The £10 Pom - Freda S.

U3a Talk 15th October 2026

In 1965 I was a GPO telephonist aged 25 and living in a bedsit in Manchester.



During a lunch break, I spoke to a colleague (named Joyce) and the conversation led to us agreeing to emigrate to Australia. So after a visit to Australia House in Manchester the interview more or less suggested that Brisbane would be the best place to go.

So on 9th September we boarded the plane for Australia. I must clarify "plane", it was a turboprop and packed to the over head luggage rack. The first stop was Bahrain. Apart from travelling to Europe, the customs of the Middle East was very educational.



The experience of visiting the toilet was an eye opener, It took me some time to work out putting one's feet in a slot and standing over a hole in the floor. Something that I was not eager to repeat again. On to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) , Singapore and the Darwen Australia.

At last I could get a shower and a change of clothing. Finally we arrived at Brisbane and the experience of having to remain on the plane that was being fumigated was excruciating.

After going through immigration, we were shown to our accommodation. For Families they were given chalet like houses, for Couples and singletons we were shown to a dormitory. On the flight, we had made friends with a couple from London, and the first night in Brisbane Anne and Reg had gone into town for a drink. They came back the hostel and Reg was fuming. He was dressed in a smart pair of slacks, shirt and cravat and had been refused a drink, because he wasn't wearing a tie. we all decided to go to the local bar and this is where I had my first Aussie beer. 2 Small glasses and I was quite inebriated.

The next day Anne came back and told me that they had found a flat and that there was another available. Needless to say, we couldn't get out of the hostel accommodation quick enough. It was a modern refurbished flat and fully furnished. It was the next morning that we discovered the "dreaded cockroach". Joyce had left her empty cup of milk on her bedside cabinet only to find a big red cockroach at the bottom of the cup, Needless to say, the cup and the cockroach were flung over the balcony. Later in the morning, Anne came to our flat asking if we had found any cockroaches in the dressing table, as she had. I have to say this is a condition of living in a hot climate.



It was difficult to get work (contrary to what we had been told in England) and although I was prepared to do anything, a dining room maid at Brisbane General I was not. The Australian friends suggested that we should go to Sydney and that we would stand a better chance of getting work.



The Sydney experience was totally different to Brisbane. For example we didn't know that the flat that we rented was two minutes from Kings Cross, the notorious red light district of Sydney. We did manage to get work as telephone operators but had difficulty with the Aussie twang. Plus we had to put up with a lot of insults about being Poms. I did explain to one caller that the term POME referred to Prisoner's of Mother England, which was more fitting to their ancestry. Needless to say I was reprimanded.

We did have fun especially when travelling. We decided that our first holiday would be to Canberra. What we didn't know, was in Canberra shops and bars closed early and because it was Easter, everywhere was fully booked.



So it was a question of finding somewhere to sleep in the car. I was desperate for the loo so we thought that we had found a quiet spot only to discover as I lowered my pants that we parked next to a drive-in movie and the film had finished and all the lights came on. We tossed up for who would sleep in the back of the car and as usual I became very friendly with the gear stick. We were woken by a flock of Galahs (noisy Aussie birds) singing their dawn chorus. We had brought some food with us and as we hadn't eaten since the previous evening I decided that I would start the barbecue. I put on some sausages and steak and when everything was black I decided breakfast was ready. It is now that I discovered that I was not an Aussie, black doesn't mean cooked. Alas I dug a hole and buried evetything.

On another occasion we were visiting friends in South Australia. John was a warden for the Forestry Commission, so it was difficult to locate the exact position (no Sat Nav)

I stopped at a police station asking for directions and was told to go up the road for about a mile, turn right and stay on the road then we will come to Nangwarry. What he didn't say was that the signpost said 112mile. So you see distance to the Aussie is no problem.



Australia is a wonderful country if you live with the wild life. I tried for six and half years, but the cockroaches, spiders and snakes did for me.