

10/7/12 – I have just had my second birthday since we became Grey Nomads, so that now means we must have been on the road over 12 months.

We are currently travelling the Oodnadatta Track, and have been on the dirt since leaving Lyndhurst just over 2 weeks ago. The conditions of the road vary from good quality, hard packed dirt, to corrugations, to loose gravel. It has been graded earlier this year, so it has not been too hard on our rig. The corrugations are the worst, making conversation impossible, as the 4WD bumps across. The van has come



through with flying colours, with the exception of a side trip out to Dalhousie Springs, where one section of the road was so bad that a bottle of sun-dried tomatoes “unscrewed” itself, and

made a mess in the pantry – which now smells of oil and balsamic vinegar!



After we left Marree on the day of the Camel Races, we camped at Coward Springs, where there is a small natural spa to wallow in. We did not, feeling it was way too cold to take our clothes off in the middle of winter, just to stand in an artesian pool!

However, we did hear via the grapevine that another “mature” couple were fooling about in the water later that night, after the sun went down.

Coward Springs to William Creek and we camped in a small crowded “caravan park” which is managed by the William Creek Hotel. If it were not for the fact that we needed power, we would not have stayed there, as the amenities were dirty and the park dusty – until someone complained, after which, the cleaner (a Dutch backpacker) arrived in the afternoon to

clean the showers and toilets. We had met a couple in Marree, Steven and Gayle from Tasmania. They left their van at Marree and travelled as far as William Creek, staying in the cabins in the park. We joined them for a drink in the busy hotel that



evening, and they invited us to visit them if/when we ever get back to Tasmania.

Our next free camp on the track was at Algebuckina Bridge spanning the Neale River. The bridge was built for the Ghan Railway, and is one of the few remaining visible relics of the route.

The most evidence we have seen of the rail track is the mound following the road, the occasional ruin, and pieces of sleepers which have been thrown from the line when it was removed. The sleepers are a huge source of timber for campers who use it for firewood.



There are waterholes at Algebuckina, so Brodie (the Roadie) was able to have a swim, and John cast his line in as well, in the hope of catching a yellow belly for dinner.

We had salt bush lamb chops that night!



Oodnadatta is two thirds along the track. The Pink Roadhouse stands out like a sore thumb as you hit town, offering fuel and mechanical repairs, dining facilities, small amount of groceries, hardware, post office, caravan park and advice on the track. What the Pink Roadhouse don't know about the Oodnadatta Track, you don't need to know. They (Adam Plate, the self confessed Guru of the Oodnadatta and his wife Lynnie) have created lots of "mud maps" of various points of interest, the town, the caravan park, as well as a whole page full of really useful information. It was Adam who named the Oodnadatta Track back in the 1970's.



From Oodna, we took a side visit to the beautiful Painted Desert in the Arckaringa Hills. If only we could have been there at sunrise or sunset! However, for a change, we were able to see such a beautiful place AND take Brodie to share the view, as the hills are on private property.



The brochure says, "If you photos could wear out hills, these would be flat by now!"

I know what they mean.



We also detoured north, via Hamilton Station to visit Dalhousie Springs, something everyone we spoke to told us we had to do. The only issue was that Dalhousie is in the Witjira National Park, and of course, you can't take Roadies into National Parks...

We had been given the name of the owner (Tim Williams) of Hamilton Station by a vet we met at Parachilna, so after ringing him, and gaining permission to camp on his property near the border of the park, we set out with caravan in tow! Long hard slog to this campsite – took us close to four hours, but the seclusion, the night sky, the silence was all worth it.

Tim had advised us that there could be dingoes around, so we kept a close eye on Brodie (the roadie), but heard no evidence of any around on the two nights we camped there.



Dalhousie Ruins and the springs were definitely worth the trip. We swam in the artesian waters with a temperature of around 36°. Absolutely beautiful!
Amazing to think it is mid winter, we are in the middle of a desert, and swimming!!!



Left, John at Dalhousie Ruins

On our way back from Dalhousie, we found we had a leak in one of our tyres, so out came John's newly purchased Tyre Pliers, which enable him to be able to take the tyre off the rim and repair the tyre. In this case, it appears that there were lots of splits around the

tyre, so we were unable to fix it.

We bought a new spare from the Pink Roadhouse!





Oodnadatta has a 6x4 loop, six sandhills, and four claypans, which emulate the conditions in the Simpson Desert. We decided to give it a try, so with van unhitched and tyres deflated, we took to the sandhills. John and the tug performed well, no issues.

