

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

Author and Photography - Richard Windeyer

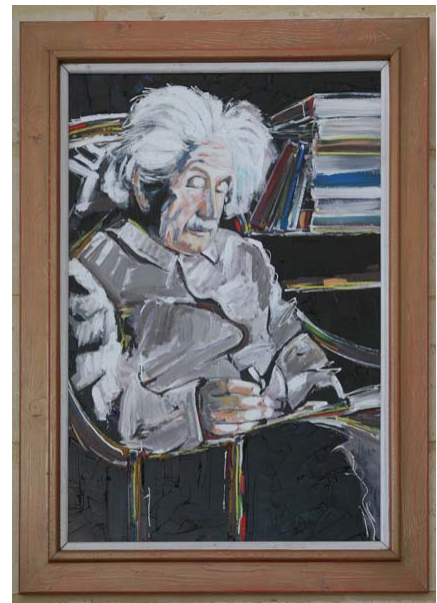
PART 2 - Perth to Sydney

Perth to Leeman - Tues 26th June

We left Perth a little later than usual in fine weather for a change, meeting up out of the city. Allan and Lynne joined us after traveling from Narromine to Adelaide where they put their vehicle on the train to Perth. They completed a small side trip to Kalgoolie and back while we were in Perth.

Stopping off at the Einstein Gravity Centre near Gin Gin we viewed an informative video on the centre and amused ourselves with the many working models of gravity devices.

We continued north stopping for lunch at the Cataby Road House turning off to the coast for the Pinnacles and passing a large windmill farm on the way. There is a 4WD track right along the coast from Lancelin to Cervantes however we didn't have time to do this track. It is supposed to be fairly difficult.



The Pinnacles are an awesome geological formation and a must see if passing through this area. They look like a huge graveyard with thousands of tombstones poking out of the sand.

Heading north we passed through Cervantes and Jurien Bay which would have been a lovely place to

stay however it was too far south of Geraldton which was our destination for this leg.

Allan commented on the huge amount of residential development in these WA coastal towns and we put it down to baby boomers setting up for their retirement.

It was getting late so we started looking for a campsite for the night bypassing Green Head and settling on the caravan park at Leeman. This was a nice quiet spot with good amenities and we were the only campers. The owners weren't around so we spoke to one of the local residents who said we could set up anywhere. He worked one of the Cray boats and offered to sell us fresh Crayfish the next day at a good price however as we were moving on couldn't take up the offer.

Leeman to Kalbarri - Wed 27th June

We awoke to sound of the noisy engines of the Cray boats heading out to sea. The season was ending on the 30th June and they were out get the last of the catch.

Heading for Geraldton we hugged the coast road and stopped at Pt Denison/Dongara for a look around and has some morning tea. Looking out to sea we noticed the reef continued to run right along the coast making navigation for boats difficult.

We ate lunch at Eclestone Pool which is a lovely place to stop and a good remote camping area. The warning about amoebic meningitis if the water was over 24 degrees turned us off a little.



Arriving in Geraldton for lunch Allan stocked up on supplies and we had a look at the HMAS Sydney war memorial. Heading north we turned off for Kallbarri in wild, wet and windy weather stopping off to look at the coastal cliffs on the way in.

Arriving in Kalbarri we decided to book cabins at the Murchison Caravan Park due to the weather and were lucky to find three available. We purchased dinner of local fish and chips from the nearby marina and retired to the Smiths cabin for some refreshments. The temperature outside was starting to become balmy which was much better than the cold we had endured down south.

Kalbarrie to Shark Bay - Thurs 28th June



Leaving Kalbarrie we were not able to drive into the "Loop" and "Z Bend gorges as the road was closed due to the wet weather. A couple of other gorges accessible on the blacktop were brilliant.

It was an uneventful journey to the Overlander Roadhouse where we had lunch and turned left for Shark Bay. We stopped off at Hamelin Pools to view the "Stromatolites" and escaped with an ugly look from the caravan park manageress.

At Shark Bay we set up our tents in the caravan park right on the beach and enjoyed the full moon and a few refreshments. Allan commented on the size of the fish in the laundry fridge so although we didn't have time to drop in a line this evidence and the number of boats around indicated a great place to fish.



