

Aboard Sengo

Kinquaid

Aboard Sengo

March 2017

Bagging the Peak

Even if we did cheat a bit

9

Around Stanthorpe

Exploring the Granite Belt

14

Biggenden

National Parks and sitting out the aftermath of Cyclone Debbie

18



At Lindsay Rock Tops; Mount Kaputar National Park

Geology, Gunmen and Grizzly Conflicts.

We weren't storm chasing in March - but we did get wet; and exploring was scheduled trying to dodge the rain. We followed in the footsteps of bushrangers, learnt about rock formations, and came across reminders of history before, during and after WWI and WWII.

From Bungendore to Biggenden



We were often out exploring in the rain

March was a wet month. The whole idea of this four-month exercise in Kinkaid was to escape the Wet Season but we only had five 24-hour dry patches in the entire month, and it wasn't the location – we travelled 1880 kilometers (without side trips) from Bungendore just outside Canberra – to Biggenden, a hundred kilometers west of Bundaberg – it rained just about everywhere we went. At the start of the month it was the persistent East Coast Low that sat off the NSW coast for weeks – far longer than it should have – and at the end of the month there was Cyclone Debbie!

Whilst a cyclone had graced Australia in WA in February, it hadn't threatened large populations. March's cyclones were more serious; Sengo sat through a Cyclone warning for **Blanche** in Darwin on the 4th March but it was **Debbie**, purported to be the biggest since Yasi in 2011 (and of whom towns are still trying recover), who graced us on 28th March and who did serious damage across parts of the northern and central coasts of QLD. At the end of the month we found ourselves in Biggenden, sitting out Debbie's aftermath – she had by this time, fortunately, turned into a tropical low.

Sydney 2nd – 6th March 2017

1st -2nd March 2017. I spent our last full day in the Canberra area out clothes shopping with our hosts, raiding three op shops in Queanbeyan to come home with one pair of pants, three tops and a handbag – for the grand total of \$19.50. Not being used to shopping op shops I thought that was good shopping. Andrew stayed at 'home with the boys' and relaxed. We left Bungendore around 10am on the 2nd of March and headed toward 'the big smoke'. Playing the route planners against one another we took a few back roads before rejoining the Hume Highway and headed toward town. Having included motorways and not tollways in our instructions to the navigation system, we headed a bit far into town before weaving our way toward Dural in the Sydney Hills, where we were booked in for a few nights. Rain had started light but ended up a little short of torrential, which is not a good thing on unfamiliar roads towing a van. After several wrong turns, missing the entrance to the caravan park, and being allocated the wrong spot, we eventually set up the van before the next downpour came.

Wiseman's Ferry

3rd March 2017. In 2010, the last time we were at Wisemans Ferry, having crossed the Hawkesbury River from the north, I noted driving through town what a great view there would be from the pub and that afternoon tea on the balcony would be grand. This morning I proposed a second visit (Wisemans Ferry is 41 kilometers from Dural) and whilst we didn't end up at the pub we did end up having a cuppa from an establishment with approximately the same view (albeit a little lower down the hill). Planning to check out the cemetery where Solomon Wiseman was buried after a short walk, we first headed off across the river ferry to find the Grass Tree Circuit. There are a few walking tracks around here, including one that is part of the Old Great North Road, cut by prisoners from Sydney to Newcastle between 1826 and 1836. Because the schematic in the pamphlet we had didn't seem to scale we stopped at an overgrown picnic ground to see where we were from the information board. The board was older than the walking track and had no mention of it, and I found out later that we hadn't quite driven far enough. However, as soon as we got out of the car we were covered in swarms of mozzies, (I am not kidding, the air was black with them) putting all thoughts of a pleasant walk immediately out of our heads; just getting back in the car trapped 20 of the black biting beasts in with us. Walk abandoned we headed back the other way and leaving the Hawkesbury on our left we headed over the Thomas James Bridge (the oldest in-use convict built bridge on mainland Australia (1830)) onto the historic 'town' of St Albans. The day had started drizzling and there had

pretty much been on and off rain so far. When we got to the St Albans' historic cemetery we waited for a break in the weather before getting out to have a look. This little cemetery has a group of people looking after it and the lawns for most of it are low, making walking amongst the rows easy (although there are still some headstones hidden in the bush). We spent a few minutes looking at these old graves, and wondered what might have been for the lives that were lost. Suddenly however the mood changed and the wind started to roar. I knew what was coming next. Andrew got to the car just after the rain started. I got soaked.

It was pelting by the time we got to the Settlers Arms Inn at St Albans. Because of the age of the building there were a few gaps in the verandah and you had to walk through the breaks in a wall of water to get inside. One hundred and sixty years old, the steps at the doorways were appropriately worn, head height was appropriately low, a notice outside stated there were 'very free range' birds around, (chooks and peacocks), and the house cat managed to throw a fur ball behind us on the stone floor as we were eating lunch in an old and dark dining room!



The historic St Albans Cemetery



The historic Settlers Arms Inn St Albans had 90ml of rain this day

Wiseman's Ferry cont

After lunch we crossed the MacDonall River at St Albans before driving back to the Hawkesbury and crossing it with yet another ferry. Instead of turning left to go back to Wisemans Ferry we turned right and ended up on one of the prettiest drives I've ever done; Hawkesbury River to the right, sandstone rock faces to the left. This was a slow and windy drive and we eventually turned off it at Sackville and headed home.



