

The Hamer Newsletter



22 May 2008

Hello to One and All,

Well here we are back on the big island (as the Tasmanians call it) and starting to head north. We left Tassie on 26th April and went to Melbourne for a few days before starting the journey and have to say it was sad to leave the little island but it was definitely the right time, before the winter set in.

We clocked up around 8,000 klms on our trip around Tasmania in the 3 months we were there, and now is the time to stop being tourists and take it more slowly, especially with the price of diesel these days. So, here is what happened since the last letter.....

Saturday 29 March – After a few days looking around beautiful Bruny Island we left on a wet, windy day and went to Franklin where we parked on the foreshore with a heap of other travellers. When we arrived, we caused quite a stir when Stopalot's wheels slipped off the muddy track on a tight bend into a drain, and the side landed on a big rock. There was no moving it without causing a lot of damage, so RACT came to the rescue and lifted



Stopalot up and onto a steel ramp borrowed from one of the caravaners and then we could back onto the road. How embarrassing and what an audience we had! Luckily the only damage was a slight dent in the checker plate and a scrape on the waste water tank – and our pride of course.



It remained wet and windy, but we braved the weather and went to the Tahune Airwalk, a really beautiful walk through the tree tops, and over 2 swing bridges across the Huon and Picton rivers.



There was also a Forest Festival at Geeveston where we enjoyed watching the chainsaw artists carving incredible figures out of solid blocks of wood using only chainsaws. It was even worth standing in the rain squalls to see them working.



Monday 31 March – Still raining and cold so we decided to go in search of better weather. We arrived at a little village called Kempton in the midlands north of Hobart, and discovered a parking area for travellers complete with power points and water taps, and a sign requesting a gold coin donation. The village was tiny, with a pub (only open a couple of hours each evening), a tiny post office cum gift shop and a tiny grocery shop which had the bare essentials. It is great to find these little gems of places to stay.



Wednesday 2 April – Off the Bicheno on the east coast. On arrival the wind started to pick up and that night was very blowy – a tent near us had part of the outer tent shredded. That was the night of the “hurricane” and we were so glad to be on the east coast as the van park we had planned to be in that night outside Hobart was hit hard and one caravan was crushed by a falling tree. The only reason we were not there was that Frans was able to do his Enertrade board meeting by ‘phone instead of flying to Brisbane - talk about lucky!

While at Bicheno we did the compulsory tourist trip to Freycinet Peninsula and a walk up to a lookout over Wineglass Bay – up 600+ steps but worth the effort. At Cape Tourville we bought some beautiful fresh oysters and steamed mussels from a marine farm – can’t get any fresher than that day’s harvest! We also did a trip up to the Bay of Fires and promised ourselves that one day when we go back we will spend a few weeks there camped next to the beach.



Another great day trip was up St Mary’s Pass to Fingal, and a little forgotten town called Rossarden which used to be a tin mining town but now is becoming a ghost town with deer grazing on the streets. We returned to Bicheno via the Elephant Pass – neither Elephant or St Mary’s are really suitable for taking Stopalot so we decided to leave Bicheno the way we came.

Sunday 6 April – Left Bicheno and went back to Campbelltown in the midlands, where we camped a month ago. It was noticeably cooler than the last visit and it even rained a bit although not enough to do any real good – it is really dry in the midlands area. The car and Stopalot got a much needed wash down using buckets of water from the river.

Tuesday 8 April – To Low Head north of Launceston at the mouth of the Tamar river. From here we did a day trip around the north eastern area through the mountains to Scottsdale and as far as Weldborough. The historic hotel there was purchased by a Cairns couple a few months ago (Kevin and Erin Walter) so we had to go and say g’day. What a change in climate for them, from the tropics to the cool mountains of north Tasmania!

The Low Head area where we stayed has an historic lighthouse and Pilot station which which was built in 1835 and has been well preserved.



Friday 11 April - On leaving Low Head we travelled to Windermere just north of Launceston and visited ex-Cairns



friends who live in a delightful circa 1813 cottage, restored and extended, overlooking the Tamar River. What a beautiful area it is and we wouldn’t mind living somewhere like this one day.

The next stop was Riana in the highlands south of Burnie, at a lovely campground operated by volunteers at the Riana Pioneer Memorial Ground. For a small fee they provide power, water and ablutions. From there we did a day trip to Waratah and Hellyer Gorge. Waratah is an interesting little mining town perched on a ridge overlooking a gorge – all very picturesque and worth a longer visit next time.

