

Lorraine's April Blog

We finished off March in Burnie where we were camped at Cooe on the Bass Strait. I think I have already mentioned how lucky we are to get to camp so close to some of the bigger town. They get our patronage and money; we get a free spot to camp for a few days. We bumped into Kel, Paul and Wendy. We met Kel before Christmas at Oatlands, bumped into him again in Gordon in the Channels, the again in Stanley in the North West. His lady companion Sue is Wendy's sister, and John offered advice to Paul about his satellite dish. I think this may have been the start of a friendship. When we saw them again in Cooe, they called us the travelling tomatoes, due to my herb garden, featuring at the time, a tumbling tomato bush.

Once our business was completed in Burnie, we headed off over the Gunns Plains – where we saw crops of potatoes being harvested. The potatoes down here are something to look out for, before Christmas we were eating delightful little pink eyes, and now Dutch creams, bought always from farm gate stalls.



As we wound our way over the plains, we headed up to the Leven Canyon, where, after setting up camp, we set out for a circuit walk around the canyon wall, including a walk down 697 steps.

Yes, it was a hard downward trek, but think of poor Steven McTurk, whose labour of love was to build the steps down into the canyon. With assistance of his crew (they did not have work for the dole in those days), Steven built the 697 steps, carrying in cement equivalent to the weight of three cars, 132 posts and 550 litres of water to mix the cement. It took him twelve months, working in conditions varying from -2° in winter to scorching 30° in summer. As you climb down the stairs, there are timely rest stops in the form of seats with carving reminding you how many steps to the top, and how many steps to the bottom – and how many steps to the next seat.

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With John's newfound hobby of photographing fungi, we found plenty of subject matter on this walk.



A few days later, we were about to set up in the freedom camp at Gowrie Park, when along came a familiar vehicle, with Rick and Carol-Lea, whom we had previously spent time with at Rocky Cape. They were camped around the corner at the Gowrie Park Wilderness Park, and Rick was looking for someone to hike Mt Roland with. We agreed to the challenge, set up camp around the corner and waited for a good day to tackle the hike. John takes up the story...

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At Rocky Cape Tavern in March we camped next to a couple of wacky grey nomads named Rick and Carol-Lea. They are good fun to be with, Rick is a mind of information especially with electronics, and Carol-Lea was a bar manager so has many funny stories. After a couple of days we parted company.

A few days later Rick and Carol-Lea came to see us at Stanley, they were camped elsewhere. Now the 4 April and we were in the process of setting up our camp at a freedom camp at Gowrie Park, and blow me down, in pulled Rick and Carol-Lea again, they were parked at the caravan park. So as it was a cheap park and they were there we decided to join them. That afternoon Rick "said fancy a walk up Mount Roland?" I investigated and decided ok. By the 7 April another retiree Ken had joined the team and the 3 of us with food/water/and assortment of clothes and cameras took off. It was about 9.30 am. Ken was apprehensive because he had had 2 hip replacements, I was apprehensive because of my lungs and Rick was chomping at the bit to get going. A 5/6 hour return trip up Mount Roland

about 1300 meters to the top. Well it was steep but ok.

We made the halfway point by 12.30 and had a little lunch, put on more clothes as it was getting high and windy and found cache no 1 on Lorraine's list, then pushed on for the top.

Ken was hurting I was puffing Rick was talking.

About 2 pm we made it to the summit after a 100 meter rock climb, and what a view. There was a trig point on the top and a view to die for.



Half way!

There was cache no 2 there, but in the excitement of getting to the top, I forgot to find it.

The views went all the way to Bass Straight. Spectacular! I had another bite to eat, Rick had a Crown Lager. Ken touched the trig point and headed back down. I think he was in pain but determined to get the job over. After the 100 meters climb down the first part it was fairly easy walking down hill to the half way point. Ken was still in front, when Rick and I got there Ken shouted out "Half way" but we couldn't see him as he was powering. I found the hike down was easy on my breathing but my legs,



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wow they were burning, and we all said it was steeper going down as we had to be careful not to slide. It was starting to get dark we still had a way to go but all was good, we caught up with Ken and the 3 off us made it home at 6.30pm....9 hours 18 kilometres and 3 mates.

A great memory and many pictures.



We had plans of going up to Cradle Mountain on the following Saturday, and offered to puppy sit Roxie, Ken and Sue's Siberian Husky X FoxyXJack Russell. (Dad was the Husky) on the Sunday, but as they were due to move back to Devonport to the ferry on Sunday, we swapped days with them and minded Roxie on Saturday. We took her (no she took us) for walks, and was a very good puppy in Ken and Sue's absence. They enjoyed their day up the mountain; we enjoyed having a dog with us.

