

## Episode 255

### Saturday 1 November 2008

#### Willie's Western Downs Special

Start your Western Downs adventure with a visit to the home of one of Australia's best-loved heroes. Gunsynd was the bush horse that bolted from obscurity to horseracing fame in the 1970s, winning a string of big, east coast races including the Cox Plate.



The fairytale started in 1969 in the public bar of Goondiwindi's historic Victoria Hotel, where four locals formed a syndicate to purchase the grey stallion. Bill Bishop is the last surviving member of the syndicate and much of his wonderful collection of memorabilia is on show at the Gunsynd Museum which you'll find next to the town's Visitor Information Centre.

From Goondiwindi, you can travel deeper into the Western Downs along the Barwon Highway. It's a 200-kilometre drive west to St George, dubbed the inland fishing capital of Queensland. The town's wide Balonne River is home to yellowbelly, Murray cod and silver perch and attracts anglers from all over. Another picturesque fishing spot is Wallum Creek, about an hour's drive away from St George at Bollon.

The little town of Bollon is home to Nullawokka Aboriginal Cultural Tours, run by Bill Speedy. Bill is a descendent of the local Cooma tribe and offers a bush tucker morning tea before leading the tour group to the banks of the creek where he has set up a traditional aboriginal family camp.

From Bollon it's a short drive to Charlotte Plains, just east of Cunnamulla. Sheep have been the life-blood of this farm stay since the 1800s and guests are welcome to watch the action in the historic shearing shed when the season is in full swing.

The artesian bore head is another spot favoured by campers. Since 1892, it's pumped out half a million gallons a day at 47 degrees Celsius. The water cools as it flows through 145 kilometres of drains that snake across the property. Owners Robyn and Reid Russell can put on a camp oven dinner up by the bore head on request. If you're not camping you can stay in a classic old Queenslander homestead, decorated with the treasured heirlooms of Robyn's childhood.

While at Charlotte Plains, you might run into a true character of the bush – Willie Cooma, the Cameleer. Willie roams the west with his beloved caravan of camels, many of which he caught in the wilderness of the Simpson Desert. Tourists have traveled with Willie onboard his specially made caravan. Willie has plans to lead 10-day safaris deeper into the wild country that he loves.

**Contact Toowoomba and Golden West Tourism**

[www.toowoombaholidays.info](http://www.toowoombaholidays.info)

**Contact Cunnamulla Visitors Information Centre;** Ph: 07 4655 8470

**Contact RACQ Travel;** [racq.com/travel](http://racq.com/travel)