

## Lorraine's September Blog

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After leaving Longreach at the beginning of the month, we have travelled a lot of small



developmental road, narrow stretches of bitumen connection small remote locations. These roads, usually only wide enough for one vehicle are used by road trains, farmers – and grey nomads. When the roads have been wet, the gravel verges are soft and it is easy to get bogged. We managed to get through the area unscathed, but saw evidence of a lot of mishaps. We headed into the Barcoo Shire, an area almost as big as Tasmania, but only with three towns one and a population of around 360.

We found camps beside creeks, at lookouts and a few tiny caravan parks in each of the three towns. Stonehenge, the first we hit was quiet and sleepy. We had heard more rain was coming, so decided to head up to Swanvale Lookout to be high, but not necessarily dry. We stayed there for three days, enjoying the views, sunsets and sunrises. Yes it did rain, but we were OK.

We met a couple of travellers from Warrnambool, Victoria – they have a very



distinctive Red Bus, this bus featured in many of our photos over the next few weeks. We nicknames them “the plonkas” because, whenever we saw them it always looked like they arrived, they liked, they stayed, without looking like that had actually set up. They just plonked.

After three nights we moved on, finding ourselves in Jundah



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where we hooked up to power and water. The Plonkas did too! Jundah is another small location, but is the centre for the shire, with a museum, a half decent shop (owned by the shire) and a small but new caravan park.



One night was enough in town; we moved down to the Thomson River – where The Plonkas had relocated to as well. Bernie (Mr Plonkas) spent a lot of time fishing, catching plenty of yellow belly but I could not entice John to have a go.

Betty (Mrs Plonkas) was lovely; we spent quite a few chats over cups of tea.





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We caught up with The Plonkas again in Windorah. They beat us to Cooper's Creek, and plonked themselves down beside the river so Bernie could fish.

Bernie told us he had found a fresh grave in the bush, so called out the new young constable from town. Together they "resumed" the grave to find some camper's stash of firewood. We would love to have been a fly on the wall when the campers returned to find their grave had been robbed.



Cooper's Creek, which runs into Lake Eyre was rising fast and flowing fast.



Normally a small creek, the channels were beginning to flood out, so we needed to keep moving before we became marooned on a muddy hill beside the creek.

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John had heard the Quilpie Show was on the following weekend, so we made a bee-line for that in the hope of a good show. It was small and quiet, the exhibits limited, the entertainment scarce,



BUT the pig races were a riot!

Later when the exhibits were being sold, we bought a beautiful heavy fruit cake for \$10.00 (I think it got 2<sup>nd</sup>

prize) There is still a piece of it in the freezer (was). That night we went to the Rodeo.



Oh, yeah, when we arrived at the Quilpie Caravan Park, The Plonkas were there. Bernie was doing his other passion; he had a metal detector, his hobby to find gold coins (i.e. \$2 & \$1) which he saves and donates to flying doctors. At the time we met them, he had several hundred dollars waiting to be donated.



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We wanted to detour to Eromanga and down to Thargomindah, but that road was cut, so we travelled the shorter, but dryer road. Thargomindah on a Sunday is dead quiet, but fortunately we were able to get fuel. For those not in the know, Thargo is approximately 1100km west of Brisbane, and Eromanga a town that boasts having the furthest service station from the sea! In Thargo, there is an interesting Artesian Hydro Power Plant, believed to be the oldest working unit in Australia, possibly the world.

The town was first in Australia, and third in the world to produce hydro-electric power for street lighting by using water pressure from the Artesian Basin. We learn so much in these little places.



Moving on, we found a great place to camp beside a lake – Lake Bindegolly, just outside the Bindegolly National Park. Several days later, after seeing no one since leaving the main road, we moved on – having spent the time playing around with the camp oven and identifying birds around the lake.



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It was another wet day as we entered Yowah, an opal mining district south of Quilpie, after a 70k drive of the main road, we pulled into the freedom camp in town, and guess who we found – you guessed right, our good friends The Plonkas has pulled up and were contemplating the mud. We offered to drive them up the Yowah Bluff – there was a cache there, an apparently a fantastic view. Yes, there was a cache, in fact, Mr Plonkas was right on track to finding it for us, but the view – well, it started to rain, so we could see nothing of the surrounding countryside.

Yowah, a small town of probably around 100 permanent population (the rest being miners who come for a season). The town is on smelly bore water with a bore drain running through town. You can bathe in the “baths” at the caravan park, or go to the artesian pools, where you sit for 20 minutes at around 40 degrees, then you move to a cooler pool to cool down before cooking yourself again at 40 degrees.



It was way too wet to enjoy either the “open air baths” at the caravan park, or the artesian pool, but we did drive around town, and met some of the locals who are happy to share their interest and knowledge of the local “nut opal”





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The small ironstone “nuts” found in the area can have a kernel inside of crystal opal, but are often hollow. We found heaps of them lying around the town, already cut; we don't know if they were successful or not.



(photos courtesy of Johnos Opals )

The Plonkas left early the next morning, while we hung around till later in the day, waiting for the rain to abate then headed via Eulo for lunch at the Eulo Queen. Now, the pub may well be called The Eulo Queen, but it run by the Eulo Dragon Lady. We ordered toasties from a young (very young) girl behind the bar, and off she went to make them. In comes Dragon lady (with her basket of ironing) who told us it was after 2.00 pm so the kitchen was closed. Meanwhile the young (very young) girl continued to cook our toasties. Meanwhile more hungry travelers arrived wanting toasties. I thought she might develop a hernia! We all got our toasties, she got perhaps another \$150 in her till, and I bet the young (very young) girl got a dressing down.

