

The Hamer Newsletter



20 November 2007

Hello to One and All,

How time flies when we are on the move and having fun! We are still moving about too much due to Frans' Enertrade commitments, and that looks like going for longer than we hoped – probably March 2008 now – but the end is in sight.

Over the last month we have experienced varying weather and temperatures and the variations in the countryside to match. From cold wet and very green, to hot dry and very brown and dusty areas. It is amazing sometimes how much difference 50 km can make. Once again we have been pleasantly surprised at the character of many of the inland towns and the efforts made to hold on to their pioneering history and the lovely old buildings. Also, the prolific spring flowering has been wonderful. We have seen heaps of silky oaks in full bloom everywhere, and in the forests the wildflowers are quite spectacular. We certainly picked the right time to travel through this part of the country. But oh, the flies! Everyone is complaining about the flies and the hat with veil has become an essential item of clothing. Even Frans has adopted a netting attachment for his Akubra hat.

After leaving Crows Nest on 14th October, we left Stopalot at its birthplace in Brisbane and went to the Sofitel for 2 nights of luxury.

Frans had to have his laptop keyboard replaced after subjecting it to the “hot coffee test” – it failed, unfortunately. Then the new keyboard had to be replaced (under warranty) because it was faulty – lucky we were in Brisbane and could get this done.

Wednesday 17th October – Redcliffe Showgrounds

After collecting Stopalot, now with upgraded axles and the microwave securely in place, we went to Redcliffe Showgrounds for a night. It is a real bonus being able to stay in the showgrounds in many places, as there is always more room to move for big rigs like ours and usually not many other travellers staying – we were the only ones there that night. It was very windy and cool.

Thursday 18th October – Peachtrees campground in the Jimna State Forest near Kilcoy, with friends Barry & Elaine. We had 3 nights there and it was very pleasant but quite cool at night. The beanies and jumpers came out and the fire at night was very welcome. Kangaroos grazing all over the park and plenty of birds, and interesting forest walks.

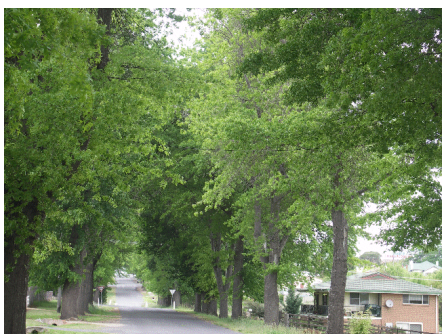


Sunday 21st October – Kenilworth. Barry & Elaine returned to Brisbane and we went to Kenilworth via Maleny through the most beautiful countryside. After the recent rains it was all looking very green and lush. We stayed at the showgrounds in Kenilworth, very well maintained and opposite the old cheese factory which makes the most delicious cheeses and yoghurts and sells all sorts of lovely produce from jams

& preserves to olive & macadamia oils, and really yummy “Plums in Port”. That really is the ultimate dessert – the plums with yoghurt and then the very plummy port with coffee afterwards.

Tuesday 23rd October – Back to Brisbane to have the solar power system checked out and minor modifications done. All is working well and we should have no problems as long as there is a reasonable amount of sunshine.

Thursday 25th October – Kalbar showgrounds. This is a small town with a good showgrounds, with the loos accommodating a large number of green frogs. Never have we seen this many frogs in one place, and we suppose it is a good indication of the general health of the surrounding ecosystem! 2 thunder storms overnight and quite a bit of rain.



Friday 26th October – Tenterfield showgrounds. A lovely town just over the border in NSW and a great base to go exploring some national parks. We went to Girraween national park and did a 2 hour walk. The wildflowers were really beautiful and we came across many avid amateur botanists photographing everything in sight. Frans also took heaps of photos. We also went to Bald Rock, Boonoo Boonoo and Basket Swamp national parks although it was a bit too warm to do much walking. Once again we had thunderstorms in the afternoons.



Monday 29th October – Coffs Harbour, where we stayed a week and Frans went to Brisbane. We had new “slime-filled tubes” put on the bikes to try and stop the constant punctures, and went for a ride to the jetty. So far, so good, no new punctures. Coffs Harbour is a great place and is going ahead at a fast pace. Property prices are going through the roof as in so many of the seaside towns and some of the new hill-top houses are

massive. We had more thunderstorms and heavy rain, and masses of “stinkbugs” decided to colonise our outside chairs. They might look pretty but they don’t smell so good!

