

# The Hamer Newsletter



**24 June 2009**

Hello to One and All,

We left you last time in April at Whyalla after the CMCA rally. We finally left Whyalla on 22 April and drove south down the Eyre Peninsula, visiting the little towns along the way. The first overnight stop was at Red Bank just north of Arno Bay on a beachside picnic area at the end of a long dusty dirt road. What a beautiful spot that was, although the weather was very windy with frequent rain squalls and no opportunity to do much outdoors. Still, we stayed there for 2 nights enjoying the feeling of solitude and the ocean views.



**Friday 24 April**

Still very windy and wet, so we packed up and drove to Arno Bay to a van park for 3 nights – the power was very welcome to run the heater. We attended the Anzac Day ceremony in the village – about 20 people for a flag-raising in the wind and rain, and walked the boardwalk through the mangroves to the water – had not known that mangroves grew on the southern coast.

**Monday 27 April**

To Lipson Cove, another isolated beachside camping spot – still windy with rain squalls, and no luck at all with fishing, but the scenery was great.

**Tuesday 28 April**

To Tumby Bay motorhome park for a night – a



great spot for self-contained travellers for \$5 per night. We organised to meet up with Kiwi friends Bevia & Myra the next day in the Tumby Bay caravan park. It was a beautiful sunny day, made a nice change to be warm in the sunshine.

## Friday 1 May

To Port Lincoln where we stayed for 3 weeks. Frans flew to Newcastle for several days for a



CMCA meeting. We bought a new spare wheel each for Fang and Stopalot and had

them fitted underneath Stopalot – 2 spares each now, just in case.



We also did some day trips, to Lincoln National Park where we saw emus roaming, and to Coffin Bay. The weather was still very variable, mostly windy and rain showers with the odd lovely day thrown in. Absolutely no luck with fishing at all.

## Sunday 24 May

To Whyalla, to make preparations for the big outback trip. It poured rain all night – since we have been in this area they have had more rain than usual.

## Monday 25 May

To Quorn via the Pichi Richi Pass, and met up with Portland friends Geoff & Glen Donovan in their 5<sup>th</sup> wheeler. We travelled to Hawker, looking at ruins along the way, and stayed at the Flinders Ranges van park overnight.

## Tuesday 26 May

To Rawnsley Park camp grounds just outside Wilpena Pound in the beautiful Flinders Ranges. We camped in the bush camping area away from the main campground,



collected firewood and had our first campfire. We did some walks around the area – beautiful scenery with the very rugged mountain ranges. It was very chilly with cold winds.

Over the next few days we did day trips to see the sights of the area – Wilpena Pound, Bunyeroo Valley, Brachina

Gorge, Parachilna Gorge, Blinman, Stokes Hill Lookout, Moralana Scenic Drive – all very spectacular landscapes and heaps of wildlife including emus, red and grey kangaroos, and wedge tailed eagles.



## Monday 1 June

Back to Hawker to meet up with Graeme & Joy Campbell (also from Portland in their Hiace pop-top campervan) and get ready for the Oodnadatta Track. We also drove out to a ruined homestead called Kanyaka where several stone buildings still remain including a large shearing shed. They did it tough in the old days. We rang the Pink Roadhouse in Oodnadatta to check on road conditions and



decided we could do the trip without too much trouble.

## Wednesday 3 June

Our little convoy headed off to Leigh Creek van park – run by the community for travellers. We booked a tour to the coal mine for the next morning. The residents of Leigh Creek are all mine employees or employed in the town, and rent their houses from the mine. The open cut coal mine is of a good size but doesn't match the central Queensland mines – 12,000 tonnes of

coal are sent to Port Augusta every day to run the power station.

## Thursday 4 June

After the mine tour we drove, now on dirt road, to Farina campgrounds. Farina is a working property with the stone built ruins of the original village. It is difficult to comprehend how a whole community lived here in the dry and desolate conditions.



## Friday 5 June

After a cold early morning we drove to Marree and refuelled. Then it was on to the Oodnadatta Track – cloudy, light rain showers and still windy. After stopping to let air out of the tyres to suit the rough road, the journey continued with many stops for photos at various points of interest.

As this road follows the old Ghan Railway, there are lots of ruins of fettlers quarters and railway bridges.



We stopped at Lake Eyre South but could not see much water and it was too exposed and windy to camp for the night, so we continued on to Curdimurka Siding and camped there. There was rain all around the horizon and we had one rain shower but not enough to cause problems on the Track. No phone or TV reception out here so nights are spent huddled around the camp fire until it's time for bed.

