

Queensland Meandering

May to July 2012



Lake Boondooma

Special points of interest:

- Inland Queensland
- Lake Boondooma
- South and North Burnett regions
- Car cricket -During some of the longer sections of this trip we played car cricket. The rules are that whoever is "batting" scores 1 point for every vehicle you pass going the opposite direction, four points for every caravan and six points for trucks. When you pass a red car you are out, and someone else has a turn, trying to beat your score. If you pass two red cars in succession, the next person is out for a duck! You can change the rules to suit yourself - for example if we pass a caravan of our own make we score ten points!

Of Lakes, Rivers and Dams

After our travels from home through the Flinders Ranges, up the Strzelecki Track to Innamincka, then across to the Sunshine Coast at Maroochydore, we had done some long and dusty kilometers.

We rested at the Cotton Tree Caravan Park at Maroochydore, did some washing, caught up with friends and family, and did some more relaxing. It was a bit tricky, the relaxing bit, as part of our time there was a long weekend, and this park is a mecca for families in tents with eskies over long weekends.... But it is still a lovely place, regardless.

The period of travel in and around Brisbane was badly affected by rain. It rained just about everywhere we went for the whole four weeks we were there. But in between the rain, we saw some magical places in the South and North Burnett regions.

Wivenhoe Dam

I needed to be on the phone for work purposes the following week, so we parked up at the lovely Wivenhoe Dam campground. This is one of our firm favourite spots and it did not disappoint this time either.



It was still raining when we left the Sunshine Coast at Maroochydore and headed inland to Wivenhoe Dam. I was truly over the rain by now. But at least at Wivenhoe we would have a fantastic view and tranquillity all around us. The view from the van's awning is one of the most special we have ever experienced; a lake, with birds, kangaroos and water which sparkles less than 30 metres from the front door. Together with power and water, and a lovely ablutions block, this is a great place to relax. And the fine weather emerged not long after we arrived.

The Dam was more than full and the view at sunset was especially lovely. We definitely enjoyed our five days there.

But we did need to get on and enjoy other places. So we put the nose of the Landcruiser in North gear and pulled steadily up through the inland parallel to the coast, stopping at a nice overnight camp near Kingaroy. It was called Soren Hansen Bridge on the Stuart River (listed in CAW). It is a beautiful quiet spot. To get there take the road out of town till you get to the southern end of the Golf Club. Turn right - 3Klms further on to the river. It is a nice big area with plenty of space for big rigs and was blissfully quiet. There was another van there but we had the place to ourselves.

Continuing northwards I was surprised at how many little towns provide free camping on town commons, usually opposite the local hotel, so you can go out for dinner with a quick walk from your van. Very enlightening of the communities, as this brings in valuable money for shops and services in those towns. There was a few towns where we saw other vans camped and they seemed to be relaxing in sociable groups.

This is country we had not visited before and I was taken with the rolling hills and green countryside. Undoubtedly the area is not as green in times of drought but right now it is very appealing country. Each little town seemed to have lots of shops which had evidently shut down some time before, with empty windows and an air of neglect. But most still have a hotel and a few occupied houses. I am generalizing here - some towns were as busy and bustling as ever.

Lake Boondooma

We arrived at Lake Boondooma about mid-afternoon and as we turned off the road and down into the park, we saw a large sprawling lake with rigs of all sizes and descriptions around the water's edge, as well as a tiered powered camp area. The powered sites were grassed and appealing, with a great view down into the Lake, but we were after a spot on the water's edge. Which we found with very little difficulty. Our site was on a pleasant grassy strip and as close to the water as we could have wanted. It was a lovely outlook.

It was fairly quiet during our several days here, which I gather is not how it used to be. Apparently there are no school holiday bookings, either, so it would not be too busy during that period.

While at Lake B, we took a day trip over to Murgon, and popped in to see Bjelke Petersen Dam, which also has camping (both powered and unpowered). It was a bit more expensive than our camp, although managed by the same body (Sun & Water). And it had less waterside camping, but the powered sites were nice. And it was closer to a town than Lake Boondooma (which is about 20 kms from the small town of Proston). Also, importantly for some folk, BP Dam (as it is known locally) has mobile phone reception, which our spot did not have. On our day trip we called in and had lunch at Moffatdale Ridge Winery - lovely. The chocolate port was to die for. They also had a lovely flinty, citrus dry verdelho wine which we fell in love with. We may come back to BP Dam after we have been over to Bargara, we said to each

other.

