

OZMANBRIT 2011 - 2012

**The Awesome Adventures of...
Jodie Dragonfly & Andy Robinson**

**The travelling tales of an Englishman
about to hit Australia by storm**

As told by: Andy Robinson

Dedication

This book is first and fore-mostly dedicated to Jodie (Madame Dragonfly), who without her support throughout the whole trip and willingness to 'let me alone to get on with things', it might have never happened.

Ever since day one of me first getting to know Jodie, we seemed to get along effortlessly. We would chat endlessly throughout the night (my time) about anything and everything. It was very rare we would have disagreements on many of the subjects we covered and quite often we would know what either of us were thinking without having to actually say it.

And even in those early days, she had a certain something about her. At the time I didn't know what it was but it was sure enough something that had kept me intrigued enough to want to stick around and learn a whole lot more.

Whether it was planned or not (she first had plans for setting me up with someone else), she had me hooked. And when she suggested I should maybe one day come over to experience Australia first hand under her watchful gaze I had to jump at the opportunity at the earliest opportunity.

The chats went on throughout the wee small hours and we grew closer and closer with every conversation until it sort of became inevitable that we should meet and finally know how good we would be for each other.

It was never going to be easy and believe me we did have our setbacks from time to time. But when we did finally get to hold each other for the very first time, it was nothing short of love at first sight and things just couldn't have been any better.

Thank you so very much Jodie.

I love you very much now sweetheart, and look forward to that fateful day in which we can both settle down together and get to reminisce over this book's gripping contents and the sweetest memories of our early courtship that it documents for us xxx

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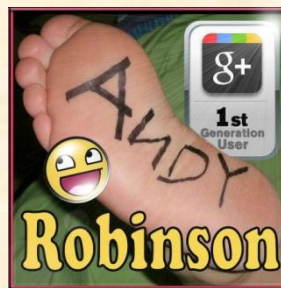
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Sunday, 20 November 2011

About travelling

If you have ever been lucky enough to have travelled through any old market town in, of or around the good old United Kingdom, there's a very strong likelihood there could and would more than likely be a weekly cattle market or similar still being held there of a weekend and it is in such places you will get to see all nature of domesticated farm animals being herded through and around turnstiles leading them to either an end of the road knackers yard bolt gun thing to assist in dispatching the poor animal or an auction ring of some sort whereby the hapless creatures would be sold and led off to pastures new, only to be fattened up in time for their future journeys down the gated corridors of the local abattoirs in order to at best meet their makers or more commonly, some untalented chef's warming pan.

Yes there are indeed still places around the world like this where modern life can still imitate just what happened in times of yore in these olde-worlde bastions of fenced off-ed-ness. Take for instance our post offices draped floor to ceiling with what can only be classed as Olympic grade hurdles, jumps and fences or even better still the average way we are greeted in today's airports. Which have us being herded individually through man-made turnstiles; makeshift barrier-tape corridors and endless queuing systems deliberately laid before us to either completely naff us off or prove the scope for even more red tape and its inherent delays from the powers that be on our inward or outward bound journeys.

Never mind the fact we have spent the last three hundred years or so fighting for the abolition of slavery or forcing our leaders to adopt a better stance on the rights



of the world's population and his dog, but it is airports to me that appear to have been sorely overlooked in this matter. I mean, right from the very offset, we are channelled through check in; a ticket collection, passport control, luggage sorting affair type obstacle course we are forced one by one to cross in carefully manufactured and manipulated lines.

And having got thus far, we have committed ourselves to a further funnelling through even more channels specifically designed to arrest any would be terrorists from leaving our shores and wreaking havoc on an unsuspecting world. And if by chance you should make it past these guys of border control, you are rewarded for your tenacious herding abilities by being allowed to spread about a little as you graze on the offerings of the great god Duty Free in a last ditch attempt from the presiding government to stop you draining the county's resources by taking all their precious currency away with you.

And it doesn't even stop there. Within just seconds of leaving the inshore tax havens of the duty free shop, we are finally freed (of a fashion) of our captive boundaries as we are left to spread aimlessly about in a millionaires' utopia of designer coffee shops, newsagents, and bespoke suppliers of last minute, exorbitantly priced dress items for those who had previously left the house without their socks no doubt. This host of lifesaver superstores; preying on their captive client base like vultures hovering around the skies around an empty oasis. Bleeding us all dry of what little hard earned we might have after forking out for our fortnight in the sun.

And why have the airports gotten away with this for so long you may ask. We don't usually tolerate being treated in such a Guantanamo Bay fashion. But because we are finally on our jollies, Those two weeks in the foreign sun that have probably cost us more than two months in overtime to afford, we simply don't seem to give a shit and allow the airlines full privileges to abuse us in that manner. And besides, getting through the herding mechanisms of most airports has to remain to be easier than finding an easy exit to your local Ikea furniture store. At the very least there remains a slight possibility that when push comes to shove, there is a good chance you will eventually make your way back home intact from the airport. Nonetheless it was the airport I was at and I was about to board flight number EK 0020 to Dubai. I was finally on my way....

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 21, 2012

Well as our infamous travelling Pom was boarding his flight to Dubai, a nervous wreck of a girlfriend, me, was waiting to get a phone call or text message, to see if he actually made it to the airport and that he was indeed on his way to Australia. It all felt very much like a dream that he was actually on his way. I mean we had been planning this for a few months now, but for him actually to be on his way, wow, just wow. I was going to be able to touch him after all this time.

I remember when he first said, I am coming to get you, as soon as I sell my house, I am coming to Australia to prove to you that this is real. Knowing how long he had been trying to sell his house for, I thought this was going to be a long time off yet, but when the universe decides to give you a kick in your cynical arse, it does it convincingly, his house had a buyer the following week. The wheels were now set in motion.

There was the waiting for the sale to be finalised, the getting of the passport, the booking the flights, all a waiting game. There was the small set back with the passport application being sent back and therefore putting any chance of him being here for my birthday out the window. Another 4 – 6 weeks felt like it was going to be forever, but in the big picture, it was only a small wait. Talking every day via Skype made the time pass quickly. I was averaging 3 hours sleep a night because I couldn't pull myself away from our conversations. I was going to be a wreck by the time he got here!!!

When the passport finally arrived, there was the choice of the flights. Singapore airlines were the saner of the 2 choices, arriving at human hours at Brisbane airport and departing at human hours from the same airport. This was the preferred choice, but what we ended up with was the flights with Emirates, arriving at ungodly o'clock on a Tuesday morning. WTF!!!

The universe was now having some fun with us.



Monday, 21 November 2011

Australia bound

According to that great god of the internet Google, just 16,471 kilometres, 10,235 miles or even 8,894 nautical miles (as the crow flies) from my bedroom, lies a distant land that time has almost forgotten. And in English money that equates to two flights across lands afar and waters deep. The first from Manchester UK to Dubai, an uneventful flight on a Boeing 777 300 lasting a whole of 11 glorious hours of being sardined into a metal fuselage around 20 years old. And the second, pretty much more of the same. Another 14 hours of the same in fact if all be told. But despite the lack of legroom and the dehydrating effects of the freshly compressed, cabin atmosphere, the plane was still fully equipped with all the modern conveniences of a dollar a text messaging facilities, Harry Potter's last stand and seat to seat conferencing via the on board telephone systems. All well and good I'm sure you'll agree, but when it is just bog standard internet you really want, it left a whole lot to be desired.



And what of the distant land of Australia? Well just like the plane, it is old too... Very old.

Because for around 60 million years, since the formation of the Great Dividing Range (stretching more than 3500 km from Dauan Island off the north eastern tip of Queensland, running the entire length of the eastern coastline through New South Wales, then on into Victoria and turning west, before finally fading into the central plain at the Grampians in western Victoria), Australia has been all but silent geologically, which has allowed it to preserve many of some of the oldest things ever to be found on earth – the most ancient of rocks and fossils, the earliest of animal tracks and riverbeds, and probably the first faint signs of life itself.

You see at some undetermined point in the great immensity of Australia's past – perhaps 45,000 years ago, maybe 60,000, but certainly before there were modern humans in the Americas or Europe – it was quietly invaded by a deeply inscrutable people, the Aborigines, who have no clearly evident racial or linguistic kinship to their neighbours in the region, and whose presence in Australia can only best be explained by positing that they actually invented and mastered ocean-going craft at least 30,000 years in advance of anyone else in order to undertake an exodus, then having finally arrived on the terra firma that is Australia, promptly forgot or abandoned nearly all that they had learned and scarcely ever bothered with the open seas ever again.

It is an accomplishment so singular and extraordinary, so uncomfortable with scrutiny, that most historians breeze over it in a paragraph or two, then move on to the second, more explicable invasion – the one that begins with the arrival of Yorkshire born Captain James Cook and his doughty little ship HMS Endeavour in Botany Bay in 1770. Never mind the fact that Captain Cook didn't actually discover Australia and that he wasn't even a captain at the time of his visit. For most people, including most Australians, this was where the story truly begins.

The world those first Englishmen found was famously inverted – its seasons back to front, its constellations upside down - and unlike anything any of them had seen before, even in the near latitudes of the Pacific. Its creatures seemed to have evolved as if they had misread the manual. The most characteristic of them didn't run or lope or canter, but bounced across the landscape, like dropped balls. The continent teemed with many other forms of unlikely life. It contained a fish that could climb trees; a fox that flew (it was actually a large bat); crustaceans so big that a grown man could climb inside their shells.

In short, there was no other place in the world quite like it. There still isn't. Eighty percent of all that lives in Australia, plant and animal, exists nowhere else on the planet. More than this, it also exists in an abundance that seems

incompatible with the harshness of the environment seen around it. Australia is the driest, flattest, hottest, most desiccated, infertile and climatically aggressive of all the inhabited continents. (Only Antarctica is more hostile to life). This is a place so inert that even the soil is, technically speaking, a fossil. And yet it teems with life in numbers uncounted. For insects alone, scientists haven't the faintest idea whether the total number of species is 100,000 or more than twice that. As many as a third of those species remain entirely unknown to science. And for spiders (eek), the proportion rises to nearly 80 per cent.

You take my point I'm sure. This is a country that is at any given time staggeringly empty for the most part and yet still packed with stuff. Interesting stuff, ancient stuff, stuff not readily explained. Stuff yet to be found. Trust me, this is an interesting place. You see Australia is the world's sixth largest country and its largest island. It is the only island that is also a continent, and the only continent that is also a country. It was the first continent conquered from the sea, and the last. It is also the only nation that began its modern life as nothing more than an outdoor prison.

It is the home of the largest living thing on earth too, the Great Barrier Reef, and the most famous and striking monolith Ayres Rock (or Uluru to use it's now official, more respectful Aboriginal name). It also has more things that will kill you than anywhere else on the planet. Of the world's ten most famously poisonous snakes, all are Australian. Five of its creatures – the funnel web spider, box jellyfish, blue ringed octopus, paralysis tick and stonefish are the most lethal of their type in the world. This is a country where even the fluffiest of caterpillars can lay you out with a toxic nip, where seashells will not just sting you but sometimes actually go for you. Pick up an innocuous cone shell from a Queensland beach, as innocent tourists are all too want to do, and you will discover that the little fellow inside is not just astoundingly swift and testy, but exceedingly venomous. If you are not stung or pronged to death in some unexpected manner, you may also be fatally chomped by sharks or crocodiles, or carried helplessly out to sea by irresistible tidal currents, or left to stagger to an unhappy death in the baking outback.

It's a tough old place without a doubt. And as if all that were not enough for the peoples of this expansive land, the poor buggers were now only hours from having to put up with me too. Or should it be me that needs to worry I ask myself.

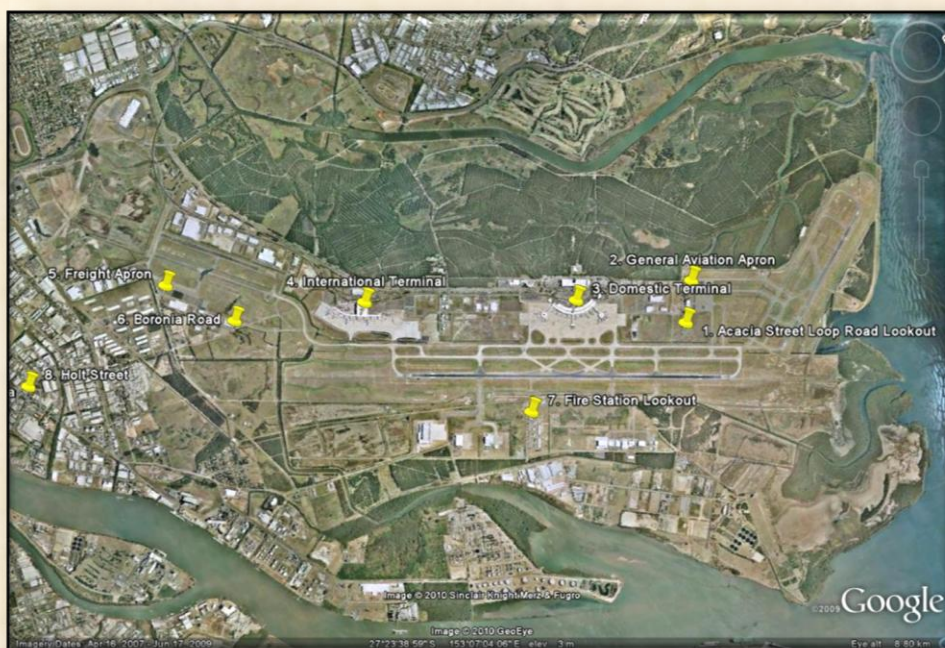
Dragonfly emerging: Jan 21, 2012

I still call Australia home...

We are quietly proud of our deadly animals, it scares the hell out of tourists, but hey, that is what the Vegemite is for. Smear this on your neck and you will be protected from the deadly drop bears. Put it in your socks and you are unlikely to be bitten by snakes. Vegemite isn't for eating, it is for protection, our deadly animals cannot stand the smell or taste of it, so they will leave you alone.

Yes we are a land of extremes and of danger but the people who live here are unique. We are born tough and we can handle adversity better than anyone we know. We are resilient. Take our storm seasons, they are tough and do a lot of damage, but the community pulls together to get back to normal. We put out the call and heroes in all shapes and sizes come to help, our volunteers keep this country functioning.

There is no where on earth like Australia and no where on earth I would rather be living. Once you experience life here, it is hard to return home...



Brisbane Airport

Tuesday, 22 November 2011

Enter Australia

Ok, I've been gone for a week now and the blog is already way behind. I mean for you guys I haven't even landed in Oz yet. But I did and was only 20 minutes late in doing so, which is far better than some of the local bus services back home I might add.

Anyway... After reading about all the extremes of the TSA in America within the almighty treasures of the Goog, I was fully expecting to be strip searched and having my botty seriously violated on entry to this huge country (yes I do generally look that dodgy), I therefore felt completely cheated to be only politely requested to amble past a tiny sniffer dog; a beagle barely the size of my fist. I mean, I had lube at the ready and everything. What the fark kind of way to quell a revolution is that? I nearly demanded to go through again such was the level of my disappointment.



And but for the fact I had someone rather special waiting for me at incoming, I would have made more of a fuss but schedules were at stake here and whereas I was here on my jollies, my hosts still had work and other daily nasties to take care of so my terroristic activities had to be somewhat curtailed for now. Maybe on my way back home perhaps...

MEET MY HOST

"I had someone rather special waiting for me at incoming"... Meet Jodie Anderson, AKA Jodie Dragonfly to the members of Google. A remarkable woman who not only holds down a full time job, spends upwards of a further 40 hours coordinating Emergency services cadets, even more time supporting Rural fire service and still found some time to keep a certain Brit entertained through the wee small hours of the UK night. She really is a human dynamo without an ounce of selfishness in her body. Simply taking a look through her diary would tell the most sceptic of onlookers that this woman is driven with a passion for her cadets. Well it would do if you could wade through all the innuendos and general high level flirting the two of us have been up to, but maybe we best not go there.

I know a few of our closer Googlies have been half expecting us to shag each other to death within minutes of meeting but we have nonetheless managed to keep things real. I mean there is more to life than sex you know. Like bacon. You must always find time for bacon!!

And then there is work and blogging and coffee drinking to be done. Things that could get either embarrassing or at least messy if done in a multitasking jerky sort of way. So with all this in mind, I regret to inform the raunchier among you readers that we have decided to limit our lovemaking activities to a mere 12 times a day for now. We will of course review this from time to time for the inclusion of the occasional quickie here and there and hope this will be to your liking. And no, there won't be any pics as photographers are quite pricey at that time of night.

Needless to say what with the effects of things like jet lag, unpacking and general getting used to having each other around, it would have been easy to include sight-seeing photos but the inside of a stranger's bedroom might not be that interesting to some so maybe we should skip that bit. And what I am really trying to say here is that in being so bold, I am hoping you are now sat wondering whether or not we actually did or didn't. Hopefully too you will get the picture it is none of your bloody business and just leave it at that.

AND LIFE GOES ON

For the greater part of the first week, I was invited along to where Jodie works. Naturally I wasn't to be allowed on the actual shop floor so to speak but I was allowed to come and go in and out of the canteen area and help myself to drinks and the like. The whole setup seems quite civilised on the face of things despite it being an office of sorts with which comes the usual

mix of office politics and treacherous back stabbing bitchiness. Something I was soon to become a part of; as it was later declared I was a 'security risk' to the smooth running of everyday operations (I told you I looked dodgy).



Maybe it was because I wandered round taking pictures of the place, maybe it could have been the fact I was roaming around with a netbook and they feared I was illegally tapping into their wi-fi. They are after all one of the biggest ISPs in town here. Or maybe, just maybe, some back stabbing knob head had heard about my reputation on G+ (thanks for that) and had insisted the higher authorities put a stop to me being there. In any case the "Yes" Optus trademark was specifically changed just for me and was now a resounding "Optus says NO!"

At any rate, whatever prompted their decision, I was left out in the not so cold baking heat of the great outdoors to wander around aimlessly for hours on end (Nice tan by the way) free from the great constraints of air conditioning and shaded office interiors. Oh my god, I'm from England, I'll melt in this climate! And despite going walkabout all alone unable to find Jenny Agutter I did make it. Unlike my friend Mr Toad here...



Luckily, there is still plenty for me and others like me to do while left to our own devices. Sightseeing was one option and I did manage to get some in here and there. Then there were the coffee shops. Can somebody please explain the whole range of latte, skinny, full blown, half baked, dry, medium, and sweet and all that really means? And for God's sake tell me why nobody other than me seems to know what Nescafe instant is. I know someone has to know because I alone cannot buy the 50,000,000 jars on display in any given supermarket. Give me coffee dammit, not a crash course in some foreign language.



Anyway I digress... Back on the wildlife front, I had yet to meet the herds of dangerous assassins promised in all the holiday brochures. But I did manage to see a wombat...

Billy Bob is that you mate?

Dragonfly emerging: Nov 23, 2011

Wow... you really do talk me up!!!

Shhh... You are going to ruin my hard-faced bitch reputation I have worked so hard to get ;)

Thank you for thinking so highly of me... kisses

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 21, 2012

There I am, waiting at the airport. OK, I sat in the car for 20 minutes convincing myself that yes he will like me in person and no, he isn't going to run away when he sees how pink my hair really is. So he is running 20 mins late, no biggie, that isn't too bad considering.

I know roughly what he is wearing and damn I can't believe it is 7am in the morning!!! I have been up since 4am so that I could be fully awake for when he arrives, oh look, coffee!!! I will grab one of those to calm me down. Nope that didn't work. I hate expensive coffee that tastes like crap, so now I am a little annoyed over the coffee, but hey not so nervous about meeting him for the first time. Coffee finished. Bugger, no distraction, where is he. Oh crap, there are 2 exits. Did I pick the wrong one?

OK I will stand out of the way back here, why do all the tall people have to stand in front of me? Oh god, there he is, I wonder if he will find me back here. Oh wow, he is tall. It feels good to be finally in his arms...



Wednesday, 23 November 2011

Oh Noes...



It rained today.... What the fuck's that all about? I came here to get away from all that sort of thing. Grrr

Dragonfly emerging: Nov 23, 2011

Harden up princess!!! You haven't seen anything yet!!!

;)

Goddards: Nov 23, 2011

Yeah, it's gonna get worse.... ☺

Excalitez: Nov 25, 2011

Princess.... Hehehe

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 23, 2012

So you leave the country and this hits... good on ya!!!

A SEVERE storm warning for southeast Queensland has been cancelled but weather forecasters have renewed their warnings for residents to brace for heavy rain.

Places likely to bear the brunt of the wild weather include Hervey Bay, Gympie, Toowoomba, the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Ipswich and the Gold Coast.

The heaviest rain was over Stradbroke Island and the far southern parts of Moreton Bay just after 9am.

Rainfall totals are between 35mm and 40mm an hour.

Hotham Creek near Beenleigh recorded 182mm and Dunwich on Stradbroke Island recorded 141mm in the 24 hours to 9am.

A flood warning remains current for coastal rivers and streams from Rainbow Beach to the NSW border and adjacent inland catchments.

Several roads have been closed due to flooding.

Police said there is water over Moggil road at Taringa and Toowong.

January 24, 2012.

King tide flooding. Region braced for flash flooding

FURTHER flash flooding has been predicted for areas north of Brisbane, with severe storms predicted for the northern Sunshine Coast and Gympie areas.

Pullenvale and Brookfield are also affected, with reports of localised flooding.

OZMANBRIT – The travelling tales of an Englishman about to take Australia by storm

The heaviest falls experienced this morning include 109mm at Mount Tamborine, Hotham Creek 130mm, Norwell 122mm, Laheys Lookout 97mm, Benobble Alert 92mm and Steiglitz Wharf with 127mm in the six hours to 8am.

The Bureau of Meteorology issued a flood warning this morning to warn residents on the Gold Coast, Albert and Logan catchments to prepare for wild weather.

The Queensland Police Service has warned motorists against crossing flooded roadways with several affected by rising water and heavy rain.

Coburg Rd at Canungra, the causeway at Tamborine-Oxenford Rd at Wongawallan and Days Rd at Coomera have all been closed by police following heavy rain this morning. (near where I live!!)

Police have issued further warnings for road closures at Donaldson Rd, Rocklea, between Dunn Rd and Collinsvale St.

Drivers have been urged not to drive through the area and to travel via an alternate route.

Roads have also been closed at Hardys Rd, Mudgeeraba, Upper Ormeau Rd at Kingsholme and Mirambeena Drive at Pimpama due to water over the road.

Clean-up crews are working to clear mud debris and water from Beams Rd, Carseldine, but motorists are warned to expect delays.

Dangerous road conditions and localised flooding in the Mount Mee section of the D'Aguilar National Park have forced the closure of the park temporarily.

Meanwhile, the Bureau has warned of further stream rises across coastal and inland catchments between Rainbow Beach and the NSW border, with localised minor flooding still being felt on the Sunshine Coast at Paynter Creek, Diddillibah.

Authorities have warned Queenslanders they face the most severe weather conditions since last year's devastating floods and cyclones.

Hughenden, in the northwest of the state, received a taste of it on Sunday night, with a storm that dumped 34mm of rain in just 10 minutes, similar to falls that devastated Toowoomba last January.

Hughenden storm Jan 22

OZMANBRIT – The travelling tales of an Englishman about to take Australia by storm

Hughenden experienced a storm like no other, blowing wind gusts of around 170 klm/hr. Several homes lost whole roofs whilst power was cut to the whole community.

The storm produced winds of up to 170km/h, a destructive force usually seen only in Category 3 cyclones and rarely in inland regions.

Rainfall of up to 400mm is tipped to fall over the next six days along most of the state's coastline with the southeast expected to receive the heaviest falls.



Queensland Floods 2011

Thursday, 24 November 2011

My 1st week in Oz

Throughout the majority of my first week over here, most of our time was spent simply taking care of business. For example there was work still to be done to pay the bills, a lot of running around to meet the needs of the various emergency services groups Jodie supports and family matters to be taken care of. We did however manage to slot in a few extracurricular activities along the way.

On the Wednesday for instance I was invited along to the SES (State Emergency Services) awards ceremony at Logan East SES on Daisy Hill where after being in the country for less than 36 hours I was greeted by the mayor of Logan Pam Parker, who immediately decided it might be a good idea to introduce me to the whole turn out as the man from the UK specially drafted in to take photos for the evening. WTF? Did she not know my camera skills were second only to those of an untrained chimpanzee?



[Check out the full SES awards album here](#)

Apparently it turns out that I being a mere tourist was the first person to be spotted with a camera and it is here that endeth the only vague similarity between me and the more professional camera jockeys of the BBC. Anyway,

I did what I could for them and while my efforts are quite possibly far from perfect, I am still more than happy to do my bit to help promote the unsung heroes of Australia and all they do for the local population. And in doing so, I am also happy to include a few of the dreadful shots I managed to take for them here.

We seemed to do a lot of stuff for the cadets that week. There was a lot of running around to do for these guys as it was soon to be their end of year thingy wotsit doo dah. Friday night was the penultimate meeting for the cadets this year where it was interesting to go along and see what the guys actually got up to and learn what it was that took up so much of Jodie's time.

We did however manage to find some "quality" time too. And I say that in a tongue in cheek kind of way because it entailed watching three "Twilight" movies in preparation for the recent screening of the latest instalment. Yes you heard me right... Twilight - the one with the sparkly vampires. Somebody shoot me please! I mean if the global economic meltdown wasn't enough to worry about, I now had sparkly vampires to keep me awake at nights too.

Anyway it was Saturday night when we trekked up to Yatala for the local speciality **Yatala pies**. I had four of them. Greedy bastard I hear you say. And yes I know, but having already learned what I'm like over making choices over something as simple as coffee, did you really expect me to be any more decisive with something as tasty as Yatala pies?



So, armed with said pies (it was a drive through) we headed off down the road to my very first experience of a drive in movie theatre (yes to watch Twilight four – Oh god). Never mind though, if the movie was lacking the

whole experience was quite entertaining in itself. There were cars galore and people sitting on top of them, in them, in front of them with barbecues burning, hell some people even backed their utes (utility pickup type vehicles) with mattresses in the back to recline in for the evening/movie.

The pictures projected onto the screen and sound radioed in through the car stereo (high tech or what?), the experience was enjoyable and we also had the added bonus of a set of semi comfortable seats. Much better than at a common cinema. I was also interested to see what kind of atmosphere the drive in could offer as with most movies in a cinema, it is often the crowd interactions that can often help make or break the film being shown and I must say that sitting there with the windows wound down gave pretty much the same sense of belonging.



And having come out here fully expecting to blog the whole trip, we spent whatever spare time we could doing a little sight-seeing too. I wanted to get some pics together for this and found some good opportunities to do so at [Brisbane's South Bank](#) where you could find covered walkways, a Nepalese pagoda, a big Ferris wheel eye in the sky affair that most major cities seem to have these days, pools and garden walks along the way.



[Check out the full South Bank album here](#)

There was also **Mount Coot-tha** which overlooks the majority of Brisbane. Here were some stunning panoramic views of the whole of Brisbane. We arrived there early evening hoping to catch a sunset over the area which we did but unfortunately the battery of my camera managed to die before the sunset had fully given in to some truly magnificent night light scenes. We hope to go back sometime and more properly capture the full glory of the place.

And another recent jaunt included a trip up **Mount Tamborine** where unfortunately the lighting and partial cloud cover restricted any photo taking opportunities. Having said that though, I have to state I love the whole place and how anyone could ever visit and not like it would be beyond me. It really is quite awesome.



[Check out the Mount Coot-tha album here](#)

Dragonfly emerging: Nov 24, 2011

Sounds like love at first sight

Excalitez: Nov 25, 2011

Twilight.....ahahahahhha. You poor thing. :(

Staci Finch Thompson: Nov 30, 2011

Sounds like an excellent time to me! I miss drive-ins - I'm glad you all still have them. No better way to enjoy a movie (any movie, even one with vampires!).

Hope the rest of your trip is as fun!

Dragonfly emerging: Nov 24, 2011

This first week was a baptism of fire. I don't think Andy fully comprehended what I do when I don't have Madi. A normal day for me starts at 5am.

Tuesday – the day he arrived in Australia, after a few hours of quality time at home to get him settled in, I had to return to work for a few hours. Then it was on to a cadet meeting where I was interviewing 5 new adult leaders. The LCAC (local cadet advisory committee) meeting is made up of representatives from Fire, Ambulance, SES, EMQ, and me. So Andy got to greet all the interviewees on their way through the door at the Ambulance station where we were, across the road from the fire station where our fellow google plus firemen used to work. 11pm we got home that night.

Wednesday – I had the day off to spend with Andy, the housemate made himself scarce, and we had the house to ourselves. This is when I forced him to watch some Twilight movies so he could get himself across the story before we went to the drive-in on Saturday night. Oh and I fell asleep while he watched the movies :). That night we were off to the SES awards night for Logan, where 4 of my cadets were getting medals for their participation in the storm and flood activations that saw the world focussed on our state and the devastation of that past summer. Andy became the Mayor's new best friend with taking the pics for her that night. We got home at 9.30pm then went for a walk down at Paradise Point. Home at midnight that night.

Thursday – back to work and normality for me, getting the final touches on the training I had for the cadets the next night. Yep, I get to teach them all about the dangers of Cyber bullying and Sexting. Oh and this was after we got back from Mt Coot-tha and watching the sunset.

Friday – Andy met the cadets for the first time. He saw me training them and saw how these little angels are full of life and character. I think just quietly, I like the naughty ones the best, they will get the most out of the cadet program and this will impact their lives the most. Home just before 11pm.