Needless to say, we did not stay at Eulo, instead found a beautiful spot to stop over beside a rising creek at Bollon. In Bollon, we were able to walk along the creek into town, spend time in the very



interesting museum, and have coffee in the equally interesting Debs Place.

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We shared a few drinks with neighbors Mike and Marg and arranged to meet up again at Millmerran Camp Oven Festival.

Moving on we arrived in Cunnamulla, only to find the Plonkas plonked in the middle of town. Mr Plonkas thought the park might be another good spot for his metal detector. As usual, it paid off for him. We promised (again) this would be the last time we would see each other – they had to start moving south. After our shop in Cunnamulla, we moved on to a very wet camp beside the Balonne River. By now, we were only 450 KM from Brisbane, where we are spending Christmas. We walked in the rain, cached in the rain, and dodged showers by visiting the Cobb & Co Museum. There are a few interesting old buildings in town, in particular the shire hall.

The river continued to rise, so thought it prudent (don't think I have ever used that expression before) to keep moving.





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Drove through a small locality of Glen Morgan, and were surprised to find a small but busy car museum. We spent a couple of hours at Montys vintage auto museum. The building is the old 1940s style garage, and is now a working museum, the owner continuously updating and working on his collection.



Museumed out and coffee over, we moved on to another camp at Meandarra. Brigalow Creek was flooding, and the road north to Miles was cut, so we pulled into the little camp here, connected to power and water and did the washing.

Two days later, the road re-opened and off we went again.

Caliguel Lagoon looked safe and dry, we even found some grass on high ground to set up on, a change from the mud we had been experiencing lately; a pretty spot, used



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by the locals for fishing and skiing.

We passed through Miles and Chinchilla, detoured to Chinchilla Weir where we spent a few more muddy nights, and another detour via Kogan before driving on to Cecil Plains. Kogan is one of those little "off the highway" places, but has some brilliant sculptures in the park. Artist Hugh Sawrey was the founder of the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame in Longreach, and the sculpture in the park, opposite the pub depicts Sawrey with his mate, "Darkie" Dwyer, the former publican of the Kogan Hotel. It is so lifelike; you can see the laughter lines on Sawrey's face.





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We are amazed at just how accurate the weather predictions have been lately, we have always known in advance when the next wet day would occur, and planned our move accordingly. We had rain at Chinchilla, and knew we had a few days up our sleeves before the next event would occur. Our planned destination of Millmerran for the Camp Oven Festival coincided with two more such events! Wet weather caused the organisers a bit of grief; they stopped taking bookings, just in case they had to move campers. Our site was not too bad – we thought; we got on OK, after chewing up the site behind ours, and avoiding the quagmire in front. We had a wet day during the lead up week, but it was not OK. We had booked from Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September for the entire week, including the festival, the grounds slowly filled, as we explored the area and met up with friends. Joe, John's friend from the old "work" days, came to see us one day, we were camped close to Marg and Mike, who we met earlier in the month, so spent a few happy hours with them, and also met up with some geocache friends, Stripling Warriors, Tassie Trekkers and Gulliver's Travels, and some on-line friends from the Grey Nomads forum were there as well.

A very social lead up to a great event. Someone said, even if the festival was not on, it was still a great week.



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Coco, the pink poodle who raises funds for breast cancer was hostess of one of our happy hours.



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The festival was fun, plenty to watch, see and do. Lots of food to eat and cooking demonstrations to attend.



We learnt a lot about heat bead cooking, and bought a new camp oven. Entertainment all day, both days, the highlight for us was seeing Sara Storer on Saturday night. Needless to say, we now have two new CDs.



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In the lead up, down the highway at Captain's Mountain was an event called Chisholm Trail, a "western" style shooting event, where all the competitors dressed as cow boys and girls, shooting at targets through saloon windows and doors, wagon trains etc. It was colorful and noisy. They all take on a character, and maintain that character all weekend. They had saloon nights and a final evening ball, and all dress up accordingly.



[This is Whiskey Annie](#)



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Another of the events in Millmerran during the lead up week was the local craft ladies invited crafty caravaners to their craft morning. A group of us went, all with our crocheting, knitting or card marking, and were made very welcome.



We were supposed to leave on Monday (3<sup>rd</sup> October) but decided to leave the van for another day, as we drove up to Nobby (near Toowoomba) to visit our friends David and Dea (The FelixIIIs) without the van. It was raining, and we did not want to drive the van, in the wet with 1,200 other vans leaving Millmerran at the same time. We had a lovely lunch at Rudds Pub at Nobby, great, as always, to catch up with David and Dea, and left early, the sky was threatening. And chuck it down it did, all the way back to Millmerran.

On arrival at the showgrounds, water everywhere, neighbours had moved to higher ground, our van sitting in almost a foot of water at some stage of the afternoon apparently. Not much we could do, until the sun came out on Tuesday. We dried out as best we could, packed up and were on the road again by midday. Well, we tried. John drove off our site – ok, across the road – ok, onto sites across the road, thinking to avoid the mud on the road – ok, then suddenly – SUNK. It was a tractor job to

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get us out.



It has been another varied month, punctuated by wet weather, mud and road closures but, as usual, we are still having fun with all the variations life throws at us.

On our eating our way around Australia theme, here we are at Caliguella Lagoon, enjoying our camp fire side meal. For Bev and Al, note the flower on the table, and the place mats.

