

Aboard Sengo

Aboard Sengo

December 2016

Tidying up and bedding down

Spending the first half of the month tidying up Sengo for her Summer holiday wasn't fun in the humidity of Darwin

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Heading South

A big road trip; over 3000 kilometers in 9 days.

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Yorke Peninsula

Exploring some of South Australia's farming heritage

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The road trip begins

Leaving Sengo in Darwin for the 'Wet Season', we headed south; travelling over 3000 kilometers to Ardrossan on South Australia's Yorke Peninsula. It was a long drive in a week and as usual for a long trip in a short space of time, we really saw very little. A follow-up Road Trip in the future may fill in the gaps.

Tidying up and Bedding down

Sengo has been wished a fond (temporary) farewell whilst her crew heads south out of the 'wet'. She will get lots of showers but will probably not be clean when we return as the pollution from the rain in summer in the 'top end' leaves lovely, and highly persistent, black streaks.

We were hoping to head south in early December but a delay in our departure was the result of, despite an earlier phone call, not being able to lock a sail maker in to help us remove the sails, and a few days more were compulsorily added to our stay in Darwin. This wasn't such a bad thing however as it reduced our panic from 'overwhelming' to 'mild' but we still found we were struggling to get things done in the time we had. Of course the biggest factor was the heat and humidity and if we had been locals we might have been more efficient, but coming from the southern states we found that a couple of hours at each end of the day was all we could manage.

Sengo gets naked: The removal of Sengo's sails wasn't as straightforward as expected. The mainsail came down reasonably easily and after being strapped on deck by Andrew and the sail maker and lowered to the dock with the spinnaker line it was bundled into a marina trolley with the help of a third set of hands. The genoa however wasn't so simple. In theory all we had to do was lower the line (we had not done this before) and fold the sail up. Unfortunately a screw on the furling rigging was not screwed in far enough and the sail got caught. As a result Andrew found himself admiring the marina from above – we had to send him up the mast to fix the issue. After a couple of attempts to get him the right tools the job was done. An hour's work had turned into about three.



Other tasks included setting up a couple of fans and a dehumidifier, packing most of our stuff inside (the marina staff will put the rest of it inside if a real blow is expected), moving what we think we will need for four or so months on the road into the caravan (bearing in mind we are moving from a 48 foot catamaran to a 17 foot caravan (and essentially we only have one hull)) and working out the logistics of our driving route to South Australia before the 23rd December. We moved to a caravan park (where we could plug in the air conditioning and have a good night's sleep (not to mention to the immense relief of Cilla and Tiger who were really suffering in the heat on the boat)) and made many trips backwards and forwards to Sengo to finalise the packing. Unfortunately the closest caravan park to the marina wouldn't take the cats so the one we eventually ended up at (which also officially doesn't take pets but were happy to negotiate) meant that picking up and dropping stuff off at Sengo was a 20 kilometre round trip. Whilst we tried to start early to get the jobs done, our earliest time at the boat was 0800 and by 1100 we were usually pretty exhausted. The weather was changing by early December and there was usually a 'shower' (storm) around 1600 every day, the extent of which however usually covered where we were staying but not the marina so we had to time our departures so as not to get soaked. It was often dark when we headed back for the night. Eventually we were set, said our farewells to the marina staff and *Backbeat*, who had kept me company for the previous couple of weeks, and headed south.

Carols by Candlelight. 4th December 2016

The contrast was interesting: two uniformed foot police-people inside the grounds walking around in flap jackets/vests with western strides, arms hanging out at sides, hands in readiness to grab their very obvious firearms - compared with the two mounted police people at the front gate where both the police people and their horses were wearing fake reindeer horns (the horses also wore tinsel). What ever you think about the combination of a group of songs from a religious sect combined with a character that really only evolved out of a capitalistic move to make money by a bastardisation on a German folk tale and its morphing into an English tradition, Carols by Candlelight certainly has one thing going for it...the organisers usually manage to find a highly talented bunch of people to entertain you. Carols By Candlelight in Darwin 2016 was no exception and the extent of local (born here) or localised (grew up or moved here) talent was amazing. There were also some entertainers more recently acquired by the area and a Tongan Choir. The backup choir was a mixture of ensembles from across Darwin and the state. And yes there was the expected chat with Santa (although you wondered where that was going when he asked his co-host if she would help him 'get some gear off' (boots and jacket as it turned out)) and a performance by a young local lass (Tiffany Grey I think her name was but I can't find her listed anywhere) that had nothing to do with Christmas, and everything to do with fishing. The gates opened at 1630. I got there at 1745 (it would have been 1800 but J from the marina gave me a lift up the hill, thanks) and I grabbed something to eat (a yiros (souvlaki for those Victorians) and a soft drink) and went in search of a spot. I chose right up the top near the back fence thinking I was far enough away that I was unlikely to get others plonking themselves in front of me and apart from the odd walk through I had a great view; arched by the branch of one of two large trees. The acoustics were terrific; well balanced, and loud enough to drown out the recalcitrant kids climbing on the other tree (and pulling down its limbs....,) although it was touch and go with the cicadas at one stage. At the end of the evening there was a fireworks display that emanated from directly behind me so I chose the right spot. At the end of the night I walked the two km back from the Ampitheatre and the roads were surprisingly empty. Andrew missed out, he was still on the road driving our summer accommodation from Brisbane to Darwin (see next page).