A pretty drive



A pretty drive

The 4th and 5th of March were still wet and whilst we ventured out and caught up with **Two Up Together** for breakfast and relatives for dinner on the Saturday, Sunday was that wet we hunkered inside the caravan all day.

The 6th March was a Monday. Usually there is an afternoon yacht race on Pittwater but we knew from the early morning forecast that today would be windy. Sure enough as the day wore on and the wind kept blowing we got the call that the race had been canceled. We were disappointed as we had stuck around Sydney for a couple of extra days to go out sailing but I took advantage of the wind anyway – I did a load of washing.

Our day wasn't completely bereft of an adventure however as we'd gone for a drive to Berowra Waters in the morning. The Galston Road from north of Dural down to Hornsby Heights has big warning signs at the start of it – vehicles 7.5 meters and above are banned and when you get into the gorge area you understand why. This is where, whilst traveling amongst sandstone rockfaces and vegetation on one side and vegetation and steep downhill terrain on the other, you are advised to reduce your speed to 5 kilometers per hour in order to turn around the sharp and steep curves in the road – a vehicle that is too long would cause complete havoc here – it would block both ways of traffic. This is a pretty, if not slow drive from the rural hinterland large properties of the Sydney Hills to the suburbs of the Hawkesbury. Clearly there is some wealth here – you can tell just by checking the items of hard rubbish – the quality of chucked-out furniture gives you some idea – but someone was chucking out a piano – I mean who dumps a piano on the nature strip for hard rubbish?

Upon reaching the suburb of Hornsby Heights we headed down the narrow 2.5 kilometer end of Somerville road (listed as dirt in the interps I had but is now bitumen) having to reverse partly back up the hill in order to let a coach bus through, and had a short stroll along the river at Crosslands. We only made a couple of hundred meters though, turning at the viewing platform because the mosquitos were a shock. We drove back to the ridgeline and along to Berowra, again heading down a narrow road to Berowra Waters, where we crossed the Hawkesbury by ferry and had lunch at the public picnic tables adjacent the marina. Continuing on this road led us back up to Dural and our caravan.



Berowra Waters



Berowra Waters

Dubbo and surrounds

7th – 12th March 2017

The 420 kilometer trip from Sydney to Dubbo took longer than expected with a few missed turns and the resultant search for appropriate roads to turn the rig around took time. On top of this, the trip over the Blue Mountains was a little slower than I thought it would be, traveling from Windsor to Richmond and the back way through to Lithgow – however where there was view of the escarpment it was pretty spectacular. Lunch was at Bathurst on the side of the road (we missed the sheltered information centre by a matter of a few hundred meters) and our other stop for a longer break was the roadhouse at Molong.

Whilst there were back roads into where we were staying (on a farm south of Dubbo) we thought it prudent to travel the long way around to ensure we had bitumen and there were no surprises on unknown dirt roads. It. We arrived around 1800.

Our hosts south of Dubbo were friends we hadn't seen for quite some years and we ended up staying five nights. The farmhouse had a very relaxing view from the front verandah and, as it overlooked the regularly watered garden, it was a great place to spot birds. Surprisingly the two house-dogs (very gentle versions of what can be temperamental breeds) didn't exist in the eyes of the small passerines; wrens and others regularly potted around on the ground a matter of feet from the canines.

The bird list for the stay around Dubbo (at house and access road out) is as follows:

king parrot; blue wren; yellow robin (?? Race); willy wagtail; jacky winter; black faced cuckoo shrike; red-rumped parrot; apostle bird; chough; Australian kestrel; sparrow; crested pigeon; teal; swallow; pied butcher bird; Australian magpie; mudlark; galah;



Watching birds from the verandah



View across the Blue Mountains



Our Hosts: Dozer (above) and Cookie (below). The birds seem to completely ignore their presence.





Dubbo Gaol

9th March 2017

Today we did the touristy thing. I have visited the Dubbo Zoo twice (and Andrew once) so that was off the list but we discovered the Gaol - we didn't even know the Gaol existed. The small Gaol area is smack bang in the middle of town (Dubbo has grown up around it) and was responsible for holding prisoners from 1871 to 1966. It downgraded its status to Police Gaol from 1914 as the number of prisoners had fallen and most of the hardened prisoners were sent to Long Bay. From 1871 to 1904 there were eight hangings in the goal and one of the display rooms has a history of each individual who lost his life this way. The holographic presentation is interesting and the interps elsewhere sparse but concise – covering the specifics of some of the gaol's history and the specifics of some of its inmates – some of which is told by replicas of the inmates themselves. The voice-overs are triggered by sensors and after the 'prisoner' has told his tale he moves you on. I think they have done this well. I really enjoyed this small historic site.



Grinding Grooves

The grinding grooves (Terra-Mun-Gah) that extend along the Macquarie River at the Terramungamine Reserve (just to the north of Dubbo) were created by the local aboriginal people of the Ironbark tribe to sharpen their tools and weapons. This site is listed as an Aboriginal Heritage site under the National Parks and Wildlife Service Act 1974.

The reserve now permits overnight, self-contained camping.





