

A winter outing to the west paddock - June/July 2007

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PART 1 - Sydney to Perth

Prologue

Early in 2007 I received a call from Col inviting me on a trip he was going to make in June/July across to the west coast of Australia. As this was unexplored territory for me, I jumped at the opportunity. The ensuing months saw us do plenty of planning and an itinerary was developed covering some 15,000KM of our great continent.

Sydney across to Port Augusta and down the Eyre Peninsular. Then across the Nullabour and down to Cape Arid. Across through Esperance and down to Albany. Up through Perth to Exmouth then across to Tom Price. Back across to Karrartha and up to Broome. Across to Halls creek and down the Tanami to the Alice, then home via the Plenty and Donohue Highways.

My brother Gordon was interested in the trip to Perth with a view to the traveling outback and to play a couple of games of golf. He then planned to fly back to Sydney.

Col's mate Allan was to join us in Perth after shipping his vehicle across to Perth from Adelaide by train and whilst we were in Perth complete a round trip to Kalgoolie and back.

My preparations included replacing the existing storage system with a drawer system made by ORS as I found the plastic joints of the existing DIY system were not up to the corrugated roads of a Cape York trip the previous year.

My vehicle was a TD100 Series Landcruiser. Col was driving a 105 Series Landcruiser Diesel with an after market turbo and Allan was driving a new Hilux Ute.

Sydney to Nyngan - Fri 8th June

I left Sydney early Friday morning with Gordon. Col and Robyn traveled separately to us and we met them at Nyngan. I headed over the mountains through Katoomba for Parkes where Gordon was interested in looking at the location for a proposed NSW rail transport hub. We were lucky to choose this route as the weather in Sydney was deteriorating rapidly and a tree had come down across the Bells Line of Road. This was the route that I had originally planned to take.



A nice lunch at the Parkes Leagues Club saw us on our way with a detour via the "Dish" for a gander.

The weather was overcast and wet and many of the dirt roads were being closed around us, so we stuck to the blacktop.

It was good to see that the area was nice and green with new shooting wheat. This additional follow up rain would most likely see a good winter crop.

An uneventful trip found us in Nyngan where we fueled up. The Bogan River was running a banker due to the recent good rain and the billabong behind the caravan park was full. Col and Robyn were already in residence in one of the cabins at the Riverside Caravan Park that Robyn had booked prior to us leaving Sydney. Booking cabins in advance was well planned as the weather was foul.

Nyngan to Broken Hill - Sat 9th June

We all departed Nyngan early and headed for Cobar. On the way out of the caravan park I almost skittled a pet Joey which had decided to run out in front of the vehicle. It slipped over before quickly bounding away.

At Cobar we enjoyed morning tea at a roadside stop near the entrance to the town where there is a large town sign on a mine tailings wall.



As we had all looked around Cobar on previous visits it was on to Willcania for lunch which we made up from our own supplies. Luckily there was a break in the weather and we had a peaceful lunch on

the banks of the mighty Darling. Due to the drought it was only a skeleton of its normal flow with water in a few dirty smelly waterholes.

Leaving Willcania we headed for Broken Hill and arrived mid afternoon. After booking into the cabins at Lakeview Caravan Park, Robyn suggested Gordon and I have a look at the sculptures just out of town whilst they looked around town. A short drive out of town to the area where the



sculptures were located and a lengthy walk to the top of the hill was the exercise for the day. There are some 10-15 sculptures on the top of the hill weighing as much as 8 tons. The stone had been transported to this location and the sculptures completed on site by various sculptors some years before.

Returning to town I dropped Gordon off at the Musicians Club, which had an Internet Café, to check his emails and I then drove up to the lookout above Broken Hill taking in the 360 degree panorama of the town.

Broken Hill to Whyalla - Sun 10th June

Another early start on this leg found us heading for Peterborough and much to our relief we left the wet weather behind for a while. We stopped for morning tea along the way and had lunch at Wilmington purchased at a local store.

