

WA Wheatbelt to Toodyay

Stage 7 October 2018

The good weather continued and we found more great camp spots, including a couple of caravan parks. Toward the end of the report's period it started to warm up again. And then it got cool again....talk about all over the place.



The Old Mill, Toodyay

Urban Camping

This stage started on 16 October 2018.

We had enjoyed our stop in Kalgoorlie, especially catching up with son in law Charlie. But it was time to move again. It seems four days in one place sees us ready to 'up sticks' and move on. Although I do like a period of a week or so in one place every now and again.

We headed on West on the Great Eastern Highway (GEH). The town of Coolgardie has a dump point and nearby water tap so we filled up the van's water tanks there (after a quick search for the tap which was well hidden in flowering plants!) and continued on. The wildflowers along the road were still giving a stunning display and made the journey a delight. How lucky we have been to see such beautiful flowers this trip! There seems to be a preponderance of golds with purples, colours which go together so very well. Recent rains have revived the wildflowers and so plants we saw last time were flowering afresh.

Karalee Rocks

S31 14 59 E119 50 24

Regular readers will know that Karalee Rocks is one of my firm favourite camps. I think it is the pleasant bush setting which appeals, as well as the nearby rocks to walk over and the dam which was full to the brim. (The question has to be asked why Niagara Dam was so empty when here and Lake Douglas were so full...?). Also, it has good phone reception which I needed as I was on call this week, a flushing toilet and a dump point and tap is in the camp.

Initially our plans had been to spend two or three days here but it was so pleasant and the weather was nice so we decided to spend six days here before moving on. Our neighbours from Kalgoorlie, Mary-Ann and Craig, joined us for a night too and we had a nice happy hour with fellow campers one afternoon.

But after six days we were both ready to go to a caravan park to do some washing of sheets and towels, and so we headed on to the small town of Westonia, further West on the GEH.



Westonia

This town is truly a delight, with clean streets, more flowering displays along the sidewalks and with quirky replicas of previous houses and stores from days long gone. There is a real pride in this town and it shows. The store is a co-operative run business and prices are very cheap, and the attached coffee shop looked attractive.



The town caravan park is quite appealing too, and has power and water sites at \$20 a night or \$120 a week.

We did a trip over to Merredin for the day to get the car serviced at a mechanic who had been recommended by a friend, and for me to have a haircut. Both were necessary actions (the last time I had my hair cut was in Tasmania about four months previously). I found a new café for lunch and coffee while I waited for Val and the car to pick me up, so the day was pretty good all

round! I also made the wonderful discovery that Westpac Banks have free wifi for a distance around them and in Merredin this allowed me to download some pretty hefty phone app updates at no charge. Bonus.

And we had dinner at the local tavern, which was a bit fraught as the cook hadn't turned up and one of the waitresses was cooking. It was clear this was not her idea and she mightily resented the task. But the meal was fine, if somewhat late in coming. Still, all was good and we had a great night out. (Regular readers will recall that this hotel is a Freo Dockers supporter, and everything in the building is decked out in the relevant colours. And I mean EVERYTHING. There are posters on the wall, there are signs over the doors all saying Dockers Way or Dockers Avenue etc., the bar runner is purple, the pool tables are purple not green etc.).

Another interesting feature was the town, which is neat and fanatically tidy, and bustling with civic pride, and has embarked on a crusade to entice newcomers to town. They have released a fair number of quarter acre blocks for sale for \$5000 each. Each block is attractive and presumably has water and power available... Clearly there would be a caveat requiring you to build on the block which would stymie my cunning plan to buy say four or five in a row and build one ginormous house on just one block. So I abandoned that cunning plan, as I always must.

The other interesting thing with our stay here was the caravan club which arrived in the afternoon on the day we arrived, and surrounded us. They were certainly chirpy and cheerful, but come about 9pm they all collapsed back into their vans and snoring away. I have started to feel very wary of caravan clubs experienced at close range.

Kwolyin

S31 55 52 E117 45 32

After being surrounded by caravan club members we deserved peace and quiet, so on the Thursday we headed further West toward Perth, through Bruce Rock and across to Kwolyin Camp. This is a campsite provided by the Bruce Rock Shire and is a great spot to prop for a few days. It has good facilities, like a camp kitchen with free gas stovetop and barbeque, and flushing toilets. Sites are located off a loop around the campground and we needed to find a largish one as friends were joining us from Merredin. See [here](#) for more details on the site.

Kwolyin is the site of what was a small town, settled in the early 1900's. The townsite was selected in 1912 due to its position near Coaring Spring and the townsite was gazetted in 1913, the same year the railway was opened. The station was initially named as Koarin but later renamed as Kwolyin. Kwolyin's State Hotel was constructed in 1914. It was destroyed by arson in February 1992. The gutted hotel building was demolished later that same year... You can still see remnants of the old town. Interestingly, there is a claim that the first European to visit the region was in 1864, the same year the hotel was built in my small town back in SA...

The only drawback with the campsite here was the poor phone and internet reception. We got reasonable phone and internet by placing the phone in one of the van windows, and alternatively using the modem with our external aerial.

As we were joined by Karen and Paul, we had a lovely time sitting under the shade of the tree

between our sites and talking. It was such a pleasant weekend! Well, except for the hordes of flies during the day and the mosquitoes the second night....