Meet Kinquaid

Kinquaid (557 KQD) is a white 2002 turbo diesel Pajero with manual transmission. He has just over 200,000 kilometers on the clock and before we bought him had never towed anything. Andrew is not so keen on his looks but he drives beautifully. He is of course only a temporary member of the family as at the end of March or April/May we will be selling him and the caravan (both purchased in Brisbane in February 2016), so we can continue our circumnavigation of Australia on Sengo, who is patiently awaiting our arrival back in Darwin

Passing road-trains requires patience. There are a few overtaking opportunities south of Palmerston for a hundred kilometers or so. After that you need to wait for a long straight section of road.



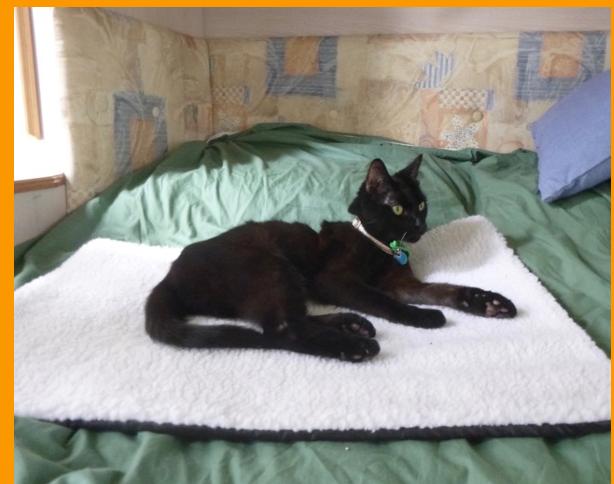
Unfortunately for Tiger, we had to leave his boxes behind!



‘You’re kidding aren’t you!’ ..Possibly what went through Tiger’s mind when we transferred him across from Sengo to the caravan.



‘Madam Muck’ has nabbed the ‘fake’ sheepskin on the bed as the snoozing place of choice.



Darwin to Alice Springs

Darwin to Katherine

1525 kilometers and three days of driving got us to Alice; the last two of which felt really long (650 km and 548 km respectively). On 15th December we departed Darwin at 0930, which was two hours later than we expected and stopped only once; on the side of the road as we thought Cilla was asking to go to the toilet but I think she was just sick of being on an angle (we made sure the cages were flat after this) and balking at the new and scary situation she found herself in. Cilla and Tiger have not had a long drive since their move from Victoria to Sengo (a 14 hour drive) in July 2014. We arrived at Katherine, had a late lunch after setting up at the Riverview Tourist Village, and went for a mid afternoon dip.



Katherine Hot Springs

... the locals want to rename them the 'Katherine Thermal Springs' but they felt barely tepid to me. Granted it may have been a contrast between the air temperature and the water temperature but I was expecting something a bit hotter. Having said that the water was delightfully refreshing and had we travelled to Mataranka instead and jumped in the springs there at the homestead we would have been steamingly uncomfortable (apparently they are at around 32 degrees all year).

The top pool of the Katherine Hot Springs is a short walk from the back of the Riverview Tourist Village and access is via a metal walkway and steps. Apparently the locals keep building the waterfall gap up to make the pool deeper but the council keeps knocking it down – I guess this is to do with liability. We spent sometime here, hanging around on a cheap floating noodle talking to a few locals, until our fingers started to shrivel up and we got out. A small creek leads to the next pool which is much more manicured with concrete walls and steps for access. It is delightfully pretty but we didn't get back in and didn't follow the springs any further downstream. Eventually they run into the Katherine River. We sizzled in the heat and headed back to camp.



Darwin to Alice Springs

Devils Marbles

In 2000 when we travelled 3300 kilometers in three days each way to get from Melbourne to Mataranka there was very little time for sight seeing on the Stuart Highway. As a result our trip to the Devils Marbles consisted of around an hour and Andrew promised the next time we would visit we would camp here. This visit consisted around twenty minutes (pets aren't technically allowed in the camp area but we didn't actually have the time)

so my wish to spend some serous contemplative time here still stands.

