

# Tasmania: Narawntapu NP to Brady's Lake

## Stage 2 April to May 2018

Almost a month had gone by at the time we left Narawntapu, and we had done much travel outside a radius of 100 kms from Devonport. However, we saw a lot of the towns and countryside around each place we had camped. This focus on one region at a time while camped in one place continued in this next stage of travel.



Sinkhole, Tarkine Drive

## **T**assie Camps

This stage started on 16 April .

### **The West**

From the national park we headed due West, past Devonport and on to Stanley, a small town on the North West coast. We travelled in bright sunlight and enjoyed the sweeping views of ocean as we travelled the two or so hours to the Recreation Reserve at Stanley. This camp is on land owned by the Golf Club but they provide camping there, right in the middle of town, for \$6 a night.

Stanley is a small town on a peninsular and with a towering backdrop of an outcrop called The Nut. It stands at 160 metres high (we know because we went up there on a chairlift). With a population of close to 500, the town seems primarily focused on tourism, and is extremely quaint.

While we were there, and our stay extended to a whole week, we did the usual things of tripping around, and we saw some lovely natural features as well as enjoying the local coffee shops and dinner at the hotel. We were joined at Stanley by my dear friends Denise and Ray, who we had



known in Darwin. When we first met we were young things just starting our families.... So of course we had dinner together most nights and enjoyed stretching out in lounge chairs and warmth at their rented house. What a treat...one night we had a bath in their lovely big spa bath!

We also had new friends and fellow travelers Bernie and Carol join us at the Recreation Reserve. They had been with us back at Railton as well. A nice feature of travel is when you connect with like-minded people and run into them from time to time.

The main activities we enjoyed at Stanley were visiting Trowutta Arch, a sinkhole in the Tarkine area, and taking the chairlift to the top of The Nut. Another day we visited Dip Falls and The Big Tree. A full day was taken up with the loop drive through the Tarkine. Of course, we did something every day but these were the highlights of this area.



Trowutta Arch is a natural sinkhole, formed when acidic rains weaken the earth below an area and ground above sinks into the vacated hole. Sometimes water seeps or drains into the hole and you get a wet sinkhole, as with Trowutta. And yes, there was indeed an earthcache here too!

***Trowutta Arch***



The trip up the top of The Nut was special too, if only for the views from the top, which gives wonderful 360 degree views. We are fairly lazy and took the chairlift up and down, unlike Ray and Denise who at least walked down.

There was an earthcache there which was quite arduous in having to obtain information located at five separate sets of co-ordinates, and one way or another we completed that task.



After a lovely week at the Stanley Recreation ground, we pointed the car and van South and travelled down to Waratah. The town is small, only really boasting a hotel and a small caravan park, and a small service station which sells a small range of groceries and takeaway food.

But our arrival in Waratah was fairly interesting. It was ANZAC Day, and as we drove up the main street we encountered a large group of townsfolk gathered outside the cenotaph, having an 11am service. The road was blocked by the group, who viewed our arrival with a bit of apprehension, as there was very little space for us to pull over and they thought we were going to try to drive through them. We pulled over to the kerb in the small space available and joined the service. The locals warmly welcomed us (as it was a cold day that is all that WAS warm) and we paid our respects to the fallen and those who gave service together with the rest of the little community.

They had made ceramic poppies which they "planted" on the grass verge overlooking the waterfall and adjacent to the cenotaph. What a wonderful sight they made!



It was wet and bleak for the two days we were here, and we stayed at the small caravan park to top up the watertanks, do some washing and generally luxuriate in having heaps of power.

From Waratah we continued South to the larger town of Strahan. This area is known as the Wild West Coast and probably with some good reason, historically. Back in the 1890s and to the 1930's the area was an active logging centre as well as having a steam railway

for much of the period. At Strahan we stayed at a campground owned and managed by the Golf Club. Well, there is very little managing as the only facility is a water tap. A nice, large grassed area is provided for self-contained campers, with individual sites marked with areas of welcome gravel. Given how much rain this area gets, the gravel meant a dry and clean site to put the van. Our view was of lovely greens and trees and was right in town! All at \$10 a night, this was a great spot for the five nights we were in Strahan.

We certainly packed in a lot during our five days at Strahan. On our second day after arrival we did the Gordon River boat cruise. It was a full day and was undertaken in luxury. We had lovely comfortable seats and a wonderful view of the river. A major stop was at Sarah Island, the site of a previous penal colony which had housed many eccentric characters (not all of them were



prisoners...). A brutalizing experience for the worst of the worst, the place has a serious place in our penal history.