So you get the general idea of how busy he was just in the first week.

Tuesday, 6 December 2011

Sydney Bound

For our second week, I want you to imagine you might be stood at the white cliffs of Dover back in old Blighty and you were to decide to get in your car and drive all the way up to Aberdeen. That, if overland would be a trip almost the full length of Britain and Scotland combined, top to bottom so to speak and a total distance of around 436 miles as the crow flies. That's a 702 Km excursion that would take you the best part of a full day while travelling most of the way on normally chock-a-block 3 laned motorways.



By comparison, the same journey in Australia is dwarfed by the sheer immensity of the land mass that is the largest continent on earth, so what seemed like it would surely be a trip for only the hardest of types now turned out to be a trip that many Australians wouldn't think twice about making and that is what we practically did in travelling the 723Km (455 miles) down to Sydney using the M1 Pacific Highway along the East Coast, only a two laned carriageway at best. Fortunately for us though, there wasn't that much traffic accompanying us (not like the heavily congested UK roads) which helped in making the trip.

We did however take the precaution of including many stops en-route to help break up the monotony of the voyage. And Australia has a few 'big things' on many of their routes to help cheer the wearisome traveller along.



And two of the 'big things' we happened across were the Big Prawn outside Ballina on the North Coast and the Big Banana at Coffs Harbour but like I already mentioned, there are many more to choose from. You can [Take a look here](#) for a more complete overview of such 'big' places.

These were not however our main choice of destination as we had already pre-arranged to meet with a fellow Googler, Cath Slater who resides in

Sunny **Newcastle**. Yes you read that right, Newcastle. And no, that is Newcastle Australia not the famous '**Brown Ale**' swilling Newcastle of the Geordie homelands back in Britain.

It appears that in 1911, BHP chose the city of Newcastle as the site for its steelworks due to the abundance of coal in surrounding areas. The land put aside was prime real estate, on the southern edge of the harbour. In 1915, the BHP steelworks opened, beginning a period of some 80 years dominating the steel markets and heavy industry there. As Mayfield and the suburbs surrounding the steelworks declined in popularity because of pollution, the steelworks still thrived, becoming the region's largest employer. But in 1999, the steelworks closed after 84 years of continual operation and had employed about 50,000 people during its existence, many for decades. The closure of the BHP steelworks occurred at a time of strong economic expansion in Australia too. Since the closure, Newcastle has experienced a significant amount of economic diversification and a huge cleanup which has strengthened the local economy rather than decimated it, the place has improved considerably too because of this and has now become one of the most photogenic of beaches in all of New South Wales.



Welcome to Newcastle Beach

Anyway, by the time we arrived here it was getting quite late but we had already planned for this by making an advanced booking at a local hotel for the night a few weeks prior to the trip. We all met up there and trundled down the road to a local MacDonalds for coffee, cake and a chat. I might also add at this point that the people watching aspect of such a place is good value for money too as you watch people coming home from nightclubs, police and other services coming in for breaks and the like. Oh and get this, this particular MacDonalds was a 24 hour affair too, something we don't have back in England, even though we seem to excel in 24 hour shopping and other things, 24 hour happy meals is not one of them. And by now, it was almost three in the morning when we finished up and returned back to our hotel after making arrangements to meet up again with Cath the following morning for a meal or something more than just a good old chinwag.

HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS

Obviously, our new found company was a definite highlight, as was the coffee and cake we had together that night. But along with the highlights we experienced, we suffered some pretty bad lowlights too, the first being the hotel room we had booked.

"I have stayed at other Formule1 hotels and they are much better than this. When I arrived I was told that they weren't doing breakfast due to renovations (would have been nice to be notified when I booked) I was given a room with an air conditioner that had an air freshener stuck in it to make it smell nice. The carpet on the floor was stained and the very old tv had the worst reception I have ever seen. Even the pay tv channel was very snowy. If going to Newcastle, stay elsewhere."

[find this review here](#)

This was not a review left by us but it came pretty damned close. For a one night stop over it would have been ok if it had at least been clean which it wasn't and yes the air conditioning unit in our room too, had one of those magic tree, vanilla flavoured car air fresheners stashed within its grilles. Unfortunately, we only found this review site after the event and yes it was cheap, but for only a few dollars more, we could have had a lot better.

Having survived the night though, we went to meet up again with Cath and chose a bay-side restaurant for the breakfast that was suddenly deemed unavailable back at the hotel. Highlight... bacon, lowlight... coffee machine was broken. Bad enough in itself, but we also had to wait just shy of an hour before the bacon turned up too. So there we all were sat at an outdoor table

in the roasting heat of the clear blue skies over Newcastle. But the food was good when it eventually did turn up.

After the food came the biggest highlight of them all. A trip along the length of Newcastle beach. And the scenery there is absolutely gorgeous. Neither was it so busy it would have been impossible to move like Britain's Blackpool beach front often gets. To date this was to prove the highlight of the whole trip and I would definitely recommend it. Even though Cath (a native of the area) reckons we should all keep it quiet so it remains the oasis of tranquility it appeared to be for our visit.



[Click here for the full Newcastle photo album](#)

The trek up and down the beach took little more than an hour to complete and even though it was the cream of the crop as far as excursioning was concerned, it did however hold a final lowlight in tow. To learn more about

this, you will have to read the further blog entries as it has quite a bearing on how the rest of the journey unfolded.

WHO ATE ALL THE PIES?

As an aside for a moment, it is worth noting too (especially after the **pie shop fiasco in Yatala**) that Australia has a few more 'Famous' pie vendors along it's Eastern coastal regions.



For instance, on our way out to Newcastle we happened across **Fredo's Pies** in Coff's Harbour again and later came across **Harry's Cafe de Wheels** for his 'world famous' pie and peas. Naturally, I had to give them a go.



Eeeeeeyummy!!

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 8, 2011

It was so good to see Cath :) and Newcastle is just spectacular...

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 21, 2012

Most sane people would get a good night's sleep before heading off on a trek like we were about to do, but no, we got back up from an awards night where we get home around midnight and then start packing, falling into bed around 3am. Needless to say, our departure time was pushed back a little. Instead of the 6am getting up to get moving, we were up at 8am and didn't leave til 11am.

We had a long 10 hour trip ahead of us, not to mention we needed to stop for fuel once and taking pics along the way. I did most of the driving until I finally got over my control freak attitude and allowed Andy to drive for a few hours coming into Newcastle.

We arrived about 10pm that night and lucky for us, Cath Slater was able to come rescue us and take us to Maccas for coffee and people watching. The hotel I had booked us into, well, I was under the impression that this hotel was going to be basic but still of a good standard. Oh boy was I wrong. Can I just say, if you have a choice of staying in an F1 motel or staying somewhere else, chose the latter. The review I left on the travel website was almost identical to another traveller's experience. I was not alone in my dislike of this establishment. But thanks to Cath, we didn't have to suffer it for long.

We woke up the next morning to a beautiful day and packed the car to head back over to Cath's place so we could head out to breakfast on the beach. I should have known something was wrong when we walked into the cafe and they said the coffee machine was broken. Why would you open if you cannot serve coffee? This thinking was beyond my comprehension. But the seductive sizzle of bacon won out and we ordered and sat outside in the morning sun.

The walk along the beach was just stunning, good company, the girls having a good old natter and the pommie git taking happy snaps along the way. Our first picture together was taken along this walk with Cath. For the record, I hate photos of me, but we needed to record this wonderful day, so I pulled on my big girl pants and smiled.



Wednesday, 7 December 2011

Meet Sydney

Further down the coast, another 167 Km further down to be exact lies the sleepy (yeah right) town of Sydney which was our central destination for the rest of the weeks journeying. Being a major city and in effect the unofficial capital of Australia, I wasn't sure what to really expect from the place apart from the usual hustle and bustle, heavy traffic, tightly packed buildings of a normal working city and many of the old clichéd images of the Opera house and harbour bridge.



[Click here to see the Sydney Harbour Ferry Ride photo Album](#)

And it was with all that in mind that I suggested we shouldn't go killing ourselves to take it all in as, for the great extent, most of it would already be well documented on the internet especially after the city found itself in the spotlight during the 2000 Olympics. Yes it would be nice to have a wander round and take in the atmosphere of the place along with some of the sights but I wasn't really up for fighting the hoi polloi with respect to the task of getting around the place.

Anyway, we left Newcastle in the afternoon of the Sunday and arrived at Sydney for around 4pm where we booked into the Travelodge hotel (much better than the last place) for a total of three days to give us time to go explore in a relaxed enough manner. And upon arriving in our room, we first took the opportunity to catch up on some much needed sleep after the late night snacking and bad hotel of the previous night.

DISASTER STRIKES

It wasn't until we woke up that the final of the 'low-lights' of the Newcastle trip first reared its ugly head. Yes I had gotten myself sun-burned. How the hell did that happen, I'd been so careful.

Now I know they say only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the mid-day sun, and that if you put an Englishman anywhere abroad, usually you can generally easily spot him as he is the one that looks like a deep fried, bright scarlet, red and sore looking lobster being cooked for teatime. And because we Brits normally see so little of the sun, we willingly throw ourselves at the mercy of its burning rays, while most of our Australian counterparts tend to be a lot more aware of the damage it can do to human flesh and so treat it with a great deal more respect. But I really had been careful, or so I thought. Not so though, I'm afraid.

You see that trip down the beach in Newcastle was the time I chose for the first airing of my shoulders to the blazing Australian sun and what made it unknowingly worse was the cool gentle breeze blowing across said shoulders. I was without doubt, totally oblivious to the whole sunburn thing. And being the man I am, I, like I did to her face, fully blame that Cath Slater woman. Grr :)

But back to the story again...

When we later woke from our slumbers, my neck and shoulders were red raw with sunburn but they were reasonably bearable pain-wise and to save any further burning I overdressed before leaving the hotel to go explore the

harbour, taking a ride along the waters past the Opera house and harbour bridge on one of the many ferry boats laid on there. On the ferry, we went over to Watsons Bay via Garden Island a place where Jodie reckons she had spent 6 years in electronics and weapon systems refurbishment for the Australian Navy (R.A.N.) to Doyle's fish and chip restaurant which is situated at the forefront of the ferry landing bay.



Talk about having a captive audience. There was no way for any one of the hundreds leaving the ferry to enter the bay without passing through the place while being seduced by the succulent aromas of the food being prepared and with fish (shark) and chips for two costing just over \$30 AUD, I'm sure the place was quite a good money spinner for good old Mr. & Mrs. Doyle. Something the long queues lie testament to for sure.

Anyway, we sat at the bay front with our fish dinners and I must say, it felt rather empowering to be sat there eating shark in a country where the sharks think very little about actually eating you, and after having her fill, Jodie decided it was a good idea to share the remains with a solitary seagull that had patiently kept us company for the duration of the meal. Sounds quite cosy in principle doesn't it?



+ food =

But the trouble is that where there's usually one seagull, there is often another million or so, close at hand. And true to form, they all showed up in good time to harass the pair of us for our scraps.

Anyway, after nom noms it was a case of off to further explore the expanse of land known as **Watson's Bay**. It is located on the southern head of the entrance to Sydney Harbour. To the east is the Tasman Sea and to the west is the Harbour with a glorious view of the city of Sydney in the distance. It is where Governor Phillip first landed in Australia.



[Click here to view the **Watson's Bay** photo album](#)

It's also recognised as Australia's oldest fishing village, having been established in 1788. We headed off down the beach, looked around the marina, checked out the buildings and open spaces, hell I even climbed a tree during our escapades.

Climbing trees? OK, so we were having too much fun and had to put a stop to it all. So with that in mind we headed back to the ferry for our return trip to the harbour where we would embark upon a train ride to St James' in the city centre for more photos, a little shopping, an explore or two around the buildings and historical interest things and having once again exhausted camera batteries, memory cards and traveller's legs, we headed back to the hotel for a pasta salad style health food type meal thing.



[Click here for the Hyde Park and surrounding areas photo album](#)

It is worth noting here that part of this jolly up was to take in the opulently appointed bank buildings built in the early 1900's while the rest of Australia was subjected to extreme poverty (sound familiar?). One such example was the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in Martin Place, a building that despite its splendour and public interest aspects, actually refuses the taking of pictures Grr.

Never mind though, thanks to the interwebs, here's one we prepared earlier for you... it's all real marbles in there and it is huge too. This photo hardly does it any justice at all.



Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Martin Place

After tea when the temperatures had dropped sufficiently for us to venture out again, we set out to trek the length of what is locally called 'the rocks' taking in yet more buildings, shops, places of interest, the docks, the nightlife and whatever else we thought would fit our lenses. And that meant some night shots too. Maybe it's time to confess once more that a

photographer I ain't as the lack of lighting seems to be directly proportionate to the blurring of the photos I take (grrr again).



[Click here for the Sydney by night photo album](#)

But we did what we did and when we did it we turned round and recovered our tracks doing some more as we made our way home to the hotel for the remainder of the night.

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 11, 2011

Sydney is wonderful at night, you really need to see the city in the day and the night to get the best of what it has to offer

Saturday, 10 December 2011

Sydney Day Two

She lay there spread across the mattress of the bed as naked as the day she was born as he leant over her. He could see her eyes dilated, her nostrils flared and her face flushed in front of him as he closed in for another kiss. Their lips met and he raised his hands to hold her in a warm embrace and that was when it all happened...

"Well, those of you who know me, will know I don't do sympathy... well I sometimes even thrive on the pain of others... in saying this, today, I was almost moved to changing my heartless ways... seeing this pommie git in agony, was almost too much to bear... well if I could have stopped laughing that is..."

Let me take you back to the scene of the crime, a crime against nature... Newcastle beach, midday sun, pommie in a white wife beater enjoying the sun with 2 Australian goddesses (love you Cath)...

*"I don't burn" he says
"I go pink then tan" he says*

He has been rubbing this in for a few days now... you see, I burn and peel and go back to lily white and I am quite happy with my healthy fear of the midday sun and its nasty side effects on my tattoos... after all I have spent a lot of money to be THIS coloured...

We had breakfast in the sun, because, when you are English you don't see this yellow orb as often, so you make the most of it... waiting for close on an hour, the bacon finally arrived and breakfast was being served at 11:30am... any good sun fearing Aussie knows that you stay out of the sun between 10am and 2pm, but Cath and I were partly shaded so we didn't worry too much about the Pommie bastid... (Can I just say, I was not happy with the fact the coffee machine was broken down either, what sort of establishment offers breakfast and no coffee!!!) So breaky now done and dusted, it was off to the beach, for some site seeing...

Crystal clear blue water, blue skies, the occasional white fluffy hint of a cloud, the day couldn't have been more perfect... even the dolphins were enjoying the day, frolicking in the waves... I have never been to Newcastle

before and I must say, OMG, why did it take me so long to discover this hidden gem!!!!

After a couple of hours walking along the beach at Newcastle with Cath, Cath and I having a chat and Andy taking pics for this blog, we jumped in the car to 'go up the hill' to see how the other half live... some gorgeous houses, spectacular views and a Harry's Cafe de Wheels pie to be had... pie sadly was a disappointment to Andy... I was still full from breaky and just needed water as the sun was sooo dehydrating... please note, I have still not had coffee!!!

After dropping Cath back home and a 90 minute drive to the hotel in Sydney, we finally unveiled the newly pinked Andy... at first I thought he still had his Die Hard (wife beater) vest on, but no, it was actually his white chest and his very very VERY red arms and neck... Andy still boasting about how he is going to look great tanned when the red goes...

a cautious day in the sun the next day, with Andy wearing long sleeve shirt over the top of his t-shirt to make sure he didn't do anymore damage... common sense would have probably suggested a day away from the harbour and beach of Watsons bay, but that's not how I roll... I was on a mission to show Andy every one of my favourite places in Sydney while we were here... that came all unstuck Tuesday lunch time...

after a night out seeing Sydney at night and taking pics of the bridge and opera house and wandering around the city at night, well I was limping, but that is a whole other story, I don't give sympathy, therefore I don't expect it... anyways, Andy discovered what happens when blood flow hits dry burned skin suddenly..."

AND LIKE THE STORY BEGAN...

"The itching across his arms was now driving him to distraction and he was laughing out loud at the pain because I fear if he hadn't he would have been in tears... no amount of cold wet towels, cold water or after sun moisturiser would help him, so he quickly put himself in a scalding tub of water to try and equalise the burning sensation in his arms... this was my cue to go to the chemist across the road and get some aloe vera gel and burn neutralising/numbing spray...

What I came back to was a 6 foot 2 inch naked man spread out in the bath tub, looking maybe a bit more human, and not driven to want to scratch his arms clear through to the bone... far more contented, but the room was like

a sauna... I sprayed the numbing solution onto his arms, brought him in a bacon and egg roll and left him to soak some more...

Later on, a much more human Andy emerged from the bathroom, hoping that the poor housekeeping guy that brought more towels, didn't see him in there with his legs resting half way up the shower walls... how easily this Englishman seemed to be restored, scalding hot bath, fresh towels, numbing spray for the burn and a bacon and egg butty for the belly... and all was well in his world again...

I think Andy is now starting to understand why I am white and why all the road signs on the way from Queensland to Sydney were talking about sun sense and skin cells in trauma... we are the lucky country with our sun and sand and beautiful clear blue waters, but with all that beauty comes the responsibility for us to take care of ourselves...



Yes I photo shopped on extra tan so you could better get the idea

PS Andy said he will still be brown tomorrow... sighs"

Thanks Jodie, What do you know about tanning anyway? And whereas I cannot deny any of what you have said, I will however point out that the Aloe Vera moisturising lotion you gave me should NOT have been stored in the room's mini bar freezer and consequently applied in a frozen state. I make no apologies for the holes left in the ceiling that day.

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 11, 2011

Andy, sweetie, darling, I DON'T TAN!!!

I am white, I like white, it makes my colour stand out so much better...

plus you burn in the sun, you know what it is like to burn now don't you darling ;)

Andy Robinson: Dec 11, 2011

Pfft..... 'twas just a scratch

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 11, 2011

Just a scratch?... More like an open flesh wound!!!

Seriously, I have never seen skin peel like that, other than on very old people...

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 11, 2011

Oh, just so you know, 2 weeks later...

HE IS STILL PEELING!!!

:)

Gotta love that Aussie sun

Andy Robinson: Dec 11, 2011

Yeah, Peeling spudz for chips that is

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 11, 2011

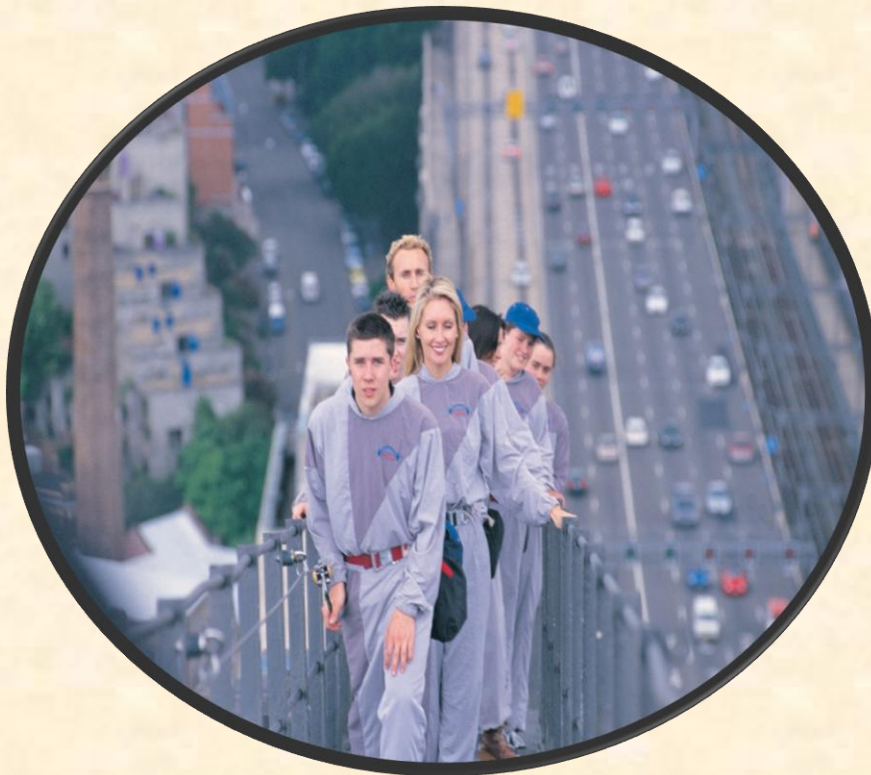
So you are Mr Potato Head now?

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 21, 2012

After reading this again, I realise you may have been right about the aloe vera gel being just a little too cold, in hindsight, I should have warmed it up in my hands first.

Giggles.

I just wanted to reduce the burning sensation in your shoulders. I didn't mean to cause freezer burn on them. :)



Climbing the Harbour Bridge... What I could have been doing if it weren't for that sun

Sunday, 11 December 2011

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

We interrupt this blog to bring important news to the world... Today (11th December) was Andy's birthday again. Don't ask me why but it happens every year for some reason.

The day started off really well where a woman's love was well and truly pledged....



Could this mean Toy Story 4?

And then there was Bacon. A food for the gods.... There really is nothing better in the world than half a pound of pig slapped between two random toasted rounds of bread, and I was given two of these beasts to munch my way through, (must be my birthday I thought) nom nom xxxx



mmm bacon...

And then after a nice peaceful afternoon with not too much sex to wear us both out, it was off for a nice peaceful afternoon's get together where friends Teresa and her daughter joined us over a drink and a meal over at the **Oxford Tavern** in celebration. The event was only marred by us being hurried somewhat by severe weather warnings (yes Australia has weather) and because of said weather warnings, we made our way back home via **the Cheesecake Shop** for a good old birthday cake to round off the day with...



mmm cake...

What more could an almost 50 year old 'Old Fart' really want or need for?

I'll tell you what....

I wanted sex and drugs and rock and roll, fast cars and loose women. Money to burn, houses to trash, yachts, bimbos, world domination etc.

But all in all it was still a good day. After all, last year all I got was socks. I'm obviously going up in the world. Good old Australia, YAY.

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 11, 2011

Hmmm, my car is fast

Andy Robinson: Dec 11, 2011

Is it a Holden ute?

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 11, 2011

Sweetie, when you live here, you will discover that the Holden ute is a piece of shit... it is only the tourists that like them

Godders: Dec 18, 2011

lol...Am I still classed as a tourist??

Andy Robinson: Dec 18, 2011

You tell her Godders... LOL

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 19, 2011

Yes Godders you are still a bloody tourist

Godders: Dec 19, 2011

CHARMING!!

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 19, 2011

What does someone get their boyfriend for his birthday, keeping in mind he has to travel back to the UK with whatever he gets? I struggled for weeks to think of what to get him. So thankfully, my favourite online store, thinkgeek.com, had some t-shirts that reflected his personality.

<http://www.thinkgeek.com/tshirts-apparel/unisex/generic/b597/>
<http://www.thinkgeek.com/tshirts-apparel/unisex/popculture/d18d/>
<http://www.thinkgeek.com/tshirts-apparel/unisex/generic/ea89/>
<http://www.thinkgeek.com/tshirts-apparel/unisex/popculture/eaee/>

These seemed like the ones that would suit him best. His love of The Big Bang Theory, his love of bacon and well the last one is sort of personal, but you get the idea ;)

So with the gifts arriving after his birthday, I had to set about making his day great.

1. Let him sleep in
2. Brekky, Bacon Sandwiches of course, served with coffee and a lot of love :)
3. Lunch with friends at a local pub
4. Cake!!! picked out by Andy from the Cheesecake Shop, Tiramisu Gauteau, my favourite

Lunch was cut short by the incoming storm warning sent to my phone. You just don't mess with storms in Queensland and the pub itself was slowly emptying of patrons as they heard similar warnings.

Cake was eaten at home over the next 3 days by Andy, the house mate and I had a slice too :). He even picked out the perfect candles for the cake, which now adorn "the hat".

We watched what was supposed to be a terrifying storm from my bedroom with the blinds wide open, looking out the huge double sliding glass door, where I promptly fell asleep for the next 5 hours!!!

Horrid girlfriend I hear you say...

Well as luck would have it, Andy crashed out too and was only awake about 5 mins before me, enough time to go and make me coffee and bring it in and make me feel guilty as all hell for wasting his birthday sleeping.



Monday, 12 December 2011

To Infinity and Beyond....

So it was still our second day in sunny Sydney and despite the effects of the damage inflicted by the sun and the not so caring partner (Aloe Vera in the freezer? What's that all about?) we still managed a fairly normal-ish kind of day wrapped up in front of the telly watching a funny film from good old Blighty carefully interspersed with far too many advertisements.

Most of that day was spent in the confines of our **Travelodge hotel** room as the sunburn had severely impaired our outside faring capacities through fear of being burnt again and an abstract terror of being taken too far away from the cooling effects of the not nearly quite big enough bath tub.

We did however strive to leave the hotel in one last ditch effort to explore Sydney by night again in so far as we went all the way next door to the hotel. A journey consisting of at least 50 paces and an elevator ride down 12 floor levels. It could have been more I suppose, but that would have been a whole 'nother storey.



Anyway, we quickly made the journey, sat and ate our Japanese meal out in the street, and quickly rushed back indoors like vampires escaping the rising sun. I knew that Twilight saga was a lot more than it was made out to be.

This was to be our last night in Sydney as we were to be out of the Hotel by morning and we fully intended to pack our bags when we returned from the day's extensive journeying. But we didn't. We just ate our fill, struggled to negotiate the 15 second journey back to the hotel, arrived at our room like someone trapped in a desert arriving at an oasis, collapsed on our bed and promptly slept for the rest of the night.

The following morning we arose in time for an unhurried packing session, express checkout, and a massive bundling of stuff into the car before finally leaving the hotel car park and saying goodbye to Sydney one last time.

Although we hadn't done much there, we still thought we had done enough to do the place justice. Any longer there and it would probably have just been another any old city, any old place. But somehow it managed to treat us to just enough touristy stuff to retain its mystery and magic.

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 12, 2011

Ok the chemist said to put the aloe in the fridge to chill it down for sunburn, so I thought the freezer would do that faster... in hind sight I should have squeezed it onto my hand first before putting it on your shoulders... giggles... but your reaction... hehehehe... was priceless... I wonder if they have fixed the damage to the roof yet ;)

And don't forget the guy with the cough in the room next to us that got moved to another room on the same floor, I am assuming due to his cough being so bad... Must have been something in his room to make him cough so loudly all that time... hehehehe...

It was funny running into him in the lift ;) then figuring out who he was!!! And those pants he was wearing, well they should be illegal...

Monday, 12 December 2011

SAFE SEX

It's all about wearing protection guys and with that in mind, meet the new addition to the expedition party... Meet the hat.



Before setting off on this jaunt across the other side of the world, in my infinite (lack of) wisdom, I decided I should probably try looking my best and therefore opted to get a haircut. But dear reader, not doing anything by halves, said haircut was to be as close to absolute baldness as is humanly possible with the aid of a hover mower and an edge cutting strimming tool. Yes I opted for a number one all over. And what's more, I wore it with pride and thought nothing more of it.

Then we met Sydney...

Amidst all the eeeks, ooohs and aaahhhhs of the painful sunburn inflicted earlier by the Newcastle sunshine, around about the time we hit Sydney I could feel a definite burning sensation to the old bonce. And bearing in mind that back in Blighty we only get 3 day long summers, for an Englishman of

my caliber, that is a totally new experience to be had. I had to protect my brain for the benefit of Google's G plussers, my own sanity (debateable) and the whole of mankind who was probably in need of a really good laugh around about now.

And being the sprightly nearly half a century old type that I am, OMG it actually suits me while wearing the bugger. Who would have thought? And don't tell anyone, but it's actually good for pulling the birds too...



So, just like that, the travelling party of two became three. Jodie, myself and the hat (the birds come and go as they please). The brain continues to rattle around the 59cm skull but no longer fries in the Australian daylight and all is well with the world once more as we venture out into the big vastness of Australia with renewed vigour in an effort to fill our new travelling partner with feathers, badges, souvenirs and all sorts of other assorted crap.



Yes we might not look much in our own individually isolated glories but put us together and me and the hat are just.... well you be the judge and decide.



SAFEST SEX I EVER CAME ACROSS !!

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 13, 2011

There is a coffee cup in this pic too if you look closely enough ;)

Andy Robinson: Dec 13, 2011

Hope you can't tell what religion I am... Gulp!!

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 13, 2011

Wiccan? I have only ever seen witches burned that badly

Slinky: Dec 17, 2011

Enough of the pics of you naked. I've still not seen a single picture of this so called "women" that you have been staying with.

Andy Robinson: Dec 17, 2011

Apologies but the good lady other half has refused to be photographed, claiming fears that people will think I have been abusing her.