Dundullimal Homestead



Dundullimal Homestead



Stables



Dundullimal Homestead

Dundullimal Homestead was built around 1840 in the Palladian Style (after Italian Architect Andrea Palladio) with a central building and two side pavilions (both side pavilions are no longer there).

Officially a slab house, it holds some unusual features, such as a very low verandah (to reduce glare and keep the house cooler in summer) louvered windows (generally a more tropical solution to heat dissipation), and originally a cobble stone courtyard (the original stones have been rearranged). (This idea came from India - where water is thrown on hot stones in summer and the air is cooled as the water evaporates slowly).

The homestead and 11 acres were annexed in 1985 from the remaining 1280 acres of the original 26000 acre squatter run.

The home was fairly well off as a stable complex complete with buggy room, blacksmith and groom's quarters is also on the property.

Today Dundullimal is run by the National Trust and there is a fee to access the site (but no fee if you just want to pop into the café for a cuppa).

Around Narrabri

12th -15th March 2017. It got hotter as we travelled from Sydney north; the contrast to hot and sunny Dubbo was bad enough but our last 60 or so kilometers into Narrabri even worse as the car's air conditioning seemed to give up. There were a couple of false kitty litter checks and so after an early lunch at Gilgandra we made it into Narrabri mid afternoon. With the van set up we relaxed in the air conditioning in the hot afternoon until going for an evening stroll around 6pm; looping along the main road to the Narrabri Creek and then back via the back streets. Birds seen: pied butcherbird, noisy minor, crested pigeon, turtle dove, lapwing, mudlark, eastern rosella, starling.



However, the heat didn't last so...

The best thing to
do in this.....



is this.....





View from Mount Kaputar



View from Mount Kaputar



View from Mount Kaputar



Mount Kaputar

At least we bagged the peak...

13 March 2017. Ordinarily, I would not be heading into a thunder and lightening storm in order to go bushwalking – but according to the forecast for the next three days this morning was going to be the best of a bad bunch in terms of our opportunity to explore, and having checked bom.gov.au the lightening flashing down in front of the car was part of the first of two storm cells on the radar. I was hoping that it was going to be past our destination by the time we got there and the gap between the cells long enough for us to partake in two short walks. Of course we had started later than hoped as our first priority for the morning had been to get to a mechanics to try to sort our air conditioning unit. Funnily enough it was working this morning and the advice was, believe it or not, that it had probably ‘frozen’. The solution to this is apparently to turn the air conditioner off and leave it just on fan when it packs up so it can thaw out. Advice noted for next time, we then turned our attention to our original plan for the day.

Mount Kaputar is approximately 40 kilometers from Narribri and when we left the town the sun was shining. In fact most of the way up the mountain the sun was shining and having faith that the first storm cell had passed we drove by several lookouts by the road stipulating we would stop at them on the way back. Nearing the end of the road however, I looked across into one valley and knew we had maybe pushed it a bit too much. In that couple of seconds that I could see through the trees there was no view to a valley between mountain slopes, there was just a solid blue grey colour. The planned walk described was from the Dawson's Spring Carpark but the track to Mt Kaputar was mainly up a 4wd track, so instead of walking it, we drove. The light was disappearing. Fast. We were thankful we had a 4wd and we walked the final track up to the viewing platform and trig point on Mount Kaputar just as the clouds came in to shroud us. There was a storm cell to our west; the clouds were enveloping us from our east, the wind was icy. Within five minutes it was raining.

Following back down the track and past the turn off to Dawson's Spring we found the end of the road leads to a radio broadcasting tower (where the view was of light grey cloud) just above a car park with a circuit walk to three lookouts. We waited for the rain to stop. And waited some more. Eventually we gave up and headed back down the mountain where Murphy's Law could have predicted sunshine by the time we were on the flat valley road. I was disappointed we didn't really see anything and still hopeful

that the predicted serious storm warning would pass before the morrow and we could repeat the exercise in better weather. At the end of this day we hadn't really seen any of the geological features this park is famous for – but at least we had 'bagged the peak.'

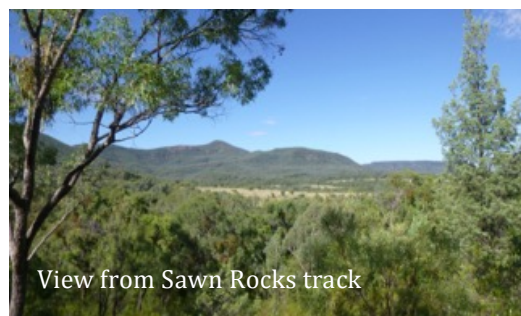


14th March 2017

You know it is really wet when a bedraggled magpie is hiding (shaking) under the shelter of your car in the rain. At around 8am the sky hadn't looked that bad – there were plenty of blue patches to be seen in the morning of light grey clouds, but as the morning wore on, the blue disappeared and we were in for a wet one. In all Narrabri had around 60 mill. Thunder entertained us and occasionally it was more than showering, our bad timing ensured we both had instances of getting stuck at the toilet block in the bucketing rain. The back way to the toilet block past the laundry was the only way to get there without wading through the floodwaters gathering in the gutters. At around 3.30pm the rain had reduced itself enough to let the sun shine a bit but there was not much of the afternoon left for exploring.