Gayndah

We headed North, and went through interesting country of rolling hills and small country towns. The South and North Burnett regions are fascinating, the towns are interesting and the people are so friendly. I could live here.

Early in the afternoon we pulled into a nice rest stop just outside the reasonable sized town of Gayndah. We had been aiming for the free camp on the other side of town at the Weir, but this rest stop was very appealing and so we decided to stay the night here. It was a good choice, as some other vans came in a bit later, and we all shared Happy Hour together at a suitable spot between all the vans.



Our van had a view of the Burnett River from our awning which was quite lovely. I was quite sorry to leave such a nice spot the next morning, but there was a maximum of 20 hours there for campers and we always do the right thing.

Incidentally, when we quickly visited the nearby Weir free camp the next morning, it was packed with small backpacker vans and there was very limited space for bigger rigs - which was of course occupied. It would be fine if you got there early enough

to snaffle one of the bigger spots, I guess.

Bargara

This coastal community is located near Bundaberg and is quiet and has a great caravan park (Bargara Beach CP). We had been here before a couple of years ago and they remembered us (well, OK, their COMPUTER remembered us) and knew to give us a larger site (#134) due to our longer length. (Our van has the longer draw bar and a heavy duty bumper bar on the back with spare tyres there). So we had a delightful spot which had more space either side than most, with a nice grassed area to put visitors chairs and a table under some trees.

It was raining and cold for most of our stay at Bargara; we started to think that if we wanted rain and cold weather we could have stayed home.... Just joking - home was way colder than in QLD.

When we left, we stayed for a night at the rest stop at Ban Ban Springs. Mentioned in Camps Australia Wide, (site 466) it is a lovely spot, with large areas of mown grass, around a natural spring, and with a toilet block. It would be a delightful spot to stay for several days but it has a limit of a 20 hour stay.

I did take note of a spot nestled just off the road in a nice bush setting, not far from Ban Ban Springs. It was 27 kms from Ban Ban Springs, on the road from the intersection back to Childers. Only a small spot, but it could fit a couple of big rigs and a few smaller ones, it has only a wooden chair and table, and is right beside a creek, with a lot of small shady trees. It is not signed and you have to keep your eyes peeled for the access road, which was fine to travel on even in the pouring rain on the day we visited there.

This would be a lovely spot for a couple of relaxing days. We saved the idea for a future trip!

Bjelke Petersen Dam

S26 18 18 and E 151 59 40.

We moved on to a place we had checked out while camped at Boondooma Dam. Situated 15 kilometres from Murgon in the South Burnett, Lake Barambah, also known as Bjelke-Petersen Dam, is a popular area for recreational freshwater fishing, boating, picnicking and camping, with reasonable facilities. (The caravan park there is called Yallakool caravan park). A boat ramp with large car park make this the ideal place to wet a line. There is also a kiosk with basics. The Bjelke-Petersen Dam covers 2,500 hectares, and holds 1,450,000 megalitres of water, used for irrigation and water supply to the towns of Murgon and Cherbourg. Koalas, wallabies and kangaroos can be seen around the lake while the birdlife includes black swans, ducks, pelicans and cormorants.

The Dam is referred to in CAW6 as site 552, Yallakool Tourist Park.

Of equal interest to us was the outstanding view of the lake from many of the sites, both powered and unpowered. We wanted a cement slab on our site due to all the rain we had been having (oh my it was wet!) and we chose a site with a great view out over the water. (Site 12 is a great spot).

This area has many fascinating country towns to visit, and we did day trips to Kilkivan, Nanango and Goomeri and popped in to some wineries. Another day we extended the normal length of a day trip and went up some winding, narrow roads to the Bunyah Mountains.

On the Sunday, we booked lunch at Cloveley Winery, and enjoyed a wonderful meal in beautiful surroundings. What a life!

I think the South and North Burnett regions are well worth a visit and to make the most of the region's attractions, it is important to allow plenty of time to look around.



We knew we would meet up here with friends who also have a Kedron brand caravan (Sue and Ann) and when they arrived we all moved down the hill slightly to some grassed sites (with power and water) with a beautiful view of the Dam. In the dryer weather these sites were lovely (sites 34 and 36). Here is a photo taken of Val with Sue and Ann, in front of the vans.

