

Wine Guild of SA Wine Regions Trip Padthaway Wrattenbully Coonawarra May 1 – 4 2018



It was a gorgeous day for travelling! Nothing but blue sky and mild temperatures for our journey down to Naracoorte to commence several days of wine tasting in the Limestone Coast area. Having laid on weather like this then clearly God is a wine drinker!

We had an uneventful journey and I trust everyone else did also. We arrived in good time to do a little bit of shopping for breakfasts and BBQ prior to checking in at the Big 4 Naracoorte Holiday Park and, after that, a short walk back to the Big 4 entrance to climb aboard our coach.

It was on the coach that we learned the “ground rules” for the trip – well, “rule” actually – it being that if we were on time for the coach then we were already late. Okay, I get it, the coach leaves at the appointed meeting time – I can live with that. (And, by the way, it did leave at the appointed time consistently throughout the trip – I’ve seen military operations run with less precision than that.)



Pete Rawlins briefly welcomed us all to the tour and gave a brief welcome to our latest member, Scott Rawlins. I admit, I thought that to be the strangest “welcome to the Guild” that I’d seen but maybe that’s the way Pete likes to do it.

Anyway, a short trip south to Penola saw us arriving at our first winery for the trip.

Raidis Estate



After filing off the coach in a remarkably orderly fashion we took our seats at a very formal looking arrangement of tables. Someone

had really taken some time to prepare, here: tablecloths, glassware, water, spittoons, pens and paper – it looked like nothing had been omitted. In fact, it was a great setting but if I had any criticism (and it was minor) it was that the lighting, whilst creating a great ambience, made it a little difficult to see the colour of the wine. I would have loved to really gauge, in particular, the colour in their Pinot Gris, which had been treated to a certain amount of skin contact.

Our time at Raïdis began with a brief introduction by Roger King who, prior to introducing our hosts for the evening, made a much more formal welcome to that previously mentioned new member, Scott Rawlins. Ahh, that's better! So, over to our hosts: Steve, Emma and Chris (Raïdis, that is). It turned out that the Raïdis patriarch, Chris, had been declared BBQ master so it was basically Steve and Emma who addressed us that evening. After briefly describing the background to their operation they led us through their wine portfolio.



Steve and Emma worked well with each other as they poured and then described each of their wines. They were able to keep our attention with information and anecdotes not only about the Raïdis operation but also the Coonawarra in general and “terra rossa” in particular. In fact, they had so much information to impart that it was difficult to find a moment to discuss their wines amongst ourselves.

I'd noted that the Raïdis logo is, essentially, a goat. They also make full use of goat terms on the labels of their wine. Apparently, they also use goats amongst their vines (after harvest, of course) to keep down the weeds and dispose of any fallen grapes, which is where the goat connection came from in the first place.



With the tasting finished, we were treated to the Greek BBQ that had been cooked by Chris whilst we were otherwise engaged. Along with the BBQ we were very generously invited to take a glass of wine. As further evidence of their generosity, we were each placed in a draw to win entry to a Raïdis special event later this year or, if unable to make it, a bottle of wine instead. Jill Rogers won that!

These guys had gone to enormous trouble to make us welcome and I, for one, certainly appreciated it. If the rest of our visits were anything like this then it was going to be a great trip.

Pete formally thanked our hosts and then it was homeward bound – along with quite a few purchases, I noted.

Wines Tasted:

- 2017 The Kelpie Sauvignon Blanc
- 2017 The Kid Riesling
- 2010 The Kid Riesling
- 2017 Cheeky Goat Pinot Gris
- 2015 Mama Goat Merlot
- 2015 Wild Goat Shiraz
- 2016 Kefi Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2015 Billy Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2013 The Trip (blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Shiraz)



DAY TWO

Another gorgeous day! Today's visits were to include the "cave experience" and we'd been warned to wear "sensible shoes" – still, I wasn't really expecting the footwear inspection as we climbed aboard the coach. Better safe than sorry, though. A brief journey, north this time, had us at what we understood to be the only Cellar Door (currently) in the Padthaway wine region, that of Henry's Drive. What a great setting that turned out to be on such a lovely day – a veranda overlooking the vines.

