

# The Hamer Newsletter



**17 April 2009**

Hello to One and All,

Our last report ended at Lithgow in the pouring rain & cold wind – the locals loved it as they badly needed the rain, but we were a bit fed up with being rain-makers so we headed off to the dry country. What a difference in such a short space of time – a few hours drive and we were into the real dry inland, with dust devils and dust haze all around.

**Monday 16 February**

We drove via Bathurst to West Wyalong where it was



warmer and very dry and dusty – such a complete change from the lovely green in the mountains.



**Tuesday 17 February**

To Ariah Park via Barmedman and Temora. Ariah Park is a lovely tiny town known as “The home of wowsers, bowsers and peppercorn trees”. Wowsers, because way back in the

1920's a second liquor licence was rejected by a section of the town, bowsers because they have lovely old colourful petrol bowsers lining the street, and peppercorn trees planted along the centre of the street (and elsewhere) for the green and shade in an otherwise dry and dusty place.



We stayed at the sports ground where they have a large area with power, water, showers and toilets, all for \$5 per night. What more can a traveller ask for?

We had a drink at the local pub and met some locals.

**Thursday 19 February**

To Hay via Griffith, passing lots of wheat, grapes, olives and citrus on the way, watered from



irrigation channels criss-crossing the country. It was interesting seeing names we have known for a long time – such as De Bortolli & McWilliams. There was a large free camping area alongside the river, but as it was so hot we decided to stay at the showgrounds on power, so we could run the airconditioning.



### **Saturday 21 February**

Frans' 65<sup>th</sup> birthday. We drove to Nyah on the Murray and stayed at a free camp next to the Nyah harness Club and

cricket ground. There were huge river red gums full of cockatoos, galahs, kookaburras and rosellas. The dawn and dusk cacophony was deafening. We celebrated Frans' birthday with a pizza and a bottle of red.



The next day one of the other campers caught a big murray cod in the river and presented us with fillets for dinner – very nice they were too.



### **Monday 23 February**

To Cavendish via Swan Hill, Donald and Horsham. Still very windy, dry and dusty and no water in the lakes or dams. The sheep paddocks were as brown and dusty as a desert – don't know what the sheep were finding to eat. We stayed at the Cavendish Recreation ground on a rise above the river. The

overnight minimum was 7.7 C and the morning was clear, cold and sunny.

### **Tuesday 24 February**

To Portland, to the Henty Bay Van Park where 5<sup>th</sup> wheeler friends Geoff & Glen Donovan were living and working. We stayed there a couple of days on a lovely grass site, such a change from the dirt and dust. The 5<sup>th</sup> wheeler next to us dwarfed Stopalot & Fang.



### **Thursday 26 February**

To a dairy farm belonging to friends of Geoff & Glen, to stay on the bend of the river for a few days. We got the fire-pots out and did some camp oven cooking. Geoff & Glen took us out on day trips to see the area and we had a great time. We also had visits from their family and too many big meals with wicked desserts.



## Monday 2 March

Total fire ban day and forecasts of very hot, strong winds. All of the regional schools in the area were closed and bus services cancelled due to the risk of bush fires. During the afternoon the wind really picked up and it was decided to leave the farm and go to a camp spot near the beach where we were sheltered by the sand dunes.

## Tuesday 3 March

We went into a caravan park in Portland and after a very windy, dusty morning there was a complete change of weather and we had squally rain which was very welcome after the dry spell.

For the next few days we did more day trips and a tour of the Alcoa aluminium smelter which provides employment in Portland.

## Friday 6 March

To Hotspur on the Crawford River north of Portland for a CMCA Chapter meeting with the Portland Bay Rollers. It was wet, cool and windy, sunny and warm, misty in the morning – what a range of conditions. We spent a good



time enjoying the company of the Rollers and too much food yet again.

## Monday 9 March

We had to have the axles checked out on Stopalot – tyres wearing unevenly and a suspicion that something was not right. The easiest way to deal with it was go to Melbourne and have the axles removed and sent to Alko to sort it out. We overnighted and fed the horses at a rest area at Inverleigh near Geelong and then went to Pakenham where a trailer firm removed the axles.

We went to stay with Karyn & Sean for a couple of nights while Stopalot was on chocks.



## Saturday 14 March

With upgraded axles and 4 new tyres on Stopalot, we raced back west via Ballarat and stayed at a free camp at Dartmoor overnight.