In the latter period of Sarah Island's existence the island turned into a ship building facility due to the presence of skilled prisoners and huon pine, a prized ship-building wood. A desperate group of 10 prisoners stole the last ship built there (a brig) after they had finished building it, and then sailed the brig to Chile. That story forms

the theme for a play held in town

called *The Ship That Never Was*. The play is into its 25<sup>th</sup> year of continuously running and presented by two people, who engage audience participation. It was a real hoot and we thoroughly enjoyed it. Apparently, so the story goes, the ten sailors were later charged with mutiny and stealing a ship and one or two of them were facing execution by hanging. They escaped this ending due to a wily lawyer who argued on their behalf that as the brig had never been registered (as a ship) all they had stolen was an assorted bundle of wooden planks and canvas sails.... I think I have the story reasonably accurate. Sarah Island is now a quiet and peaceful place and its ghosts have rested now I think.



Then we went on the Heritage train ride up to Dubbil Barril, a four and a half hour trip on a lovely old heritage train, lined with Tasmanian oak. Greeted with Josef Chromy champagne on arrival, and given a delicious afternoon tea, we were treated like royalty. The train travelled through the rainforest and followed the river all the way up. It was a relaxing and enjoyable day, worth every cent of its cost.



Strahan was a good place to stock up on fruit and vegetables and to have our flu vaccinations too. They have a little medical centre and we booked in to have the jabs, and met a very talkative and interesting doctor. I don't think he has too many folk to talk to...

Anyway, it was time to move on again. So, bright and early on the final morning, we headed East toward Queenstown. I had been anxious about that narrow, winding stretch out of Queenstown, with deep, deep drops on the side. The anxiety was misplaced, and although the hills were very real and very high, the road was not the nightmare I had been expecting. It was definitely scenic. And anyway it was only for about 10 kms or less, so even had it been a worry it would have been over and done with quickly!

This day's trip was through beautiful rainforest and mountains, and at lunchtime we pulled in to a delightful camp site at Lake Burbury. **S42 4 25 E145 38 18**. With a view out over the lake and ably ourselves (more on that shortly) we felt privileged to be in such a lovely environment.

We had a strange coincidence happen here. The phones were checked to see if there was any phone reception, not that we thought there would be. There wasn't. An hour or two later, I turned the phone back on to check a detail stored on it, and lo and behold, there was a bar of reception! I quickly rang a family member who had just been to the funeral of her mother and who we really needed to speak to. She answered, and we chatted for quite a while, which was wonderfully

reassuring for us to hear her voice. Then, as soon as she hung up, the phone reception disappeared!

Darkness fell on the lake with the mountains disappearing into the mist. Then, long after dark, a car pulled into the site (which is really only big enough for one vehicle), with two young people ready to camp for the night in their car. Val went out and told them about the lovely spot 100 metres down the road which was empty, and they left.

We only stayed the one night at Lake Burbury, and pressed on the next morning, after a relaxed breakfast. The countryside was pretty but much more flat country, with many patches of button grass (a tussock-forming sedge, a unique grass in Tasmania) and then stretches of temperate rainforest. It was lovely country and we enjoyed the driving.

Our destination for the night was Derwent Bridge, a small town but a great location. Lake St Clair is just four or five kms away, as is The Wall, a wonderful 100 meter wooden wall of sculptures, all carved by one man, Greg Duncan. We stayed at the local hotel for the night; they provide free camping for self-contained vans. Naturally we had dinner there and had their famous curry. What a wonderful meal, all in front of a huge fireplace.

We nipped out to the lake early the next morning, grabbed the two geocaches around the area, and then returned to hitch up and hit the road again.

This time our destination was Brady's Lake, **S42 14 2 E146 29 44**, a spot on the lake about two hours drive from Derwent Bridge. Apparently it can be very busy here during the trout fishing season, but that had closed a week before our arrival and it was very peaceful and quiet on our arrival. Only one other camper was there and we could not hear or see them as each camp is well separated from others.



The view from our van of the lake was outstanding. This would have to be one of the most magnificent camps we have stayed at. Peaceful, quiet, a water view and mountains in the background. The two days we spent here were uneventful although strong winds and rain came in on our second night.

We had internet here (patchy, but we could access emails) but no phone reception.