The Devils Marbles are around 100 kilometers south of Tennant Creek and consist of weathered granite that was originally formed 1700 million years ago. Geomorphologists have different names for the different formations in the group. Four aboriginal groups used the area to replenish food and water and consider the site sacred.



Darwin to Alice Springs

The Drive South



Bonney Well was used by telegraph workers, stockmen, an itinerant missionary and the army.

I thought they built things big in QLD but the Northern Territory has the biggest windmills I've ever seen. The first was in Pine Creek but the one at Bonney Well on the Stuart Highway appears to be just as large. The only real way to traverse the interior of the country in the 'old days' was if you had a regular supply of water. A series of wells were dug along the old telegraph line and along stock routes and some are still marked on maps today (if only in writing). The Bonney Well is a ruin (although the wind mill looks as though it is still operating (and clearly isn't original)) and the stone structure (estimated to be built in the 1880's) is only one of three remaining along the Stuart Highway (what was then called the North South Road). As a result it was declared a heritage place under the *Northern Territory Heritage Conservation Act*.

I am not sure if there is still a well at Wycliffe Well, another little dot on the landscape, but there is a roadhouse (with caravan park) and a mural on the side of the building claiming that Wycliffe Well is the UFO capital of Australia. It might be fun to pop in there next time we pass.

General landscape changes. The drive south travels through various landscape types but the changes are so subtle that one minute the understory is tropical plants, the next it is bare red sand whilst the main bush remains the same. If you compared patches of bush a couple of hundred kilometers apart it would be more obvious.



Bonney Well

Alice Springs - Day 1

Alice Springs Desert Park

I wanted to visit the Desert Park last time we were in Alice Springs, in 2000, but as on both occasions in that year we arrived at 1830 and left at 0400 the next morning, clearly that wasn't going to happen. So, as a result, visiting this park was a priority for our couple of day's rest/stopover this time. The Desert



Park is a small park but that didn't mean we saw all of it. On their website they provide a half day itinerary which includes turning up at the park upon opening at 0730 and spending an hour wandering around before starting the 'interps' with the 0830 kangaroo talk. Whist we aimed to start early, we didn't move very quickly in the heat and so arrived just before the kangaroo talk. We were officially the first customers through the door and the only attendees for the poor guide (Doug) at the kangaroo enclosure. The park provides a summer itinerary and if you attend every keeper and guide talk, and allow them to escort you to the next talk, you have very little time to yourselves. Of course

having been a guide at Healesville Sanctuary, the nuts and bolts of red kangaroos (and kangaroos in general) was not new. However, our guide was of the local Arrernte tribe and the cultural information and relationship to this animal was fascinating. Poor Doug got us on the Desert Survival session as well and he did very well to answer our (mainly Andrew's) questions that got a bit off his speil but not really off topic. The Dingo talk is a keeper talk (there is a distinction between guides and keepers here) as is the Bird Of Prey exhibition at the Ampitheatre. The nocturnal house presentation is a guide talk though and it is the best nocturnal house I've ever seen (apparently the biggest in the southern hemisphere). The guide did try to show us some baby bilbies but they weren't showing themselves so we had to put up with adults instead (adults are still very cute). The poor girl who was conducting the bush medicine interp had a tough time with a aggressive (white) know-it-all who stole her thunder and mentioned the plants before she could. We headed out after the 1400 talk (missing the 1500 talk on fish by minutes (9 species in the territory apparently) and we only got to go through one of the bird averyes (there are several). The keeper talks had a strong environmental message in them although for us it was preaching to the converted; to the other tourists (all non Australians, it may not have had any impact).

