

The Hamer Newsletter



15 February 2009

Hello to One and All,

Well, Christmas and New Year have come and gone and 2009 is already well under way. Having been retired now for over 2 years we can honestly say that the time goes faster now than it did before we stopped working and started travelling and it is hard to understand how we ever had time to go to work.

Sadly, Fin, our little fighting fish departed this life just before Christmas and is buried under a tree at Crows Nest.

After spending a quiet family Christmas and New Year at Crows Nest, we packed up and started the slow meander southwards. Before leaving we had to buy a new portable compressor as ours blew up and that is one very essential piece of equipment for keeping the tyres pumped up on truck and trailer.

Friday 9 January 2009

To Mudgeeraba south of Brisbane to park on the footpath outside a friend's house – people we met on our Canada/Alaska trip and were very keen to meet up with again. We spent 3 nights there in very pleasant surroundings and enjoyed the company of Mark and Kathryn.

Monday 12 January

To Kyogle NSW, with a detour to Banora Point to visit caravanning friends Val and John for lunch. Catching up with friends all over the place is one of the really good side benefits of this travelling lifestyle.

At Kyogle we stayed at the showgrounds and were the only campers there – surrounded by a mixed herd of cows with a very large and possessive bull, which spent much of the night bellowing and keeping his herd together.

Whilst there an auto electrician fixed up the wiring to the reversing camera, which had stopped working, and we

treated Fang to 4 new tyres. The original Goodyear Wrangler tyres lasted for 60,000 K, so we replaced them with new Goodyear Wrangler "Silent Armor" all terrain, Kevlar reinforced tyres – with a name like that they better be good!

We did a day trip to the Border Ranges National Park – very beautiful landscape especially Mt Warning and its surrounds. We came across a young couple bogged in a



Kombi van on the side of a dirt road. What an opportunity – Frans was able to use his Snatch Strap for the first time and pull them out.

Thursday 15 January

To Casino for 2 nights to meet up with 5th wheeler friends Norm and Frea, who we first met 2 years ago at Casino. We all went out to dinner at the local RSL for a belated birthday treat for Bev.

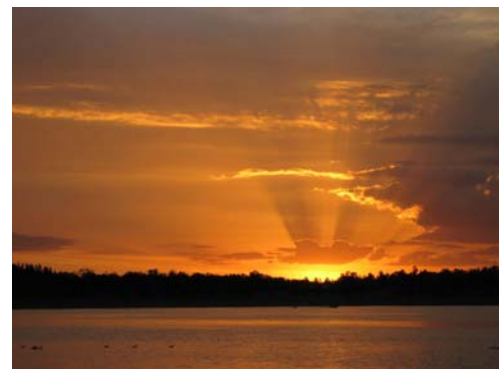
Saturday 17 January

To Bingara on the Gwydir River. It was very hot so we went to the van park, hooked up to power and started up the aircon – we are still a bit sooky when it comes to really hot weather! We went for a drive around the area and found some good camping spots along the river, but a bit too tight for Stopalot.



Monday 19 January

To Lake Keepit State Recreation Reserve – still very hot but we decided if we camped near the lake we would at least have a breeze. We were the only campers



in the area we chose and set up camp ready to settle in for a couple of nights. Well, with dusk we soon found out why nobody else was around – we had the worst plague of tiny flying insects we have ever experienced. They went straight through (or around) the screens and in no time the inside of Stopalot was infested with thousands of the little blighters. Luckily they were not the biting kind. So, the only thing we could do was sit outside with all the lights off and spray inside.

The next morning we found that the outside of the truck and the van were covered in tiny bugs. We packed up and made a strategic exit and went to a little town called Werris Creek, about 40K south of Tamworth.

Tuesday 20 January

At Werris Creek football oval, parked under some lovely shade trees and hooked up to power with the aircon



running. We spent half a day cleaning out the inside of Stopalot – those little insects were in every nook and cranny.



We spent one day in Tamworth checking out the buskers at the country music festival, and eating junk food. It was interesting to see the different performers and the very different styles of music. We stopped to watch one family group with several kids and 2 adults, all obviously having a ball. We also watched a Chinese performer named Carl Chang playing an Er-Hu (Chinese 2 string violin) and bought a CD. It is very haunting and beautiful music.

Another day we took a drive around the area, including Hanging Rock. It is very beautiful countryside in the New England region and quite green at the moment especially as there has been recent rain. We have had quite a few thunderstorms.