We had a few refreshments and invited Lee and Sandra, a couple from Tasmania, for a chat. They had come across to WA via the Great Central and Gunbarrel Highways.

Shark Bay - Fri 29th June



We awoke early to a fine day and headed for Monkey Mia to watch the dolphins being fed, well worth the \$6.50 entry fee. A throng of people lined the shore and one person from the crowd was selected to feed them. About half a dozen dolphins came in for a feed.

We headed for Cape Peron and it started raining "again". The journey out to the cape was uneventful on a sandy track passing through clay pans called "Birridas" on the way.

At the cape there was a flock of hundreds of sea birds on shore as the seas must have been too rough for them to hunt.

We checked out a couple of camp sites for future reference but found them pretty rough and we then headed back to camp where Allan found his swags saturated. He booked a cabin for the night where we all had a few refreshments.

Shark Bay Sat - 30th June

We awoke to a fine day, "Hallelua", broke camp and headed for Steep Point the most westerly point of mainland Australia. Expecting the track to be closed we found it open so we pressed on.

On the long run up to the point on an excellent track we passed a grader driver and gave him a thank you wave. We traveled up and down the sand dunes until we arrived at the ranger station. There we paid the \$22 per vehicle entry fee, a little expensive for a day trip. As this is private property it goes to the property owner.



The fishing along the channel is supposed to be excellent and the number of camps along the foreshore attested to this. We looked at the line of waves breaking on the reef between Dirk Hartog Island and the mainland and made the assumption this was the reason for the good fishing however the currents looked treacherous. We enjoyed lunch at the Point.

We headed back south and late afternoon Col had a puncture so we stopped while he replaced the tyre. Dusk caught us at "Tamala" station where camping was available for \$5.50 a night so we paid our fees picked up the gate key and headed for the beach arriving on nightfall. We set up camp in the dark by the light of the full moon.

Shark Bay to Exmouth - Sun 1st July

We awoke to a sky which was quickly becoming overcast and broke camp in a hurry. It wasn't long before it started to rain and absolutely bucketed down on some sections of this uneventful leg into Exmouth. We stopped off at Coral Bay and were surprised at how large and crowded the caravan park was. Not a place we would stay even if a site was available.

Moving on we arrived at Exmouth late afternoon where we again took cabins. Although it had cleared up as we arrived this was a good call as it again started to bucket down and rained through the night.

I had seafood chowder at the pub restaurant which I reckon is the best I have ever tasted and that includes the wharf in San Francisco. The others cooked dinner in their cabins.

Exmouth - Mon 2nd July



Daybreak welcomed us with a steady drizzle and we got away to a late start for a trip down the west coast of the peninsular to Yardie Creek to check out the gorge. Luckily the rain had stopped for the walk along the clifftop where we gazed down at the small boat taking a few people for a trip through the gorge by water.

We stopped at a few camp spots to check them out for future reference and found them OK but they were all taken. This is a busy spot and you need to get there early to bag one.

Moving on we stopped at Tourquise Bay and put our snorkeling gear to good use on the reef which comes quite close to the mainland at this point. It was raining again so the colour of the coral was rather dull however there were plenty of brightly coloured fish about.

We had a late lunch at the information centre and as it was getting late headed back to camp. We had dinner and I went to the pub again for another seafood chowder feed and then returned to the cabin for a few refreshments with the others.

Allan broached Col's Cunard Port, which had been given to him by his aunt on a cruise, finding it up to expectations.

Exmouth to Tom price - Tues 3rd July

The day dawned fine and sunny and we departed at a reasonable hour heading along the North West Coast Highway. At the Nanutarra Roadhouse, where I paid \$1.71 a litre for fuel, we turned for Tom Price. The others decided to fuel up in Tom Price.

We had an uneventful journey to Tom Price using the dirt road rather than going through Paraburdoo as this saved us quite a few kilometers. Looking around town we booked the Pillbarra Mine tour at the Tourist Information Centre for the following day. Heading back to the caravan park we booked in and set up camp.

