

Canning Stock Route / Rudall River Experience - 2001

(19 nights under the Southern Cross in a swag)



By B Webb

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Table of Contents

<i>Before the beginning</i>	1
<i>Preparation</i>	1
Fuel	2
Water	3
Food	3
Beer	4
Tyres	4
Maps / GPS	5
Radio's & EPIRB	5
Swag / Tent	6
Spinifex	7
Visibility Flags	7
<i>Brief History of the Canning Stock Route (CSR)</i>	8
<i>The Journey</i>	9
Day 1 Home to 40k East of Paynes Find	9
Day 2 40k East of Paynes Find to North Pool	9
Day 3 North Pool to Windich Spring	11
Day 4 Windich Spring to Well 8 & Scorpion Bore	13
Day 5 Well 8 & Scorpion Bore to Well 13	16
Day 6 Well 13 to Calvert Range	18
Day 7 Calvert Range to Durba Springs	20
Day 8 Durba Springs	24
Day 9 Durba Springs to Lake Disappointment	26
Day 10 Lake Disappointment to West of Georgia Bore	27
Day 11 West of Georgia Bore to Rudall River	29
Day 12 Rudall River to Watrarra Pool	33
Day 13 Watrarra Pool to Desert Queen Baths (DQB)	36
Day 14 Desert Queen Baths to Carawine Gorge	39
Day 15 Carawine Gorge to Marble Bar	41
Day 16 Marble Bar	43
Day 17 Marble Bar	43
Day 18 Marble Bar to Karijini	44
Day 19 Karijini to 85k South of Newman	44
Day 20 85k South of Newman to Home	44
<i>Home Again</i>	44
<i>Appendix A Crew/Vehicles/Etc.</i>	45
<i>Appendix B The Canning Stock Route - Travellers advice booklet</i> ...	46
<i>Appendix C List of Provisions</i>	47
<i>Appendix D Inventory</i>	48
<i>Appendix E Radio Stations & ABC TV in WA</i>	49

Before the beginning

Well bugger me; we actually started planning this trip 6 weeks in advance. ‘No big deal’ I hear you say, well it was for us. The planning and preparation for the last trip we undertook in 1997 was nearly all left until the last week prior to departure. You might ask who is ‘we’. Well that’s my good friend Morris (full time Fireman and part time agricultural contractor) and myself (retired Customs Officer and part time agricultural contractor).

The first thing we had to decide on was where we were going? We wanted to tackle the first half of the Canning Stock Route (CSR), across to Rudall River National Park and then on up to Marble Bar (to visit Morris’s brother Kevin) and back home. A great idea but we didn’t think it wise to tackle the stock route with only one vehicle. We were both prepared to take our own vehicles, but that then meant that two more people were required to make up the numbers. Who could we ask that was not only willing and available to go at the same time, but with whom we would also get along with amicably for the full three week period? The first few people we thought of either weren’t available or may not have fitted the second aforementioned criteria.

While visiting Walter, a friend with whom I used to work with in Customs, I noticed a brochure on his breakfast counter advertising a trip to Karijini National Park. This prompted me to mention Morris’s and my plan to tackle the CSR. I then half-heartedly asked if he would be interested in coming with us. He said he would think about it and let me know. A couple of days later, much to my delight he said ‘Yes, he would love to go’. Now we only needed one more person to make the idea a reality, but who?

As it turned out both Walter and I thought of the fourth person at the same time but neither of us thought he would say yes. We were right. We asked Steve, another friend who I worked with in Customs and with whom Walter still works, but he said ‘No’ as he was too involved with kids football, school committees, family etc. to be able to spare the time. That is, until he thought about it over the weekend and discussed it with his family, who all agreed he should go. So now we had an idea, the vehicles and a crew to make it all work (see Appendix A). What else would we need? Quite a bit as it turns out.

Preparation

The four of us held meetings at Walters’ (as he was the most central to the rest of us), at six, four and two weeks prior to departure. At the meetings we discussed what would be needed for the trip, how to organise the requirements and decide who would undertake each task. This was partly achieved by gathering and learning as much information as we could about the CSR & the Rudall River National Park. A book borrowed from the library called *“The Canning Stock Route – A Travellers Guide for a Journey through History”* by Ronele & Eric Gard, which is considered the ‘bible’ of the CSR and is definitely required reading and preferably should be carried with you. We also borrowed a video from the Library called *“The Canning*

Stock Route – The Loneliest Track in the World” and we all made a point of not only watching it but taking relevant notes as well. The above mentioned book and a booklet included with the video, entitled “*Travellers Advice Booklet*” covered such topics as Travelling Season, Vehicle Preparation, Off Road First Aid Kit, Track Conditions, Recovery Gear/Techniques, Food/Water, Navigation, Radio Communication & Fuel Requirements (see Appendix B). It was the last, Fuel Requirements, which caused us the most fuel for thought, if you pardon the pun.

Fuel

We had to not only carry enough fuel for both vehicles but also organise a fuel drop at an appropriate spot. This was further complicated by the fact that Morris’s 1999 Toyota Land Cruiser Wagon was Diesel and my 1998 Mitsubishi Triton 4x4 Club Cab V6 Ute was Unleaded Petrol (ULP). Some of the information we had digested suggested that 2 to 3 times as much fuel as was needed on an ordinary road would be required to traverse the CSR and climb the many sand dunes thereon. After much calculating, educational guessing and throwing darts at a 44 gallon drum; it was decided we would both have to carry 200 lts of fuel. This would hopefully get us through the first part of the CSR and out along the Talawana Track to an aboriginal community called Parngurr (Cotton Creek) situated on the South East boundary of the Rudall River National Park.

Morris contacted the Capricorn Roadhouse near Newman and organised for a 44 (200 ltr) drum of Diesel and one of ULP to be delivered to Parngurr prior to our arrival. This was on the condition that it was paid for in advance, a grand total of \$750.00! Yes, you did read that correctly and NO, I haven’t made a typo. You have to bear in mind that the truck delivering the two drums had a round trip of about 1000 km of dirt roads. It calculates out to \$1.875 per litre! At the time diesel in Perth was just over 90 cents per litre and ULP just under 90 cents per litre!

This solved the problem of how much to carry and where to have the fuel dump, but two problems still remained. HOW to carry 200 lts each and how do we take on 200 lts at Parngurr if we are not completely empty. The second problem was solved first. We would carry 4 extra, but empty plastic 20 ltr containers on the roof rack of Morris’s car. As far as carrying 200 lts of fuel each, Morris’s Toyota already had two tanks, the main one of 90 lts and the auxiliary of 70 lts. So with the addition of 2 x 20 ltr jerry cans he had 200 lts. However we added another Jerry can to give us 10% reserve as well, a total of 3 x Jerry Cans.

My Triton only had one 70 ltr tank. So I set about investigating the addition of a second tank. The first one I checked out which fitted under the back of the ute replacing the space where the spare wheel was fitted, was going to cost around \$1,106.00, bugger that! Reading through the ‘Quokka’ revealed a second hand 100 ltr aluminium tank for sale for \$80.00, much more reasonable. When I rang up to enquire about it, the lady explained that someone from the country was interested in the tank and would look at it in a couple of day’s time. I patiently waited the couple of days and rang back to discover that the other person had not showed up. So I quickly drove over and purchased the tank. Bargain!

That's where Ray, my brother-in-law, comes into the story. Having built his own aluminium yacht, he therefore had the know-how and the right equipment to work and weld aluminium. We discussed fitting the tank underneath the ute tray, but it all got too complicated. Instead we decided to cut the tank down in size and make it fit in the ute tray at the front and between the boxes I had built at either side. Ray accomplished all this with his usual professionalism and modified the tank to fit the spot perfectly. All that was left was to plumb the outlet and breather pipes into the existing fuel system together with an electric solenoid switch operated from the dash. When activated the solenoid allowed the fuel from the second tank to gravity feed into the original tank

The cut down tank, now only holding 85 lts, together with the original tank 70 lts and 3 x Jerry cans, now gave me a total capacity of 215 lts, near enough the same as Morris's Toyota. Morris understandably didn't want to store 3 x jerry cans of diesel inside his Land Cruiser wagon, so I agreed I would carry them together with the 3 x jerry cans of ULP in the back of the ute.

'Ahh' I hear you cry 'how is 85 lts going to fit into a 70 ltr tank'. Well as it turns out it takes in excess of an hour for the fuel to transfer, as it all has to pass through a 5/16th hose, solenoid and filter. Assuming you are driving along at the time, and therefore consuming fuel, by the time the top tank is empty you have conveniently used the excess fuel out of the bottom tank.

Water

Again with the aid of our newly acquired knowledge, some guesstimation and 'the old dart in the water tank trick', we decided to carry 100 lts of fresh water. This was accomplished with 1 x 20 litre plastic jerry can style container carried in the Toyota. 2 x cube shape and one rectangular shaped containers, which turned out to be 25 lts each and one ready use 5-litre container in the back of the Triton. All this water was to be mainly for consumption, and would be supplemented along the way with water from creeks, soaks, pools, wells, etc.

Food

Some of the info we had read about food was quite complex. We agreed to keep it simple but as it turned out it was far from boring, perhaps mainly due to the high quality of the food we ended up with. We decided to cater for 2 days to Wiluna, 10 days on the CSR, 4 days in the Rudall River National Park and a few days to allow for the unforeseen and then top up at Marble Bar for the run home. 12 x vacuum-sealed meat packs consisting of 2 x sausages and one piece of steak for each of the four of us were ordered from Max, a butcher in Kwinana. We figured we would use about a loaf of bread a day, but that it was unlikely to last much more than a week, so we settled on 8 x loaves. 3 x big boxes of Weetbix, calculated at 4 x pieces each per breakfast. 24 x 1 ltr cartons of UHT Milk, baked beans, spam, dried peas & beans, spuds, carrots, fresh apples, oranges and home grown mandarins, ingredients to make damper, etc. (for a full list see Appendix C).

I had acquired 2 x 50 litre empty dog biscuit containers about 280 x 280 x 680 mm in size with a large screw on lid. One of these turned out ideal to store most of the dry type provisions in and the second was designated the bread bin. Not sure if it was the container or the Woolworths '4 x Seed' bread, but it all kept amazingly fresh right up to the last slice, then about a week old. The rest of the food was contained in 2 cube shaped plastic containers, except the 12 meat packs that were stored in the 39 ltr 'Engle' fridge, kindly on loan to us from Milan, a neighbour and friend.

Beer

How much beer should we take? We originally decided on 2 x cans per person per day of midstrength beer to last the first 2 x weeks to Marble Bar. This works out to 3.73 x 30 can blocks. We rounded this up to 4 blocks, and then added another as we decided it would be too bloody expensive in Marble Bar (it was - \$47 per block!). Well that's what we started with. However as time progressed it was looking like we were going to be pressed for room. As none of us were big drinkers we decided to cut this back to 3 blocks. On departure day, when we finally arrived to pick up Steve and the rest of the provisions, Steve had thoughtfully provided another three blocks just on the off chance that there was enough room. Some quick shuffling of gear ensued and some how all six blocks of beer were shoehorned in. This lasted us 18 nights, with only the last night without a drop. So the magic figure we had sought at the beginning turned out to be 2.5 cans per person per day.

Also bear in mind that one warm can of beer shaken up and with the ring pull just cracked results in a stream of foam and carbon dioxide more than capable of extinguishing an average-sized fire anywhere in a car. So now you can include extra beer as multiple fire extinguishers.

Tyres

Although wide tyres would be excellent for the sand dunes, they are not recommended for the overall trip as they are more prone to punctures, due to there greater footprint area and softer side walls. In fact stock standard tyres preferably with higher ply ratings are the preference. My vehicle is fitted with ordinary 205 x 16's, so not a problem. However Morris's Toyota was fitted with mag wheels and wide tyres. So he kept an eye out in the 'Sunday Times - Readers Mart' and 'Quokka' for a set of second-hand split rim wheels to suit. He was eventually successful, purchasing 4 split rim wheels complete with high ply rating, 235 x 16 tyres with reasonable tread and tubes all for the amazing price of only \$80.00! Bargain in anyone's language.

