monday, 24th May two of us set off for a four day and 1,500 km ride to Cassilis and back. In the process we were going to ride two more of NSW's "motorcycling roads": the Bells Line of Road and The Putty Road. "Where the hell is Cassilis?" you might be asking. Well, if you have read my "*Excellent Road Trip - No. 3*" you might recall that Cassilis was the small town in the mid-west of NSW, between Merriwa and Dunedoo where I almost ran out of petrol on the SilverWing and was saved by the town's publican. At the time I promised myself that I would come back and stay in his interesting pub; this trip gave me that opportunity.

For this trip I had a new riding companion, Don, mounted on his Suzuki VStrom 650, fitted out with a Givi screen, panniers and top box, thus making it a rather neat tourer for this type of travel. I set the route up to Cassilis and let Don decide the return journey. Day one was Batemans Bay to Tarana (between Bathurst and Lithgow) and stay again in the Tarana Hotel. Day two was Tarana to Cassilis via the Bells Line of Road, The Putty Road and the Golden Highway. Day three was Cassilis south to overnight at some location yet to be decided and then return home on the fourth day.

The ground rules for this, and all our other rides were:

- 1 We travel about 400 km per day
- 2 We stick close to the speed limit (my riding partner on this trip found this much easier to do than my regular riding partner)
- 3 We try to stop and smell the flowers (and I take the odd picture)
- 4 We stay in country pubs, the type of place where our wives would not stay
- 5 We **DON'T** go on dirt roads (although Don's VStrom would have been quite comfortable doing so)

On this trip we were able to meet all these ground rules, ride some great roads and meet some interesting people along the way.

On with the ride report!

Day 1 - Batemans Bay to Tarana



The SilverWing loaded and ready to go



Don and the author (nice VStrom!)

We left home in the Bay at about 8:30 a.m. and arrived in Tartana about 2:30 p.m.; a rather quick run due to the lack of traffic rather than break-neck speeds. The route from the Bay was west up the Kings Hwy. to Braidwood for our first stop at the Bakery (rating: 4½ out of 5). "*Its only half an hour away!*" I can hear someone moan; but I find it difficult to travel past this place without a stop. Strong, hot coffee and a warm croissant to warm the "bod" for the next stage to Goulburn.

Although Goulburn is only 150 km from home, there is no petrol for the next 150 km to Oberon so a brief stop for fuel was required. In the past I have stopped at Taralga for lunch but we were making very good time, it was not quite 11:30 a.m., so we decided to push on to Oberon. This decision was made without checking the map; I've made this mistake before, I think Taralga is about half way, where its only about a third of the way and I can't

do that part of the road at the same pace as the run up from Goulburn, especially when you add in a stop at the Abercrombie River and several hold-ups for road works. So it was close to 1:30 p.m. by the time we reached Oberon.



Main street through Taralga



Abercrombie River crossing

I've ridden this road several times now and surprisingly it was not as cold as I thought it was going to be. Perhaps the SilverWing keeps the weather off better than the CB900 Hornet I used to ride.

Given we were making such good time we decided on a leisurely (but late) lunch in Oberon. DJ's Cafe and Takeaway was the first eatery we came to as we rode into town. I've eaten here before so had no problems with Don's decision to stop. DJ's has a hearty "country style" menu with lots of choice and quite large servings (rating: 3½ out of 5).

The weather had been overcast all morning and rain had been forecast. Over lunch the sky began to blacken and it seemed rain was imminent. Because we had made such good time to Oberon we contemplated a detour to Bathurst to sample the great coffee at the Visitor's Information Centre and to do a couple of laps of the Mount Panorama race track (setting the fastest lap for a maxi-scooter?) but the pending rain put an end to that. Tarana, our destination for the day, was only half an hour away; with a little luck we could beat the rain and have an early finish for the day. We reached the Tarana Hotel by 2:30 p.m. but had to ride the last few kilometers in light rain.

This is my third trip from Oberon to Tarana by motorcycle. The last two via Lowes Mount Rd. while the first run was via Hazelgrove Rd. That first trip was documented in my "Bay to Bathurst" ride report. The difference between the two roads is Lowes Mount Rd. is bitumen all the way while the last few kilometers of Hazelgrove Rd. is (good) gravel. However, one of the group on that first ride was not pleased that I had caused his shiny cruiser to travel over un-sealed roads. The venom with which that displeasure was expressed has always made me wary of taking fellow riders back over Hazelgrove Rd. If you are not afraid of a little dust (or mud) then Hazelgrove Rd. is both quicker and more picturesque.

