

Lorraine's August Blog



Tropic of Capricorn Crossing

We seem, to have spent this month just travelling up, along and down highways and by-ways, so I hope my words continue to interest you. The work on the Nissan completed, we set out north along the Stuart Highway. After leaving Alice Springs, apart from rest area stop overs, and the occasional road house, there is not a lot to report on.

We found a brilliant camp at an old WWII site, camping on the remains of dongas and barracks. We were there for three nights, camp fires every night, listening to an audio book. Not a lot of “traffic” there, probably due to the fact that it is the “Barrow Creek “ WWII site, so those of you who know the Barrow Creek story, may be a bit of a scary place to camp, Wolfe Creek Crater only with a real life story!



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We had passed through Wycliffe Well and its stories about aliens, Aileron with its giant Anmantjere man, and even found a fruit farm at Ti Tree – in the middle of a desert!



We were beginning to wonder if we would be “found and counted” for the census on 9th August, but the little people in green found us at the Devils Marbles.



The Devils Marbles, or Karlu Karlu by its traditional name, is a group of weathered rocks in the middle of Northern Territory, with the Stuart Highway dissecting them. A small camp site below the rocks, you are able to wander around at sunrise or sunset and take in the beautiful rounded

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boulders.



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At Tennant Creek, we checked into the small caravan park, camped on beautiful green grass, something we had not seen in any camp site, be it road side stop over or caravan park, since leaving Melbourne! I was able to catch up on washing; John washed the Nissan and the caravan, both of which was badly needed. We visited the Tennant Creek Telegraph Station, built as part of the Overland Telegraph Line, each of these stations were part of a network from Adelaide to Darwin. We had also visited the station at Barrow Creek. The Tennant Creek station is in excellent condition, we had a key which allowed us passage into many of the old buildings which have been restored. Given the remoteness of the area, and the harsh conditions, they are in reasonable condition.



Turning east on to the Barkly Highway at Three Ways, we headed for the Queensland Border, relatively quickly, with only one stop over on the way.



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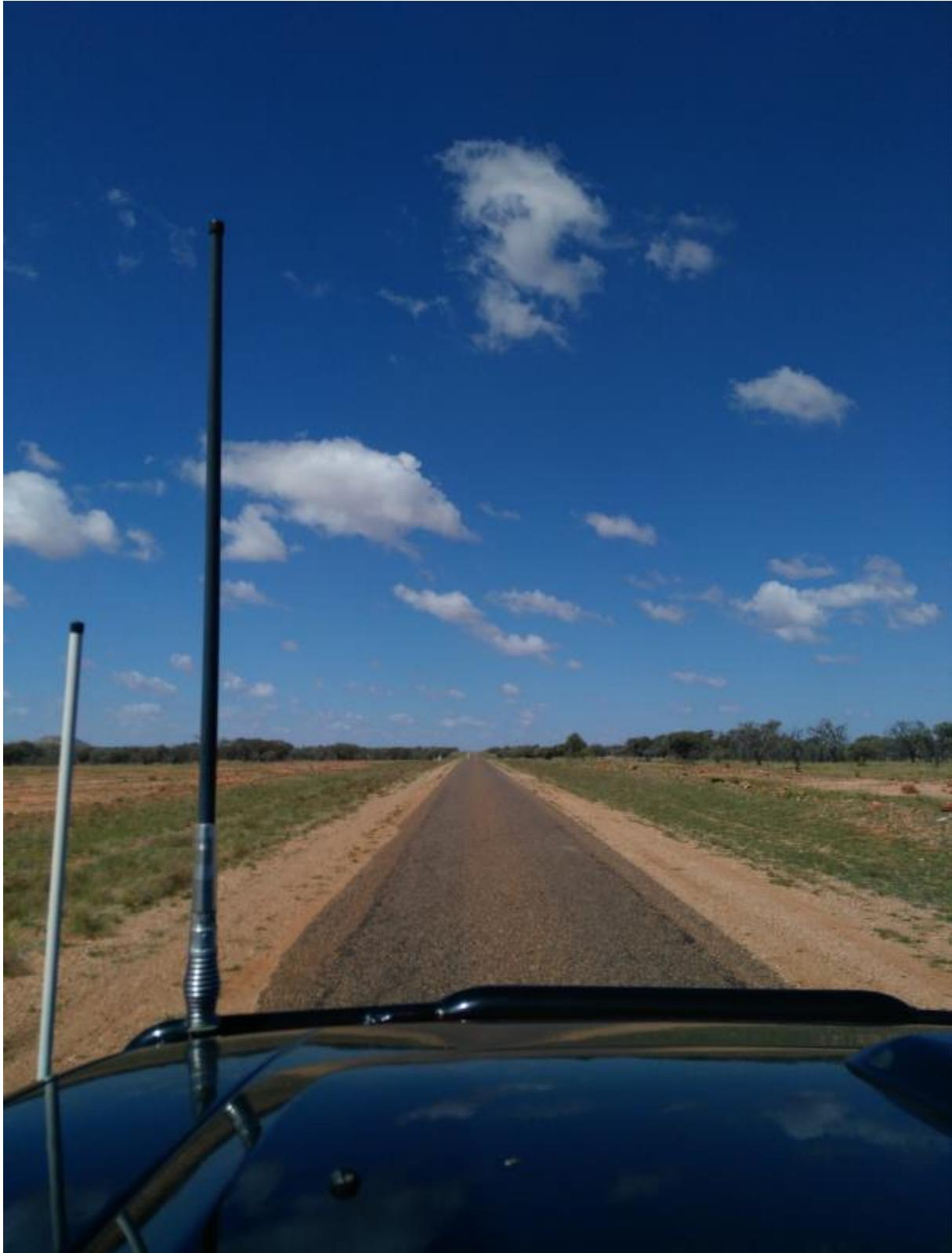
Camooweal found us beside a beautiful camp beside the Camooweal Billabong, where we were