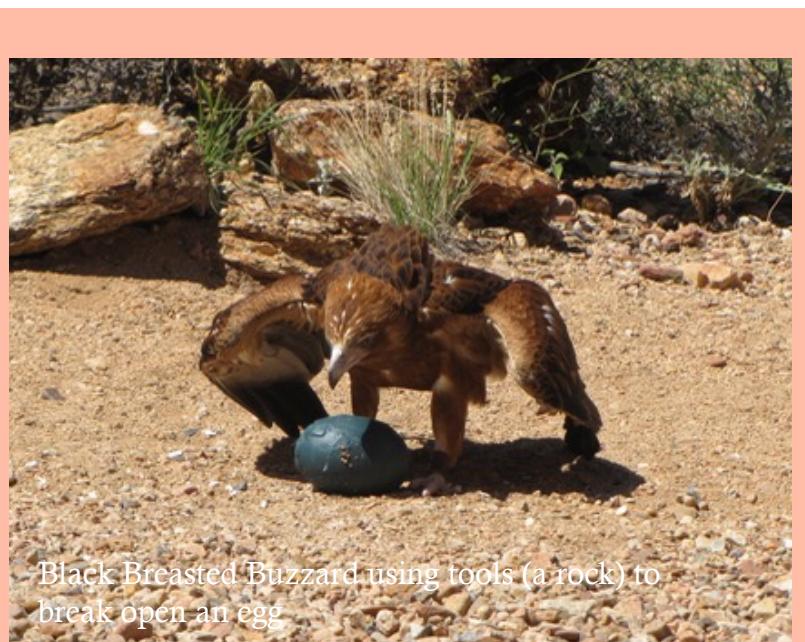


Alice Springs

Alice Springs Desert Park



Aurora is the Park's Close Encounter bird and he was waiting with the keeper inside the entrance building at 1300 to greet visitors.



Black Breasted Buzzard using tools (a rock) to break open an egg



Thorny Devil



Bilby – nocturnal house

Alice Springs - Day 2

Olive Pink Botanic Gardens

Although it was due to be an exceptionally hot day (40 degrees) we took the opportunity to get on the bikes (the first time since Maryborough (see Aboard Sengo January 2016) and go for a ride. There are a couple of marked walkway/bikeways on the local map and we headed along the Todd River to the Olive Pink Botanical Gardens. The Gardens are open at 0800 and so is the café so the idea was to do a bit of exercise, have an indulgent breakfast and ride home. We were a little early so we took the extension of the walkway along the dry Todd to The Gap, the geological gap you go through to enter Alice Springs, before heading back for breakfast.

The Gardens consist of local arid species (with some themed areas). Olive Pink (1884 - 1975), originally a botanist, spent the better part of her life fighting for the rights of a local aboriginal tribe (north of Alice Springs, not the tribe that covers the Alice Springs area) and as a result became a thorn in the local government's side. She established the gardens but they were not open to the public during her lifetime. A curatorial and apprenticeship staff is supported via a perpetual fund.



Termites

Leaving Darwin, south of Palmerston where the 'bush' starts, the iconic thick base, even thicker head 6-foot plus light grey termite mounds line the main road. These however quite quickly morph into the redder more non-descript morphs of the smaller termite mounds, not often topping five or so feet and they run for miles. All the way down to Alice Springs, the density clearly depending on number of ants and resources available, these 'mounds' line the main highway that dissects the top half of the country. Some lark 'has had a bit of fun' and dressed the 'odd one' up. Some are dressed in t-shirts, some have caps, some have sticks (or branches) for arms and some have gloves for hands. Occasionally you will see a termite mound dressed in a dress accessoried with fancy full brimmed hats as if they were going to the races. Around Tenant Creek, the 'termite people' have messages; the first I saw I couldn't read (as we 'sailed' past at 100 kilometers per hour) but the second was clearly directed at the local school kids. The mound was dressed in a brightly coloured pullover, with a brightly coloured baseball cap with the notice 'Come to School'. I am not sure where all the clothes came from (one assumes the local op shop rejects) but I suspect no one asked the termites what they thought of this idea

Far from being an amusement termites present obstacles for construction across the country. Electricity poles are an important infrastructure item and the Northern Territory solves the problem of 'poles' (traditionally built from tall tree trunks) by having structures consisting of two sides of metal rails reaching up to a point with cross beams that make the structure look like a never-ending ladder. South Australia has the two metal outside beams but instead of cross steps they have filled the entire section in between with concrete.

Although termites present issues to construction they are an important part of the ecosystem. The Rosenberg's Goanna is now highly vulnerable in South Australia because termite mounds (where the lizards lay their eggs) have been removed from farmland. The environment department in SA is asking for sightings to be reported as it is expected that at each remaining sight where these lizards live, there is likely to be less than 100 individuals.



Power pole in South Australia

Alice Springs to Ardrossan

Crossing the Border



Finally, a border we can actually stand on!

Filling up with diesel at the last pub in the NT (or the first pub in the NT depending on which way you are traveling), we gave the cats a toilet break, which they didn't take, and headed for the border. The border post is quite swish (see photo, kindly taken by a fellow traveller) and has info on South Australia, its history and rules, or, if you are coming the other way, the Northern Territory, its history and rules. Our overnight stop was Marla, at the start of the Oodnadatta Track (which we were not taking) and 159 kilometer away. I had not changed my watch since QLD and so instead of having to take away thirty minutes I was having to add it on. We found we suddenly lost an hour! Powered sites at the Marla roadhouse/hotel/motel were thirty dollars (they don't take bookings but I was told there was plenty of space). We were the first to turn up but it was about a third full by the time we went to bed) and the food as basic. We decided to purchase dinner: the meals were generous sizes but Andrew didn't get the kangaroo we had paid for.