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 18, 2011

Oh I exist slinky :) just camera shy... just don't want to ruin his blog



Here's a nice bird to look at instead

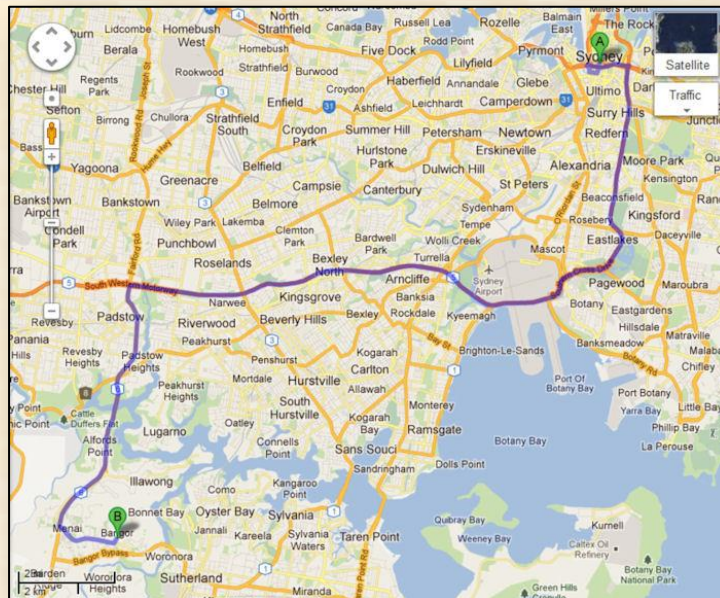
Tuesday, 13 December 2011

On the road again

While still down in Sydney, it was decided Jodie was to catch up with a few people she knew. Jodie had lived here a few years and had quite a bit of history in the place (and some of it was good too). So our first port of call would be her father's place where we were to make our base for the next few days while we got around the general area in a somewhat manic manner and managed to see everyone that counted.

(Having not known any of these people previously, I hereby ask that they please accept this disclaimer if my comment 'people that counted' either included or excluded them against their will - Yeah, like they can do anything about it right now).

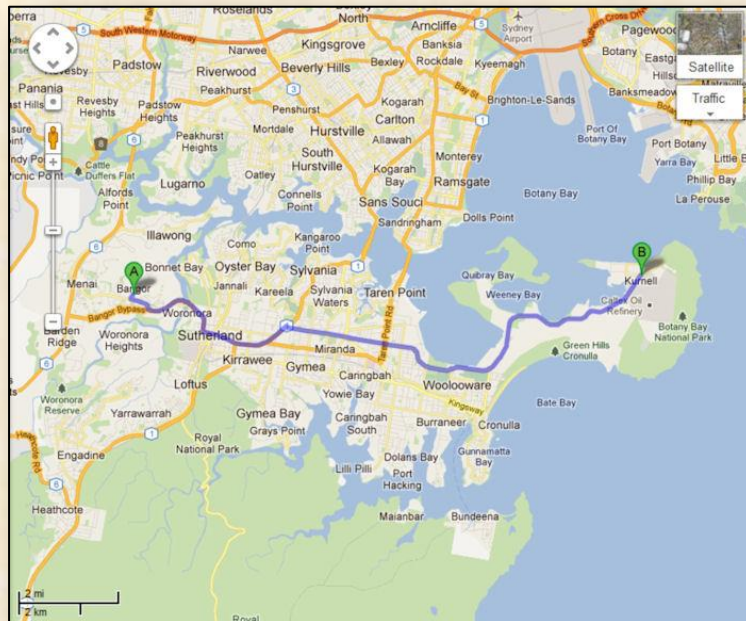
Anyway, from the hotel in Sydney we travelled 38Km further south to Bangor (another English, no, Welsh name) to meet Jodie's father Barry and his Thai wife Jongdee.



Sydney to Bangor 38Km

We stopped for lunch, unpacked for the duration of our stay, caught up with current affairs (family stuff) and got stuck in to some good old fashioned laundry (even holidays have boring bits you know).

From there it was a quick 20Km east to Kurnell to visit Simon and Fenessa and their kids Nathan, Georgia and Adrienne. (Close personals of Jodie).



Bangor to Kurnell 20Km

We arrived there just in time to see them getting home from school, drank copious amounts of coffee, ate cake, and gassed until well past six in the evening when it was time to make our way back to dad's again for a magnificent Thai spread laid on by his wife. It was gorgeous and the refusal of seconds was not an option. Yum yum.

Now for those of you like me who had never met Barry before, may I now refer you to the good old Noah of biblical fame. My reason for this will become quite apparent as soon as you approach his house only to be met by his latest baby, a forty foot yacht cum party boat affair that he is constructing out of finest quality aluminiums, factory made pontoons, full living quarters with kitchen and bedroom and toilet, outboard motors, and probably a crew of twelve disciples to help man the lifeboats.



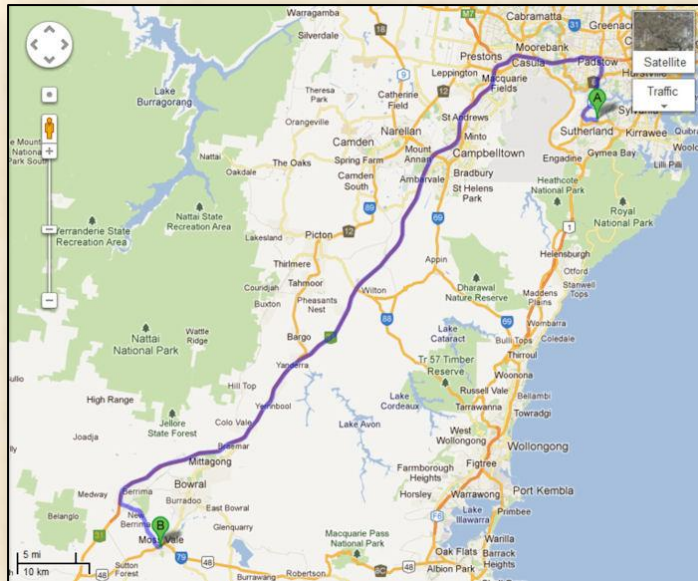
Noah's Ark 2nd attempt

And being the hands on kind of guy that I usually am, Barry and I found an immediate affinity and presently began talking shop for the duration of our time together.

Without delving too far into Barry's personal life, he was for many years a man working in the hospitality industry for Qantas airlines. And that clearly showed the following morning when the breakfast spread produced by him was placed in front of us. It was a full spread of traditional English fayre that was fit for a king and there was plenty of it too. Obviously being an Australian, he thought this would be a good time to put me to the test with a jar of Vegemite too. Naturally I took up the challenge and other than this little incident, I actually think he liked me :)

After our fill of hearty breakfast foddors, it was a case of all pile back in the car again to go deeper south to see the Southern Highlands (more on this in [another post](#)) but we nevertheless jollied along southwards for another 121Km to arrive at a place called Moss Vale.

OZMANBRIT – The travelling tales of an Englishman about to take Australia by storm



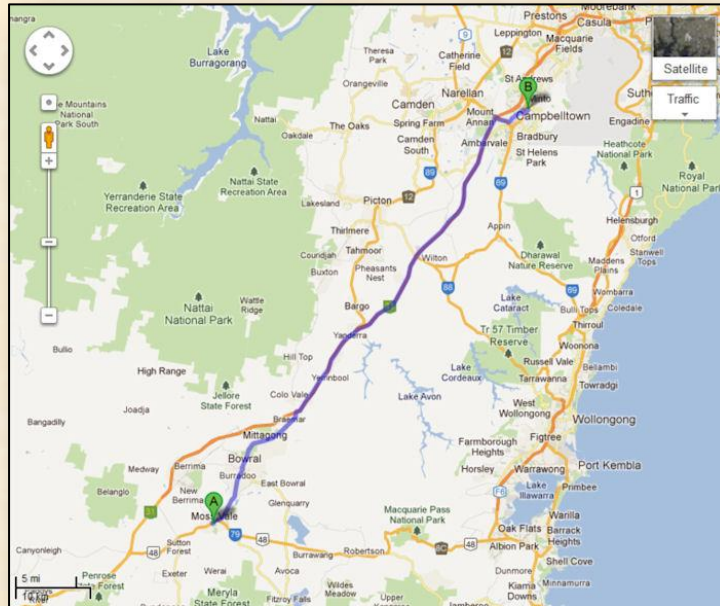
Bangor to Moss Vale 121Km

Where we found a long lost family friend Leanne working in her shop selling some class coffees and baccy to the passing workforce along with some select antiques. A weird combination of things to sell you might think but they seem to be making it pay so hats off to them.



Old friends & antique coffee?

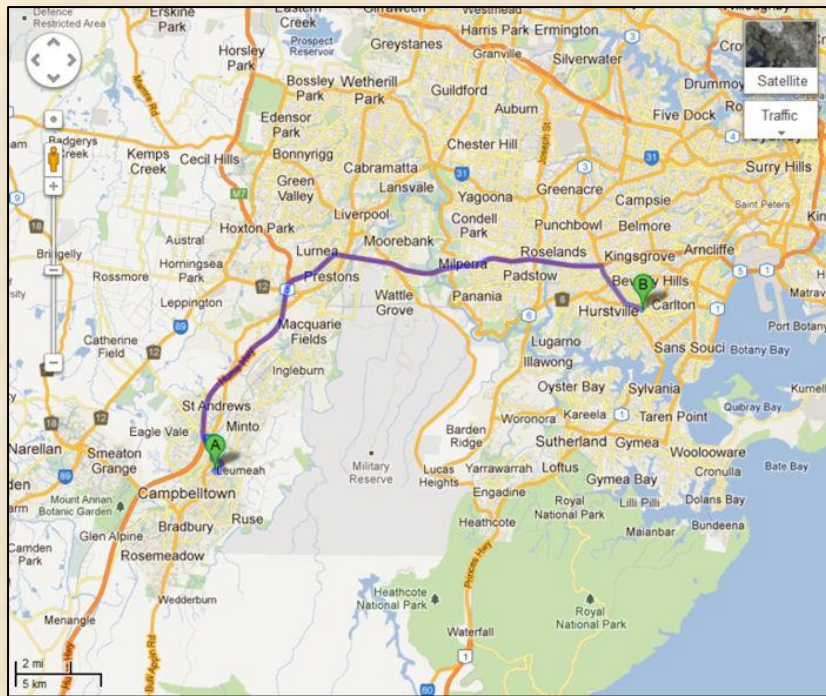
And from there we headed north east. Another 76Km to Leumeah where we met with another old friend of Jodie's, Mel who was a teacher presently at home with her two sons Lochie and Joshie while her hubby was working abroad back in the UK. Sunderland I think it was she said he was lurking.



Moss Vale to Leumeah 76Km

This meant more meeting folk, more catching up and more coffee and biscuits for all as I was kidnapped by the two boys and treated to a trip around their garden and trampoline while the girls sat chatting among themselves rebuilding their time apart and building bridges for the next ten years of probable separation.

Having said that, we still had a fun couple of hours there before it was finally time for us to pile in the car once again to head off west. This time it was for a Vietnamese meal (hmm never tried one of those before) in the **Miss Saigon Restaurant** situated in the town centre, with yet more of Jodie's old friends, Ronnie and Sue who were another 37Km north-east of here at Hurstville. It only took five times round the town before we eventually found parking, but when we finally met up the company and the meal were all good, although the room was rather noisy so we decided to leave and find somewhere for a quiet drink.



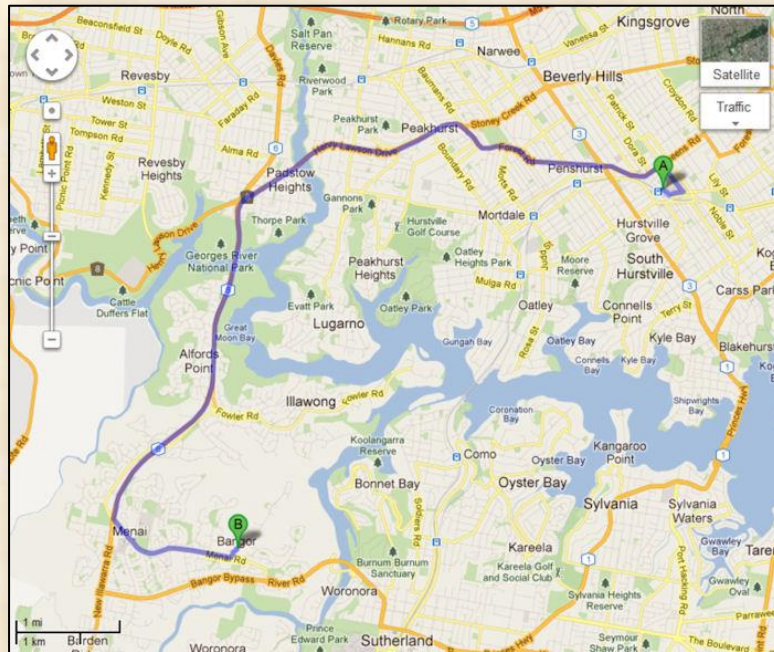
Leumeah to Hurstville 37Km

It was only a matter of a small trek across the road from the restaurant where we all found a place for coffee and doughnuts just outside a cinema complex and it was there where Sue somewhat misguidedly attempted to penetrate my hollow and totally numb skull and teach me some of the wonders, whys and wherefores of coffee-shop coffee in all its various shapes, forms and sizes. Some of it even sank in too, before we had to head back to Barry's again to bed down for the night.

It was early the following morning when things took a slight turn for the worse though because the preceding night when asked what she would like for breakfast, Jodie replied "something light" without thinking too much about it.

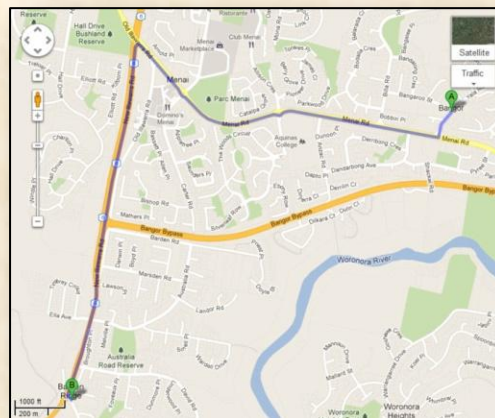
That actually translated into me being robbed of my hearty traditional English breakfast from the morning before though with it being swapped instead for a scantily filled dish of raw fruit. Grrrr she obviously hates me!!

Horrid girlfriend !!!



Hurstville back to Bangor 16Km

It also meant beginning the last of three hectic days on a more than half empty stomach as we once again hit the road to see yet another couple of friends, Tracey and her hubby Geoff with their young son Jack over at Barden Ridge. Quite a local jolly this time being as it was only seven minutes down the road for us. Bloody hell, I could even have walked that one.



Again we stayed for a couple of hours there with them, just long enough to catch up for the next five or so years again before we had to be back with Barry and Jongdee at Como Marina for a parting lunch before we set off on our long way home again.

We were going back via Newcastle once more to catch up with that she-devil Cath Slater again for more of her sunburn, sorry, I mean a last meal, this time an Indian that happened to be more like a Mexican (yes the Vindaloo was more like Chile con Carne. I don't whinge for nothing you know). Then, after our 'last supper' there were cuddles and goodbyes a plenty before the deadly drive back to home and Brisbane.

So all in all, many new faces were seen, many Kilometres were crossed, and many hours of happiness were had. Life was certainly good (bar the sunburn Cath) for a change.

Andy Robinson: Dec 13, 2011

Ok first pic, we didn't take that route

We went along botany bay so we could see all the houses. We like houses you see.

So we went through Brighton le Sands, along to Sans Souci and Taren Point, then Miranda, Sutherland and across the Woronora river.

Now I just have to get Google Maps to translate it all :)

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

OH GOD!!!

I am so not related to my father...

I WAS ADOPTED!!!

I am sure of it...

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 21, 2012

The friends we caught up with are the ones I keep in touch with. Good quality friends are hard to find.

Tracey and I went to school together and we were later house mates. I flew to Thailand for her wedding to Geoff. This was the first time I have been back to Sydney and actually met their son Jack. I have known Tracey for 24 years.

Mel and I met at Garden Island when we were doing our traineeships with Australian Defence Industries. Mel left to take up a scholarship in teaching, I stayed on for another 5 years at Garden Island. I have known Mel for 22 years.

Fenessa and I met originally when I was working for the National Australia Bank when I left school. I thought working here while I was trying to get into the Navy would be a good career choice. I lasted a year in the bank before taking up the traineeship working for the Navy :) Fenessa and I met years later through my then best friend and her cousin who was best friends with Fenessa. We have been friends ever since. 23 years or more from memory.

Leanne is a family friend I have known since I was a teen. She used to live in the same street as where dad lives.

Ronnie and Sue. I have known Ronnie ever since she walked into a training room at Optus Rochedale Satellite facility, 2007, teaching me something I really wasn't interested in, because I was going through the divorce from hell and I was toxic and angry and pissed off at the world. She liked me anyway :) Our 2nd thing in common, our motorbikes, both VT 750 Shadows, only difference, her Lucy was black and my Ruby was red. Our first thing in common, we are both awesome!!!



Barry "Noah" Grant

Tuesday, 13 December 2011

The Southern Highlands (Highlights)

When I was first told I would be travelling to the Southern Highlands, I was expecting to come across scenery similar to where I live already. You know the sort of place, high hilly surfaces, cold hostile weather, deeply forested woodlands and dark overcast and overshadowed skies. But none of this was true.

Yes we had gone further into the Great Dividing Range than ever before and yes height was a factor, but that was where all the similarities ended. What we had actually landed ourselves in was some of the most gloriously photogenic scenery I had ever come across. There were blue skies all around, wide open spaces, old country courtyards, churchyards and a wide array of charming buildings.



[Click here to view more from the scenic album](#)

And even along the country lanes we travelled, we came across stone carvings of the native wild life in the middle of what seemed to be nowhere of any real significance. It was as if they had been placed there especially for us. They looked both pristine in their appearance and splendid in their isolation.



This Wombat is well bad. Badder than our own Billy Bob even.

[Click here to see more from the Statues album](#)

And outside of the more major conurbations, there weren't any of the usual arrays of tasteless monolithic housing to be found either. Instead, where it was obvious that money did exist, it was only ever pushed into your face in a far less crass and totally more subtle sort of way...



Check out the [ironwork in this album](#)

It was a beautiful day for us both with plenty for us to see and do. And even when we were somewhat flagging and ready for a refuelling with copious amounts of coffee and even more cakes, we luckily stumbled into a pleasantly quaint looking little villagey thing built around what was the Berrima branch of the [Australian Alpaca Centre](#).



So who's the prat mirrored in the window?
Take the weight off your feet and check out the [Alpaca Centre photos here](#)

It was a building chock full of all things alpaca. With clothing, bags, toys and ornaments all derived from alpacas in one way or another. There were shops, workshops and a mini museum along with special displays and the good old restaurant that supplied extremely good fayre for a wearisome traveler. Well worth a visit anytime.

And finally there was Berrima itself. Population not very many but a place beautifully kept. A church, a river, a bridge and every bit of it so very very photogenic.



[Click here for the full Berrima album](#)

And I suppose that while we have a church in our midst, we should all now join in prayer together. A prayer to simply bless the little putt-putt mobile we are using for the whole of these ten weeks in Oz.... Our very own little trusty steed. Just like little Donkey in Shrek 1, 2, 3, and probably 4, 5 and six.



God bless the trusty putt-putt mobile

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 13, 2011

"little putt putt mobile" WTF!!!

This little thing is built for speed and handles mountain roads like it is on rails!!!

You and your bloody Holden fetish!!!

Andy Robinson: Dec 13, 2011

Is that when being towed?

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 13, 2011

Be nice to my car mister...

QLD is too big to walk around!!!

Goddards: Dec 18, 2011

LOL...!m in stitches here..

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

Don't encourage him... i have had enough of his "if you were a nice girlfriend, I would have got a Holden ute for my birthday" crap...

Apparently I am a horrid girlfriend

Andy Robinson: Dec 21, 2011

Dead right she is... Doesn't even want matching Holdens

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

Stop it!!! First it is the matching jumpers and now bloody matching Holdens!!!

No Holdens in my front yard thank you very much

Andy Robinson: Dec 21, 2011

Well the moods will never match, I could never be that angry. M O O D !

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

I'M NOT IN A MOOD!!!!



Wednesday, 14 December 2011

Transporting Home

After leaving Newcastle at around nine at night, all we had to do was drive back to Brissy. Sounds simple doesn't it? But rather than choosing to break up the journey, with another overnight stay in a dodgy hotel, we chose to drive back overnight and share the driving between us.

An admirable idea at the time, but it all fell down where the co pilot was supposed to sleep while the other drove. Needless to say, that never really happened and when we did eventually arrive back at Brisbane at just 9 minutes past six the following morning, we both had match sticks holding our eyes open and were well and truly worn out but glad to be alive after a couple of near misses and nodding off at the wheel.

And it didn't take much longer before the comfort of a nice warm bed had us both entrapped for the best part of the day ahead.

And with that in mind, this wouldn't be much of a blog entry so I have decided to take a look at Australian transport systems (hopefully excluding bus routes which I have managed to live without back in the UK since leaving school, and although they do exist, it just goes to show how in-effective they are against the modern man's love for cars). Yes there are planes and trains to do this too, but even more so there are automobiles.

And as you have previously read (you did didn't you?) in the [about travelling](#) post, planes can quite often be a law unto themselves so we won't be going there in this piece. I did however take a look at the local trains and unlike the British versions they seem to be a really laid back affair with plenty of space, and generally very clean to boot.

Unfortunately, being aware of the current sensitivities of this terrorist laden world we live in, when I asked a station worker for permission to photograph a couple I was denied doing so while being given the weakest excuse ever that it would be dangerous for me to be darting around the rail tracks just to snap an oncoming choo choo.

So now it seems I must be looking simple as well as dodgy?



Shhh, don't tell anyone...



Next I thought, I know, I'll look at shipping. I like boats and thought out loud, "is there a harbour where we can get some passenger liners like I once did in Crete?" With that, Jodie soon had us bundled into the car and was driving to the Port of Brisbane. I'll tell you what, if you want to see thousands of brand new cars and trucks awaiting being sold, and millions of metal containers, then this is the place to be. The port is huge and it was nigh on impossible to find a direct route to the water's edge.

After a good half an hour or so of trying to find water, we came to another dead end in a road and a sign on the railings which read... Trespassers will be shot, deported and sold into some deviant form of sexual slavery or words to that effect and behind said fence lay a shed with a uniformed man sat eating his sandwiches.

When I asked him what the score was, the man replied that the good ol gubment took a very dim view on terrorists stealing goods before they got to slap huge taxes on them and it would be for my own good if I got the fook out of there rapid style. A very odd situation indeed I thought when you can travel down the coast to Sydney and take as many pics as you like of all the militaria (active serving warships) on full show at Garden Island.



Mum's the word...

But the biggest visible transport differences seem to appear in the automobiles range of things. It is fair to say that in general, the Aussies tend to love their muscle cars. And while there are a few cheap and cheerful run-arounds on the Australian motorways, there are a hell of a lot more on today's British roads, but this is hardly surprising I suppose with the UK petrol prices being as high as they are and the much longer routes to be travelled over here.

Another major difference (to me a builder type) is there are not that many panel vans around. Whereas we have vans of all shapes and sizes over in blighty ranging from micro cars to medium vans, transit vans, 3.5 tonne vans and even 7.5 tonne lorries, the Aussies seem to prefer their open backed utility vehicles (utes) with actual panel vans being much in the minority to the point they are virtually none existent (well almost). Yes they have their Toyota four by fours like we all do but they also have their shinier Fords and Holdens (GM) which we tend not to.

And then they have two further distinctions in this realm. Firstly the more industrial looking type, a car chassis-cab with an open tray slapped on the back. A true load it and go option.



Or then there's the tamer more domestic looking version that looks more like a boy racer's wet dream with fancy shoes on than any kind of true work horse. I guess that just makes me a boy racer then because they definitely

have the looks even if I know nothing about the petrol thirsty rubber bands they probably use for engines.



Want one ... These are the **Holdens** that Jodie has been banging on about throughout this whole blog's comments. Back in Blighty, this would be a Vauxhall Astra but for the fact they don't come in this shape variation.

Another thing worthy of note is the distinct lack of vehicle signage (trade, company and heavy commercial). Rule one of marketing says that huge blank side of your vehicle is the most cost effective way to advertise. It tells your customers who you are, how to get you and what you do. What a missed opportunity therefore to not be doing it. There really are only a few taking advantage of this medium, I would love to know any reasons why.

Lorries seem to take on the more American style of huge bonneted Mack (Surprisingly no Peterbilts or did they fold already?) trucks rather than the more European flat fronted styles. And while there is a mix of the two, this mix definitely sides on that of the meatier Mack designs. Across the EU, the harmonised weight for international transport was set at 40 tonnes at a maximum length of 16.5m for articulated vehicles and 18.75m for drawbar combinations.

The maximum overall length permitted for rigid vehicles is 12m. And there is no legal maximum height limit for goods vehicles or for loads in Britain, but for rather obvious reasons, vehicles must be able to pass under bridges. However, since 1 February 2001, the UK's maximum goods vehicle weight has been changed to 44 tonnes with the same maximum dimensions. I have yet to learn what the permitted tonnages are for the Australian highway brutes, but there are definitely a lot more wagons pulling extra long supplemental trailers over here.



Fuck that's a big one!!!

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 14, 2011

In Australia, we choose only the finest people to be part of our public transport system... their intelligence is second to none...

This is probably why they thought someone of even above average intelligence to be a simpleton...

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 21, 2012

Bloody Holden utes.

Andy has not let up on them since seeing them for the first time when we were on the motorway between work and home. He loved the style of body that was seamless by design, where as the FORDs, seem to have their tray added on as an afterthought.

If it wasn't for the fact I am a FORD girl, I would have found this funny. But he does have a point. The Holden does have a prettier body, shame about the engine. I liken them to super models, while they look great, there isn't much substance to them.

FORDS are a thinking girls car.



A thinking girl's car indeed...

Wednesday, 14 December 2011

Updating the Updates

Today is the 15th of December already. And having arrived here on the 15th of November, I can proudly say I have now been here for a whole month and survived it all. Doesn't time fly when you're enjoying yourself eh?

And in that time, In between the trips across country, we've had work, play, exploring locally, meals out, nights by the telly, shopping trips and more people to meet up with. We even got to explore a place called **Bunnings**, the Australian version of a DIY shed very much similar to **B&Q** or **Screwfix** back home.

Unfortunately for those of you actually following the blog chronologically, apart from the birthday entry for the eleventh, you are still only at the 3rd of December (yes I am that far behind) and we have just arrived back from our death defying (ok **sunburny**) trek over to Sydney.



At home for the duration... back at Dragonfly Mansions

Well since then, not a lot of long distance exploring has been done. Instead, Jodie has been back at work again, I have been desperately trying to bring this up to date here and together we have been attending more cadet and rural fire meetings for the volunteer emergency services of Queensland (I will at some stage more fully explain what all this is about for you but I am still trying to get some additional info together for it).



The thing is, that all the services are winding up for the Christmas period (**is it really Christmas?** - another post coming soon) and so there were quite a few prize givings, general meetings, mayoral Christmas carol services to police and interviewing sessions for new adult leaders in preparation for the new year. All that on top of having the next years syllabus laid out meant another five evening's and one morning's worth of 'functions' to attend during this period of shortfall.

It hasn't all been cadets though, we have been out and about locally looking at real life things (**today's earlier transport blog was an example of that**). We have checked out the housing (of particular interest to us both), the shops, the weather and a few other things where comparisons can be made between 'Home and Away'.



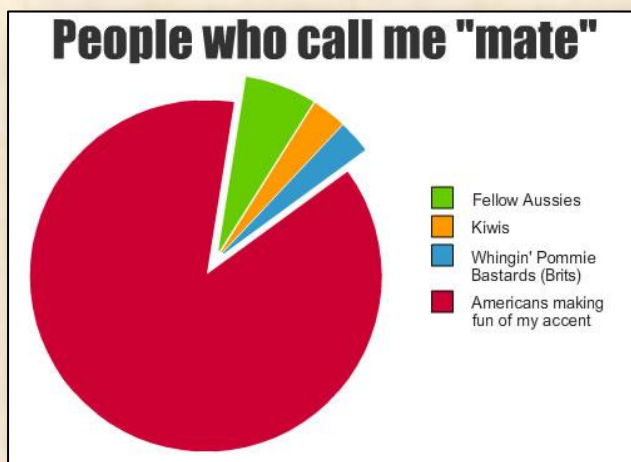
And if any of this comes over as me just being another one of those whingeing pomes, then I will apologise now as that was never the intention and whatever comparisons are to be made here will be done so in a completely unbiased way. I am genuinely interested in this place and in doing this I realise I will be expressing my opinions more than those of any others but hey, if you feel I have missed the point someplace, that's what the comments box is for.

I look forward to opening up some interesting future discussions. And in the meantime, there will be plenty more content coming your way. I mean only this very Friday, we will be risking life and limb again for you in travelling up to Bundaburg and the rum distillery there. How exceedingly 'knicker-wettingly exciting' for you all, I bet you can't wait.

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 14, 2011

Bundy, the home of Bundy Rum and yes we will tour the factory while up there :)

<http://www.bundabergum.com.au/default>



Thursday, 15 December 2011

And So This Is Christmas

It gets light by half eight in the morning and dark again by three in the afternoon. It is usually raining if not snowing, there are winds burning their way across your cheekbones and when you walk into a room from the cold sub zero temperatures you immediately feel tired in front of the blazing fire that is fully stoked to keep you warm.

And as if that wasn't bad enough on its own, having supermarket hyped Christmas displays all around you from early September onwards and radio stations from the beginning of December methodically pumping out party anthems and Christmas hits 24 hours a day, helps further build the ambience.



Television adverts also abound on a daily basis, outwardly suggesting to us a need for all those must have items we've managed to live without for the rest of the year while the station programmers try to reel us in with the shallow promise of another single six month old (at best) blockbuster movie to keep us all going merrily throughout the holiday period.

And normally, for the average Brit, that should be enough to convince you that Christmas is on its way...

But this year it all feels incredibly odd. For starters, the sun is rising at five in the morning. And it is rising while being roasting hot too. The only thing resembling snow right now would be the burnt peeling skin falling from my shoulders (are you listening Cath?) and cold is simply not an option. Hell it even stays light in the evenings.

