

The Hamer Newsletter



13 October 2007

Hello to One and All,

Well here we are on the road again. Our last letter ended as we reached Cairns in June and we planned to be there for 3 weeks. We finally left Cairns on 17 September, 2½ months later than planned. Still, it was worth the stay as Frans facilitated the sale of a business while we were there and did some business consulting as well, so the coffers were topped up and we had lots of time to catch up with friends. Frans also had several trips to Brisbane for board meetings.

We did a 1 week trip to Cooktown, which was windy (as always). It's a great drive now on bitumen all the way and we enjoyed a couple of nights at Endeavour Falls caravan park north of Cooktown, followed by a few days in Cooktown proper. Then back to Cairns for several weeks. ARB installed heavy duty springs in Fang, which has improved the ride when towing Stopalot, and also fitted towing mirrors to supplement the rear vision camera (thanks Dave!).

Monday 17th September - Murray Falls National Park campground (between Tully & Cardwell) for 2 nights. It is a lovely place and well worth the visit – dry and dusty at this time of year but the falls and river are beautiful, although the water was a little too cool for us to swim.



There were lots of orchids flowering in the trees and plenty of bush turkeys wandering around looking for food. There were only 6 campers there the first night, and only 2 on the 2nd night.



The only thing that spoiled our stay was a car load of young hoons who raced around the campground sending up a huge dust cloud and making a lot of noise. We reported the rego number to the Cardwell police on our way out and they phoned us later to say it was a local resident and the Sergeant would attend to the matter, so hopefully he will talk some sense into the ratbags.

Wednesday 19th September - Toomulla Beach (45 k north of Townsville). This is a freecamp and is a great place for travellers. We stayed there 2 nights, very relaxing, peaceful and quiet, and met a lovely couple in their 70's who have been 'on the road' for over 4 years and still loving it. We wanted to try our hand at fishing again but the high tide was very shallow, low tide was miles out and the inlet was infested with midges so we didn't bother.



Friday 21st September - Wulguru (Townsville) caravan park.



We caught up with friends in Townsville, and decided to stay around the area so Frans could fly to Brisbane for his next meeting.

We went out to Ravenswood, an old gold mining town, for 2 nights and stayed in the showgrounds.



This is a very interesting town with a long history, and still has 2 mines operating, 1 open-cut and 1 underground. The open-cut mine has a lookout where you can sit under a shelter and watch the digger loading the huge haul trucks with ore. They work two 12 hour shifts every day of the year. We sat there for ages watching the action, and also went back to watch the night shift. The museum in the town is in the old court house, built in the 1880's. It still contains the original judicial benches and is in excellent condition. There are 2 hotels in the town and we had dinner at one of them to celebrate our 24th wedding anniversary.



After Ravenswood it was back to Townsville so Frans could go to Brisbane, and we had to stay there until Sunday 30 September so Frans could be sure of TV reception for the NRL grand final. Once that was out of the way we could proceed on our merry way.

Monday 1st October - just south of Belyando



Crossing on a private cattle property.

We could see a Telstra tower but just our



luck, the tower was the microwave link and not a NextG tower and we had no reception at all. We were next to a Southern Cross windmill which creaked and groaned all

night, but it was a great place with absolutely no lights to be seen anywhere and far enough off the road to be away from any traffic noise – and a beautiful sunset.

Tuesday 2nd October - Clermont. The road was very rough and bumpy and when we stopped for lunch we found the microwave had come loose and was hanging on by one leg. We headed off to Theresa Creek Dam and stayed there for 2 nights. As with most places we have been lately, it was dry and dusty and very hot, but a really nice place and the sunset was beautiful.



View from back window Theresa Ck Dam

Thursday 4th October – After removing the microwave to the back of the car, we went to Emerald Showgrounds for a nominal fee of \$5. It was horribly hot (the caretaker's thermometer showed 41 deg C) and we soon discovered the whole place was infested with prickles and burrs. Our shoes were covered and Bev spent the afternoon picking the burrs out of the shoes and rugs. We had intended to stay there for 2 nights, but decided to escape the next morning and go to nearby Lake Maraboon in the hope of finding cooler conditions. It was just as hot there but at least we had a late afternoon thunderstorm and that cooled it down a bit.



Saturday 6th October - Baralaba via Banana, intending to stay at the Neville Hewitt Weir freecamp. When we arrived it was packed out with people taking part in the annual fishing competition, so we went to the caravan park. We were the only tourists there and the owner was so delighted to have a customer that she gave us a bag of home grown tomatoes. Hot & dusty again and a plague of tiny flies at night.

Sunday 7th October – Theodore, an “RV Friendly Town” with a great freecamp with good water and hot showers, all provided by the Lions Club. A great place to stay and there were many caravans and motorhomers there. The fly plague was there too, so sitting outside with a strategically placed fluoro light was the only way to keep the little blighters out of the home at night. We took a day trip to Isla Gorge National Park and also to nearby Flagstaff Hill where we found a hand built stone road dating back to the 1860's.



Tuesday 9th October – Chinchilla. We stayed at a small caravan park and watched storm clouds build up. The park owners assured us that the storm would pass by “as usual”, but shortly afterwards we were in the middle of a violent thunder storm with hail and pelting rain, wondering if the roof would hold up. Frans checked it later and there was no damage at all, so now we know we can weather small hail stones. In other areas the hail stones were as big as tennis balls and created havoc.

Wednesday 10th October – After having Fang serviced at the Chinchilla Ford dealer, off to

Dalby for the night. On the way we were confronted by a huge “oversize” truck coming towards us, on a narrow road in a cutting! The police escort moved us out of the cutting and we were perched on the very edge of the road on a steep bank – the cargo was 6 metres wide and coming towards us at speed was a horrifying sight. It maintained speed with an escort behind radioing the driver “left, left a bit” and it whizzed past us with a few inches to spare. We heard on the radio that the cameras on the far side had hit the trees!

Thursday 11th October – There were more thunderstorms were predicted for Dalby and Toowoomba, so on leaving Dalby we went via the northern route through Kaimkillenbun to Crows Nest, the best freecamp of all, at Frans' sister's place. On the way it was noticeable how green and fresh it was all looking after the recent rains and some paddocks even had water laying in them. On arrival at Crows Nest we just had time to park Stopalot and unhitch and down came the rain. It only lasted 10 minutes but any rain is welcome here after such a long drought.

The dams are still very low though and the rain is only wetting the surface, not providing much runoff in the catchments.

We stay here until Sunday 14th, then off to Brisbane for a board meeting and more modifications to Stopalot. This time we are having heavier suspension fitted (compliments of the trailer manufacturer just as a precaution so we can be confident on bumpy gravel roads when we start going further outback), having the microwave refitted with straps to hold it down, and having the solar system checked out, just to make sure it is functioning efficiently. After that, it will be time to start meandering south into cooler country and doing more freecamping, relying on our own resources instead of staying in caravan parks. With any luck, Frans will be able to retire from his board position at Enertrade by December and we will be totally free to wander wherever we want.

We think we have just about got the hang of this lifestyle now, and are much more confident about our ability to stay away from major highways and cities and spend most of our time in regional and rural areas. Frans is now quite an expert on manoeuvring Stopalot and Bev is getting better at giving directions after having a "reversing" lesson in Cairns (thanks Pete!). We are very good at conserving our water and getting by on about 20 litres per day when necessary, and as long as the sun shines the solar system provides all the power we need.

That's it for now,

Regards, Frans & Bev