This is another tiny place with a big camping area,

and beautifully carved tree trunks in the park and along the street. One enormous multi-trunked stump has lots of fairytale figures carved into it. Another series along the street is all connected with the war – soldiers, a nurse, families saying goodbye – a tribute to the sacrifices made during the war.



### **Sunday 15 March**

We left Dartmoor and headed for South Australia via Mt Gambier. We followed the coast through Southend, Beachport, Robe and Cape Jaffa and stayed at an isolated spot called “The Granites” on the coast north

of Kingston SE. It was a wild, wet and windy night and the morning was much the same with occasional brilliant sunshine breaking through.

### **Monday 16 March**

After leaving the Granites we travelled along the Coorong and at Wellington crossed the river on a ferry before heading to Langhorne Creek – another well known name in wines. We stayed at a great camping reserve there.



### **Tuesday 17 March**

To Victor Harbour via Strathalbyn. This area has some beautifully preserved old stone buildings and reeks of history. Victor Harbour was quite a surprise – a lovely seaside town with an historic precinct. We stayed with friends Barry, Kerry & Jack Lang who we met on our Canada/Alaska trip. Safely parked in their front garden and spoiled by our hosts, we enjoyed 2 nights here in their company. Barry

took us for a drive around the area including over the notorious Hindmarsh Island Bridge, and to the Mouth of the Murray which is disappointingly tiny – barely a trickle flowing through. We knew the Murray was in trouble but it’s not until you actually see it that you comprehend just how bad the situation is.

### **Thursday 19 March**

We left Victor Harbour and drove along a very scenic route through farmland and vineyards to Blackwood in the Adelaide Hills to park in the



garden at Peter & Margaret Wright's house high up in the hills. The narrow windy roads leading up there were a challenge, but Frans had no trouble getting us there safely and manoeuvring into position.



We spent 3 nights there enjoying their company and picking up lots of good tips and information about the next stages of our journey – through S.A. and up the centre.

We drove around Port Adelaide and checking out the historic buildings there



with well-known names still showing – Elders, Goldsborough Mort etc. It's great that these old buildings are still there and we can only hope that they are preserved for the future.

### **Sunday 22 March**

Leaving Blackwood we drove out of Adelaide and



north through Gawler, Kapunda, Eudunda to Burra Creek Gorge campground for the night. This is a beautiful huge camping area on the banks of the creek – well hidden by reeds, and surrounded by massive river gums. On arrival we met up with another Southern Cross 5<sup>th</sup> wheeler, (Stopalot's younger brother) the first we have seen since we started travelling.

The areas we passed through are all very historic with heaps of old stone buildings, and lots of ruins in the sheep and wheat paddocks. It was all very rustic.

### **Monday 23 March**

To Port Augusta via Burra, Jamestown, Laura, Melrose and Horrocks Pass which had magnificent views. Coming out of the Pass and down towards Port Augusta, the country became very flat and desolate looking, and obviously very dry. This area receives little rain each year.

We stayed at the sports & recreation ground for 2 nights and Fang had a service at the local Ford dealer.

### **Wednesday 25 March**

To Whyalla and the CMCA rally. The first few days is for the volunteers to get it all set up and ready for the members to arrive. Bev handed in her crocheted and knitted items for the donations store (knee rugs, bed-socks & beanies). CMCA collects these at each rally and then donates them to nursing homes and the like. Frans met with the other board members and we got to know a few of our neighbours. Bev was given a job in the Treasury section, collecting money from members wanting gas bottle refills and laundry washed, and from people going on the bus into town. It's a good way to meet lots of people and keep busy.

Day 1 of the rally on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> saw the board members outside the gate doing “Meet & Greet” with the long lines of members awaiting entry to the grounds. With about 500 motorhomes arriving it takes quite a while to process them and get them parked on their allocated sites.

### **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April**

We are still here at the Whyalla showgrounds. The rally finished on 5<sup>th</sup> April but we decided to wait until after the Easter and school holiday crowds get off the roads before we start travelling again. We will probably leave here in a few days and start exploring the Eyre Peninsula, and hopefully do some fishing. After that, Frans has to go to Newcastle for a few days for board and other meetings, and then we can start heading up the centre. Hopefully our friends from Portland will join up with us for that trip.



That's it for now – catch up with you again later,

Regards,

Bev & Frans