Padthaway

Although the cellar door was that of Henry's Drive, our host was John Summers, President of the Padthaway Wine Region Vignerons. After being introduced to us by Roger, John gave us a brief welcome as well as introducing the Cellar Door Manager at Henry's Drive, Liz Goossens. With that done, he then essentially invited us to "get stuck in" – I believe the actual phrase used was "casual tasting".



Presented for tasting were wines from a number of different Padthaway producers each, apart from the first, with a representative who was available to help guide the tasting, if necessary. Represented were (from left to right as I looked at them) Giggling Goose, Morambro Creek (Andrew Bryson), Landaire (Carolyn Brown), Limestone Coast Wines (Leisha Munro) and Farmer's Leap (Andrew Martin). Nothing from Henry's Drive itself, you'll notice, but then that was available for tasting or purchase inside the Cellar Door.



Part way through our tasting Leisha, from Limestone Coast Wines, gave us a presentation on the Limestone Coast area in general and the Padthaway region in particular. Apparently Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay do particularly well in this region and have a reputation for reliability and consistency. Leisha drew comparisons between the area and Bordeaux in France.

I'd been through Padthaway many times in my travels and knew there were vineyards here but never thought to wonder why there were vineyards but apparently few wines from the area. It turns out that the reliability/consistency factor has been used for years to advantage in blending by the big companies (I'd seen signs for both Penfolds and Lindemans on the way through). Happily, this situation is starting to change with wines now being marketed with the proud claim to be from Padthaway



During our visit we were also reintroduced to our old friend "The Bonney Upwelling" first brought to our attention, I believe, during our visit to Mt Benson in 2013. It turns out that Padthaway is only 55km from the coast and therefore the upwelling also has effect here. When the weather is hot, the cool breeze created by the upwelling is able to give vines a welcome reprieve from the heat during the evening.



Following our tasting lunch was served – well, I should really say during rather than following as we were able to continue to taste throughout lunch. This was just as well, really, with so many wines to get through. Lunch, by the way, consisted of soup (Indian cauliflower or Moroccan pumpkin – gosh these people go a long way for their vegetables) followed by pork sliders and a range of pizzas.

Apparently, Padthaway means “place of good water”. Well, in my opinion, it means place of good wines also.

Finally, Pete formally thanked our hosts and it was back on the coach for the next venue.

Wines Available to Taste:

Giggling Goose:

- 2016 Sauvignon Blanc
- 2015 Shiraz
- 2016 Viognier

Morambro Creek:

- 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2014 Shiraz
- 2014 Chardonnay
- 2016 Jip Jip Rocks Shiraz Cabernet
- 2016 Jip Jip Rocks Shiraz
- 2017 Jip Jip Rocks Sauvignon Blanc

Limestone Coast Wines:

- 2017 Vandenberg Shiraz
- 2015 Shiraz
- 2016 Sauvignon Blanc

Landaire:

- 2015 Chardonnay
- 2015 Vermentino
- 2014 Shiraz
- 2015 Tempranillo
- 2016 Graciano
- 2016 Cabernet Graciano

Farmer’s Leap:

- 2012 “The Brave” Shiraz
- 2013 Shiraz
- 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2014 Chardonnay
- 2013 Random Shot Shiraz



Wrattobully

On our way back through Naracoorte, our coach stopped to pick up James Freckleton, Vice President of the Wrattobully Wine Region Association. This was ostensibly to allow James to discuss the local geology and geography as we drove to our destination but I suspect that it may have also been necessary in order for us to not get lost. It’s fair to say that we seemed to travel to a destination so remote that even my hearing aid lost signal.

