

Lorraine's October Blog

OCTOBER

We have arrived, after much anticipation, on the Apple Isle – Tasmania.



The weather has been close to perfect, if not cool and windy. Our first morning after disembarking from the big ship, we drove around the corner, found a park overlooking the Bass Strait, pulled out the Weber, and much to the amusement of local early morning walkers, proceeded to cook bacon and eggs. That is what I love about this life.

We had been invited by friends near Launceston to visit all in same day to help recover from the trip, but the trip had been so shitty, we did not get much sleep, and I felt rather feral, so instead, we found Narawantapu National Park, where we recovered for several days (including taking a 8km hike to Archers Knob) before attempting to socialise.



The view from Archers Knob.

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Socialising over, we proceeded up to Beaconsfield to the mine site, where we were able to tour the museum, learn more about the mine disaster that we had seen so much about – again from afar on



TV. For the benefit of those too young to remember, or live overseas, two miners were buried underground, a third killed after an earthquake shook the area back in 2006. It took two weeks to release the two survivors.

Beaconsfield is on the western side of the Tamar River; on the east side is George Town and Low Head, where there are some spectacular examples of chainsaw art, something that is big here in Tasmania. An artist called Eddie Freeman uses his imagination and

a chainsaw to create art from old and dying macrocarpa trees. We knew there would be many more to come, but enjoyed these ones all the same.

We had been kindly invited by a fellow Grey Nomad to camp on his property at Lebrina in the North East, and as we were waiting for mail, needed to do washing, had doctor's appointment in nearby Scottsdale, took him up on his offer.



Allan has the most beautiful smokey coloured kelpie called – wait for it – SMOKEY.



We stayed for about 10 days, heading off mostly every second day as we started to explore. We walked up to Lilydale falls, discovered hidden disused railway tunnels, hiked to amazing gorges and stumbled across an amazing gallery.

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The gallery – The Lalla Appleshed Gallery – is run by artist Shelly Mcleod, who is a painter in all sorts of medium, but also (in her spare time!!!) creates scale sized dolls houses, and hopes to create a whole village in miniature within the next twelve months.

She was excited to have two very interested people to talk to, and did not stop to take breath for almost an hour.

After 10 days at Lebrina, it was time to move on, but before doing so, we had a geocaching event. A caching couple by the name of "Felixl" from Western Australia with mutual friends of ours had been invited by some Tassy cachers to a Welcome to Tasmania BBQ. We also got invited, and went along to meet quite a few Tassy cachers.

From Lebrina, we spend the next two weeks exploring the north east corner of the island. Bridport, Waterhouse Bay, Cape Portland, Musselroe Bay and the Bay of Fires, before heading back across through Derby towards Launceston for our house sit.



iBridport



Waterhouse Bay



Petal Point, Cape Portland



Mussleroe Bay

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Bay of Fires

We walked sandy beaches with rocks covered in orange lichen, John fished and we camped with the sound of waves crashing on the beach nearby.



We had free camping as we moved around the coast, mostly in conservation reserves – national parks charge \$13.00 to camp. The challenge has been finding water and dump points. We manage!

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We found ourselves walking along beautiful white sandy beaches, in rainforests and magic little walks amongst tree ferns (they call them man-ferns in Tasmania), mossy rocks, and waterfalls. We discovered hidden gems like Mt Paris Dam and the Anchor Stamp. Camped in a paddock beside a pub – which has its own beer swilling pig at Pyengana, and camped beside the Blue Derby mountain bike trail in Derby.



We saw more Chainsaw Art in Legerwood. Trees planted in 1918 to represent the fallen in WWI as a memorial, in recent years, had become old and dangerous. The threat was to cut them down, until locals called for the artist Eddie Freeman to create some of his chainsaw art.

Depicting the 7 men who did not return, the memorial is a moving tribute for the town.



Mt Paris Dam – now that was a surprise..... The dam was built in 1936 to service the Mt Paris Tin mine. The concrete wall, 250 metres long and 16 metres high was blasted at the base to allow the natural flow of the Cascade River in 1985, following 15 years of being empty. In 1994 more alterations were made to prevent the dam ever holding water. That is the history lesson over. We drove there through logging tracks in the hills behind Derby. Not sure what we were going to find, parked the 4wd about 200 metres up the track and wandered down the last muddy track to the river. What a surprise waited for us. I thought we had stepped into an enchanted forest. Babbling water



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over mossy rocks, tree ferns, and a cool peaceful sensation. Absolutely beautiful.