As far as spare tyres were concerned I carried a complete second spare on the roof rack & two new inner tubes and Morris carried 3 x spare tyres and tubes on his roof rack. Of course, we also carried appropriate tube patching and tyre fixing kits. Additionally we also carried two 12v compressors to reinflate either flat tyres or tyres deliberately partially deflated to suit the conditions. We did deflate our tyres to cope with the sand dunes, but only to around 27 psi as there are lots of rocky outcrops that have to be driven over as well.

Maps / GPS

Good maps are essential on this type of undertaking. We had a total of four covering the CSR. One old and one new RAC strip map, one Australian Geographic strip map (included with *'The Australian Geographic book of the Canning Stock Route'*) and *'Australia's Great Desert Tracks'*. The *'Rudall River National Park'* was included in *'Australia's Great Desert Tracks'* and we had a map of the park that was included in an article in the Oct/Dec 1997 Australian Geographic. The *'Australia's Great Desert Tracks'* also included GPS locations for most of the relevant wells, camping spots etc.

On our previous trip I had borrowed a GPS (Global Positioning System) from a friend and it turned out to be a very useful bit of gear. As we were really going *'off the beaten track'* this time, we decided, that although not essential, a GPS was a very desirable piece of equipment. Rather than borrow one again, I decided that I would like to purchase my own. So after much research and a number of *'Sunday Times – Readers Mart'* and *'Quokkas'* later, I purchased a second hand *'Garmin e-Map AU'* GPS unit. While a bit more expensive (\$550) than even some of the new units available, it had some amazing qualifications. The most amazing of which was an underlying map of *'the whole world'*. I know that sounds hard to believe but it is very true. It doesn't show all the lesser roads in the suburbs (*yet; I believe Garmin and UBD are working on it*), but it does show most major roads. Practically all the roads we drove on during this trip were in it; even parts of the CSR itself were shown!

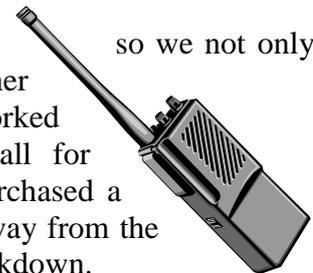


Figure 1 - Garmin eMap GPS

We had a copy of Dick Smith's *'Australian GPS Location Guide'* with us. The Latitude & Longitude coordinates of all of the wells on the CSR; most of the towns we passed though and many other features are included in the book. So we were able to punch these into the GPS and were instantly given a direction & distance to travel. This proved invaluable for locating some of the harder to find wells and which side-tracks were most likely to go in the direction required etc.

Radio's & EPIRB

Both our vehicles were already fitted with UHF CB Radios, had communication between ourselves but also with other road/track users fitted with similar radios. These radios worked perfectly for this intended use but are of no use at all for communications over 20 km. Additionally Walter had purchased a new Uniden handheld UHF CB to use when anyone was away from the vehicles or, as a backup should either of the vehicle sets breakdown.



The information we had absorbed, suggested that due to the isolated area we were to travel in it was prudent that at least one vehicle in each group should carry an HF radio, fitted with at least some of the Flying Doctor frequencies. It would then be

available in an emergency and capable of bridging the long-range gap not covered by our UHF CB's. New HF radios are in the region of \$3,500.00, so it was decided to hire one. This cost \$220 plus a deposit of \$200 for four weeks hire. As a licence is required to operate the HF Radio, Walter organised one for the cost of \$30.50. The 'portable' HF we received was a 'Codan' brand, consisting of the main set with weatherproof lid, a long length of wire to be thrown over a tree to act as an antenna and spring loaded clips to attach to the battery for its power source, all encased in a canvas zip up bag. It was, in fact, exactly the same as sets I had used in Customs, some 20 years earlier!

An EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) can be activated, in a life threatening emergency, anywhere in Australia or indeed the world, to forward a signal via satellite to a ground station, where the alarm is raised and approximate position indicated. As with the HF radio, it was not essential but highly recommended that at least one vehicle carry one. So an EPIRB was also hired for an additional \$44.00.

Swag / Tent

Morris reckons that a comfortable chair to sit in and a good night's sleep are the two most important items when camping. I whole-heartedly agree. At one stage we were all considering a swag as the simplest and quickest to erect sleeping arrangements. Steve & Walter investigated swags in Fremantle and I investigated them in Rockingham. Coincidentally we all came to agree on the same brand and model swag. An 'AOS' Adventurer Kingsingle dome stile, with a high density covered foam mattress 2140 x 1200 x 50 mm, canvas weatherproof flap and sandfly proof mesh, was considered 'the go'! In an effort to curb yet more expense, Morris had experimented with a piece of canvas, 2-man nylon tent and a foam mattress. This he found to be quite comfortable, reasonably easy to erect and all rolled up into one, not so small, cylinder shape. So, it was decided to purchase only three 'Adventurer' swags (\$295.00 each) from Fremantle Disposals.



My existing sleeping bag was getting a bit old and was a lightweight type more suitable to Perth summer nights than winter nights in the desert. K-Mart just happened to have sleeping bags on special (\$48), so I purchased a new one more suitable to the task at hand. I decide it would be a good idea to actually sleep in my new sleeping bag and swag out on the back lawn one night, to test it all out in the safety of my own back yard, so to speak. So I set it all up, kissed Hazel goodnight and ventured out into the cold air much to the delight of our two dogs, Buster & Chevy, who thought it was playtime! After settling them down I got undressed and slipped into the sleeping bag and, I must admit somewhat nervously zipped myself into the swag. There isn't a great deal of room inside once it is all zipped up! However that is soon overcome by shutting ones eyes. A short while later, in the first stages of drifting off to sleep, I was disturbed by a loud sniffing noise right near my head. It was Chevy, come to check if I really was going to sleep in the cold, and on the now dew covered back lawn.

I had a comfortable nights sleep and awoke in the morning, quite refreshed and without any undue pain. After this new experience, I contacted Walter & Steve and suggested they both do the same and try out their respective swags, at home, before we ventured off on our trip. It was just as well I did. Walter tried his out without any drama, but Steve, who is much more solidly built than Walter or I, discovered that there was not enough room in the swag for him to turn over in! To cut a long story short Steve returned his swag for a refund and followed down the path that Morris had experimented with. That is tarp, nylon tent, mattress and sleeping bag all rolled into one. The moral to all this is, swags are great, but if you are thinking of sleeping in one, make sure you try it out first!

Spinifex

Spinifex is growing everywhere, including the middle of the track. If you are one of the first vehicles through at the beginning of the season when the Spinifex is in seed, around May, then you have a problem with the seed heads breaking off and blocking the radiator fins. This can be overcome, or at worst reduced, by placing some shade cloth or flyscreen mesh in front of the radiator. We didn't have this problem, as we were travelling late July – August but we still covered the radiator anyway!

Spinifex in the middle of the track was however still a problem. At the time we travelled the spinifex stalks had dried and become brittle, so vehicles travelling over it tend to break bits off which lodge in any spot they can under the vehicle. The danger is that a collection of broken spinifex stalks will gather and lodge adjacent to a hot surface, such as the exhaust pipe, smoulder and then catch fire! If this happens you need to extinguish it quick, before it becomes serious. To cater for such an emergency Morris carried a pump-up pressure 7 ltr plastic garden spray with a handheld extension to reach under the vehicle with. *(We never used it, but it is just another of those items you have to carry in case it is required. It can also double as a shower but we didn't try that either!)*

Another problem is that Spinifex can lodge on top of any protective bash plates under the vehicle and another recommendation is that the bash plates be removed. This would certainly solve the problem, but as a large part of the track travels over rocky outcrops, I would think twice before I removed any bash plates! The best advice is to keep an eye and nose on it (Spinifex has a very distinctive sweet smell when smouldering) and regularly remove any build up.

Visibility Flags

It is advisable to have some form of brightly coloured flag about 300mm square fixed to the top of a whip pole and mounted at least 1m above each vehicle while travelling along the CSR as an advance warning to other travellers of your existence. We used an old HF antenna mounted on the roof rack of each vehicle. Other vehicles we saw had a bamboo or fibreglass pole about 3m in length fitted to their bull bar.

Well there you are, I said there was a lot to organise.



Brief History of the Canning Stock Route (CSR)

The CSR snakes its way more than 1700 kms across four of Australia's remote deserts, from Halls Creek in the north to Wiluna in the south. The pioneering pastoralists of the East Kimberly first identified the need for a stock route to get their cattle to markets in the south of Western Australia just over 100 years ago. 46 year old *Alfred Canning* set out in 1906 to survey the route.



Then in 1908 *Canning* led a team of 31 men, 70 camels, 2 wagons and 12 months supply of food 100 tonnes of building material to sink and construct the 48 wells required as drinking spots for the cattle as they progressed south. Each well had about 12 m of troughing for the cattle to drink from, and a windlass and bucket for raising water. Most were fitted with a whip pole for raising large quantities of water using camel power.

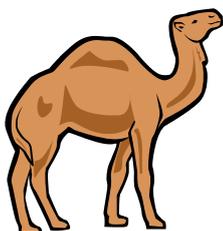
The CSR was not used as much as first predicted. However *Alfred Canning* was called out of retirement in 1930, at the age of 70 to restore a number of the wells. After the restoration the use of the route increased especially from 1932 to the years immediately after World War II.

During the early years of World War II there was a perceived threat of the Japanese invading the North of Australia. In 1942 the CSR was reconditioned again to act as an evacuation route for people and their cattle.

The last of the estimated 31 mobs of cattle were taken down the route in 1958.

Vehicles first ventured on the CSR in as early as 1925, but only parts of it. The first complete trip was in 1968 when a surveyor, *Russ Wenholz* his friend *Dave Chudleigh* also a surveyor and *Noel Kealley*, a survey assistant tackled the whole length of the CSR, in their own time and at their own expense. With fuel drops at wells 48, 35 & 24 they were able to negotiate the route, in a couple of heavily laden Land Rovers, in 35 days. Five years passed before the next full-length traverse in 1973 by a party from Darwin. In 1977 a Perth tour company took the first paying passengers on 'Australia's most remote holiday'

In 1991 an estimated 80 to 100 vehicles travelled on all or part of the CSR. During the 8 days that we were on the bottom half of the CSR, in June/July 2001, we saw at least 18 different vehicles. From this, I would guess that a couple of hundred vehicles at least must travel the CSR each year.



Over 900 sand dunes have to be crossed if travelling the entire 1700 km.

The Journey

Day 1 Home to 40k East of Paynes Find

The great departure day finally arrived. It had been decided to rendezvous at Steve's home as he lived in Warwick and was located nearest to our destination. We would then have morning tea and be off. So I picked up Walter on the way through Bateman at 0901hrs and arrived at Steve's to find Morris had also just arrived. The obligatory photos of the adventurers setting off were taken. Together with a small bit of footage to start the beginning of the home movie style documentary, that Steve was to film on his recently acquired Panasonic SVHS video recorder, throughout the trip. Steve's wife, Jenny, had put together a great morning tea complete with sausage rolls, lamingtons, biscuits etc. At 1028hrs, waving goodbye to Steve's dad, Jenny and their three boys we were finally on our way. The neighbours must have wondered what all the fuss was about; little did they know it was the beginning of a three-week adventure for four modern day explorers.

A bit of banter to and fro on the radio's and we were off, up the Freeway to Joondalup, across to the Great Northern Highway, on through New Norcia and the first stop was at Walebing for a pie and a cup of tea for lunch. Then we continued on through Dalwallinu and Wubin to Paynes Find where we turned right towards Sandstone. From here the road changed to a well-graded dirt road for the 450 km to Wiluna. Wishing to make as much distance towards Wiluna as possible we pushed on for another 40 or so kilometres until around 1730 hrs. We didn't wish to drive much later, as apart from the risk of colliding with a roo or an emu it was our first night to set up camp and we wanted to do so with a reasonable amount of daylight up our sleeve. So we pulled off to the south of the road, a few hundred metres in and set up camp in a small clearing.

