

## Tasmania March 2006 (Tony & Sharon)



### Tasmania here we come

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March 28, 2006 Phone call from daughter Megan at 0430 (yes – a.m.) to say have a great holiday. Set off at 0630. Rain and floods near Grafton and the snorkel had to be used (Sharon driving). The water wasn't overly deep, until the bow wave nearly swamped us (a case of leaden right foot).

Stayed overnight in Newcastle with Tony's sister and brother in law.

### Bon voyage

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March 28, 2006 set off at 0900 and found the Spirit of Tassie in Darling Harbour without any worries thanks to a map supplied by John, the brother in law. Having coffee up the road when Barry rang on the mobile. He and Gail had arrived and they said they were starting to

board the boat. We ran back to the car only to wait another hour before boarding. Ship was fantastic great views of Sydney Harbour. Gail, Barry and Sharon went to the upper deck later in the evening only to be blown away (by the wind, not the scenery). Night's entertainment was a piano man. Dinner was excellent.

The boat was packed with bikers, the Ulysses Club heading for their annual general meeting in Ulverstone. Growing old disgracefully! They were great company on the trip.

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> Saw an in house movie after breakfast. Then off the boat at Devonport 12 midday. A luxurious start to the holiday.

### The north

Drove from Devonport to Deloraine. Barry, Gail and Sharon stopped to shop for food and provisions (i.e. alcohol) while Tony went to Westbury to get the hired camper trailer. After leaving Deloraine we then drove to Cradle Mountain. We managed to get the camper trailer up (thanks to the help of Barry) in time for the rain and the winds. Thanks to the camp kitchen (with 2 log fires going) we managed to cook dinner as our camp stove supplied with the camper trailer didn't work (till it was dismantled & cleaned in the daylight). The winds were so strong the table inside the tent blew over – almost blew our jackets off!

Tues 7<sup>th</sup> Sharon lost her ring (found 2 hours later inside the shoe she was wearing) After buying the shop out of thermal underwear we then walked around Dove Lake for 2 and a half hours in the rain and the wind. (We will never forget. It was beautiful) Hot chocolate and soup at the Cradle Mountain Lodge with a log fire and we were revived. Played cards in the camp kitchen near the fire at night.

Wed 8<sup>th</sup> 0930 all packed up and off we go. Off to Stanley. Barry, Gail and Sharon went on the tour of the platypus (we saw 5 Platypi in the wild which was fantastic) and the fairy penguins (little penguins). Tony held the fort (relaxed and enjoyed a quiet drink or two) at the caravan park.



## North West

Thurs 9<sup>th</sup> All up and packed. Caught the chairlift to the top of the Nut, a massive formation shaped like a loaf of bread. Walk around the top admiring the views of the coastline. Had to laugh at the sign recording the efforts in the 1800's to construct a breakwater by blasting rocks from the cliff face. After the blast nothing happened, till 12 years later, when suddenly tonnes of rock tumbled into the sea (as close to a dismal failure as you can get in my view). Off to Smithton for lunch which was an extended stay as the mobile phones were now in range. Then on to the Dismal Swamp. Gail, Barry and Sharon rode down the slide at great speeds (exceeding 100km/hr) to reach the bottom slightly frazzled. We walked around the maze and the art works. Off to the West coast and caught a barge across Arthur River as the bridge was falling down. On to Couta Rocks which was very rugged. Sharon & Tony didn't spend as much time enjoying the scenery here as they preferred, on account of having to wash out the camper trailer.

**Tip of the day:** Before traveling, shut off portaloos properly.



## The West

Next morning on our journey Barry had a fuel filter issue with his car, making it extremely difficult to tow a caravan uphill on windy dirt roads in the wilderness. Broken down at the side of the road and 2 other 4wd's stopped to help out (at least heads under bonnet) for hours (coffee and cake all round). Left Barry stranded and Tony and Sharon off to Zeehan for mechanical help. Halfway there Barry and Gail called on the UHF they were back on the road limping along. Crossed the Arthur river one car at a time on the barge. Had our photos taken with a very funny sign (which described the best way to cross the river, ruling out looking for a bridge, there isn't one, or even looking for a barge operator, he will come when he is ready). The barge operator's T Shirt said he was Too Old to Die Young. Fuel issue fixed at Zeehan with the helpful advice of a diesel mechanic (who confirmed where the in line filter is hidden; "Even Nissan don't know where it is").