Third day lucky. Being ever hopeful of a reprieve in the weather we had booked another night at the caravan park. The forecast for the 15th March was for showers developing in the afternoon. I was hoping the day would give us enough time to recommence exploring Mt Kaputar NP before we got wet. And there was not a cloud in the sky when we got up. It seemed a bright, sunny and invariably going to be hot day. We jumped in the car and headed up to the northern section of the park, along the road to Bingara. Here, near the neck of the National Park is an area known as Sawn Rocks. This geological feature, known as organ pipes, is created when the basaltic flow cools slowly allowing the crystal structure and resultant cracks to align perfectly.

Noisy friarbirds greeted us as we started the easy 750 meter walk to the Sawn Rocks lookout. As the vegetation turned from dryer woodland to wetter gully species our hosts morphed into lewin honeyeaters and grey fantails.



View from Sawn Rocks track



Sawn Rocks



Sawn Rocks



From the platform at Sawn Rocks you can take the stairs down into Bobbiwaa Creek but despite the rain there was just the odd little puddle in the dips of individual rocks. A quick nibble at the picnic table at Killarny Gap (where there is only a picnic table – I was hoping for a track or two to a lookout) before lunch back at the caravan and then, with a deep breath, we headed back to the southern section of the park, along the road once travelled, all of two days ago. Making the same decision of two days before we thought we would leave the lookouts to the way back and headed back to the car park of Eckford Lookout where we had waited previously in the rain. The car park was empty and so was the sky.

The Bundabulla Circuit takes in three lookouts, Mount Lindsay Rock Tops and if you wish, Dawson's Spring picnic ground and nature trail as well. The entire loop is estimated to take around 3.5 hours. We started at 1pm. Small birds were prolific at the top of this walk and species changed as vegetation communities changed. Our initial hosts were fire-tail finches and blue wrens. Further along we were entertained by black-faced cuckoo shrikes, crimson rosellas, and wedge-tailed eagles. The track was a typical bush track except near the lookout edges, where you made your way over expanses of rocks, sometimes uniform in all directions and the only indication of the path being bright yellow markers/reflectors on the ground. The views from the Horse-arm Creek, Eckford and Bundabulla lookouts were spectacular – you could see for miles and had the day been clearer who knows what distance you could ascertain. BUT, developing showers in the afternoon means just that. At Bundabulla lookout we watched one raincloud drop its load in front of us and one drop its load (in the direction of the wind) from the direction we had just walked from. At Lindsay Rock Tops we rested for a few minutes but the grey clouds were quite active behind the adjacent peak. With the beat of the thunder behind us we decided against doing the complete loop, cutting back to the car along the road and the rain started when we were around 40 meters from the vehicle. We had again, timed it to perfection. And again, the view from the



Bundabulla Circuit



Bundabulla Circuit



Bundabulla Circuit

lookouts on the way down was, in most cases, non-existent. (I did get out into very large and heavy raindrops attempting to get the view from one). There are still walks to be done at Mount Kaputar NP but they will have to wait for our next visit.



Bundabulla Lookout

Drizzle to the left of me, rainfall to the right....here I am, stuck in the middle with Andrew... and definitely time to move on!



Bundabulla Lookout

Inverell

16th – 18th March 2017. Both roads out to the access points of Mt Kaputar NP wind through picturesque farmland with the most magnificent 17-21 million year old Nandewar Mountain Range in the background. I had admired the scenery on the way to Sawn Rocks on the 15th March and I found myself admiring the same scenery this morning. This time however, we weren't stopping. Our goal was Inverell, a destination only decided late the previous night, predominantly based on the predicted rainfall for the

coming days. Our original thoughts had been to head back toward the coast – I wouldn't mind exploring the Coffs Harbour region, and perhaps staying a little inland at Dorrigo on the waterfall circuit. The pictures of drowned cars at Coffs Harbour on the news however put an end to that. So ensuring we had a caravan spot waiting for us in Inverell (I rang the park at 0800) we headed out of Narrabri around 0930.

Killarney Gap seems to be highest point of the road and then you descend. The road signs warn of a steep descent but it doesn't go on for long and you emerge from the range into a peneplain of grazing farmland

with volcanic mountain oddities dotted to the side. This terrain goes on for some time until there is another descent into more defined foothills and valleys. Road signs warn of cattle, sheep and horses across the roads but temporary electric fences seem to have been established to keep the livestock off the bitumen. A quick stop in Bingara to stretch the legs and then an arrival in Inverell around 2pm for a late lunch. The afternoon was hot – and after a rest our only activity was a quick walk around town. The predicted afternoon storms didn't eventuate and the night sky was filled with brilliant stars



Thunderbolt Circuit



Thunderbolt's lookout

Goonoowigall State Conservation Area is 1057 hectares and part of it has been a flora and fauna reserve since 1920. I could see why; the wildflowers were prolific and I don't think this is even peak season. Some of the flowers were a bright blue, a colour I didn't think was common in nature. The reserve was obviously part of the range of the local aboriginal tribe before European Settlement but was also where segregated peoples were taken to and settled between 1900 and 1960. (Goonoowigall (pronounced gunny-wiggle) is the local word meaning 'wallaby rocks'. There are three main tracks in the reserve and we chose the 4 kilometer Thunderbolt Circuit, leading through vegetation to 'Thunderbolt's lookout' and one of his supposed hiding paces. We didn't see any wallabies. Bird sound was regular but most were hidden. The double barred finch was our first spot and from then on, apart from an eagle, all we saw were tufted honeyeaters.