Col and Robyn completed half the heritage walk which consisted of walking up and down the main street. The owner of the toy museum had a large collection of Landrover's in his yard in various stages of disrepair.

Leaving Willmington we headed for Horrock's Pass and the steep decent into Port Augusta where we refueled and took on some extra supplies. An uneventful journey down the Eyre Peninsular found us in Whyalla early afternoon where Gordon decided to have a game golf at the local golf course to keep his eye in.

At the Tourist Centre, Colin and Robyn and I took a tour of the navy ship "Whyalla" which had cost the local council \$5,000 to purchase, from the navy, and \$500,000 to move it to its present location on dry land.



Whilst Gordon was playing golf the rest of us booked into the Hill View Caravan Park and were pleasantly surprised at the quality of the accommodation. This was in the style of a motel room and the units had two separate bedrooms although they did charge motel prices. This was the only accommodation we could find at the time we booked due to the long weekend.

I phoned Andrew (AJ) from the Overlander forum and arranged to meet him at the caravan park later in the evening.

Whilst Colin and Robyn went to have a Chinese feed I returned to the golf course to pick up Gordon and while waiting for him to finish his round of golf had a pleasant chat to one of the locals. John had been a resident of some 52 years and gave me a good rundown on the town.

Andrew showed up in his shiny red Holden HSV Clubsport and with Colin and Robyn joined Gordon and I for a couple of refreshments and a chat. It seems South Australia and particularly towns associated with the mining boom like Whyalla will do very well for a few years to come.

Whyalla to Pt Lincoln - Mon 11th June

The usual start for the reasonably short run down to Port Lincoln found us at Tumbly Bay for lunch after a quick stop for morning tea along the way. Whilst Colin and Robyn made lunch Gordon and I had a seafood feed. We were not impressed at the cost of the box of food for the amount in it.

Leaving Tumbly bay we passed through a heavy rain band which cleared as we approached Port Lincoln.

Arriving in Port Lincoln early afternoon and after a quick stop at the information centre to obtain a key for Mystery Bay we completed a quick tour of the town and headed for Lincoln National Park.



We checked a couple of spots for a camp site and found most too exposed to the wind finally settling on one on a lee headland facing inland and overlooking a crescent shaped beach. There were a couple of caravans already in residence and we had trouble finding a spot where we could get our tent pegs into the ground.

I tried my luck at fishing with a lure and only had one strike in an hour, so gave it away without catching anything.

After dinner everyone adjourned to the camp fire which Col ignited using a bag of heat beads and fire lighters. After a few refreshments we retired for the night.

Pt Lincoln to Coffin Bay - Tues 12th June

Breaking camp early we headed for Mystery Bay which was a 100km round trip to the bottom of the national park. This place would have been nice in summer but in winter we found it nothing really special.

We traveled back to Port Lincoln where we dropped off the key for Mystery Bay and then had lunch in the park overlooking the port.

It was only a short trip to Coffin Bay National Park so we arrived in good time to purchase some firewood and bait at the General Store. We headed for a camp site at Black Springs along a sandy 4WD track.

I led and we aired down after coming to some soft sand, reaching a point where there were two tracks, one straight ahead with a water crossing and the other a bypass. As there were wheel tracks straight ahead I tried this route first and got the surprise of my life when I suddenly dropped into a deep hole with the water briefly coming over the top of my bonnet. If this didn't test the fix to the problem I had on the previous years Cape York trip, where the fan blade ripped into the radiator core, nothing would. Col used the bypass and after I checked my radiator for any damage and finding none it was on to the camp site.

We found one other couple in residence at this site which was adjacent to a small sandy beach.

After setting up camp Gordon tried his luck with the fishing gear and had a single bite but no fish. After dinner we adjourned to the fire for refreshments.



Whilst at the fire the seat of my camp chair started to tear so I used some cable ties to try and repair it. This was not successful and just before we retired for the night the seat of the chair broke along the seam and I ended up sprawled on my backside on the ground.

Coffin Bay to Ceduna - Wed 13th June

On arising I tried my luck with the fishing gear and was only able to land a small King George whiting which I returned to its natural habitat. We broke camp and left Coffin Bay heading for Ceduna.



