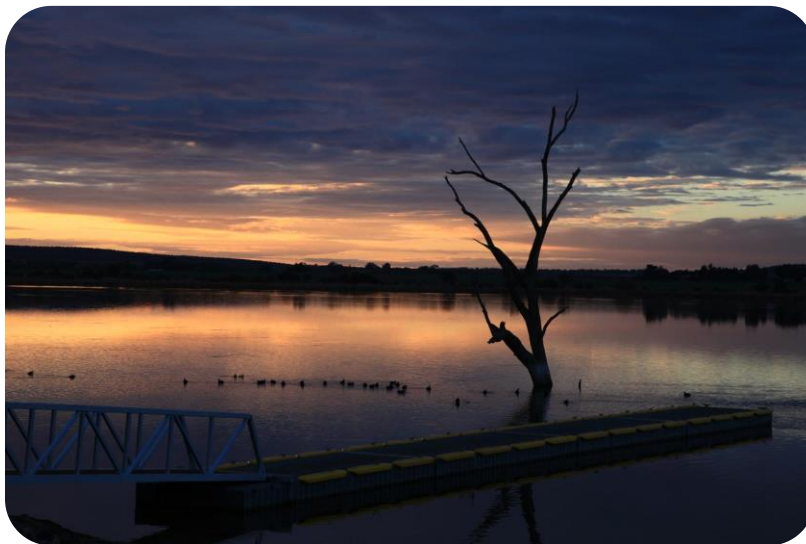


Home in the Barossa Valley to Yelarbon QLD

Stage 3 June 2017

In this third stage of the trip we again travel on from home in the Barossa Valley to Yelarbon after spending three days back home replacing the recalcitrant fridge which gave up the ghost in Western Queensland. It was so bitterly cold back at home, and on the morning we left (again) there were chunks of ice on the car bonnet. Things were a lot smoother this next stage of travel and we enjoyed some really, lovely camp spots.



Lake Wyangan

This stage started on 21 June.

Bottle Bend, near Mildura

S34 18 11 E142 17 59

Our last night before returning home on the previous leg of this trip was spent here and we aimed to come back to what is a lovely spot. When we pulled in just after lunchtime, there were other vans there and we got the last riverside site! Although it was sunny, it was cold, and the night was particularly nippy. But we managed to enjoy a couple of hours sitting outside in the afternoon sun enjoying a cup of coffee and later, a glass of wine. It was an early night and in the morning, we packed up the breakfast things and were again heading North. And we were with a working fridge this time.

Sandy Point Reserve, Hay

S34 30 54 E144 50 6

We had also stayed at Hay on our way down only a week before, but this camp site, on the edge of

town, is large and can accommodate numerous vans in relative peace with space, so we turned in here after the bridge over the Lachlan River. We found a nice, peaceful spot with trees nearby but not too near (falling limbs, as well as shutting out much needed sun from the solar panels).

Another couple pulled in, and over drinks around the fire at Happy Hour, we discovered we have about four sets of friends in common. It is a small world! As they live at RVHB, together with other friends, we will likely see them again. It was a lovely sunny afternoon and cold evening and again the diesel heater earnt its keep.

Lake Wyangan, Griffith

S32 12 43 E146 0 57

This pleasant camp site is located about 10 kms outside Griffith, and is a campsite on the side of a gently sloping hill leading down to the lake. The views of the lake are lovely, especially at sunrise and sunset. We intended to only stay one night but ended up staying two. This allowed us to do some chores in the van, see a bit of the countryside around Griffith, and have dinner out one night.

Not long after we arrived and set up, our neighbours from the night before also arrived, and so we had a couple more Happy Hours together.

This region is famous for its fruit and vegetables and we bought some produce from an Italian bloke at a roadside stall. I made a big pot of soup from the capsicum and butternut pumpkin, and it kept us from starvation for a couple of days!



We saw a humorous art work at McWilliams Winery which shows a vintage pressing in action. I just had to take a photo. See photo above.

We decided to go out for dinner in Griffith and remembered from the last time we were here that there is an iconic Italian restaurant. Trying to remember its name, we went to one in the main street where we thought the place might be. We got that completely wrong, and the meal was terrible. So we just had to try again and for the next meal ate at the other establishment, which was better. But it wasn't as good as we recalled so who knows where the dratted place was!

The next day we again headed North, although at present we were not going too far each day! I think we were still only two days drive from home....