The following day, we took ourselves up to Cradle Mountain. It rained the whole way up, we walked the 6k around Dove Lake – it rained the whole way around the lake, then it rained all the way back to the caravan. Fortunately, we took some hot soup with us, so on our return, we sat in the car and drank our hot soup. We did not get to see Cradle Mountain!



Another day, we spent with Rick and Carol-Lea exploring the Mole Creek Caves area.



The cave we chose was the Marakoopa Cave Tour, where, as well as stalagmites and stalactites, we saw glow worms. I am a bit over caves, the ones in Hastings were better, and we have seen many on the mainland, but they are always interesting. Rick and Carol-Lea lived up to their wacky sense of humour and played silly beggars in the dark.

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As we had been driving around this area, we had seen signs saying "Road Closed --/--/-- between 0900 and 1700" The dates varied, the times varied, but it was all the same signage for Targa Tasmania. John desperately wanted to find a campsite where we could view part of this iconic Tasmanian race. We finally found a stretch of road within 10 minutes of our campsite where we could watch part of the race. Targa Australia run the world's largest, longest and hardest tarmac rally event – and this event in Tasmania was no exception.



Through country lanes and over the Tiers, the challenge for prestige cars is world standard. We set ourselves up on the side of the road, seats, coffee and camera ready for the action.

One bingle, two cars almost heading off in the wrong direction.

Even for a non rev-head like me, it was quite an interesting couple of ours of entertainment.

After our time at Gowrie Park, we headed off down the Mersey Valley, hoping to get a glimpse of the Walls of Jerusalem. An elusive part of the Western Tiers, the Walls cannot be driven to but you can hike. From Tasmania Parks site: *"The Walls of Jerusalem are located in a remote area of the Tasmanian highlands and are part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The area is a spectacular labyrinth of alpine lakes and tarns, dolerite peaks, ancient but fragile forests of Pencil Pines and unique alpine vegetation.*

There is no road access into the park and entry is only possible by walking. There are no facilities for shortstop visitors other than toilets at Wild Dog Creek. All tracks into the area are steep and rough and are subject to extreme weather conditions that can include heavy rain, hail, snow, freezing temperatures and blazing sun. Low cloud can reduce visibility to a few metres and snow can cover the track making it difficult to follow. There are limited track markers so navigational skills are essential during poor conditions. These conditions can occur in any month of the year and the weather can change dramatically within a few short hours.

Bushwalkers must be well equipped and preferably experienced in Tasmanian conditions. Walkers must also follow Leave No Trace Principles to ensure the unique and majestic beauty of the area is not impacted"



This mini forgot to turn left!

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So, we did not go – the hike there and back can take up to three days. And I am not about to leave the comfort of my caravan to do this.

Instead we moved on to Deloraine, where we had some of the best happy hours ever, and I mean EVER! We met Jo and Ray, who hosted each of our three happy hours, Jo was a scream, greeting each guest as they arrived with “are you a folder or a scruncher”. Well, you can imagine where the conversation went from there. Maybe not happy hour, more like laugh a minute...



Deloraine is a pretty town of around 2500 population. The autumn leaves were falling, so there were carpets of gold, red and orange everywhere you looked.

The camp was in town, beside the river, with a swing bridge traversing the river; it was easy to walk into town.

The weir below the swing bridge changed daily, ducks and black swans waited for picnickers to throw some bread for them.



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As we have travelled around the island, we have noticed some groups of people, dressed in what appears to be very old fashioned dress. We have discovered they are Quakers, who settled in Tasmania in the 1830s. The Quakers came to Hobart missionaries and contributed to the Tasmanian



life and welfare. They played an important role in the evolution from a penal settlement to a self-reliant society.

They appear to be gentle peace loving people, who live off the land, offering their produce at markets. Their dress is old-fashioned, but comfortable; they speak with a gentle American twang.

We saw a group in the park beside the river in Deloraine, taking photos like any other Australian family group.

We walked along the Meander River, and enjoyed hamburgers at the brilliant 50s diner in town.

This is one town I could settle in – one day!

From Deloraine, we set out for the Central Highlands. This area dotted with lakes is up to 1600 metres above sea level, although we only went as far as around 1200 metres. Some of the lakes are natural, some man made for hydro. We wanted to circumnavigate as best we could, The Great Lake is both natural and man-made and is Tasmania's second largest lake (Lake Pedder the largest). The shack towns in what are some the coldest areas of the state are not the best of places to stay in winter, when the population drops to around 200!

