



The Visiting Volunteer Program is a major tourism asset for Milparinka and the Corner Country.

During their stay in Milparinka over a two week period volunteers provide local and regional tourist information through the Courthouse Visitor Centre as well as referrals to other attractions and local businesses.

- **They undertake minor maintenance and cleaning of our facilities and actively provide security to our buildings and assets.**
- **They collect donations and entry fees, sell souvenirs and assist with occasional catering projects, our only real means of regularly raising tourism funds.**
- **They maintain visitor statistics and record sales and donations.**
- **Importantly, they provide a friendly face to visitors.**

During their stay in Milparinka Visiting Volunteers become valued members of the community, and remain "friends" well beyond their time in the township. Some volunteers are "returnees", making the pilgrimage to Milparinka year after year.

Accommodation options for Volunteers in Milparinka include self contained accommodation for two in our cottage, or providing one's own accommodation such as a camper or caravan.

The program attracts such up to 50 individuals each year.

Further information is available by contacting John Eyles on 043964494 email John.eyles1@bigpond.com, or

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Milparinka is a tiny community located in the Unincorporated Area of far north western New South Wales, about 40 kilometres south of Tibooburra and 300 kilometres north of Broken Hill. It is the oldest proclaimed township in the Corner Country, and is situated on the banks of the Evelyn Creek, named by Charles Sturt during his 1845 Inland Expedition.

During the expedition Sturt and his men were forced to spend six months trapped by drought on the banks of nearby Preservation Creek. The site of this heroic feat is one of our region's, and Australia's, most significant heritage places, as symbolized by a still-intact cairn built on top of Mt Poole.

In the 1870s, as pastoralism spread across the west of the colony, gold was discovered not far from Sturt's Depot Glen. As the newly announced mineral boom brought more and more people to the area (named the Albert Goldfields) the pressure on scarce water resources grew, and a township was established on the Evelyn Creek's waterhole.

At the time of its 1880 proclamation Milparinka boasted all the trappings of a modern day community: hotels, shops, a blacksmith shop, a bank and a post office. Gradually it also acquired the symbols of colonial administration; a police station and cells, a courthouse and a school.

Resources' booms are notoriously followed by a bust, and by the early twentieth century Milparinka and the other townships of the Albert Goldfields were no longer viable communities. As the majority of the three thousand goldfields' residents left the area Milparinka became a virtual ghost town. Tibooburra, once known as The Granites, survived to become the Corner Country's administration centre.

For close to eighty years Milparinka remained in limbo. With the owners gone the many local sandstone buildings became ruins, mostly assimilating with the dry dusty earth from which they had been carved. One hotel, the Albert remained open, trading beers and meals with a few locals and the odd passerby.

Down the rise from the Albert, on the crest of a ridge above the creek stood the Courthouse, a magnificent example of colonial architecture, sturdy, but also succumbing to the elements and vandalism.

Whilst it was the initiative of local people in the 1980s that halted the destruction of the building, it was a new organisation formed in 2000 that actually brought it back to life.

Slowly the Milparinka Heritage and Tourism Association, comprising mainly of station people, has gone about attending to its core business of preserving and interpreting our community and region's heritage. It operates on a voluntary basis, drawing funds for projects from competitive grant programs, donations and more recently, from the sales of souvenirs.



The Association was responsible staging a re-enactment of Cobb and Co Gold escort to mark the 125th anniversary since proclamation, an event which attracted more than 350 people to the community in 2005, and other community celebrations.

For its work the Association has been awarded considerable merit: a Business Enterprise Award in 2004 and finalist in the Community of the Year Award in 2004 and 2005. In 2005 the Association also received a Volunteer Heritage Award.

WHAT'S AT MILPARINKA?

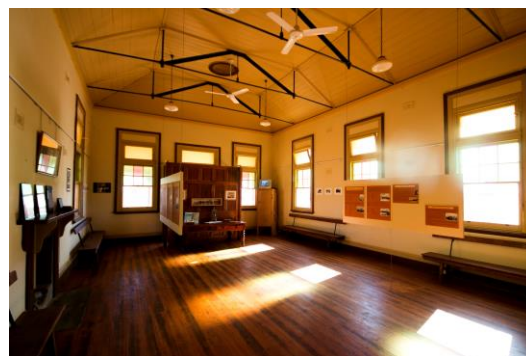
The core business of the Milparinka Heritage and Tourism Association Inc has been built around the Barracks or Police Station Heritage Precinct, and utilises several heritage buildings.

The Milparinka Courthouse

Built in 1896 the courthouse was designed by James Barnet, the same architect who designed the Sydney Post Office and Bathurst Gaol. It has been restored with assistance from the Western Land Commission and NSW Heritage. NSW State and Regional Development provided funds for the publishing of interpretive material, and the NSW Dept of Corrective Services provided labour to complete much of the structural work undertaken in 2002.

Comprising four rooms the main section has been devoted to Local History Interpretation. In keeping with the ambiance of the building simple displays interpret:

- Local aboriginal history
- Charles Sturt's expedition
- Burke and Wills Expedition
- Settlement of the far west
- The discovery of gold
- Transportation
- Information about the school, hotels, police station, post office



Copies of some of the interpretive material that have been locally researched and published is also available.

