

# Desert Trek 2009 - Isisford to Santora Rosa

## *Graham and Chris on tour - 2009 Part 3*

### Outback QLD

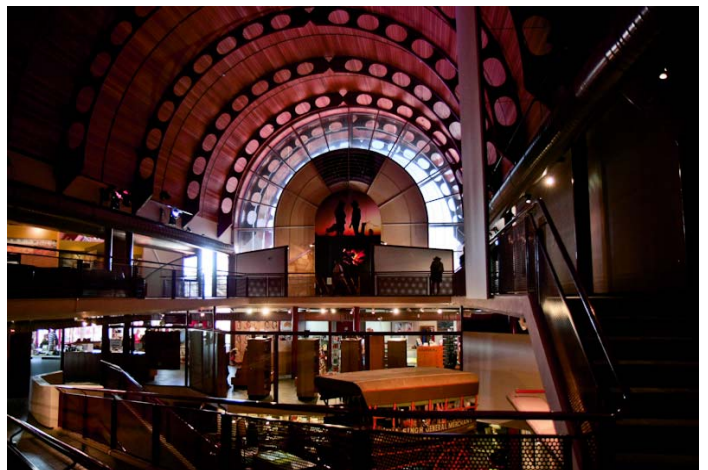
If you remember, my last journal was emailed from Isisford on a Friday afternoon. One does not normally expect a quick response or any response at all but before I disconnected from the internet a rather urgent email popped up on my screen. "Urgent Please read this now". The urgent email turned out to be from one of our good friends in Adelaide, Viv Lucas. She advised us that she and her other half (Dave or to his old mates "Nerk") were headed off first thing Sat morning to Arkaroola then onto various outback towns arriving in Longreach on Sunday afternoon. What a coincidence, we had planned to break camp on Sunday and arrive in Longreach about lunch time. Now Viv was not quite sure where Isisford or the Barcoo river was but she was fairly sure that it was in QLD somewhere so she took a punt that we would be close to Longreach. Obviously they weren't driving, they were flying in one of these planes. Boy what a coincidence, we don't hear from them for months and suddenly, out of the blue they are going to arrive in Longreach on the same day as us. So we arranged for us to get to Longreach, settle into the Cara-



*Boeing 707 at the Qantas Founders Museum. A number of other planes including a Jumbo 747 and DC3 are on display at the museum*



*The R M Williams Show at the Stockman's Hall of Fame*



*Inside the "Stockman's Hall of Fame"*





*Dave Moreton hamming it up for the Camera while Chris looks on—Sunset cruise on the Thompson River*



*Thompson river at Dusk*



*Yours truly on the receiving end of his own camera for a change thanks to Viv*

van Park (Bloody Caravan Parks - Yuk ) and then pick them up from the airport. There were 4 of them as they were travelling with another couple. What a blast, what an amazing coincidence. Dave and Kathy, the other couple, own a bus company that specialises in outback tours and Dave and Viv are looking for some work for their aircraft, so while we took in the sites they also were on the look out for some business for Bus/Air type specialty tours to the SA/QLD outback. Now for a rather small town with a population of around 3,000, Longreach is alive with tourists. They arrive mainly by road but also by train and by air. Longreach for those who are not aware is the home of QANTAS. The “Queensland and Northern Territory Air Service” was founded in Longreach, and there is an extensive and quite brilliant founders museum at the Airport. Also there is the “Stockman's Hall of Fame” museum. Longreach is very worthy of at least a 3 day stay if you can



*Station Store's Company Car—vintage Whippet*



*Preparing the airborne tourists for departure to Mt Isa - safety check in progress.*

stand the large number of tourists. The other 2 main attractions in the town are the Cobb and Co coach ride starting at the Station Store ending with a gallop along the town common and a trip up the Thompson River on a cruise boat in the evening for a sunset dinner and cruise. As idyllic as Longreach seemed, it is interesting how all communities have their own set of problems. In Longreach there is some disquiet over the fact that the authorities have not maintained water supply from the artesian basin and are accessing water from the Thompson river. The result of this is that the water to some parts of the town is not hot and people are having to install hot water heaters. Of course, the claims are that it is only hurting the poorer areas of the town. Can't help thinking that the problem is vastly different than we would experience in the city but the conspiracy claims are no different. After 2½ Days of fun and frivolity the airplane tourists set off for Mt Isa and the following morning we set off in a northerly





*A Bustard in flight. I don't think they like flying much as we have some difficulty in getting them into the air but at last success*



*Main street in Muttaborra.*

and so was named after the town. So what would you do other than build a replica of the dinosaur in the middle of town. The town is also the site of an historic outback hospital that closed in the 80's.

