

# Carnarvon Gorge to Boulia QLD

## Stage 6 August 2017

In this sixth stage of the trip we continue through warmer country, and some scenic outback places. We made a late decision to travel to Boulia (the take-off point for the Plenty Highway, via Windorah and Bedourie, simply to revisit the places our son went through when he was much younger.

This stage started on 15 August 2017.



### *Lara Wetlands*

From Carnarvon Gorge we went back up to Rolleston on the Carnarvon Highway, then further North again onto another outback town of Barcaldine, and decided to see how far we could get before we got tired. About 2.30pm we reached the quaint town of Boguntungan.

### **Boguntungan.**

S23 38 52 E147 17 23

It was certainly an interesting and unusual little town. I think the population was 2 people, who live in the one house. All the remaining houses, well kept with mown lawns etc, have been vacated by previous tenants who are now in aged nursing homes in Emerald. Family of each person look after the houses. There is also a railway museum, and a public toilet. The town allows camping in the park near the museum, in return for a gold coin donation. I was amused to see that at dusk, one solitary streetlight came on, in front of the one occupied house. There was also a Telstra tower in the backyard of that house. Talk about well provisioned! And it is a long time since a passenger train stopped here..... It was a very quiet and peaceful night.



## Lara Wetlands Camping

S23 48 22 E145 11 52

This campground is 28kms South of Barcaldine, or 78kms North of Blackall. And what a special place it proved to be. The campsite is on a wetland created by an uncapped bore which runs into a 'lake' and camping is around the water's edge on green grass. Toilets and showers are provided, and an artesian pool! Oh what bliss. All this lovely peace and quiet is only 30kms from Barcaldine. I might add that we were impressed with how polished and vibrant Barcaldine is these days. When we last saw it about 12 years ago, it was down at heels and quiet. There are now bustling shops and cafes, and the streets are alive with caravans and motorhomes of all descriptions.

The 'Tree of Knowledge', under which striking shearers met back in the 1890's, and then later formed the nucleus of the Australian Labor Party, is in prominent position. It was poisoned by someone in an act of vandalism a few years ago, and the now dead tree has a structure around it which is mesmerizingly beautiful. There are wooden 'shears' suspended from the ceiling, and which move in the breeze making a lovely chiming noise. I guess they also represent the tree's leaves.



Back to the wetlands... We arrived about lunchtime and pulled into a nice spot on the water's edge and set up camp. This was a very special place to stay and we thoroughly enjoyed our three nights here. It was becoming a familiar refrain; "I could stay here for longer".

There were spots all around the "lake", a wetland created by the artesian bore pumping

into a pool and then into the wetlands. The place is a birdwatchers' mecca, and Val certainly saw a few. We also enjoyed the hot artesian pool each day, and were glad we had brought our bathers. The photo on the right is of a tawny frogmouth, so well camouflaged you can barely see him/her. Doesn't the bird blend in perfectly?



While we were here there was an evening of country and western songs, presented by a visiting singer who performs at various locations. I guess the music was the perfect choice for the bush...

When we left Lara, we headed back up to Barcaldine, got the obligatory cream buns (we wanted to buy groceries but it was a Sunday and the supermarket was shut. Truly), and headed West to Longreach, and did our shopping there. It wasn't easy to find a supermarket open there either but we found one with the car navigator, and stocked up on the items we needed.

Then we headed due South on the Jundah road, heading to the small towns of Stonehenge and Jundah. We passed at least 150 horse floats and other assorted campers, returning from a rodeo at Stonehenge. As the road was narrow, every time a vehicle approaches, you need to get one wheel off the bitumen, and of course slowing down. This was time consuming and tiring. But eventually we arrived at our night's accommodation, the Swanvale Jumpup.

### **Swanvale Jumpup.**

S24 35 8 E143 16 7

This is a great camp, right on a hill overlooking the valley below. There is a rest area on the highway but a track leads into the camp sites on a ridge. The only facilities there are rubbish bins and concrete tables and chairs. There is a lookout there too, but some selfish folk pulled their van across it and set up camp, denying access to other visitors.



