

# Five and a half days on the road with Henry



Greg Bryan and Sean Morahan laugh with relief as they walk through the border gate into Hungerford

Shortly after midday last Thursday Greg Bryan and Sean Morahan stumbled through the border gate after a 220 kilometre trek recreating Henry Lawson's walk in the Summer of 1892. After five and a half days on the road, the two men arrived in Hungerford happy, relieved and wishing they had brought more than one pair of socks.

The Western Herald caught up with Greg and Sean after they returned to Bourke on Thursday night.

*So just how hard was the walk from Bourke to Hungerford?*

Greg: I think I probably thought you could just walk forever but I found you can't do that. I think I had a pretty naive and maybe a disrespectful idea of what it would be like, so even at the end of the first day my legs were pretty tired and my feet had blisters and I learned pretty quickly that it was going to be a lot harder than I had planned for.

I never got to the stage where I was afraid I was going to quit, but I certainly very quickly got to the stage where I was afraid of all the pain I was going to endure before the end of it. So that was really worrisome on day one and day two knowing that there was day three and day four and day five and day six before me.

*You said you already had blisters by the end of day one, how did you treat them to keep going for the next four and half days?*

Greg: Again as a part of my lack of preparation I hadn't really brought anything. Fortunately Sean balanced out my lack of preparation, he was super prepared and had lots of the bandages I should have had, different types of bandages, Vaseline, different types of ointments. So he had all of those things I made use of. As well, we stopped at Fords Bridge at the pub there for a late lunch on the second day and I hobbled out of there and I'm convinced that they thought I wouldn't make it another hundred yards.

Andrea told us she got updates from people towards Bourke and she was letting people know, who were going toward Hungerford that we were on the track and so one couple that were driving from Tamworth to Broome she had told them 'Oh that guy must have a boot full of blisters' and so she was kind enough to stop and offer me some stuff that she had... that was a big help. So I made use of the kindness of others including Sean.

*So what have you learnt about Henry Lawson and his writing from this experience?*

I can certainly understand his perspective much more so than I previously did and I think he probably included in his writings lots of warnings that I had failed to heed about how hard it would be. I recognise that he did it in summer and there would have been a whole host of other challenges to deal with that we were fortunate to avoid. But you know I certainly learned about Lawson and he, quite rightly, did it tough and therefore the impressions he formed of the bush as a result of his

experiences are not to be derided for being overly negative, because that's what a lot of people think: he was too morbid. I think that his perspective is an entirely justifiable one given that it was based on his experiences so I don't think that is inappropriate at all.

*Henry Lawson did the walk to Hungerford in December, but how did you handle the cold nights?*

Greg: The first night when we woke up in the morning there was a thin layer of ice on our blankets. But really we had a big fire each night and we kept it going all night so it really wasn't near the problem I expected, that was one thing that was much easier than I had expected it to be.

*So Greg, how did you convince your family to let you do this and come out and act as your support team on the road?*

Greg: My wife was certainly aware that this was something that was a lifelong dream and so when I said it was something that I wanted to do, she and my daughters were there to provide support so it was never an issue of convincing them. I think we were about five kilometres from the finish and I said to her as she drove by 'I think we're going to make it' and she revealed then that up until the end of the third day she didn't think we were going to.

She also was really shocked by the bad state that I was in when she caught up us and when she saw how much I was suffering on the second and third day so it seems she was not convinced it was going to happen.

*Sean, how did Greg convince you to walk 220 kilometres with him?*

Sean: We've been mates since we were four and twice before he has dropped on me some adventures he was doing but he has done it at the last minute and said are you coming... both those times I missed out and this time I was determined I wasn't going to.

I loved the idea of having an adventure with my mate, I loved the idea again of following in the footsteps of somebody who is historically significant to Australia, that being Henry Lawson, and also the fact I hadn't been further west than Dubbo so I got to see what is very much the heart of Australia... all those things appealed to me and very much got me on board.

*How did you feel about being 'on board' three days down the track?*

Sean: Actually I was going alright, the first three days I was going pretty good. Day four was my shocker, which was actually really good because the first couple of days I was looking after Greg and then the next couple of days he was looking after me, so even from that point of view we really got to experience that whole mateship thing, the essence of it, first hand.

You know the first two nights I was getting firewood to keep him warm and I was making sure he was alright and making sure he had food and water within reach and all that, the second two nights he was doing the same for me... So it still did appeal to me and it was part of my



Sean and Greg met up with fellow survivor of the Hungerford walk, Andrew Hull at the Port of Bourke Hotel. Hull, along with Tonchi McIntosh completed the walk to Hungerford in the summer of 2005.

motivation. We both discussed it a bit and we found that we were drawing as many motivations as possible from everywhere to keep us focused on what we were trying to achieve rather than get lost in the distractions of insignificant things like pain.

*How did it feel to walk through the Border Gate in to Hungerford after five and a half days of walking?*

Greg: I certainly had mixed emotions, because it was the end of something that was pretty incredible. I said to Sean just before the finish that they were six of the best days of my life and I knew this was the end of it. After saying that they were six of the worst days of my life, so for it to come to an end I certainly did have mixed emotions and certainly there was a great sense of achievement and satisfaction and there was

joy, but there was also some sadness that it was all over.

Even as we drove back from Hungerford back to Bourke we realised and we commented that we were in a different world again, where things were different. We were zooming by things in the car that we had just walked along and you just saw so much more and heard so much more when we were out there walking so there was certainly a sadness that that really heightened sense of awareness would no longer be with us.

Sean Morahan lives in Sydney, where he runs his own business building websites and training people in sales and service for the motor industry. Greg Bryan is a professor in education faculty at the University of Manitoba, Canada, where he specialises in children's literature.



Five and a half days of walking took its toll on Greg's feet



Greg and Sean enjoy their first drink at the Royal Mail Hotel