I got off the plane at Brisbane airport on the 15th of November. I have been here a month already and yes, I have seen Christmas trees (pics to prove it too) in the shopping arcades, in Brisbane, Newcastle and Sydney but they didn't really register. It seems the supermarkets here have somehow managed to keep it very low key too and but for the fact I recently had another birthday (selfish of me I know), which heralds the fact that Christmas is only 2 more weeks away, I would never guess it was Christmas at all.

I even attended the Logan mayor's Christmas Carols service at the Logan sports centre with Jodie and her emergency services cadets, but still it registered a big fat zero on the Yo Ho Ho scale. It just doesn't seem right, Hell it isn't right. Yes decorations have been going up and yes some people have gone way over the top with them (a global phenomenon it seems – oh dear) but even so, it still just isn't as in your face as we get it in Britain.



I mean, there's no Christmas menu at MacDonalds for one thing, no masses of Bernard Matthews 'Bootiful' turkeys setting sail from the shores to escape their programmed Yule tide doom, and probably not a single roast tater to be seen anywhere either during all the strangely unseasonal of seasonal festivities. Cooked meats and salads, barbecued shrimp and only a modicum of alcohol appear to make up the celebratory menu that hails in the birth of the antipodean lord. It's all so wrong, wrong, and wrong.

Bing Crosby and the boys would be lost here too, wandering aimlessly about the place in search of a white Christmas other than that projected by a heat haze over the horizons.

Now don't get me wrong here, Australia does have bad weather from time to time and now is the time of year they would be having it too. Believe it or not, we are looking at possibilities for tsunamis, severe rain storms, flooding (yes flooding), cyclones and at the same time as if the rest wasn't bad enough, forest fires too.



And even though there is not much place for snow in this mix apart from way up in the highlands, you will probably be amazed to learn that the hail here comes in the size of golf balls.

Yes, it's far from the dry and arid Australia we grew up with back home as promised by that damned Jenny Agutter, and her 'walkabouts'. They simply weren't the true picture. If it wasn't for her, we might have also known that Crocodile Dundee was not indicative of the real way of life for big city Australia either.

So I guess it sort of messes with your head somewhat living this topsy turvy way of

life and it could take some getting used to. It just doesn't seem right to be sweating during the Christmas period but life as you know is an adventure as they say and I remain fully committed to not having it any other way. "Bring it Santa", I demand and who knows? I might even get some gifts this strange year too. I just hope you can still shop at a twenty to midnight, Christmas Eve at the local petrol stations here like you can back home.

And how does a sleigh work with no snow? I have to ask myself.

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 15, 2011

Oh crap!!! Are we doing pressies?

Andy Robinson: Dec 15, 2011

Only if the petrol station stays open

Goddards: Dec 18, 2011

Mate....11 years on, it still doesn't feel right I can assure you..Maybe I'm getting older but seriously it is wrong!!

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

I don't even have a xmas tree up... housemate killed that for me telling him I am a nightmare with the decorating of the tree...

pfft OCD my arse!!!

Andy Robinson: Dec 22, 2011

OCD? She soon put him in his place LOL

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 22, 2011

I have a xmas tree :) and it lights up... will put this up tonight :)

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 21, 2012

Xmas this year just didn't feel like xmas. There were a lot of people saying that and it wasn't just the Poms :)

This time last year, the emergency services were being pushed to their limits with the barrage of storms and the damage they caused, not to mention the flooding state wide. This year has been very mellow, sombre even. Maybe all the stress has finally hit home. Maybe we were bracing for what could possibly be the same type of weather again. Maybe we were worn out and had just lost the passion that comes with xmas and all its trappings. I think we all just needed a holiday from the holiday itself.

This should have been an exciting lead up to xmas with Andy being here, but with the feeling of xmas being so far off kilter, we cancelled doing gifts for each other as well and just chose to relax and enjoy the down time together.

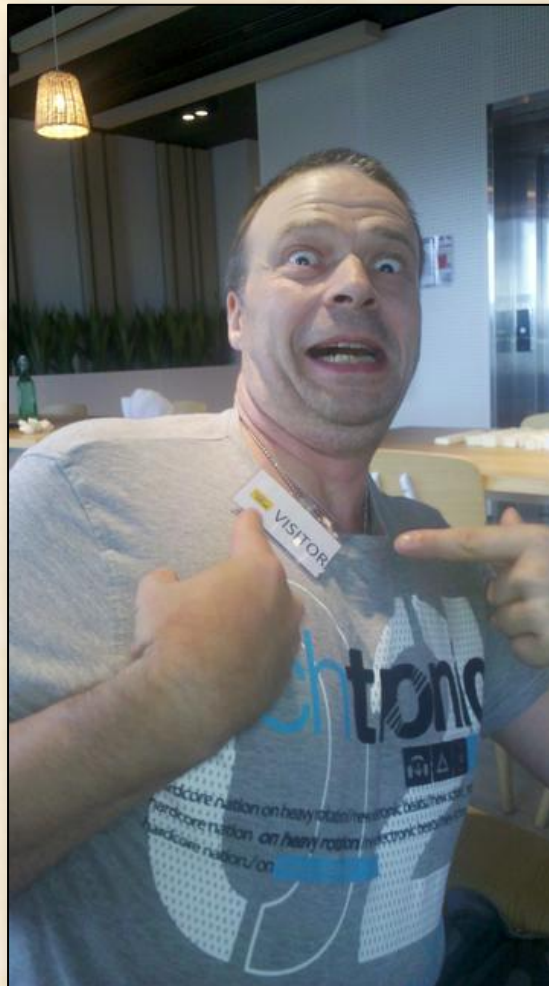


Thursday, 15 December 2011

BREAKING NEWS...

Today, December 16th 2011 at 12:00 this afternoon (Australia time)....

'Yes' Optus finally buckled to what can only be construed to be a dose of common sense today and said 'yes' again to me entering their building. And it appears that the security threat that I once somehow posed them was somehow skilfully lifted from my shoulders (WTF?)



Sadly, the hat (see **safe sex**) was not so lucky and had to stay in the car.
Just exactly who is it that makes these stupid decisions?

I go back tonight to steal all the chairs MUWAHAHAHAHAHA (YEAH!!)

[Click here for the full story](#)

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 15, 2011

Oh dear... santa now has u on the naughty list...

Andy Robinson: Dec 15, 2011

Hey it wasn't me emptying my sack for the kiddies... Just saying (walks away whistling)

Goddards: Dec 18, 2011

LOL.. What happened there... Why they change the mind? Hat's can be used as weapons...think 007!

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

Yes, luckily the hat wasn't seen by the security forces that deemed him a risk to our assets and network...

I am a far bigger risk when I am in a MOOD



Saturday, 17 December 2011

Dear WWF



Dear WWF,

Please excuse me for writing so near Christmas but I fear I may be the bearer of some rather sad tidings for animal lovers the world over. The thing is, that during the just short of five weeks that I have been in Australia, I haven't actually seen much in the way of wildlife at all. And by wildlife I mean that of the hairy, sharp toothed, possibly vicious variety and not that of the girly girls lying drunk in gutters of a Saturday night after the clubs and bars have spilled out.

You see, before leaving the UK, I took the liberty of checking up on the wilder side of things in Ozzie land and came across many colourful reports of killer things that would think nothing of feasting on me for dinner, poisoning me if I were to feast on them, stabbing me with venomous pointy things and generally making me violently ill before despatching me to possible pastures greener.

The problem is, is that for as long as I have been here, I have only seen one lizard in the whole of Brisbane, along with three green frogs, 40 odd tiny geckos, and a host of assorted birds. And this is where I have struggled with all of this emptiness and feel I must now warn you of my findings.

I mean Crikey!!!

Were they all culled after the death of Steve Irwin? Or maybe pensioned off along with Mick Dundee? or something? ... Anything?

Because it somehow appears that the usually identified with Australia killer beings are all to be deemed somewhat all but extinct to the casual onlooker. I mean not a single shark, croc, jelly fish, spider or snake have been witnessed. And even the lesser malicious animals like kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, koalas and emus appear to have shuffled off their mortal coils too. There's not a single anything to be seen. At all even. Nish, glish and not even a frosty flake. Ever. WTF where are they all?



Gheckos and Green frogs. Some of the only wildlife actually seen

And it's not like I haven't tried looking for them either. Because between the both of us, Jodie and I, we have already travelled over 5000 Kilometres

aimlessly to-ing and from-ing across the Great divide of the Australian east coast while shopping, working and playing.

And even while heading straight for any roadside Cane toads so we can “hear them explode under the wheels” (thanks for that Jodie... He says not quite sure how to proceed with this information), we have still been on the lookout for the elusive beasts.

So, I’m beginning to think (for what it is worth) that the whole of the Australian wildlife circuit has probably recently been wiped out by a specialist group of ninja spirited cane toads then. Cane toads having no natural predators other than Jodie’s wheels, lawnmowers, golfers clubbing them to death and the odd dog that never really knew any better (they are poisonous by the way), being the perfect candidates.



Bazza the Cane Toad

And it's particularly those toads that Jodie had missed with her car wheels (Sometimes I really worry about her) that are probably doing the biggest amount of damage to other breeds, leaving the only way left open to experience the indigenous antipodean animals these days, being to visit zoos or wildlife parks where it is now believed that remote controlled robotic versions abound (installed to reduce the risk of riots or panic throughout the general public).

The cane toad was first drafted in from central America to help control the rise in cane beetles on the sugar canes grown in Northern Queensland. Unfortunately, the beetles lived at the top of the canes and the toads resided at the bottom. And never the twain did meet. And Along with no natural predators, like a lot of things in Australia, the toads just ran amok. And now they stand to take over the world by chewing up all the animals from this huge continent.



Well that is the problem as I see it at present and I'm not sure you will have any instant solutions to this problem being as it is so near Christmas now (**apparently**), but it would be nice if you could help me complete my study of this magnificent land by maybe shipping over a few of your registered captive bred creatures (from overseas maybe) to assist in aiding my journalistic shortcomings and making available some photographic opportunities for me (pictures often being better than words, that sort of thing).

Yours Sincerely

A bit short of meat too.



PS... We will be out hunting skippies at seven in the morning peeps. Naturally, should we be lucky enough to actually sight any, we will of course let you know. Watch this space...

NEWS FLASH.....

What was that skip? There's how many of you guys? All sitting in a field? And there's nobody stuck down the mine either? Streuth!!



Taken at 6:30 AM 18/12/2011 Bundaberg

As earlier intimated, we went out early and caught a full herd of the spring loaded kangas, 13 in all. But as the photo kind of suggests though, it might have been them that were actually spotting us (maybe they are just large meercats in disguise). But anyway.... they weren't robotic in the least bit, nor were they clockwork and neither were they mechanically operated in any way shape or form so....

MYTHBUSTERS SAY: **MYTH BUSTED!!** YAY

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

For those of you who don't know about cane toads, in Bundaberg there was a statistic of local car accidents that read:

45% of car accidents in Bundaberg were caused by drivers crossing lanes to kill cane toads...

YES the cane toad issue is that bad!!! I was just doing my bit for the locals in killing off these hideous creatures... plus they sound cool as they POP under your tyres ;)



Can you find the buggers?

Sunday, 18 December 2011

Oooo Nice!!

Well we did lots of stuff in Bundaberg this weekend, stuff I will at some stage be reporting on. But before I go into the usual highly detailed, informative, entertaining, and educational gear, I thought this deserved a post all of its own.



Hope you can agree. It is very.... er.... **ORGASMIC LOOKING.**

To say the very least!



I think I need to go lie down for a while now. All this excitement wears the old heart out you know.

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 18, 2011

You left out you being chased off by the owner...

Goddards: Dec 18, 2011

lol..

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

You know the type, a tattoo covered biker looking git ;)

Andy Robinson: Dec 23, 2011

Missed opportunity there Godders LOL

But wait...



Hehehehehe I bet Jodie's having nightmares right about now

Tuesday, 20 December 2011

A Bit of Bundy

Good evening everybody, I am Andy Robinson, I'm just turned 49 years old and I too am (cough, cough, snuffle, mumble) an alcoholic...

Or I'm sure I would be if I ever got locked in where we visited next.



Another 400-ish Km heading north up Queensland's Bruce Highway we went and we finally made it to where Jodie's Mother lives with her partner Clifford, in the sleepy farming town of **Bundaberg**.

I might have given that little fact away the other day with my '**where have all the animals gone?**' post in which Clifford and I set out early one morning to hunt kangaroos, but this was where we now found ourselves for the weekend, catching up with family and exploring the local scenery.

But how does that make me an alcoholic you might ask, and if you don't, I will happily sit here and wait for you to do so.... Oh good you finally asked (hurry up next time.. grr).

Well Bundaberg it seems, is sugar land, and it has been since 1872 when it first began producing commercial sugar from sugar canes. It has acres upon acres of these cane things growing here and some of those canes eventually go to the **Bundaberg distillery** where in 1888 a group of farmers joined together to make rum with the by-products from the molasses the sugar canes were producing. And that is how Bundaberg rum and my reported troubles may have first come into being.

It was in 1888, that the first barrel of Bundaberg Rum literally rolled out of the distillery production line. And since then, Bundaberg Rum, through its

trials and tribulations, has gained recognition as one of Australia's most famous of spirits. Later, in 1986 the Bundaberg Distilling Company appointed its first tour guide and a positive demand soon saw the need to expand the tourist operation. And that was possibly our cue to become a part of it this day.

Our guided tour around the distillery had us look, feel and taste our way through the makings of the Famous Aussie Spirit. Starting with the raw material molasses, to the aromas of maturing spirits, where our temptations ran high for a refreshing free sample or four in the bar with a variety of Bundy mixes and Rum liqueur based drinks.

It was a pretty good if short tour, during which we learned how the distillery had suffered a couple of setbacks; the first being a fire in 1907 and second a 'big' fire in 1936. And it was probably around then that they suddenly realised that what they were playing with was quite... Extremely Highly Flammable I guess and they have since started taking steps to help minimise any future of these 'combustion parties'.



It must have been along with these steps that came the ban on the use of cameras, the wearing of watches and the carrying of anything battery powered (although why anyone would choose to use a vibrator on a tour of a distillery is beyond me... Oh they meant mobile phones, oops). And as if that weren't enough, spare a thought for the hard of hearing too that were rendered instantly deaf upon surrendering their hearing aids. Don't anyone tell them about my pacemaker eek.

Other than that, we generally had a good time as we looked back at the Bundaberg rum advertising history, came face to face with the famous Bundaberg Rum Bear, drank merrily of his wares (well, being the designated drinker, that post fell on my shoulders and I was only too happy to take on the samples Jodie (the designated driver) would have had to suffer hee hee), bought freely of said wares and generally ran amok of the place. Even the hat was recognised on this jolly and was further adorned with assorted pins to help commemorate the day.



[Click here to view the full Bundaberg Rum Album](#)

After the tour, the bar, the shop and the ubiquitous ice cream, we jumped back into the car (because the term putt-putt is somewhat frowned upon), set the sat nav for our next destination and followed the verbal instructions of... "Drive around the corner".

We were at **Bundy Kegs**. A small cooperage (barrel making facility) owned by Schneiders. That's the company that produces the massive storage kegs for Bundy distillery, which was more a collection of talented people making barrels, carving woods, blowing glass etc being presented through a free to enter gallery come shop display type thing where rather than laying down

any hard earned, yours truly decided to take photos instead. It was a good stop, some interesting stuff and it was an half an hour well spent.



[Click here to see the full Bundy Kegs Cooperage Album](#)

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

The glass work is amazing to watch, but the glass blower was on holidays while we were there... :(

There was this awesome glass dragonfly there too!!! Check the pics for this

Tuesday, 20 December 2011

A Bit of Bundy part 2

After taking as many pics as we pleased back in the Bundy Kegs cooperage, it was getting desperately close to the next meal time for my delicate body and so we decided we would head up towards the coast again for a pretty stretch of beach at **Bargara**. It's not a huge place by any standards and we entered it near enough in the middle where we accidentally stumbled across a restaurant come motel, come hotel, come hostelry called **Kacy's**.



[Click here for the Kacy's Restaurant Album](#)

It was a delightfully pleasant place fully equipped with its own wine cellar and the food was good too. And with a choice of comfortable surroundings both indoors and outdoors, we chose to sit inside by a large fish tank (more photos hopefully and having seen the tank shots, maybe not) and as far as we are concerned, it comes highly recommended to any would be venturers.

Having refuelled for the afternoon, we headed straight across the road for a small but charming gift shop having gotten in the mood of dressing the hat.

Unfortunately for the hat though there was nothing in the line of pins or other appropriate adornments. So the hat was in a mood and left in a huff.



[Click here for The beach at Bargara Album](#)

Shame that, because having left the shop we strolled over the road to another great Australian beach, Bargara where even more photos were taken. It was around about now that with the frequency of photography being undertaken, the photographs we took actually began to look something half decent (if you still exclude the fish tank back in the restaurant).

We were on a roll (photographically at the very least) now and so travelled further up the beach to a place called **Mon Repos**, a turtle breeding area along with its own information centre. And although we didn't get to see any turtles (mainly because it wasn't early or late enough) we did manage to see some stunning scenery without the need of travelling too far to get it. All we did was follow the pathways to the beach set up specifically for night parties to go down and see the hatchlings run for cover.



Click here to see the full [Mon Repos Album](#)

I know it must seem silly to many to have travelled so far and not stayed to capitalise but there is one thing you must learn about Jodie's mother and step father... Being as they live in a really rural area, they have spent the majority of their lives living under the sun which means rising and falling along with it. And as we had previously arranged to meet them for dinner that day, we had to rush back at around what felt like 4ish in order for the old biddies to be bedded down for seven or eight – Bless!!

So you can guess what happened next can't you? Yes we returned home to meet the parents, got a take away instead of going out, stayed up together until ten (wooooo) and then sat and twiddled our fingers and toes for a couple of extra hours before it was closer to our normal bedtime. We had to be up early in the morning... for kangaroo hunting (but regular readers will know that already).

It was needless to say, six o'clock the following morning and I was already sat adjacent to Clifford, bombing down the road in an old white Toyota run-

around, heading toward an open paddock where kangaroos were known to gather at such a stupid hour. And sure enough they were there waiting for me. It would have been nice to say with their autograph books at the ready, but they were kangaroos dammit. They can't read can they? And so with the joeys in the bag so to say, it was back home for breakfast before we packed and set off back for Brisby once again.



Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

Andy is loving his food here :) complains that I am shrinking his clothes...

Anyways, it is a pity we didn't have longer to show Andy the turtle rookery at night and witness the logger head turtles, laying their eggs on the beach... it is truly a beautiful thing to see...

Andy Robinson: Jan 10, 2012

Tiptoes across the beach at night... crunch, squish, squelch, juice

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 10, 2012

You are terrible!!!

Wednesday, 21 December 2011

Bye Bye Bundy

With breakfast firmly rammed down our necks, we were ready to go tackle another day of mystery touring ahead of us. We had said the previous night that it would be a good idea to just go where the car takes us and that was what the plan now was. (We really must get the steering fixed you know).

So we headed back into Bundaberg town centre to look at some of the buildings there. We have done a lot of buildings during this last few weeks. Mainly because that's what I do for a living and Jodie has a keen interest in them from a developer's point of view too. So yes there are a few building pics and there will probably be a lot more to follow.



For more building pics, [Click Here](#)

And after leaving the town centre, the next place we came across of any interest was **Bauple Museum**, a community based project where the local history had been collected together and put on display for all and sundry to come along and witness. What a brilliant idea. It would be great if more places would do the same. We had a great time noseying around and there was some really good stuff in there too. Only problem was, with just having had another birthday recently, it was thought I was one of the crusty old exhibits and it was really hard to get away again.



For the latest in communications, Check out the **Bauple Museum Album**

When I eventually did escape however, we high-tailed it down the road fast enough for nobody to catch us which meant that in little to no time at all, we had reached another hidden treasure along the way, **Alford Lake Park**, Cooloola, just on the outskirts of Gympie (please, no visions of pervy old men in ball masks here). Recently flooded, the place has undergone a total rejuvenation extending its boundaries even further. And it is really quite beautifully done and it really was a pleasure to wander around it to take it all in.



Check out the turtle near the lower tree stump
and check out the [Lake Alford Album here](#)

Further yet down the Bruce highway is a building that seems to defy gravity in much the same way as do the [Ripleys world of strange things](#) buildings situated in coastal regions.

Except where as Ripleys might have a car hanging out of the front façade, this place has a ute parked on the roof. We are of course talking about the [Ettamogah Pub](#) near Noosa. The Pub claims to be the most photographed pub in the world - probably because it was built to appear as if it were falling down (it's based on a pub in an old Aussie cartoon series).

The pub is an everlasting tribute to all things quintessentially Australian and its location halfway between Brissie and Noosa makes it a handy rest stop for a drink or a steak. We however chose neither, preferring instead to rush home and get naked as the housemate was away test-piloting a blisterpack



of viagara and a packet of ribbed pleasure seekers this weekend but I cannot really go into that kind of detail here.

Of course there were other places of interest along the way like the **double bridge that spans the mouth of the Brisbane River** which looks quite spectacular from within the confines of a passenger seat in the old Rolls c'nardly.

Another local masterpiece of engineering well worth a look at some time.

But for now our journey had reached another end and the welcoming door of Dragonfly Mansions awaited us weary travelers once again.

[More pub pics here](#)

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 21, 2011

My car is a Mazda 3 SP25 not a putt putt or a Rolls c'nardly... Grrrr

Goddess: Dec 21, 2011

SP = Special Putt (Putt)??

Andy Robinson: Dec 21, 2011

SP = Spare parts

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 22, 2011

Look you 2 window lickers, strap your helmets back on and back off my car!!!

Andy Robinson: Dec 22, 2011

SMALL PENIS LOL

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 22, 2011

Oh sweetie... I wouldn't call it small ;)

Andy Robinson: Dec 23, 2011

The car right?

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 27, 2011

Yes of course... the car...

Andy Robinson: Dec 29, 2011

Ah the putt putt. OK got it now... SNORK

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 27, 2011

It's not an effen putt putt!!!



Thursday, 22 December 2011

Unexpected Dinner Guest

Somewhere pretty close to Dragonfly Mansions, lies a local bar type restaurant thingy place just around the corner. And the reason I am mentioning this now is that the other evening, a friend of Jodie's, Sharon, had turned up and we had planned to all go out for a meal there.



The Boathouse Tavern... Coomera QLD

It wasn't a great distance to travel, just a couple of hundred yards if that, so off we all hopped (made it more interesting that way) down the road (yes we didn't drive), across the field, over the railings and through the traffic until we finally reached our destination... **The boathouse Tavern**

And once inside, the surroundings were refreshing and comfortable and we were only let down by the standard of food being served being as how the place was staffed by microwave technicians rather than fully fledged chefs. Having said that though the servings were still ample, the food edible and very little went to waste.



It was supposed to be a meal between just the three of us that night, but half way through and completely unannounced, you wouldn't guess who had the audacity to just come along and show up...

MR EDDIE LIZZARD!!

He was in fact what is commonly known as approximately 24 inches head to tail of **water dragon**. And he has probably claimed the pool laden tavern as his home; being able to feed on any scraps the 'awed at the sight of him' punters might throw him. Providing that is, that the punters weren't so hungry they might pick him up and eat him in the first place.



Now these days, it is quite rightly scorned upon when dogs turn up in restaurants, but what is the ruling on lizards? Surely anything that shits and walks at the same time, or is even capable of thinking of doing so (sorry granddad), should all be classed together in the 'undesirables' list, even if this particular chap brought us many smiles all round.

He didn't really do much while there it must be said, but as far as any mid meal entertainment goes, he has some of the thousand dollar a gig performers well and truly licked as he calmly wandered through the dining masses, head held high and generally not giving a toss.

He knew the place well and felt just as much at home in the pond waters as up on dry decking. It was easy to know this place was surely his and we were merely the passers-by that night.



Dragonfly emerging: Dec 22, 2011

He was seriously cute and damn could he swim!!! so graceful and so entertaining all at the same time :)

Andy Robinson: Dec 23, 2011

That's enough about me, the lizard wasn't bad either

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 27, 2011

Tickets anyone?

Stephen Dickson: Dec 31, 2011

Who's this 'Sharon'? You must mean Shazza...

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 27, 2011

The Boat House Tavern is essentially a tradie's bar. Friday afternoons you will find a scantily clad young “lady” being your hostess bringing your drinks to you, oh and if you like to tip her, she will gladly accept.

They have recently opened up the Waterfire Restaurant, and it seems to be very popular. I must admit I wasn't impressed. It was basically a bistro where you order and pay up front then wait for your food to be brought to you by girls with little or no waiting experience. The serving sizes were small for the prices we were paying but the entertainment as far as the water dragon swimming in the water feature was brilliant. I really think apart from the company, that water dragon was the best part of the eating experience.



Friday, 23 December 2011

xxx Merry Christmas from Oz xxx

Well even if it still doesn't seem to be the case at all from where I'm standing, we finally got indisputable proof through the door that it is actually Christmas time over here in Australia. We had the external fairy lights now (without going overboard... remember global warming?), the eighteen inch Chrissy tree on the dining table and now the ultimate in really telling it like it is, a Christmas card. And it had my name on it too WTF?



A huge thanks goes out to Cath Slater once again (but don't think I have forgiven you (or ever will) for burning me so badly that day at Newcastle..). Grrr

So, without further ado, may I take this opportunity to wish all you lovely readers the very best wishes and compliments of the season (Nice pressies... best compliment I could come up with at such short notice). I hope you guys get all you wish for and all the Christmas trees in all the world have Holden utes parked beneath them (because our resident commenter Godders, probably thinks the world would be a much better place if they did).

OK, Now for the bad news... Do Koalas actually exist? Without labouring on the point too much, it's been nearly six weeks now and there's still no sign of them. And at least the card above didn't show the old cliched scenes of snow, wise men, nativities etc which is good because I haven't seen any of those either (especially the wise men or at least, 3 of them all at once). LOL

The sandy beach and surf boards are really bang on though because to many over here, that is exactly what Christmas is all about. It's a day at the beach where the tourists ie me are usually dragged along and fed copious amounts of beer to render them unconscious and then left out to bake in the 40 degrees centigrade, midday, summer sun. There's only Cath Slater can ever burn a tourist any faster.



And besides all best efforts on my part, including putting up sparkly tinsel decorations, carol singing, finding recipies for roasting the resident cockatiels (don't tell Jodie) etc. I still cannot find the all so elusive Christmas spirit, it STILL doesn't feel right here. Not right at all.

I know, maybe if you all came along and adorned me with rich and expensive gifts. Maybe that would provide me the missing link. And even if not, I could do with a new library of iThings and the like. And I would definitely make sure I had you thinking (if no one else) I felt it was more Christmassy for all your efforts (purely because I'm like that).

Seriously though, while over here on my jollies, it is hard to keep up with the everyday struggles of the real world and with this in mind, I would appreciate it if you could all return again tomorrow for the much awaited blog entry in appreciation of the voluntary emergency services that we have been spending so much time with. The service members that give up their time freely at the least opportune of moments and do so without want of recognition.

I've had a wonderful first five weeks here now, the weather has been brilliant if not milder (as in cooler) than normal, the temperatures comfortable, not too overbearing with excessive humidity, and the rainfall minimal, a far cry from last year. Yes it has all been fantastic but it could have all been so very different. Come back tomorrow and I'll show you all what I mean. And for those of you who can't make it, please come back real soon.

And finally to all of you lovely readers, I demand you have a very merry Christmas and continue to drop by for a few words of wisdom from the silly old Englishman (git more like) who continues to boldly explore this amazing continent while forever continuing to dodge deportation at every step of the way (hope all is well back home).

Andy Robinson: Dec 23, 2011

Let me be the first to wish you all a happy Easter !!

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 23, 2011

Roasting the cockatiels?

I am not leaving you home alone again...

Tiniest Violin: Dec 23, 2011

Ya mad pommie bastard good blog

Slinky: Dec 24, 2011

Happy Christmas, Andy and Dragonfly, From Steve And Debi,
Oh and just so you know both your sisters are reading your blog but couldn't work-out how to comment.....

Andy Robinson: Dec 24, 2011

Damn you slinky... Bang goes the theory I come from a long line of interlekchewels.
Merry Xmas family peeps

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 25, 2011

Slinky, it just dawned on him about your first post... he didnt know who you were then... hehehe... good thing he has someone here to point out when he is being daft :)

Andy Robinson: Dec 25, 2011

Surely if she had half a brain cell, she would point out when I wasn't being daft. That would be buckets easier. But you're family, you knew that already didn't you Slinky?

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 27, 2011

Half a brain cell? Seriously... now you insult my intelligence?

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 27, 2011

You love that thin ice you skate on... grrrr

Cath Slater: Dec 28, 2011

I did not burn you. Aussie sun did that...twas you methinks who said..."let's sit outside" and the sun did the rest. If you hadn't been sitting outside you would have missed the errant dolphins trying to knock surfers off their boards...sigh...ain't no pleasing some. :(

Andy Robinson: Dec 29, 2011

Blimey Cath, if your feet are hurting that much try taking your shoes off. We love you really hun, just needed something to pad the writing out with. LOL

Saturday, 24 December 2011

21st Century Heroes

As you sit here reading this blog on what is probably your Christmas day morning or maybe within the couple of days just after it, I would like to remind you all of the sterling voluntary work of all the Queensland State Emergency Services that so often get overlooked at times like this.

