

QLD June 2014

In this trip report we detail the time we spent in and around Brisbane as well as Maryborough, Standown Park and Wuruma Dam. It also covers the travel through the outback through to Noccundra Waterhole. The Queensland coast is truly beautiful and we always enjoy spending time in and around the coast to the North of Brisbane itself. But the special parts of this trip are always the outback. There is a unique quality to the light, the air is crisp and clean and the feeling of vast spaces is enticing.

We left the last trip report at Linville, where we had spent a couple of quiet and relaxing days.



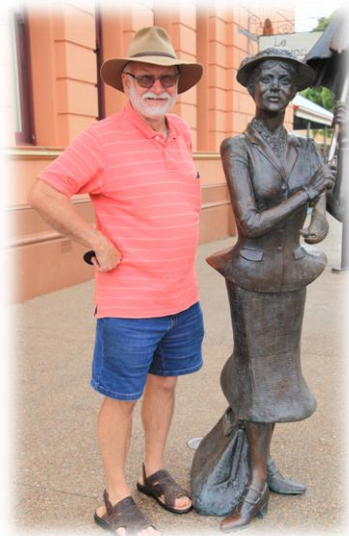
Maryborough

From Linville we needed to be in Maryborough at a friend's invitation to attend a social event connected with their enterprise, "RV Homebase", a gated community for RV owners. Other friends are building a home there and to say the whole concept is impressive is an understatement. Houseowners are able to house their RV in a lockable shed next to the house proper. And the houses are built to the owners' specifications. Peter Shadforth has wrought something very special here.

While in Maryborough our friend Noeline organised accommodation for our van at the facility, together with a few other vans with folk also attending the forthcoming event. We were right next to our friends Sue and Ann in their Kedron, and were able to socialize with them before hand. We also caught up with our friends Lesley and Erich who are building a house here and will have probably moved in by the time this report is published.

The event we were invited to attend was a civic gala reception in the Town Hall, with the Mayor giving a speech, and a performance by Tenori, the three original members of the Ten Tenors. The canapés and champagne were top notch (Grant Burge Pinot Noir Chardonnay, I noted, my firm favourite, and it comes from the Barossa) and folk were appropriately attired for the night. Val did not have his dinner suit with us

so was reduced to wearing "Smart Casual".... We had a few friends with us that night at the event and it was good to enjoy the night with them.



We did a bit of looking around Maryborough while we were there and thought it was a lovely town. We saw the PL Travers statue, of the author who penned the Mary Poppins stories and other works. There was a geocache there, of course. We logged it and

a few others in the region.

However I found the quality of the caravan parks in Maryborough extremely disappointing. I did not see one I would be happy to stay at. Given the local Council's shortsighted attitude toward provision of affordable rest or camping areas, we wondered if there was a connection. If you have a captive audience why would a caravan park owner bother to provide a quality product or service? I can see why the place seemed devoid of tourists and on the Saturday and Sunday it was a dead town. They desperately need an injection of travellers to make the place more vibrant.

Standown Park

S 26 02 13 E 152 47 14

After the weekend at Maryborough we joined our friends at Standown Park (75 kms South of Maryborough) for a couple of days longer but the Park was soon to be hosting an event of their own to open a Veterans monument. They were expecting large numbers of vans or campers. Although the place is huge, and a delightful place to stay, the influx meant it would be anything but peaceful. We stayed on the unpowered area and enjoyed the view of the nearby forest. At this time it was still peaceful and quiet! This park was designed to accommodate returned servicemen, as I understand it, in an atmosphere likely to be recuperative and sociable for returned servicemen and women. The happy hour each night was well attended and enjoyed by everyone there. This park is a credit to all involved in its creation and maintenance.

A standout feature of our stay here was a day trip to Tin Can Bay and Inskip Point, with their beautiful beaches. This area is not yet developed but it will be. Such beauty will not be allowed to remain so untouched for long, alas. We were given a guided tour by Erich and Lesley who have been in the area for a while now, waiting for their new house to be built at Maryborough, and we could not have had better guides.



Wuruma Dam

S 25 10 52 E 150 59 14

Our friends Sue and Ann had headed for the Dam straight after the RVHB bash and we had pegged this as a spot we needed to stay at after the last time we had been in the region. At that time two years previously it was raining too much for a visit there. So up we headed, North through the Burnett region to this delightful free camp near Eidsvold. It is of course lovely there but it is also popular. It was very busy but we found a nice spot near Sue and Ann and with a good view of the water. The only facility here is a water tap and toilets, and the local Council does collect rubbish regularly. How wonderful of them to provide this great spot. It is a fair distance from the nearest town of Monto, but the peace and tranquillity makes up for that. We sat around a fire in the evenings, and on one night cooked our dinner in the Bedourie campoven over the



Wuruma Dam (Ann and Sue's van) and other campers at the water's edge.

coals.