Apex Park, Dawson River

The skies were blue and days were sunny when we decided to head North. Friends had recommended the Dawson River freecamp, so we headed up there, driving steadily through the rolling hills of the Burnett region. There are some lovely little towns (and some are quite large, like Biloela). We felt we could happily spend months in just this small corner of Queensland, but alas, time was against us and we had only another week or so before we needed to head back to Brisbane for work commitments and a Kedron Owners Group Annual General Meeting.

The Dawson River camp was deservedly popular. It is a large area of mowed grass, with well maintained gardens and facilities. There is a shower and toilet block, spotlessly clean while we were there, and situated right beside the large flowing Dawson River. An honesty box is prominently displayed and we do

hope everyone who was there made a contribution to it. We always put money in these boxes, to ensure the authorities continue to provide such a valuable service, and as a small donation toward their upkeep.

It was busy each night, with about 30 or more vehicles camping there. On our second night, a camper trailer arrived at 9.00pm and set up right next to us with a degree of clanking and clanging. This meant I had no compunction about putting on our diesel heater in the morning at 6.30am....I almost hoped the noise of it starting up gave them pause for thought about camping so close to others, so late at night, when there was ample room elsewhere.

Coominglah Range Rest Area

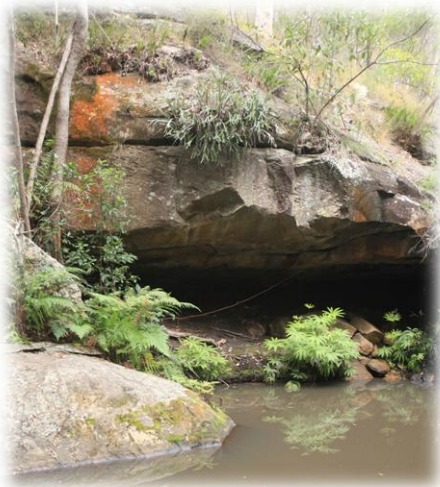
GPS: S24 47.980 E150 59.065

Just North of Monto is a delightful rest stop on top of a ridge, and in a largish clearing surrounded by tropical rainforest. We parked alongside one edge of the clearing and facing the forest, with our awning into a tangle of lantana. It made a nice cool and private little spot to sit and read. While we were there some other vans came in - it was not crowded - and we had afternoon drinks with some folks with a Spinifex van and another couple with a Lotus van. They recommended we consider Mingo Crossing for a lovely spot to camp, so we thought we would try to include that in our itinerary. Already it was clear that we were running out of time.... We also wanted to visit Cania Gorge, as we were so close to this iconic area. So we headed first to Cania, fairly early, but not until we had first called into nearby Monto for morning tea at a delightful café in the main street.

A link to this lovely spot is <http://www.exploreaustralia.net.au/Queensland/Capricorn/Coominglah-Forest/Coominglah-Range-Rest-Area>

Cania Gorge

There are two separate commercial camping areas at Cania, a Big 4 and a Top Tourist. The Big 4 park is large and caters for children and has four star facilities such as jumping pillows and a large pool. This was not our ideal spot and we preferred the quieter and smaller Cania Gorge Tourist Retreat (phone 07 41678110). The sites were lovely and in a nice bush type setting.



The gorge itself is in a national park and has rugged sandstone escarpments and steep forested slopes. There are walks of varying grades, as well as the nearby Lake Cania itself.

We enjoyed staying at this lovely bush setting and (in a rush of blood to the head) decided to do one of the walks. I felt that the walk to the tree fern pool would allow me to take some photos of the pool and so we set out on 5.2 km walk. It was a pleasant enough walk through rainforest but the pool itself was not all that interesting due to the water in the pool being muddy. But I managed to shoot a few worthwhile shots.

And while staying here, we did a quick run over to Wuruma Dam (a nice free camp, out from Mulgildie). It would have been lovely to stay at but the rain meant this was not really a good option so we left Wuruma until another time.



Brisbane

Due to the weather (we had experienced almost non-stop rain in the past four weeks) we decided to abort the trip to Wuruma Dam or Mingo Crossing, and ended up staying longer at Cania Gorge, then tracked down and into Brisbane. This time, we stayed at the Lawnton Showgrounds in the north Brisbane suburb of Lawnton, a really nice spot with a heap of space and reasonably priced powered sites.

The Lawnton Showgrounds caretaker can be reached on 0459 023346 or 07 3205 2597.

We were in Brisbane for a number of meetings and then we were to continue southwards back home. The only question was which direction to take; down the New England Highway (cold and wet most likely) or a Western route through QLD and NSW. This decision was affected by the weather.....