Muttaborra continues on the tradition of QLD outback hospitality with very cheap rates at the town camp ground with the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> nights free. As the camp ground was in the main street and in full view of the whole town we decided to head for the Broadwater that was about 9K out of town.

Here the camping was free and when we enquired about showers in the town it was simple. Either go to the camp ground or the swimming pool and you can have a fantastic hot shower (more hot artesian water) for no charge. We do set up a shower in all of



*Camped at the Muttaborra Broadwater on the Thompson River*

belly (if you can catch the buggars) is a fairly good diet. You can't really blame them for growing veggies as the closest shopping for any fruit and veg or any other food for that matter was in Longreach, some 150 Km away. At least they could buy booze locally as long as you didn't want a premium Shiraz.

From Muttaborra we headed east to Aramak. Another very hospitable quiet town that once again offers the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> nights free in the camp ground. Aramak is famous for the fact the it was where Harry Redford, alias "Captain Starlight", in 1870 stole a



*Muttaborra's pride and joy. A replica of the Muttaborrasaurus*

direction without any specific destination in mind but we did need relief from the onslaught of caravans that arrived daily in Longreach. So we headed north for the small outback town of Muttaborra. Muttaborra is known for a couple of things but it's main claim to fame is that it is the site of the "Muttaborrasaurus", first discovered in 1963 by a local grazier. This raptor is considered to be unique to the area



*Lunch at the Muttaborra pub. Chris with Strongbow in hand*

our camps but there is nothing like the full blast of an artesian based shower and besides it was a good excuse to come to town for lunch. Also we do feel somewhat guilty in these situations so we generally try and spend some money in town. Usually at the pub for some booze or a meal or two.

The camp on the Broadwater was excellent and so we stayed for 3 nights. Mind you there were some other campers who were set in for some time (4 months) to the extent that they had a veggie garden growing. I guess veggies and Yellow-





*Reedy Creek*



*Our camp at Reedy Creek*

herd of around 800 head of cattle and drove them to SA. He was subsequently arrested and taken to court for cattle duffing. So amazing was the feat of driving the herd some 1200km to South Australia over much of the ground that Burke and Wills had traversed and perished only 10 years previously and down what is now known as the Strzelecki Track, that the jury found him not guilty, at which Judge Blakeney made his famous statement "I thank God that the verdict is yours, gentlemen and not mine". There are many who consider that this criminal feat subsequently was the catalyst for opening up much of that area of the country. The cattle drive is re-enacted each year and for a cost you can join the drive (<http://www.harryredford.com.au/>). The modern drive is only for 200km but apparently a great experience. There is a movie "Harry Redford, the Movie" which has been produced by an Amateur Video Club from Brisbane. I can organise copies if anybody is interested.

After coffee in Aramak we headed north once more for Lake Dunne. This is a natural lake situated on a Cattle Station where there is camping, and water sports. We had lunch on the banks of the lake and although it was pleasant and very cheap camping fees we decided that we would like to find a more remote place to settle for a few days, so we set off along the road until we determined by our Magellan GPS that we were not that far from Reedy Creek. We headed off the road and after a kilometre or so of bush bashing (no tracks) we found a delightful spot on the banks of Reedy Creek and set up camp for a few days. While there was no water in the creek it was an extremely pleasant campsite and a great spot to chill out.

After a restful few days we headed south to Barcaldine for Lunch and noted that it was a place we should revisit at sometime but we were keen to head down to Idalia NP which is about 80Km west of Blackall. Barcaldine was the home of the Australian Workers Union and consequently the Australian Labor Party. It is also the home of "The Tree of Knowledge" that was infamously poisoned by some twit in 2006. A huge monument is now built around it that was the subject of a number of national news items some months ago. The Australian Workers Heritage Centre is a vast museum to the working men and women of Australia.



*Idalia, while not dramatic, still very scenic*

At Barcaldine we joined the Landsborough Hwy (Matilda Way) so consequently we also had to content with an onslaught of other vehicles, caravans and trucks etc. Reaching Blackall we set up camp for 1 night to do some shopping before heading out to Idalia NP. That evening we were entertained by the renowned bush poet, "Lowie".