A few weeks after we had left this delightful spot, we became aware of a major dispute in the community of Monto between the Big 4 caravan park out at Cania Gorge and the local Council, over proposed council plans to build a low cost rest stop for travellers. Presumably the caravan park is similarly concerned about the Wuruma Dam camping as well. Of course the park owner does not realise that the travellers at these places are never going to be his customers. They are not likely to want to stay at a caravan park, and in the absence of a free or low cost facility they will move on elsewhere - and take their money with them. A multitude of studies has shown such travellers do spend money while they visit. While we were there we went into Monto and bought groceries, fuel, newspapers and had a meal out. We probably injected \$200 into the town. All because they had a nearby attractive freecamp.

Brisbane

It would have been great to stay longer at Wuruma but we had the van booked into the factory for some new additions and a small repair, so we needed to get back to the city. We overnighted at Linville again (and again having dinner at the local pub) and then curved back into Brisbane. While in Brisbane we stayed at the Lawnton Showgrounds at Pine Rivers, a Northern suburb. At only \$20 a night, the price can't be beaten! And better still, it is within an easy walk to the railway station to catch a train to the city. It is also a pleasant place to stay.

We went to the Brisbane Show on one of our days in the city and were blown away with the advances in caravans. The interiors of the new Kedron Top Enders are now so glitzy and polished you would hate to get them out and about in the great outback! (Just joking). They are using an imported laminated glass material on the cupboard and fridge doors which is very clean looking and gleams. Apparently it costs a fortune but is

worth it. If customers prefer different surface materials they can of course choose them. . And there are now ceramic bowls and downlights in the ceilings. Our van is showing its age with its old fashioned oak cupboards! But I do still prefer the warmth of the natural timber.

And another day we visited the Nespresso coffee store in the city centre and were overwhelmed with the choices. We came away with a heap of new coffee flavor pods.

A highlight of visiting Brisbane was catching up with my old schoolfriend Joan. We had not seen each other in 47 years and it was an exciting time hearing of each other's news and achievements. Interestingly, our religious and political affiliations are very similar. Identical, in fact!

After we left Brisbane we wanted to visit our favourite national park campground in the region, at Girraween NP near Stanthorpe. As a really nice camp site near Gatton was on the direct route there, we stayed overnight at **Heifer Creek**. (S 27 44 56 E 152 05 26) This nice camp is sited on a river, with lots of green grass and huge shady trees. It does have drop toilets but they are the only facilities. Of course, there were lots of birds, including scrub turkeys and whip birds. There was a nice couple there in a camper-trailer who we had a relaxing couple of afternoon drinks with until the cold drove us inside well after dark.

Girraween NP near Stanthorpe

S 28 49 58 E 151 56 16

The campground has always been a bit over- shaded but recent changes to the way caravan sites are now positioned means there is more sunlight. This of course matters for our solar panels, and as the nights were freezing (literally) we needed energy going onto those panels!



Girraween NP

We enjoyed sightseeing in the region, especially going back to Castle Glen for more spirits and real fruit essence liqueurs. They reduce local fruit to an essence then flavor the spirits themselves in a huge array of available wines,



Stanthorpe

spirits and liqueurs, as well as bubbles. It is an amazing sight to see!

We bought our daughter a bottle of her favourite caramel whisky with real gold flakes in the bottle. That should make her happy.

Bonshaw Weir

S 28 59 08 E 151 16 31

The **Bonshaw Weir** Camping Area is on the NSW side of the Dumaresq River, which forms the border between QLD and NSW. A pleasant freecamp, it has no facilities and so you are expected to be completely independent in terms of water and onboard toilet....



We arrived fairly early as the drive across from Stanthorpe

was not far and even though we nabbed a couple of geocaches on the way we were still there by lunchtime. The camping area is only small and could probably fit no more than four rigs comfortably. But we were nicely in a position overlooking the water and on lovely green grass, so thought we had done OK. The other campers there were nice folk and we enjoyed a campfire chat in the evening. There are farms all around the camp area and it was interesting to see (and hear) a farmer using a shotgun to scare the cockatoos from his freshly seeded fields. The birds objected to his intrusion, in great noisy, squawking groups.

The night was crystal clear and frosty that night, and it was nice to snuggle down into our warm bed.