Time for dinner. To keep it simple this first night, we decided to have the precooked meal that Walter had brought together with some rice. After dinner found us all sitting around the campfire, having a beer and discussing the 'Southern Cross' and the millions of other stars now visible in the outback night sky. A very clear crescent moon was also very visible. I think this was when the words 'serenity' and 'ambience' were mentioned for the first time and were soon adopted as words that we were to use continually throughout the trip. Feeling a bit knackered from the travel and the excitement of the first day we all turned in around 2000 hrs.

Day 2 40k East of Paynes Find to North Pool

Awoke at 0615hrs, bloody freezing, well nearly, it was only 1.3°C. I had survived the night in my new sleeping bag and swag reasonably comfortable and warm, as indeed had the others. The first job was to get last night's fire going again. We boiled two kettles each morning, one on the fire to fill our two s/s thermos flasks, ready for morning tea and lunch time stops and one on the gas stove for a breakfast cup of tea and a bit left over to wash the dishes. Breakfast most mornings consisted

of Weetbix and a cup of tea, both filling and quick and easy to organise before dismantling camp and proceeding on. As we left our overnight spot Steve took some footage as we emerged back on to the dirt road.

We still had over 400 km to travel to Wiluna and we were under the impression that the general store would close at around 1300 hrs, it now being Sunday. By 0730hrs we were on the road again and heading northeast. About half an hour later, a little further up the road, Steve called up on the radio and said that an emu had just tried to commit suicide on their front left wheel. After the euthanasia of the poor emu, and there appearing to be no damage to the car, we were soon on the way again. We stopped in Sandstone for our morning cup of tea. Just before midday, making good time toward Wiluna and having just turned right at a 'T' intersection near 'Yeelirrie' homestead, Steve was again on the radio and said that they had just got a flat tyre. We discovered later that the emu had done some damage after all, cracked the base of the inner tube filler neck. The chance of our ETA into Wiluna being prior to 1300 hrs was now reduced to 'bugger all' and we needed to change the tyre as soon as possible. We all bogged in and considering we had not practised for this eventuality, were back on the road again in what seemed record time.

Wiluna was still a long way away and only just enough time to make it before the store closed. Some 30 odd km's from Wiluna we came on to the main road from Leinster to Wiluna. Much to our delight it was a fairly new bitumen road. Arriving in Wiluna on time had suddenly become more realistic. Sure enough we pulled into the fuel pumps at the general store at exactly 1250hrs, but the fuel pumps were locked! Surely they hadn't shut shop early after all our effort to get there on time. Luckily, no, they were kept locked as a precaution, as they were not visible from inside the store. To top it all off, they didn't shut at 1300 hrs as we had been lead to believe but at 1500hrs!

We topped up with as much fuel as could be squeezed into the two vehicles. The next fuel stop was nearly 800 km away and we were unsure as to our likely fuel consumption along dirt tracks, through creek crossings and over sand dunes. Next task was to liase with the local Police. We gave them a copy of our proposed itinerary, personal details etc. (see appendix A). Then we headed north out of town, missed the turn off to Well 1 and finally stopped at a very picturesque spot called 'North Pool' at 1345hrs.

We set up camp on real couch type grass, which had been neatly 'mowed' by the local wildlife. We had a late lunch, which consisted of hard boiled eggs that were partly frozen as I had my borrowed 'Engel' fridge turned up to high. We decided to do some washing, both clothes and ourselves. It was not long before this picturesque spot had lost some of its charm, due mainly to the odd assortment of clothes drying on the cloths line, now hanging between a tree and the Toyota's roof rack. Morris repaired the previously deflated tyre by replacing the damaged tube with one of the spare tubes carried for just such an occurrence. Walter set up the HF Radio, and we were soon listening to other travellers communicating with each other. During lengthy quiet spells in the conversations I tried unsuccessfully to speak to any other radio operator.

Meanwhile Steve was reviewing some of the video footage he had taken during the day. He then instructed me on how to use the camera so that I could become the second cameraman and Steve could be included in some of the footage. Beer time, now I was in the shit, the beer was also slightly frozen. We then noticed the first of quite a few kangaroos that were to make their way down to the waterhole for a drink.

Walter had brought a bottle of wine with him to celebrate his birthday later in the trip. He figured the safest place for it would be in the middle of his swag. While unrolling his swag to set it up, and completely forgetting what was in it, he dropped it, for the second time! Luckily it didn't break and it managed to survive through to Day 9.

Dinner this night was to be the first of the steak and two sausages each, together with carrots, potato and peas. As we sat down to eat the meal Morris said 'Well this is it, either the steak and snags are going to taste good or we are going to have to put up with crap for the rest of the trip'. It certainly wasn't 'crap', in fact it was excellent, as indeed was all the meat for the rest of the trip. We made a commitment for when we returned home, to personally thank Max the butcher for such good meat.

After dinner we forced ourselves to stay awake until 2000 hrs, then we finally succumbed and retired to bed. During the night we heard the sounds of various animals coming to the water to drink.

Day 3 North Pool to Windich Spring

Up at dawn with the birds, luckily not quite so cold this morning. We finished breakfast, packed up and were under way around 0810 hrs. We headed the 10 km back out to the main road, turned left toward the beginning of the CSR. 29 km further along the road we were suddenly there. On the right was the commencement of '*The Loneliest track in the World*', at the start of which was a sign (see right).

CANNING STOCK ROUTE
This road is recommended for
4WD vehicles only
There is no water, fuel or services
between Wiluna and Halls Creek, over
1900 km in length.
Motorists are advised to obtain
adequate supplies and spares before
venturing on this road.

We all got out, took photos and realised this was it. We were finally at the beginning of the CSR, nearly 1000 km from home and soon to head off into the unknown. Well not really, but it does sound dramatic, don't you think?

This first part of the track is easy, an ordinary car could handle it without any drama, assuming it wasn't wet. It's a bit like a very long, semi rough dirt driveway. Just a couple of kilometres up the track and off to the right is Well 2, now in ruins, and an old steel water tank. From here there seemed to be tracks going everywhere. Not really sure which one to take we let the GPS decide for us and off we went, luckily in the right direction. A few kilometres up the track we had to pull over to let the first of two vehicles heading South pass us. A quick chat with them revealed that while they were camped at Well 6 overnight it had rained and some of the track further up was under water but nothing we couldn't handle.

Next stop was Well 2A also known as the 'Granites' It was originally constructed in 1910 and was blasted out of solid rock to create an additional well to reduce the distance stock had to travel between Well 2 & 3. We stopped for lunch at Well 3, which had been fully restored by the 'Geraldton Four wheel Drive Club' in the late 1990's. Just to prove it all worked Walter & Morris opened the hatch, lowered down the large heavy steel bucket and then wound it back up, full of quite good water, then emptied it into the stock trough alongside whilst Steve eagerly recorded it on tape. Lunch was to have consisted of cold meat sandwiches from the cooked leg of lamb that Morris had prepared before leaving home. After much searching Morris decided that he must have left it at home on the kitchen bench. So much for that idea, baked beans and 'Spam' would have to suffice.

I might add at this point, although we had a rough overall itinerary of approximately how long we would take and where we would end up, it didn't break down to day-by-day destinations etc. This was deliberate, as we were after all, on holiday! So the idea was that we would head off in the morning, when we were ready to go. If possible coincide a stop for morning or afternoon tea or a lunch break, with a historic Well, picturesque spot, creek crossing or other significant point of interest. This worked exceptionally well and we never seemed rushed or pushed for time. We aimed to set up camp for the night around 1600 hrs or at the latest 1730hrs each day.

Another 20 odd kilometres up the track, Steve & Walter decided to walk on ahead with camera, video and handheld CB to film us as we drove along. They were gone for what seemed a considerable length of time, probably about 15 minutes in reality, when the radio sprung to life and Walter said they were ready for us. Off we went. When we caught up with them we discovered we were at Well 4, complete with windmill and water tank.

Next stop was Little Windich Spring, a sandy creek crossing with large pools of water surrounded by large river red gums, quite a picturesque spot. The sky was quite cloudy at the time and off in the distance to the northeast could be seen a thunderstorm complete with rainbow, luckily a long way away and moving east, away from us.

Only a short distance further up the track we came to Windich Spring itself and our overnight camping destination. This really was a picturesque spot, one of the best of the whole trip. It was quite a large pool of good water, surrounded by rather large and therefore fairly old river red gums. →

Once again we set up camp, but this time Walter and I pitched our swags nearly 20 m upwind of Morris and Steve's tents. Have I mentioned snoring yet? No, I was being polite. Well I'm sorry but I am going to now. Morris snores, not all night but it certainly seems like most of the night. Steve also snores some of the time. This, depending on where you are trying to sleep in relation to them, can set up a stereo effect.



Figure 2 - Windich Spring

Although it is argued that this in turn keeps the Dingo's at bay, it makes it extremely difficult to sleep, hence the positioning of our swags. We never heard or saw any Dingo's at night though!

I purchased a headlight torch before I left home, it consists of a very small torch attached to a headband. It runs on 2 x 'AAA' batteries powering 3 very bright LED's as apposed to a bulb. It has the advantage of being very lightweight fairly bright and very functional with an estimated battery life of up to 80 hrs. Although the others agreed to it's functionality, it was soon referred to as the '*dickhead-torch*' because of the way it protruded from my forehead when wearing it. I often left erecting my swag until one of the last chores. Even if by the time I got around to it, it was dark, the '*dickhead-torch*' made it an easy operation. Steve's new Video had an infra-red function, which allowed it to film in complete darkness, albeit in black & white. Deciding he should try this function out he filmed my swag and me wearing the '*dickhead-torch*'! Not sure what the Australian Censorship Board will make of that!

Dinner on this third night was Hazel's stew. It was easy to heat up, so much of it that rice wasn't required and it was enjoyed by all. From the start we hadn't delegated ourselves any particular jobs, but preferred to work on the theory that if it needed doing someone would do it. For instance, we all did some cooking, but the majority was cooked by Walter & Steve. Morris's, almost legendary, expertise was in creating great dampers. Me, well I specialised in getting up in the morning first, closely followed by Walter, encouraging the previous nights fire back to life, getting the kettles ready for thermos's and tea and setting out the Weetbix ready for the by then emerging fellow campers.

Another evening was spent studying the Southern Cross and the multitude of other stars. Then bed around 2000 hrs followed by quietness – sounds of silence – in fact the blood sloshing around your ears can be bloody deafening in this situation. Ssslllleeeep.....

Day 4 Windich Spring to Well 8 & Scorpion Bore

After a number of beers and or cups of tea or coffee just prior to going to bed, and no matter how hard you try to squeeze it all out on that last pee before retiring, some time in the wee hours of the morning (ah, I just realised where that expression comes from) like it or not, you have to get up for another pee. Well, this takes on a new meaning when you are all zipped up in a swag.

Picture this in your mind; it's so quiet it's deafening. Firstly I have to undo the Velcro at the top of my sleeping bag (that stops the zip inadvertently creeping down as you move around in your sleep) 'zzzit'. Then as quietly as I can I undo the zip on the sleeping bag 'zzziiiiippi'. Followed by the zip on the insect mesh 'zzziiiiippi', followed by the two bigger zips on the canvas all weather flap 'ZZZIIIIIPP.....ZZZIIIIIPP'. Finally walking a short distance into the scrub I have a pee 'ppppssssssSSSSSS'. Then back into the sleeping bag and swag and

close all the zips again ZZZIIIIIIIPP.....ZZZIIIIIIIPP.... zzziiiiiiiipp..... zzziiiiiiiipp'

By this stage Walter has been woken up by all the noise, also needs to go for a pee and so it starts all over again as he gets out of his swag! This inturn wakes Steve, 'zzziiiiiipp' sleeping bag, 'zzziiiiiipp' flyscreen, 'ZZZIIIIIIIPP' tent flap, pee, back in tent zips all done up again. This is about when one of us realises that it is 0530hrs, and if we had all hung on another ½ hour or so, we were going to get up at dawn anyway!