Col traveled back to town to pick up Paul who lives in Tom Price and works at one of the mines. He was to join us the next day after work for a few days before flying back home to Perth for the rest of his days off. During happy hour a few of the local inhabitants came in for a feed. Corellas, Pigeons and Galahs amused us with their antics.

Tom Price to Karajini National Park - Wed 4th July



I was up early and surprised a local taking the washing off the line. The others awoke late and after breakfast we headed to town for the mine tour.

The coach arrived at the tourist centre and we headed for the mine. We viewed the separator and pit from lookouts and stopped beside one of the 240 tonne dump trucks marveling at the 3.4m diameter tyres and the vehicle towering above us.

Back to town we loaded some more supplies and headed for Karajini National Park arriving early afternoon. We stayed at the Eco centre as it had solar showers. Whilst the rest of us had a siesta Col headed back to the mine for a personalized tour and to pick up Paul from work.

Karajini National Park - Thurs 5th July

The gorges were beckoning and I lead the group to Dales Gorge and the Circular Pool. Alan, Paul and I climbed down into the gorge leaving the others at the top. A well made track took us into the bowels of the gorge where I had a quick dip whilst the others watched. The water was cool however the waterfall was warm, the water having picked up heat from the rock exposed to the sun.

We worked our way back through Fortesque Falls and the Visitors Centre stopping at Joffre Gorge where we climbed down to the gorge head. Moving on we Headed for Weano Gorge where 4 gorges meet then headed back to camp. This national park is a must see in WA.



Karajini National Park to Tom Price - Fri 6th July



We broke camp and headed back to Tom Price via Hamersley Gorge. Another magnificent gorge with a running stream feeding clear pools greeted us. Well worth the diversion.

After booking back into the caravan park we headed back to Tom Price to top up our supplies before heading to the information centre to view a video on the Pilbara Iron Rail Access Road. We planned to take this road the following day to Millstream Chichester National Park as it is a bit of a shortcut. The use of the road requires a permit which is only granted on viewing the video.

Tom Price to Millstream Chichester National Park - Sat 7th July

Col had to get away fairly early to drop Paul off at Parraburdoo to catch a plane back to Perth for the rest of his days off. The rest of us hung around camp waiting for his return. I tried to book accommodation in Broome for everyone but found that most of the parks would not take bookings for campsites and the best I was able to do was have my name added to the waiting list at one of them.

We were on the road mid morning and headed for the Rail Access Road and turned onto what we thought was the correct road. The track was slow going and not capable of handling the 80kph speed limit that was stated on the permit. Eventually we realized that this was not the correct road and I stopped and walked up the rail line embankment to look over to the other side of the line. What greeted me was the sight of an excellent dirt road well capable of 80kph.

Backtracking we headed down the correct road arriving at Millstream/Chichester National Park around lunch time. Lunch was enjoyed on one of the waterholes and we then went in search of a campsite. The one

Col had stayed on a previous occasion was closed so we moved onto Crossing Pool to find it full, with an officious camper taking ownership of the area.

There were hundreds of Correllas in residence in the trees and bird droppings everywhere so we decided it wasn't worth staying in any case. Moving on we settled on the Stargazers camp area which was fairly open but only had one resident when we arrived.

While the others relaxed I headed for the Millstream Homestead to look around and then to the clifftop lookout gaze down on the river below.



When he returned to camp he found the others had been protecting his campsite as quite a number of other campers had come in and wanted to nab it.

Millstream Chichester National Park to Roebourne - Sun 8th July



After we packed up I led the others back to the homestead to look over this old building. Looking at how the roof was attached we could see it had been designed to withstand cyclones. Taking the homestead walk led us through an area with clear flowing streams, Millstream Palms and large paper barks', much like an oasis.

On the way out we had a look at the magnificent view from the cliff top lookout.

On the uneventful journey to Roebourne we found some colourful Sturt Desert Peas in flower along the route and we also stopped at the Python Pool for morning tea.



Arriving at Roebourne we headed into Point Sampson to look for a campsite but found both caravan parks full. Heading back to Roebourne to the Harding River caravan park we found some vacancies and booked in.