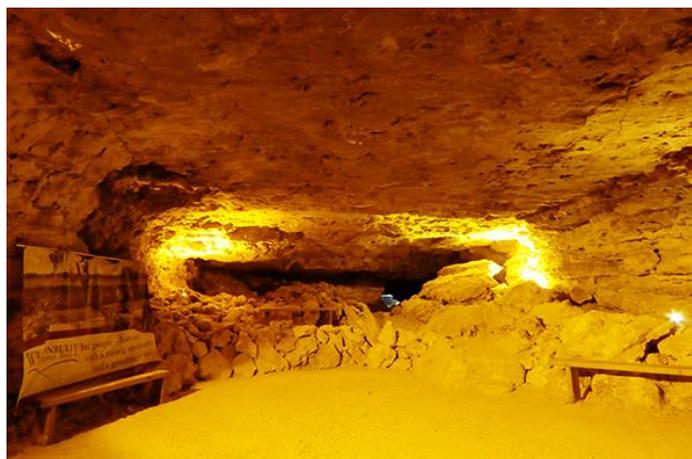
Whether we were travelling aimlessly or with purpose, James regaled us with information about Wrattontully, which, ratified only in 2005 (and including part of Victoria) is one of the youngest wine regions in Australia. Apparently, the area was planted between 1994 and 1999 and the climate was described as “Mediterranean”.



In due course, we arrived at our destination, Schultz Stone Hill Cave, which could only really be described as “the middle of a vineyard”. On alighting from the coach, though, we discovered a few people, a generator and a hole in the ground. Ahah! This was the entrance to the cave we’d been told about. We were briefly introduced to Tim Fletcher, President of the Association and the people who would help lead our tasting.

Without much further ado we commenced our speleology adventure. Starting with some fairly rustic steps and followed by a path that could reasonably be described as challenging we made our way back to where the coach was parked – only quite a few metres underneath it! At this point, the tight path we’d been following opened out into a reasonably cavernous ... well, cavern.

Without much further ado we commenced our speleology adventure. Starting with some fairly rustic steps and followed by a path that could reasonably be described as challenging we made our way back to where the coach was parked – only quite a few metres underneath it! At this point, the tight path we’d been following opened out into a reasonably cavernous ... well, cavern.

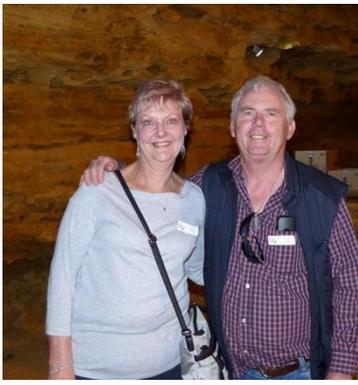


Decked out with tables, wine barrels, wine racks and some advertising posters it was, in essence, a Cellar Door – but only for today and only for us. Still, anyone who didn’t describe this as at least “special” simply wasn’t trying. Apparently, they’ve previously used the space for functions and dinners – however, with

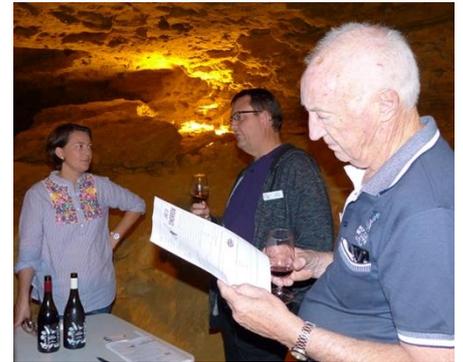
everything having to be carried from the surface along the path we’d just used it’s not an easy achievement. Full marks for persevering, though.

Like Padthaway, we now had the opportunity to partake in a casual tasting of wines from four wineries: Eight At The Gate (with Claire Davies), Patrick Wines (with Luke Tocaciu), Land of Tomorrow Wine (with Susie Harris), and Smith & Hooper (with James Freckleton). (Malone Wines was expected to be in attendance, also, but had to pull out at the last minute. One of their back vintages, though, was present – apparently, it was all that James could find at such short notice.)





As we worked our way through the wines, we were able to revel in the ambience afforded by being in a cave. It was a unique and amazing experience and, for me, one of the highlights of the trip. I don't want to allow the wines, though, to become lost in the experience. There were certainly some beauties presented. Apparently, our hosts would be happy if we went away with the confidence that Wrattobully wines were worth considering. They certainly achieved that, in my view.



All too soon, it seemed, it was time to surface again – the path made, perhaps, a little more difficult by dint of the generous helpings of wine that we'd sampled in the depths. With us all safely back at the top it remained only for Pete to make the formal thank you and then back on the coach for our temporary homes.