Tuesday 6th November – Cooperook state forest south of Port Macquarie. This is a good freecamp, with plenty of room in a forest clearing, but it rained almost non-stop and 2 nights there was enough “confined to quarters”. Even with the grey and wet conditions, the solar panels still produced a enough charge.

Thursday 8th November – Lake Liddell north-west of Singleton. Trying to outrun the rain, but it was so widespread there was no escape. On the way we drove to Harrington, then through Tuncurry and Forster. This is a really lovely part of the NSW coast and one day we will go back in better weather to spend some time there.

Lake Liddell is next to the Liddell power station and near to a coal mine, and has huge coal trains going past at regular intervals all day and night. It would be a nice enough place in good weather, but with a howling wind and drizzling rain, one night was sufficient.





Friday 9th November – Gulgong - via Muswellbrook through some really beautiful country. Still wet and windy but starting to clear.

Gulgong is a real wild-west town with lots of original buildings along a narrow main street and the best Pioneers Museum we have



ever visited. It covers 2 town blocks and is housed in a collection of old buildings which used to be businesses, including the old motor garage and shops. The Henry Lawson centre is also well worth a visit. As with most of these old towns, there is a “heritage walk” which is fascinating and good exercise too.

Sunday 11th November – Orange – via Wellington and Lake Burrendong. More beautiful country and very green and lush. Wellington is another place we have to go back to one day, especially to visit the caves

Orange is a very “English” town with great displays of English and European trees and flowers. Bev felt quite “at home” amongst the oaks, elms and horse chestnut trees, and the roses & rhododendrons. There are many beautiful parks in the city and the wide streets with shady trees give the town a pleasant relaxed air. Frans went off to Brisbane again.

The weather was good here, sunny but with a cool breeze. Everything was looking very green but unfortunately the rain had come too late for the wheat, oats and barley crops, most of which were cut for hay or the stock let in to graze. Another year of no returns for the farmers.

We went for a drive to Mt Canobolas and Lake Canobolas and surrounding areas. Lots of vineyards and fruit orchards on rolling hills and fabulous views. The sign at Mt Canobolas warns drivers to attach snow chains in winter! The winters here can be bitterly cold, they say.



Friday 16th November - Cowra, via Millthorpe, Blayney, Neville and Carcoar Dam. Millthorpe is another old town which has retained its heritage buildings and has some outstanding examples of original 1800's bluestone cottages, one of which is still used as the public school. We stopped here for a walk around and morning tea. Roses



everywhere and cute little cottage gardens.



Unfortunately, much of the surrounding countryside is totally overrun with Patterson's curse, which is a real nuisance to the graziers and crop farmers but looks fabulous at this time of the year in full bloom, with masses of purple flowers covering the paddocks and hillsides.

At Cowra we went on a bus tour to landra Castle (Mt Oriel homestead). This is a grand old 2 story homestead from the early 1900's with 57 rooms, each with a fireplace, and with the



original electrical wiring in place and in use. It was left derelict for many years and has been substantially restored to its former glory, and is still occupied by its 85 year old owner when she visits. The farm still operates under a manager although it is much smaller now than its original size.

We also visited the beautiful Japanese Gardens and the Japanese War Cemetery, the only one in Australia. It is sobering to see row upon row of grave markers all with the same date (5-8-1944) of the Japanese soldiers who died when they tried a mass breakout from the POW camp at Cowra.

Monday 19th November – Junee via Young and Cootamundra. The weather has gone from very warm to very hot. It reached 36 °C Monday, and today (Tuesday) it is close to 40 °C so the airconditioning is having a good workout.

We ventured out to visit "Monte Cristo", another grand house from the 1800's which has been restored by the current owners, who actually live in the house. It is relatively small, having only 3 bedrooms, but has been filled with antiques of the period and decorated in the opulent style of the times. It is reputed to be the most haunted house in Australia with 10 verified resident ghosts. Their collection of horse drawn carriages is superb.



Another "must do" at Junee is the Liquorice and Chocolate Factory where organic liquorice and chocolate coated goodies are made. The process of chocolate-coating nuts, liquorice and fruits etc is totally by hand and it takes around 6 hours to apply up to 40 coats of Belgian chocolate plus 4 coats of acacia gum to produce the final product ready for packing. The best treat was warm liquorice rope straight off the extruder – can't get fresher than that!

Well, that's it for now. Our next stop is Wagga Wagga so Frans can go to Brisbane again, then again from Albury at the end of November, and then Melbourne in mid-December where we will stay until we go to Tasmania in February.

Cheers for now,

Bev & Frans