And as I have already intimated a few times within this blog, Australia isn't always the dry and arid semi desert we often take it for. It has weather and like with most other things in Australia, the weather here has more than its fair share of extremes too. For example, from September/October through April it is storm season, which means storms capable of ripping the roof off



your home, gusts of up to 100Km an hour, torrential rain, thunder that will scare the feathers off your birds and leaves small children crying while clinging to their mother's skirt hems, as well as power outages (oh no warm beer, that will never do).

And then as if that wasn't bad enough, during the months of December through February there

are usually flash floods along with said torrential rains and cyclones to boot. Couple that with the bush fires from September through January (strangely running in unison with school holiday season) and you can easily see the need for extraordinary people running emergency services to help rescue, retrieve and generally clean up the mess afterwards.

You don't believe me? Then take a look at this lot... This particular incident was a culmination of the dam not being let out in time and when it was released, it was done so during a king tide resulting in massive flooding throughout the area. And this is just a little of what went on at around this time last year. Check out the full associated album for more.





More pictures are available in the online [Emergency Services Album](#)

This wasn't just Brisbane either, there were other places across Queensland being hit with cyclones, torrential rains, flash flooding and other forms of storm damage. Places that we have visited during the progress of this blog among others. Places like Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Dalby and Rockhampton.

And that is why Queensland in Australia has in reserve, a small army of volunteers (around 75,000 individuals), the State Emergency Services, on call for all kinds of trouble, and the emergency services cadets (which we have already established, Jodie spends all her spare time coordinating) fall under the wings of these services too.

Queensland, has it's normal everyday paid emergency services for day to day stuff; QFRS - Queensland Fire and Rescue Service. (meet Billy Bob Wombat, Michael Sharman, Coach Dudley among others (all seen found terrorising G+ as am I)), and QAS - Queensland Ambulance Services.

And then there are the volunteer services:



Rural Fire Service

QRFS - Queensland Rural Fire Service (assisting with bush fires etc).

SES - State Emergency Services (general assisting with disaster management and supply of buildings and vehicles).

EMQ - Emergency Management Queensland (own the cadet program)

There is another branch to all of this too and that would be the State Corrective Services. Not so much for the management of disasters, but there all the same as part of the overall funding package.

Together the corrective services, QFRS, SES, QAS, QRFS all supply monies for funding the cadet training program and while EMQ actually takes ownership of the program, it supplies very little in the way of finance, any shortfalls having to be made up through fundraisers or external donations.



State Emergency Services

And apart from the many life skills these kids learn while participating, the cadets, starting with an intake at between the ages of 13 or grade 8 at school up to the age of 15 and a half, can come out at 18 with certificate 2 in community safety which is exactly the same as that that the adults get in the SES only it also has complimentary fire awareness and first aiding courses too.

There are all forms of accident response scenarios for them to practice, triage, radio and communications, map reading, land searches (looking for missing bodies, dangerous weapons out in the open etc), along with participation in community events in policing things, helping to set up, and even raising public awareness about their individual units.

And on leaving the cadets these young adults will have gained real world recognised qualifications for inclusion on their CVs, they can continue on as adult leaders within the cadets or should they choose, they have entry into SES and QRFS or even both with their recognised skill sets. After which, 2 years of continued voluntary service serves as a recognised pre-requisite for a professional career within the paid fire and ambulance services.

And as is the case with many other countries I'm sure, if these volunteer services were ever to be paid for through everyday governmental spending,

Australia would have bankrupted itself years ago. And likewise, but for the sterling work these guys do or are currently learning to do, including fire services, land searches, flood control, boat patrols, rescuing trapped individuals and the like. Australia probably wouldn't even be the modern world land we know of today.



Emergency Services Cadets

So, for the likes of myself and many others who have maybe been at the receiving end of the help and care given by these emergency services, these guys must surely be the true heroes of the 21st century and my hat truly goes off to them as I salute them all and wish them a really peaceful but nonetheless happy Christmas. Particularly with the impending approach of the latest tropical cyclone, Grant which is currently off Darwin in the Northern Territories. No doubt these guys are already impatiently waiting to be activated.

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 22, 2012

Well I am surprised that no one commented on this.

The unsung heroes of our country are the volunteers that make up the support services in the emergency services. They give up their time to be trained up to a professional

level and do this willingly and are usually amongst the first respondents to an emergency situation. AND they do all this without expecting praise or reward, they do it out of a sense of community spirit.

Without the volunteers of Australia, this country would come to a stand-still.



It's not only the people that suffer in times of extreme weather

Sunday, 25 December 2011

CHRISTMAS

Christmas was coming, the goose was getting fat....

A good old Christmas Dinner....



But ours was nowt like that.



Somebody please tell me this is just a starter

Despite the barren looking spread on the table (photo deliberately taken too early because I can't have you all spying on me now can I?) there were salads galore (Salad WTF?), plenty of meats (More like it), good company (Naturally, I was there) and so too was an old friend Kat Lloyd, good conversation (Nom, nom, nom), plenty to drink (Burrrrp!!) and plenty to do (ZZZZ).

The day as a whole, was a hugely successful one with plenty of time and energy for the inclusion of the likes of :

Board games (not spoiled by the presence of kids),
Wii console games (not spoiled by the presence of kids),
movies to wind the evening down (not spoiled by the presence of kids).

The movies were... Paul and Tomorrow when the war began, if anyone is asking. We thought they were good anyway.

Besides all that however, many extra sources of finger foods were provided throughout the whole day which I appear to have over indulged in (not spoiled by the presence of kids), There was still more than enough to drink (not spoiled by the presence of kids), there were Christmas puddings and trifles (not spoiled by the presence of kids), and the conversation was exceedingly invigorating (not spoiled by the presence of kids).

And believe it or not, we still managed to get ourselves totally stuffed
(not spoiled by eating any uninvited kids).

Maybe on reflection though, it might have been nice if there were a few kids there. After all, Christmas is all about the kids isn't it? And when you have kids, you tend to get kids toys to play with when the buggers go to bed don't you? I knew there was something missing...

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 25, 2011

Madi would have enjoyed her day more with her dad than with us anyway...

It was a nice change and the first time in 12 years i didn't have her for the day...

She needed the break and would have be spoiled everywhere else she went yesterday :)

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 25, 2011

Oh and re the food, good on ya for making it look like I have you on a diet!!!

Stephen Dickson: Dec 31, 2011

You should have said there was a need for kids. I could have loaned you a pack for 'a while'....

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 3, 2012

Nah, it was a nice for a change, but I am missing miss Madi atm... She is in Sydney with her dad on holidays, sunburned for the 4th time this summer... sighs



Tuesday, 27 December 2011

BOXING DAY

Boxing Day... is traditionally a day following Christmas when (in the good old days) wealthy people in the United Kingdom would often give a box containing a gift to their servants. Today, Boxing Day is better known as a bank or public holiday that occurs on December 26, or the first or second weekday after Christmas Day, depending on national or regional laws.

It is observed in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and some other Commonwealth nations. Did you see that?

They observe it in AUSTRALIA!!

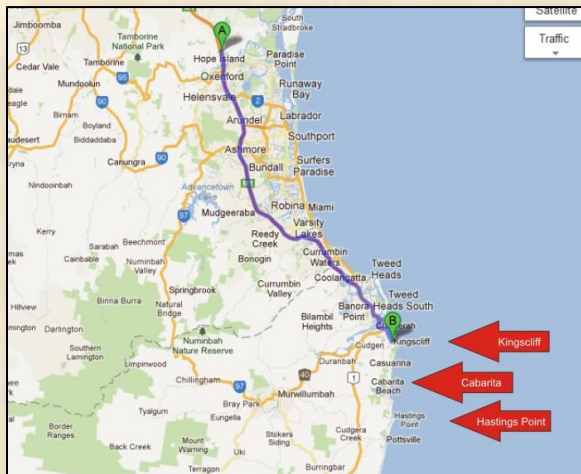


So what does one traditionally do on a boxing day? If I were back in England, it would generally mean either a choice between queueing up for the sales to begin (Or camping out the night before if they were half as good as they used to be in the seventies), or impatiently waiting for the television companies to air their latest exclusive to our 'bloated on turkey leftovers' eyes.

What about over here in Oz though? What would I be subjected to for a good old Australian boxing day? Well the answer to that came in the guise of a phone call at around 9 am. It was Sharon Pearson again. She was the one that suffered the presence of the water dragon with us a few days earlier.

Well without giving away the plot too much, the day would involve a further 60 Kilometres of travelling, temperatures in the 30 degree plus region, much sand and water, very few clouds, crossing time lines and territory borders, eating stuff, getting nicely browned, 6 hours away from home, around 300 photos and generally having yet another fantastic day. "Surf's Up!!" Was the cry for the day and we were heading off towards the territory of New South Wales and yet another beach... or two... or maybe even three.

OZMANBRIT – The travelling tales of an Englishman about to take Australia by storm



Like the map suggests, our first port of call would be **Kingscliff**.

Which just happens to be where Jodie attended **Kingscliff public school** from 6 to 11 years of age (not that it did her any good).

Kingscliff Public School opened its doors in 1957. The numbers of children attending Cudgen Public School, 3 km away, were overcrowding its small site.

Classes were being held in the local hall. A school of eight classrooms was built to cater for the children of the growing seaside village of Kingscliff.



[Click here for the Kingscliff beach album](#)

Anyway, we headed to the town centre, parked up, crossed the road, and there was the beach. Unfortunately, this bit of beach was closed due to tidal erosion of the beach front but undeterred we doubled back over the road and had lunch at **Pizza Capers** (Check out the **day's special** in the photo albums).

After lunch, it was a quick jaunt down the front while taking in the shops and then we all piled back into the car and travelled a few hundred yards up the road to access the main beach area for **Kingscliff**. The day was to be an exercise in exploration more than anything else so we walked up to the water, got our feet wet, and generally took loads of photos for your edification and delight.



[Click here for the **Carbarita Beach** album](#)

And then it was time to exercise the chariot once more (this time a Hyundai i30 not a putt putt) and head off further down the coast to **Carbarita Beach**. It was a heavenly place where it was virtually impossible to take a bad photo. There were specially constructed walkways around the main beach where it seemed the views had been specifically engineered for near

perfection. I recommend you take a look at all these albums even if you skip all the others.



[Click here for the Hastings Point album](#)

With every bit of beach we came across, there were hints of better beaches beyond and it was with that in mind that we continued even further south to [Hastings Point](#). Once again, the views were stunning, the seas (oceans more like) were crystal clear with multi-hued shades of bluey greens and brilliant white sprays, the skies were near cloudless, the sun blazing and the whole day perfect.

How many Brits are lucky enough to experience a boxing day like that I asked myself as I sat and remembered the cold ice laden roads of back home this time last year. There really is no comparison.



Oh and just in case anyone noticed. It's not what you were thinking... no it's not an affair... there's only ever been the one hat I ever loved and wanted. It was just a moment of weakness. I was sorely tempted by that Jodie woman. Yeah she made me do it!! I was weak.... and that flappy hat caught me at the wrong moment...

BREAKING NEWS AGAIN!!!

Checkout the new opinion poll in the right hand column of this blog. Your opinion counts as much as any other's so go drop your vote today. You never know, the future of Australia could depend on it one day.

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 27, 2011

I think maybe you have a soft spot for Australia now Mr Robinson

Andy Robinson: Dec 27, 2011

You said you wouldn't mention my putting on weight and wobbly belly... Grrr

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 27, 2011

Ummm I didn't mention that... but it makes a nice soft pillow for my head when we are watching a movie ;)

Godders: Dec 28, 2011

LA LA LA

Andy Robinson: Dec 28, 2011

A very well thought out and concisely put argument there Godders

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 22, 2012

Boxing Day was a great day out of the house to show Andy some of my most loved beaches as these were the ones I spent time at as a child and the memories here are wonderful. I was part of the Surf Life Saving Club program from youngsters called “Nippers” where we learned all the same things as our modern day Iron Men display when in competition.

I went to school up on the hill, yes my school had ocean views when I went there, not that as a kid I ever appreciated it, but I am sure NSW Department of Education is being offered massive amounts of money by developers to buy the land that the school is presently situated on.

My family lived in Kingscliff, I mean, grandmother, great aunties, we all lived in this little beach side town. At one stage 4 generations of the Priest family resided here. Those who know me will get a chuckle out of knowing I was descended from a family with the name Priest. It is my maternal Grandmothers family name. Funnily the same line that the Wiccan side comes from.

Cabarita and Hastings Point were where we would go on weekends with family friends for picnics with the kids, because the shallow river inlets were safer for us little ones to be in, versus the pounding surf of Kingscliff.

I am also amazed that the Hyundai i30 wasn't called a putt putt but my larger Mazda 3 SP25 was!!!

Sharon Pearson: Jan 22, 2012

The Hyundai will never be called a putt putt.....GGGRRR, larger by how much, when I bought it you said it was bigger inside than the putt putt.

Boxing Day was great and as a seasoned Aussie, Andy I didn't get burnt. I have only just discovered Kingscliff recently through Jodie and must say it is just one of those places to go when you need an uplift. It is full of lovely scenery, and the photo's prove it.

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 22, 2012

Well it seems bigger inside until I lay down the seats in the back of my car and then my car is huge!!! I must admit I did like driving the i30, great little car

Tuesday, 27 December 2011

A Little History

We have passed this place a few times now while batting up and down the highways of the Gold coast (Pacific Highway, Burleigh Heads apparently). It looks kind of awesome as you go speeding past it from a distance so I had to beg, plead, no collapse on the floor kicking and screaming in supermarket isles to get the good lady to take me back for some photos (Well it works for kids doesn't it?).



Oh no, it even has *its own album*

I hope you think it was all worthwhile.



Where Shelby Cobras go to die

It is history I tell you. And you probably reply with it's possibly art too...

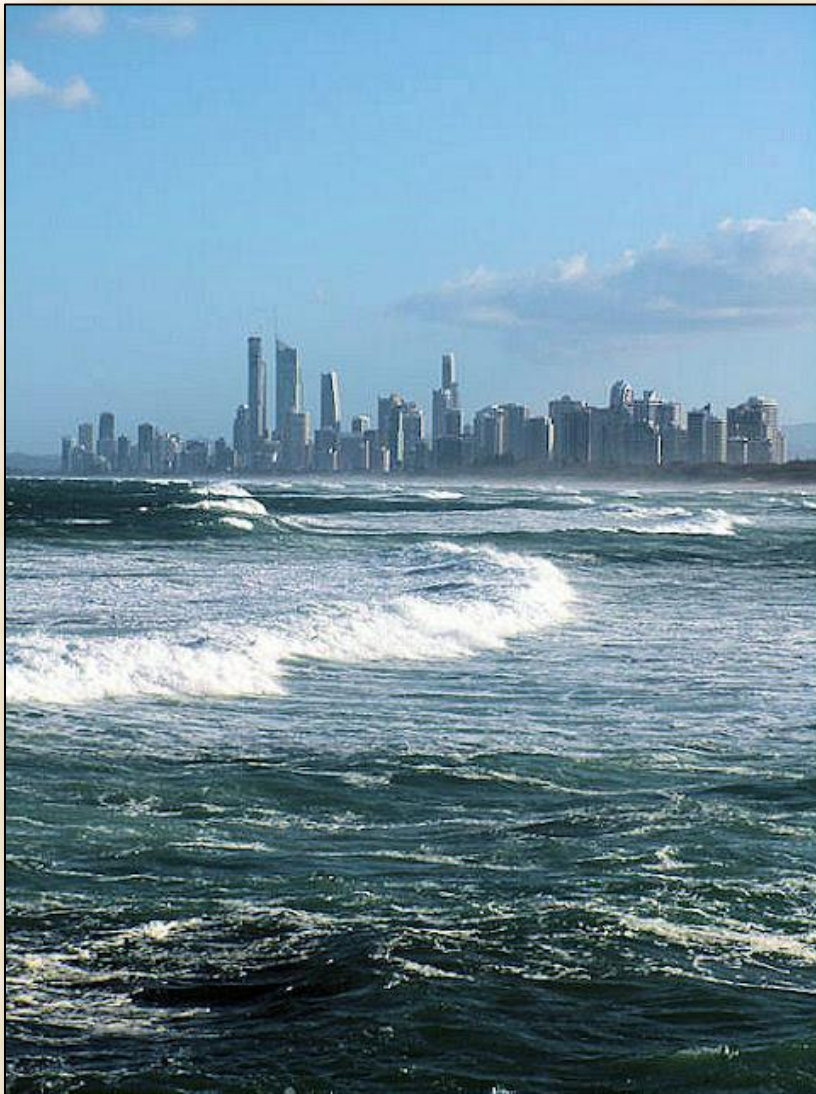


Looks better than some of the motors I have driven all the same

Or is it just rubbish?

Wednesday, 28 December 2011

Surfers Paradise... At the Spit



[Click here for the full **Surfers Paradise** album](#)

What more can I say Guys? Stunning isn't it?

Yesterday we took a quick 24 km south easterly trip out to a place called **Surfer's Paradise** after work and also took in the nearby Wave Break Island where this photo was taken or the **Break Wall at the Spit** as the locals prefer to call it. And once again, with very little effort on our part I might add, we were less than an hour away from home and surrounded by stunning scenery, clear blue skies and crystal clean waters all at once.

Like almost everywhere else, the place is absolutely awesome and well worth a visit even though it was a little too hustle and bustle for my liking. When



actually buried inside the heart of the city area, there is very little to distinguish it from any other large city in one respect, but on the other hand, it is also a major tourist destination, home connurbation, business emporium and playground for the rich and possibly famous (so I should fit in there somewhere).

Apart from the expansive surfing beaches along the whole front there are high rise hotels, apartment blocks, shopping centres and the usual city like amenities along with large expanses of marina real estate including the myriads of general boats

and ocean going yachts (many costing millions of dollars) built to exacting standards to perfectly match the millionaire scenery.

The place is highly populated by Chinese and Malay people, and you can often see many of the Australian men out with their Thai brides, dotted along the coastal waters, taking part in their daily rituals of fishing the local and spectacular waters for that night's tea. And the fish are quite plentiful in the clear blue pacific that serenely abuts the coastline. Nothing at all like the murky North Sea waters back home.



I almost got wet taking this shot for you

And as the name of the place suggests, it is a complete surfer's paradise too. A haven for all kinds of water sports. Sports like surfing (obvious that one really), swimming, boating, paddling, jet skiing, fishing, walking, jogging (if you really must) and even the odd bit of photography too.

And if you are anything like me while in tourist mode, there are also plenty of opportunities to go nosying around the many nearby places you wouldn't normally think about visiting. Take for example the boat yard / marina place we were at where we could actually walk up to and touch (and possibly buy if we had massive pockets full of cash) boats (some of them nearer ships) that at present (never say die), we could only ever dream of owning.



Not particularly this one either I must add... There were boats here that wouldn't even fit in the image frame without you first having to buy or hire another boat to go out to sea just to shoot back at them. It really is a different world out there.

GOT TO GET ME ONE OF THOSE BABIES!

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 22, 2012

Now you understand why Queenslanders get up at 5am to go to work early. With beaches like this at our disposal, why wouldn't you come home early to come out and enjoy them. I would like to say that is the reason I go to work early, but for me it is all about getting a car space where I don't have to walk 5kms to get to work!!!

I didn't really get to enjoy these sites until Andy came out here. I had never been to the

Spit before. I have been a tourist in my own backyard showing Andy the beautiful sites that our Gold Coast has to offer.

I am now making an effort to go and see all these places again while I am waiting for Andy to come back. Keeping myself in the energy of him while he is away. He really brought me to life.



Another one of those big wheel thingies

Wednesday, 28 December 2011

One for the Ladies..

Shoes or chocolate? Shoes or chocolate? Shoes or chocolate?

Or how about going for the chocolate shoes option? (Oh should I wear em or eat em, wear em, eat em and on it goes)? Well if ever there was a man who could help you ladies ever decide, it could be this guy....

Welcome **Max Brenner**.



Biggest chocolate bar I ever saw

We stumbled across this little shop of his, one of many around the world apparently, while we were eyeing up which boat to steal over at the marina while we were in Surfers Paradise t'other night. And having been previously taunted by the aromatic 'come and eat me' smells coming from other fine fooderies all around us, it wasn't a hard decision to go for it and enter into the world of the somewhat universally famous chocolatier to stuff our cake holes if not our whole faces.

Problem was, there wasn't much in the way of real food available there. So, making the best of a bad job, we opted for a bowl full of crepes with bananas and a plate full of waffles with more nanas and strawberries... all covered in various forms of chocolaty stuff. There was chocolate sauces, chocolate creams, chocolate ice creams and chocolate drinks all available in dark, white or milk varieties and although it all looked so very very enticing and 'heart attack waiting to smack you in the face for even considering it', it was however quite disappointing, gritty, richly gloopy and considerably over facing when we finally got to plunge our spoons into it all.



[Click here to get smothered in chocolate](#)

Maybe it was just us plebs with the untrained palettes of wannabe millionaires, but it wasn't quite right for us. It was a love it or hate it acquired taste thing, much like Marmite for us Brits and vegemite for the Aussies. Which was a damned shame really because the place offered so much in the way of promise. I mean take a look around the shop itself, it was the dogs dangles in every conceivable respect.

I just don't know what it was we ever did wrong in a different life to not get

to fully enjoy it, but like I said earlier, it simply left a lot to be desired from where we were sitting.

Apologies to you readers too, because even the photographs this time were a little disappointing (something to do with not wanting to use flash with the shaking hands of a chocolate addict bereft of his fix - that sort of thing). But alas, in the true "please come and be bored shitless with my holiday photos" tradition, I have still included an album of sorts to help try and wet your appetites.

Maybe I should go back to just eating pies again. There's still plenty of mileage left in that for a hobby... Mmmm, I'm hungry again... Where did my Cadbury's go?

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 22, 2012

Max Brenner's is the single most, biggest ever disappointment I have had when it comes to food of any sort.

The hot chocolate drink was sickly sweet and was like drinking a very thick soup but sweet, icky sweet. The banana crepes were much better but still very sweet and too much for me to handle. Andy did his best to finish off what I couldn't eat but I could see he was struggling with it also. He used the ice cream to try and thin out the hot chocolate. I don't think that was very successful.

I have been wanting to go to Max Brenner's for years but they had always been too packed out that there was never any seating available when I went past, but now, I never have to worry about that again.



Give me one of these any day

Thursday, 29 December 2011

Apparently....

You know you're Australian if...

- * You believe that stubbies can be either drunk or worn.
- * You're liable to burst out laughing whenever you hear of Americans "rooting" for something.
- * You understand that the phrase 'a group of women wearing black thongs' refers to footwear and may be less alluring than it sounds.
 - * You pronounce Melbourne as 'Mel-bun'.
- * You believe the letter 'L' in the word 'Australia' is optional.
- * You can translate: 'Dazza and Shazza played Acca Dacca on the way to Maccas.'
- * You believe it makes perfect sense for a nation to decorate its highways with giant bananas, prawns, lobsters, oysters and sheep.
- * You call your best friend 'a total b#stard' but someone you really truly despise is just 'a bit of a b#stard'.
- * You think 'Woolloomooloo' is a perfectly reasonable name for a place.
 - * You're secretly proud of our killer wildlife.
- * You believe it makes sense for a country to have a \$1 coin that's twice as big as its \$2 coin.
 - * You understand that 'Wagga Wagga' can be abbreviated to 'Wagga' but 'Woy Woy' can't be called 'Woy'.
- * You believe that cooked down spent beer yeast makes a good breakfast spread. You've also squeezed it through Vita-Wheats to make little Vegemite worms.

- * You believe that the more you shorten someone's name the more you like them.



- * Whatever your linguistic skills, you find yourself able to order takeaway fluently in every Asian language.
- * You understand that 'excuse me' can sound rude, while 'scuse me' is always polite.
- * You know what it's like to swallow a fly, on occasion via your nose.
- * You know it's not summer until the steering wheel is too hot to handle and a seat belt buckle becomes a pretty good branding iron.
- * Your biggest family argument over the summer concerned the rules for beach cricket.

- * You shake your head in horror when foreign owned companies try to market what they call 'Anzac cookies'.
- * You still think of Kylie as 'that girl off Neighbours'.
- * If working at a bar, you understand male customers will feel the need to offer an excuse whenever they order a low-alcohol beer.
- * You know how to abbreviate every word, all of which usually end in "o" arvo, combo, garbo, kero, lezzo, metho, milko, muso, rego, servo, smoko, speedo, righto, goodo etc.
- * You know that there is a universal faraway place called "woop woop" located in the middle of nowhere.



- * You know that none of us actually drink Fosters beer, because it tastes like sh#t. But we let the world think we do, because we can.
- * You have some time in your life slept with Aeroguard on in the summer.
- * You've only ever used the words - tops, ripper, sick, mad, rad, sweet to mean good. And you place 'bloody' in front of it when you REALLY mean it.

- * You know that the barbecue is a political arena, the person holding the tongs is always the boss and usually a man and that women always make the salads.
- * You say 'no worries' quite often, whether you realise it or not.
- * You understand what no "wucking furries" or "no wuckers" means.
- * You have sucked tea, coffee or Milo through a Tim Tam biscuit.
- * You own a Bond's chesty, in several different colours.
- * You know that roo meat tastes pretty good, but not as good as barra or a meat pie.
- * You know that some people pronounce Australia like "Straya" and that's ok.



And lastly, you will immediately forward this list to other Australians knowing that only they will fully understand it.

Staci Finch Thompson: Dec 29, 2011

Well, the seat belt/steering wheel one also applies to Texas. Great post, even if I didn't understand half of it.

Andy Robinson: Dec 29, 2011

I got most of it down. Just a couple I need to look into now. Eeek how scary is that?

Dragonfly emerging: Dec 29, 2011

I have just finished translating the rest to him Staci... we Aussies have a language all our own... just get the wombat and gpa in a thread with coach and I have trouble understanding them

Stephen Dickson: Dec 31, 2011

Add the beetroot thing to the one directly above it.

Bloody Aussies!!

Slinky: Jan 01, 2012

Ok I understood a total of about 2 things of that list.



What's one of these things though?

Saturday, 31 December 2011

HAPPY NEW YEAR



I would just like to take a minute now to wish all you lovely readers a happy new year, 2012. I'm here having a whale of a time and sincerely hope you are finding some enjoyment reading all about it. Thanks for being a part of it all and please, please, please, keep coming back. We have another 18 days to go yet and then some so don't give up on me right now.



Oh and by the way... did you know that this year would be the Chinese year of the dragon? No way you may say but believe it or not it is true. Take a look at what just walked in through the front door here... A cute little chap isn't he?

Excuse the smoke by the way but he has just returned from lighting the local firework displays around here. Another surreal kind of something is not quite right experience for me. Remember I'm a brit and to us brits, you usually get fireworks in the middle of winter not summer.

So watching all of the fireworks welcoming in the New Year with cloudless skies, warm temperatures, no rain, sleet or snow is a real brain teaser and as good as the noisy fizz bang crackle bang fireworks actually were, they still seemed far from right. No wonder my brain often hurts. And then there's the time element to be aware of too. 11 pm here (Brisbane) is midnight in Sydney. So who really knows when the Australian new year should really begin.

Anyway, that's enough from me for now. Have yourselves a really good 2012 and don't get too drunk tonight while getting there if you haven't already, or if you did have too much, feel free to join me in enjoying the first of many strong coffees to come.

Happy January the first to absolutely everyone!!

And now, if you don't mind, I really must take my leave. I'll be the one sitting in the corner waiting for the voices (Screaming in my head) to stop... All the very best guys.



Dragonfly emerging: Jan 22, 2012

New Year's this year was one of the most quiet I have ever had. And I am truly thankful for that. The first one I haven't had Madi but I did have Andy and it was just wonderful being with him, seeing the fireworks, both lots, and seeing in the new year with him. Standing and watching the fireworks from the complex I live in, his arms wrapped around me, what more could I have wanted.

This new year is full of hope and promise, something that hasn't been in my life for a very long time. Goals for Madi and myself, goals for cadets and goals for Andy and myself too. This is going to be a big year where anything is possible. I look forward to the achievements of this year.

Health Wealth and Happiness to you all

Andy, thank you for making me come to life in a way I never thought possible, thank you for all the joy and love you have brought to my life.



New Years Eve fireworks at the Gold Coast

Saturday, 31 December 2011

The TWILIGHT Zone...

There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity itself. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of all his knowledge. It's a dimension of sound, a dimension of sight, a dimension of the human mind. You're moving into a land of both shadow and substance, of things and ideas.

You've just crossed over into an area... we call... the Twilight Zone.

Regular readers will already know that I am presently living here in Oz with a certain Madame Dragonfly here at what is affectionately known as Dragonfly Mansions (the house in the picture... Numba 40), in the sunny suburbs of Coomera, near Brisbane.



But over in the twilight zone, lies another numba 40. Another Dragonfly Mansions. Another place for me to stay maybe.



There's a lot more house, a lot more gardens, a lot more cars and who knows, maybe, just maybe...



A LOT MORE BOOBIES! YAY!!!

Stephen Dickson: Dec 31, 2011

What's the crack. You lot on the move?

Goddards: Jan 01, 2012

LOL Madame Dragonfly...

