

How We Found Yarram... Brian & Jacqui Lee

Written by Brian & Jacqui Lee



OK... a bit of an experiment here!... We all have our own way of telling the same story. Like **Brian & Jacqui Lee**.

Both love writing short stories and both are also very creative artists living in a small coastal town in regional Victoria called Yarram.

So when we recently asked if they could write something about **'how did you two end up in Yarram?'** we weren't expecting a story from **both** of them written... from their own perspective!

We've combined both stories below in a sort of 'time-line', to see how each of them recalled what made them decide to settle in Yarram.

Their Stories...



Jacqui and I have lived in big cities quite a few times in the sixty-two years we've been married; Bristol, London, but always - and I know she felt the same - we preferred to get out into the countryside during the day rather than at night.

When we came to live in Australia in 1987, we lived in the outskirts of Melbourne, between Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula.

We both had jobs in the city and it was certainly fun to be there, but at the weekends we usually hopped on the train to the Mornington Peninsula, with all its bays and beaches, or up into the Dandenong Hills to the north-east of the city, both of which were beautiful.

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Life had become unbearable. We were struggling with a massive mortgage, and we both had jobs that was destroying him. He was losing weight and becoming a sad shadow.

I worked at a nursing home, which had a new owner trying to cut all our resources, and the residents were

Brian worked for the boss from hell!... in an art studio. He was on anti-depressants and we knew we had

We had bought a house in Patterson Lakes at a time when the mortgage rate was over 17%.



Our escape began as weeks of food and drink and be 'up and away' Friday as soon as we finished our toil.

Destinations varied, Phillip Island, Lakes Entrance, and other beauty spots were explored.

We had friends who joined us and we camped once at a small caravan park in Gippsland.

I remember we had a tent that weekend and getting up in pitch darkness to find the toilet was scary. No

But the place had a scrubby little beach, and a real charm, and we loved it.

A seed had been planted!

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Another frequent venue of ours was Lakes Entrance, about two hundred and seventy kilometers away; a good beaches, lots of ‘hippyish’ shops and some excellent eateries.

The main route to the Lakes was down Princes Highway and we used it a lot.

But I had heard of an alternative route, the South Gippsland Highway, through Korumburra and Leongatha to see what it was like; a decision that proved momentous later!



On that fateful trip, which was a turning point, we changed everything, though we didn’t realise it then – we pulled off the highway at a sign that said “PORT ALBERT”.

Friends had mentioned this place in passing, saying it was an attractive little town, so we thought it might be worth a look. It was Lakes Entrance, and we weren’t disappointed!

Port Albert is a small seaside town that was the first port to be set up in Gippsland, serving the sailing ships of the 19th century. It still carries much of the charm of those old days.

We spent about an hour there enjoying the quiet and the scenery and just as we were leaving, I said, not to Jacqui, but to the world: **“You know Jacqui, I could retire here, it feels like home!”**

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One beautiful day in July we were driving to Lakes Entrance for a break, when we stopped off at Port Al

It was a sparkling day the place was quiet and beautiful. Peace drifted around us, we felt stronger and h

We talked about selling up and travelling.

The plans began right there and then: It was time to cut our losses and start again.

Our biggest hurdle – selling the house - took nearly a year. It was such a bad time. Eventually we did se
ourselves a new start.

Skip loads of photos and books were discarded, clothes and small furniture, a fridge and a washing mac

Some things we regret letting go of! - Like our very comfortable bed!

Also some of the photos...

Anyway we loaded the caravan, and found a site at the caravan park on the outskirts of Yarram near Po

It consisted of holidaymakers and a few scruffy old guys living in vans, a little beach, a shop, some show

The men staying there permanently were friendly and happy to share a beer, they were mainly fisherme
boats.

The park at that time was neat and clean, and we chatted to the owners, arranging to have a concrete s

The day we moved was stinking hot, and we had flies all over us when we stopped for a break. We also
months before.

It was a tiring day.

When we eventually set up our new home the cat hid under the bed and would not come out. But Tess

We looked at each other and wondered what had we done!!

We had originally expected to travel, becoming grey nomads.

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Brian

We then travelled on to the Lakes, through Yarram, which I have no memory of from that trip, but which

The place where we made more good friends than we ever did in our travels, where we both found niches we love all that the surrounding countryside had to offer, with Port Albert as the jewel in the crown.



Jacqui

Tired and happy we strolled to the beach.

There were magpies warbling, and little crabs scurried as we disturbed them.

The sun formed a silver horizon, as we looked at the bent old trees along the shore and watched pelicans



The nomad idea although still in our minds, faded, yet we did get on with our lives when returning.

Brian joined the Lions club and soon had a lot of new friends. We both became very busy. In fact we too

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I joined Lions too, we cleaned the local school; fitting it all in by careful planning;

Brian was soon on several committees, and became a Shire Councilor, (Wellington Shire)

He also became president of Lions in 2000. By then I had a job at the hospital and was taken on as a specialist for dementia patients! I loved it.

The move gave us more friends than we had before. When living in suburbia we had made no lasting friends. In the rain forest and beaches, hills and farm country we had friends everywhere.

Our caravan was changed eventually to a large cabin which the owners offered us at very low rental, so we had all the furniture!

After being married over 40 years we had to refurnish a largish two bed-room cabin, from the start.

In 2003 we moved into Yarram itself so we could walk to Clubs and Cafes and the supermarket.

I ran an art group, also helped to establish U3A (*University of the Third age – basically 'Lifelong Learning'*)

I worked until I was 70 at the hospital.

We have never regretted our move here. There have been hard times of course, but friends and the town have made it a great time, some wild nights, and wicked weekends. Yet I can go back to the beach or to Port Albert and remember the good times.



At the Caravan Park, next to the beach.

In its dark canopy the night herons used to sleep all day.

Stirring and arranging their plumage. These huge birds are rare and they only hunt at night.

I found real joy seeing them. Those and the lorikeets were so beautiful. Our wild life paradise compensates

I remember all the times when I was fitter, walking the tracks by the beach over crunchy gum leaves and bringing the smell of the sea, and the scent of Tea Tree.



Brian

So impressed was I that I did something I very rarely do – I wrote a poem about the place, and the words

PORT ALBERT by *Brian Lee*

Port Albert lies quiet, awash with pure light,

The houses and gardens, an artist's delight.

Piers, jetties and park crouch low round the shore

Aglow with rich colour, like a carpeted floor.

The outgoing tide leaves sand damp and brown,

And many hued shells lie all over the ground.

A gull washes feathers of crisp black and white,

In warm sheltered shallows - a splashing delight

Tiny waves clutter the uncovering sand,

Dancing and tumbling, where water meets land.

A spectrum of turquoise and aquamarine,

Undersea gardens change from deep blue to green

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Boats of all colours turn slow on the tide,
Pulling tight on their hawsers as they float side by side
Their reflections all a-quiver in a water-borne 'frieze'
Shimmering and swaying in the light morning breeze
Now gold strips of sand thrust their heads into view

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As the tide keeps receding, cleansing anew.

Small boats come in as others go out,

Leaving white foaming wakes all scattered about

Away to the west, almost lost in the haze,

Wilson's Promontory stands, pale blue guard of the bay

Hills dressed in trees spread dark green to the sea

with pale green grassy tops, rock strewn and free

The sea governs all in this colourful town,

It encircles the place, like a warm turquoise gown

Small islands are strewn like gems all about,

but Port Albert's the crown - of that there's no doubt



Jacqui

Yes this place will hold us!... it still does.

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