Same day, we continued on to a little park beside the river. *Maa Mon Chin* I think it was called. We were looking for a cache. The track was narrow; we received a few scratches to the 4wd, but arrived at the picnic area. Saw what we thought was the correct tree where the cache was hidden, and then around the corner saw some MUGGLES with an F250! "Did you drive here?" they asked. "No" I replied, " we walked - HAHA." "We have a flat battery, can you help?" "Yes we can help?" So, our little old Nissan Patrol GU tdi revved up the big new F truck! Away they went, we went back to the tree, found the cache and were on our way.



Another caching day found us in the Blue Tiers, where we hiked to a waterfall, another trek to the Anchor Stamp. We know what a "stamp" is, but really did not expect this giant rusting relic being engulfed by tree ferns. The battery stamp, designed to crush the mined ore, consists of 2 sets of 10 heads, was bought to the area from the west coast of Tasmania in the 1930s.



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The mind closed in 1950, the area is now dotted with mining relics, including the stamp, an old water wheel and from time to time in the forest, you catch glimpses of railway lines.

At Pyengana, where we camped in a paddock beside the “Pub in a Paddock”, we visited the Pyengana Cheese factory, where we watched a fully automated dairy, where cows at their leisure, heavy with milk, wander up to the dairy, through a one way gate, queue to go into the milking stall, take their turn at having a robotic arm latch on to their titty, milk is extracted, cow moves on to a scratching bay, has a scratch, then goes on her way through another one way gate. All without human intervention! We then bought some



cheese – as you do. Further up the road is the St Columba Falls, named by Margaret Connell, the daughter of a young Irish convict, in reference to Saint Columba (although, Margaret claimed to be the daughter of a French Lady.) The falls are over 90 metres high and often regarded as the highest falls in Australia (although the nearby Ralphs Falls are 100 metres, but are often dry)

NOVEMBER

November found us back near Launceston – we had a house sit booked – and planned to use the time exploring the Tamar Valley. After a stopover at Old Mac's Farm, we headed towards Westbury where we found Pearn's Steam World in full swing. Once a year, this attraction “fires up” the steam engines for rides and displays of all sorts of steam engines, we were lucky just to be there that day. It was fun to ride up high in the historic traction engine or on the miniature train, and look at all the historic displays.



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Onward to our farm at Bridgenorth for our house sit – a small hobby farm where we had a new born foal and her mother, two other male horses and two dogs to look after.



From here, we were able to explore Launceston, The Tamar River Wetlands, and discovered hidden gems like Notley Gorge and the Glen Garry Maze. Notley Fern Gorge is an area of only 11 ha with patches of wet sclerophyll forest, dominated by large old eucalypts. As you descend towards the creek, the variety of fern increases. Between the mosses, ferns and the fungi, it is like walking through either a magical wonderland, or a prehistoric era, where you expect to bump into a dinosaur at any corner.



[Are those dinosaur legs?](#)

Also in the reserve is the Brady Tree, a huge burnt out gum where notorious bushranger Matthew Brady used to hide.

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The Glen Garry Maze was another of our little out of the way places we stumbled upon. The maze, completely planted with manicured hedges was a fun challenge, followed by a few of the other people sized bush puzzles in the gardens behind the café. This is one of those children's places where grown-ups can have a lot of fun as well.



Just south of Launceston is historic Evandale and Longford. At Longford is Woolmers Estate, a property established in 1816 by a member of the Archer family. Six generations of the Archers lived there until the late 1990s; we were

able to tour the house and outhouses, and the national rose garden, which was the following day, open for a festival. We decided to go on the Saturday, and almost had the place to ourselves, on the Sunday, apparently, there were thousands! Woolmers Estate is one of 11 convict built properties listed on the Australian Convict Sites World Heritage Property.



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Launceston is the second largest city in Tasmania, only dwarfed by Hobart, has a population of around 110,000, and was originally settled in 1804. Now a beautiful clean city with a mix of modern and historic buildings.



We visited the National Transport Museum, which John enjoyed, and Cataract Gorge, which we both enjoyed.



The Gorge on the South Esk River has beautiful parklands, a suspension bridge spanning the river and a chairlift, for those too lazy (or unable) to do the walks. We walked quite a few kilometres within the park on a beautiful warm (for a change) sunny spring day.



So, here we are – mid December and I have still not completed October's blog – or November for that matter, but thought I had better make a go at some of it in case you all thought we had dropped off the bottom of the map.

Perhaps if I get this off my chest, I can then make a go of the east coast, which we have been exploring since the middle of November. Enjoy our latest.