I had booked accommodation at both Tarana and Cassilis; Tarana because I specifically wanted Cabin #3 as its close to the railway line and Cassilis because it was the destination for the trip and its proximity to coal mines causes it to be booked out on some nights.



Cabin #3 at the Tarana Hotel

Booking in at the Tarana Hotel was a formality and we were quickly in our cabin and out of the rain. The Hotel has three cabins which each have a kitchen/meals/lounge room, bed room and a bath room and three bunks in the joining passage way. Based on my last visit, I chose a bunk because each bunk has a window that provides a good view of Tarana railway station and the Main Western Line; great for train spotting! The cabins have air conditioning so we were able to get ours warm quickly. The insulation (pre-Rudd stimulus money) and warm quilts means it can be turned off over night and not keep you awake. Breakfast makings (cereal and toast, tea and coffee) are provided. Each cabin has a hard surface alongside it where motorbikes can be safely parked. The nightly tariff for a cabin is AUD99.



Cabin at Tarana Hotel



Train spotter's bunk (Tarana Hotel)

The pub has a bar/lounge area with a coal fire for all the cold nights they have up here. The publican lights the fire at about 5:30 p.m. so we sat around in our snug little cabin drinking tea, reading and chatting till beer/coal fire o'clock then ambled over to the pub for a few beers before dinner. Meals are satisfying and substantial; I had bangers and mash (with vegetables Cliff!) and we shared a bottle of red wine. We finished the wine back in the cabin and retired early. I was able to see several trains go by before drifting off to sleep.

The Tarana Hotel is a really good place to stay. Its centrally located in the Bathurst/Lithgow/Oberon district and is surrounded by some good riding roads (including Hazelgrove Rd.). You can contact the pub on (02) 6337-5841 (rating: 4 out of 5).

Day 2 - Tarana to Cassilis (in the rain)

It rained quite heavily over night. I woke several times to either the sound of the rain or a passing train - I would love to live beside a main railway line and have a tin roof! It was still raining lightly when we woke. Leisurely shower, breakfast and pack the bikes and we were off on the Sodwalls Rd. to Lithgow in light rain. This would be a good ride in the dry. We stopped in Lithgow (still raining) for fuel and I caused a terrorist alert in the Caltex garage because I had not removed my open face helmet and black baklava (although, I had pulled it down so my face could be seen) - "Its for my protection!" the cashier wailed. I thought an old bloke riding a maxi-scooter would not have seemed much of a threat even to the most timid cashier.



Tarana Station - Main Western Line



The Tarana Hotel

As we ride out of the service station onto the western end of the Bells Line of Road the rain begins to fall harder - bugger! Bells Line of Road has been a favourite run for fast bike riders (and car drivers) for a very long time. However, the State has stepped in to limit the fun (Oh! Sorry! I mean danger) and has speed restricted almost the entire 82 km of this road to 80 km/hr or less. On this day it didn't seem to matter much, it was raining, thick fog obscured both road and scenery and the road surface was very wet - caution seemed like a good option. Even with the speed restrictions, this looks like it would be a great ride on a fine day. In hindsight we should have stopped for a break along this stretch; there are several places, like Bilpin, that look good. One cafe advertised "Hot donuts and coffee" - I should have stopped. As it turned out we rode for nearly FIVE hours without a coffee and pastry break - a tragedy of monumental proportions!

The Bells Line of Road runs from Windsor in the east to Lithgow in the west. The Putty Road starts from Windsor in the south and runs up to Singleton in the north. Riding from Lithgow it is not necessary to go all the way into Windsor; from Kurrajong you can take Comleroy Rd. then Blaxlands Rd. and cut across country to The Putty Road. This diversion saves time and cuts off built-up areas; it also is quite picturesque and on a fine day should give panoramic views over western Sydney.