Coober Pedy – 21st Dec 2016



Mullock Heaps along the Stuart Highway



Inside an original miner's dugout home: his mine was on the level below

Discovered by a gold prospector's son whilst looking for water in early 1915, Coober Pedy (approximate translation for 'white man's holes' in the local indigenous language) is supposedly the World's largest opal field. Most of which is pulled up is 'rubbish' but some can make a comfortable living in mining opal. Apparently there is however, no scientific method of working out where the opals runs might be – you dig and if you find a seam you follow it. As a result large mining companies won't mine for opal and most mines are run by individuals, or preferably partnerships where the costs and rewards can be shared. The costs of establishment and equipment can be high, although traditional mining with a pick and shovel still works (but is limited if you wish to dig deep when two shafts need to be dug for mine ventilation).

The majority of the town lives underground and house boundaries must have at least 4 meters of rock between neighbours' rooms. Just like normal housing, plans must be submitted to council for development approval, although practically all suitable spots for underground houses have been taken within the specified town boundary.

There has been discontent with the current council for mismanagement of rates and monies and the municipality is several million dollars in the red. We spent the afternoon doing a mine tour – there are two options for tours, either take a tour operator inside town where the mines are no longer allowed to be worked, or take a tour across the Stuart Highway in the Working Mine. Whilst this would have been interesting we chose the slightly cheaper option of an in-town facility. The lead up shafts to the shop and tour start contain a museum that covers geological, prospecting and aboriginal history with regard to the town. An interpretive area of Aboriginal culture of the area is unfortunately closed for renovation. As a strange twist of fate, not only did the guide we got come from Melbourne, she was also born in the same hospital as me. If we had more time here we would visit Croc Harry's mine (built and lived in by the original Crocodile Dundee (who gave up Croc Hunting not because it was made illegal, but because crocodiles had almost been hunted out)) and take a scenic drive to the Breakaway's and Dingo Fence.

Woomera – 22nd Dec 2016

It's all in the timing...



Missed it by That Much...

...was possibly a call made many a time around Woomera after it opened in 1947 when British and Australian personnel established Woomera as the biggest rocket testing range in the World; 270,000 square kilometers (or the size of Spain apparently). The town was not open to the public until the mid 1980's, and access to the range is still prohibited. The town is still a support base for Defence personnel working at Roxby Downs, and the current population of Woomera is around 120.

We arrived into Woomera after 1200 and were the first to set up in the caravan park, a paddock of few trees (the shade of none of which are particularly useful), non descript cabins along the outside wall, a cleaner who doesn't now his North from his South and strictly written instructions on the door to the office that payment needs to be made between 5 and 6pm only, which is when management open the bar adjacent the parking area.

It was after 1400 when we left the van to go exploring and you can't miss the yard of the town's museum (or the block next door) both of which are dotted with old planes, rockets and radar equipment. The museum itself is a Nissan Hut type building, (a small looking hanger) but the door was shut fast when I tried it. There was a phone number under the building sign but we didn't call it. After a wander around both blocks of historical items we headed off to the Visitor Information Centre. I tried its door. It was also shut fast. It turns out that because it is Summer Season both buildings are only opened with restricted hours..between 10am and 2pm. It was now 2.30pm. We had missed them by ..'That Much'.

Yorke Peninsula

23rd-31st December 2016

Officially the Yorke Peninsula Council area encompasses the boot-like land mass jutting out from the South Australian mainland lying south approximately in a straight line west from the top of the Gulf St Vincent to the Spencer Gulf. For various other reasons; tourism, maps and demographics, the Yorke Peninsula area includes the northern towns of Kadina, Wallaroo, Moonta and Port Broughton. The Peninsula covers over 5000 square kilometers in area and Kadina in the central north is the largest centre (officially in in the Copper Coast government region). Most of the Peninsula's towns swell with an extra thousand or two individuals in the summer and holiday seasons although apparently the 2016 Holiday Season has been quiet, as has the previous few years, so we probably didn't quite get to see how busy the place can really get.

We were based at Ardrossan about two thirds of the way up the Peninsula on the eastern side, and spent a lot of time driving in order to see as much of this jutting land mass as possible.

