

Yowah QLD to Bingara (NSW)

Stage 4 - August 2023

Our travels through the QLD outback continued, and we enjoyed superb weather for the next stage of travel. Cool days and colder nights were our lot, with no pesky rain.

The outback has a special appeal; friendly people, towns which are grateful for your presence and bucketloads of history.

But as we travelled further East we left the true outback behind and entered the regional areas and larger towns, also with their own appeal and attractions.



Paddabilla Bore

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On the Balonne Highway, travelling due East, is a famed birdwatching area of Paddabilla Bore. What else is here other than birds? A heap of solitude and a pleasant area to find a secluded camp. Tracks wind down behind the bore and dam, and it is easy to find a nice spot to camp.

When we pulled in, about lunch time, we found a spot well off the road with a campfire stone ring and the largest tree trunk ready to be a campfire. Indeed it burnt all night with little red embers glowing away, and we had to put it out properly before we left the next morning.

We were the only people there that evening and enjoyed sitting outside with a glass of

port and enjoying the warmth of the fire. The night was crystal clear and very cold.

The only notable event here was the breaking of the dratted door handle. This caused Val some grief, as the old one wouldn't come apart as well as it should. He had a spare (although it took a little finding) and was soon on the door. Without a door handle you cant leave the van unattended.

Bollon

Bollon is a small, very small town, on the peaceful Wallam River. It has a café, a grocery store, police station and a hotel. But it has astutely benefitted from providing free camping on the banks of the river, with showers and toilets and water taps for travellers to use in return for a donation. To say its popular is putting it mildly.

Arriving early, we managed to get a prized riverside site and soon set up with our awning open to the view of the river. Our first night of our two nights here were quite peaceful, but the second night there would have been 20 or 30 vans nearby. None of the other vans bothered us by coming too close as we had a riverside site!

Interestingly, the town had only Telstra 3G (no Optus whatsoever, consistent with outback QLD) so although our Telstra phones worked well, internet was patchy. Even our phone Cel-fi Go booster had no impact. And locals told us that sometime soon even the 3G was to be phased out, so they hope the 4G tower is installed before this happens.

We had dinner at the hotel. No Irish backpackers this time, but it was definitely a backpacker who served us. He was looking decidedly frazzled and rough around the edges. But we had a pleasant meal sitting outside at a table on the verandah, and the meal was reasonable.

I'd like to say we spared a thought for the poor buggers back home with their sleet and cold, but I'm afraid this is untrue. We revelled in sitting outside after dark in mild weather.

Yelarbon

We kept heading East and toward the little town of Yelarbon. This town is not much bigger than Bollon but also has a small Recreation Grounds caravan park. You can camp in the powered site area for \$20 a night or in the unpowered area on the grassed oval for \$10 a night.

The campground is delightful with nice flowers, and has a herb garden and flowering bushes. It makes this a special place to stop for a space.

We needed to do a bit of washing, which is easier if you are connected to water and power so we set up fairly quickly and got a load of washing on. Over the four days we were here we washed so much clothing, sheets, towels, blanket, cushion covers etc that the machine had a good workout.

Yelarbon is not too far from the regional city of Goondiwindi and we did a day trip back there for groceries, and a new DC-DC charger. The latter is a device which allows power to charge the van's batteries from the car and from the sun simultaneously while driving. This can be valuable if the weather is rainy or overcast. Our old unit had started to fail, and while Val could tweak it back into operation, on this leg of the trip his powers to fix it failed. So, a new unit and lowered bank account. Sigh.

But we were heading back into unpowered campgrounds from Yelarbon, and if the weather didn't co-operate, we had the extra assistance from the DC to DC.

Texas

Another small town and another great camp! We left Yelarbon nice and early, very early, and arrived at the freecamp at Texas in time to nab a good spot before it got busy. A great plan in theory but not in execution; we arrived too early and had to wait until a couple of rigs left. Not to mind, after waiting a short while we then got a good spot on a grassed area and quickly set up. Before long we had our chairs out and morning tea was enjoyed overlooking the trees and creek behind the van.

This is a popular spot and we did have vans fairly close to ours, but everyone is aware of the need to not intrude on others, and it can be handy to catch up with others over the camp fire.

We spent three days here, stocked up on groceries and water in our van's tanks and were ready to continue on.

Girraween National Park

On the Queensland-New South Wales border, 260km south-west of Brisbane, halfway between Stanthorpe and Tenterfield is the lovely Girraween NP. This is high country and cold in Winter.



We had booked our site online as required nowadays, and with the site "sight unseen" pulled into the national park campground with a touch of anxiety and a backup plan. The newly designed campground is bristling with damned bollards which make getting in and out of a site difficult, and the park was very busy with other campers.