Cnr Blacklands Ridge Rd and The Putty Road

The Putty Road is even more enamoured by fast bike riders than the Bells Line of Road. However, it has a history of bad road accidents, many involving motorcycles along its 234 km of winding bends. For us, it continued to rain for most of our journey up The Putty Road. Only the last 30 km was dry. I was told that there were several places along this road where you could get fuel. On the day we traveled only two places (Colo Heights and Broke) had fuel available. Both also had cafes of a sorts but neither looked particularly appetising, hence our coffee and pastry deprivation. All that aside, you can see why the "go fast guys (and gals)" like this road with some sections very tight and windy while the rest is more open but still with lots of bends - don't ride this road if you like long straights! Ironically the best surfaced parts of the road are the sections that have 80 km/hr speed restrictions. Some parts of the road are quite rough while others have longitudinal seams (the bitumen laying machine was only a third the width of the road wide so each lane has this joining seam) that can catch your tires and can steer you off-line - very nervous!

We thought Broke, about 20 km south of Singleton, would be our stop for late lunch but the service station/hotel/cafe did not look very appealing so we decided to push on to Denman, 46 km up the Golden Hwy. This is a very good two-lane highway which I have travelled before.

Denman has a choice of several cafes, all look quite good. We chose Chocolate Hills for no particular reason. The cafe is about half-way down the main street on the southern side. We received a cherry greeting and had a good choice of meals; the ham, cheese and tomato melt followed by scones, jam and cream was very filling and was washed down with sweet flat white coffee (I hope my wife and doctor don't read this ride report). Chocolate Hills is recommended - rating 3½ out of 5).



Merriwa, main street

After our leisurely lunch it was back onto the Golden Hwy. From Denman its 30 km to Merriwa then another 54 km to Cassilis. The section to Merriwa, through Sandy Hollow runs through a gap that links the Hunter Valley to the mid western plains. In several places the sides of the gap are lined with high sandstone cliffs. However, the low cloud and overcast sky hid much of the natural beauty of this area. Merriwa to Cassilis is open farm land and the highway is well surfaced and aligned with fast open bends - others could be tempted by such road conditions. Cassilis is a short distance off the highway but well signposted.



Uarbry Road, Cassilis, NSW



The Royal Hotel, Cassilis (ca. 1850)

We arrived in Cassilis at about 4:30 p.m. As we pulled up in front of the Royal Hotel we received some good-hearted banter from a couple of locals - "this looks good!" I thought.

On "Excellent Road Trip - No. 3" we passed this way and by the time we pulled into Cassilis I was almost out of petrol. I was saved by the Royal Hotel's publican who sold me some of his private stash of the essential fluid at a rather high price - it was a seller's market after all! On that occasion, we were only passing through but I mentally filed it away as a place to re-visit and stay.

The Royal Hotel was built in 1850; for an interesting read about the town and its history click [here](#) and [here](#). The pub seems to have had a recent renovation. The bedrooms (up stairs) are well furnished with a comfortable double bed, clothes hanging rack and small TV. Facilities are shared and are clean and airy. Breakfast makings (cereal, toast, spreads, coffee and tea) are available. There are stables in the yard to the side of the pub where motorcycles can be securely parked over night. All this for AUD30 per night - this is one of the best country pubs I've stayed in; up there with Dunedoo. Rating 4¼ out of 5. Phone

(02) 6376-1004 or see the website at www.theroyalhotelcassilis.com.au if you are interested in staying there.



After unpacking we ambled down to the bar for a cold beer. The local hecklers were still sitting out the front so we decided to join them for a chat. What followed was a couple of hours of very funny conversation. Our new friends were Philip "Plug" Rowlinson, his 'young' brother Lewis "Lew" Rowlinson and their mate Ken Morgan. They looked like they had been at the pub for quite a while and it was not likely that Don and I were going to catch up with them in the number of beers drank. They were interested in our bikes and where we had ridden from; this was the start of two hours or more of really funny reminisces and tall story telling.

Plug and his two mates are the type of characters that it is becoming increasingly rare to meet. They plainly have had a life time of working in the bush. The hardships of that life are written clearly in the lines on their faces and the callouses on their hands and especially in Plug's case in the creases and folds of his battered hat! I have never seen such a fine example of a bushman's head wear. All that said, these characters are often a storehouse of interesting tales, a great source of oral history.



