

The Hamer Newsletter



11 February 2008

Hello to One and All, and for those we have not been in contact with lately, we wish you a very happy and prosperous 2008.

We are now well into our 2nd year of living in Stopalot and travelling around, and how quickly that time has gone!

I see that we finished off the last letter enroute to Wagga Wagga back in November and we were finding it very hot and dusty. Now we are in Tasmania and it is very windy and cool – talk about extremes! In between, we had some more interesting travels, so here is the travelogue.

Wednesday, 21 November 2007 – To Wagga Wagga from Junee, still very hot and still lots of flies. The next day, Frans went off to Brisbane.

Monday, 26 November – To Jerilderie via Lake Urana – what lake?? These areas have been in drought so long, there is not a drop of water left in most of the former lakes and dams. (Of course, that may have changed now with some places having had rain since we were there).

We stayed in Jerilderie for a few days. It is a pleasant little town but also suffering from the dry conditions.

Thursday, 29 November – To Echuca. We stayed at a caravan park on the Murray river inhabited by flocks of ducks and corellas. We just had to do a paddle steamer trip from the historic Port of Echuca, where the



TV series “All the Rivers Run” was filmed, and spent a few hours looking around the area at the old saw mill and rail equipment which has been preserved, along with various old buildings.



What a fascinating place and reeking of history. It's a pity the river is so low and relies entirely on releases from

upstream weirs.

Saturday, 1 December – To Rutherglen via Yarrawonga. From here we toured around the region and stopped at the



old gold town of Beechworth for a look at the beautifully preserved historic sandstone buildings, including the Court House, Telegraph



Station, Lands Office, and Chinese Protection Office (they were pretty hard on the Chinese in the 1800's).

Monday, 3 December – To Albury via Corowa and Howlong, both pretty little towns. Frans went to Brisbane from Albury.

We did a bit of sightseeing around Albury and enjoyed the Botanic Gardens and the very impressive war monument on top of Memorial Hill with its 360° views over Albury.



Saturday, 8 December – Back to Rutherglen, this time to do a tour around some of the wineries and stock up on some really good wine and port. The bank balance took a big dive after visiting Rutherglen Estates, Morris and Buller cellar doors. It's a good job in a way that we are limited for space in Stopalot!

On Sunday there was a great farmer's market in Rutherglen where we bought some excellent locally produced olive oil, fruit and venison sausages. The weather was still very hot and dry, with no relief in sight.

Monday, 10 December – Off to Bonnie Doon, but very disappointingly, no water in Lake Eildon at Bonnie Doon. We stayed at a van park which in the good



times was a hive of activity right on the lake, and now is very slow – in fact, we were the only tourists there.

We drove to Mount Buller Alpine Village, a lovely drive through beautiful countryside and up the mountain. Bush fires



ravaged the area not so long ago, but the trees are recovering well. After lunch at the Village, we went up to the summit car park and Bev walked to the very top of Mount Buller, with its magnificent 360° views. It would be stunning in winter with the snow. Frans set up the camera on its tripod and took this photo of us "on top of the world".

Wednesday, 12 December – To Healesville, a pleasant little town in the hills outside Melbourne and home to the Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary which we enjoyed visiting. It is very well laid out and interesting. Still very hot and we are looking forward to some cooler weather.

Saturday, 15 December – To Coburg in north Melbourne and home for the next 7 weeks. We certainly got our wish for cooler weather, as it was wet and windy and very unpleasant when we arrived at the van park and a very muddy site. Frans went off to Brisbane again and when he returned we were able to shift to a better site with a concrete pad for the rest of our stay.

Melbourne did its usual trick with the weather, some very hot days mixed in with lots of cool, wet days, and a few really nice days in between. We spent Christmas and New Year's Eve with Frans' daughter Karyn & hubby Sean and their rellies and friends.

Our stay in Melbourne was good and allowed us to catch up with maintenance chores and paperwork, and do all the little things you keep putting off when travelling. We also did a bit of sightseeing around Melbourne, and Frans did 3 trips to Brisbane.

Saturday, 2 February 2008 - The last night before we left, Karyn & Sean treated us to a Neil Diamond tribute show at the zoo, with a picnic dinner and a bottle of red, for our birthdays. It's a great venue and a very enjoyable evening.

Sunday, 3 February - On to the Spirit of Tasmania 2 and sailing for Devonport. We had a cabin, but did not get much sleep as it was a bit rough. Still, it's a good ship and we arrived safely at about 6.00 am, very quickly through quarantine and off to the caravan park where we had to wait for them to open up at 7am to check in. After stocking up again with fruit & vegies, we were ready to start exploring Tasmania.



We spent 3 days in Devonport and toured around the local area, and found it is all very rural and scenic. Barrington

Lake International Rowing Course is a spectacular location for rowing trials, and the surrounding area is just beautiful. I foresee that we will be running out of descriptors and adjectives very quickly in this place.



Thursday, 7 February – We left Devonport and travelled about 50 K via Ulverstone and Penguin to Burnie, and a free camp at Cooe Point Reserve. We were right on the water, looking north over Bass Strait, surrounded by other 5th wheelers, motor homes and caravans. It's a bright sunny day, but there's a cold wind blowing, straight off the Antarctic. We have 20 days before we have to be back in Devonport for Frans to do another Brisbane trip so we have plenty of time to just take it slowly and enjoy the journey. On this part of the trip we plan to see as much of the north west as we can, including Strahan and Queenstown and hopefully the wind farm at the very north-western tip of Tassie where the



Roaring Forties howl in from South America.

Hopefully, most of this trip will be free camping and enjoying the less populated open spaces, and buying fresh fruit and vegies from local producers along the road. We are also planning to do a bit of fishing and maybe even catch something edible.

Saturday, 9 February – Off to Stanley, an historic fishing village almost at the most north-westerly tip of Tasmania and the site of the Van Diemen's Land Company settlement. The company was formed in London in 1824 and is still operating here and in New Zealand today. The house and farm they built for their manager still exists and is open to the public. It gives quite an insight into how they live in the 1800's.



We are camped at the old fishing wharf along with about 25 other travellers. It is an unofficial free camp because the caravan park is always booked solid and is the perfect base for exploring the region.



We have been on day trips to such places as Arthur River further down the west coast with “The Edge of the World”, supposedly the most westerly point in Tasmania (it isn’t) with no land westward until you reach South America in 17,200 klms. It is a bleak, cold and windy spot. We have also sighted the wind farm at Cape Grim, and counted around 60 towers turning in the “Roaring Forties” winds.

It is almost constantly windy here and cool. It is summer, but the average maximum is around 21°C and the wind chill makes it feel much cooler than that, so the warm clothes are very welcome.

So, once again, that’s it for now,

Regards, Bev & Frans.