Thunderbolt Circuit

The National Motor Museum

There have been several 'car' museums in our travels and up until now we haven't gone into any of them. This museum, run by volunteers but managed by a board isn't just anyone's single collection; it is a group of individually owned (although some individuals own several) vehicles that pay for the privilege of being in this location. The climate in Inverell it seems is perfect for maintaining the integrity of the vehicles. Some cars are in close to pristine condition having never been modified and some are complete restorations. The board decides which cars are allowed to be in the display collection and those with heritage plates allow the owners to take them out occasionally on the road. The collection includes a 1906 Dayton, believed to be the only one in the world and please note the green Model T Ford. Earlier in the month we had a classic car pass us on the open road. I instinctively said it looked like a Model T – Andrew immediately said it couldn't be because it was green - but there you go – some people do like to buck the trend. If it was a Model T however, I doubt it was this one, it was several hundreds of kilometers to the south.



Model T Ford

Captain Thunderbolt

Frederic Wordsworth Ward (bushranger Captain Thunderbolt) (born 1835?) was the son of a convict and got involved in horse and cattle stealing early when joining a gang run by his nephew (who was newly released from prison). Convicted of receiving stolen horses he served four out of a ten-year sentence at Cockatoo Island before being given a reprieve. He was sent to prison again when he returned late from leaving the district (a condition of his reprieve) when he delivered his partner (Mary Ann Bugg; also listed as a bushranger) to her father to give birth to their child. It is popular belief that Captain Thunderbolt was shot and died in 1870, the bullet wound on the back of his knee an identifying mark. There is some conjecture however that the body in his grave is his brother, and that Thunderbolt escaped with his sister to America and died in the early 1900's.

There are many spots around NSW and southern QLD that purport to be Thunderbolt's hideouts (and lookouts). We managed to visit a few of them.



The Granite Arch, Girraween NP

Around Stanthorpe

Inverell to Stanthorpe. 19th – 21st March 2017. The rain had gone, the sky was clear and as per usual the outside temperature felt quite hot even at 0800. I was feeling good and the thought had crossed my mind that I might do some of the driving today. The trip wasn't going to be long, it was along main roads and there would be plenty of places to pull over if I was feeling uncomfortable. BUT, clearly the Universe thought that it wasn't going to be my day to try driving with a caravan, as around 20 minutes before we were due to leave I stubbed my toe. And it wasn't just any old stub. It was a good and hard connection between the little toe and the back of the hinged face of the door. OUCH. There was that much 'ouch' that the gap between the little toe and the next one hadn't righted itself in the immediate aftermath and I was in that much pain that I suggested the hospital – which was just down the road. Andrew's comment to that was they would probably take half the day to see me and all they were going to do was strap it up to the next toe anyway. So I got Andrew to strap it up instead, and spent the rest of the day hobbling when I had to be on my feet.

We stopped at Tenterfield for 'elevenses', and I was impressed with the guy at the info centre who directed us exactly to a place with a coffee and a vanilla slice -Andrew's request - I had a gluten free option (but it was a very nice (and sweet) piece of jaffa cake). The café was in the Arts Centre, dedicated to Sir Henry Parkes and from where he made his 'federation speech'. The building has been upgraded and now includes a theatre and museum. It is run by the National Trust.

The drive to Stanthorpe after this didn't take long and we arrived to find the staff exhausted after the day before- when they had booked in a large bunch of backpackers. We also found out said backpackers had been rowdy until 3am in the morning in the games room. Great. Our allocated spot was directly in the sun so we requested instead, lucky site 13, mostly in the shade by lunchtime but close to said games room. We wondered what the evening was going to be like, but the staff had closed off the games room and the only evening sounds were of the crowd and guitar entertainment from the camp kitchen. The only backpacker issue I had to deal with was the propensity of some to literally walk through our campsite – between our car and caravan. I thwarted one return attempt by shifting my chair to block the gap. The next instance I chased the culprit, had to repeat myself, but essentially said that in this country it is considered rude to walk through someone else's campsite – if he would just like to walk around the outside of the car. I think he got the message.

Stanthorpe in the Granite Belt region of southern Queensland seems like a reasonable sized town, with only a few empty shops and I was pleased to see even some cafes were open on Sunday afternoon. There are three supermarkets, - Woolworths, Aldi and an IGA – but today (Sunday) the Woolworths and Aldi were dead. IGA was going great guns and extremely busy and clearly have the Sunday market covered; the hoards of backpackers that came in yesterday would have helped. Andrew came down with fatigue and slept the afternoon so there was no afternoon excursion. I read instead.



Sir Henry Parkes School of the Arts

A walk, politics and war

20th March 2017. With Andrew's sore fetlock (calf) that he'd been watching for a few days, and my sore hoof from yesterday, a decent walk at Girraween NP wasn't going to happen. We could have chosen one of any number of national parks in the area but Girraween was probably the best known. The short 1.7 kilometer return walk from the car park to the Granite Arch gave us at least a touch into the area. Next time we will do some proper walking.