entertained by courting broilgas. We learnt that they usually move in threes, mum and dad, and their baby from the previous year.

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Finally, back in Mt Isa, we caught up with our friends David and Dea (The Felix's), we met and cached with them in Tasmania, caught up with washing (yes again) and shopping, before heading off the highway towards Boulia.



The road to Boulia

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The Diamantina Development Road (as are most developmental roads) is a narrow strip of bitumen, only one car wide, with gravel on each side, allowing vehicles to pass each other when necessary. Occasionally, there are passing lanes, but mostly not, you have to watch out for road trains, they have right of way, and you have to pull right off the road to let them pass. Just hope there is no mud! Having said that, it was a beautiful drive, not much traffic, and as there has been so much rain in the Queensland outback, the verges and paddocks are all green. Get up close, you will see it is mostly spinifex and weed, but green all the same.



We found a camp site called The Dam. The dam, hidden behind some rocks, almost a small version of Devils Marbles, is more like a lake; it does not appear to be manmade. We set up beside the water; only two other vans close by, but far enough away to not worry about them. We watch the birds on the water and above the water, I think there must have been at least 20 different species, and the wild flowers were in full bloom.

After two peaceful nights there, where we cooked over a camp fire each night, we moved on through Dajarra, checking out their little museum before arriving in Boulia.

Having spent time in Boulia five years ago, we only stayed one night, before heading out into the Channel Country, Min Min Country and Jump Up



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Country. Again, everything is green. The two photos below show the view from the Cawnpore Look Out in the Lillydale Hills. The first was taken in August 2011, the second in August 2016.



Back in Winton, one of my favourite towns in Australia, we settled into the camp at the back of the North Gregory Hotel. While the camp site is not particularly exciting, the hotel is impressive, cleaned up a lot since the last time we were through. Current pub is about the fourth to be built on the site, previous ones being burnt down. Hopefully this one, built in a beautiful retro style, like something out of the Great Gatsby, will remain.



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based in Winton, we drove into Bladensburg National Park and did a couple of the drives in the area, including the old Bladensburg Homestead, Scrammys Gorge and the River Gum trail.



Scrammy's Gorge

Despite this being our fourth visit to the area, (including the time we worked out at Glen Kyrie on the other side of the national park), this was the first time we took the time to do the trails.