But we soon had a suitable site and set up.

The wattle was blooming and so many lovely flowering plants were out it was just gorgeous. I should have captured the wattle but it was not to be!



Anyway, we spent three days here, with daytrips into nearby Stanthorpe and surrounding wineries. But two days were damp with rain most of the day and this meant keeping an eye on the caravan battery system. Amazingly the batteries were full or almost full each afternoon, but it was achieved by managing the system. (Using gas to boil the kettle rather than the electric jug etc).



Wallangarra

After three days without internet I was ready to head back into civilization and so we moved on South on the New England Highway. It was only about 35kms of travel before we reached our next destination, a nice freecamp at Wallangarra, a small town right on the NSW/QLD border. When I say it is on the

border I mean exactly that..one half of the town is in QLD and the other half is in NSW. The old railway station has one platform in each state.

We pulled into a really pleasant grassed area called Jennings Rest Area, well off the highway and out the back of the town. I am guessing it was in QLD....who knows?

The only facility was a modern toilet block and rubbish bins but it had everything we needed.

A quick trip to the local general store saw us stocked up again and reassured that the town welcomes visitors on the grassed rest area. The area was huge and although there were about seven rigs there the second night, all were well spaced apart from each other. We had space, good sunlight and great phone reception so we were laughing (as they say).

The countryside around here is drop dead gorgeous and we did a day trip up the back way to Girraween NP one afternoon, and again admired the wattle which was flowering vigorously all along the road verges.

Tenterfield

After the four lovely days at Wallangarra, enjoying peace and lots of spacious green grassed camping, we thought it might be best to move on. So we trekked all of 20kms South to Tenterfield.

What a magnificent town. We have passed through here previously but never stayed. It is amazing how a town is fully revealed when you spend more time there.

Famous now as the town Peter Allen came from (his father was a saddler there, leading to the song Tenterfield Saddler) but also where Henry Parkes was born. Parkes gave a speech there in 1889 calling for the country to federate. A plaque testifies to the speech...I know, as it was on the building housing the wonderful Courthouse Café!

"On 24 October 1889 Henry Parkes delivered a speech at the Tenterfield School of Arts on the need for the Australian colonies to federate..." (National Museum of Australia). This now known as the Tenterfield Oration. They don't make politicians like him any longer, alas.

We stayed at the Showgrounds here, which are situated on a small creek, with willows and gum trees, and had our van backed onto the creek. It was very pleasant sitting outside on the grass overlooking the creek and watching the birds flying in and swooping into the water.

However, the park was busy and the caretaker was jamming vans in, so our neighbours were very close indeed. Not quite so close that we could not put out our awning, but

too close to have the van beside the awning as well. The car had to go in front of the van. On a positive note the neighbours were all nice people!

We had dinner out at the Tenterfield Tavern and it was a really nice meal.

The nights were cold here as you could imagine, with the elevation but we were on town power and ran the airconditioner all night. Luxury!



While at Tenterfield we did day trips, and found it a fascinating area. There is a cork tree which was brought out to Australia from England in a jam jar in 1861, and is still growing happily in its new home. The cork is quite thick..but you are forbidden to touch it!

Our day trip to Bald Rock NP was also a delightful day out. We took a packed lunch and had it at the picnic area among lovely vegetation.

On the way back we came across a "Bike Trail"...some folk have great imaginations.



Bingara

Before we left home we knew that Bingara would be a prime destination. This small New England town on the Gwydir River is not only a lovely little place, but there is a magic town common which allows visitors to camp. Surrounded by hills, the town rests in a natural amphitheatre and is truly lovely.

We have camped here on the river a couple of times previously and loved our stays. So we planned our arrival for about 11am, a time we thought would be ideal to nab a good spot right on the river. And that is what happened. We managed to get a good spot but moved to an even better one the next day when our neighbours moved on.



Our intention was to stay for a few days but our spot was so nice and the weather so good that we decided to stay for a week. We arrived on a Sunday and left the following Saturday.

During our stay we had a trip to nearby Cranky Rock (yes that is its name!), a Reserve with granite boulders of immense size.

It was a nice cool and sunny day for our visit and it was a fairly easy walk to the viewing



platform so we were able to see the rock up close. The steps were fairly challenging but soon overcome. Once I would have had no problems walking in that terrain but those days are gone.

We were blessed with good weather over the last few weeks of this trip and although we had rain while at Bingara it was at night, so it didn't really matter! In fact it freshened everything up and no doubt the grass benefitted from it.

This was the last of our stays in the high altitudes;

from here we headed down to the plains and slightly warmer days.