What a lot of fun we had.



We are now camped at a quiet little spot called Olarinna Creek.

Last night there were a few other campers, but they have all gone now. It was my birthday yesterday, and eight of us shared a camp fire, good conversation and a few to many drinks! We are waiting for the influx for tonight!

There is only 115 km to go now before we reach Marla, The Stuart Highway – and the bitumen.

11/7/12 The van held up well over the track, with only one broken catch on a draw. Although both the truck and the van are very dirty, not much dust has crept inside Dunmowin. On arrival at Marla at the end of the track, my phone when crazy with missed calls and birthday messages!

14/7/12 – Coober Pedy was interesting, not unlike Lightning Ridge, however, most of the housing, shops (opal) and accommodation are actually underground. We did an underground mine tour, and had a cup of coffee underground, but the most interesting thing was the Comfort Inn chain of motel.



They allowed us to go in and look at as many rooms as we wanted. It was fascinating.

The landscape is pretty strange. As the miners dig their shafts, the dirt has to remain on the surface, and the blower creates pyramid like hills of the dirt they extract.

These hills dot the landscape for kilometres.



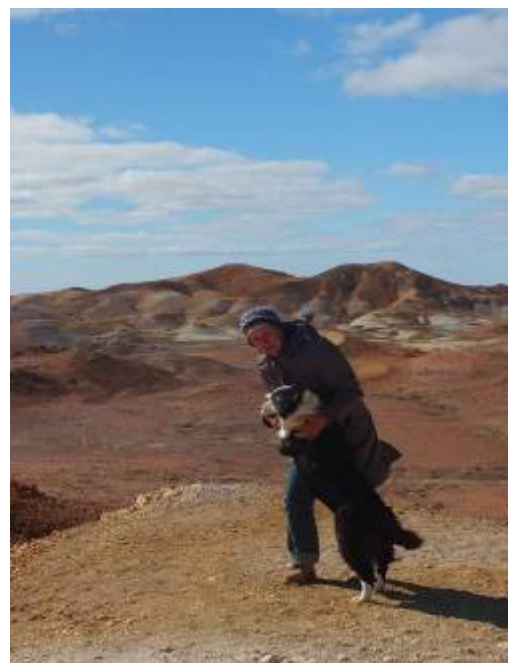
The warning signage in the area is all about the dangers of falling into shafts. I love the third one – “don’t walk backwards”. The miners are not allowed to fill in the shafts when they finish their claim, these hills of dirt – and the holes they came out of - are there forever.



We took a drive out to “the breakaways” which are mesa like hills, coloured like the painted desert we saw near Oodnadatta. Actually, I think they were prettier than the painted desert.



We have been lucky enough to go to so many places recently where we can take Brodie, and once again, this was one.





This drive took us out through the hills, over the “moon plane” and along the dingo fence.

The dingo fence is over 5,300 km long, and forms an unbroken barrier through Queensland, NSW and South Australia, keeping the dingos north of the fence line.

Parts of Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome was filmed on the moon plane, named for the lunar like landscape and vast expanse of rocky plains. Pricilla Queen of the Desert also featured in the area.

17/7/12 – We found this spot by fluke, most of the “free camps” dotted along the highway are nothing more than rest areas, and extremely exposed to the elements, and nothing to look at.

This one – Lake Hart – we have the most incredible view of the salt lake.



We arrived yesterday morning in time for morning tea, and decided to stay for the night. This morning we have decided to stay another... The lake is a salt lake, like so many in South Australia, but there appears to be water creeping in somewhere, you can stand at the water's edge and watch it spreading.



This photo was taken on the day we arrived. Note the small amount of water in front of me.

The photo below was taken on the second day at the same spot. You can see how much the water level has changed.

At Lake Hart, there is an abandoned salt evaporation farm, but we found out later when at Woomera that there was also a rocket launching pad on the other side – also abandoned.



19/7/12 Woomera was a let down, really all you get to see there is street-side museum of rockets, planes, bombs and space junk!



Mind you, a very tidy town, not unlike the mining town of Leigh Creek. Still administered by Commonwealth Government, the defence presence is very low key, and the town has been “open” since 1982, which means that tourists are now able to drive into the town.

We only stayed there for one night, and today travelled to Roxby Downs. John has been hoping for ages to do a mine tour, but as there have been protests out at Olympic Dam where the mine is, BHP Billiton have closed down the tours for the month! So we drove on to another opal mining town, close to Lake Torrens, called Andamooka.