On the way we called in at Point Labatt and looked down on the sea lions sunning themselves on the rocky outcrop below us. Continuing on we stopped for lunch at Port Kenny and it was then on to Ceduna where we had booked cabins in town.

Whilst Gordon went to an Internet Café to check his emails I fuelled up and bought some fresh King George Whiting to cook for dinner.

I watched the spectacular sunset over the Ceduna pier and then adjourned to our cabin for dinner.



Gordon did a sterling job with the King George Whiting on the stove whilst Col and Robyn had purchased cooked fish and chips. They were rather disappointed with their feed.

Following dinner the State of Origin was on and we relaxed in front of the TV. The TV reception was pretty abysmal and watching the match was like an action replay with only one frame in five coming through. The sound was fine so at least we knew what was happening in real time.

Ceduna to Caiguna - Thu 14th June

A very early start was in order for this long 800km haul to Caiguna. On the way we were surprised to see wheat this far west however it soon gave way to scrub and the treeless plain of the Nullabour.



We stopped of at the Head of Bight where we found a well set up visitors centre run by the locals. Walking out to the lookout we were rewarded with the

sight of a Southern Right Whale frolicking just under the cliff face.

Another two whales were headed our way but we needed to move on to get to our next destination at a reasonable hour. We arrived just on sunset for the pre booked accommodation at the Caiguna Roadhouse Motel. After a nice dinner and refreshments at the roadhouse we retired for the night.

Caiguna to Isralite Bay - Fri 15th June

Another early start and a quick journey along Australia's longest straight stretch of road found us at the Balladonia Roadhouse where we had morning tea and fuelled up at \$1.68 a litre, the most expensive fuel to date.

We turned off the main road down the Balladonia Track and were disappointed to see a road closed sign. I returned to the roadhouse and was relieved to find the track was open.

We headed through Cape Arid National Park for Isralite Bay over some 170km of sand and bog holes which slowed us down to 20-30kph. This journey took us some 6 hours.

We stopped for lunch at a nice water hole on the route and also to admire Mt Ragged along the way.



On the way we came across a herd of camels on the road that bolted into the bush on seeing us.

Arriving at Isralite Bay we took some time to find a decent camp site and ended up not far from a fisherman's hut which was deserted when we arrived. Towards evening the sound of a chain saw indicated the owners had returned.

This place we decided was "The Journey" rather than "The Location" due to its remoteness from civilization. Being able to have a fire was also a key part of the decision to stay there as it was outside the national park.

Isralite Bay to Cape Le Grand - Sat 16^h June



We broke camp at a reasonable hour and on the way out of Isralite Bay looked at the ruins of the old telegraph station.

There was no story at the site as to why the telegraph station had been built at this location. This oversight seems to be a traight common to WA historical sites.

Later on in the trip we were lucky to hear one of the locals explaining on ABC radio the reason for its existence.

After another 60km of sand and bog holes and stopping for morning tea we were back on the main road headed for Cape Le Grand National Park. The grandeur of this small national park is awesome and to date and my mind only just behind Wineglass Bay and Cradle Mountain in Tasmania in terms of beauty.



We passed Frenchman's Peak and traveled to Thistle Cove where the panorama is absolutely magnificent.

Checking out the campsites at Lucky Bay and finding them exposed to the weather we moved on to Le Grand beach where we set camp.

The solar showers at the camp site were a bonus and we made good use of them. Whilst around the camp fire Robyn noticed a very tiny native mouse running around the campsite and took great pains to make sure it didn't get into the tent.

Cape Le Grand to Stokes National Park - Sun 17th June

We could have stayed on a week at this location but our next destination was beckoning so it was on to Esperance to top up our supplies and have lunch.

When we arrived it appeared no shops were open but after refueling we found an IGA store and bottle shop that were open. It seems the major shops in WA aren't allowed to open on Sunday however IGA has an exemption.

Lunch was enjoyed in the park overlooking the grain terminal and then it was on to Stokes National Park.