Up at 0610hrs, 6.9°C, breakfast, pack up and underway around 0740hrs. Our first stop for the day is Well 4B only 10 km up the road. Here, Walter timed how long it took for a dropped stone to hit the water, 1.16 sec from this he calculated that from the surface to the water level must be 6.6 m. I grabbed a tape measure from the ute and measured the distance to be 6m, well done Walter!

We continued, stopping briefly at Well 5 along the way. Well 5 is the deepest well on the route, some 31.8m deep. More than 100 tonnes of rock was blasted and removed by hand to complete this well. Arriving at Well 6, we were quite taken by beautiful setting surrounded by large trees. Camped amongst the trees we met four Queensland guys travelling in two Toyota Land Cruiser Utes. We checked out the Well itself, which had been reconditioned by the Geraldton 4WD club in 1991. Quite a variety of birds, including emus watched us as we had morning tea and a chat with our newfound friends.

Onward once again, stopping at the foot of Mount Davis only a short distance up the road. I think this is where the first 'Challenge' was issued, that being to climb to the

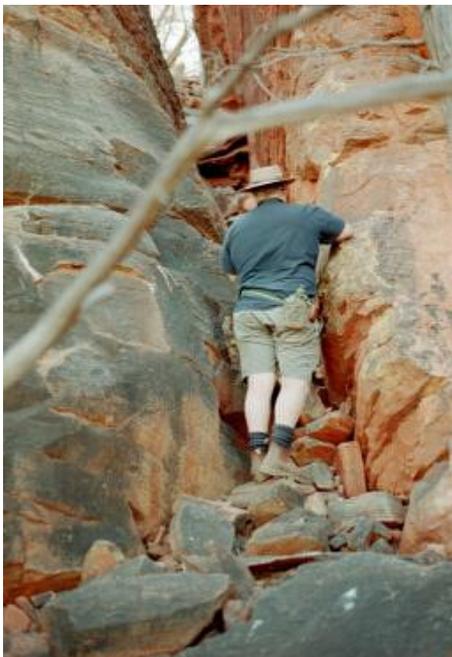


Figure 2 - Morris climbing Mt Davis

top. The word 'Challenge' was used at least once, nearly every day from then on. It was usually either Steve or myself urging the other to 'have a go' at what ever the latest 'Challenge' happened to be. Climbing Mount Davis is not hard, and very rewarding views are to be had from the top. There were even a few small aboriginal paintings to be seen on the rock face, part of the way up.

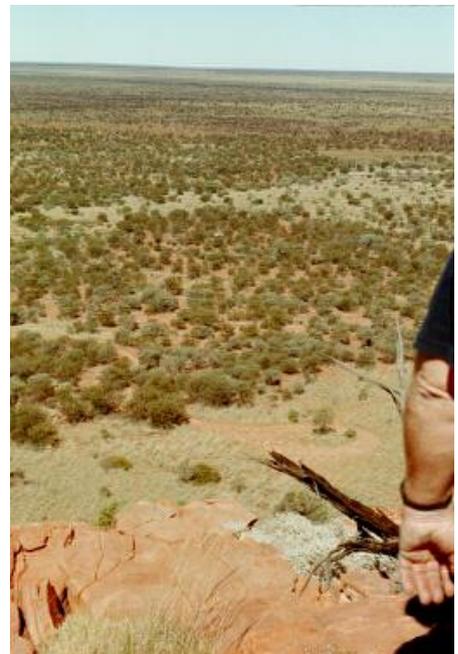


Figure 3 - View from top of Mt Davis

Then it was a quick look at Well 7, before heading on to our final stop for the day, Well 8 and Scorpion Bore. Just short of Well 8 we came upon an area where the track was underwater. Steve and Walter went on ahead on foot to film the vehicles passing through the slightly slippery and muddy water. I drove through first without any drama but when it came to Morris's turn, he couldn't resist the temptation to speed through and as he passed Steve there was much swearing as Steve got splashed.

We located Well 8 easily enough, but Scorpion Bore that was supposedly nearby eluded us. We set up camp a 100m or so from the Well, had a cuppa, then headed off on foot in an easterly direction in search of Scorpion Bore. We eventually found it about 1.5 km East. It was quite a little oasis all on its own. Water, pumped by a windmill into a tank, was cascading through the overflow pipe and spreading out some considerable distance over what would otherwise be very dry ground. In amongst all this wet sand was quite lush couch type grass. I am sure the cattle and other wildlife around would find this a popular spot. After pausing to enjoying the 'serenity' and 'ambience' of the place we collected some water in our buckets and returned to camp.

Morris had noticed a strange and not very pleasant smell emanating from inside the back of his 4WD over the last couple of days. Determined to get to the bottom of it he emptied out the back checking each item for smell as it was removed. You remember the leg of lamb he was supposed to have brought but ended up leaving on the kitchen bench? Well he found it! It was in the vehicle after all, but not in the fridge where it should have been. I'm sure the dingoes would be impressed but we weren't. Phuuueew...

Somewhere along the track I had lost the scanner antenna, which had been mounted on the bullbar. We used the scanner to monitor both UHF CB and the older style HF CB channels. This was to assist us with advanced warning of any other vehicles in our vicinity. Scanners, unlike radio-transmitters, are not fussed about what type of antenna they use. Morris had with him an HF CB, but not installed, so I borrowed the antenna from this to replace the missing one allowing the scanner to continue its vigilance.

After a dinner of steak, snags and vegetables we settled around the campfire to discuss the stars that could be seen. Walter is very knowledgeable on lots of things, including Astronomy. Having a beer and listening to his explanation of stars, distances, light years, meteors, gravity and goodness knows what else, it suddenly seemed to me to be all 'bullshit'. All the so-called experts that worked all this out over the eons had simply got it wrong. That is when the '*Great Blanket Theory*' was born.

It was suddenly obvious to me that night time was simply brought about by a massive blanket being pulled over the outer area of the atmosphere thus blocking out the daylight. Just like a cloth over a bird's cage! Walter said, somewhat sarcastically 'so, how does that explain the stars then?' Grabbing another beer and staring into the sparks rising from the fire, I said 'bloody obvious really. They're actually pinprick holes in the blanket caused by sparks from fires.' Ripping the top off a new beer, Walter asked 'What's your explanation for the bloody moon then?'

Now on a roll with all this information flooding into my mind, from goodness knows where, I said 'It's the small flap type hole in the blanket by which it is slowly pulled over the earth's atmosphere. That's why you can't see it all the time, it depends on how far the flap is open or shut.'

Walter was not impressed by this new revolutionary theory. As I handed another beer to Steve I could see a glimmer of light in his face, or was that just the firelight reflecting? The most promising likely supporter, however, was Morris who was obviously in deep thought over this startling new revelation or had he simply dropped off to sleep?

Day 5 Well 8 & Scorpion Bore to Well 13

A day or so earlier we had decided to all pick a particular cup so that we would always know which was whose. Morris's was cream, Steve's yellow, Walter's fawn and mine was brown. Organising breakfast this morning Morris had just poured out the hot water into the cups to make the teas. After replacing the kettle on the fire he turned around and noticed the brown cup was only half full. Picking up the kettle again he topped the cup up. I came over to have a slurp and noticed my cup was only half full. Mentioning this to Morris he topped it up again. By this stage Morris was wondering about his sanity. That's when we noticed the water on the table under the cup and that the level of tea in the cup was already dropping away. The cup, although a good quality 'Hostess' brand hard plastic type, had cracked down both sides of the handle. It had been out all night in the cold air and we can only assume that pouring in the hot water must have been too much of a shock for it! Moral to this story is, ensure you have spare cups, luckily we did.

Breakfast finished, camp dismantled we were underway again at 0803hrs. Next destination was Well 9 Weld Spring, 26 km up the track. Arriving at Well 9 we were greeted by a large number of cattle milling around the stockyards, windmill, tank, water trough and lush grass. Also found here is the remains of a small stone fort, built by *John Forrest* in 1874, as a precaution against attack from aboriginals.

Continuing on we arrived at Well 10 in time for morning tea. To the drovers of time gone by Well 10 was known as the lucky well, as it marked the end of sand dunes when travelling south along the track. As we were heading north, it meant we would soon be tackling them. So off we went deeper into the unknown...

Earlier in the morning, we had heard a number of faint radio transmissions. We got the impression the transmissions were from a light



Figure 4 – Morris, Steve & Walter at Well 9 Weld Spring

aircraft to a ground vehicle mustering cattle. We were right, as the transmissions became much louder we saw the aircraft off in the distance just above the treetops. A short while later the aircraft was quite close and very low. It disappeared for a while, and then it suddenly appeared out of nowhere from behind us and flew right over the top with its siren blaring. It seemed as if you could reach up and touch it, it was so low.

Further up the track, Steve yells 'Challenge' over the radio. This time it was another large hill, but on the right hand side of the track. This was also fairly easy to climb, but when we got to the top there was another hill behind it with some sort of cairn built on top. So off we went down the far side and up again to the top of the second hill. It was indeed a cairn on top, possibly used in surveying the area, as the view from the top was pretty spectacular. Took a few more photos then back down to the 4WD's.

Continuing on, we stopped briefly at Well 11 to read the 'Notice to Travellers' sign and observe a flock of zebra finches sitting on the remains of the old drinking trough. About half way between Wells 11 and 12 we came upon two huge truck tyres left at the side of the track. They had lots of tread but the sidewalls were badly damaged. Must have cost someone a lot of money! Next we were driving along the side of Lake Aerodrome, so named by *William Snell* when renovating some of the wells in 1929, because he thought it might be used to land planes on. Wrong! The salty surface proved to be too soft. The edges were good and smooth though and we were soon zipping along. In some spots we even got into top gear!

Not far past Lake Aerodrome we crested the top of a sand dune and spotted our first Camel. He was keen to keep an eye on us but at the same time kept his distance. Walter and Steve were soon following behind him trying to get closer for filming but he was not having any of this and was soon lolloping along parallel to the track dribbling from his rather large and floppy bottom lip.

Arriving at Well 12 we met the Queenslanders again just as they were departing. We had lunch, and then carried on. By now we had started climbing over the occasional sand dunes. So far they were relatively easy, all that was required was a reasonable run at them in 2nd high range 4WD. As they got bigger we dropped the tyre pressure to around 27 psi and sometimes taking a couple of goes at the harder ones, in 3rd low range 4WD.

Alongside the track just before turning off to Well 13 we passed the remains of a burnt out Land Rover, a timely reminder of what can happen if you do not keep on top of the potential spinifex build up. On arriving at Well 13 our next camping spot, we found the Queenslanders had already set up camp for the night.

Once our camp was established it was decided to repack the firewood that a day or so earlier we had loaded onto the roof rack of my ute. It had protruded below the rack in some spots and was trying to wear its way through the canvas top. We were led to believe that firewood was hard to find at some of the camping spots further up the track, hence the dead branches on the roof rack. Once this was completed we settled into cooking dinner. We had the curry that Steve had brought with him,

complimented with some rice. Then more discussion re the 'Great Blanket Theory' ensued, until around 2000hrs, when it was off to bed again.

Day 6 Well 13 to Calvert Range

1.3°C as dawn breaks. It should have been hard to get out of bed this morning, as it was so cold, but for the fact we had all managed to avoid getting up for a pee during the night because of the cold. Now we were all busting. So we arose, watered the nearby shrubbery, had breakfast, packed up and were underway by about 0820hrs.