Sunday 13 April – Back to Westbury and Andy's Bakery campground – not as many travellers here as last month and it is obvious the mainlanders are all heading back to warmer climes. We spent some time looking around at land for sale, toying with the idea of buying a block in case we consider eventually coming here to live – did not find it but maybe when we come back.....



Tuesday 15 April – to Hadsden van park, in preparation for Frans' last ever trip to Brisbane for a board meeting. The next day the Targa Tasmania rally cars drove past the van park, and we decided to go over to Sheffield to watch them come in for their lunch break. It was a beautiful sunny day and we found a good spot just outside the



Sheffield sportsground and watched the cars entering – Frans took heaps of photos. There was even an Austin A30 which brought back memories for Bev who learnt to drive in one of those!.



Frans went off to Brisbane on Wednesday afternoon and on Thursday had his final board meeting followed by a long lunch, returning to Tassie on Friday. That's it, no more board meetings and complete freedom from now on in our travels.

Monday 21 April – To Devonport for Fang to be serviced and checked over. We keep hearing clunks in the suspension but every time it is checked it is found to be OK.

Thursday 24 April – To Latrobe, another lovely little town with a great free camp for our last 2 nights on the little island. The autumn colours are really beautiful and the weather is typical autumn with sunshine, rain squalls and cool breezes.

Saturday 26 April – Back to Devonport and parked near the ferry until time to board at 6.30pm. The wind came up and it was blowing a gale – the crossing was pretty rough but we slept reasonably well in our cabin and woke up to calm weather. We were off the ship and driving towards Frankston at 7.08 am in fine clear weather. We stayed at Frankston for 4 nights, went to the caravan and camping show at Caulfield, spent some time with Karyn & Sean and took Fang into an F250 expert for a second opinion on the suspension. Once again, a clean bill of health so I guess we just ignore the clunks!



Thursday 1 May – Away from Melbourne in the rain and arrived in Bairnesdale at the edge of the cloud – they would love some rain in Bairnesdale but always seems to miss out. We stayed with a motor-homing friend who owns cottages on 10 acres at Eagle Point and let us park on her land for 2 nights. This is a beautiful area and nearby Paynesville is going ahead

with canal style residential developments and lots of money tied up in boats parked near the back door.

Saturday 4 May – Off to Canberra via the Monaro Highway, through very dry high country grazing land. The drought is very much in evidence here and after the bright green of northern Tasmania and southern Victoria it appears very drab. We stayed at the Canberra Exhibition Park which has a huge area for travellers with power and water. We visited with Bev's cousin Anita who lives nearby. We couldn't actually remember when we last met, but it must have been in England when we were both very young – if at all! The next morning we left after a big Sunday breakfast with Anita and her friends.

Sunday 5 May – To Canowindra via Cowra, spending a few of days doing nothing much, Frans working on the share market trying to make our fortune and Bev catching up on paperwork. This is another typical little country town with old buildings, empty shops but still surviving on the farm businesses in the area.



We woke up on Monday to the sound of a hot air balloon being filled in the field next to the van park. It was a perfect morning for ballooning, very cool and clear and the colours so bright – Frans took a photo out of our bedroom window.

Thursday 8 May – Off to another little town called Premer between Dunedoo and Gunnedah. This town

has only 65 residents, one tiny shop cum post office and a pub that burnt down 2 years ago and is slowly being rebuilt by the owner. In the meantime he sells cold tinnies out of a fridge in his building site donga. The Lions club provide free power and amenities for the travelling public and it was a great place to stay for a couple of days. This year they are harvesting a bumper sorghum crop and there was a stream of grain trucks all day going to the grain silo in the town to offload – some good news on the farm front for a change.



Saturday 10 May - To Copeton Waters State Park. Bev camped here over 30 years ago when there was nothing but the dam and the bush. Now there is a proper campground for caravans with power and amenities, but the surroundings are just as beautiful as they were back then. The water is down to 20% though and they badly need rain.



Monday 12 May – A long run up to Crows Nest to catch up with Frans' sister and hubby and lend a hand for a few days. Frans has put his muscles to good use cutting down lots of dead trees and cutting and splitting into firewood and other chores such as fixing the chook pen, cleaning chimney and gutters etc. It's good to see that after 18 months of retirement he can still do that kind of thing! We will stay here

a short while then start travelling north again, towards some warmer weather.

Cheers for now,

Bev & Frans