Ben Halls Cave, Weddin Mountains NP

S33 54 24 E147 57 1

It was ten years ago we last stayed here, and on that occasion, it was also cold and foggy with drizzling rain. This time it was certainly cold but the days were crisp and sunny, and we had a nice site in full sun, so not only were the solar panels filled quickly each day but also the van warmed up in the morning sun. This spot is renowned for the nearby cave which apparently harboured Ben Hall and his merry men, who could see police as they approached, and thus had time to escape. The cave is up a 1500m walking track which steadily climbs up through bush and scrub to the cave itself. It is a great view from up there. Val was nimble enough but I huffed and puffed over the rocks, and was glad to reach the end of the track at the cave's entrance.

The reason we re-visited the cave was so I could prepare an earthcache for publication. This is a type of cache which has a published geological "lesson" on the features of the site, and asks the finder to answer several specific questions relating to the site which must be emailed to the owner (me in this instance) to claim the find. I did the necessary research on the site, mentioning the scarp and types of rocks and historical upheavals causing the nearby mountains, and promptly submitted it for publication. It was published the next day by the reviewer (fantastic speed) and lo and behold, someone logged it as found that same day. This makes it all worthwhile.

Our site here had a nice table and chair as well as a good fireplace, so we had a fire each night, which was welcome in the cold weather. It wasn't very busy and our nearby neighbour came over for a chat a few times.



We spent three nights at Weddin Mountains and moved on again, passing through Forbes (where we did some grocery shopping and topped up our water at the dump point), and moved on again to our next camp

There was internet reception (with an aerial) but no phone.

Bogan Weir Recreational Reserve, Peak Hill

S32 43 24 E148 7 37

What a special place this proved to be (despite its name)! The camping area is just six kms West of Peak Hill, a small town on the Newell Highway.

Overlooking a river at a weir, the camp site is a large grassed flat area, with sites right on the water's edge or out in the paddock. We chose to be further out from the trees as we wanted sun for the solar panels, and for warmth. It was nice and quiet, with only two other vans here and nice sociable people asked us to share their fire for a yarn.



It was very cold at night with heavy frosts, and our water pipe freezing up, so we could not get washing water from the tap. And there was a big disk of ice over the water bowl outside!

It was so nice that we decided to spend three days here and could happily have stayed for longer. But we did need to keep moving on. We washed the van down of all its Corner Country dust, and on our third night, had the pleasure of meeting up with another Kedron van's owners who called in for the night.

Hickeys Falls

S31 25 51 E149 4 1

The next morning we headed off nice and early headed back to Hickey's Falls, stopping for morning tea and arriving at our night's camp site mid afternoon. On our last trip down, this proved to be an absolutely lovely little camp site near some (presently dry) water falls. It was a parking area on gravel, surrounded by trees and a picnic shelter, with a path to the falls - all of 30 metres away. Several other caravans pulled in before long. But it was once again a particularly cold night and we were pretty tired, so we retreated to the van for dinner and an early bed.

Riverside Camping, Bingara NSW

I had heard all about this spot for years, and seen idyllic pictures of people camping on the banks of the Gwydir River, just South of the QLD/NSW border. It is every bit as nice as the photos said. There are two separate areas to camp; one is about 5 to 12 kms out of town on the Copeton

Dam Road, with sites all along the river, and the other is closer to town in a smaller more concentrated area. Recent rains meant that the further out sites were difficult to get into and with slippery access, so we found a camp along the river closer to town. It was just lovely. We had a view of the river and a family of Pacific Black ducks with a mallard, and even a pelican. Although the first day was damp with showers of rain, the subsequent days were sunny and clear.



With the sunny weather our batteries were full each afternoon about 1.00pm and we had more power than we needed. The little Nespresso machine got a real hammering, and I wondered if it was close to being worn out!

On our second day here we made a trip over to nearby Copeton Dam which is impressively huge. You can camp there but it was so overtly commercial with even a \$12 fee to drive in and have a look, that we decided we would not be camping there in future. But the day was not a waste - we saw a great geological feature in a rockface near the dam. So we prepared a new earthcache for publication. I did the necessary geological research (it is amazing how much you can do with Google and with a complete absence of geological knowledge) and after Val formulated the cache questions and answers, we published it in his name. It was published overnight! Wow, talk about speedy.

Yelarbon QLD

Recreational Reserve

After three peaceful days at Bingara we pressed on Northwards, back to the little town of Yelarbon, just over the border from NSW. A gravel shortcut of 43 kms looked sensible to save a lot of distance on otherwise bitumen roads, and so it turned out to be a good and scenic track.

Yelarbon is the spot from where we had decided to return home with a bung fridge, three weeks earlier. It felt like the excursion was complete, returning here and ready to continue where we had left off. And with a working fridge this time!



The gardens were looking just as nice as we remembered, and there was still as much firewood piled up for a decent fire to sit around each evening!