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 03, 2012

Nah just found a place around the corner that looked nice... i could never afford it, it is a water front :(

Andy Robinson: Jan 04, 2012

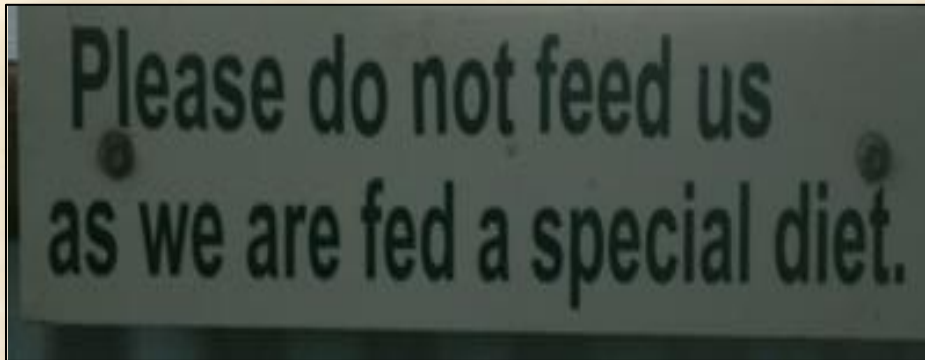
Madame Dragonfly funnier than boobies? Seriously??
BLIMEY!!



Tuesday, 3 January 2012

It's life Jim...

Over the new year period, it appears I might have harped on a little too much about Australia's lack of animals because our whole schedule was put on hold, turned upside down, thrown around a little and completely rewritten to include a visit to [Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary](#) about 50 minutes away from Dragonfly Mansions at an average speed of circa 120 Km per hour (bizzies allowing).



Click [here](#) for the full [day out at the zoo album](#)
And apologies for the old geezer pics.. I thought he was Crocodile Dundee

We arrived there early enough to find parking (not bad for a public holiday) and proceeded to the outside café to await with coffee in hand the other members making up our party for the day who included Patricia (Youth development officer from cadets) and her two boys Sean and Andrew (Great Name there) from the night before (we spent the night before with them at theirs for New year's Day. Hence my absence from proper blog content lately).

And then there was another couple, Shari-lee and Keith who are adult leaders from another cadet unit (yes cadets again). And then there was Paul another adult leader. Probably the tenth Paul I have met over here and pretty much like all the other Pauls, he was good company although for one reason or another, I couldn't remember who, what for or why he was here, but he was, so we happily put up with his presence.



Anyway, armed with camera, coffee and a lone muffin between two, we strolled through the entrance just in time to feed the 100 or so Lorikeets that lay in wait for us. Lovely wild birds in their multi-coloured splendour but none the less, trained to 'turn up' for a freebie sugar laced meal they couldn't

possibly refuse while crapping on all and sundry beneath them. And yes, we were included in that last statement but fortunately, their diet had rendered their doo-dahs to be nothing more than watery splashes rather than the muddy white and black offerings rendered to us in the more usual crow dusts and duck oils of the real world.



After that was the short wander through a gateway to the petting zoo where we saw (and could join in with had we wanted to) lambs, sheep, goats, guinea pigs, chickens and miniature ponies all desperately pleading to be fed with overpriced pellets and straw (available at a nature reserve near you subject to status). The usual

stuff you would find in petting parks all around the world. There was however one slight difference here, this one had free range kangaroos (OMG they do exist) surrounding it.

Now before I go any further I have to relate that my only experience of these spring loaded beasts was that of Skippy the 3 foot tall bush version from 1970's television. BUT... I also know they can grow as high as six or seven feet tall in optimal conditions. No such luck here though, the highest we saw was around four foot standing on its hind legs so as to pose no form of real threat to us foolhardy visitors.

Among the kangaroos (reds and greys – mmm, a bit like squirrels then) there were their smaller cousins, the wallabies and their 'too big for roasting tins' neighbours, the emus and ostriches. And then there was also "Look at the size of the nut-sack on that big boy", Jodie scaring away parents with small children with her more audible of observations on the roo's tackle bags.

From there we were herded to the Birds of Prey pavilion for a flight show including falcons, owls (two kinds, barking and barn), sea eagles, and eagles (of a fashion – the ozzie interpretations of). Cool birds and a cool way to meet them for sure. But alas not half as long as one would have liked it to be which meant we were soon looking for more to see. But first it was time for din dins in the restaurant area that was besieged with hundreds of bush turkeys and water lizards. Well it felt like hundreds.



When lunch was at an end, it was time to take in a few more of the indigenous animals of Australia. There were koalas (not bears by the way), wombats, snakes, turtles, lizards, monitors, crocodiles, sheep dogs, dingoes (not many people with kids there), Tasmanian devils, flying foxes bats, and a platypus for us all to witness as well as numerous hooked beak type birds with their parrot-phenalia (you may groan here) to be observed.



Besides all the animals, the place also went out of its way to help educate its visitors with sheep dog and shearing exhibitions, the bird of prey show, a scale and tails show (snakes and crocs), a koala presentation, platypus feed and keeper presentation and a Tasmanian devil presentation.

All in all, it was another great day out with plenty to see and do. It wore out the kids (which is always a bonus), and because of its very outdoor nature and the 30 degree sunshine in near blue overhead skies again, it almost got me burnt some more. Almost I said... It really needed Cath Slater to have pulled that sort of thing off more successfully.

And so it is with a heavy heart at being wrong, that this whinging pom finally stands corrected. There are animals in Australia, real ones too, but they hide themselves well from all lily white skinned tourists like me. In all honesty, most of the creatures are dawn or dusk types which is probably why I have done so well to avoid them which is good too really.

I mean, if a wild and unpredictable 7 foot tall kangaroo decides it's a good idea to dive out in front of your moving motor (putt-putt in our case), it can really do some serious damage to it in the process of having its arse going through its brain like that of a fly. And with that in mind, you want to see the size of the roo bars (more aptly named bull bars for UK and American markets) they have on the front of vehicles over here.



Andy Robinson: Jan 04, 2012

HOLD THE PHONE....

I just got told that skippies don't make that tutting noise for speech. WTF?

Is there nothing about this place that has been truthfully portrayed in the movies?

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 19, 2012

I just read this entry for the first time just now. Your readers must think I am some real class act.

1. legal speed limit for driving in Qld is 110kms per hour, for me to be doing an average speed of 120kph, there would have been times where I was hitting around 150kph... I don't remember seeing you white knuckled in the passenger seat of the, grrrr, "putt putt"!!!

2. I didn't mean for the kids to hear the comment about the roo's balls, I mean damn, they were hanging like 8 inches below his body, wouldn't they like drag along the ground? That can't be comfortable. Now i know why men wear underwear...

3. Dingoes and kids don't mix for a reason, it is still making news over here... sighs (insert Meryl Streep's bad Aussie accent here) Lucky we didn't lose Sean here...

AND you left out how we lost Sean in the reptile enclosure and couldn't find him for like 20 mins and had the zoo staff searching for him, only to find out that he found his mum and had been watching the reptile display in the stage area with her the whole time!!!



Tuesday, 3 January 2012

Who wants to be a milliner?



By all accounts, the hat is having a wonderful time over here (as indeed am I) and it is loving being adorned with all kinds of souvenir type sparklies and brand new shineys.

Problem is, is how the hell do we get it back to England? Maybe I should go move to Arizona with my best friend Mark...



Needs more badges !!

Andy Robinson: Jan 04, 2012

Got more badges today. Went to Nimbin, Uki, Murwillumbah and Fingal Heads (sounds like a disease), but nevertheless we came away with three of the buggers. Read all about it here very soon.

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 28, 2012

Really "the hat" isn't that embarrassing to be seen with, but it is a lot of fun to see how it has developed over the time he has been here... I believe he is presently building a bust to sit "the hat" on at home...

OZMANBRIT – The travelling tales of an Englishman about to take Australia by storm

The lack of readily available internet access for him at his end is doing my head in!!! But he is keeping busy and life is good and still very positive... we still talk on the phone...

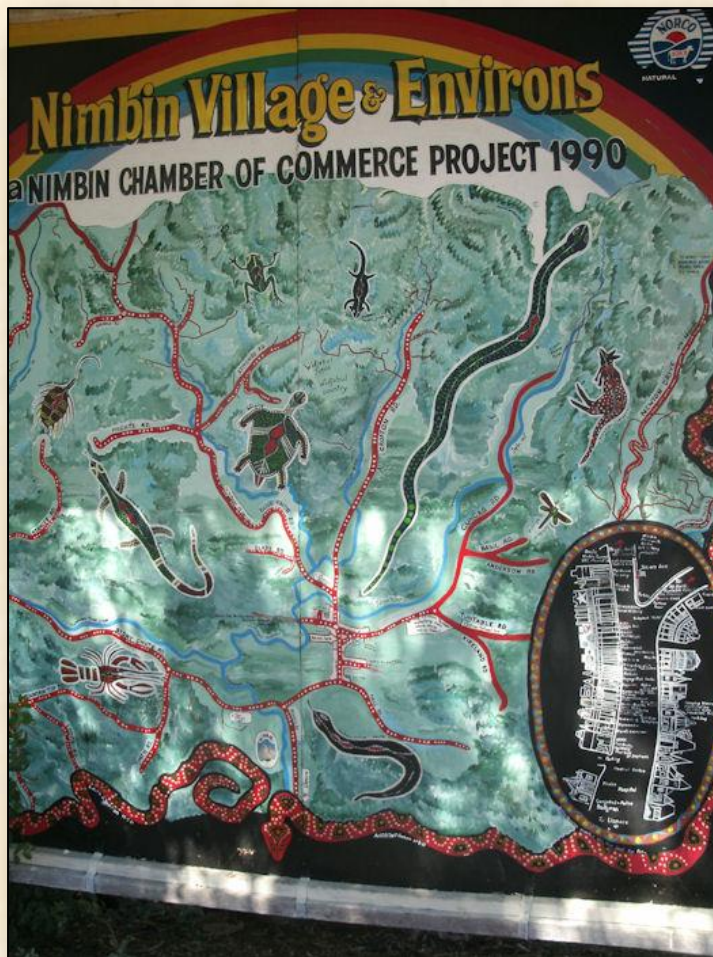


Such a handsome chap.... Not sure about the guy wearing it though

Wednesday, 4 January 2012

Nimbin and the Candle Factory

Question... What's the first sign of a good old fashioned candle factory?



Google maps street view

We had found our way back into New South Wales (remember to change all clocks) again and had stumbled upon the sleepy but somewhat defiant town

of **Nimbin**, rumoured to be the stoner's capital of Australia. And while there, I was half expecting visions of Amsterdam and clouds of acrid smoke and the pungent aroma of a quarter of best farmed "weeds" but that was simply not the case.

Nimbin is a small township that seems to have publicly gotten away with sticking up its fingers at authority. And although there are strong ties to a drug related culture and rastafarianism, there were only ever signs of association and not actual use of illegal substances. You see, it's a kind of schoolboy defiance where we can all pretend to be a part of it without actually taking part and to a Brit on tour over here, the single road township with a fork at one end carries the distinct feel of a 'smutty postcards' Blackpool back home if not a little smaller.



For a better look round Nimbin, [click here](#)

Complete with its shops full of tat, bars and gaming machines, the place has a real feel of naughtiness but that soon dissipates as you start looking out for real criminals. And the only thing that shatters the whole illusion, is the huge police station at the end of the road there suggesting we are all being good after all.

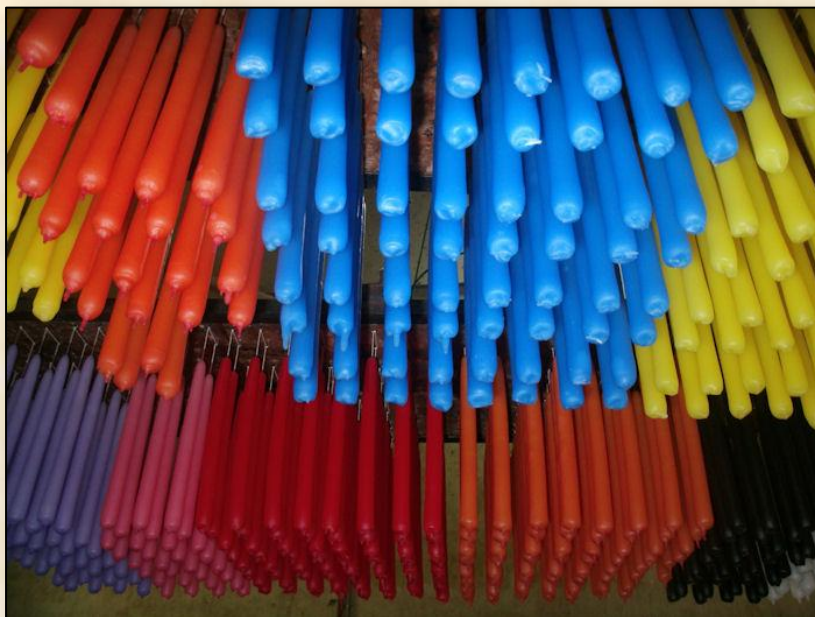
Nevertheless we were at Nimbin and had to therefore make the most of it by fully exploring the shops, the **museum**, the huge **Nimbin Hotel** for lunch, and

finally the **Nimbin Candle Factory** just over the Cullen bridge (a Twilight reference there just to keep Jodie happy).



The candle factory is situated in what was an old butter factory (where they put on a fair old spread for lunch no doubt) just north of Nimbin and today the building seems to be shared with a theatre company of some sorts (what the hell kind of actors do they use in a "bush theatre"?), but they were closed so we couldn't make further comment on that. But it is here that they (the candle factory) still make candles using only the finest edible grade waxes (for wrapping cheeses), food colourings and traditional methods and while doing so, were happy to take time out to show us around and teach us how things got done there, explaining the dipping processes, the shaping of candles, the smoothing of

candles (with an electric iron no less), and how they use candle offcuts to produce their larger multicoloured block candles.



[Click here for the Candle factory album](#)

It's not a huge place by any means that they operate from, and it is hardly geared up for today's mega-orders for supermarkets either, but it is however a quietly successful and seemingly thriving cottage industry with a useful product (yes it seems Australia still has power outages), where the friendly and approachable manner of the staff play a huge part in gaining repeat business no doubt from all over the world as tourists like me continue to stray through their doors.

And so, in answer to the question posed at the start of this entry...

What's the first sign of a good old fashioned candle factory?

Well the answer just hit us in the face when we got there. Maybe it says the same to you...



Or maybe you just had to be there...

Andy Robinson: Jan 04, 2012

Is marijuana really nature's way of saying Hi?

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 05, 2012

No it is more hiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii :)

Andy Robinson: Jan 05, 2012

You mean higher then?



Ooooo shineys... Nice!!

Thursday, 5 January 2012

Tripping

After leaving the candle factory back in Nimbin we headed back towards home with no definite plans which brought us into another small place called **Uki** (pronounced Yookeye in case you really are that interested).



[Click here for more Uki photos](#)

We stopped there primarily for something to drink but mainly due to the interstate time differences, all of the cafes were closed leaving us with the only option of a convenience store so, resigned to the fact there was to be no fine dining, we parked up the old jalopy and wandered around on foot snapping at anything of interest as we went (photo snapping not moody snapping that is).

And that seems to be the thing with Australia, it appears that no matter where you are, there always seems to be something well worth photographing. Whether or not I can do any justice to that is the crucial part under scrutiny here but Uki like everywhere else we have visited, is a quiet,

clean and well presented little place and as suggested on websites, there are some things really worthy of the odd snap here and there. And during the whole holiday this country has given me some of the most satisfying photos I have ever taken. So generally speaking, the place mustn't be all that bad.



[Click here for the Murwillumbah Album](#)

Anyway, from there we headed back towards [Murwillumbah](#) (yes you may have read it right but how did you say it? If indeed you even tried). Again, it wasn't for any particular reason apart from Jodie being born at a hospital there (sadly no statues of that ~ thank god) but like the town's website suggests, it is a beautiful place despite its chequered historic past (somebody's birth that is).

We dotted around the prettiness, saw some nice scenery, eyed a few houses, took in [a closed museum](#) and went up the the [Lion's Lookout](#). And then, like

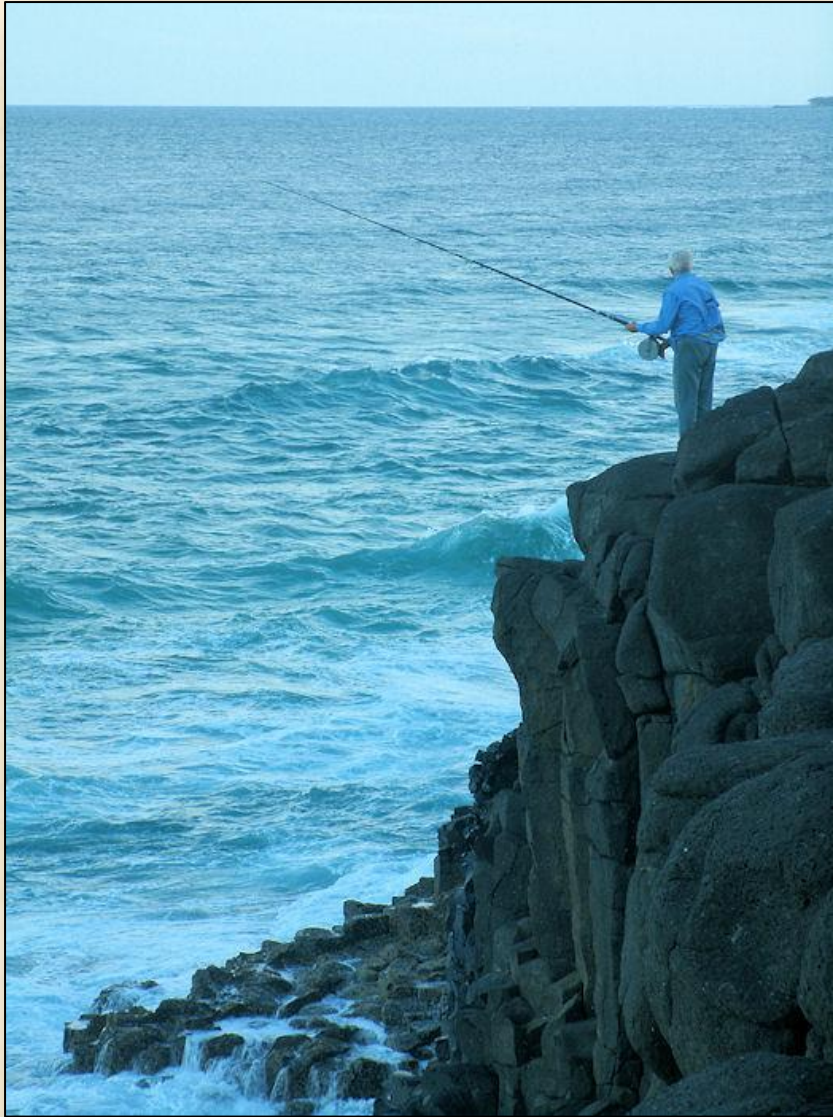
in all the best movies (really?), it was back into the putt-putt for a trip even further down the road to **Fingel Head lighthouse** and yet another bloody beach. This time overlooking **Cook Island** (it's a dirty job, but somebody has to do it. So very glad it was me).



View from the Lion's Lookout

And I say "another bloody beach", because I was trying not to swear too much and because I know I have readers back in old blighty probably suffering with freezing cold temperatures, ice, snow, sludge, dark overcast nights and plenty of rain and I profusely apologise to them for seeming to be rubbing their noses in it with all this sand, sea and sunshine. I honestly didn't know this place had so many beaches. Yet alone how beautifully presented,

warm and welcoming they all are. Oooops sorry guys, got carried away again.



More [Fingel Head](#) photos [here](#).

One thing I must say here though is that while I was out photographing all the pretty things that were generally easy to focus on, I saw a real, live, out in the wild dolphin jump out of the water right by the rocks I was standing

on. What a truly humbling moment that was for me and I know the rules, pics or it never, but it did happen and it happened too bloody fast to catch it on film or even SD card for the benefit of the more technically minded.

It will, like the rest of my time out here, be captured in my memories for a very long time to come though. And I'm just happy this angler guy didn't hook Flipper, the fishy master of the shiny blue Pacific and get pulled to a watery death at sea. What the hell was he thinking standing that close to the edge? And, please... Nobody tell me now that Flipper can't speak either. That would just be the end of all reality in my merry window licking, little world.

And hurry up with the votes on the poll on the right. Voting closes in one day's time...

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 05, 2012

Old jalopy? Chequered past?

And dolphins don't speak... it was all done for the gullible viewers/tourists...

Andy Robinson: Jan 05, 2012

Victory is mine... Damn you all !!!

And now we shall say nothing more on the matter LOL

Samantha O'Brien: Jan 05, 2012

Can't wait to photograph it all...but I am gonna have to do mine in a condensed mini tour.....LOL

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 28, 2012

Uki – my grandfather and great grandfather were dairy farmers, so Uki is where my family first enjoyed Australia. My great grandfather, Alexander (Paddy) Grant, settled here with his family and the tradition of dairy farming was passed down to my grandfather. Their old farms these days have become a housing estate just outside of Uki.

Murwillumbah – the place of my birth a few years ago ;) My grandmother who I openly do not like at all, still lives there, across from the church that both her daughters were married in. I went to visit my grandmother before my divorce, riding my VT750 Shadow. I got off the bike, pulled off the jacket, yes tattoos now showing, then took off the helmet and I walked up the path to her place on a Sunday morning, just as church was coming out. I swear it was 2 minutes before the parishioners we at her front door checking she was ok. She had to, and she was most embarrassed to do so, introduce her oldest granddaughter and let them all know she was ok. I love to shock :) especially her. my favourite memories of M'bah are of when my grand dad was alive, he was a rat bag and I miss him terribly. My grandmother turned into a bitch after his death. She was fighting with him on the day he went to work and never returned.

M'bah as a kid was all about the Banana Festival and becoming a Queen or a Princess in the festival parade. It was like a beauty pageant for the local country folk. The younger of my 2 aunties was a Princess one year. The Hari Krishna's used to have the most colourful floats and were full of wonderful music and movement. They have a local community, not far from M'bah.

Life is too short to stay mad at those you love, and you never know when they will be gone. So have your disagreement, but do not leave each other's side until you can see love in their eyes again. She has been a bitter old bitch ever since his death. Unresolved issues will turn you to stone if you aren't careful.

Tumbulgum – used to have a ferry when I was a kid. We used to have to drive our car onto the ferry to get to the other side of the river. That little bit of fun has been replaced by a boring bridge. The ferry driver used to be a local character. Funny how some memories will stay with you.

Fingal Heads – I haven't been up here since I was a kid and to tell you the truth, I don't ever remember going to the light house. So another first, being a tourist in my own back yard, we walked up to the light house and the views were just amazing. I used to live in Chinderah, just down the road from Fingal Heads.



Thursday, 5 January 2012

Homepage

If you walk down any English street or road, the chances are, you will be met by rows of uniformly built housing. Even the newer housing estates of this green and pleasant land are made up of only a few (maybe half a dozen) variations in house styles in as many as 200 homes. It all looks kind of deliberate and for the want of a better word, orderly...

First impressions of Australian housing however couldn't be any further from what I am used to, the image I have portrayed above. The housing here seems to be a simple case of build whatever you like (within regulations of course) and sod what the neighbours might think. There are of course some precautions put in place, but they don't always appear to do the trick. And it is quite rare to find a street over here of uniformly built housing but things are getting slightly better in that respect with the building of some new 'same style' housing complexes (similar to the housing estates back home).















All of these houses above neighbour each other on the same street.
A typical scenario in most Australian suburbs.

And coming from within the building trade, the only problem I have with any of this (so called) freedom of expression in Australian housing is that there is no accounting for the 'keeping up with the Jones' brigade, and where one day you may have a home you can be proud of, along can come Mr & Mrs next door who proceed to build what could be either a masterpiece (shadowing your own efforts) or a complete abomination (knocking the value (aesthetic if not monetary) of your own efforts), and yes there are actually signs of just that happening all over the place. And there seems (on the surface at least) to be very little you can do about it.

You see back home, even though the properties are generally a hell of a lot smaller on the whole, an Englishman's home is said to be his castle. So when a house is built in England it is generally built to last in excess of a hundred years and it is constructed of long lasting materials like stone, brick and slate for both weather proofing and durability, and it is subject to being to some degree, harmonious to the neighbouring properties.

The house is then home to a party for as long as that party is willing and able to live there and maintain it and it is then sold on when said party gets bored

of it or wishes to move on. The property is generally regarded to be the main item of value in a man's wealth.

And while you can personalise, chop and change your home, the basic housing stock remains very similar in shape and style bar the odd extension here or there. But from what I have gleaned In Australia, this doesn't seem to be the case. Whereas in England the more talented of property developers would look out for "doer uppers" – run down properties to be renovated and resold for profit. In Australia it seems the land is more the real key to a man's riches.

Properties over here seem to take second fiddle to the actual land they are sitting on. And when a property goes up for grabs here, it seems that the land the property sits on is usually the significant part of the deal. And there is a great possibility the existing property could be simply pulled down to make way for something er... better? Even heritage listed buildings are not safe over here with 'accidental' fires often accounting for their demise when it comes to redevelopment.



With this in mind it appears that most of the older homes are therefore only sold for a token scrap value, merely given away with the land they sit on. A house here is sold more as a plot of land (usually a quarter of an acre) and

the condition of the property often bears little consequence to the value of the land it comes along with. Houses are even shipped away for resale here.

There are also signs of one-upmanship everywhere you look in the Australian housing stock. Bigger and better properties are sprouting up among the hoi polloi and the inevitable race for best takes on new dimensions as the houses grow out of all proportion and inevitably out-price themselves from normal home buyers.

It's a sad situation really, as the only way to progress from there would be to sub-divide plots to bring back affordability. But that in turn, will lead to a new move towards building condominiums and shared housing with a tendency for a lot more 'building' and less garden spaces and then an inevitable need to grow upwards with high rises taking the place of today's more sprawling but modest in comparison bungalows.

And then there are the homes for the rich...

"Hello Mr Builder... Can you come round and throw up on my front garden please?"



I'm sorry if that sounds a little insulting, but to the richer people of Australia, what the hell are you thinking? Is it so hard to put a little thought into what you are building? Driving around some of the more affluent areas of the Gold Coast, it is easy to believe that there simply is no accounting for taste and there is definitely no monopoly on good taste by the rich alone.

Yes they may be able to afford the stuff we lesser mortals can only dream of, but please... it costs nothing to look and when we look your way, we often find it hard not to laugh...

Some of the creations on show really look like they could have

been put together better by a three year old with a decent sized bucket of Lego. Bigger and brasher is not always beautiful, better or a brilliant use of wealth guys. Diamonds for example, carry their value in their perfection more so than in the size alone.

So please, please, please, make your extensions sympathetic to the rest of your building, incorporate the monolithic statues and the like ONLY if it suits the building rather than your egos. And God help you when it comes to ever selling up. What was your overall strategy for resale values again? Was it that of good planning or simply planning blight that you built your home and your country's heritage around?



[Click here for a 'full house' album](#)

But don't get me wrong here, a lot of Australian home owners take a real pride in their homes and there really is some stunning architecture going on around here giving a wide and varied stock of housing to suit all tastes. Some of them are really quite nice too. But another thing that seems quite odd to a sun starved Brit, is the way the Aussies tend to cover up all their

windows with shades or blinds or trellis works. Either that or have great clumps of trees bang up to the front of the property obscuring all views. And if they don't do any of those, the next option is to build six, seven or eight foot walls all the way round the place which is a real shame when places can look this good.

Andy Robinson: Jan 06, 2012

Do you reckon all the blinds are because they are all vampires?

Paul Anslow: Jan 07, 2012

G'day Andy, I'm enjoying your take on Australia and relate to a lot of it. I am a ten pound Pom who came here with my parents a long time ago. As for housing estates, there are a lot here in Sydney (and in other major cities) where there has been a vain attempt to hide the fact that there is only a few designs, with huge two storey places with little space between and microscopic backyards.

Hopefully you can stick around, or come back and see the rest of this amazing country.

Say Hello to Jodes for us,

Best regards, Paul and Heather

Andy Robinson: Jan 07, 2012

Thanks for the input Paul. I'm trying to say it as it is or as I see it. But having said that, if I do get anything wrong, feel free to correct me.

And now I get buried in complaints LOL

Godders: Jan 08, 2012

No complaints here Sir!!

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 09, 2012

Definitely no complaints here... oh apart from my car is not a bloody putt putt!!!

Andy Robinson: Jan 09, 2012

Your putt-putt is barely a car more like LOL

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 09, 2012

Home is where the heart is. And as you can tell, some of these places had no heart or soul at all, they were just massive monuments to bad taste that apparently not even a lot of money can buy.

I love looking around Sovereign Island to see how the other half live and as it turns out, they exist. How can anyone enjoy living in these monstrosities when they spend all day at work just to be able to afford them? A lot of these "mansions" were empty, or half finished and a lot of them were up for sale. Maybe the recession hit the top end of the food chain too.

There is a distinct difference between what "old money" build and what "new money" throw up in the small plot of paradise.

There is no accounting for taste. With the sort of money that they have spent, you think a designer or maybe PR person could have had better connections to get something decent built.



A typical Queenslander style house

Saturday, 7 January 2012

Brochures...

I know my time here is nearly up and I should be spending every last minute now trying to take in as much as I possibly can... But every now and again I need to stop myself dead and look to the future for a while. And that always takes me to the fact I need to choose a new hat for my much wanted return.



It's not that I am in any way disenfranchised with the current hat I have got and continue to adorn but there is something at the back of my mind, subliminally telling me my time here is not yet complete.... It's a big place, and the people here have big hearts and I for one will miss it all.

The hat thing is probably just the inner voices starting up in my head again.



What more can I say?

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 09, 2012

Oh it's the voices again... Sure, blame them



Sunday, 8 January 2012

Tripping the Light Fantastic

Without wanting to further bore any of you stay at home types with yet another beach, our next destination for a good old root around (oops do not use the word root – it means naughty things in Oz), was to be what proved to be a hugely popular destination for the travelling masses with many folks rumoured to be staying here for months on end.