Yeh!  
Barge  
Arrived.





### The rendezvous

Then on to Strachan. Megan and Andrew Weier met us at our campsite and invited us to their holiday unit for dinner. After eating take away fish and chips in a log cabin polished wood and luxury environment did we want to go back to our tent? Megan and Andrew were off the next day so we said our goodbyes.

Next day we took the steam train to Queenstown through rainforest and beautiful scenery. Wonderful lunch supplied and short walks to the Gordon River. We all caught the bus home. That afternoon Barry & Gail took a scenic flight over the Tasmanian wilderness and still haven't stopped talking about it!

Sunday Barry & Gail took the Gordon river cruise while Sharon & Tony had a relaxing sleep in and washed clothes before a scenic drive through a forest on sand tracks and along a beach. Later we all met up for a quad bike tour and terrorized the locals flying over the sand dunes. It was great. Then some beach driving before some inland 4WD tracks. At one point Barry was stuck so we had to do a U turn. Back at the caravan park Tony discovered a nail had hitched a ride in a rear tyre, so it was removed & plugged. Sharon cooked pizza for everyone for dinner. That night we nearly blew away and the rain came down in true Tasmanian style.

### Heading south

Monday rain, rain and more rain which created spectacular waterfalls on our drive through Queenstown and beyond. Called into Derwent Bridge and Lake St Clair. Weather too rainy and windy to walk anywhere so on we went.

### Disaster

Down the road towards Tarraleah when bang, crash, a pall of smoke almost obscured the Millard when it blew a tyre and skidded down the road. Thanks to Barry's skillful driving and a straight stretch of road they safely came to a halt. This time we left the Millard by the side of the road and on we went to Tarraleah 26 km away. The wheel had locked up (rubber strands caught around the brake cable), breaking a spring hanger.



### The town with no phone

Found very friendly helpful locals. A boilermaker borrowed a generator from a mate to run his welder and did temporary repairs to the van on side of the road. All back at the caravan park and a more substantial welding job was done (with the help of 240V power). Tarraleah was small, friendly, windy, rainy, no pubs, no shops no phone, and lots of wallaby poo everywhere.

Tuesday set off to find a phone and a dump station (beats emptying the portaloo into the camper!) at Hamilton. Beautiful little café called Platypus Café in the middle of nowhere. We all sat drinking coffee and cake in lounge chairs. On to Hobart and Bob Jane T Mart to find that Barry's van tyres and rims were under rated. New rims ordered in then headed south to Dover. Picturesque little fishing village 80 km s of Hobart. Caravan Park just across from the water with good facilities.

Wednesday up early, headed south for sight seeing. Diverted to Southport, very picturesque town on the coast. Then onwards down a good gravel road to Cockle Creek, southern most point in Tassie.

### The phone with no town!

En route passed a phone box at the side of the road – no town in sight! Beautiful scenery plenty of wildlife, though lots of road kill. Saw one dead Quoll (white spotted furry thing). At Cockle Creek, saw a copper whale sculpture, a memorial to the whales in the area. Whales were wiped out by whalers who killed the calves first. The calves would cry out for their mothers who would then come in for the same fate - sad but true.

Then headed north to the Thermal Springs (28 degrees) and Hastings caves. Gail and Sharon studied a creek for quite some time trying to locate a platypus, suspected source of the bubbles. Only to read the sign stating that the bubbles were in fact carbon dioxide. Hastings Caves were spectacular. One of the biggest and best is Australia (lots of stalactites and stalagmites) but equally fantastic was the construction of the pathway through the caves. Huge amount of hard work there.



### Walking on air

Next stop Tahune Forest Reserve for the spectacular air walk through the rain forest. This was a steel constructed walkway ave. 20 meters above ground (not for vertigo sufferers). Then we split up - Barry and Gail to Hobart to pick up caravan rims and tyres, and Sharon and Tony back to Dover. After securing new shoes for the Millard, Barry and Gail climbed (in a Nissan kind of way) windy Mt Wellington. They finally arrived back at camp and after van tyre changes we watched the opening of the Commonwealth Games.