We met up with another couple we previously met in Tasmania – Paul and Wendy. We had coffee with them, and joined them at Australian Age of Dinosaurs, where the replicas of remains (and some original bits) are on display. The tour here is in two parts, the first is an interpretive movie, explaining about the find of the bones by a farmer by the name of Elliott, the dig, through to the opening of the museum. The second part of the tour takes you to the area where volunteers are cleaning bones found in the area and pallet



Pallets of dinosaur bits waiting to be cleaned

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upon pallet of bones waiting to be cleaned.

We decided the following day, at a huge expense to ourselves, to go back as volunteers, but that night, I had a fall on the way to the showers, grazed my face in the gravel, and looked a right mess the next morning. All good now, except for my glasses, which took the brunt of the fall. Will have to put up with them until we get back to civilisation. And we saved ourselves a couple of hundred dollars.

Speaking of Paul and Wendy, and David and Dea, it is great to catch up with fellow nomads that you have spent time with in other state. When you travel full time, and don't have much contact with your own family, a bit of familiarity goes a long way.

Moving on to Longreach, we dodged bad weather as we moved. Many roads in south west Queensland have been closed on and off due to rain and flooding causing bad road conditions, so we are constantly monitoring the road closures web sites, and frequenting information centres as we move. In Longreach, as the free camps were mostly awash, we booked into the Longreach Tourist Park, which has, I think, around 200 caravan sites. All in the mud! \$33.50 per night for a quagmire! Anyway, we decided to go back to the Longreach Hall of Fame, visited it around 18 years ago, wanted to see if it had improved any. Reluctant to say that it is still the same, disappointed to say that the information that mum submitted about Grandpuppy for the Unsung Heroes still sits in a filing cabinet. What I did discover is that (if we had known at the time) we could have spent \$12,000 for a plaque to be made up with all the information about my grandfather. The centre has run out of room currently and is reviewing what may happen in the future, so I will be getting myself on a mailing list for future developments. Once again, we bumped into our friends David and Dea, who had come back to the centre for the last of their ticketed events in Longreach.

Back on the highway, about 100 k east through Ilfracombe to Barcardine.

Stopped off at Ilfracombe to check that John's hat still hangs over the bar and to see if any new exhibits appear alongside the road. John donated this hat 18 years ago for the cost of a beer, it is still on the ceiling of the pub.



On to Barcardine, to find a few caches and count the caravans lining the main street, before heading north (off the highway) to Aramac for an overnigher.

Aramac is a small town (pop 300) housing a pub, a general

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store/hardware, community library, rural supplies and two churches.



[The Catholic Church in Aramac](#)

We camped behind the pub and walked the town, before moving on to the nearby town of Muttaborra.

Muttaborra (pop 100) is even smaller than Aramac, but there was enough there to fill in four days. Surprisingly, this little village has 14 caches (not including the one that was published the night AFTER we left town), a trail of sculptures, and interpretive trail of the old buildings that stand or used to stand in the town, three waterholes that are good for fishing, an historic site – part of the Shearers Union Strike, and two museums.



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So we filled in each day, caching, walking around the interpretive trail or checking out the sculptures, or the waterholes. The small community caravan park in town costs \$15.00 per night for the first two nights, and then is free for the next three nights, so if you stay for five nights, it works out at \$6.00 per night for power and water! Pretty good deal. The two museums are George Cassimatis' General Store and Dr Arratta's Hospital.



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We had arranged for Ros, one of the locals to come and open each of them, and thoroughly enjoyed her commentary at the hospital, where she had been born, had broken bones repaired, and had teeth pulled by the local dentist! Ros is the daughter of farmer Langdon, who found remains of a dinosaur on his property back in 1963, commonly known as the Muttaborra-sauris. She was able to give us more of an insight to her father and the reasons he passed the remains on to the

Queensland Museum. If you go to the museum, and see the big dinosaur at the entry, you have seen a replica of the Muttaborra-sauris. In the meantime, an interpretive centre in the middle of town is in the pipeline. The partially bituminoid road back to Longreach was now open back to Longreach, so we completed another loop.

I leave you this month as we leave Longreach after topping up with fuel and groceries, before hitting the byways again.

Our picture for this month's "Eating our way around Australia" is courtesy of the Barrow Creek WWII site, totally cooked over our choofer fire.