Wines Tasted:

Eight At The Gate:
2013 Cabernet Shiraz
2016 Chardonnay

Patrick Wines:
2012 Joanna Shiraz
2012 Shiraz
2017 Riesling

Land of Tomorrow Wine:
2016 Shiraz
2015 Chardonnay

Smith & Hooper:
2014 Reserve Merlot

Malone Wines:
2005 Cabernet

DAY THREE

The weather was turning! From the lovely sunshine of Day Two we were now looking at the possibility of some serious rain. It was still warm, though, as we walked down to the coach, admittedly with our umbrellas unfurled to fend off one or two spots of rain. As we once again travelled south to Coonawarra a hush seemed to have descended upon the coach – whether that was



because we were all awaiting the fire and brimstone that the weather had in store for us or, perhaps, we all just had hangovers.

Redman Wines



Pretty well as soon as we arrived at Redman the heavens opened up and delivered that promised, and no doubt much needed, rain.

Once again it fell to Roger to introduce us to our hosts for the morning Dan Redman and his brother Mike along with their father, Bruce, and uncle, Mal. Oh, and let's not forget Billy, the wine dog, who greeted us so enthusiastically that he was clearly in need of a second tail as one was just not enough for all the wagging to be done.



Dan and Mal related the Redman story to us and, it's fair to say, there was a fair bit of that. The Redman family have been making wine in this area since Adam was a boy – well, since 1908 anyway. It's fair to say that they're fairly proud of that history and a quick visit to the Cellar Door will prove that. Indeed, even the space we used for the tasting had a number of historical photographs and posters. (By the way, that same Cellar Door even had a plaque as a



thankyou for a previous visit from the Wine Services Guild – that's us!)

Oh, and I have to mention the wine crusher! The Redmans have a rather unusual addition to the standard wine harvester. Whilst most wineries pick the fruit and drop it into bins for crushing back at the winery, Redman have a "field crusher", enabling them to de-stem and crush in the field, transferring the juice straight to a trailer tank. Talk about fresh crush!



Oh, and I have to mention the wine crusher! The Redmans have a rather unusual addition to the standard wine harvester. Whilst most wineries pick the fruit and drop it into bins for crushing back at the winery, Redman have a "field crusher", enabling them to de-stem and crush in the field, transferring the juice straight to a trailer tank. Talk about fresh crush!

We were led through a tasting of the Redman portfolio, including a very generous tasting of their aged "blend" just to show us the ageing potential of the wine. Even when the "formal" tasting was over we were told that, as it was too early to leave, we could help ourselves to re-taste any of the wines and/or to just sit and listen to the rain. Some of our group, meanwhile, had a bit of a tour of the winery equipment and sampled a wine from the barrel.



Wow, what a great visit. After the formal thank you from Pete it was time to load the purchases onto the coach, along with us, for the next destination.

Wines Tasted:

- 2012 Shiraz
- 2013 Shiraz
- 2015 'The Last Row' Shiraz
- 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2014 Cabernet Merlot
- 2006 "The Redman" (Cabernet, Shiraz and Merlot)



Chardonnay Lodge



There's not much I can say about Chardonnay Lodge except that the roof leaked! I guess they'd been a bit caught out by the sudden change in the weather and found one or two places where the rain could get in. That notwithstanding, it was a good setting and the meals were excellent – I certainly didn't hear any complaints. Very efficiently and promptly delivered, too – thanks, in part, to Roger fielding the waitress' deliveries and sending them in the correct direction.

The other thing I noticed was a fair bit of sparkling Shiraz being drunk. Still, the less said about that the better. Back on the coach for the next destination.

Wynns Coonawarra Estate

Underground again – this time into a "traditional" cellar, which is to say a wine store below ground. Apparently, these are quite unusual in the Coonawarra, mainly because the limestone base to the terra rossa is generally not very deep. In the case of Wynn's, the main building is built on a slight rise in the ground – leaving enough depth for an underground cellar, which is their original barrel store.



Introductions, again, by Roger; this time introducing Tony Gleeson and Sarah Ferguson, both from the Cellar Door and winemaker, Sarah Pigeon. These began by telling us that we were now at both the

biggest and the oldest of the Coonawarra wineries – it's been going since 1896. As we'd come to expect, they also gave us an insight into their "take" on Coonawarra – I was admittedly surprised to learn that Riesling is their biggest seller.