Seating is provided making it an ideal venue to provide group information for bus and other touring groups.

The rear room of the courthouse has seen life as a court office, a post office and a rural lands board office. Today it is used as the Visitor Centre, or in today's language, the **Welcome Centre**.

With its north-westerly facing verandah this is a perfect location from which to observe travelers arriving in Milparinka. Whilst some people are shy and reluctant to come into the Precinct, those who do enjoy the atmosphere and appreciate the effort that goes into providing a resource such as this in such a remote locations. We do expect that people will pay the small entry fee and we always hope that they will leave a donation. It is difficult sometimes to achieve one or both.

Within the Welcome Centre we have a souvenir shop which generates much needed funds for the upkeep of the Precinct. We try to stock items that will be of interest, to keep prices competitive and to support our local industries where ever possible. will gather for a chat, to buy a souvenir, or to ask for directions to other attractions or accommodation places. Information is kept on site for that purpose,

The Centre has the capacity to serve tea and coffee, and generally make visitors feel welcome.

Visitor Volunteers collect tourist data (postcodes) and record sales as well as fees and donations collected. For banking purposes these need to be recorded separately. For those able to record on a spreadsheet there is a computer in the office.

The Barracks family history, war service and rural museum area.

Located adjacent to the Courthouse the Barracks or former police station was built in 1883. It ceased to be a manned station in 1920, and in subsequent years was used as a private residence. Acquired by the Association in 2003 the building was restored with funding assistance provided by Regional Partnerships. Again, labour from the Department of Corrective Services was utilised for the reconstruction work.

This year a great deal of re-arrangement been undertaken with one room now dedicated to war service and family history. Local history material is filed in folders, and there are published records of lives and events for visitors to read. Some material can be made available to the public, but there will be a fee for this.

The main room of the Barracks has been developed as a museum. It now houses a range of items that had been acquired over the years and hopefully will be of interest to visitors.

There are three private areas within the Barracks.

The office is adjacent to the museum space and **must be kept locked**. Our computer, internet connections and safe are in this room. More on locks and security later.

A walk way to the rear leads to our laundry and refrigeration room, and a store room. This is also off-bounds to the public. Later this year we hope to install a door to discourage curious visitors.

The telegraph station

This ruin was purchased by the association in 2018. A range of ideas have been put forward regarding its future, nothing certain at this stage.

The Proto-resources Mining Interpretive Centre in the lock up

The former cells are located immediately behind the Barracks, and comprise two rooms and a security fenced "exercise yard". The building has its original 1883 solid doors and sliding bolts. This area is used as a Mining Interpretive Centre.

The central feature of the displays include an original 1884 map of the mine area, and some working models of equipment used in the early days.

The restoration of the building was achieved through savings made on the restoration of the Barracks and a NSW Heritage grant. During 2019 a new Mining Heritage Centre will be constructed near the sheds and this space will be re-purposed, although into what is not certain yet.

Evelyn Cottage

This former police station kitchen is located adjacent to the cells and has recently been restored using Department of Transport and Regional Services funding to create permanent accommodation for Visiting Volunteers.

Two people can be accommodated in the cottage, with a separate kitchen/living room and bedroom. A bathroom has been constructed beneath the verandah which serves both the in-cottage volunteers and those staying in their own accommodation.

Linking all the buildings are the remains of the original clay drain pipes which fed water collected on the roofs into a central **underground tank**. The Association also hopes to be able to reinstate the drains and tanks, thus removing any reasonable risk of water damage, and enabling the Precinct to become water independent.

This area is also private, and for your personal security needs to be kept locked.

The Variety Childrens Park

Located adjacent to the cottage is a small park area with benches and displays. Drought has claimed many of the trees and shrubs, and this area, as well as the Harry Blore Memorial Park, is an area that needs lots of TLC.

The Harry Blore Memorial Park

Located across the road from the Precinct is a park area that the Association has established and maintains. Featuring native trees and shrubs the park also contains a shelter, panels with local environmental interpretive material and a picnic table. A swing has been built for visiting children.

Milparinka Pioneer Memorial Wall and Silhouette

In 2005 local residents constructed a stone memorial wall alongside the park, and invited the descendants of local families to provide plaques commemorating their ancestors. Complemented by a steel silhouette of a pioneer family and a wheel barrow laden with belongings, the site is positioned to be seen first as one approaches the town. It is stark and symbolic of the region's social history.

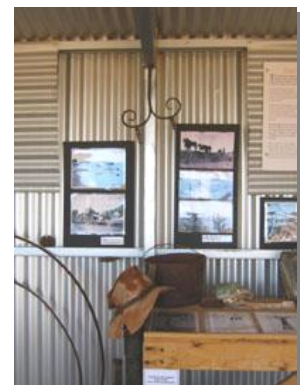
Pastoral Industry Interpretive Centre (The Farm Sheds)

On the north side of the Heritage Precinct the Association has establish two sheds and display areas that helps to interpret the pastoral industry of the region, and includes information about :

- The wool industry, and especially shearing
- Providing water, with a complete boring plant and pump jack on display
- Building fences
- Animal husbandry
- Grazing pressure management
- Weed, pest and kangaroo management

Very much an outdoors setting, the priority here for Visitor Volunteers is to limit the dust and to remove rubbish.