### **Saturday 6 June**

Another cold morning but clear and sunny. We drove on, looking at more ruins along the

way, and the Mound Springs. These are amazing mounds built up by mineral springs rising from the Artesian Basin. "The Bubbler" continuously bubbles up through the mud. Then on to Coward Springs and camped for the night in a treed site protected from the wind. A soak in the "hot springs" (lukewarm actually) and a roaring camp fire again made for a good night. We watched the camels being brought back into the paddock after their trek. So far, the Track has been quite good with no problems experienced.

### **Sunday 7 June**

Leaving Coward Springs, more rusting Ghan water tanks and ruins of fettlers quarters and rusting desalination plants, and a large dam on Anna Creek station which seemed quite out of place in this dry landscape. Through the Irrapatana sandhills, beautiful red sand dunes glowing in the sun.

We reached William Creek, which has a roadhouse/hotel, a campground and an "airport" with a dirt airstrip and a heap of little airplanes. We booked a flight over Lake Eyre for the next day, had dinner at the roadhouse and another campfire to sit round. We are getting used to the cold weather and the dirt and dust.







## Monday 8 June

We had a fantastic 2 hour flight over Lake Eyre in a 4 seater Cessna – the lake is so huge, and to see so much water in this apparently lifeless landscape is mind boggling. They say the water will all be gone by September leaving untold numbers of dead fish and lots of baby pelicans stranded.

Then on to a bush camp north of William Creek for the night, where our friends cooked up a big roast dinner for Joy's birthday. The full moon came up while we were sitting round the fire – beautiful sight.

The road from William Creek was definitely starting to get rough with corrugations and stony sections. One of Stopalot's tyres was punctured by a stone so Frans had his first experience of changing a wheel on the trailer – good fun he said.



## Tuesday 9 June

Driving north, the road was awful with rough corrugated sections, wheel ruts over boggy sections from the previous week's rain, and some fairly steep dips over

creek crossings. At times we were down 15 k/hour and some cupboards and drawers bounced open in Stopalot. Duct tape to the rescue to hold them shut.

There were many shallow puddles along road, looking very out of place on the dry gibber plains. With stops for smoko and lunch at various points of interest, we made it to Algebuckina waterhole for the night. This was a deep, long waterhole near the longest railway bridge on the old Ghan line, with plenty of birdlife.



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### Wednesday 10 June

Onward to Oodnadatta – we made it! Again, there were a lot of very rough sections and we bounced around quite a bit, but both Fang and Stopalot made it intact – except for a cracked windscreen from rocks thrown up by a truck. Graeme & Joy's Hiace proved to be a bit too low-slung and they cracked their water tank scraping the tops off the wheel ruts.

We arrived at the Pink Roadhouse and



booked in to their “van park” – probably the smallest and most basic park we have ever been in – but the hot showers were very welcome and we were able to do the laundry so it was all good.

### Thursday 11 June

A day of rest. After exploring the sights of Oodnadatta (a 10 minute walk up the road and back!) we went into the Railway Museum for a very interesting hour or so. The exhibits and written history were very entertaining and made us appreciate our modern vehicles, trailer homes and all the mod cons we have.



### Friday 12 June

To Arckaringa Homestead through the Painted Desert. What a landscape – it has to be seen to be appreciated fully – photos just can't get





across the feeling you get from being there. We camped at the Homestead and went back to the lookout for sunset photos. After agreeing to get up early next morning for sunrise photos in the Arckaringa Hills, we warmed up by the campfire and went to bed.

### **Saturday 13 June**

Up at 5.45 am in the dark, freezing cold, and off to the hills. We walked up to the top of the hills and waited for the sunrise, which seemed to take forever and that dawn breeze was biting cold. Still, it was worth it for the experience and the colours and the hundreds of photos we took.

We went back at sunset to take yet more photos. Another roaring camp fire that night and star watching.

### **Monday 15 June**

Up early again and out for another sunrise – this one even colder than the



last and the wind was freezing, but some great photos. Then back for breakfast, pack up and on the road again. We drove via Mt Barry to the Moon Plain – what a desolate, lifeless place, and the wind was kicking up the dust as we travelled. We had planned to stay the night to experience the stars from horizon to horizon, but the wind and dust were too



bad so we went in to Coober Pedy and the comfort of a van park which at least provided some shelter from the wind.

Arriving at the van park we found that the dust had leaked in through the passenger side door and window on Stopalot so there was a big cleanup job to do inside.



We spent 2 days exploring Coober Pedy – what a fascinating place and the



underground buildings are very attractive with their colourful natural rock walls and ceilings and constant temperature. The Serbian Church was just beautiful,

and the Old Timers Mine a most interesting place to while away a couple of hours. Coober Pedy seemed to be just one big quarry site really, but the main street looks almost normal.

The Breakaways are another geological beauty spot – similar to the Painted Desert but different. Hooray for digital cameras.