Quairading

Not that much further to the West is the small Wheatbelt town of Quairading (pronounced 'Quer-a-ding' with the e as in egg). It had a pleasant town with a bakery café, a pub, a bank, Shire Office, IGA Supermarket and even a quilting shop. The bakery made their own pies and pasties and apple

turnovers all of which were superb. The town also had a caravan park and that is where we headed for a few nights. They cleverly offered a deal of pay for three nights and stay for the fourth night free. So we stayed four nights. And it was a well maintained park with lovely green grass and immaculate ablution block. There was a well appointed kitchen and laundry too.

The phone reception was pretty good here which was such a nice change too.

Generally we prefer not to stay at caravan parks as the sites are regimented and people can all be sited near each other like sardines. But every now and then we discover a great park. What makes a park appealing is the size of the sites (with more generous sites being prized), green grass nearby, easily accessed (some of the dearer city parks have such tight turns involved you need to be a contortionist to get the van in) and level, shaded sites. Obviously, a view is highly valued and we love Streaky Bay in SA because it is on a beach with water lapping at our feet when we put the chairs out. And of course, we can't afford to stay at a park too often if we are away travelling for months at a time.

Greenhills Inn (3 kms North of the Quairading to York Road)

I had looked for a suitable spot to head to from Quairading and we heard from some neighbours at the park of a nice camp next to a country pub at Greenhills. To be perfectly honest, all that is at Greenhills is the pub. But what a pub it is! A gracious old style building with a delightful interior.



It was built in 1906 and made to last. We had dinner and drinks at the pub the first night and drinks the second night. While it was anticipated you would patronize the place in return for staying nearby, it was not expected. But we will always pay for our keep as they say, by having at least a drink!

In a slightly amusing incident, there was a sign nearby to the pub, saying "Bakery 300 metres". My heart leapt! Maybe they have cream buns!!? So naturally we drove down the nearby road to the bakery lickety split and found this building.... It hasn't been operating as a functioning bakery in a loong time. It was built in 1896 and restored in 2001. Despite a distinct lack of baked goods, it did make a great photographic subject.

The main York to Quairading Road used to run through Greenhills but a by-pass was built which caused the town to almost cease to exist.

Also, an amusing side story happened on the second night we were camped there. About 6.00pm a number of vehicles all arrived and started parking all around us, including one vehicle which was almost touching the back bumperbar on the van. We were in the middle of dinner at the time and wondered what was happening. Val poked his head out and asked if we were in their way... I doubt they detected the sarcasm in his voice as they assured us we were fine where we were. They also told us a BIG group was arriving for a 40th birthday bash. We looked at each other, quickly packed up, hitched the van and towed it across the paddock to a quiet spot well out of the way. We heard not a peep out of the big group for the rest of the night. They had all gone when we got up in the morning.



The next morning (a Sunday) we left after morning tea, and drove into nearby Beverley. This is a delightful small town (I am guessing a population of about 800?) which allows campers to stay for two or three nights on a field on the edge of town, with toilets just across the road. There was also a tap with potable water in the middle of the camp site which had some shady trees dotted throughout the area as well as nice clear sunny spots. I can strongly recommend this little town and its friendly inhabitants.



While here Val spent the day driving into Perth (about 100 kms I guess) to pick up the next spring, which was to be our new spare. As predicted, the second spring on that side of the van went as well, requiring replacement, and luckily we had ordered two the last time around! These springs are costing us a fortune. Let's hope we don't need to buy a fourth one... By now Val is an expert at changing caravan springs.

York

The camp at Beverley was a two day limit so we did need to move on, but in any event we wanted to be over in York for Melbourne Cup Day. A booking had been made for the hotel there and we realised

that if we stayed overnight nearby we could walk to and from the hotel. The hotel was an absolutely marvelous place to have Melbourne Cup. It was like something out of a movie; high ceilings, bowls of roses and polished heavy wooden tables. The Imperial Homestead has just been done up after a longish time closed. We were greeted in a courtyard with a glass of bubbles and canapes, and then watched the Cup run out there in courtyard in the morning sun dappled with shade from trees. (It was run about 11am in WA time...) And to top it off, they had a competition for best dressed man and woman, and Val won the male component! Truly. I don't think I will ever hear the end of it....



And where did we stay? At the freecamp in the road back from the main street and running

alongside the town park, with a view of the Avon River. With free power, and a toilet block nearby. As the only spot free was the front position with one of the coveted power boxes, we got lucky. So we had a wonderful day, all considered.

From York we drove all of about 80 kms to the more Northerly small town of Toodyay (pronounced "2-J"). We wanted to see a few things around there and hot weather was forecast, so we booked at a caravan park (the Toodyay Holiday Park and Chalets). Sites were in a bush setting and with good space between other campers, we felt very comfortable here and enjoyed the rarity of spending a whole week in one place!

We had another serendipitous experience here, out on the Julimar Road at the Alicia Winery and Restaurant. What a wonderful wine tasting and experience we had. Jacob, a Swiss German immigrant, spent at least an hour talking us through his winemaking, which includes meads, and the most unusual sauvignon blanc I have ever had. We bought some to share back home with a couple of oenophile friends. Of course we bought two meads as well. One mead was spiced with juniper, cinnamon and anise. Jacob has his own grapes, as well as his own beehives, and makes everything himself. He is also the chef and the food was all European and utterly delicious. Val had a roast pork with baked potatoes and sauce with sauerkraut, and I had a schnitzel with a wild mushroom sauce. I wish I could go back...

After the week here at Toodyay it was time to head into the city. Therefore a booking was made at a caravan park in Perth and we again packed up for the next stage of the trip.