Granite Arch

A stop at *Heavenly Chocolate* was going to be our 'reward' for a short stroll but it didn't quite turn out as we had expected. Unfortunately the chocolatier has sold this business and the new owners have not yet been instructed in the art of chocolate making. As a result the hot chocolate flavours are from Italy and the chocolates from elsewhere, although all Australian made. It didn't stop us having a hot chocolate on the verandah with a few chocolates as a side, admiring the birdlife in the garden and the chooks in the pen, but the experience wasn't quite as exuberant as we'd hoped.



Tenterfield Saddlery

The building that housed the 'Tenterfield Saddler' subject and grandfather of Peter Allen's song, wasn't always a saddlery. It has also been a homestead and a bank. The current owner runs it as a leather shop four days a week when it is run by volunteer staff. When we had driven through on Sunday the guy in the info centre had pointed out on the map where it was but hadn't said it was only open Thursday to Sunday. Subsequent to say that it was shut today (Monday).

The Sir Henry Parkes Memorial School of the Arts

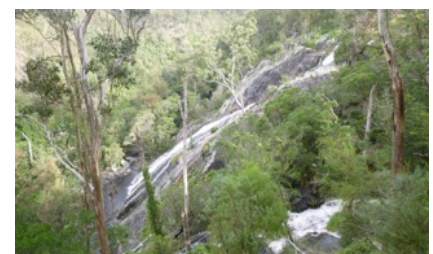
It was the idea of an organised, complete and unified defense force that was the main idea behind Sir Henry Parkes' 'Tenterfield Oration' call for 'one nation, one people', on 24th October of 1889. His themes also included immigration control (not much has changed in 130 years), border tariff reduction (between states) and a set of standards for key infrastructure. It is said that 'his passions included development of a representative government, universal education and public investment in works and services'. We have to remember this is before the Boar War.

Parkes, a former NSW premier was voted out of his seat in 1882, but the then sitting member for Tenterfield vacated his seat so Parkes could return to parliament. He resigned after only two years but apparently remembered the support given to him by the locals and made his 'oration' in the front room of the School of the Arts. It took another 12 years before we became the Commonwealth of Australia. Of course initially it wasn't all roses; Aborigines weren't included in the constitution and it was an all-white policy. The building is run by the National Trust and for a small fee you can explore some of the rooms including artifacts and information on Sir Henry Parkes. Sadly for all his successes, he died a pauper.

Around Tenterfield

Bob and Bev Sorbie have compiled a series of tour pamphlets entitled 'Tenterfield Tracks and Tales (Off – road drives for soft 4WDs).' These are of varying lengths and we chose drive Number 8, 'Tenterfield to Aloomba, Undercliff Falls and Return', one of the shorter ones. Each drive takes you to or past historic points of interest and this drive included: the memorial to two airman who crashed an F111 in 1987, one of Thunderbolt's supposed hideouts, The WWII tank traps across what was then the only all weather road from Sydney to Brisbane, the bridge where Thunderbolt held up Mark Hart for his winnings on the horse races, an historic cemetery and a waterfall. There was also reference to many historic villages, along the way -

evidence of which is now non existent. There was a café stop (lavender farm) included in the itinerary but we didn't get there, the hour of the day was late and we still had distance to get back to Stanthorpe



The Brisbane Line

The Tank Traps on the Mount Lindesay Road, which was until the 1950's the New England Highway and the only all weather road between Sydney and Brisbane, are believed to be one of a series of installations along the controversial 'Brisbane Line'. Some say the demarcation of what the incumbent federal government in WWII was prepared to give up should the Japanese invade northern Australia is fictional and the term *Brisbane Line* was in fact first coined by an American officer. The tank traps and the concrete wall along this divide are located just north of the WWII troop training camp at 'London Bridge. During WWII 10,000 troops were camped in the Tenterfield area.



Grapes and Apples

21st March 2017 was a day of indulgence. We started at Suttons for some apple juice tasting, moved onto cheese tasting, then a bit of wine and fudge tasting (Stanthorpe is reported to have over 50 wineries) and back to Suttons for apple pie, before we visited Donnelly's Castle (another one of Thunderbolt's lookouts??) before driving back through an area clearly allocated originally as a soldier settlement (the place names are those where the main battles were fought in WWI). Whist a lot of soldier settlements didn't work because returning servicemen were allocated land that barely gave them subsistence farming – the Granite Belt area seems to



Another of Thunderbolt's lookouts? Donnelly's Castle

provide fertile and productive land, growing fruit, wines and timber. A visit to another winery (where I think I picked up 40 odd flea bites from the furniture) and a late lunch at the JamWorks (where jams, chutney and preserves are available for tasting) had us heading back to the caravan in the late afternoon.

Wivenhoe

22nd – 23rd March 2017



Café at Cormorant Bay



Heading toward friends: into the storm

Wivenhoe Dam came to media attention with the 2011 Brisbane floods. The timing of the flood mitigation release would be the subject of an investigation and an independent team of hydrologists found the release raised water levels by up to 10 meters in the Brisbane River. Fortunately individuals were exonerated in the findings but interps at the information centre at the Dam outlines the events leading up to opening the gates and whist some wild rain was expected apparently there were at least two instances where no more heavy falls were predicted - before some of the worst rain the area has seen arrived.

Across the Dam wall is Cormorant Bay and the café here has a lovely outlook over the water. It was a great place to have lunch.