Texas

S 28 52 03 E 151 09 51

Back to Texas! This camp spot has become a firm favourite, being in such a nice setting (on thick green grass overlooking a river) and close to a reasonable sized town. We did some shopping and a largish wash in the washing machine and felt happy to have a full stock of clean clothes again. I had intended going to the pub for dinner but instead we seemed to have several meals planned which were happily eaten in the van. The days were warm here but in the late afternoon suddenly it would turn cold. We really used the time here to have a look around and to relax. On a day trip we found a lovely camping site over near the small town of Yelarbon, and decided that if the weather held sunny we would target staying there. And thus it was we headed for Cunningham Weir which is in the direction of Yelarbon.

Cunningham Weir

S 28 44 239 E 150 57 702

The Cunningham Weir is 1.5km from Beebo, down Cunningham Weir Road, and is signposted. Beebo is 31 km from Texas on the Yelarbon Texas Road. Blink and you will miss Beebo. The weir is disused and no longer structurally sound. But it does have pleasant camping on the river banks overlooking the Dumaresq River. There are absolutely no facilities but it is a delightful spot to spend some time. If you had enough to entertain you, a week could be happily spent here. Val did put a line in for the yellowbelly but alas caught nothing. In any event his efforts were half hearted...

We placed the van overlooking the river on some nice green couch grass, which seems to grow so well here, and we had a million dollar view. And no one around but us!



Yelarbon

S 28 34 35 E 150 45 25

Only 30 kms further on from Cunningham Weir is the small town of Yelarbon. Its appeal for us was the great camping grounds at the Recreation Reserve. The town has installed the camp site where the old prison used to be located (and there is a museum still there in the old gaol cells) with a pristine clean shower and

toilet block, powered and water sites as well as unpowered camping on the oval, a laundry with a \$2 a load washing machine, lovely gardens and a herb garden! What more could you want...and all for \$15 a night. Volunteers maintain the facility and ask you to put your money in an envelope and into the donation box. We wanted to fill up our water tanks and do a couple of loads of washing so we added a few dollars for the extra water we used topping up our tanks and in using our own washing machine.

We had heard the hotel had great meals and so it did. We had a wonderful meal there at reasonable rates given the town's remoteness. The locals were all very friendly and we enjoyed the evening. By the time we got back to the van it was pretty nippy!

That night was the heaviest frost we have encountered yet on this trip. At 9.00 am the car windscreen and roof was still covered with about 20cm of thick ice. I am unsure how the flowering pansies and petunias fared out there in that cold.

After two nights at Yelarbon we headed on to an overnight stop at the small town of Bollon. At lunchtime we called into the famous icon hotel at Nindigully and planned to have one of their famous hamburgers. Alas it was only 11.15am and they didn't open the kitchen until 12 noon. They offered to microwave us a sausage roll but that kind offer was not hard to decline! We headed on, after looking for the resident geocache - which eluded us.

Bollon

S 28 01 45 E 147 28 45

It was late afternoon when we pulled into the Wallam Creek Camp site at the small town of Bollon. There were so many vans and motorhomes there it looked like a caravan park. All neatly strung out along the river, the travellers were taking advantage of the toilets, a few taps and the nearby dump point for black waste. It was a dusty waste ground and I felt the area was being loved to death. It was not hard to move out of there early the next morning. Maybe earlier in the year it could be worth visiting but I would not willingly stay there again. I do not know how people can target such places purely because they are free. I would rather find a quiet spot off the road behind some trees in peace and quiet.

We passed through the large outback towns of St George and Cunnamulla, doing our shopping for groceries and fueling up at St George. This is a pleasant town on a wide river and with green grassed parks along the river's banks.

Paddabilla Bore

S 28 07 01 E 145 11 40

Our camping software on the iPad said this was a lovely camp and indeed it was. We arrived about lunch time and had lunch, then decided to stay the night. One night turned into two as the place was just so nice and relaxing. The camping areas are about 500 metres behind the bore and allow for private camping among trees and vegetation. This is getting into the Channel Country and the landscape becomes pretty sparse, with big blue skies and wide horizons. But this spot was like a little oasis in the middle of nowhere and we



really enjoyed staying there. A bonus was the tap with warm artesian water... it initially had the typical sulphur smell but that soon disappeared and left lovely soft water.

We spent the second day catching up on housework (washing the floors and washing of our smalls) and as the days were brilliant sunshine we were able to use the computer to catch

up on this trip report and to charge up all the batteries in things like phones, iPads and cameras.

The bird life here is worth staying for alone, as the flocks come in for water from the bore, and Val saw hooded robins, red capped robins, budgerigars, finches and other birds he can't identify. The rare Halls Babbler and Bourke's Parrot eluded him completely.

By coincidence, some fellow Caravaners Forum members came into the camp late the first night (we could hear them chopping wood for a fire) and the next morning we walked over to say hello. Ross and Barb were on their first trip with a new Free Spirit van which we had a guided tour throughout.