We decided, despite this to find a couple of places to camp. The first we found was at Little Pine Lagoon, which apparently is **THE BEST PLACE IN THE WORLD** for angling. So, here we are all by ourselves, apart from a few empty shacks, one fisherman in a tent and some noisy wombats. Boy

was it cold, so we only stayed one night, and found another camp site.

The next lake – Lake Arthur – another hydro built lake, now a popular brown trout fishing destination. Pity we did not have an internal waters fishing licence. We would have eaten like kings.

We found a bush camp – nothing more than a clearing in the trees - near to Jonah Bay Boat Ramp, but not in the camp grounds, so it was even more remote than Little Pine Lagoon – **apart** from the constant to-ing and fro-ing of utes driving into the nearby forest



Sunrise over Little Pine Lagoon

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collecting firewood for the encroaching cold weather. So here we were totally on our own, *apart* from another caravan. The weather deteriorated, dropping below zero, we had ice on our outdoor table, the grass outside crunched beneath our feet. You could not see far in the fog. We woke that morning to find our neighbours had chickened out and moved on. We stayed two nights in these conditions, not wanting to drive down the switch back of the Western Tiers in these fog. Brrrr!



When we did, we ended up in Evandale. Another beautiful heritage listed town, where we were able to free camp. We had driven through Evandale previously, but decided this time to stay put for a few days and explore more of the area. Brickendon was on our radar, as was Clarendon House, two



historic homes. Brickendon is another on the Convict World Heritage Sites. You don't get to see inside the house, but have access to the farm buildings and gardens. There are eleven in total; we have seen all five in Tasmania, one on Norfolk Island, and one in Fremantle WA. This property was convict built and worked, and like Woolmers, belongs to the Archer family for 7 generations. Unlike Woolmers, it is still a working farm, operated by the Archers.

Clarendon, on the other hand is national trust listed, so you get to walk around the house as well as the gardens. The property is on the banks of

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the South Esk River, and was the large pastoral property, with the servant's wings and many farm buildings waiting to be explored.



Our friends Colleen and Ken (we met them at Bicheno last year) asked us to come and visit them for dinner, they live in Evandale in a gorgeous little pink cottage, dating back to the 1840s. They have extensively renovated, but not losing the feel of the cottage. They are fortunate though, that the house is not heritage listed, so were able to modernise to suit their needs.

On Anzac Day, the town swelled, we even saw Kate Warner's car, (Kate is the Governor of Tasmania). We did not see her, but her driver was sitting in the car eating a pie! She was probably at some posh luncheon after the ceremony!

Moving on again, we found ourselves at York Town, which was once the fourth largest settlement in Australia. The British first established themselves there in 1804, and it was a busy village until around 1808, when it was realised that the port they so needed silted up. Launceston, down the road a bit, took over. Now, all that is left is a walk around the area where an archaeological dig has found remains of about 50 buildings.

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We camped at Watermill Cottage, where the owner Steve allows grey nomads to camp around the lagoon on his property. His watermill operates randomly, and apparently there are trout in the lake. We stayed a couple of nights here, enjoying camp fires and the slosh slosh sound of the watermill, while we explored the area to the north.



Rain set in, so we moved on again, back to Deloraine. Now the beginning of May, and the countdown to the 15th has begun. In Deloraine, we bumped into our friends Wendy and Paul, who were only a few days off leaving the island. We shared a lot of laughs with them, we to dinner to celebrate our 20th Wedding anniversary. That was nice. We played Keno, wow!!, we won \$2.00.



The weather has been bad ever since Deloraine. We went into Launceston again to attend a geocaching event, staying once again at Old Macs Farm. John wanted to go to Agfest, and as were in the area, took the opportunity. About 19,500 Tasmanians attended on the Friday which is a regional public holiday. We braved the weather on Saturday (the day before had lots of rain, therefore lots of mud), but the rain held off, and the mud had dried a little; it was still a gum boot day. Agfest is huge event for Tasmania, where all things farming are on display, from cattle prods to combine harvesters, but like most shows, there were also cooking displays, cars, trucks, caravans and boats, food halls, hamburgers..... You know, just like any other show.

Not far from Agfest, which is held at Carrick, is Entally House at Hadspen, another heritage listed property open to the public. The estate was established in 1819 by Thomas Reibey. Reibey worked for the East India Company. His eldest son, Thomas Reibey II married Mary, a former convict, who later became one of Australia's wealthiest women. (Mary is most recognisable as the face of the Australian 20 dollar note – and is the only convict to have been recognised in this manner.) The

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estate was the graining grounds for Malua, the 1884 Melbourne Cup winner, and there is a cricket oval believed to be one of the first in the country. We were told there were games between the gentry and convicts, and as nobody could find any record of scores, it is assumed the convicts must have won.