We had a welcome phone call there (yes, there was phone and internet reception!) from a fellow Kedron friend Sue and her husband Rod. They arranged to meet us



there the next day and we then spent the next night there together. It was a very scenic happy hour drinks session overlooking the valley. Sue is an exceptional birdwatcher and she soon had Val scouting out various birds.

The next day we headed off to first Jundah where we filled up with fuel, and then onto Windorah. There was a nice caravan park there which had a new overflow area on gravel but with power and water (and sullage). Sue and Ian were in the same boat as us, needing water to do washing. So very quickly

the washing machine was activated, and clothes, sheets and towels were all hanging out to dry. And the four of us continued to do what we do best, sitting talking and relaxing. We did have dinner at the pub

and that was really nice.

There was a geocache in town, and we quickly nabbed that, and then visited the Information Centre. Really helpful staff gave advice on the region and offered a free coffee. I declined the coffee as we had a machine back in the van with better coffee. We also took a photo of the local identity in his little house, which is right in the main street. I think his name is Kevin but he claimed to be Joe when asked.... I gather he is a bit of a character. He told us a story of the time he went to the Birdsville Races with two of his horses. They

were in good form and both won their races and so he won quite a bit of money. But the cheques bounced - because the Race Treasurer had absconded with the money. I have no idea if this really happened or not.

After two days we headed off again, now travelling pretty much North, to Bedourie. The road was bitumen for the first hundred or so kms and then gravel. The road varied between corrugations and smooth gravel, but always there was dust, fine clouds of dust. And a stiff wind was behind us. When we stopped at some remote spot for lunch, the wind nearly blew me off my feet.



Anyway, we eventually arrived at the small town of Bedourie about 2pm, and we decided to stay in the caravan park on an unpowered site as we needed no power or water, but the park was close to the free artesian pool. I love artesian pools. Apart from cream buns they are my favourite thing! So we walked over to the pool, which proved to be a scalding 40 degrees, much too hot. But gosh it was nice anyway. And then later we walked over to the local Hotel and had dinner, a really great meal of salad, chips and chicken Kiev for me. Val had a pork chop, and later he slipped the fatty rind to the dog under our table. You know you are in the bush when there are two dogs under your pub dining table. Yes, we know we should not have fed them, and no they were not fat.

Our son spent some time in Bedourie when he was much younger, waiting for a motorbike part, and he was taken in by the local police member, so we took some photos of the police station for him, as well as the phone

box from where he rang us. There is only one phone box....

This photo on the right is of the art installation, representing hills and rocks and trees.

We only stayed the one night at Bedourie despite the attractions of the artesian pool, and we headed off in the morning after an early walk to take photos. It was a short drive on bitumen the whole way, and we had an enjoyable time stopping for photos and the one solitary cache on the way.

When we arrived at Boulia about lunch time, we went straight out to the camping area near the creek and behind the race course. This is about 4 kms out of town.

### **Boulia, Bourke River**

S22 53 20 E139 56 14

This is a delightful area, with little areas among trees and shrubs, near the river. There was a bit of water in the river, and the birdlife was prolific. We were so glad we did go out there to stay, as the caravan park was very busy and campers were all crowded in near each other. We, on the other hand luxuriated in a splendid spot next to bushland and with a view of lovely white gums and foliage. We

didn't even need to close our windows to get changed or have a shower as there was no one nearby.



Val reducing air pressure in the tyres

Folk reported they were catching yabbies' in the river but alas we had not brought our yabbie pots.

This lovely little town had a small supermarket and fuel station, as well as community facilities and a Min Min experience which we paid to see. It is a high tech explanation of various people's experiences with Min Min lights. They asked if anyone had actually seen them, and although Val put his hand up, they asked him no questions about it. Perhaps wisely, as some folk may have found

the whole event quite traumatising. Val was not distressed about his encounter, however....

We got the sole cache in town, and did a cursory grocery shop, and Val spent a whole afternoon taking two van windows out and clearing them of accumulated dust, which had been preventing the blinds from closing efficiently.

And now we were ready for crossing the Plenty!