The area is predominantly farmland, the land a maze of different shades of yellow and brown, with the predominant crops of wheat, barley, field peas, lentils, faba beans, lupins, canola and oats smattering the landscape. Some of this is converted into hay and exported. Some sheep and cattle are brought in between crops and crops are rotated to maintain the health of the soil; field peas are planted before wheat to increase the nitrogen in the soil, a much more efficient and sustainable way of increasing nutrients than the addition of superphosphate that the farmers added at the beginning of last century. Like elsewhere on this continent, this practice caused soil salinity and this can be obviously seen on the land adjacent the roads south from the top of the peninsula (it didn't help that the land was relatively salty to start with). Some reserves have been kept for flora and fauna, but apart from a couple of exceptions these are generally only small and in the main probably have only been saved due to a quirk of their location and the inability to clear the land. Pleasingly, some road reserves are thick Mallee scrub, whilst others contain



the odd tree with a ground cover of the escapee adjacent crop.

Each town seems to have its own museum, some of which are National Trust Buildings. These are open at specific hours; usually a specific day and/or public holidays and usually between the hours of 2pm and 4pm. So if you were inclined to visit the museums of the area you would be best to plan a week in advance; Monday at point A, Tuesday at point B etc.

Our experiences at eating out were a mixed affair; from the standard pub meal to the odd café; you can compare everything from the Troubridge Hotel in Edithburg where the slow cooked rump was sensational and they had the best variety and creativity in the salad bar that I've ever seen, to the chocolateire in Maitland whose capsicum free salad had capsicum in it, to a small eatery and gallery in Port Broughton where the cook didn't know what was in the curry paste she was using (it was a written in Chinese) and the fish was dished up tepid on a cold plate.



One of the back roads to Arthurton. We missed a road and did a bit of unexpected 4Wdriving.

Yorke Peninsula



Pioneer Farming

South Australia is officially the hottest state in the country. It is dry, in some cases dusty and not all of it is arable. Despite the desperate attempts by early settlers, the countryside is dotted with abandoned and ruined buildings, a legacy to early farmers who didn't make it. Also dotted throughout the Yorke Peninsula are commemorative monuments celebrating the pioneers of the local districts. The photo below is a commemoration of the pioneers of the Cunningham District (1873-1973), a district reduced to a smudge on a gps map. Some districts still have the old church building on a prominent corner, and many of

these are intact. Some have, like the rest of the community simply disappeared forever.



Yorke Peninsula

Wind farms. The photo adjacent is of wind turbines on the ridge north east of Port Broughton. I am not sure how big this facility is but there is a large facility at the southern end of the Peninsula (Wattle Farm just south of Edithburgh) with a viewing platform for the public. Wattle Farm has the ability to produce power for 52,000 homes.



Mining. Mining has been a prominent industry on the Peninsula for some time. The obvious mine is the dolomite operations just south of Ardrossan operated by OneSteel. The 'new' jetty was built largely to transport dolomite from the Ardrossan area but other mining operations on the Peninsula have included salt and gypsum (for making plaster and Bellco Chalk...see further info on Inneson), and at Moonta there was a large Copper mine from 1861 to 1923.

There is a proposal from Rex Minerals for further mining on the Peninsula just south of Ardrossan but the original proposal for exploration for gold, copper and iron ore was modified to exclude the iron ore as the iron ore price dropped. Mining was expected to start in 2016 but now that the copper price has dropped the enterprise has been put on hold until it is viable. Land holders are now confused as to the company's intentions. Locals are worried about,

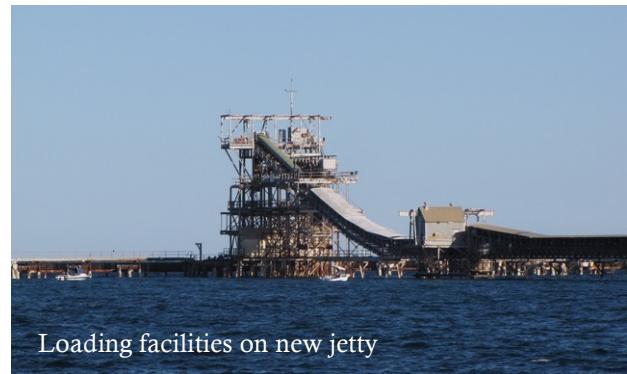
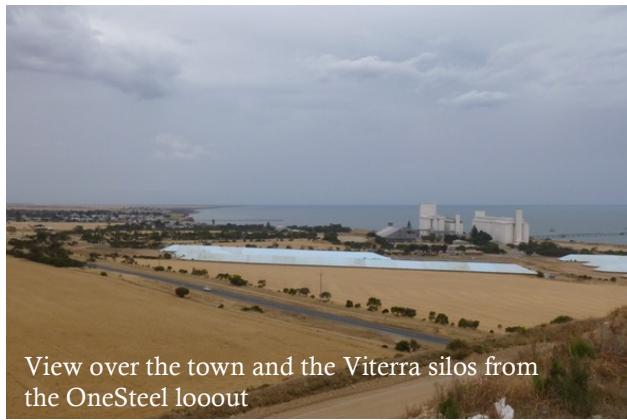


amongst other things, the loss of farmland. Proposed new wind farm facilities 20 kilometres south west of Ardrossan have also got detractors and large protest banners are prominent along some roads. The project has been approved but delayed and the 199 turbines that were supposed to be built in 2016 now have to start appearing before August 2017 before the planning permission expires.