The brothers Rowlinson ("Plug" on the right)

One of Plug's stories was about a brush he had with a Highway Patrol officer while he was droving a mob of cattle. In retelling this story I am not making fun of Plug but trying to portray some of the humour and wit of his story telling. It starts with Plug ridding a "four wheeled bike" (ATV) at the head of a mob of cattle he is droving down the "long paddock". *(For readers outside Australia, the "long paddock" is the term used for stock routes that run along country roadways where paddock boundaries are set well back from the road and herds of cattle or sheep can be driven. In times of severe drought pastoralists will "turn out" their stock onto the long paddock looking for better feed. This is a rare occurrence these days in the southern states with trucks used to move stock.)* In reading this story you should read "****" as "aaa(r)k" and you will get a bit more of the flavour of Plug's story telling. Plug, I hope I do you justice!

Plug: I'm at the 'ead o' the mob rid'n me f***ing four wheeled bike, well off the f***ing road yu understand. Then this f***ing 'eyeway patrol bugger pulls up and comes over to see me. **Highway Patrol Officer (HPO):** Have you got a licence for that thing? **Plug:** A f***ing licence? 'cause I got a f***ing licence! **HPO:** Can I see it? **Plug:** F*** no! I don't 'ave it with me. **HPO:** Where is it? **Plug:** It's in the f***ing truck. **HPO:** Where is the truck? **Plug:** Down the other f***ing end o' the f***ing mob. **HPO:** Do you have a permit to drive these cattle? **Plug:** A f***ing permit? 'cause I got a f***ing permit. **HPO:** Can I see it? **Plug:** The f***ing boss 's got it. **HPO:** Where is the boss?

Plug: The f***ing boss? 'es in the f***ing truck.

Not to be deterred the policeman returns to his car to make his way through the mob to see the boss.

Plug: (laughing and coughing) "F***ing idiot! The f***ing boss is not down the other end a the f***ing mob. 'es in f***ing Dunedoo at the f***ing pub." (more laughing and coughing) "That's the last I'll see of that f***ing bastard!".

The postscript to the story is that sure enough the Highway Patrol officer could not find the truck or the boss so he returned and fined Plug for riding a vehicle while unlicensed and for driving cattle on the highway without a permit.

"F*** me!" said Plug.

We just rolled about laughing. This bloke ought to be a national treasure.

It was getting late and cold so we adjourned the story telling and drinking to inside the bar. Plug found someone else to tell his stories to while we ordered dinner. Tuesday night is "Steak Nite!" in the Royal (given there was no menu, we presumed that steak was the ONLY choice. The Royal would have rated even higher if the steak had not been so tough; I think the soles of my boots would have been easier to chew! Given the enjoyment of the last few hours, tough steak didn't seem that bad.

After dinner we got talking to a builder doing work for the local school. He has a KTM trail bike and does lots of cross-country and dirt trail touring with his mates; he had some interesting stories of out-back rides. Turns out, he was not a local but was in town building a toilet block for the local primary school as part of the Government GFC stimulus spending. His was the only quote and he was charging AUD300,000 for a three stall dunny! AUD100,000 per seat! One of his tradesmen reckoned you could build a four bedroomed house for that money -he's probably right.

The locals were trying to talk us into staying an extra night. Wednesday, 26th was "State of Origin" night (for those who live outside NSW and Queensland, State of Origin is the annual Rugby League football clash between the representative teams from the two States). The pub was providing FREE beer up until the first try was scored - the locals were hoping for a scoreless draw. "Why would you go riding your motorbike when you could stay here and drink free beer?" we were asked incredulously.

After a phone call home it was off to bed. I lay lay in my comfy bed listening to the rain falling quite heavily on the tin roof while I write up my notes for this report. At times like this there's not much wrong with the world; no rain tomorrow would be nice.

Day 3 - Cassilis to Cowra via Milthorpe and Mandurama

I had a great sleep in a comfortable bed. The mobile phone alarm woke me about 7:30 a.m. The shower was hot and strong. Breakfast was breakfast and we were on our way by 8:30 a.m. I'll be back to Cassilis one day! Its too good a place for just one visit.

As we left Cassilis most of the sky was overcast but the town and surrounds was lit up in bright morning sun light - very pretty. We were not sure where we were going for the day so thought we would make for Dunedoo first and decide on our route over a warm coffee. I've said earlier that the Golden Hwy. is a very well made road and the section from Cassilis to Dunedoo is no exception. The only problem was rain. Not long after leaving Cassilis the skies blackened and down it came. I had not put wet weather gear on earlier but at speed I was not getting wet. Don, on the other hand, needed to stop to put on his gear (benefits of a maxi-scooter over a naked style bike?). During this stop I got much weter than when travelling at 100 km/hr.