It was quite amazing in that we were the second to last campers



*Rainbow Creek - Idalia NP*





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to get a site in the caravan park before it was full. Yet down on the Barcoo river on the town common, there was an extensive mowed area where there was free camping and toilets supplied by the community. Another example of outback QLD hospitality. So why the caravan park was full I have no idea but maybe like us they just wanted to recharge their batteries, do a bit of shopping and be on their way the next morning. Mind you there were a hell of a lot of people in the free camping area but by no means crowded.

After some shopping in the morning, we set out for Idalia, only an 80Km drive and in retrospect probably not worth it. Not a lot to see at Idalia and we would probably would not visit there again. Consequently we only stayed one night then headed back to



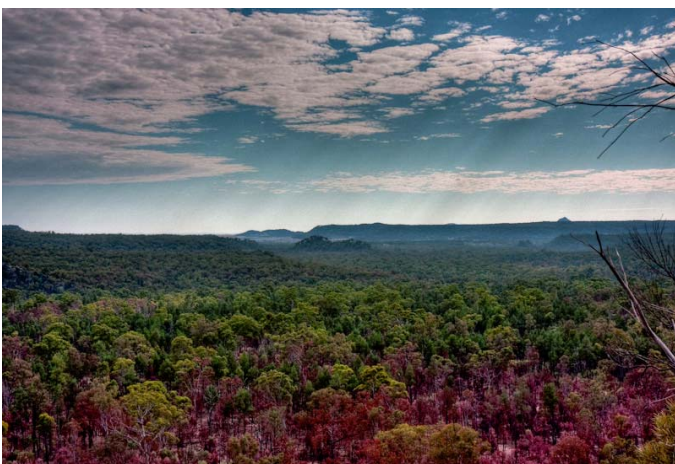
*An example of the awesome wildlife at Santora Rosa*



*Early morning - Santora Rosa Camp Ground*



*Geology and low intensity fires make for interesting photos at Santora Rosa*



*The Carnarvon Range geology covers a huge area - this trip we will accomplish about half what there is to see*

Blackall then onto Tambo where we had some lunch in a café and coffee at the Pub, refuelled and headed NE to Santora Rosa Section of Carnarvon NP. Off the main drag again on roads that provide access to the local stations, and a very enjoyable drive





up through the park to Santora Rosa.

At Santora Rosa, on our arrival there was one other camper, a young family with two young boys and a baby. Later that evening another camper arrived in a hired 2WD camper which was a bit strange because it was 4WD only beyond the Camping ground and there was nowhere that you could go without crossing a sandy creek crossing.

The couple in the camper were about our age and from NZ. We started chatting and consequently arranged to set off with them in the morning to explore the park. That way we could assist them with any disaster that may befall their tiny camper. Well we had a great day with them but not without some mishaps. Thinking that the main issue would be crossing the creek, with the



*Plenty of caves to explore*



*Rescuing Dave and Pats camper*



*Chris and Pat pose for the camera*

track OK from then on we set off. The creek was not a problem but the track was by and large loose sand and the poor little camper struggle with some of the hills until eventually it could not traverse a sandy rise. Well we got to and pulled them out and decided that perhaps we should leave the camper parked. The reason we had not suggested this originally was that

1. we thought there probably would not be a problem after the creek crossing and

2. the back seat of our car is chockers.

So we loaded all of our gear from the back seat into Dave and Pats camper, unfolded the seats and set off to discover that the end of the track was virtually just around the corner and not at all difficult to negotiate. In fact when we got back to the camper, Dave and Pat drove the camper to the end of the track to turn around. The camper was on hire and the hire agreement apparently states "bitumen roads only". I wonder how our friends got on when they returned the

camper on their departure from Australia.

On the first night of our stay at Santora Rosa, we sat around the camp fire and drank some Red wine with Dave and Pat. On the second not we pretty much had the whole camp ground sitting around our fire. In particular the family with the young kids. What great kids they were. Full of mischief but at the same time well behaved. The good cheer went well into the night and was the culmination of a very enjoyable 2 night stay. Next day we were headed for Ka Ka Mundi Section of Carnarvon NP. Supposedly the remotest part of Carnarvon and 4WD only.

End of Part 3