I am of course talking about a strange old town where things just didn't seem to add up. And by that, I mean it has not been like anywhere else I have seen in Australia to date, for starters it was a lot busier than the majority of other places. It was also a lot more built up and seemed outwardly less picturesque. It was a place called **Byron Bay**, oh and yes, it also has a beach or two (cough, cough).

With slight traces of the drug/hippie/beach bum scene, Byron is mainly a place for water sporters to go get wet at, shoppers to go get skint at, and twenty-somethings to go get jiggy with each other's beautiful bodies and bumping uglies at (hopefully after the sun goes down and in private). What more can I say? It is a typical holiday destination where people go for all kinds of holidayish sorts of things and having said that, the general populous here seems to be a little on the younger side too.

There are however shops and markets galore, along with fine restaurants and plentiful eateries. Bars and beaches abound by the bucketful, and festivals appear to take place on every corner and just like in most other successful holiday destinations around the world, there is also a constant stream of people busily doing nothing in particular, flowing up and down along the main streets. Hell, there's even an Olympic size or looking, outdoor swimming pool right next to the beach, God knows what they would want that for.



Byron Bay Album here

But that was just the first, smack you in the face impressions I got. Below the surface, the place benefits from the same old overall cleanliness as the rest of Oz, the same friendly faces of the locals, and the same old glut of instant photography opportunities with the same old mix of different building styles, etc... etc... etc... Oh and then there's also the dreaded crop circles that appear every morning on the pristine beaches... Now that's got to be scary if not worthy of note...



Is it art or is it more a way of life? Nah, bet it's them aliens again.

Further down the road from the main centre of Byron stands the Byron Bay lighthouse and all the associated water, rocks and, need I say, more of the same old stunning scenery I am very quickly becoming accustomed to. The lighthouse is open to the general public with an accompanying museum and stands proud at the top of a purpose built walkway which includes lookouts over the coastline, seating and picnicking areas, and some rather splendid flora and fauna to look into along the way.



Check out the [lighthouse trek album here](#)

Little did I know though, the walkway went on for what seemed like miles (it had hairpin bends doubling back on itself too), taking us over to the eastern most point of the Australian mainland. And as you stand at the [sign actually telling you so](#), you can see the small final peninsular of land jutting out into the ocean while making the tantalisingly wrong assumption that it is only a hundred or so yards away from you and therefore merits your further inspection.

Downhill all the way, the gentle seaside amble soon turned out to be more of a trek of what seemed to be astronomical proportions but without the aid of Zulu or Spock, I eventually made it to the end, waved at what should be south America way, way, way ahead of me, took some pics so as to prove it happened and then presently turned round and shit myself.

You see it suddenly dawned on me, that my journey so far had been downhill all the way. And in order to continue in any kind of direction at all, I would now have to begin to go... UP those very same hills... Eeek.

Now having learned quite a lot about hills through where **I live** back in the Penines of Blighty, I knew this was not going to be an easy task by any means. But with the putt-putt patiently waiting for me at the top, I had no choice but to proceed with my undoubtedly life threatening return.

The aching legs were among the first of the symptoms to hit me as I ascended my way back. Then came the breathing difficulties... Happy people with smiling faces brushed passed me while I was audibly gasping for what seemed the very last drop of oxygen on the planet. Jogging old aged pensioners were looking my way like nothing was amiss while wondering what the hell could possibly be wrong with me as they scratched at their foreheads. Others looked on with sheer concern as volunteers stepped forward to offer the man with a crimson red face, pained expressions and flared nostrils some aid in the guise of isotonic drinks, space blankets and full sleeping facilities for the rest of the month. Sweat poured from every inch of my body and my hair was bleeding water down my face...

I had made the first quarter of the return trip home.



Never mind the hiking, this should have been me !

I remembered on my way down how I was thinking 'I hope this is all worth it' along the way and 'I'll kick myself later if I didn't do it', but now all I could think was, 'what the hell was I actually thinking?' or 'no it was **notbloodyworthit**'. But it really was a trip that had to be made and now, with the benefit of hindsight, CPR, gorgeous nurses that I was too unfit to play with and defibulators (Honestly - the things I have to go through for you guys), I really am glad I did it and yes it really was worth it.



Don't even think about it, this is less than
a tenth of the steps en-route

And having finally made my way back to the top of this monolithically tall headland just in time to see the light on the lighthouse shining its way across the crystal clear Pacific, that seemed as good a time as any for me to whisper (having been rendered unable to talk) a very fond farewell to the scenic pleasures of Byron Bay. Will you guys ever forgive me for being so slack? To be honest, I don't really care. My feet hurt, I have stitches in my sides and stomach, my heartbeat is racing and to top it all, I need a wee but

the nearest toilet is down a spiral track of about another bzillion kilometres and it will just have to wait.

Oh Byron Bay, you are a lovely town with lovely beaches and beautiful rocky backdrops wherever needed but please, oh please, oh please, can you not put up some warning signs for when I or any other like minded but physically challenged mortals like me should ever return to your welcoming shores?

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 09, 2012

You are going to have to let up on the putt putt crap!!!

Andy Robinson: Jan 09, 2012

Do you mean I should putt-putt it down?

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 09, 2012

Byron Bay is one of my favourite places in OZ. I have been playing tourist with Andy while he has been here and have been seeing sides to my favourite places that I had never seen before.

Cape Byron, where the light house is, I have never been up to the lighthouse. I didn't join Andy on his trek down to the eastern most point of OZ cause I am still sporting a partially dislocated knee and I still had to drive home!!! When this knee is fully functional again, I am going to do that trek with Madi and we are going to see all the wonderful things Andy did, minus of course the park ranger who came looking for him to make sure he was ok ;)

(park ranger came looking for a missing child that was noticed missing before Andy headed down that way... must have been a happy retrieval of the child as it never made the news :))

Byron has the Jazz and Blues festival at Easter that one year I am going to make my way down too.

Byron Bay is one place where I can get wonderful vegetarian food from the Cardamon Pod Restaurant <http://www.cardamompod.com.au/about.html> I discovered this place by accident one time and go there each time I visit Byron Bay. For the record, I am not a

vegetarian but I enjoy that this food is made with love and from a spiritual place and you can really taste that love when you eat the food :)

The crowds at xmas are usually younger but the rest of the time, it is a good mix of people. Xmas and festival times you will find large crowds here but for the weekend trips I make down there, it is pretty easy going with parking not a real issue to find. The people are friendly, the shopping eclectic and the views sensational.



Yep, been there done that 😊

Monday, 9 January 2012

A Matter of Opinion

Did you ever stop to consider what the two most impossible things in the world to ever achieve are?

Well first off, it must be getting to have a proper deep and meaningful conversation with a man (any man) just after sex (Hee hee, that should get the women talking).

And the second is to actually find somebody that enjoys trawling through other people's bloody holiday photographs. Especially when said photographs run into the thousands.

So it was with this in mind (the second one not the first, unless you want to have sex with me and see how we fare that is, in which case see me later), that I recently fashioned a small opinion poll to ascertain as to whether or not this very blog was or wasn't (delete as appropriate) actually boring you all to death.

12 people out of the million (I wish) that regularly read the blog, actually took the time to answer, which is fine as the other 999,988 must have fallen asleep already.

So it is boring then is it? Let's take a look...

Well, of the 12 that did reply, the breakdown was as follows:

Andy is most definitely a whingeing pom – 1 vote.

I swear I will hunt you down whoever you are and I will find you.

And when I do find you, I will sit you down and whinge at you to my heart's content with you listening in captivity. I mean, look at these shoes, I've only had them three months and already the soles are wearing thin... etc etc etc.

Andy is not so much a whingeing pom – 2 votes.

You guys can come again. Feel free to come inside, read and love everything I say and do. You may all have my babies.

Who is Andy? – 1 vote.

Yes, thanks for that Mum. The guys from the retirement home will be round presently. Please have my inheritance at the ready.

I just love the blog man – 8 votes.

YAY... it seems the blog is sufficiently entertaining and funny to be classed a runaway success and not in any way boring at all (herm herm).

Oh dear, now I have to go find something else to write about. Please send donations ASAP so I can stay longer and hopefully write something of true meaning and value.

But seriously, thanks guys for your appreciation. And... after fully realising how taxing this whole affair must have been for you all (12 replies out of how many?), I promise I will not be testing you again anytime soon.

Thanks again to all for taking part. And please, don't be looking at any of this as a huge waste of time, instead, I suggest you just look at it all this way...



Dragonfly emerging: Jan 09, 2012

WE ARE SO HAVING WORDS WHEN I GET HOME!!!

Cath Slater: Jan 09, 2012

Hahahahah Not boring...love the blogman was my vote! and you thought i was the whingeing pom voter... :(how did the appellation "pom" or "pommie" come about I wonder???

But I digress....I love your blogs and you of course you bad Andy you! And Jodes...go for it girl!

Andy Robinson: Jan 09, 2012

Pommy...

The term pommy, pom or pomme, in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, commonly denotes a person of British (usually of English heritage) origin. A derogatory term, it was controversially ruled no longer offensive in 2006 by the Australian Advertising Standards Board and in 2010 by the New Zealand Broadcasting Standards Authority. Despite these changing views, many British people or those of British origin consider the expression offensive or racist when used by people not of British origin to describe English or British people, yet acceptable when used within that community: for example, the community group British People Against Racial Discrimination was among those who complained to the Advertising Standards Board about five advertisements poking fun at "Poms", prompting the 2006 decision.

The origin of this term is not confirmed and there are several persistent false etymologies. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) strongly supports the theory that pommy originated as a contraction of "pomegranate". The OED also suggests that the reason for this is that pomegranate is extinct Australian rhyming slang for immigrant; it cites an article from 14 November 1912, in a once-prominent Australian weekly magazine The Bulletin: "The other day a Pummy Grant (assisted immigrant) was handed a bridle and told to catch a horse." A popular alternative explanation for the theory that pommy is a contraction of "pomegranate", relates to the purported frequency of sunburn among British people in Australia, turning their fair skin the colour of pomegranates. However, there is no hard evidence for the theory regarding sunburn. Another unofficial explanation is that P.O.M. stands for 'Prisoner of Millbank ' or that P.O.H.M.E. stands for 'Prisoner of Her Majesty's Exile'. However, the OED states that there is no evidence for these terms or abbreviations being used and that they are an unlikely source. Historian Richard Holt maintains the origin of the term comes from English cricket tours of Australia where the English gentlemen amateurs would drink Pommery Champagne in preference to Australian beer.

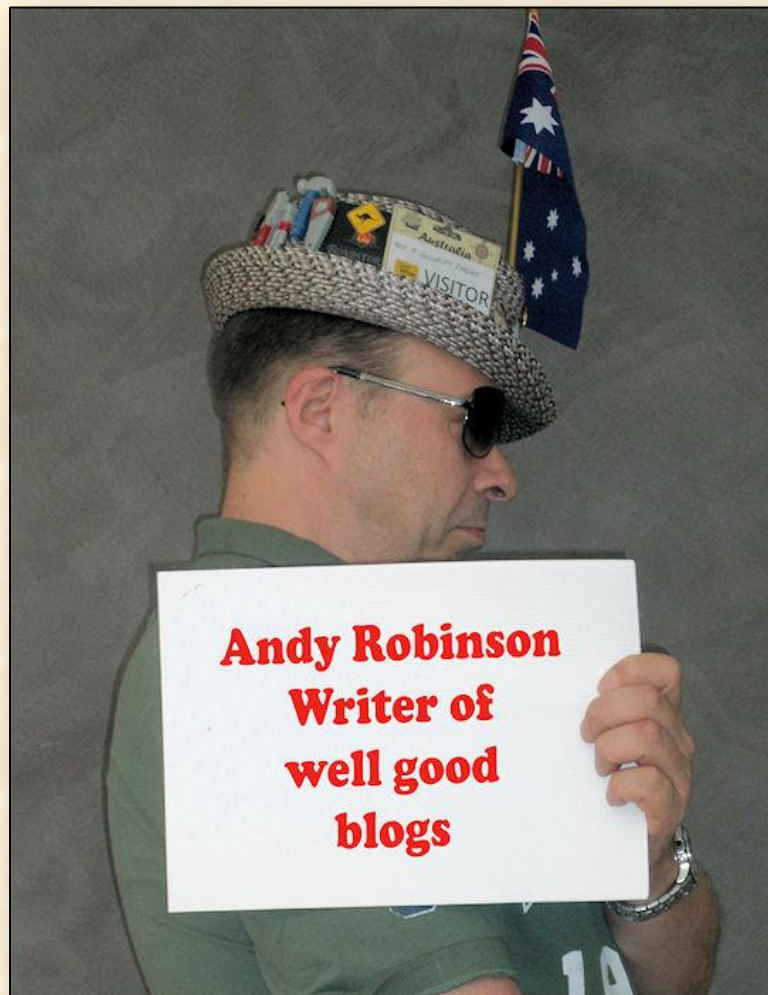
Or maybe it is because it just was. Let's not fight over such things I say, Hari Krishna, bells, beads, peace and harmony.

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 09, 2012

Love peace and mung beans babe... and stop pimping yourself out to get better ratings on your blog!!!

Andy Robinson: Jan 09, 2012

Anyone wanna see my bits?
Well go to the archive lists on the right then



Wednesday, 11 January 2012

Staying Home

There are times when even the most intrepid of explorers are forced into taking the odd day or two off from investigating brave new worlds. And with Monday the 9th also meaning a return to work for the 'it's not an effin putt-putt' whinge bag, today was to be one of those days.

But that is not what you came here for was it? To which I can only reply, WTF? I'm on holiday here too you know? But, by way of a compromise I have been allowed by she who must be obeyed, to give you a bit of a guided tour around the lands of Dragonfly mansions.

Obviously I won't be going into too much detail here as both I, or my better (much better in fact) half, being semi-responsible adults, are not too much into the habit of broadcasting the whereabouts of all our worldly wealth to complete strangers over the inter-webs. After all, Jodie has enough trouble with stalkers already. That's how she met with me for God's sake.

Anyway, starting from the big scary city, turning left at the local Spar (yes they have Spar mini-markets here. And believe it or not, they even have Woolworths (not the bankrupt English version of pick and mix fame but mega-supermarkets the likes of Tesco. How does that work then?)), going down the Pacific Highway super slab thingy, getting lost on a couple of wrong turns, and just around the corner from the Boathouse Tavern that we mentioned in earlier posts, there lies a small housing estate of say around 50 odd houses, some of which are townhouses (two storey affairs) and some that are villas (bungalows, who the hell are they trying to kid?) and then there is one, just one, solitary mansion house (and I say mansion house purely because my one bed roomed flat, back



home will probably fit in just the bathroom here) – Dragonfly Mansions (enter at your peril, I mean, look what happened to me).



Dragonfly Mansions: [Click here for a good old nosey](#)

Dragonfly Mansions is in fact a three bed roomed villa (so bungalow) affair with sliding glass doors instead of external walls, wall to wall tiled floors, a kitchen, a living room, bathroom, garage cum gymnasium and separate bog room. The walls are bedecked with diamonds, precious metal covings and floor to ceiling 50 inch plasma screen televisions. Granite work surfaces adorn the kitchen and bathroom units as do the mother of pearl cabinet doors, platinum sinks, marble wall tiles and solid gold fixtures and fittings which were all robbed from the local Bunnings DIY store (hence no internal photographs). Somehow the contrastingly cheap shoddy plastic door handles just don't add up with the mirrored ceilings though.

Outside however, the gardens are deliberately small and therefore extremely manageable even for the most novice handful of green fingers, being adorned



with nice architecturally ornate and significant plantings here and there to make the whole place feel rather good, warm and generally all over cosy. And looking just down the only road seen twistedly running through the whole estate, there lies the piece-de-resistance to the estate, the wannabe Olympic sized swimming pool with adjoining spa bath, family changing facilities, en-suite kitchen and barbecue area and lordy lordy, there's even additional electric lighting for after dark (when they actually remember to turn the lights on that is). The pool closes at 9pm, when the witches come out and wash their cats or something equally esoteric.



Poolside photographs here guys

The pool itself is not at all a toy affair, with water running at about one and a half metres deep that turns a bright iridescent purple colour when you wee in it (sorry about that). And even though it is not heated, while cold enough to send icy chills right through your bollocks when you first enter it, it soon feels remarkably warm once you're fully immersed.

Personally, I have to say, I hate the place.

But that's only because I haven't been allowed to set about it with my tools yet (although I have already done some internal remodelling (I moved a chair)) and brand it with the much needed mark of my own artistic flair and dare I say, home crafting abilities...



PadPimpers for Australia I say, that'll soon show them.

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 11, 2012

I want to live where you have written about

Goddess: Jan 11, 2012

lol

I heard you moved more than 'a chair' in the Bungalow ;)

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 12, 2012

My house will never be the same again

Andy Robinson: Jan 12, 2012

Nowt to do with me he says whistling as he walks away

Andy Robinson: Jan 11, 2012

They were living in self inflicted darkness (why do you Aussies do that?), so I came in, moved some stuff around to give them more space and opened up the window blinds. That's all your honour :)

Samantha O'Brien: Jan 11, 2012

I gotta pad you can pimp.....and more than a chair needs to be moved....LOL

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 12, 2012

Self inflicted darkness? I live with a bloody vampire... plus it keeps the heat of the day out... the windows aren't double glazed...

And Sami, you can have him for a while but I will need him back..

Andy Robinson: Jan 12, 2012

Yes and I suppose it stops the white floor tiles fading too doesn't it?

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 14, 2012

I am not normally home during daylight hours (work, cadets, Madi, rural fire etc), so it really hasn't bothered me until you arrived here and I saw how much better the place looks in the daylight with the blinds open, when it's clean!!!

You have made a difference to my environment at home as well as impacted my life :) kisses and thank you.



Thursday, 12 January 2012

Airports



Gold Coast Airport, Coolangatta

Travelling South from Dragonfly Mansions (our home-base) down to the coastline (hope no one noticed that) border between Queensland and New South Wales, and sitting just north of the mouth of the River Tweed, lies the cheery town of **Coolangatta**. Home to what is known as the Gold coast's airport, the sinking of the schooner Coolangatta there in 1846 and another quite popular holidaying destination.

And the reason I bring all this to light, is we had to go trawl down there the other evening to collect Madi (Jodie's daughter) off of a plane coming in from Sydney where she had been visiting her Granddad Barry (**remember Noah's Ark?**) with her father over the Christmas period.

Anyway, with all that in mind, we donned our Dora the Explorer hats and backpacks once again and set off on our way down the King's highway or to use its real name, the M1 Pacific Highway (We did it, we did it) to see what we could see, do what we could do and somewhere along the line, collect any spare, unsuspecting and vacant looking children found licking windows in the arrivals lounge of what is the official **2nd airport** to the city of Brisbane while still continuing to collect all forms of amateurish coloured photographs to document it all and fully bore you all to death with.



[Click here for lots of pics again](#)

So approaching Coolangatta through neighboring nicety, **Kirra**, we parked up (or did the putt-putt finally break down? One or the other) next to what is locally known as the 'big groyne' which separates the two beaches (oh dear, beaches again. Is there no end to them in Australia?) of Kirra and Coolangatta which sit overlooking Surfers Paradise in the distance heading north across the water.



And just like many of the other beaches here (all of them in fact) these are also blessed with golden white sands, rocky outcrops, blue skies, crystal clear waters, photogenic scenery and everything else the Australian blueprint for beaches seems to carry (I'm not allowed to mention the bikini clads), this time with the added bonus of world renowned surfing.

Later that evening, we all checked in at the airport just in time to check out with the required extra bodies. It was quite a scary experience actually, not solely because it was Madi we were collecting (honestly), but because it was also bringing home the reality that my time here in Australia was nearly up and I too would be once more partaking of the airport facilities. Eeeek

How can that possibly be with so very much remaining to be seen and done? After all, there's always time for another beach or twelve isn't there? And then there are the innards of this great place to explore. Not to mention the fact it is still freezing back home in Blighty (Shivers at the mere thought of it).

I haven't even considered the likes of **Uluru (Ayres Rock)**, either yet. Then there's the north, the south, what's left of the east and then the west to still see. It's all so very much to do, with so very, very little time.



All I can say is thank heavens we got to meet with the legend that is the wombat, an unknown entity found parading on google turf for the last two years, Billy Bob Wombat (fireman extraordinaire) finally became a reality a few days earlier for us when both australian and anglophile worlds clashed head on at the Boathouse Tavern Last Friday. It was a good day and a trans-continental Buzz-up to top them all. As indeed was the one with Cath Slater (almost forgiven now Cath :)).



And apologies in advance for the intrusion into your privates Bob (or +Ned Kelly as we now know you thanks to the Google nym police) but both Jodes and I came to the unanimous conclusion that both Google plus and the now recently defunct Buzz, made you look a lot rounder in body and face than you do in real life. And it is with that and nothing but that in mind, that we felt almost

compelled to post up your mug on here and see if Blogger does it too.

Mmm, for now, the Jury remains out...

Maybe you should try dreadlocks?



Dragonfly emerging: Jan 12, 2012

Yes the wombat is way better looking in person... can I say that? Eeek

Andy Robinson: Jan 12, 2012

Better looking than what?

Doug Thompson: Jan 13, 2012

A pom and a banana bender I'm surprised that the camera didn't fail.

Andy Robinson: Jan 13, 2012

Less of the banana Doug :)

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 14, 2012

I guess to anyone who has met Andy while he has been here with me will understand how his departing to travel back to the mother ship is going to affect me...

Having someone who truly understands you to your core and still likes you is a pretty rare thing, I have been truly amazed at how well we have got along and the depth of understanding that requires no words...

We just get each other and I love that :)

I am so going to miss him :(

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 14, 2012

The airport

This little old sleepy town of Cooloongatta (Gold Coast) has a pretty busy airport for a regional airport. This only 30 years ago was a tin shed. Both Brisbane and Gold Coast airports have come a long way in the last 10 years. Gold Coast airport now boasts some international flights as well but it is still restricted by curfews for take off and landing. Brisbane however is one of the rare airports in Australia that has 24 hours flight arrivals. Which will come in handy seeing as Andy's flight will be leaving at 2.30am on Wednesday morning!!! Yes I will be staying with him until he has to go through customs. And to anyone who works with me, please just bring coffee to me on Wednesday whenever you pass my desk as i am going to be a wreck.

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 19, 2012

The airport goodbye was harder than i thought it would have been. I passed up the offer from friends to drive me home, thinking, he is just going home, he will be back soon.

What happened was I said good bye and then sobbed uncontrollably walking back to the car. Yep, its official, I am a sook. I was fine for most of the drive with the music so loud I couldn't hear myself think

When I got home, my house mate was waiting for me out the front. Keep in mind this is now 3am (did Andy get to everyone I knew to have them keep an eye on me?) and I have 2 more text messages from girlfriends seeing if I am ok.

I walked in the house and smelled his aftershave, and then lost it again. It finally hit home, he was gone. Trying to sleep should have been easy but it eluded me. 7am I rang my boss, I was an incoherent blubbering mess, he just said, I will see you tomorrow.

SO I am guessing Andy saw this coming, because I sure as hell didn't. I didn't leave my

bed until 5pm that afternoon, after a phone call from yet another girlfriend, saying "pity party of one, it is time for you to go".

Yep was my cue that life goes on, time to go get Madi and go to the beach for a walk.

Breaking it to Madi that Andy had gone home was hard, she curled up in my arms and cried. So I went out in sympathy, yet again (that's my story and I am sticking to it). Anyways, we walked along the beach, she posed on the gym equipment for pics for Andy (we meant to get these pics before he went home but every time we went to something else came up) we talked and cried a little more.

After an hour of this getting back to nature and grounding all the sadness, it was time to get back into our routine. I had work tomorrow, Madi had to get back into her routine of sleep as school is back in less than a week. Time to suck up the tears, and get back into mum mode where I am the strong one for everyone. Time to put all this emotional stuff on the back burner.

I miss him like crazy. He impacted our lives in ways I couldn't have foreseen in my wildest dreams. Waking up and not seeing him there 2 mornings in a row now, very hard. Him not being here when I get home from work, harder again. I miss the sound of his voice, stirring me up, calling the cockatiels "not budgies" or calling my car a "putt putt". All this in just 9 weeks with Andy. I wonder if he realises the impact he has had on us...



Friday, 13 January 2012

Fuck it!



MAYBE I'LL TRY AGAIN LATER :) After all it is Friday the 13th !!

Only kidding folks, am actually out and about doing more beaches so you lazy lot don't have to. Will write it all up for you when I get back

(God you're so demanding).

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 13, 2012

What? They are demanding?

No beaches today folks, it will be mountains, and distilleries only :)

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 14, 2012

Ooops didn't make it to the distillery as we had to get home to get ready to go out to dinner with friends..

Samantha O'Brien: Jan 15, 2012

We knew what you were doing.....



BUSTED!!

Saturday, 14 January 2012

Banging on

Good heavens, after rather a dodgy start to the day (see my last post), we finally took ourselves out and about, and get this... we didn't see the sea.



What no oceans?

That's right, no more boring you with beaches. We stayed inland today to visit a place that is part of the **Scenic Rim** (best not ask) and we have come across it a couple of times before. It is **Mount Tamborine** which is odd because while it is described as a plateau on the accompanying website (linked), it certainly feels like a mountain as the car grudgingly chugs its way up some of the really steep and hairpin bends on offer. I thought plateaus were flat?

Unfortunately for you guys, due to the very nature of the roads we travelled, it wasn't really possible to capture some of the most breath-taking scenery to date with its full panoramic, vistoramic, hydromatic (?) views over the whole of the Gold coast, sheer drops, awesome housing, small holdings and full on forestation.



[Click here for the Mount Tamborine album](#)

Where we eventually chose to stop (the [Mount Tamborine Winery and Homestead](#)) was more or less just a single street of tourism based shopping and restaurants (Yay coffee TFFT) with the inclusion of the winery smack bang in the middle of where we wandered aimlessly through the endless crowds around us. And while we were there basically acting like tourists, being peddled all kinds of touristy (some of it quite high end and far from

cheap) goods, believe it or not, the sales spiel we witnessed was quite polished and professional sometimes bordering on the downright pushy too.

But that wasn't all we did though, we also took in some of the funky buildings along the way, met with real live and dangerous animals, had a good old rummage through the shops (not root) and once again, got some good photos along with a further ubiquitous cup of coffee and cake slices.

There also be dragons up there.

There's quite an esoteric feel to the place I found, with plenty of dragons, fairies, mythological gods and lots of other 'Dungeons and Dragonsy' type statuettes amid the many arts and crafts being carried out there. Crafts like glass wares, badges brooches and pendants, paintings, clothing, jewellery and even clock-making. There were also plenty of the normal trashy touristy trinkets up for grabs but I regret to inform, there was nothing of any worth for the hat.



Now under most normal circumstances that would have been bad, bad, and even worrisome news. But being the resourceful kind of chap that I am (and without even knowing it I may add), I have had other's collecting souvenirs on my behalf... How good is that then?

Today for instance, I was informed on behalf of the hat, that Jodie's mother and partner (from back up in Bundy) had collected from their own Christmas mini travels, a cane toad's head key ring along with another pin or two. And even as we sit and read this or look at the pictures here, they are being

rushed over from Melbourne through Bowen and then by courier in time for my impending departure. Thanks for that guys.

AND AND AND....



We found another one of those vintage mash up car things again, maybe not as good as the one we had reported on earlier, but no less shiney and eye catching. It was parked up all alone just crying out to be pictured, so that's what we did. We pictured it. Probably having its front bumper scraped off as it drove over the next one inch obstacle, but we pictured it anyway.

And besides all that, cutting a long story rather short because I am after all still very much on holiday and have much better stuff to do with my impending lack of time, we had only spent four or so hours doing



nothing much but enjoying every minute of the excursion and had to come away only because we needed to be ready for a second meeting cum get together with Alex and Dan at their place where we would all sit around a large table, amidst good company and conversation, while drinking copious amounts of liquids of varying alcoholic toxicity and getting ourselves stuck into a large and healthy meal later on during the evening. Life is so very very hard over here.

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 14, 2012

For Madi and I, showing Andy where we used to live was a mixed bag of feelings.

Mt Tamborine is where Madi used to go to school until the bullying became so much of an issue we needed to change schools for her. The times her and I experienced on the mountain were bitter sweet. She still sees the mountain as a place where her she was bullied but she loved home with all the chickens and animals she was allowed to have.

I used to love the mountain for the esoteric feel and the winding roads for me and my beloved VT750 to enjoy.

Andy got to see some of our favourite shops and some new ones neither Madi nor I had experienced since they had changed hands in the last couple of years. We never made it to the distillery or cheese factory, i think he would have loved these, but maybe when he comes to visit next we can continue our tour of the mountain and see the sights we love so much. We never got to show him the view from where the hang gliders take off, nor did he get to see a sunrise or sunset from this mountain, which were on the to do list :(

Tiniest Violin: Jan 14, 2012

So you had a poofters day out frolicking with the squeeza's on the green behind the gold, yes playing with an dodgey rim he's never even seen before !

Clean up your act you pommie bastard or you my good sir will shout for the entire night when I swill piss with ya

Andy Robinson: Jan 14, 2012

Mmmm will reply to this Mike after I get it translated LOL

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 14, 2012

So when are you catching up for a drink mikee? the pommie bastid goes home wee hours of Wednesday morning..

Andy Robinson: Jan 14, 2012

VT750 = two wheeled putt-putt :)

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 14, 2012

Fuck I should have got a Holden ute

Andy Robinson: Jan 14, 2012

She's in a moooooood!!