Walking the Yorke.

If you are feeling energetic the local tourism association with the relevant government authorities has constructed and linked existing walkways and paths into a 500 km track (almost complete) edgeing around the Yorke Peninsula. The track is suitable to cycle as well. Authorities are continuing to put in seating picnic areas and interpretation boards.

Ardrossan



The First sheep run in the area was in 1851 but the Ardrossan area was officially settled in the early 1870's.

The town of Ardrossan is probably most famously known for the invention of the Stump Jump Plow (the manufacturer of which had 130 employees at one stage before the Great Depression forced the closure of the Ardrossan factory).

The (now public) Jetty at Ardrossan was built in 1886 (and extended in 1880) to export the products of the area that included crops (wheat, barley), stock (wool, sheep), farm implements, and mallee stumps. A ketch service was also available for passengers to Port Adelaide twice weekly. Goods were taken to ships using horse and trolleys.

Ardrossan is still the centre of a farming community but is also a popular weekend and holiday location. The caravan park we stayed at was three quarters full of annual sites (permanent holiday van sites).

Blue Swimmer Crabs are the reason Ardrossan gets some of its visitors and crabbing off the jetty is one of the main activities listed for the town. The crabbing is down a bit at the moment and some were having better luck than others. A change of tide is usually needed for a good catch but Christmas Day was due to be a 'dodge; tide, as the locals call it – where there is no tide change during one cycle.

We arrived in Ardrossan on 23rd December and not knowing it was on, missed the town Street Christmas Party by a couple of hours.

A dolomite mine was opened in 1948 by BHP and a new jetty built to the south of the existing public jetty. Salt from nearby Price is loaded onto ships at this new jetty as well as grains from surrounding farms. The Viterra silos at the jetty can hold up to 420,000 tonnes of grain.

Innes National Park

Declared in 1970 predominantly to protect the remaining habitat of the Western Whip Bird (thought extinct on the Yorke Peninsula until 1960), Innes National Park covers the 'toe' of Yorke Peninsula and protects a large tract of native heathland. A large proportion of this vegetation is regenerated as the park incorporates areas that were previously mined for gypsum and salt.

The Visitor's Centre is sparse with a little interpretation but the staff are as helpful as they can be. The only modern toilets in the park are here; drop toilets are situated at the car park at West Cape Lighthouse and Stenhouse Bay Jetty. Some camping areas also have drop toilets.

Shipwrecks. The coast is dotted with shipwrecks and one island off the coast just east of West Cape (Wedge Island) is graced with five tragedies. At the end of the jetty at Stenhouse Bay the *Hougoumont* lies scuttled in 20 meters whilst on the beach at Ethel Beach lies the wreck of the *Ethel* and what is left of the *Ferret*.

Wildlife. Speed is limited in the park, predominantly to 40 kilometers per hour. Signs along the roads indicate the possible presence kangaroos, emus and mallee fowl. In 2004 tamar wallaby were re-introduced (The Australian mainland population was extinct and individuals were imported back from New Zealand). An eradication plan for foxes was carried out prior to this and initially 20 individuals were released. There were further releases in subsequent years and I read someone's recent blog that the wallabies were abundant. The interps in the Visitor's Centre regarding this however is dated 2003 before the first introduction so needs updating.

Lighthouses. There are short walks to the Spencer and West Cape Lighthouses.



View from Visitors Centre

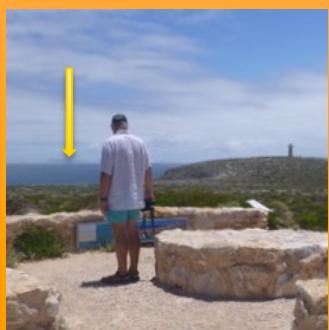


View from road entering the park

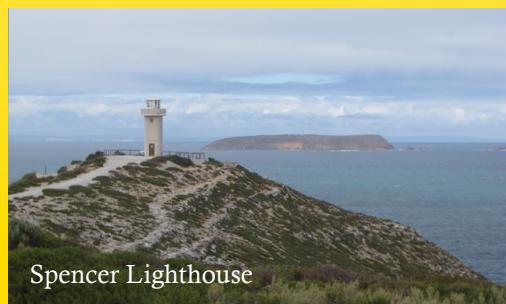


Innes National Park (cont) Lighthouses

Just off West Cape lies Wedge Island whose lighthouse began operating in 1911. Wedge Island has 5 shipwrecks around its perimeter and although the actual lighthouse is only 5 meters tall, it is geographically the highest above sea level in Australia.