### Heading east

Thurs 16 March Headed north, hopefully away from the cold. Through Hobart then first stop Sorrell. North again a very scenic drive including Burst – Me – Gall hill and followed the beautiful Prosser River (narrow road only steel cable between us and a wet rocky end). On to Orford which gave us views of Maria Island National Park. Final stop today Bicheno. The Blow Hole and orange coloured sea lichen on the rocks provided spectacular scenery. We set up camp and booked at a restaurant for dinner. A short steep walk to Whalers Lookout preceded a beautiful dinner complete with ocean views fishing boats, good food, company, wine and fairy penguins (which appeared from the sea). We later drove around the area and found fairy penguins on the rocks near the blow hole and in the front yard of a local resident's house.

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> Off to Coles Bay and Freycinet National Park. Saw the Hazards (colourful massive rocks on the Peninsula) and sleepy Bay and Wineglass Bay from the lighthouse lookout.

Coffee in Coles Bay overlooking the windswept turquoise waters and watching a boat being battered on the beach by the waves on the other side of the bay. Next north to St Helens closely following the coast all the way.



### The north east

Sat Early start (even earlier for Sharon – washing on the line at 6.30am) 8am headed north initially inland then westwards along good though corrugated roads to the Bay of Fires Conservation Area. The orange colouring on the rocks at the sea side gives it the name. Black swans along Ansons Bay inlet were as plentiful as they were camera shy – quickly but gracefully drifting away out of camera range. North of Ansons bay followed easy 4WD tracks to our morning tea stop. Gail and Sharon very excited to discover lots of little oval shaped “rocks” (looks like Wombat poo, smells like Wombat poo, tastes like ...no made that bit up, must be Wombat poo). Then off to Eddystone Point for a photo opportunity at the light house. This area is part of William National Park. Next inland to Gladstone for lunch in the park before heading north east to the tip of Tassie. Stopped at Petal Point. Returning South had a close encounter with a friendly wombat beside the road (we could have touched it).

Driving through Weldborough Pass Scenic Reserve, echidnas seemed to be at the side of the road at virtually every bend (of which there were many). Various cheeses were sampled at the Pyengana Café, before driving on to St Columba Falls, beautiful scenery. Completed the day at the Pub in the Paddock, which history tells was established by the sons of a midwife (& mother of 15 – plenty of practice), who had more interest in drinking beer than farming. An unusual fun activity there is feeding a stubbie to one of two beer drinking pigs (takes all of two seconds). After a relaxing Guinness (was St Patrick’s Day yesterday), back to St Helen’s.

### Sunday 19 March

Packed up at St Helen’s and said goodbye to Barry & Gail. Was almost howling Gail as the women said their goodbyes. Trip leaders headed off to see friends at Bridport; we were destined for Beauty Point, near the mouth of the Tamar River. We crossed the Tamar over the Batman Bridge, after admiring spectacular scenery under the cable hung bridge (brought back memories of Tony’s motorcycle trip there 25 years ago).

Dinner in the pub at Beauty Point that night – memorable – then a walk along the river admiring a pink sky, pink reflections and black swans – an excellent last night in Tassie!

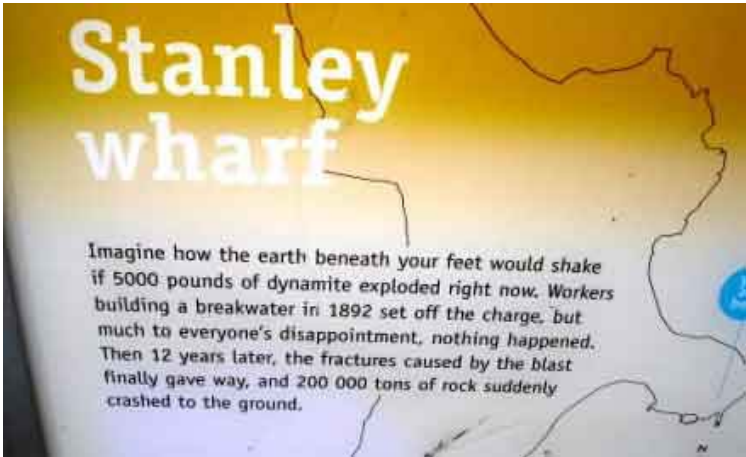
### Home again

#### Monday 20 March

Back to Devonport, after a brief diversion to the Axeman’s Hall of fame at Latrobe. A celebration of the achievements of world champion axeman David Foster. There we purchased a Tassie memento – a David Foster axe (since put to good use clearing a fallen tree in Sundown NP).

Then to the boat .

Back to the mainland, back to reality, back to work!



Barge Crossing Arthur River

A must do trip! Many thanks to Barry & Gail.

Story and photos by Tony and Sharon Collin