



T U T O R S ' T I P S

USING INTERNET WEB PAGES AS A BASIS FOR LESSONS: The Birdsville Races



Web pages focussing on current events have proven to be a useful basis for literacy lessons. I particularly like the way that one idea leads to another via links and, as a result, there are myriad possibilities for developing a range of skills. Recently I have used the Plant a Tree Day and the Brisbane Exhibition as well as the Birdsville Races home sites as starting points for lessons. A number of different activities relating to the Birdsville Races homepage are shown below.

Locating places on a map

A beginning task might be to estimate where Birdsville or another place is and then check this using a map that could be in an atlas or online. A student could then work out how far away it is from their home, how they might travel there, how long it would take, the towns that are nearby, etc.

Reading about places and moving out from there

On the Birdsville home site of <http://www.birdsvillerraces.com> there is a brief history of the town.

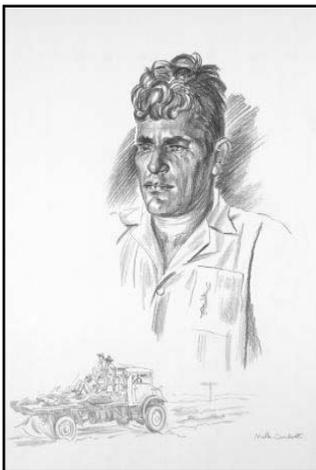
REGISTER NOW FOR THE
2007 EVENT



1. After reading the text, one way to extend the content would be to discuss the moving of livestock at the turn of the century.

A good website to use for more information about the topic of droving is the website <http://www.cattledrivesouthaustralia.com/home.html> which notes that a cattle drive was held along the Birdsville Track in May-June this year involving 500 head of cattle, 120 horses and riders from around the world. Further, there is another large cattle drive planned for 2007.

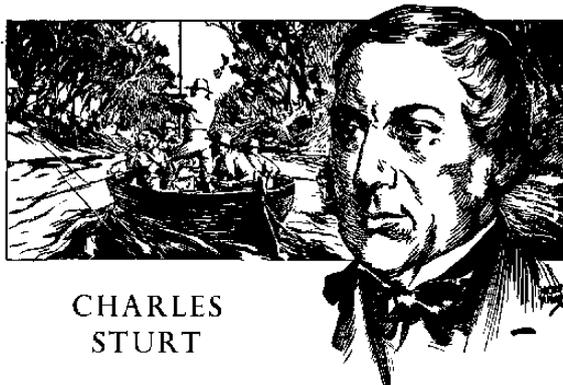
2. Another idea that could be followed up is the notion of the Birdsville Track itself. For example, there has been an exhibition in the National Museum of Australia showing the journey Noelle Sandwith made in 1953 along this route. As she travelled she made 105 sketches. The relevant site is http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/now_showing/in_search_of_the_birdsville_track/the_journey/slideshow_2_2.html#slideTop



**Alex Rabig, Betoota-to-Birdsville mailman,
January 1953, Betoota, Queensland**
Sandwith collection, National Museum of Australia

One of the sketches by Sandwith was of the mailman, Alex Rabig, shown on the left. The life of another mailman, Tom Kruse, who also serviced the Birdsville Track, is featured in a set of six sound recordings available from a number of Brisbane City Council libraries. However, tutors would need to be a bit discriminating in selecting sections for listening and discussion.

Other activities relating to the Birdsville Track might be to find it on a map and read about journeys into the interior of Australia, talk about the planning that would be needed, and so on.



**CHARLES
STURT**

3. A further idea that could be explored is the mention in the text about the history of Birdsville of the explorers Charles Sturt, Burke and Wills, etc.

For example, there is a website about Charles Sturt at http://www.davidreilly.com/australian_explorers/sturt/sturt.htm. It is his

third journey that seems relevant.

A comparison might be made between these early journeys, that by Sandwith and ones that people take now. For example, students could find out more about the Grey Nomad movement.

Exploring the origins of a town's name

Birdsville is named after the many birds that come there on their way to Lake Eyre. There is a site that illustrates the various birds that come have been seen around Birdsville at http://www.lakeeyrebasin.org.au/tour/birdsville_plain.html.



A student could find these birds in an illustrated bird book, talk about or investigate which birds can be found in other environments e.g. wetlands, read about the trafficking of native birds and so on.

Reading charts and tables

On the Birdsville home page there is a link to its climate. After reading the information presented, a student could examine the photograph on the site showing Birdsville in flood in 2004 and compare it with the New Orleans flood or the Asian tsunami.



A discussion could also be held about the Temperate weather zone and how Birdsville might fit into this. A site describing a temperate zone is at <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/envIRON/travel/tempzone.shtml>. This could lead to discussions about other types of zones and global warming.

Additional activities could include checking out and talking about the current weather information temperatures for Birdsville at <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/dwo/IDCJDW4011.latest.shtml> and comparing these with the weather information in the students' own region using a number of different sources of information.

Planning trips and itineraries on the internet

Many people now plan all the details of trips themselves on the internet. To help visitors to Birdsville, there is a 'Tours' tab on the homesite that lists possible means of travelling to the races. However, the information is somewhat scant and students would need to open up links to the individual touring companies or write emails to acquire the necessary details about duration, cost, inclusions and exclusions, etc. A table showing comparisons between the offerings could then be developed.

My students developed a different sort of table when working on the Brisbane Exhibition site. They checked out links to all the different activities that were available and then drew up an itinerary showing how they might spend a day at the Ekka. This was quite a complicated task and required considerable decision-making and detailed checking of times and days when pavilions were open and special activities were scheduled.

Writing recounts

On another website there is a recount of a visitor's experience of spending a day at the Birdsville Races: <http://members.iinet.net.au/~newtoy/adayat.htm>



From this resource, students could reflect on, and write about, a specific day they experienced, illustrating aspects with visuals copied from the WWW or scanned from their own photographs or memorabilia.