We also had an in-depth and very interesting discussion on barrels, oak and cooperage, something that had emerged as a bit of a common theme during our time in the area. Wynn's, particularly, described their close relationship with the cooper and their (the cooper's) knowledge of the wood.

We were led through a structured tasting of some of the Wynn's portfolio. In the process, and as at previous wineries, I was really starting to come to the belief that there was more to Coonawarra than Cabernet Sauvignon.

I was intrigued to learn that Wynn's are planning to add "old vine" to some of their labels to add a worldwide uniqueness. After all, many of the old world vines are relatively young given previous trouble with disease. I was also interested to note that last year, for the 60th year celebration of their Black Label, they'd closed some under cork and some under screw cap in order to make a comparison. The results should be interesting.



Again it fell to Pete to make our formal thank you, whereupon we ascended to the Cellar Door for a look around, more tasting and/or for purchases. The look around aspect was well worth it – they have quite a bit of both modern and historical items on display.



So, back to the coach for the final time today. I was a bit concerned at this point, as another coach load had arrived at Wynn's whilst we'd been down in the cellar. As I counted our 38 on the bus I did begin to wonder if they were the same 38 who'd set out with us this morning. Still, so long as we have the right number ...



Wines Tasted:

- 2017 Riesling
- 2016 Chardonnay
- 2016 Shiraz
- 2016 "The Gables" Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2012 "Black Label" Shiraz
- 2013 "Black Label" Cabernet Sauvignon

At this stage, prior to our return northward, our coach driver, Don Searle, became somewhat of a tour guide taking us via the old railway station and also showing us a trench that had been dug amongst some vines and which clearly showed the relationship between the red soil and the limestone bedrock. Another great day – yet it was not quite over. Our hosts at the Big 4 Holiday Park had very kindly provided us



with an “afternoon tea” to enjoy in the camp kitchen. I wasn’t sure I’d really needed much more in the way of food but I did enjoy the scones, jam and cream. By the looks of the crumbs left over I suspect I wasn’t the only one.

DAY FOUR

The weather was still a bit cool but the rain seemed to be staying away. Once again we boarded the coach for the now familiar drive south to Coonawarra. Again, we expected to be in place with glass in hand by 11am. In any other company, drinking at 11am would probably be enough to earn one, justifiably, the epithet “alcoholic” but in the Guild it’s just another day on tour.

Zema Estate



Zema Estate had been a last-minute fill in when Brand’s Laira was unable to host us due to bottling induced space limitations. As a last minute replacement, I was prepared to forgive Zema for any shortcomings in their preparedness. I needn’t have had any worry whatsoever, as it’s fair to say that their operation was slick in anyone’s language. We hadn’t even got off the coach before a young lady who introduced herself as Kate was welcoming us to Zema and dealing with the early administration. Wow, good start – but that was

before we saw where we’d be located for the tasting. Here, again, was evidence of a winery that had really planned for the occasion. A section of the winery had been neatly closed off with racks of wine barrels, heaters were in place and operational, tables clothed and set with everything we might want. Last minute replacement! Perhaps we should spring all our visits as a surprise.



Once in place, we were formally introduced to Kate O’Connell as well as the two who would be leading us through our tasting Nick Zema, Proprietor and Viticulturist, and Joe Cory, Winemaker. As we’d come to expect, Nick shared with us a bit of the Zema history – these Coonawarra people seem, justifiably, proud of their history – as well as their family oriented philosophy. I liked their statement about overseeing the process from “vineyard to glass” along with their philosophy that “they must be the best they can” to

enable them to compete with their often bigger competitors. As one of the smaller operators, the majority of Zema’s wines are sold through the Cellar Door. As a consequence they are conscious of the need to get the wines out drinkable now. Accordingly, their current cellar door releases for reds are generally 2012/13.

Once again we learned more about the Coonawarra and, in particular, the portion of it being looked after by Zema. I was surprised to hear they “have 20 acres and probably 40 different soil types”; one tends to think that if you’re on the terra rossa then that’s all there is to it but statements like that make you think a bit more carefully.

Nick and Joe were the perfect double act and information was imparted efficiently and interestingly. I think their



knowledge and easy presentation style also encouraged a lot of spirited questions from us. They also showed us a great range of wines from back vintage to future.