We stayed with friends for a couple of nights who live south of Wivenhoe Dam, west of Ipswich. When I had rung up to say we were coming I was told they hadn't had much rain – ironically it was pouring when we arrived.



Mount Walsh

Biggenden 24th – 31st March 2017

We chose our stop in Biggenden because of its proximity to several national parks and being within jumping distance of catching up with a few friends on and toward the coast. Our usual three-night stay was extended into a week as Cyclone Debbie made her way to landfall in northern QLD and we didn't really want to move until we knew what she was doing. It was probably the right decision as her deluge turned into a tropical low - but fortunately really only got us with mid intensity. The coast however copped a wallop and we are very grateful that we changed our original plan of heading back to Darwin via the coast road to a more inland route. A stone chip on the windscreen entailed a few days extra stay so we could get it replaced on insurance in Childers.

The Mountain View Caravan Park is Council owned. The management is terrific and the park has a mixture of transients like us and some very welcoming semi-permanent/permanent residents. We thoroughly enjoyed our stay at this caravan park, being asked to join the locals for their weekly get together meal and many late afternoon 'sundowners'. We stayed on powered spot '9'.

Biggenden

The township of Biggenden was annexed from the Degilbo pastoral run in 1851 but really established itself in the 1880's as a support town for the surrounding mining areas; local mines producing iron, magnetite and gold. It is not a big town and currently has a population less than 1000 lying between Childers and Ban Ban Springs on the Isis Hwy. (Ban Ban Springs has a roadhouse; Childers is a larger centre). Biggenden currently has a Foodworks, two pubs, local council office/library, museum (which is the top floor of the former Paradise courthouse), police station and hospital, fuel station, hardware, butcher and café. The only obvious industry in town is the abattoir and surrounding farms support cattle. Some distance out of town you can also find sugar cane and adjacent localities were timber towns. The street adjacent the closed railway line has many empty and sad looking shops which is a pity as clearly the town was quite a bustling location in its day. The town is overlooked by the Bluff of Mount Wash (Mount Walsh National Park) to the south-east and Woowoonga Mountain and wilderness area to the north.



View from the track at Coalstoun Lakes National Park



View from the track at Coalstoun Lakes National Park

Biggenden- Coalstoun Lakes, lookouts and bridges

27th March 2017. For various reasons, the main of which was my still sore little toe on my left foot, we chose a 'short' walk this morning. Short however doesn't mean easy and the 350 metre climb from the car park at Coalstoun Lakes National Park, to the picnic table at the high point overlooking the first of the crater lakes is steep. Very steep. I was grateful we had the walking sticks. The sun was horrendously hot (as we had started around 0930) but the saving grace was the soil underfoot, whilst scattered with rocks on the track, was soft, and I was careful to place my left foot where there was less impact on the injured digit. The walk to the first crater from the high point is down hill and we were greeted with the resounding and responding pips of eastern whip birds. There were a few other birds in the area, ravens being in large numbers, one brown falcon and a white-browed scrub-wren flitting amongst the dappled light of the vegetation further into

the crater. There is a bird hide at the first crater but with no water in the lake area, the bird hide is a waste. The walk to the second crater leads downward past a saddle (with a view to the surrounding area) and then down again. We only got a short way down this second part of the track. The area is littered with lots of spiders, some large ones with webs across the track. Whilst we had been able to duck under or walk around most of them, a large web across the track here put an end to our amble. There was no way around and we weren't prepared to destroy someone's home so we turned around, ambled back up the hill and almost ran down the final steep section to the car. Access to the car park is through a farmer's paddock and it was occupied by many curious bulls. Off to the side were the overgrown remains of the bush clearing chains - so famous in QLD for raping this country of its trees.

After a cuppa at the Big Orange at Gayndah (41 kilometers up the

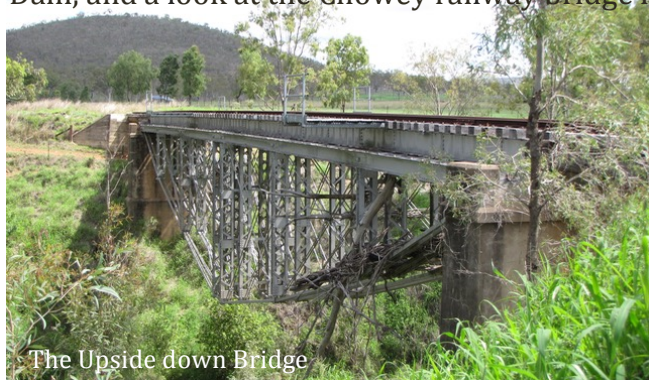


View from saddle on the track between the craters



McConnell lookout

road), we had a quick look at McConnell Lookout (a great view of the Burnett River and surrounds and a great spot for lunch if we had brought it) and the upside down bridge (both north of the township) before turning back to the town for lunch. A drive through the back roads (including a cut off road trying to get to Gray's Waterhole), an ice-cream break at Mingo Crossing at the top end of Paradise Dam, and a look at the Chowey railway bridge had us getting back to Biggenden around 5pm.