After setting up camp we headed on a trip down to Dampier and Karrartha for a look around. Heading back towards camp we traveled into Cossack, an old abandoned settlement, for a look around before heading back to camp. The town of Cossack is also well worth the detour with its well restored unique stone buildings.

Roebourne to Eighty Mile Beach - Mon 9th July



Prior to heading for Eighty Mile Beach we had a look around the town of Roebourne driving up to lookout above for a great view.

After leaving Roebourne we stopped at Port Headland for some lunch and watched a coal ship being loaded on the other side of the port.

Stopping at the Pardoo roadhouse for afternoon tea I ran into Treckie (Peter) from the ExplorOZ forum who had mentioned on the forum prior to the trip he would be up that way. Arriving at the caravan park we booked in, finding it fairly crowded, but with plenty of spaces still available made the call to stay an extra night as we were ahead of schedule and felt like a layday.

Eighty Mile Beach - Tues 10th July

After seeing the photos of the large threadfin salmon, that weighed between 8 and 30lb, on the walls of the shop the previous night I was up early to rig up a line and try my luck. The bait I used was the remnants of the T Bone steak I had eaten the night before. I assume the fish were not partial to this fare as I came home empty handed again.

Whilst on the beach I spoke to a fellow who had been at this location two weeks and he said he had only caught one fish in that time. It seems the fish were not on the bite which had been the story of the trip to date.



We lazed around for the rest of the day with a few walks along the beach and Robin scouring the shoreline for cowry shells. She came back to camp with a few small ones.

This beach is a shell collector's paradise with a group of professionals awaking early each morning to collect shells newly washed up from the night before. They then spend the rest of the day fashioning the shells into various items for sale.

Allan took a drive along the beach while I tried my luck with the fish again coming up empty handed.

We had been handed leaflets for a performance that evening by a guitarist Jeff McGinn who played both his own songs and some popular covers. A great show however it became quite cold so we adjourned to camp for a nightcap before retiring.

We found this large busy caravan park had a mixture of people using it for overnight and extended stays.

Eighty Mile Beach to Broome - Wed 11th July

An early start was in order to get to Broome early and try to secure some accommodation. An uneventful trip with a stop at a roadside rest area for morning tea found us in Broome around lunch time.

We headed for the Tourist Information Centre looking for cabins but ended up with campsites at the Police Citizens Youth Club which was one of the overflow camp grounds. The camp area wasn't too bad and was just like a cheap caravan park. Allan and Lynn booked into a motel for some home comforts.

The town was chock a block with tourists and we learned you need to book well in advance to get into the proper caravan parks at this time of year. The 20th anniversary of the Cable Beach surf club and the local races at the weekend didn't help our cause.

We spent the afternoon looking around town and headed out to the port and the point where there are models of some dinosaur prints, the originals which can be only seen on a really low tide.



Heading for cable beach we watched the sun go down with a couple of hundred other people and headed back to camp for a pizza.

Broome - Thur 12th to Fri 13th July

Thursday dawned fine and sunny and we headed off for a look around the Japanese cemetery.

Following this we headed out to Willie Creek Pearls for a tour around the farm including morning tea and boat ride up the creek to see how pearl shells are harvested. This tour was well worth the 40km journey out of Broome.



We spent the afternoon looking around the town and had a Chinese feed for dinner.

On Friday the vehicles were booked in for a service with mine taking most of the day as it was a major service and the others only requiring an oil change.

When the oil changes were completed I jumped into Col's vehicle we headed to the Pearl Luggers for a look at some original vessels on dry land and then spent the rest of the morning in the museum. The museum is also well worth a look while in Broome as it has some excellent exhibits.

Whilst there I obtained the grave number (154 according to the museum curator) for Nakamura from the Ted Egan song "Sayonara Nakamura" fame and later that afternoon went back to the cemetery to view it.

We booked a late lunch at the Wharf Seafood restaurant and enjoyed some excellent seafood including some of the best Pacific Oysters I have ever tasted.

My car was ready after lunch so Col drove me to pick it up and we headed back to camp.. Allan and Lynne joined us for a few refreshments.

Broome to Fitzroy Crossing - Sat 14th July

We were away early for the short journey to Fitzroy Crossing noticing many Boab trees along the way.