With only a week to go, we headed to Turner's Beach which is only a 15 minute drive from the ferry at Devonport.

We were only going to stay for one or two nights, then move on to another camp site, but with the weather the way it was, we decided it was better to stay put, so are here, now for the duration.

I am feeling a bit apprehensive about the ferry crossing, last week, the straight was rocked by gale force winds, the Spirit of Tasmania came off second best, with a truck toppling on cars, and people being sea-sick on the boat.

The weather this week is not much better!

I have my quells ready just in case!

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After almost eight months on this beautiful diverse island, I would like to recap some of our favourite bits, and some stats....

Favourite bits and highlights:

- Freedom camping in the wilderness
- Swimming in the bay at Cockle Creek
- The squid I caught at Fortesque Bay
- Walking on mossy fern lined tracks
- Mt Paris Dam and the Anchor Stamper
- Trial Harbour and Granville Harbour
- Waking up with ice around the van
- Hike to the most southerly point in Tasmania, therefore Australia
- Drive up Jacobs Ladder to Ben Lomond
- John's walk up Mt Roland (altitude 1300m) with two other retirees and forgetting to collect the cache
- Christmas at Left of Field
- Finding over 500 caches in Tasmania
- Finding our 1000th cache in Tasmania
- Caching with David and Dea (the FelixII) and hiking down Mt Wellington

The people we met:

- Cachers at various events, especially **David and Dea** (FelixII) from Western Australia, we met them all originally at an event in Launceston back in October, and have kept in touch ever since
- **Allan** (Footprints) Lebrina;
- **Lisa and Klause**, Bridgenorth;
- **Sue & her husband** (Gollie Mollie) Beauty Point;
- **Peter and Veronica**, Policemans Point;
- **Val and Tony** & Matilda the dog, Old Macs Farm;
- **Kevin and Colleen**, Lagoon Beach, Bicheno and Evandale;
- **Judy and Wayne** & Megsie, Mayfield Beach;
- **Lynda and Mike**, South Arm and Penguin;
- **Noel and Elizabeth**, South Arm;
- **Steve and Louise**, Outlands;
- **Kel & Sue**, Oatlands, Gordon, Stanley, Cooe Point;
- **John and Julie**, Kempton;
- **Wayne and Christine**, Lake Sorell;
- **Trudi and Xavier**, Gordon;
- **David and Jacqui** (Daffie Francis) Ranalagh;
- **Mike and Sue** (Revemike) Franklin;
- **Chris and Mandy**, New Norfolk;
- **Pat and Chris**, Queenstown;
- **David and Kay**, Granville Harbour;
- **Maggie and Greg**, Sulphur Point;
- **Carole-Lea and Rick**, Rocky Cape and Gowrie Park;

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- **Trina and Ray**, Stanley;
- **Glenda and Terry**, Marrawah;
- **Ken and Sue**, Gowrie Park;
- **Val** (Sheffield-er) Targa/Gowrie Park;
- **Paul and Wendy**, Stanley, Cooe Point and Deloraine;
- **Jo and Ray**, Deloraine.

Some statistics:

- Arrived 2nd October 2015, Depart 15th May 2016 (226 days)
- \$1580 Total site fees, including 54 nights in caravan parks and 8 nights in national parks, donations, community site fees, and laundromat costs (which I put down as site fees)
- Approximately 12,000 kilometres travelled
- \$2800 diesel for the 4wd to help us keep moving
- \$87.35 diesel to keep us warm in the van
- \$50.20 generator fuel to subsidise the sun
- \$195.26 gas for cooking and hot water heating so we can have a hot shower
- We did not see any snow, but it did snow while were here.
- The coldest we experienced was around -4 degrees
- The warmest was around 27 degrees

Boats we travelled on:

- Spirit of Tasmania,
- Pennecott Tour of the Tasman Peninsula
- Kettering to Bruny Island Ferry
- Lake St Clair ferry
- Gordon River Cruise
- Fatman Punt on the Pieman River
- Arthur River Cruise
- Daffie Francis's motor sailor
- Daffie Francis's dinghy
- Pt Puer tour at Port Arthur
- Maria Island ferry from Triabunna