We might stay here for a couple of days, take a drive down to Torrens, and stay for Christmas In July on Saturday night.

24/7/12 – We drove out to Andamooka, and stayed at a (\$2.20 each per night) camp in town. Andamooka is not like Coober Pedy, it is a pretty small and self sufficient opal town, but a lot of the facilities have closed down. Apparently, due to the expansion at Olympic Dam mine site, Andamooka will grow again, but the locals don’t seem too interested in that happening.

We drove down to Lake Torrens again, this time viewing it from the western side, not as interesting (apart from the tyre made “Lake Monster”) as the day we spent with the children at Nilpena.

We only stayed two nights at Andamooka, deciding not to stay for the Christmas in July.



Currently we are free camped at a lookout – Hancocks Lookout, where we visited before we went up to Parachilna.

From the lookout, we can see Port Augusta, Iron Knob, Whyalla, and across the gulf we can see ships waiting to come into port.

We are quite high in the mountains – about 550m above sea level.



We plan to stay here until we run out of water, but are slowly on the move to Adelaide, for my flight back to Brisbane in early August.

27/7/12 - We did not run out of water at Hancock's Lookout, but the weather turned foul, raining, extremely windy and bitterly cold, so yesterday we moved on further south, through Wilmington, Melrose, Gladstone and Georgetown finally stopping here at Yacka in a little park run by the community. So what is in Yacka? Nothing, no shops, banks, fuel, pub! All there is to do is do the historic town walk, or wait for the craft shop to open (Fri, Sat or Sun). But, it is a beautiful little village, waiting for some money to be injected into it to pick it up, however, the population is dying, so probably the village will as well. Today, we went for a round trip drive through lots of little villages, Snowtown – which has a grizzly tale of murder and a bank vault – Blyth, Brinkworth, and lunch in Clare – third trip to Clare and it has rained two out of three!

Forgot to take any photos in any of the above mentioned villages, but they are all the similar, stone houses in various state of repair/disrepair, street names always the same – north, south, east and west street or terrace, usually a high street or terrace, and always a park.

31/7/12 Last day of the month – again, and we are parked up in Balaklava, another of those stone house towns.

Since crossing the Goyder Line, we have noticed just how much the landscape has changed. The Goyder Line is a boundary line across South Australia, indicating the edge of an area suitable for agriculture. North of the line the rainfall is not reliable enough, and the land is only suitable for grazing, not cropping, south of the line, the vegetation changes, and is more suitable for cropping. The line was declared by George Goyder, back in 1865, but many of the farmers, following a bumper year of rain that year, thought Goyder's line to be a farce, and tried cropping further to the north. They failed, hence so many ruins of stone cottages north of Port Augusta. There was actually a period of time, during the building of the Ghan railway, that

“they” decided that the line, should be pushed further and further north, creating what is now the Northern Territory border.

So, back to crossing the Goyder Line. Since arriving in the Mid North of South Australia, in fact, only in the last 200k, we have noticed the change. The gibber has gone, the salt bush has gone, and what we are seeing is Australian Olympian colours – green and gold, the gold being the canola which is just beginning to flower, the green being wheat, durum wheat, legumes – the list goes on.



We may well be staying in the area beyond August for the harvest, as there will be plenty of work.

We drove through parts of the Barossa today, and had a late lunch at Maggie Beer’s Farm. Simply delicious.

For those of you who don’t watch the ABC, or are “out of the country” Maggie has a cooking show on Channel 2 called “The Cook and the Chef”

John and I had a light lunch. We shared a bowl of beef and chestnut soup, followed by a wild game terrine parcel with a green salad, and a cheese/quince paste/relish etc platter.



*Me, Maggie & Simon
(Lorraine, the cook and the chef)*



There was a cooking demonstration in Maggie's kitchen, but not by Maggie, but she did walk in during the demo!

During the demo, visitors were invited to assist with the cooking. After the demo, we were invited to taste..... and take away some yummy recipes.

Don't know just how many of you know that I am a McLeods Daughters Tragic, but here it is... Driving through some of the areas of the Barossa, you see bits and pieces left over from the eight year series, we managed to spot the Gungellan Hotel in Freeling, the "truck stop" in Kapunda, and pretty sure that we saw "Killarney" just outside Freeling.



Olympics are with us, we have the TV going most of the mornings and evenings, watching mostly the cycling, swimming and equestrian events. That may change tomorrow!

Don't know where the month has gone, it seems to have flown past. Only one more month of winter left now, so as we may well be here in SA for a few more months, we are looking forward to the weather warming up a bit.