After setting camp early Allan, Lynn and I drove to Geikie Gorge and enjoyed the boat trip along this scenic waterway. There were plenty of Johnson River crocodiles to be observed along the banks and on the rocks and we were assured by the guide they were harmless.

On returning to camp we were saddened to hear that Cols mother had passed away and he and Robyn needed to get back to Sydney ASAP. This put a dampener on the evening and we made the call to miss the Bungle Bungles and all head back home. Even so we estimated home was 6 days away without pushing it too hard.

Fitzroy Crossing to the Tanami Road (Border - Sun 15th July

We left Fitzroy Crossing and headed for Halls Creek arriving mid morning and after fuelling up headed back to the Tanami Road. We visited Wolf



Creek crater on the way through and climbed up the side for a view inside this huge depression.

Leaving the crater and after many kilometers over good and bad road conditions we finally found a camp site off the side of the road right on the WA/NT border. On the way through and during a stop for lunch Allan had to

remove his bash plate as the bolts had all shaken loose. We called into Billiluna for fuel and found it all shut up and in very poor shape.

Tanami Road to Alice Springs - Mon 16th July

Away again very early we had an uneventful trip past some gold mining leases in full operation and arrived at Rabbit Flat where we fuelled up and continued on past Tillmouth Well to the Alice. Fuel at Rabbit Flat was \$2.08 a litre the most expensive on the trip.



We pulled right off the road for a road train passing us in the opposite direction.

On the way into the Alice we saw 3 wedge tailed eagles that had been hit by cars. It's a shame to see this sad end to these majestic birds.

About 50km out of the Alice we were flagged down by one of the locals with his family on board who had run out of fuel. Allan had some spare so sold it to him. After filling up the tank, bleeding the fuel line and charging their flat battery we bid them goodbye and shortly arrived in the Alice.

We found accommodation in the Sturt Caravan Park in cabins, having no luck at the MacDonell Range Caravan Park. That night we had a farewell drink with the Smiths as they were leaving early the next day.

Alice Springs to Plenty Highway (Georgina River) - Tues 17th July

While the Smiths headed home to Sydney via the blacktop I decided to join Allan and Lynne for the trip home via the Plenty/Donahue Highways and down through Hungerford where they had a holiday home. I had done this trip back in 1997 the other direction in a Tarago on the Bourke Outback Trek and just about destroyed the vehicle wanting to do it again in a more suitable vehicle.

Away for another early start we headed north along the Stuart Highway turning right for the Plenty Highway and Jervois Station. We stopped at Gemtree for morning tea and to check the condition of the road and were advised there were good and bad sections.



Stopping for lunch at a creek Allan was lucky not to get bogged venturing out onto the soft sand.

After fuelling up at Tobermorey we decided to keep going to avoid a long day the following day and eventually

found a spot on a channel of the Georgina River near Glenormiston Station.

As we traveled off the main road to find a spot to set up camp we noticed a sand mining operation closing down for the day. After we had set up camp Allan found he had a slow leak in his front tire and decided to check it in the morning. One of my spot lights had lost a nut so I removed the spot light. We built a small fire and enjoyed a few refreshments before retiring for the night.

Plenty Highway to Windorah - Wed 18th July

We were awoken before daybreak by a vehicle heading into the mining site and it wasn't long before we heard the sound of a road train starting up. The road train headed past us taking a load of fill up the road to the location where the road was being graded. Allan's tyre was flat so he located the puncture in the dark and repaired it with two plugs but it was still leaking slowly.

After getting away we crossed the main Georgina channel and found the river still flowing and noted that this would have been a much better campsite.

We stopped at Boulia where Allan had the tyre repaired and was he was advised there were two holes most likely caused by a piece of wire.

I had a leisurely bacon and eggs breakfast at the bakery whilst Allan was having his tyre repaired.

Driving around town I found a pair of Brolga's prancing down the street and was told they were fed by one of the locals.



The town was gearing up for the camel races to be held that weekend and it would have been great to hang around to see them however we didn't have time.