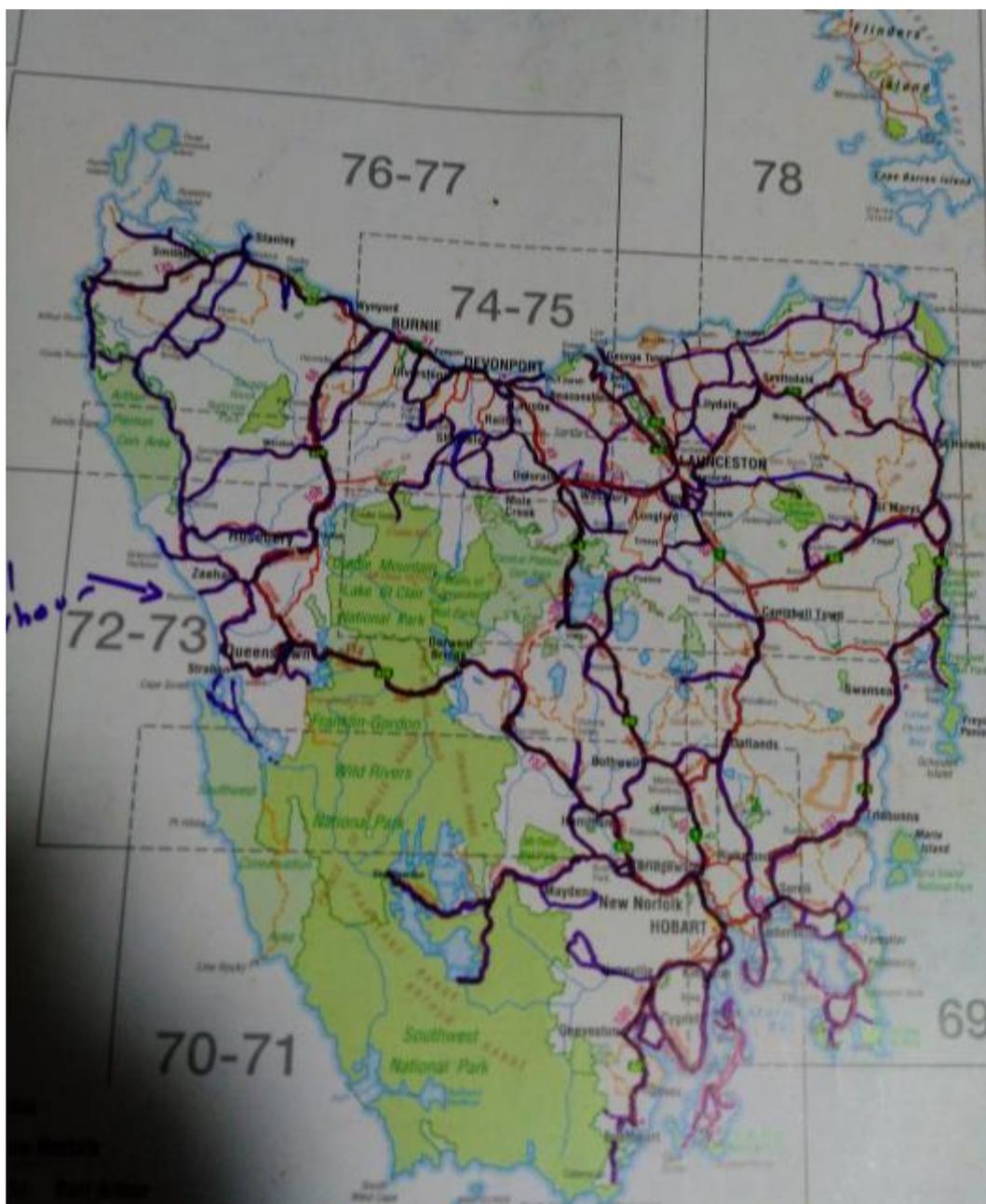
Random Things about Tassy

- They call ranges "tiers"
- The island is described as "lumpy"
- Woolies supermarkets are not the same as on the mainland
- But they do have Hills Street IGA supermarkets which have the best delicatessens ever
- Apparently, a Taswegian has two heads
- Apparently, the Tasmanian tiger is extinct
- The Tasmanian devil is not extinct
- There are some funny names for places here

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- The Devil's Gullet was closed due to the fires
- We did not get to visit the Growling Swallet
- The spotted quoll is really cute
- The spotted quoll loves salami
- The locals are really friendly
- They grow a lot of potatoes in Tasmania
- And raspberries
- And apples
- And wild blackberries
- We love Tasmanian potatoes

Map of Tasmania – about 12,000 kilometres



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