Saturday 24 January

We had to leave Werris Creek as the township was preparing the oval for their Australia Day celebrations and were expecting a big crowd for such events as gum-boot throwing. We would have been in the way, so we moved to another little town called Woolomin which has a large camping reserve on the Peel River.

For the first time ever, we saw sugar gliders launching themselves from their home tree across the camping area to another tree, then climb up to the top and launch again to the trees alongside the river. Unfortunately there was no opportunity to take photos as it was almost dark and they moved so fast it would have been impossible to focus on them.

Monday 26 January

Frans had to attend a CMCA board meeting in February so instead of him flying in from Parkes, we decided to go to Newcastle and stay there for the few days he needed to be there. So, we had 2 weeks to meander around on the way to Newcastle.

First stop was a tiny hamlet called Nowendoc which boasts a general store, a police house, a memorial hall and a handful of houses. We came across this place 2 years ago when we stopped for lunch, and kept it in mind as an overnight spot, so we stayed here for a night.



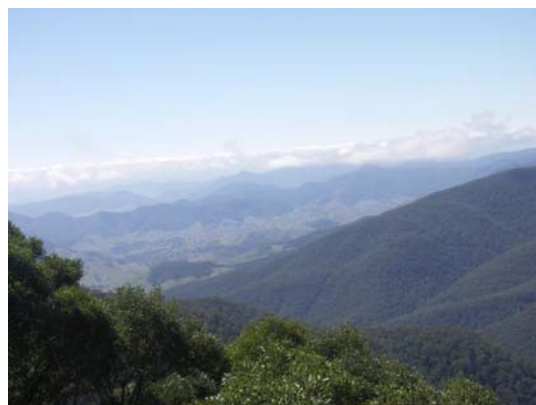
Tuesday 27 January



To Gloucester in the rain. On the way we looked at Brett Reserve which would have been a great place to stay but for the very smelly toilets near to the flat areas where we would have to camp. It was also very wet and windy and we decided to carry on to Gloucester and stay at the van park. This is a lovely van park, lots of room and we camped next to trees bordering

the river with heaps of birds to keep us company.

Next day we toured around the northern section of Barrington Tops NP and saw some of the best scenery we have seen, especially views over the upper Hunter Valley and from Thunderbolts Lookout. The weather was good and starting to really heat up again.



Saturday 31 January



To Gresford, a little town with a showgrounds camp area overlooking a river and powered sites.

We did a day trip around the southern section of Barrington Tops NP and saw more stunning scenery. One section of road on the way went through Salisbury Gap, with views forever – but so hard to capture in a

photo. It really is a beautiful area. We did a 1½ hour walk through sub-tropical rainforest at Williams River.

The weather really started to heat up into the mid 40s and the forecast for more of the same just about everywhere, so the next few days were spent trying to keep cool in the aircon, until we decided to escape and go Newcastle a few days early.

Friday 6 February

To Stockton Beach Tourist Park at Newcastle, and beautiful cool sea breezes – what a relief from the heat inland. We even got the bikes out and went for a ride around Newcastle on the Sunday and were quite surprised at what a pleasant place it is. Of course, there has been a lot of development on the waterfront since the old steelworks days.

Frans had CMCA meetings for 3 days, and we had horrible weather – wet, cold and windy. It seems to be one extreme to the other these days. Bev spent a lot of time keeping dry indoors watching the awful bushfire disaster in Victoria – what a terrible event and how thankful we were to be well away from it.



Friday 13 February

To Lithgow in the rain, and up in the mountains at Katoomba, quite thick fog. We had intended to go further but driving in those conditions was pretty awful so the Lithgow Tourist Park became home for a few days.



We did the Zig Zag railway trip, still in the pouring rain, but it was a great ride and very nostalgic to be on a train pulled by a steam locomotive. Bev

noticed from a plaque that the loco was made in 1951 – Bev's birth year - and told the engine driver. He promptly invited us on board for the shunting of the engine from one end of the train to the other. That was fun, reminiscing with the driver and his mate about the good old days of steam travel that we both remember. We must be getting old!



The Lithgow area is steeped in history – we must come back someday in better weather and have a good look round and visit the Wollemi NP as well.

Sunday 15 February

Stuck inside again as it is still pouring outside. We will leave tomorrow and head south west to find some warmer and drier weather and get closer to our next planned destination – Whyalla SA, so we are still heading south to Darwin. Let's hope some of this rain makes its way to the bush fire areas to help them out.

Bye for now,

Regards,
Bev & Frans