

The Hamer Newsletter



18 July 2014

Hello to One and All,

Our New Zealand adventure at an end, it was back to Australia and back to normal again – with the addition of starting our Geocaching hobby. We have now become quite adept at finding caches and are enjoying getting out and about and doing a lot more walking. It also means that we visit lots of hidden spots worth seeing that we would never have known about if not for geocaching.

7 February 2014

We flew back to Brisbane and went to stay with friends Barry & Elaine for 2 nights, then travelled on the Tilt train to Maryborough where we retrieved Fang & Stopalot from the display home garage at RV Homebase. We stayed there for 3 nights while we got ourselves organised again.

12 February

To Bungadoo (near Bundaberg) to stay with friends Geoff & Bev and have new shock absorbers fitted to Fang, then to Woodford for a few days.

18 February

To Scarborough for a week. We celebrated Frans' 70th birthday at a restaurant with his daughter Karyn and our friends Barry, Elaine, Kevin & Helen.



Between then and the end of March we travelled from Brisbane to Woodford to RV Homebase and Crows Nest and back to Brisbane for some medical appointments.

31 March

Finally leaving Brisbane we travelled via the Southern Cross factory at Meadowbrook for a few fixups and servicing on Stopalot, before going to Kalbar showgrounds for a few days.



3 April

Heading to Lightning Ridge, we stayed at the Deepwater Inn free camp, and the Gwydir caravan park in Moree where we had a soak in the thermal hot pools. In Lightning Ridge we checked in to the Opal van park for 2 nights and did some touring around this very interesting and unusual area.



The Black opals found here are unique and very beautiful, but very expensive. Another “when we win the lotto” wish. We went on the “Black Opal and Chambers of the Black Hand” tour and learnt a lot about the area and its colourful characters, past and present, as well as seeing some unique and fascinating hand built structures and the beautiful wall carvings in the Black Hand mine.

7 April

We headed to Trangie to visit friends Sue & Jim. Jim was working at a cotton field mulching up the plants after the picker had gone through, and he organised for us to have a ride in the picking machine. These are huge machines which pick 6 rows of cotton at a time, then spit out the bales of plastic-wrapped raw cotton. All very different from the old days.



20 April

Our next planned destination was Bright in Victoria to see the autumn colours. On the way we stayed at free camps at Gooloogong and Wagga Wagga and then checked into a van park at Beechworth so we could day trip around the area. It was typical damp, cool autumn weather but because it had been very mild there was not a lot of colour in the leaves. Still, the meat pies at the famous Beechworth Bakery and the blackberry pies at Bright bakery were worth the trip, and the scenery around the region is beautiful at any time of the year.



24 April

To Melbourne to see daughter Karyn. Karyn took Frans to the football to watch the Melbourne Storm vs New Zealand Warriors, the first time they have been to a game together so a good "Dad & Daughter" bonding session. We had dinner with Karyn each night and checked out her new flat.

29 April

To Ballarat, raining all the way and very cool. We camped at Smythesdale Gardens and found that our batteries had not been charging on the drive, and with pouring rain the solar panels are no good so had to get the generator



out. The next couple of days were reasonably fine but very cold – typical Ballarat weather. We spent a few hours at Sovereign Hill, an historic gold mine town which is a great tourist attraction and well worth a visit, followed by the Gold museum.

3 May

Still raining as we drove to Portland via an overnight stop at Penshurst. We were starting to wonder if it was such a good idea to go south for winter after all!



We spent almost 2 weeks with friends Geoff & Glen and went on some day trips around the area seeing places we had not been to. At Halls Gap and the Grampians it was sad to see so much burnt out forest from the summer bush fires, but in some areas the new growth was starting so in a few years it will be looking good again.

15 May

Off to Mt Gambier for a few days. There is so much to see in this area with its lovely lakes, sinkholes and parks.



The Blue Lake is only blue in November but still looked good. The sinkholes in the town have been turned into beautiful gardens, and Engelbrecht Cave runs under part of the city and is mostly an underground lake. The very steep walk up to the Centenary Tower is worth doing for the fabulous views.

18 May

To Kuitpo near McLaren Vale, via an overnight stop at Langhorn Creek.



At Kuitpo we stayed at a small vineyard looking after the 2 dogs, cat and the chickens, while Simon & Cecelia went away on holiday. We had good weather to start with and enjoyed walking the dogs and the lovely views. Then the bad weather set in and we had howling winds, lots of rain, thick fogs and spent lots of time in the lounge with the animals in front of the roaring fire. One night a fox got in the hen run and killed 5 of the 10 chickens so that cut the egg production. Still, we enjoyed our stay and did lots of geocaching in the surrounding area.



10 June

We left Kuitpo for some touring around before going back in July for more house sitting. We first went to Victor Harbour and did a day trip from there to Deep Creek Conservation Park and Cape Jervis. We could see Kangaroo Island from the coast but had decided that due to the high cost of getting there and the bad weather conditions, it was not worth going over. We met up with friends Barry & Kerry for lunch one day – we first met them on our Canada/Alaska trip in 2008.



Then we travelled to the Yorke Peninsula and spent time at various little towns exploring the area – Ardrossan, Port Julia, Yorketown, Marion Bay and Maitland. We did a day trip to Innes National Park and walked round the historic town of Innes where they used to mine Gypsum. There is still the remains of the Belco chalk factory which at one time supplied chalk sticks to schools around Australia.

We then wanted to go to a beachside camp on the west coast but more

severe weather was forecast so we went to Wallaroo into a caravan park instead and spent a couple of days battened down with the wind howling and the van rocking. When it all cleared the car and van were covered in salt spray and sand and had to be washed down.

26 June

With a complete change in the weather we went to Mount Remarkable National Park for 2 nights. This is a beautiful park with a good camp ground and great walks, with some ruins of an early pioneer homestead. There were heaps of birds, resident euros and emus, obviously quite used to humans being around.



From there we drove to the Clare Valley and spent a week looking around the area and some of the old towns which are little more than villages these days. Most of the shops and pubs have closed. We stayed at Terowie, Yacka, Snowtown, Blyth, Farrell Flat and Tarlee before heading back to Kuitpo.

8 July

We arrived back at the vineyard before yet another cold front hit with strong winds and heavy rain. Even though it is winter, all the spring flowers were blooming – daffodils, narcissus, hyacinth. Simon & Cecelia left on their holiday and are due back tomorrow after 10 days away. We will leave next week and resume our travels back through Victoria and New South Wales, heading for a Southern Cross owners group meet-up in early October at Brooms Head in NSW. We will be visiting Broken Hill for the first time on the way and travelling new routes.

Regards

Bev & Frans



Never to be finished castle at Lightning Ridge was probably a good idea at the time



Some of the many ruins on Yorke Peninsula



Horse drawn tram Victor Harbour to Granite Island



One of many Soldiers Memorial buildings on Yorke Peninsula





Bellco Chalk factory Innes National Park – old enough to remember Bellco chalk at school?