Not far down the track we came upon our only 'traffic jam' of the trip. We had caught up with the two Queensland vehicles, which had left just before us, and were now stopped as three other vehicles heading in the opposite direction drove past. About 35 km north of Well 13 we found a track that turned left and travelled part of the way up a nearby hill. Parking at the end of the track we continued on foot to the top and were greeted with yet another impressive view.

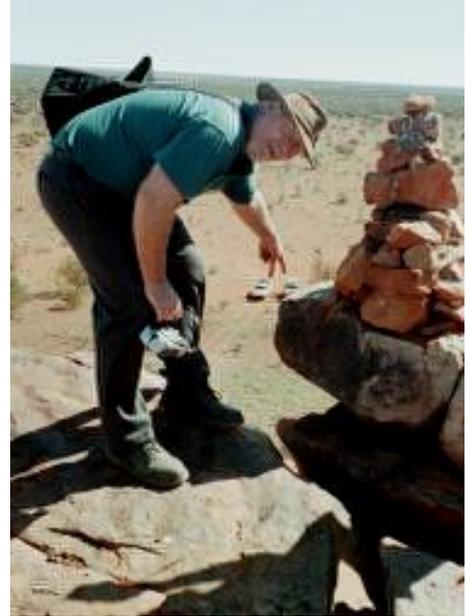


Figure 5 - Steve points to our 4WD's

Nothing much to say about Well 14 as it is basically in ruins. Somewhere around this area we noticed a distinct lack of kangaroos and emus. Up until this time we had seen literally 100's of both. This was also the end of cattle country so it was as if the kangaroos and emus hung around with the cattle! Have I mentioned my dislike of crows? Well these bloody things are literally everywhere. We saw at least 3 or 4 every day, usually near where we were camped. I refrained from shooting any of them but was horribly amazed at how they must live in practically every environment in Australia!

A feature that we all found pleasantly fascinating was the ever-changing landscape. You would think being in a desert area it would all be much the same and quite boring. It was far from boring, in fact it seemed like there were at least 20 different landscapes continually changing on a random basis. There was spinifex plains, mulga scrub, desert oak stands, sand dunes, river red gums, water holes, white salt lakes, creeks, undulating gravel plains, rocky outcrops, small grevilleas and countless species of flowering plants all with very small, vividly coloured flowers, to name just a few.

We bumped in to the Queenslanders yet again at Well 15, they had left the previous nights camp before us. Well 15 had been in ruins until it was renovated 1998 by the Geraldton 4WD Club. It had very good drinking water, which was remarkably warm. Not only did we top up one of our water containers with it but we also used some to have a quick wash, especially our hair, which was looking and feeling a bit ordinary with all the fine sand and dust around. We also enjoyed a cup of tea here before we pushed on ahead.

On the way to Well 16 we came upon the remains of *'Murray Rankin's trolley'* left here in 1972 when *Murray Rankin* and a friend, *Peter Waterfall* abandoned an attempt to walk the stock route from the south. *Rankin* returned in 1976 with two friends and successfully walked from Halls creek to Wiluna. Rather him than me! A little farther along some prankster had placed a *'This is a Bicentennial Road Project'* sign just prior to a particularly rough section of rocky limestone outcrop. As we arrived at Well 16 the Queenslanders were just leaving. A quick chat and they were gone, heading north again.

It was now lunchtime. Up until now, if we had baked beans for lunch, we just had them cold. Morris had told us how his brother, Kevin, heated up his baked beans by placing the can in a spinifex bush and setting fire to it. Apparently the idea was to pierce a hole in the can so that it didn't explode, then select the right size bush to set on fire so that the beans would be hot enough but not too hot. Not knowing what the correct size bush looked like, Steve decided to have a go anyway. Unfortunately it couldn't have been a big enough bush as the beans were only lukewarm it was an interesting idea all the same.

After lunching on our lukewarm beans, tin ham and surprisingly fresh 6-day-old bread we headed north again, about 8 km, to the Calvert Range turn off. At this point we had estimated that our fuel economy was much better than expected, therefore we could afford the extra fuel required to complete the 90 odd km round trip out to the Calvert Range and back.

Not long after turning on to the Calvert Range track I turned on the solenoid to let the top fuel tank drain into the main tank as the main tank was nearly empty. We had travelled about 541 km since refuelling at Wiluna. Walter calculated our fuel economy thus far to be 17.8 MPG (15.7 lts per 100 km). This was excellent, much better than we had estimated. We suspected it was partly due to the fact that the vehicle was only averaging around 40 kph. The fastest speed we achieved on any of the CSR was 67 kph, and that was on the edge of one of the saltpans.

Not far onto the Calvert Range track we passed some signs indicating that 1080 poison had been deployed in the area, presumably to dispose of rabbits. It must be working we hadn't seen a single rabbit in our travels. We arrived at the Calvert Range after crossing a few more sand dunes, the last of which was quite high and had an extra long run up on the downward side. That was going to be interesting on the return journey, as we would be going up not down this long run up. At the base of the Calvert Range is a track about 17 km in length that circumnavigates the range. We decided to go anticlockwise for no particular reason. Not far along this track was an offshoot to the base of the range. We decided to head up it and have a closer look. It was not long before I called 'Challenge' over the radio and suggested to Steve & Morris that we climb to the top. We all agreed and were soon clambering up the side. The view from the top was quite spectacular, but we were getting used to this, and virtually expected that it would be. Back down again we continued on around the ring road until we were almost opposite where we had climbed to the top. Now on the northeast side of the range, we found a track heading in toward the base again into a kind of canyon. As it was after 1600 hrs and we hadn't located anywhere suitable for camping we decided to set up camp *on* this sidetrack.

Dinner started, I asked Walter if he wanted a hand peeling the spuds. He said no he had done that, they just needed washing and then he would put them on the stove. I part-jokingly said 'Don't bother washing them, the action of the boiling water will do it for you.' Taking me at my word he did just that cut them up into pieces and chucked them straight in the saucepan of water still slightly dirty. As it turned out, the action of the boiling water did clean them! It's amazing what you can get away with when you're not being scrutinized by the women folk!

While dinner was cooking Morris busied himself preparing the ingredients for a damper to be cooked on the fire coals. As mentioned earlier Morris is pretty good at cooking dampers. Dinner eaten, we settled into our chairs to enjoy delicious hot damper covered in jam, followed by a couple of beers. It was during the second beer that Steve's aluminium folding chair collapsed leaving Steve a dishevelled pile on the ground. He had actually braced the chair a couple of nights previously with some stout cord, as it had been showing serious signs of imminent collapse, but to no avail. He picked himself up, dusted off and disgustedly threw the chair to one side spending the rest of the evening sitting on one of the food containers.

We decided to listen to one of the 'talking books' we had brought with us. Not having a portable cassette player we needed to play the tapes in one of the vehicle tape decks. About the second day out the tape deck in Morris's Toyota had 'shit' itself. Luckily the radio still worked! So I inserted the first tape into my vehicle cassette deck. I had the doors open but as the ute was facing where we were sitting I had to turn it up quite loud so that we could comfortably hear it. This caused the now rather loud sound to echo off the canyon walls on three sides of us. Rather a strange effect! I'm not sure what the local wildlife thought. We didn't think there was anyone else within probably 50 kms of us so we carried on listening to the story until 2000hrs, or thereabouts, when we were all too tired to continue and retired for the night.

Day 7 Calvert Range to Durba Springs

Way back before the trip started, Hazel jokingly described our intended trip to one of her friends as a '*male bonding trip*'. I now realize that part of '*male bonding*', particularly after camping for a week effectively on our own, has something to do with swearing! We were by now all swearing quite freely and consistently. It had reached a point where Steve and Morris had decided they were going to have a '*swear free day*'. Well they certainly tried but it was only partially successful. If they had put a dollar in a jar for every time they broke their self imposed rule, we would probably have had enough coins to purchase another block of beer, even at Marble Bar prices!

The night before I had issued a 'challenge' to Walter, that we should climb up to the top of the Calvert Range at the end of the canyon, then walk across the top (some 2 ½ kms) guided by compass, climb down the other side and rendezvous with Steve and Morris who would continue driving the vehicles anti-clockwise around the bottom. Walter had eagerly agreed to this idea, so after breakfast Walter and I set off on our expedition. We each carried a camera, water bottle, compass and some fruit.

In addition we carried the portable UHF CB radio so that we could stay in contact with the vehicles as they drove around the northeast end of the range. Following a compass bearing that we had calculated before departing we had a pleasant and not too demanding walk across the top to the other side. As we had to avoid various obstacles while traversing the top, we tracked slightly north of where we should have, emerging at the southeast side of the range, north of Steve and Morris waiting in the vehicles for us below. We were able to communicate with Steve and Morris but despite having a good view from the top of the range we could not see them. Walter felt that we needed to head more south but I thought the opposite. It wasn't until Morris started to drive south (I thought towards us) that his radio signal started to decrease and I realised I was wrong and Walter was right after all.

Once reunited with Morris & Steve we set off on the track back to where we had departed the main stock route. On the way Morris informed us over the radio that we hadn't been the only vehicle at the Calvert range the previous night. As Steve and he had rounded the northwest end of the range they had spotted a white Land Rover 'Discovery' parked in near the base of the cliffs. The 'Discovery' had a car camper extending from the roof, but there was no sign of anyone nearby, probably gone for a walk. I wonder if they heard our tape echoing around the mountains?

First obstacle was the long run up the sand dune we had noted on the way in the day before. Remarkably it was fairly easy to negotiate back over and down the other side. We think this was partly due to it still being damp from the previous night's dew. Around morning teatime we decided to stop at the approximate location of 'Sunday Well' and see if we could find it. Walter entered the co-ordinates for the location of 'Sunday Well', from '*Canning's journal*', into the GPS then headed off on foot with Steve in the direction indicated by the GPS. Morris drove in a large semi-circle around the area to see what he could discover and I climbed to the top of a nearby sand dune to see what if anything I could make out. Initially none of us found anything. Then as Walter and I were walking back in the direction of the car we almost fell into a depression in the ground. This we realised must be the remains of what we had been searching for. When I had viewed the area from the top of the sand dune, it was quite noticeable that there was a low-lying area of different vegetation intermingled with salty looking ground. The depression we had stumbled upon was near the middle of this area, and we suspected that during heavy or prolonged rain the whole lot would probably be under water, which would slowly silt up the well into its present condition, practically disappeared.

A short distance further on up the track Steve decided to get some more creative footage for his video documentary. Digging a shallow trench in the middle of the track he placed the video camera in it then gestured to us to drive over it. Morris drove over with no problem. Due to my slightly lower ground clearance, doubt started to creep into Steve's mind as we drove closer in my car. As we were nearly on top he starts yelling 'Stop, Stop, STOP'. We did, but right over the camera. Luckily it missed by a few centimetres.

Continuing on we rejoined the main stock route and headed toward our next stop. '*Canning's Cairn*' is a 2m high landmark perched on top of 60m high sandstone cliffs of Durba Hills built by *Canning* and his men in 1906. There are easier ways to get to the top of this near vertical cliff face, but Walter and I chose the 'head on

straight up approach'. Walter, who is more than 10 years junior to me, set up a cracking pace and I don't mind admitting it was bloody hard work keeping up with him. About two thirds of the way up Walter slowed to climb through a gap in the rocks. Realising this would make a good picture, I said 'Hang on a minute while I take a photo'. Much to my relief he said 'Good, I needed a break while I get my breath back'. When we arrived at the top and stood next to the 'cairn' our already shortened breath was decreased again by the very impressive view. A few minutes later Morris and Steve, who had found a slightly easier but longer way up, joined us to admire the view. While standing next to the cairn Walter took a 'fix' of its position with the GPS.



