



Our 'Tram' Ride Monday, July 19th 2010



East End of Hunter Street 1950

On the last day of the school holidays fourteen members, plus 5 grandchildren, boarded the Newcastle Famous Tram for a tour around the inner city. The vehicle is actually a bus transformed into a replica of an old tram and the first thing we noticed when we boarded were the old style wooden seats, just like those we used to sit on when trams still ran in the city.

For just over an hour we drove around enjoying the lovely old buildings and history of our city. The driver shared the commentary with work experience student, Chloe.



We had several stops – the first at Nobby's Beach – not only to enjoy the view but to have a closer look at the memorial of the MV *Pasha Bulka*, the ship that ran aground on the beach during the major storm of June 2007. A section of its rudder is now permanently on display as a reminder of that dramatic event.



Newcastle, as an industrial city, was important to the Australian war effort during World War II and had quite heavy coastal fortifications. A Japanese submarine actually shelled the coast on one occasion but fortunately there were no casualties and only minimal damage done. Our driver pointed out some of the cement structures that still dot the area and we stopped for a closer look at a gun emplacement under the Strezlecki Lookout.



As we know Newcastle was established in 1804 as a convict settlement. The most dangerous convicts were sent here as a severe punishment and to dig for coal. The conditions under which they worked were horrific. The settlement was then known as *Coal River* and became “a hell-hole”. Military rule ended in 1823.



We passed by the Bogey-Hole, a natural rock pool, which had been enlarged in about 1820 by convicts as a private bath for Major James Morisset while he was Commandant here. Enlarged yet again in later years it became a popular swimming spot.

Unfortunately our visit to the Maritime Museum was put on the backburner for a future outing as it was closed today. We enjoyed lunch on the foreshore before some of us took a ferry across the harbour to Stockton for a look back at the city sky line.