Lunch was also at Zema, although I understand the catering had been transferred from that arranged at Brand's Laira. It's certainly amazing what you can get into a brown bag (I used to be a "brown bagger" at work but it was never as elaborate as that which we had at Zema). Their brown bag was pretty much like the Tardis.



Another great visit, especially given their status as a last-minute ring in. Again a formal thanks from Pete prior to us boarding the coach, along with several



boxes of purchased wine, for one last winery.

Wines Tasted:

- 2017 Sauvignon Blanc
- 2013 Cluny (Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec)
- 2013 Shiraz
- 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2012 Family Selection Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2004 Family Selection Shiraz
- 2016 Saluti Shiraz/Cabernet (Barrel Sample)



Penley Estate



It wasn't far from Zema to Penley Estate, which was just as well as it had now been a good 15 minutes since I'd last had a drink. We passed through Penley Estate's well manicured entrance statement and passed into the Cellar Door, which once again, had been nicely set up to welcome us; clothed tables, place mats, breadsticks, etc. The wineries of the area had certainly made us feel welcome over our time here.

At Penley, Sara Fletcher and Hans Loder set out to tell us



about the Penley operation, their history and their wines. I'd missed the introduction, indeed, I'm not sure there'd been one, but it became clear that Sara was Marketing and Hans was the vineyard manager – I guess people always tend to speak to their strengths.

Actually, Hans' presentation on his approach to vineyard management was very interesting and you could really feel he's passionate about what he does. Intermingled with this, Sara led us through a tasting of some of the Penley wines in a well thought order which was very well structured for comparing their offerings. There was even some chocolate made available to complement one of the wines.



Yet again we'd been made to feel tremendously welcome and our time at Penley had flown by. As was now usual, Pete offered a formal vote of thanks.



Wines Tasted:

- NV Echo Sparkling Pinot Noir
- 2017 Cabernet Franc
- 2016 11 Barrels Wild Ferment Shiraz
- 2016 Phoenix Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2016 Tolmer Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2014 Steyning Cabernet Sauvignon

- 2012 Chertsey Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc
- 2014 Chertsey Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot
- 2016 Chertsey Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot

Wrap Up

It was time to get back onto our now beloved (and wine filled) coach but, prior to doing so, we had a brief but heartfelt vote of thanks for our organising team of Alison Ager, Phil Harris, Pete Rawlins and (I think especially) Roger King. On behalf of all attendees I'll iterate those thanks now – you all did a great job!and thank you Carol Seely for writing this great report (*Pete*)

Of course, it still wasn't over! We had our final night BBQ to come – this is traditionally a BYO everything event but on this occasion that requirement was slightly different. Firstly, during our tasting at Wrattenbully several bottles of wine had not been finished and these had been generously offered to us to take away. Accordingly, they'd been made a feature at the BBQ – along with two bottles of the Guild Tawny, which had been carried down as spares for presentations but had remained unused. Oh well, a pity to cart it back, I suppose.

Conclusion

I did not expect to be surprised by Padthaway, Wrattenbully and Coonawarra – yet I very definitely was. I'd expected the wines in the less known areas of Padthaway and Wrattenbully to be fairly lightweight, yet they proved to be complex, elegant and robust. At Coonawarra, I'd expected to enjoy the Cabernet Sauvignon and probably nothing else – yet, at most wineries, I was finding that

I preferred another wine to their Cabernet Sauvignon. I even started to revise my long held dislike for Chardonnay, something that I swore would never happen. I remain steadfastly resolute, however, that the same will not happen for sparkling reds!

For me, I guess “down south” will be Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon for a while longer – change happens slowly. In the meantime, though, when I see a Padthaway or a Wrattenbully on the wine list or the bottle shop shelf I’ll certainly give it due consideration, as I will for a Coonawarra that isn’t a Cabernet Sauvignon. This is what I love about the Guild – it educates me without me realising it and shows me new and wondrous things. What a cracking event!

DAY FIVE

Today was simply a case of “home, James” for most of us and I observed a steady stream of Guilders filing out of the Big 4 Naracoorte Holiday Park, although I know of several who were staying in the area for an extra day or so. In my case, we got a reasonably good start and were at Keith by 11am – just in time for a drink...