Moving on we headed for Bedourie the home of the famous oven and stopped for fuel and lunch. Back on the road we arrived in Windorah just before dusk and booked into Cooper Cabins which were excellent value. We had dinner and a few refreshments in their dining room. Again excellent value and the food was great.

Windorah to Hungerford - Thur 19th July

Another early start and after fuelling up and we were headed for Quilpie. The fellow at the Windorah servo is blind and it's amazing how he manages the till and credit card machine.

On this section we saw more wildlife than the whole of the earlier part of the trip. With many near misses I finally hit a roo which went under the front and rear driver's side tyres. The roo died instantly and there was no damage to the vehicle.

Coopers Creek was full although not flowing and we stopped at Quilpie for brunch and had some great pies before heading for Thargomindah.

We fuelled up at 'Thargo' and headed for Hungerford arriving at the pub for a couple of refreshments mid afternoon and booked in for dinner. Allan and Lynne have a holiday home at Hungerford and we had planned to stop off for

a few days before continuing on. We headed for their holiday home where we organized ourselves for the next couple of days.

After a great dinner at the pub we chatted to some of the locals and with Lynne being a local she did a short stint behind the bar. A fellow traveler passing through with his family was staying the night at the pub and entertained us with his banjo and guitar. Allan and Lynne went home early whilst I stayed on to enjoy the entertainment.

Hungerford - Fri 20th to Sat 21st July

We slept in on Friday and after breakfast Allan fired up the quads and hauled out some yabby traps. Setting off Allan gave me a tour of the town's perimeter on the quads and we then headed for the Paroo River where we dropped quite a few yabby traps into the main channel. Whilst on the quads we found evidence of wild pigs which Allan said had mostly died out during the drought.

While we had lunch Lynne started a roast for dinner and whilst it was cooking we all headed back along the dog fence via the airstrip back to the river to check the traps. Lynne was on one of the quads and Allan rode a dirt bike.

Each trap had about 8 yabbies averaging 6 keepers and 2 throwbacks. We put the traps back in for another catch.



On Saturday we arose at a reasonable hour and set out on the quads with Allan riding a dirt bike again.



We explored some more of the Paroo River flats but did not see much wildlife. When returning we crossed the river behind the pub near the dog fence

and Allan ventured across what looked like a solid surface only to sink the bike down to the sump in the mud.

It took two of us on the handlebars and Lynne with a tow rope on the quad to drag the bike out of the sticky mire.

After morning tea Allan took me around to Mac's place, one of the locals, to view his collection of bits and pieces from years gone by. Mac used to drive a grader along the dog fence and has been a resident of Hungerford for many years.

Following a light lunch we headed back out to check the traps again. We took the quads for a spin along the eight furlong crescent shaped race horse track on the way.

Arriving at the river we pulled in the traps and found another reasonable haul of yabbies. On returning Lynne parboiled the yabbies and we spent the rest of the afternoon peeling them with a total haul of about 80.

We had an early dinner of yabbies in black bean sauce with rice that Lynne cooked, which was delicious. Adjourning to the pub we enjoyed a few refreshments with the locals.

Hungerford to Narromine Sun 22nd July

We departed Hungerford, at a reasonable hour, for the trip to Allan and Lynne's main residence at Narromine, where they live at Skypark. This is an interesting concept where the houses back onto the airstrip with each house having room for a hanger to keep a plane and which has access to the airstrip. The journey to Narromine was uneventful and we arrived early afternoon and settled down for an easy afternoon.

Narromine to Home - Mon 23rd July

After bidding farewell to Allan and Lynne, I headed off for the journey home and arrived in Sydney mid afternoon. The Bells Line of Road was having work done on it with long delays so I traveled via Katoomba.

Epilogue

I had an absolutely brilliant trip with a great bunch of people. If you get the opportunity for a trip like this jump at it as I did.

Partipants:

Col and Robyn - Toyota Landcruiser

Richard and Gordon - Toyota Landcruiser

Allan and Lynne - Toyota Hilux

Damage:

Col - Flat tyre, stone chip

Richard - Lock nut and cover off a driving light, stone chip, broken retaining bolt on alternator.

Allan - Bash plate bolt, flat tyre

Distance:

15,500K

Fuel Consumption:

Richard - 13.5L/100K