The Upside down Bridge



Mingo Crossing

The Chowey Bridge was Queensland's first long span concrete rail bridge and was built in 1905. Sand aggregate was obtained from the creek that it spans and 658 cubic meters of concrete was used in its construction



Chowey Bridge

Biggenden –From Paradise to Boolboonda

28th March 2017. Whist I would have loved a small walk again this morning, I think it was best we gave my foot a bit more time to settle down and we headed off for a drive instead. Our first stop was the dam wall at Paradise Dam. (Paradise Dam was named after the mining town of Paradise that was drowned when the dam wall was built).



I had hoped that there was a road crossing like Mingo Crossing (at the top end of Paradise Dam) or Wivenhoe Dam (near Ipswich) but this was not to be so we started on the long way around to Mount Perry. Taking the back roads to Didcot had us 4wd driving up the Auburn Hills Road through several property paddocks, which were occupied by lots of curious cows. Part of this road is part of the National Trail but I didn't see where it entered, I was concentrating in the main on opening and closing gates and pulling fallen logs and branches off the road. There are several creek crossings along this track/road most of which have concrete fords upon which to drive; one however goes across what looks like a natural rock pass but you would





want to know the site well in the wet – there is a nasty drop off if you take the wrong track. The properties are mainly degraded bush or lightly treed. At the western end of the road however, just after a group of cows decided we were the farmer and decided they would RUN after us, the trees have been removed from the hills almost completely, and the erosion is more than noticeable. It is a cryable canyon; big enough not to see the bottom, but noticeable enough to see the junk that has been dumped in the holes. Turning out of Auburn Hills Road, we turned toward Didcot before heading back to Mingo Crossing and on toward Mount Perry. We were looking at getting lunch at Mount Perry but the shop and the pub looked a bit scary so we had a late lunch at Gin Gin instead - after heading through the Boolboonda Tunnel. As we headed home from Gin Gin the rain came in and we got home to heavy large raindrops around 1600.

Boolboonda Tunnel

The Boolboonda Railway Tunnel is 192 meters long but is unlined and unsupported and has the distinction of being the longest unsupported tunnel in the Southern Hemisphere. It

was built in 1883 for the railway line between Bundaberg and the Mount Perry copper mines. It is now part of a back road into the Mount Perry hinterland. It was raining when we arrived and Andrew was unwilling to park and get wet. I got out however to intercept the two individuals who were coming toward us with headlamps. They looked like miners but in fact were researchers, gathering information for the University of Queensland on the occupants of the tunnel. The information brochure says the tunnel is home to a colony of bent-wing bats and indeed we could see them flying around at the other end of the tunnel (apparently, according to the researchers, to help regulate the level of humidity in the tunnel) but it is also the home to a colony of grass or forest bats, a few of which were pointed out to me with the help of a torch – one small female having left her group to give birth. (apparently after feeding the youngster for an hour (equivalent to a day for us) she will return to her group). The researchers were recording the calls and had pre-recordings of calls so that when they left the tunnel they would be able to positively identify the species.

Because the tunnel is part of the road we couldn't block it forever so I reluctantly alighted Kinkaid and we drove through – I would have loved to spend some more time with the researchers. It was just as well however, as just as we exited the tunnel another car was waiting to come through in the opposite direction – it was the local police car – probably not a good idea to block him.





Cut off at the pass – road blockages were common after Debbie went through

31st March 2017. Assuming the road blockages on the RACQ website were clear we headed off to the Bridge Creek Memorial Bridge on the Broweena/Woolooga Road. We were however cut off at the pass so to speak, or rather at the intersection, as the entire road was blocked. Thwarted we turned left instead of right and headed off to Maryborough instead. With nowhere particular to visit we headed down to the marina. The media had reported that the flooding expected was worse than the 2011 event and I didn't know what to expect. The water was high but hadn't broken the banks. The café was busy (it was due to open a week after we left in January 2016) and the building now boasts several other businesses. It was great to catch up with owners and managers and one of the residents that was there when we left last January. Mid afternoon we did some more yachty based catching up. After coffee with **Bamboozle** we joined the regular 6pm Friday 'Shaggers' Catchup (Shag Islet Cruising Yacht Club) at the Boat Club at Urangan, Hervey Bay. We left at 2000 and got back to the caravan just before 2200.



High water levels on the Mary River

29th March 2017. Debbie's deluge. From around 0130 to 1330 we sat through twelve hours of mostly steady, mid-range, rain. There was some wind but nothing too strong and nothing like the wind that was raging on the coast. It was the first time in months that we were constantly checking the weather on bom.gov.au and updates on the news' internet sites. Whilst Debbie had done most of her damage as she hit the coast to the north, her morph into an Tropical low meant that she was still a threat, albeit not quite as deadly, to anyone in her path. We were on her western edge. There was eventually twelve hours of reprieve with only minimal drizzle until the wind picked up and having changed direction we found ourselves putting the awning away at 0300 in the rain. Of course it got stuck and after a mild case of swearing we finally got to bed.

1st April 2017. Breaking with tradition I am including this morning's visit to the Memorial Bridge as we had tried to visit it on March 31st (see earlier) and it fits in with one of the themes' for the March newsletter. The Memorial Bridge is the only privately built Memorial Bridge in Queensland. It was opened in 1920 and officially closed in 1976. It lists the names of the individuals that went to WWI from the Woocoo Shire and those that didn't come back. An interps board near the picnic table has some more information with particulars of the war-time effort of the locals as well as the individuals that lost their lives.