Godders: Jan 15, 2012

LOL...I think this was more putt putt putt :P similar to mine only mine goes putt ;)

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 15, 2012

Grrrrrrrr... my cruiser would have eaten your scooter for breaky Godders

Paul Anslow: Jan 14, 2012

A very nice part of the world. :-)

Slinky: Jan 15, 2012

When are you coming home? Do you need picking up?

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 15, 2012

Slinky he will be home Wednesday in the evening :(he will need a lift and probably a warm jacket... he is gonna freeze

Samantha O'Brien: Jan 15, 2012

This will definitely make the list of places to go when I come to visit.....lovely and the dragons are fabulous!

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 15, 2012

So much to see and do Sami... 9 weeks wasn't long enough :(



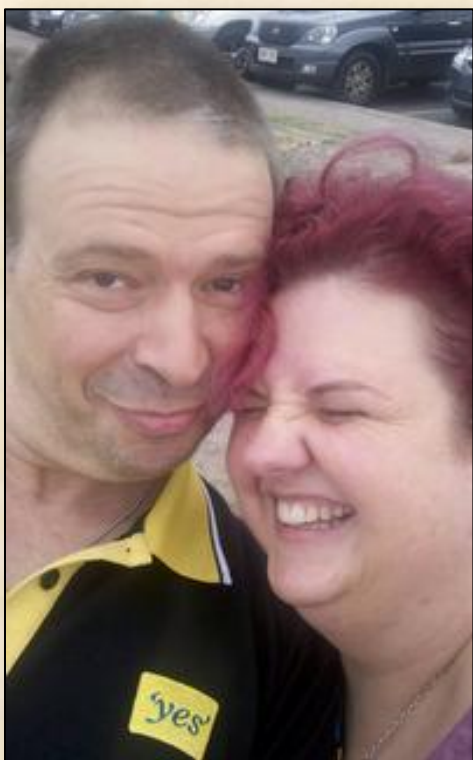
Madame Dragonfly?

Sunday, 15 January 2012

Roll Call

Although this blog is far from over, (with more entries to come) this may well be the last entry to be made from over here in Australia (It might be nice if I spent my last day with Jodes). So with that in mind, I thought it might be a

good time to issue a roll-call to bring all the people together that have been a part of this amazing adventure. Every single one has been welcoming, warm and friendly and have happily accepted this wandering troublesome pom into their open arms.



There were people from out of Jodie's work place, the guys over at Optus including...

Paul Godwin (Godders), Paul Adams and even the cleaning lady Kim, who sort of adopted me in my early days of aimlessly sitting around the Optus Canteen generally being a security threat.

And then there would be all the vollies in the emergency services brigade...

This includes the SES, EMQ, QRFS, QFRS, QAS etc and includes: Paul Godwin (SES (again)), Paul Adams (Adult Leader Cadets (again)), Terry Chapman (Logan SES, Deputy Controller), Jim Ferguson (Logan SES Local Controller), Patricia Whitehead (Youth Development Officer, Emergency Services Cadets, EMQ), the Mayor of Logan Pam Parker, Sharon Squires (SES and Adult Leader with Cadets), Sonia Paterson (Adult Leader with Cadets), Karen Guy (deputy cadet coordinator SES).

Next there would be the paid emergency services guys...

Teressa Hartwell (QAS Queensland Ambulance Service), Billy Bob Wombat (Ned Kelly) (QFRS), Paul Womersley (QFRS), Windy (you'll know why when you meet her) and her hubby Gary Nash, and Mark Hessling (all Rural Fire).

And some of the cadets...

Sami, Jonte, Dan, Dylan and Tara (with new born kitten Trevor), along with Garth, Daniel, Jake, and Katie.

And then we have Jodie's Friends...

There was that awfully nice lady (and good for a laugh) Cath Slater in Newcastle and Billy Bob Wombat (too close for comfort) both initially from over on Google.

And Ronnie and Sue over in Sydney,

Fenessa, Simon and kids, over in Kurnell,

Tracy and Geoff Hamilton (both ambos in NSW) in Barden Ridge

Mel (teacher) and her boys in Leumeah

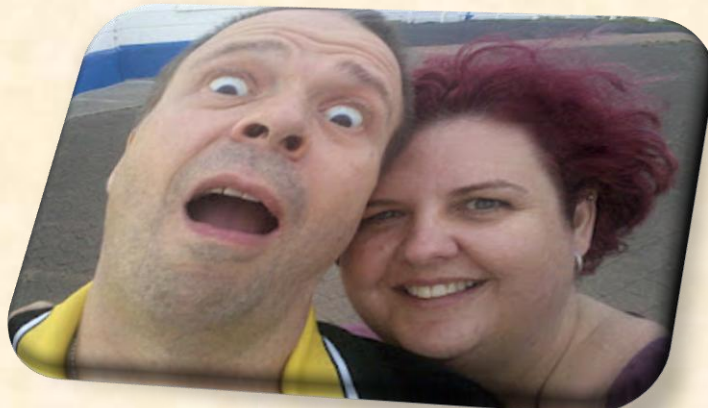
Leanne in Mossvale

Rell and David in Kingston

Dan and Alex Rielly at Tamborine

Kat Lloyd and Sharon Pearson

and finally there were Jodie and Christie over at Ormeau (involved in exorcising my body (a long and painful story)).



Damn that's some grip she has there...

Then of course there are family...

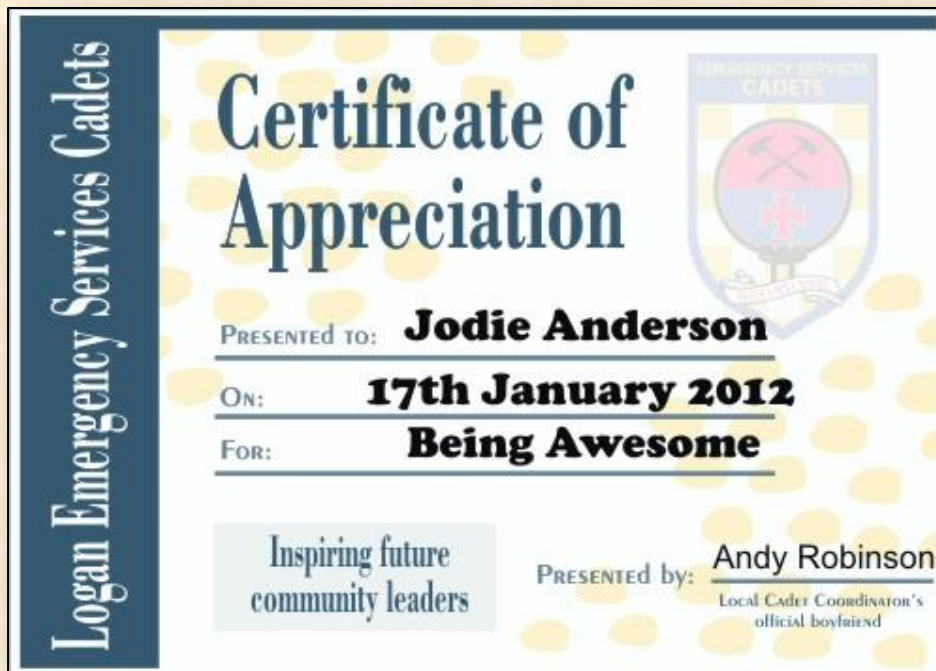
Barry and Jongdee Grant over in Sydney, Clifford and Helen Wells in Bundaberg over on Jodie's side. And I best include daughter Madison and housemate Terry into that mix. And then there's Dawn and Josh, Gaz and Caz, Debbie and Steve (Slinky) on my side (get ready to take me back guys) over in the sub zero temperatures of deepest darkest England.

And while I'm at it...

I'd best add all the followers into the mix too. You have all been "special" (windows to lick on request) and have added considerably to the whole experience and I thank you for that, even if it meant hours and hours of typing to keep you all amused. Family, friends, and internet snoopers all, you did us both proud.

And then finally...

There is the one and only Jodie "it's not a fucken putt-putt" Dragonfly who has throughout this whole experience, continually proven herself to be exceptional in everything she says and does.



Of course it takes a special kind of person to bring out the best in someone, and credit where it is due, that was my job and I did it well. But with Jodie it was never really considered a job and nor did it ever feel to be so. We just gelled instantly. Everything from day one just felt right, there were no awkward silences, nothing felt strained (maybe a few farts excluded), we knew what we were both thinking and it even got to the stage where we were finishing off each other's sentences (not prison) although it never got to the stage where she would have to finish off my meals like I often did hers (thanks for the extra ten pounds).



Jodie has made this whole holiday for me. She was the one who did all the local planning, instinctively knew where we should go, constantly looked out for places of interest, gave me the time needed to show you guys what we were up to etc, and she did it all without a single word of complaint and a lot of the time with a huge welcoming smile on her face. Single handedly, she has shown Australia to be one of the most beautiful places in the world and has won places in my heart for both her and the country. She is truly awesome.

And... although we both went into this looking for as much fun as possible and have indeed done so, there still comes a time when all good things must come

to an end and our impending separation now comes to the fore. I for one don't want to leave her and worry about how this little human dynamo will cope in my absence. And it is with that in mind, that I would like to rally all you guys up to take over from me in keeping her happy now as I leave to board the plane back to the icy plains of maybe a not so Great Britain.

Keep her busy and occupied for me guys, because while not being high maintenance (far far from it), she will still take a lot of encouragement to

maintain that wide and shining smile of hers. And it's time for us all to give back to the woman now, who constantly gives her all for others.

Oh and the hat sends his love too xxxx

Tiniest Violin: Jan 15, 2012

Piss off back home ya pommie bastard and by the way I have had you put on the do not fly list without a thorough cavity search from officer Cyril Sweetypie

Andy Robinson: Jan 15, 2012

Oh god not that gay beagle pup again

Andy Robinson: Jan 15, 2012

And just for the record... Tiniest Violin happens to be another Aussie firey.

Goddess: Jan 16, 2012

Another?!?!?

Hope you have a great last day Andy, certainly was a pleasure to meet you, even if got to see you in passing a few times...

Good to see you got photos of Jodie, coz she doesn't like to be photographed ;)

Have a safe flight home to blighty and who knows what the future holds...keep pimping (the homes).

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 19, 2012

I just saw the title under the picture of Trevor :)

I am still devising a plan (cunning even) to see how I can sneak him out with me next time I visit. I wonder how the "not budgies" will cope with a kitten in the house...

Monday, 30 January 2012

What's happening?

Ok it's been a while and I know I have been rather slack in updating this since my return to bleakest, deepest, darkest, ice laden Rossendale but it takes time to get back into the gist of things when you've been away for as long as I have and you now have problems dealing with the cold.

For instance, there's been a lot of news that needs to be properly addressed in order to more smoothly integrate back into polite society while knowing what's been happening within one's surroundings. And while I have been away, there have been a few items of particular note that have occurred in my absence, things I will now attempt to fully relate to you my lovely (if not a little needy) readers...

First off, a Rossendale GP (that means doctor) claims to have stumbled upon a simple 'wonder cure' for most common ailments...

Doctor Hansneed Warming takes up the story for us:

"I'd been out shopping with my good lady wife, and got home feeling absolutely terrible. My head was throbbing, my back was aching, chills were racing throughout my body and my corns were giving me severe troubles. But not long after a nice hot cuppa and a relaxing sit down, my symptoms had completely disappeared. And that got me to thinking..."

Most patients since then have responded extremely well to his treatments of 'a nice cuppa and a sit down'. And unlike the many expensive drug therapies available out there today, none of them exhibited any evidence of any adverse side effects or allergies whatsoever. Apart of course from the appendix patient that is. But he simply got whisked off to hospital before the



good doctor could get the kettle on. So the preliminary results so far, are seen to be most encouraging.

And then there was the news that the government has made plans to put 50 odd trillion Nectar Points into the ailing British economy to help boost an early recovery...

In an announcement earlier this week, which will delight shoppers and the city alike, the fourteen figure number of Nectar Points and Tesco Club Card vouchers will be released into the economy to help boost consumer spending. Eight billion Air Miles will also be created, enough to send a family of four on a retreat to Saturn and back (terms and conditions apply). Boots the Chemist Advantage Card holders will also be getting a free nail care kit each, and in a surprise move, Green Shield Stamps (which met their demise in 1983) will become re-valid until the end of the year.



The Nectar Points deal alone will be worth the value of a 200 gram box of unbranded cornflakes to every man, woman and child in the South while Northerners will each receive a tin of mushy peas. And Air Mile collectors with more than 10,000 miles will, as a result also be entitled to a free packet of cheesy biscuits on selected flights (subject to status). Meanwhile

Tesco will be rewarding Nescafe coffee (300 gram jars only) purchasers/drinkers with free Hob Nob biscuits in order to help streamline the terrible wastage in people leaving behind awful designer coffee shop coffees because they taste like shit with a crust on (for Jodie the convert that one).

And in a further attempt to ease the cost of these new 'quantitative easing' initiatives, the government has also made plans to email .pdf files of three twenty pound notes to every household in Doncaster. The catch... They have to print their own money, thereby lessening the financial burden on the royal mint.

The government now urges the public that with the latest glut of loyalty scheme points and vouchers now shown to be in circulation, there's never really been a better time to go out and buy a full colour printer, papers of different variety and perhaps stockpile a few extortionately priced ink cartridges.

Next there are fears that a Rawtenstall woman has sparked off a new pandemic...

Thirty six year old Mrs Beau Nidle, was suspected of contracting a new strain of the common cold. Complaining of a sore throat and feeling 'a bit bunged



up', instead of just struggling on regardless, she announced she was going to take the day off work and endlessly complain about how ill she was to her partner. It was at this point that government scientists confirmed she was obviously suffering from that old anathema, Man Flu.

"I've struggled through colds before and in many ways it feels almost the same" said Mrs Nidle, "but since I learned it was

Man Flu, I've struggled to do anything more strenuous than watching Match of the Day and re-runs of Top Gear while crashed out on the couch".

Scientists now claim that a rare mutation has caused the Man Flu virus to spread to women and although the police have cordoned off the area of this outbreak, experts say there is a real fear for it to reach Pandemic proportions and the subsequent infecting of millions of women across the country will follow.

When asked to comment, her husband said, "Her symptoms are quite similar to what I had a few weeks ago, although when I had it, it was obviously much much worse. Maybe she just needed 'a nice cuppa and a sit down'".

In other news, Lancashire police confirmed that a man was stopped for a random breathalyser test...

"The test was proved negative," explained officer Dibble from the Ribble, "However just as I was sending the chap on his way I spotted a Fine Young Cannibals CD hanging out of his glove box. Naturally, being a fellow fan, I asked him if I could 'friend him on facebook'. It was then that he confessed he didn't have an account preferring instead to use Google+."

A case was swiftly put together and the man taken to court for breaking new social media laws introduced in early December 2011. But the case was soon dismissed when the judge presiding was heard to ask, "Forgive me, but... What the fuck is facebook?"

Internationally it has been announced that NASA has engaged in finding a clone planet to that of the earth...

That's right; NASA has been charged by the American government with the task of finding a clone of the earth or any other earth-like planets. This is being done urgently now, purely on the off chance they can ask said planet for a capitol injecting sub if they ever find one. The cash strapped nation needing any form of lifeline these days, has finally shown itself to be desperately clutching at straws. And at the same time, President Barack O'bama was recently seen at a cemetery laying flowers on a grave. As he was standing there he noticed four coffin bearers walking about with a coffin. 3 hours later they were still walking about with it. Oh my God he thought, these guys are like me, they've completely lost the plot.



And finally the government has today issued emergency flat caps to every man in England...

More than 40 million flat caps will be brought out of government storage for delivery to almost every man in Britain by the end of 2012, the Prime Minister David Cameron revealed today.



The emergency headgear will form a large part of the government's multi-billion pound investment programme aimed at getting Britain's economy moving again and raising the gloom of recession. It is the first time the standard issue peaked cloth cap has been deployed in the UK in more than 60 years.

"We have not taken this decision lightly," said Mr Cameron outside number 10, "but desperate times call for desperate measures. The flat cap imbues a man with a sense of responsibility and drive. It makes him strive for better things. All this, while keeping his head warm in winter too."

The government issue emergency flat cap was first deployed during the great depression of the 1930's and well proved its worth both then and later on at the end of World War II. It was only the subsequent resurgence of the economy during the sixties that saw a recall of all flat caps for storage until another major crisis of the economy would occur.

The first batch of 25 million or so flat caps will be dropped by helicopter over northern cities like Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool up to and including Glasgow whereas in parts of London and the south east, traditional emergency protocol will dictate the wearing of more formal top hats along with silver topped canes...



I'm not sure how the lead of this blog, 'the hat' is going to take that one.

But the big news of course...

Is that I am finally back in writing mode again and the blog will continue henceforth. There is still much to be said with many more pics to add so I suppose I had really just knuckle down and get on with it. Especially as Jodie (Madame Dragonfly to you guys), has forever been reminding, no, telling me, forever on my case (delete as appropriate) that you guys are desperately in need of some form of closure.

Dragonfly emerging: Jan 30, 2012

Well you left them hanging at the airport. They didn't know if you had made it home alive, or whether you had been mugged again, much easier ways to get out of an unhealthy relationship btw, there was concern for your well being. I think others wanted to know if you made it out of here alive :)

Love you Mr Gorgeous and I am glad you are back writing

Samantha O'Brien: Jan 30, 2012

I am so glad I don't live there because none of that stuff made sense or sounded appealing... LOL



Welcome to Rawtenstall

Monday, 6 February 2012

A Cliff Hanger Ending....

Having been stranded at home now in bleakest, dreariest England for three weeks, without internet access I might add, I confess I have struggled to keep up with this blog somewhat.

The last entry I did was made over at my sister's gaff and while it bore no real relation to the matter in hand, it was a somewhat feeble (ok very feeble judging by the comments) attempt to help keep it running while waiting for a more fuller access to it to help move it better along. And then the snows came along with twelve inches in a single night and even that icy and hell under foot avenue was now being somewhat shut down to me.



I still had many things left to write about you see, like how absolutely awful it felt having to return to the UK without the woman I had so easily fallen head over heels in love with. There were to be pictures of Dubai and what I can only presume to be the Swiss Alps as I flew over them on my way back to be alone once more in my homeland. And even though the views from the plane were somewhat spectacular to say the least, it all fell into insignificance as I struggled to hold back the bittersweet tears in having to part from the woman of my dreams. Home was no longer to be old Blighty to me, home was where the heart was and that was way back in Brisbane.



Next I wanted to illustrate (this time with the help of Madi in photographs taken by Jodie in my absence) how forward thinking the Australian powers that be were in providing outdoor gym equipment and catering facilities on many of their public areas. It seems it is a way of life out there completely unmatched in many other areas of the world and it is quite refreshing to be able to live your life without the need for those dreaded recurring monthly gymnasium membership fees to worry about. And to trek out to the beach and have barbecue facilities at the ready would be simply unheard of in not so good old Blighty.



Don't mess with this one...

Ok, so personal trainers might be a little thin off the ground, but be you so inclined (which I might have been if I hadn't put on so much weight in so little time while there), there is the means for all to go find the body beautiful at no additional cost.

Add that to the inordinate amount of walking you can easily do and the added bonus of numerous beaches for exploring, boating, surfing, water skiing and even the odd touch of swimming at, it all adds up to a much healthier way of life and that can't be a bad thing if it means having more time alive to go out and fully enjoy the place.



Boats, boats, boats, boats

And while on the subject of water, another entry would have been about the massive amount of boats there are there. Boats of all shapes and sizes from canoes; to full on rowing boats (lifeguard material); to SES rescue boats; to tow along power boats; to full on ocean going cruise boats. Hell there's even the dreaded Noah's Ark boats or very similar to be found there. And as if it wasn't already bad enough looking at some of the larger more affluent houses we came across, it was a double whammy to see some of the boats if not shipping (some of them were really that big) moored alongside said houses, some of which probably cost as much as a four bed-roomed house again to boot.



Who beached this whale?

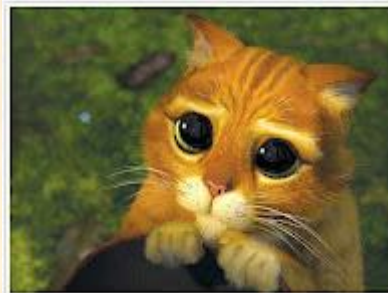
Another entry I wanted to make was to be about the Australian's ready acceptance of what can best be described as what is viewed in the UK as seemingly 'unworthy' complimentary medicines, which included various forms of massage therapies (without the happy ending I might add).

And for the benefit of the people who have known me long enough, you will already know that I have been suffering from a long time shoulder injury. And at Jodie's insistence, I was 'encouraged (she grrr-ed at me a lot)' to have a shot at what was termed 'Bowen Therapy'.

And while not entirely convinced, I went into it with a completely open mind, did the treatment, used the oils and bugger me it actually worked. After nearly three years of an immobile right arm, just two sessions with Wendy a registered therapist and a couple more with Jodhi, a friend of my Jodie's practicing for her qualifications, I can happily report that my arm is now as good as new.

But more than any of these prior 'would be' posts, I wanted to take the opportunity to publicly re-announce to the world my true feelings for that magical dynamo of a woman, Jodie (Madame Dragonfly) Anderson who had from day one welcomed me into her homeland, fed and watered me, clothed me and showed me around while inadvertently becoming a real life soul mate and best ever life-long friend.

I love you so much my darling Jodie, you mean everything that is dear to me now and I will be coming back for you as soon as is humanly possible. And when I do return hopefully in or around June of this year sometime, I will, with hat in hand and on bended knee refer you to the more than apt markings on your work shirts as I ask, plead or even beg you to consider...



Making the '**me**' a '**we**' as you '**opt**' for '**us**'

(Optus – ok that bit could have been a little better)...

To have our '**networks united**'...



And hopefully say '**yes**' to being my **wife and the love of my life** in the not too distant future, and for the rest of our days.

What I'm trying to say Jodie dragonfly, love of my life, my heart's desire, my whole reason for living as of the start of this blog (November 15th onwards) blah blah, in my (not so) best creative guise (needs more work I guess), is...

Will you please, please consider marrying me and being my bride in wedded bliss on my hasty return? Because it seems you were simply made for me. I have never before in my life met anyone who so easily ticked all the boxes and I for one could not hope to meet anyone better nor indeed spend the rest of my life with anyone more suited to me as you so often proved yourself to be.



I love you so much now my darling and best ever friend Jodie, and would consider it a great great privilege to spend the rest of my life being just a fraction as happy as we have been throughout this whole episode of our lives together. What say you make this the happiest blog of all time? And me the happiest man alive?

Anonymous: Feb 06, 2012 (Sweet Star)

Congrats my sister and Andy. I must say you should find a way to communicate a bit better when lines are down. Your bride to be needs to know your well. She loves you so much. I love you Jodie and i am so glad you found your one. Hugs and love Your sister.

Dragonfly emerging: Feb 06, 2012

Is this where I get to make demands?

Anonymous: Feb 07, 2012

I think after the last week you can make whatever you wish don't you agree? I am truly glad it is all back to normal. Now back to the normal program. I think also just tie him up and tell him he can't get free.

Dragonfly emerging: Feb 07, 2012

Well there is that... hand cuffs are harder to get out of... :)

Dragonfly emerging: Feb 06, 2012

Or is that a hostage situation...

Godders: Feb 07, 2012

aye aye - look at this then...

awww how sweet...

Dragonfly emerging: Feb 07, 2012

Shhhhh... at work... shhhhh....

Dragonfly emerging: Feb 07, 2012

Ummmm... I did make it clear that I said yes didn't I?

I love you Andy, the only possible answer was yes I will marry you...



Anonymous: Feb 08, 2012 (Sonya)

Well what can I say.....Andy I haven't even met you but I know you make my big sis very happy, so it makes the little sis smile.:) Congratulations to you both!

p.s I know where you live so be good to each other. Lol

Samantha O'Brien: Feb 08, 2012

Oh Damn....now when I come visit I am going to have to hang out with the Brit too.....I will make sure I have hook in hand (not the Capt Hook thing) just in case he gets out of line.....

And as for you Missy (yes that would be Jodie)....I have to see this on Facebook and not hear it from you...I see how I rate....LOL

Dragonfly emerging: Feb 09, 2012

Facebook? Who put this on facebook? I don't have facebook...

Anonymous: Feb 11, 2012

OMG !!!!! JODIEWe are so happy for you !!!! I was searching trying to find a current email address for you, when I came across this blog. I'm so glad I found you and so very happy for you both. Congratulations to you both !! Jodie you look SO HAPPY in these photo's I'm really glad you have found "HIM" (Andy).

PS. Love to Maddi

Would love to catch up via email or skype.

Lots of Love

Julie, Paul, Morgan and Eva

Xxxxxxxx

Dragonfly emerging: Feb 12, 2012

Holy crap!!! Aren't you guys still in Japan?

Damn girl I haven't heard from you in ages!!!

Anonymous: Feb 11, 2012

Congratulations you crazy kids! Be good to our special Dragonfly Andy, we think a lot of her.

Dragonfly emerging: Feb 12, 2012

Aaaawwww... thank you

A huge thanks to...

BLOG MEMBERS

Sonia Jane Chambermason
Paul Anslow
James Overheul
Paul Godwin
Phillip Ressler
Don Novotny (Huskerheavy)

Samantha O'Brien
Stephen Dickson
Katy Jean
Jodie Dragonfly
Stephen Graham

BLOG TOP MEMBERS

Jodie Dragonfly
Paul Godwin
Don Novotny

Stephen Graham
Sonia Jane Chamber mason

POST PLUSSERS

Andy Robinson
David Southward
Brenda Curtis
Stephen Dixon
Cath Slater
James Overheul

Jodie Dragonfly
Katy Jean
Stephanie Wanamaker
Mike Sharman
Mark Richards
Anonymous x 3

POST COMMENTERS

Jodie Dragonfly
Paul Godwin (Godders)
Excalitez (Neil Lobo)
Staci Finch Thompson
Katy Jean
Stephen Graham (slinky)
Sharon Pearson
Anonymous (Sonya Jodie's sister)
Anonymous (Unknown)

Stephen Dickson
Mike Sharman (Tiniest Violin)
Cath Slater
Samantha O'Brien
Paul Anslow
Doug Thompson
Anonymous (Sweet Star)
Anonymous (Julie & Co)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTERS FROM GOOGLE+

Billy Bob Wombat,
Inny Craw,
Steve Pirk,
Rick Calkins Jnr,
Jerri Kelly,
Jane deBond,
Gilberto Ronquillo,
Tony C,

Luke Carey,
Jenn Cameron,
Michellean Rose,
Connie Thornley,
Jo Jones,
Tom Moncho,
Peter Dubowski,
Don Novotny.



<http://ozmanbrit.blogspot.com>

Epilogue

Well the question was popped and the reception was favourable to say the least with a quite resounding YES in response.



Mmmm, there seems to be a theme going on here.
I wonder if they ('yes' Optus) would like to sponsor the wedding?

But we weren't out of the woods quite yet. For starters, it was one thing to be man and wife but there were others to be taken into consideration. And by others I meant Jodie's daughter Madi. We needed to know she was to be ok with what we were up to and the best and only way to find out was to actually sit down and ask her.

Being as I was back in England, the only option available was through Skype and that's how we did it. The conversation went something like this...

Me: *I love your mother very much Madi and would like for us to get married and want to know if you would have any objections to it.*

Madi: *What does objections mean?*

Me (being as thick as I am too): *Help me out Jodie.*

Jodie: *Do you know of any reason why we shouldn't get married?*

Madi: *Can I be there this time? Will it be in England?*

Jodie and I: *No it will be in Australia and of course you can be there.*

Madi: *Yes you can do it. Can't talk now, I'm in the middle of washing my horses (toy ones).*

And then the conversation sort of broke down into general chatter about anything but the wedding plans for another half hour. But a yes is a yes and so at some time in the not so distant future, we are to be married and be able to grow old disgracefully together. **YAY!!**

Since that day on, there have been many hours on Google+ and Skype doing the sort of things that (maybe not so young) lovers do. Rings have already been chosen and we have even picked a venue for the big day.

Without any prompting from each other, we knew instantly where we wanted the big event to happen. It was a place we had already been to on our wild travels across the eastern side of this vast continent that must have spoken to us instantaneously. It was a small but welcoming hut affair that overlooked the beach over at Kirra that was first mentioned in the post titled **AIRPORTS.**



From that angle you might all be thinking WTF? But once you actually stand inside the place you can see how it magically transforms into something quite special. And like I said, we both seemed to know at the same time that it would be perfect for the job.



Do you Jodie and Andy take this hut to be your wedding venue? **We Do**

Of course it's not going to be as simple as all that, and we have a lot of hard work ahead of us to make this all happen. First off, I have to be in a position to actually get back there. There are visas to sort, belongings to ship over and residency to be arranged which will all take time. But we are both committed and very determined to make it all happen. How could we possibly not be?

It is also going to mean a lot of time apart in the earlier stages too and to that end we have bitten the bullet and accepted a life on the internet and

telephone lines while we strive for our ultimate goal of being together on a more full time basis.

And that my friends, is where we are up to right now and where this particular chapter of our lives must end. It's been an amazing adventure and one that I would happily do all over again and I have to say that without Jodie it most certainly would not have been the same. I love this woman to pieces. She alone, made this whole experience the dream it turned out to be.





OZMANBRIT – Jodie & Andy 2011 - 2012



**Because life's journey is not to arrive at the grave
safely in a well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways,
totally worn out, shouting...**

"Holy Shit... What a ride that was!!!"