Dunedoo is a good town. On a previous visit we stayed at the Hotel Dunedoo (rating 4½ out of 5); today we were just passing through. On advice from a local we stopped at the Dunedoo Pie Shop. It has good coffee and a wide range of pastries (rating 3¼ out of 5). We sat alfresco and mulled over the maps while we warmed and nourished our bods.



The Golden Highway ("the what!")



The Pie Shop, Dunedoo (good coffee)

Our earlier indecision over the days route was resolved and we headed for Gulgong down the Castlereagh Hwy. - yet another good road, not very bendy but it undulates over some of the best farming country in the State. Its an easy run down to Gulgong and the town is rich in history and worth a stop. However, the weather was starting to close in again so we decided to press on to Wellington.

Goolma Rd. heads west out of Gulgong, this is a road I had not travelled. It is a sealed road for its entire 75 km length but it is only just two lanes and parts are quite rough. Still the countryside is hillier than Mid-Western plains we travelled across earlier in the morning and more interesting to ride. The road improves quite a bit for the last 20 km into Wellington.

Apologies to the residents of Wellington, but the town seems to be "down at heel" with some businesses boarded up. From past visits I know there are several good cafes in the center of town but on this occasion we kept going down the Mitchell Hwy. to Molong and a stop for lunch. Bank St. is the main road through town and opposite the Telegraph Hotel is the Molong Bakery. This is much more than just a bakery, there is a very wide range of fast food available at really good prices. I can recommend the steak sandwich and the coffee is not bad either. The son of the owner rides a Honda CBR100RR so he can't be a bad sort of bloke! Rating: 3¾ out of 5.



Castlereagh Hwy, between Dunedoo and Gulgong



Pioneer Bakery, Molong

Don has friends who own a farm south of Orange and he was keen to visit them if we had the time. Cowra seemed like a good destination for the night so we did have plenty of time. After another leisurely lunch we were back on the Mitchell Hwy. heading south for Orange. We were not able to contact Don's friends but he was sure he knew how to find their lot; it was located in the Spring Hill district to the south of Orange. Little did I realise but this was going to be the best bit of riding for the whole trip and perhaps of any of the trips I have

done to date.

We headed south out of Orange to Spring Hill. Here our plans went astray as we became confused about where these folks actually lived and we were unable to contact them by phone. Undaunted, we decided to push on south to meet the Mid Western Hwy. and follow it into Cowra. Its the road from Orange to Mandurama on that highway that was such a delight to ride. A list of the roads we followed is perhaps the best way to describe the route. So starting from Orange:

- Peisley St. (adjacent to the railway crossing) into Forest Rd.
- Forest Rd. through Spring Hill (where it becomes Whiley Rd.) to Milthorpe Rd.
- Turn right (south) at Milthorpe Rd. and head for the historic village of Milthorpe (well worth a stop but we didn't have time).
- In Milthorpe turn right (west) into Victoria St. which becomes Forest Reefs Rd. after crossing the railway line and continue west to the village of Forest Reefs.
- At Forest Reefs Tavern turn left into Tallwood Rd.
- 2 km from the Tavern there is an intersection where you turn right (west) into Beneree
- Flyers Creek Rd. and follow it-it eventually becomes Errowanbang Rd.
- Follow Errowanbang Rd. to the intersection at Errowanbang and turn right into Burnt Yards Errowanbang Rd.
- Burnt Yards Errowanbang Rd. becomes Mandurama Burnt Yards Rd. which you follow through Burnt Yards all the way to the town of Mandurama on the Mid Western Hwy.



Errowanbang Road near Mandurama, NSW

The whole route is paved and can be taken by any type of motorbike or scooter. From Milthorpe to Mandurama the road is mainly single lane. From Forest Reefs Tavern the countryside becomes quite hilly and there are many blind corners so care needs to be taken. The roads just seem to meander through farm paddocks, up and over hills and down through picturesque little valleys. The day we rode this terrific bit of road rain threatened from the north but we had bright afternoon sunshine all the way. We were quite exhilarated by the time we reached Mandurama. In hind sight, we should have stayed the night at Mandurama and taken the opportunity to ride back to Orange and turn around and do it all again. If you are in the area and have the time, this is a road you ought to try.