### **Wednesday 17 June**

After farewells to Graeme & Joy who were heading home to Portland, we headed north. Our first stop was at Agnes Creek on the Stuart Highway, where we stayed 2 nights. More roaring camp fires and a pleasant day doing nothing much. The mornings were very cold and we had ice on the roof.

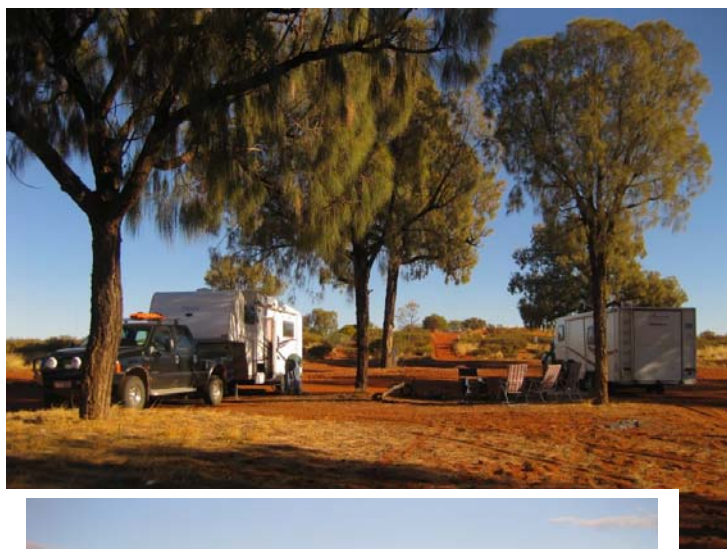
### **Friday 19 June**

On the way to Yulara, we camped overnight at Kernot Range rest area. This is really red dirt

country and the colours are just beautiful. This is our last night with Geoff & Glen as we are going to Ayers Rock which they have already seen.

### **Saturday 20 June**

We drove to Yulara camp ground, passing the magnificent Mt Connor



which dwarfs Ayers Rock. The red dunes glow in the sunlight.

We make it to Ayers Rock for the sunset viewing – not as good as it could have been but lovely anyway. Through the binoculars we could see climbers still making their slow way down the rock. Ayers Rock is just as impressive as we expected and well worth the journey.

### **Sunday 21 June**

Up early at 5.45 am in the cold and dark and off to the Olgas to watch the sunrise.

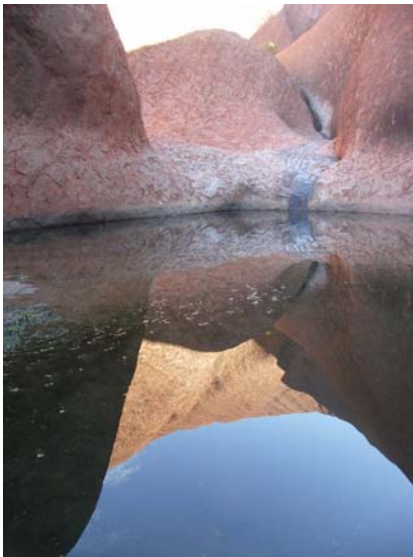






We decided that the Olgas were more interesting and impressive than Uluru. After the sunrise photos we did a walk in Walpa Gorge and another at the Valley of the Winds. All of the scenery is indescribable and photos just cannot do it justice.

On the way back to camp we drove all the way around Ayers Rock and found that



the "rear" was more interesting than the front, with some short walks to interesting spots – Mutitjulu Waterhole was an unexpected feature.

### **Monday 22 June**

Leaving Yulara we drove to Kings Creek Station near Kings Canyon, and checked in for 2 nights. This is a working cattle property with a tourist sideline – campground, cabins, camel and horse rides, quad bike rides and helicopter rides. We were lucky to get a site as there were around 100 Melbourne teenage school kids on a bus tour. They were having a ball doing quad bike rides.

### **Tuesday 23 June**

A cold start to the day with a minimum of 1.4 deg C and a day trip to Kings Canyon to do the walks – a 2 km walk along the creek bed first, followed by a 6 km hike around the canyon rim.





It started with a steep climb straight up (386 steps, we were told) and a long hike around the top with some fantastic scenery along the way.

After returning home, a hot shower and dinner by the fire were most welcome.

### **Wednesday 24 June**

Off to Alice Springs for a few days, to catch up with some chores and get ready for some more adventures.

The last month has been one of the most interesting so far in our travels, and seeing the “real” outback and the incredible colours of the red centre has been an experience never to be forgotten. Our photo gallery is expanding daily and we will have lots of beautiful images to look at in our dotage when we can’t travel any more.

Bye for now

Regards,

Bev & Frans