Figure 6 - Walter 'fixes' 'Canning's cairn' while Morris shows Steve the way forward

Climbing back down by an easier path than the one we had climbed up we were soon in the vehicles and heading toward Biella Spring our next stop. As it was now lunchtime we decided to stop in the middle of the track alongside a medium size tree, so as to avail ourselves of the only shade we could find. Lunch over we pressed on soon finding a track off to the right. It is quite a long and rough track into Biella Spring but as it turned out, well worth it. Parking a short distance from the beginning of a gorge we were soon heading up it. Biella Spring is yet another very picturesque place complete with water pools, sheer rock faces and aboriginal paintings. Part way along we looked up to see a passenger jet around 35,000 ft above us probably heading toward Adelaide or Melbourne. I bet they couldn't see us! Shortly after this Walter found someone's lost Sunglasses. We travelled about 1.5 km

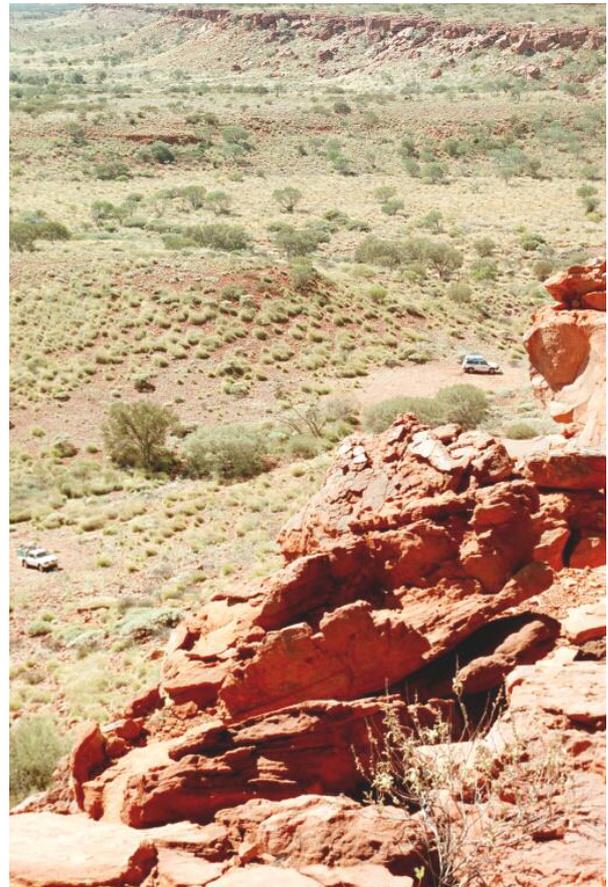


Figure 7 - View from 'Canning's' cairn

along the gorge finally stopping near a large pool and treating our feet to a sock in the eœt bloody cold water. After 15 minutes or so enjoying the ambience and serenity we made our way back to the vehicles. On arrival at the vehicles it was afternoon teatime, but we decided we had earned a beer instead. A very tasty beer it was too.

Continuing on with our journey again, this time heading toward Durba Springs our destination for the next two nights. Along the way we passed some of the most desert like landscape of the whole trip. Vast expanses of rusty-red sand between medium sized, parallel sand dunes, sparsely dotted with spinifex bushes and not much else. Then off in the distance amongst the rusty-red of the sand we spotted a bright red nestled in amongst a vivid green. As we drew closer we recognised a large collection of Sturt's desert peas. Needless to say we stopped to both photograph and videotape this jewel of the desert.

Only a few kilometres further along the track we found a track off to the right, which we wrongly identified as being the track into Durba Springs. After a couple of kilometres of quite rough track we arrived at a very picturesque camping spot that we realised wasn't Durba Springs but in fact Killagurra Spring & Gorge. So we backtracked out to the main track, then on for another 5 kms, finally rounding the end of cliff face and turned into the beginning of a beautiful gorge. This *was* Durba Springs and although we were only just getting our first glimpses it was already shaping up as being worthy of its reputation of being one of the best spots along the whole CSR. We had read and heard a lot about Durba Springs and how good it was. Well we were certainly *not* disappointed. There are probably a couple of acres of camping area, so there is plenty of room to spread out. It really is a great camping spot, lush green grass under large gnarly gum trees almost completely surrounded by 15m high cliffs. Running down one side is a long pool of slowly moving water. We were all thinking this is about as good as it gets!

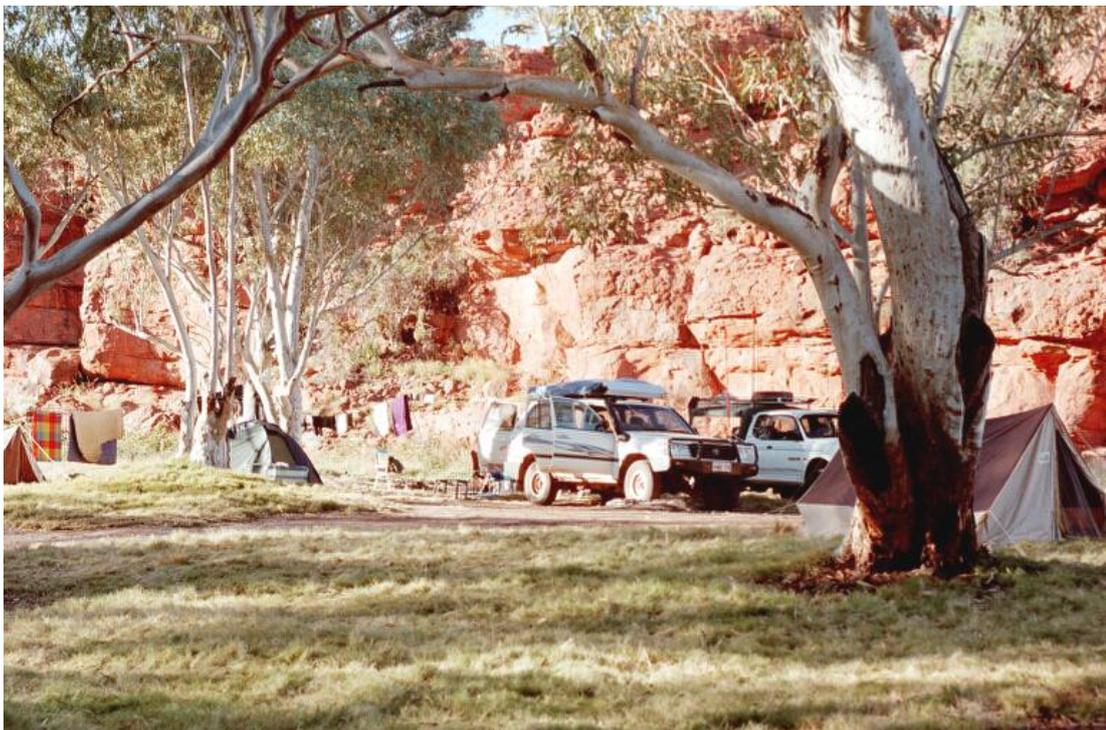


Figure 8 - Durba Springs camping area

As we drove in there were two other vehicles occupying the camping area. We selected a camping spot from the many that were there and started setting up camp. As this was to be camp for the next two days and nights we all took a little extra time selecting our exact 'pitching' spot. Walter and I decided to go for luxury and pitched my canvas 4-man tent in which we placed the mattresses from our swags, sleeping bags, clothes bags etc. It wasn't long before our camp was looking quite 'decorative' due to the motley collection of sleeping bags airing on the line. This was followed by ever increasing amounts of shirts, undies and socks hanging on the line as we all in turn washed our dirty clothes. This annoying but necessary chore completed and with the results flapping in the gentle breeze like a line of 'bunting', we unanimously decided that it was time for another beer.

There is another startling feature of this very picturesque place, the *'Durba Desert Dunny'*. Up to 100 people have been known to camp in this beautiful spot simultaneously. For many years a drop-pit toilet had been the only source of comfort but due to its frequent use it had to be relocated five times. As it was feared the toilet might pollute the springs it has been replaced by a twin (male + female) composting toilet. Money raised from donations paid the \$17,000 to build and transport this impressive building. The major sponsor was *Toyota* whose advertising slogan is *'Oh, what a feeling'*! When the urge arose we all tried this unique 'dunny' out and were all impressed.

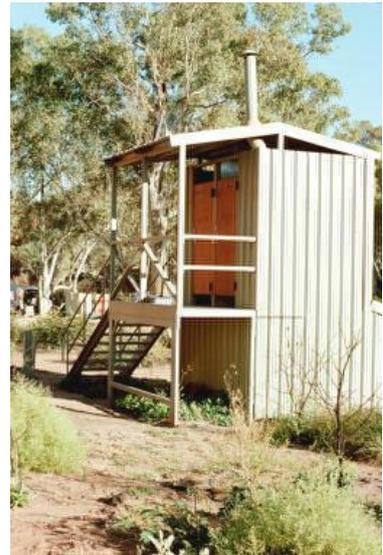


Figure 9 - Durba Desert Dunny

By now one of the vehicles that was camped on our arrival had departed. Feeling the need for some verbal socialising we headed over to the remaining vehicle. Julia & Bruce were travelling the CSR by themselves.

Bruce worked at Argyle Mine and as it transpired had taken over his current job from someone Morris knew. They lived in Perth not that far from Walter, it sure is a small world! Bruce was a little concerned that they may not have sufficient diesel to visit all the spots that they intended. As Morris was completely satisfied that he had more than enough diesel to reach our fuel dump at Parngurr, he offered Bruce the option to purchase 40 lts.

It was soon dusk and we headed back to our camp to organise a makeshift screen, behind which we each had a wash. Firewood is a bit thin on the ground here due to the large number of people that camp here. As you will remember the roof rack of my car was bristling with firewood, which we had collected near the start of the track, just for such an emergency. So a campfire was built using our transported supply of firewood. Then it was mealtime again, a bit more socialising and then bed.

Day 8 Durba Springs

Didn't rise so early this morning as we weren't going anywhere (well not by vehicle anyway). Morris cooked us bacon & eggs for breakfast. Amazingly we had only lost two eggs to the rigors of the trip so far. Steve decided to have a go at repairing his

damaged chair. Suitable branches were chosen, cut to length and whittled down in diameter, all to no avail. We all put in our 'two bobs worth' but none of the ideas were very practical. Steve kept complaining about the poor quality of the chair but no mention was made of the 'enormous' strain that the chair had been under! The eventual solution was to place the chair, minus its back legs, on one of the plastic food boxes. This worked reasonably well and the chair was used like this for the rest of the trip.

A petrol smell had been noticed near the back left-hand side of my ute, which we assumed was a slight leak from the fuel filter I had installed between the top tank and the bottom tank. However while cleaning out the ever-invasive spinifex from under the ute, I discovered it was in fact a leak in the main tank. I assume that vibration from the rough tracks we had travelled on must have made one of the spot welds under the tank split allowing petrol to ooze out very slowly (luckily). I attempted to fix it with some metal type putty that Morris had. As the surface couldn't be kept dry long enough to apply the putty, it wouldn't stick properly. After leaving it for half an hour and realising it hadn't worked Walter had a go. First he managed to actually stop the petrol oozing out by rubbing a block of soap into the crack. Now that the surface could be kept dry a second application of the metal putty worked properly. After it had dried hard I placed some heavy-duty black tape down the front of the tank and along underneath covering the putty, this was to ensure that the vast amounts of spinifex brushing underneath wouldn't pry the putty off. It worked well. In fact it is still like it!

After lunch we decided to head on up the gorge to have a good look around. As Bruce had decided to take Morris up on his offer to sell some diesel, we dropped off two jerry cans of diesel at Bruce's camp on our way past. The gorge contained a series of four large pools of water each one higher as you progress along. Three gigantic round rocks, like huge marbles, block access to the fourth pool. We eventually found a way to climb around them, but it was pretty hard work. To get this far had taken well over an hour. Along the way we had travelled between some really spectacular sheer sided gorge walls and across lots of rocks and skirted around the edge of the pools of water. We decided that if we could climb to the top we could probably walk back to camp fairly easily. Finding a way to the top was relatively easy, as was travelling across the top back to the vicinity of the camping area. The hard part was in finding a way to climb back down the gorge walls to the camping area. After a few false starts we eventually found a way down.