The Mid Western Hwy. is a pleasant run down to Cowra but on the day we did it the trip was spoilt by successive idiots in cars and 4x4's that seemed to enjoy tail-gating motorcycles. On previous visits to Cowra I have stayed at the Hotel Cowra but with each stay it has seemed to deteriorate more so for this trip it was time for a change. The Imperial Hotel had been recommended and was said to be in the process of a major renovation. We parked the bikes and checked for room availability - shared facility rooms were AUD40 per night and en-suite rooms were AUD60 a night; there was one of each left so we took them. Secure motorcycle parking is available around the back (if you ask nicely they will even let you park inside the beer garden (probably not a wise choice on Friday or Saturday nights)). The bar and bistro area was very posh looking and the rooms were quite good as well. The shared facilities room has a double bed, clothes hanging and a heater (no TV but I don't see that as a problem). The bed turned out to be very comfortable. The bistro was a real "find". While prices are not cheap the quality of the food is quite good. I had a garlic prawn pasta with a couple of glasses of a nice local chardonnay - all very nice! Rating: 3 out of 5.

Day 4 - Cowra to home over familiar roads

One problem with the Imperial is that it does not provide (or serve) breakfast; if pubs like Cassilis and Dunedoo can manage breakfast then why can't the pubs of Cowra do it? Clearly one of life's perplexing mysteries! There is a temptation in these circumstances to make for McDonalds for one of their hearty breakfasts (how can I type such drivel?) but my riding partner helped me overcome the temptation and we set off for Boorowa where the bakery would be open. On the positive side, the sun was shining and the rain had gone.



The Imperial Hotel, Cowra



Imperial Hotel secure bike parking

Leaving Cowra, we had our only "serious moment" of the trip. Don was leading and we were not far out of town. As we rounded a bend, "Farmer Bloggs" was pulling out of his paddock and clearly had not seen the approaching motorcycles. At the last moment he must of seen us and braked suddenly as Don passed by. Don wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt in that he probably lost us in the bright sunlight. Not me, I think he was half asleep and not paying attention to what was going on around him. In hind sight, it probably wasn't that close but could have been awkward.

The Lachlan Valley Way is a really good run on a motorcycle. I've travelled this road several times early in the morning and its a great way to start the day. Its about 120 km but doesn't seem that long and after endlessly humming Little River Band's "Its a long way there" we were pulling up in front of the aptly named Superb Bakery in the main street of Boorowa. There was a problem on this visit, the Superb is in danger of loosing its 4½ out of 5 rating becuae there were **no croissants available** - a bakery without croissants? Still raisin toast and hot coffee was a reasonable substitute.



The name fully describes the products!

The toast and coffee was taken alfresco. We chatted aimlessly while we watched the good folk of Boorowa go about their business. Finally we dragged ourselves back onto the bikes for the last leg of the trip home. I have ridden the route from Boorowa to Batemans Bay many times and described it in several Ride Reports. There is not much option unless you want to go a "long way" there (there's that bloody song again!). The only highlight of this part of the trip was lunch at Cafe Wood Works in Bungendore. This place is a bit up-market for simple biker folk but it was our last stop, and like dinner last night in Cowra, it seemed Ok to lash-out. The gourmet ham sandwich was very tasty and very filling (I almost had the crusty toast with home made jam) and the coffee is quite strong (rating: 3¾ out of 5). From Bungendore its a leisurely blast across to Braidwood (without a stop!) then down the hill to the Bay reaching home before 3:00 p.m.

All up, we had travelled 1,490 km over the four days. For once I could not be bothered keeping track of petrol usage (keeping a diary seems to annoy my fellow travellers) so I have no idea what consumption the SilverWing got (but it would have to be truly excellent because its such a great bike!). I was quite impressed with Don's VStrom; these make a very versatile tourer.

This was yet another great ride. It is truly an interesting country that we live in. Once again, the characters we met were highlights of the trip. I think choosing to stay in pubs and being prepared to chat with the locals makes these rides much more entertaining. The road from Orange to Mandurama was a real find; I'll be back to try it again, probably in the reverse direction. And I intend to visit Cassilis and stay at the Royal Hotel again soon.

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