Spencer Lighthouse



West Cape Lighthouse

Built in 1980, the 8.5 metre tall lighthouse at West Cape was constructed in stainless steel to minimize the environmental impact.



Innes National Park (cont)

Shipwrecks

The *Ethel* was an iron barque of 711 tonnes that founded in a storm in January 2004.

The *SS Ferret* was an iron screw steamship of 460 tonnes that was in the area when the *Ethel* foundered but due to weather was unable to help. Ironically, sixteen years later, the *Ferret* foundered on the same beach.

The hull of the *Ethel* can still be seen at the base of the cliffs (you can take the staircase down to the beach). The only visible remnant of the *Ferret* is its boiler, not far from the *Ethel's* hull. Both wrecks are slowly sinking below the sand.



Wreck of the Ethel



Monument to both wrecks



Ferret's boiler

Wreck of the Ethel

Innes National Park (cont)

Inneston

Inneston was a company town (The Yorke Peninsula Plaster Company) established around what is now Lake Innes to mine gypsum and convert it into plaster. It operated between 1913 and 1930 when the Great Depression forced its closure. The settlement had a post office (eventually), a bakery, stables, and around thirty houses that housed 100 workers.

In 1922 the company formed Bellco Chalk (chalk being a by-product of gypsum processing). (I can't find a record of where Bellco operated from after Inneston was abandoned but Bellco chalk was manufactured up into the 1980's).

The gypsum crushing and plaster making process was energy intensive and individuals were employed full-time to collect wood for burning. (Conditions were a bit cheap though: workers walked to work on company time but walked home in their own time.)

Remnants of some of the buildings still stand, and others have been restored to provide accommodation that can be booked for holiday accommodation by the general public. The bakery is essentially a shell but another visitor to the site had heard that a university/school had got students to start restoring it. As a result there is an oven in the wall of one of the bakery rooms. Museum or future tea rooms perhaps?



Images of Inneston....



Rusting ruins of machinery around Lake Inneston



Inneston Post Office



Equipment at the crushing plant



Travelling with The Kids

Whist Tiger and Cilla have got used to the boat (sort of, to varying degrees), they had not been in a car for any length of time (other than short trips to vets at ports) since the 14 hour trip from Melbourne to Sydney in July 2014. Subsequently we had two very confused and stressed 'kitties' when we left Darwin for Katherine on the 15th December. We stopped a couple of times, put them in the (dog) travelling cage with water and the litter tray to give them a break and hoped they would take it. They seem to have this shut-down mode on travel days and wait until they get to our destination before abluting, which worries me a bit as some trips have been around 600 km and I don't want them dehydrating.

Finding caravan parks that will take us has been a hit and miss affair. Hidden Valley Tourist Park in Darwin doesn't normally take pets but made an exception for 'two geriatric indoor cats.' This park lies between Darwin and Palmerston, has attractive grounds and a great pool area. Wintersun Caravan Park in Alice Springs is listed as not taking dogs but again let in 'two geriatric indoor cats'. The facilities were a bit dated here, and some showers and toilets leak. The outdoor laundry sink however was a good size (I am hand washing at the moment) and they did put us in an isolated shady spot. The pool however is surrounded by a small amount of concrete next to the front fence of the property and not inviting for a relaxing swim.

Riverview Tourist Village in Katherine is a pet friendly park anyway so there wasn't even an issue of asking permission. There was a pool here but we didn't check it out; instead heading down to Katherine Hot Springs for the afternoon dip.

Woomera Caravan Park was ok with pets, they kind of have to be, they are the only option. The caravan park at the Oasis Hotel in Coober Pedy also lets pets in by arrangement and prior discussion. I didn't bother. There were only two of us in the park. Caravan Parks at Roadhouses are all pet friendly as far as I can work out. There are no alternatives to accommodation, sometimes hundreds of km apart and singe blokes are often travelling with one or two mutts. Ardrossan Caravan Park is pet friendly anyway, but I did ask. However, my planning may have been better. We were placed essentially between two lots of dogs.



Set up in Ardrossan

Christmas decorations
were sparse this year!