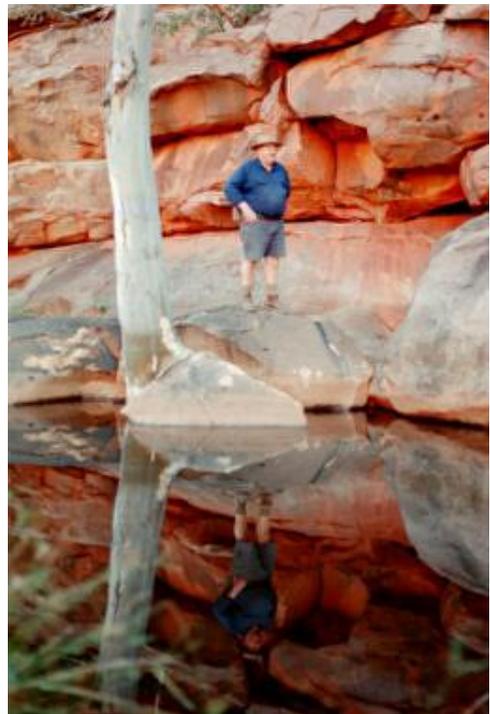


Figure 10 - Morris reflects

On arrival back at camp we found a few more vehicles had arrived and were settling in. One of these was a Land Rover 'Discovery' that we soon realised was the same

one Morris and Steve had seen out at the Calvert Range. We wandered over for a chat and learnt that Justin and partner were travelling north along the CSR on their own and were having a bit of trouble with the suspension on the 'Discovery'. Borrowing Bruce's satellite phone they had ordered a new set of springs to be delivered to Newman. In the mean time they had just had to tackle all eventualities as slowly as possible to allow the incorrectly working suspension to cope.



Figure 11 - Durba Spring camping area

Part of the 'payment' negotiated for supplying the diesel to Bruce, had been to use his hired satellite phone to make a couple of quick calls back to Perth. Later in the evening Morris and Walter rang their respective wives. Morris only connected with the answering machine but Walter was able to talk to Jan, who was quite impressed that he was ringing from the middle of nowhere. The call was kept very short, as the call cost was around \$3.60 per minute. This was the first contact we had made since leaving home 8 days earlier. The wonders of modern science!

Day 9 Durba Springs to Lake Disappointment

We were up early, had breakfast, packed up and said goodbye to our new friends before 0830 hrs. It was a bit sad leaving Durba, with its excellent campsite and amenities, but the rest of the track was beckoning us to continue. So onward we went, tackling yet more sand dunes, passing through large stands of desert oaks and through the ever changing and never boring landscape.

We found the turn off for Dieble Spring and headed out along it. A few kilometres along it we encountered another vehicle, a Toyota Land Cruiser, heading out. When we pulled off the track to let them pass they stopped for a yarn. It transpired that they were the people that had been bogged in Savoury Creek for 22 hours, which we had heard of while we were camped at Durba. Apparently, although they had attempted to cross at the recommended spot, indicated by an empty 44-gallon drum placed on the bank of the creek, they had become bogged half way across. As they were travelling on their own they had to wait patiently for the next vehicles to arrive. Luckily the next vehicles to arrive on the scene were able to winch them out of their predicament.

Continuing on we found a track heading into a gorge in the Dieble Range. At the end of the track Walter and Steve decided to continue on foot, while Morris and I elected to stay with the vehicles. Walter and Steve were gone for about an hour altogether, staying in contact via the handheld UHF CB. The going was pretty tough,

overgrown and hard work with no defined track to follow. They were unsuccessful in locating the spring, which they suspected might be further along the gorge than they had ventured.

Heading off again we soon arrived at the western end of the Dieble Hills, where we located the camping spot used by the people we had passed on the way in, remains of campfire were still warm. Lunchtime again, then we were off back out to the main track. First visiting Well 18, which had been fully restored in 1999, our next destination was 'Onegunyah Rockhole' at the base of Terrace Hill. When conditions are right the rockhole, which is in a small amphitheatre, is full of water and can be covered with a type of water lily known as 'nardoo'. No such luck, there was barely any water at all, certainly no lilies and lots of mosquitoes and other not very nice insects. So it was onward again, this time to Savoury Creek.

On arrival at Savoury Creek, instead of heading west (upstream) to the recommended crossing point we chose to head east first to have a look at Lake Disappointment. *Frank Hann* named Lake Disappointment in 1897, as he '*was disappointed in not finding water in it*'. On the way to the 'lake' we passed a spot where someone had obviously crossed over. Stopping at the end of the track still quite some distance from the now visible Lake Disappointment we had morning tea before returning to the possible crossing spot. Here Steve went for a paddle to ascertain the condition of the crossing. It was decided that all though a bit slippery at the beginning of the run, it was otherwise not bad and no deeper than knee deep. Morris crossed first without any problems commenting as he reached the other side '*Oh what a feeling*'. Then it was my turn, again without any problems. We then wondered why it was recommended to travel 5 km or so to cross this creek further upstream, when we had just crossed it here relatively easily. Perhaps we were just lucky! Now heading east along the north bank of the creek, we had not travelled more than about a kilometre when we met a Toyota 'Personnel Carrier' heading west. It turned out to be an elderly German gentleman travelling on his own. We explained to him where we had crossed over, then offered to accompany him back and make sure he crossed without incident. He accepted our offer, so we accompanied him back to the crossing point. Once he was safely across we waved goodbye and we were soon heading east again.

After deciding not to travel the extra 10 kms each way to visit Well 20 we found a good camping spot amongst a stand of desert oaks and set up camp for the night. This was a special dinner this night as it was Walter's Birthday. Walter's carefully cradled bottle of red wine was to be drunk with dinner. After the first taste Morris and I decided the 'red' was best left to those that would appreciate it. So Morris and I had another beer and Walter and Steve finished off the bottle.

Day 10 Lake Disappointment to West of Georgia Bore

As we finalised the packing up of our camp, just prior to us heading off for another days travel, a couple of vehicles passed our campsite heading south. They were either 'early birds' or must have been camped reasonably close to us during the previous night. Not far up the track we turned off a short distance to gain a closer look at the vast expanse of inhospitable salt, which made up Lake Disappointment.



Walking out on the lake was a bit like being on the surface of the moon or other similar uninviting place. It was very bright and glary, firm under foot for the most part but a slushy consistency in other parts. Just for the hell of it Walter scratched the date in the sand, which will probably remain visible until next time it rains.

Figure 12 - Lake Disappointment

Onward again, passing around some smaller salt lakes. Along this section we clocked our fastest speed while travelling on the CSR, 67 kph, as the track in the vicinity of the salt lakes is very flat and smooth. 'Flat' and 'smooth' definitely are not the words to use for parts of the track approaching Georgia Bore. Sections of, what seemed never ending track, are very badly corrugated, causing excessive vibration of the entire vehicle, no matter what speed you travelled at. It was while travelling along a particularly rough section that both my driving light mounting brackets fractured and broke off, allowing the lights to drop off, never to be seen again.

At one point the track splits in two, rejoining again 38 km further on. We chose the southern track, as although it was the alternate track as apposed to the CSR itself, it did travel passed the ruins of Wells 20 & 21. As we approached Georgia Bore the landscape changed yet again, to flat grassy plains dotted with the odd large gums bounded by rolling hills. Arriving at Georgia Bore in the late afternoon, mentally saying goodbye to the CSR, we drove into the middle of the campsite. Even though



Figure 13 - Landscape south of Georgia Bore

it was a reasonably good campsite, complete with a fully operational hand pump type bore, with quite good water, we somehow didn't feel comfortable here. Was it the other campers, who all seemed to be very clean and tidy, even their vehicles looked like they hadn't been 'off road' or were we turning 'feral'. I'm not sure what it was, but we unanimously decided to carry on and find our own campsite and some more 'serenity'. We headed east out along the Talawana Track towards Parngurr where our Fuel drop was. The Talawana Track was originally constructed by the legendary *Len Beadell* in 1963. Like much of *Len's* 'tracks' there are numerous long and very straight stretches. Apart from some corrugated sections of the track that are particularly rough, the rest was in pretty good nick, so we were soon belting along around 60-70 kph.

After travelling 22 km we turned north up a track heading towards the Harbutt Range. Roughly a kilometre along this track we pulled off on to the east side about 100m and set up camp. That's when Morris first noted his second puncture. Pulling the wheel off, removing the split rim and the tube, he soon found the cause of the problem. Some of the wire reinforcing within the tyre had started to push through on the inside puncturing the tube. This was probably caused by the large amounts of rocky areas we had travelled over deforming the quite hard rubber and fracturing the wire belting. While Morris was repairing the tyre the rest of us were looking for firewood. Some smaller wood suitable for lighting the fire was soon collected but anything large was proving elusive. Steve found a small but dead tree still standing over on the west side of the road. I hadn't carted a chainsaw over a 1000 km for nothing... we soon had plenty of firewood!

Day 11 West of Georgia Bore to Rudall River

Awakening to another crisp fresh morning we had soon finished breakfast, packed up, rejoined the Talawana Track and were again heading west towards the Parngurr Turn off. At the Parngurr turn off is another hand operated pump similar to that found at Georgia Bore. There is also a campsite here but it leaves a lot to be desired. The main problem was the flyblown, overflowing 44-gallon rubbish bins. This was in fact the first rubbish we had seen since leaving Wiluna. The recommended way to deal with rubbish on the CSR is to burn it. Everything except glass and tins will burn away to nothing but ash. Even aluminium cans will disappear if the fire is hot enough. If you don't take glass of any sort with you that solves the glass problem, so no stubbies, only cans. Stubbies are also heavier than cans and are more likely to break. We only lost one aluminium can during the whole trip, probably caused by the can bursting after the vehicle bounced over a particularly nasty bump. Any empty tins are first burnt to remove the shiny surface that prevents them rusting and then buried to rot away over time.

Leaving the revolting rubbish bins to fester away, we headed north up the track to Parngurr (also known as Cotton Creek), which is situated on the southern boundary of the Rudall River National Park. About 20 km along this track we crested a rise and much to our amazement, there laid out before us roughly a kilometre away, was Parngurr Aboriginal Settlement. It was much bigger than we had imagined, approximately 50 odd buildings. As we drove in we passed an airstrip on the west side of the road just on the outskirts of the community. We located the administrator,

Abdul, and were asking him about our fuel drums as a light aircraft flew low and noisily overhead. It was the mail plane that had just buzzed us. Abdul hastily finished explaining to us where our two fuel drums were located and was then rushing off with a bag of outward mail to the airstrip. We soon located the drums behind one of the residences and proceed to refuel the Toyota with diesel from one of the 44-gallon drums (205 litres).

Before leaving home, Morris had made up a fitting to assist us with the decanting of the fuel. It consisted of a 44-gallon drum cap with two holes drilled through it. One hole is suitably threaded to accept an air valve fitting and the other hole has a small tube welded through it, to which a piece of clear plastic tubing is attached to either side. The idea is to exchange the new cap, with one end of the plastic tube lowered into the drum, in place of the existing drum cap, connect a 12v tyre air compressor to the air valve and place the end of the other plastic tube in the tank or jerry can to be filled. Switching on the compressor pressurises the 44, forcing the fuel up the hose in the drum and out the hose into the item to be filled. It works very well but is a bit slow due to the small volume of air expelled by tyre type air compressors.

A short while later Abdul was back from the mail run and offered us the use of a hand operated 44-gallon drum pump. We fitted the pump to the second 44 and although a lot more effort was required we soon had the unleaded petrol emptied into the ute's two tanks and into two of the spare plastic containers we had carried for this purpose. Using the hand pump we then finished emptying the diesel into Morris two tanks, two jerry cans and one of the spare plastic containers. Refuelling completed, it was then on to the community shop before it closed to purchase 4 frozen loaves of bread, 1 x dozen eggs and some baking powder (for making dampers). Steve and Walter were also able to phone home from one of two public phone boxes in the community.