On entering the park we turned right down narrow unmarked sandy track for the 13.5 km journey to the Moir Homestead. We tried to determine why this homestead had been built at this location as it did not seem to be compatible with grazing or cropping. Again there was no information on the reason.

There was a magnificent old fig near the homestead and wild bees had taken up residence in the walls of some of the old ruined buildings. At least they had a sign warning of the danger of swarming bees.



We moved onto Quagie Beach to set up camp where fires were OK. The weather closed in and we endured a downpour before it fined up and we were able to cook dinner on the fire.

Robyn was sure she saw a mouse in the rear of the vehicle and we joked as to whether it was the same one from the previous night.

Stokes National Park to Bremer Bay - Mon 18th June

We awoke to rain squalls, had breakfast, packed up and left. It was still pouring when we had morning tea at Ravensthorpe and we headed down to

Hopetoun and through Fitzgerald National Park. The weather continued its miserable pattern and we stopped at Jerramungerup for lunch.

Booking into the caravan park at Bremer Bay en route we arrived mid afternoon and looked around the Bay. Colin and Robyn tried to dry out their tent and ate at the caravan park whilst Gordon and myself had dinner at the hotel.

Bremer Bay to Walpole - Tues 19th June

We left Bremer Bay early in miserable weather heading back to Point Anne in the national park to see if the whales were in residence. After about 2 hours on a muddy track and grinding through long mud holes with only a third of the journey complete we ran out of time and turned west for Albany. Morning tea was enjoyed at Boxwood Hill where we took shelter in the cafe.

Traveling through Albany we looked at the sights around Frenchman's Bay and had some lunch. We took in the sights from a number of good lookouts in the area and came across an excellent picnic area just before the old whaling station. Gordon walked down to the blowhole but found the swell was not large enough for it to work.



Heading for D'entrecasteaux National Park, dusk caught us and we stopped just east of Walpole in a caravan park. A small fire and a few refreshments kept us warm.

Walpole to Margaret River - Wed 20th June

Breaking camp early we headed to Northcliffe and then onto D'entrecasteaux National Park where we stopped at an old cattlemen's hut for morning tea.



We traveled down to Windy Harbour which has a large number of colourful holiday shacks and it was then on to Pemberton.

Arriving in Augusta we dropped into look at the Cape Leeuwin lighthouse where the Southern Ocean meets the Indian Ocean.

Near this location there is an old encrusted water wheel which is well photographed in magazines.

We were again running out of light and found a good campsite at Chapman Pool just south west of Margaret River. Gordon oversaw a raging fire to keep us warm as overnight it got down below freezing.



Margaret River to Scarborough - Thurs 21st June

Braking camp we headed for Margaret River and then to the river entrance which is closed to the sea. We watched the surfers for a while on a good swell.



Gordon directed us to the Voyager Estate winery, where he had been on a previous occasion. We marveled at the architecturally picturesque buildings the owner had built at great cost to support the winery.

We stopped in at Margaret River again for some morning tea at the bakery and it was then onto Perth.

I headed for Scarborough to the Indian Pacific hotel where Gordon and I had booked in before we left Sydney and Colin headed for Huntington to stay with his son Paul.

Perth Fri 22nd - Mon 25th June

We all amused ourselves in different ways in Perth for 5 days where it rained and blew a gale most of the time.

Gordon had a couple of games of golf at Karrinyup Waters while I took in the sights of Perth including the Maritime Museum at Fremantle. Colin helped his son Paul put in some down lights in his house.

On Friday morning everyone apart from Gordon had a stroll around Kings Park and we were lucky as there was a break in the weather.



On the Sunday we all took a day trip to Rottnest Island which also escaped the wet weather. This trip included a buffet lunch and bus tour of the island and is well worth the time.

Both Colin and I had our cars serviced by Robertson Bros in Bentley on the Monday. We were more than happy with the service finding 2 lollipops each in our cup holders and that they had also washed the vehicles which were filthy. Gordon headed for the airport and home to Sydney