This are is still a work in progress. In 2019 a third building will be located adjacent to the sheds to create a Mining Heritage Centre.



Milparinka Public Toilets

The Association was instrumental in negotiating with the NSW RTA to locate public toilets in Milparinka. They were erected by the Dept of Corrective Services. It is part of our responsibility to ensure that they are maintained and cleaned.

The Milparinka Heritage Trail

The Association recognises that there are a number of heritage sites in Milparinka that require historic interpretation. To facilitate this markers have been placed adjacent to the sites, and an information sheet published. This is made available to visitors from the Courthouse or Barracks, and includes the former school, hotel, post office and bank sites.

Milparinka Cemetery

Located just west of the township, the Milparinka cemetery is the final resting place of some three hundred or so people, although just a handful have headstones. The cemetery fence and gates has been replaced by our Association.

Map directions to the cemetery and the former Chinese Garden and Afghan cameleer campsite adjacent to the Evelyn Creek and located on the Walking Trail Guide.

The Evelyn Creek and Milparinka Waterhole

The Evelyn Creek and Milparinka Waterhole lie to the east of the Heritage Precinct. Although it remains the collection point of more than one hundred years of "junk", it is also a valuable natural feature of the area. Native animals living along the creek include kangaroos and birds, as well as, as one Volunteer discover, echidnas. A number of camping sites have been constructed along the creek.

The town in general.

The best is to just go exploring: there are old hotel bottle dumps, a sandstone quarry and a host of other "ruins" of intrigue and curiosity value. The airstrip has proved invaluable to a model airplane enthusiast Volunteer.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. **Is fuel available at Milparinka?**

A. No.

Q. **Is water available at Milparinka?**

A. Yes. Potable water is in the rainwater tanks, tap water is not potable.

Q. **Is there power?**

A. Yes

Q. **Are there toilets and showers?**

A. Yes. Volunteers use the showers and toilets attached to the cottage.

Q. **Is there a telephone.**

A. Yes, the landline number is 08 80913862. We expect to have wi-fi connected soon, it will be available for use with a Telstra mobile phone.

Q. **Is there a store in Milparinka?**

A. No. It is probably best to bring your supplies with you. There is a refrigerator with freezer box in the Barracks for meat and other perishables. There is a twice weekly mail service and fresh items can be brought up then. There are two stores in Tibooburra with a range of goods.

Q. **Are meals available at the Hotel?**

A. Yes. The Albert Hotel offers a range of home style meals and soft or alcoholic drinks.

Q. **Is there a doctor in the area?**

A. There is a health clinic in Tibooburra which is accessible 24 hours a day. An RFDS doctor visits on Tuesdays, and can be accessed by telephone 24 hours a day in emergencies. Flight time from Broken Hill is about one hour if a condition warrants a consultation with a doctor, or medical evacuation to Broken Hill.

Q. **Is information available to give out to visitors?**

A. Yes. We have a range of local tourist information and other material available to either give to (other) visitors, or for people to read and learn about the area. We also carry travel information about other regions.

Q. **During what hours do Visitor Volunteers operate the precinct?**

A. The time spent "on duty" is entirely up to the Volunteers, although it's useful to be open to catch the south bound traffic from Tibooburra early in the morning, and the northbound, after lunch.



Q. What are the main functions of the Program?

A. Maintaining a face to face presence is essential for encouraging other visitors to stay longer in the area. People like to chat, and to find out more about the area, so just being there is a primary function. In addition, keeping facilities clean and tidy is important.

We keep a small range of souvenirs for sale which help to generate income to cover operating expenses, maintenance and marketing. Simple records of sales are useful for future planning purposes. Records of money from sales and donations are maintained separately. Arrangements can be made about banking.

A Visitor Book is located in the Courthouse, but it is also useful to record specific data about visitors, such as home post code, whether heading north or south, and how they heard about Milparinka. This information can be used for future marketing initiatives and collected from those who access the Visitor Information Centre.

Q. What other "jobs" can Visitor Volunteers do?

A. Visitor Volunteers come from all walks of life, and have a range of skills. We always the need for people who can:

- type up manuscripts
- repair window panes and window sashes
- repair woodwork
- paint wood work
- undertake minor plastering repairs
- plant trees
- rectify irrigation blockages
- undertake other minor plumbing jobs
- engage in crafts that can be made and sold for souvenirs

Q. Can Visitor Volunteers take time off to visit other locations in the area?

A. Absolutely. Touring the region is encouraged. There are many other great sites to visit, such as Depot Glen, Sturt's Cairn, Mt Browne, Tibooburra, Sturt National Park, Cameron Corner and station properties.



Q. Who do we contact if we need help?

The main local contact is Ruth Sandow, T 08 80912524, 0499 164 919 email pimparalakestation@bigpond.com