We gained permission to use the track heading north from Parngurr through Aboriginal land, and then following brief instructions, were soon heading out into the 'never never'. The track was reasonable to start with, travelling a few kilometres to a picturesque but reasonably deep creek crossing. While Steve and Walter checked out the depth of the crossing and probable destination of surrounding tracks, Morris and I organised lunch. It was decided not to cross here, mainly due to the deep wheel ruts and soft mud near the far side of the crossing. Lunch finished we backtracked to check out a sidetrack we had passed on the way to the creek.

Following this meandering track to a dry riverbed but equally steep crossing. I think it was here that the abrupt departure angle created by the steep exit on the opposite bank, straightening out the trailer plug bracket and partly breaking the trailer plug on the ute, all of which is 400 mm off the ground! The crossing was otherwise fairly easy. We gained a good view of the sky as we scrambled up the steep slope on the opposite side, cresting the top of the bank we suddenly discovered a sharp turn to the right was required to stay on the track. Glad to be on the opposite side but a bit disorientated we consulted the GPS, which continually records a 'track' (also referred to as a 'bread crumb trail'). It showed we had travelled in a large clockwise loop and were back on the track that we would have been on had we crossed at the first crossing. 'Track' is probably too good a word to describe the very overgrown and sometimes hard to distinguish 'trail' we were now following, it obviously hadn't

been used for quite a while. If it weren't for a set of nearly indiscernible wheel ruts we would be truly 'bush bashing'. As it was the bushes either side of the 'trail' were brushing down both side of the vehicles.

A couple of days before leaving home I had polished all the paintwork on the ute in preparation for just such a circumstance. My theory was that the slippery polished surface would allow branches brushing passed to slip by easily without scratching the paintwork. Morris hadn't had time to polish his Toyota and it was about 180 mm wider than the ute so the sideswiping branches left more of a mark on it. Once back home simply washing the ute restored it to the condition it was in before the trip. The Toyota on the other hand required some serious polishing to restore it to its pre trip condition. So the moral of the story is to polish your vehicle before you go on a trip.

We continued 'bashing' along the 'trail' for about 15 km when we came upon the remains of a burnt out caravan. You might ask, 'How did it get there?' We can only assume the 'trail' had once been in a much better condition than it currently is. The track ahead was blocked by a large sand dune. Climbing up and over it was not insurmountable but the question was 'Where were we and did we need to climb over it'. That's when we realised the low almost nondescript hill to the east of us must be Camel Rock, indicating we had travelled too far north and would have to backtrack to find the turn off to the west. We drove over to the nearby Camel Rock and while Steve and I proceeded to 'conquer' it, Walter calculated from the map and the GPS the distance back to where the track heading west should be. The view from the top of Camel Rock, although not very high, was very scenic. It revealed quite a large expanse of water in a number of linked shallow pools. Another hill conquered we climbed back down.

Heading off in the vehicles we retraced our track back to within 500 metres of where the turn off should be. Then travelling very slowly we inched (can't really say 'centimetred') our way forwards, all eyes pealed searching for the turnoff. 'There it is.' Walter shouted as we drove straight past what indeed turned out to be the turn off. No wonder we missed it the first time, it was almost completely grown over. We thought the 'trail' we had been on was almost nonexistent, well it was like a highway in comparison to this new 'trail' (can't think of a word meaning less than 'trail'). We could barely make out which way it travelled. About a kilometre of almost pure 'bush bashing' we emerged on a *slightly* less overgrown track, that was much easier to follow and travelling in the right direction.



Figure 14 - Part of a 30 strong herd of camels

Alongside the track at a number of locations we spotted various size herds of camels. The largest herd contained 30 camels ranging in age from an old bull to reasonably young camels. The young camels were very inquisitive and we watched as they led the rest of the herd quite close to where we had pulled up to observe them. So there we were watching them while they were watching us watching them...

Travelling for another hour or so, the 'trail' slowly improving to 'track' status, we drove into a large clearing where the track came to a 'T' intersection and there was a large official looking sign facing back the way we had just come. The sign had words on it, to the effect that ...passed it was aboriginal land, ...to respect their privacy, ...and permission was required to travel along the track. Just as well we had done the right thing! A bit further along we came to the Rudall River. It was mostly



Figure 15 - Camped on the Rudall River bed

dry but dotted with large pools of water. The track mainly follows along the south bank of the river and occasionally along the soft sand bed or bank of the river itself. As we were leaving one of these sand banks we spotted our first dingo. He or she was not too fussed about us and only trotted off after we had driven to within about 200m or so. A short distance further along we stopped and decided to set up camp for the night on one of the sand banks. There was plenty of driftwood lying around to build a fire with. There was also some caught in the branches of a tree some 2m

above the height of our camp, we assumed from when the river last had water in it. Comments were made about possible flash floods, but it was decided that it would have to be an awful lot of rain in a very short space of time before we would have to worry about being flooded out. We had a bit of a wash in one of the water holes but the water was too bloody cold to have a swim.



Figure 16 - One of the Rudall River pools

Day 12 Rudall River to Watrarra Pool

Quite a strong gusty easterly wind blew for most of the night causing Steve to have to get up and re-anchor his tent. Morris's tent, survived OK as did Walter and my swags which, being low to the ground are practically unaffected by wind (except the internal type...phew).

After breakfast we packed up and were soon under way. About an hour later Steve yelled 'Challenge' over the radio. Another impressive and steep sided hill loomed above us as we made our way to the bottom of it. Walter elected to stay in the car, as he wanted to consult the maps, GPS etc. for the next part of the trip. With the easterly wind still blowing strongly Morris, Steve and I climbed to the top for yet another magnificent view. Near the top the wind blew Morris's cap off and it sailed down the other side. Following the cap down we located a small cave situated out of the wind that showed recent signs of either wallabies or euros (type of kangaroo) having camped in it.

We followed the river for a few more kilometres before we headed slightly away from it and drove into comparatively open area with only the odd shrubby tree and spinifex. Near the middle of this more open space we came across an abandoned dirt airstrip in quite reasonable condition.

Not able to resist the temptation and with the excuse that Steve wanted to get some side on video footage of us travelling, we were soon zipping along the airstrip side by side. The strip was a nearly a kilometre long and well marked. Our fun over we continued on a few more kilometres along the track until we came to the main north south road that runs through the middle of the park.

Being a well-graded dirt road, it is the main route used by the Parngurr Aboriginal Community in the south of the park and the Punmu Aboriginal Community in the north east of the park to visit one another. The 'Martu' aboriginal people populate both Parngurr and Punmu and are frequently travelling between the two communities. Only travelling a short distance along this comfortably graded road we soon had to leave it again, after first crossing the Rudall River to the north side and stopping to read a plaque embedded in a cairn alongside the road. Turning left on to a track heading east we travelled along about 5 kilometres of bone jarring rough track. The track turned and crossed the Rudall River back to the south side once again. Not far over on the south side the track headed both east and west parallel to the river. Morris and Steve decided to check out the track to the east and Walter and I headed along the west track. Staying in contact via the radio we soon

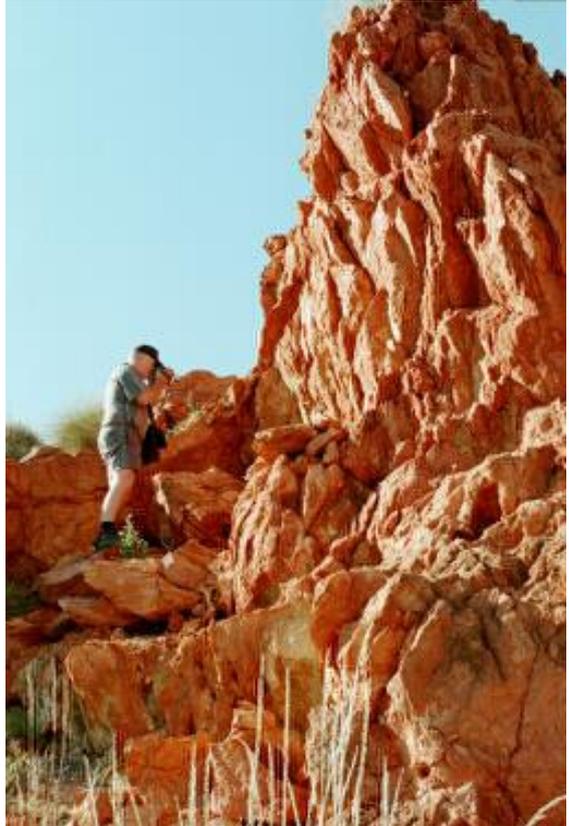


Figure 17 - Steve filming entrance to cave

learned that Morris had found a camping spot (judging from the map it was probably 'No. 11 Pool') but it was not much to shout about and they had turned around and were heading up behind us. About the same time we met two vehicles heading towards us. Stopping to talk to the first vehicle, they said that there was quite a good camping spot a bit further along which, they had shared overnight with an elderly couple travelling in a Nissan Patrol, towing a campervan. They also mentioned that the 'old guy' 'Tom' liked a chat. Saying goodbye we headed off toward this promising campsite and its occupants, closely followed by Steve and Morris who had by then caught up with us.

We rolled into the new and indeed promising campsite that we decided from the map was called 'Tjinkulatjatjarra Pool'. (*No I'm not swearing, nor have my fingers gone berserk on the keyboard and I've double-checked the spelling.*) Parked up to one end was the Nissan Patrol and campervan we had been told of but no obvious sign of the



Figure 18 – Camped beside Tjinkulatjatjarra Pool

inhabitants. There was plenty of room for us at the other end of the campsite, so we swung in and parked the two vehicles. Near the riverbank and halfway between our end and the Nissan was a campfire still smouldering. It being nearly lunchtime Steve and I prodded the fire back to life and piled on some of the nearby kindling. At this moment an elderly gentleman alighted from the cab of the Nissan (we discovered later that

he had been talking on his HF Radio and hadn't heard us drive up). Startled by suddenly seeing us there, he said, "Feel free to use our fire". Equally startled by his sudden appearance Steve and I both assumed (*wrongly*) that he was being sarcastic. Mumbling something like 'Bugger your fire, we'll light our own', we promptly proceeded to start another fire at our end of the campsite. Realising we had misinterpreted his meaning he came over to us and insisted that it was all right for us to use the 'common' fire. Slowly realising our mistake Steve and I somewhat sheepishly agreed to use the common fire and then introduced ourselves. That's how we first met Tom a retired farmer/mechanical engineer and his wife Gwen both from Jerramungup, with whom we later became good friends.

As we weren't going anywhere for the rest of the day, we had plenty of time for lunch. Morris decided it was time to try out the 'Butter Milk Pancake Mix' that we had in our provisions. It consists of a 1 litre plastic container about ¼ full of pancake mixture. To use, the container is simply topped up with water, shaken vigorously for one minute and the resulting creamy mixture poured in small dollops into a hot frypan. Spread out thinly, when browned flip over to brown the opposite side and

then serve up and enjoy. Bloody delicious, especially when topped with jam or honey.

Hunger pains temporarily satisfied, we decided to go for a stroll and climb a nearby hill to the south of our location. Arming ourselves with water and camera gear we set off toward the hill. It was about a kilometre to the base of the hill and a reasonably easy climb to the top. We were rewarded with a great view through about 270°. The remaining 90° could only be viewed by walking along the top of the ridge to the northern end of the hill. From here we could see another pool of water further along the riverbed adjacent to a large sandbar (we deduced from the map that it was Watrara Pool). The face of the hill on this side was quite steep but we managed to climb down and across to this new pool of water we had spied from above. We all agreed it would make a good campsite and that it was more sheltered from the strong easterly wind than where we were currently parked. All we had to do was work out how to get the vehicles there. From our vantage point on top of the hill we had seen

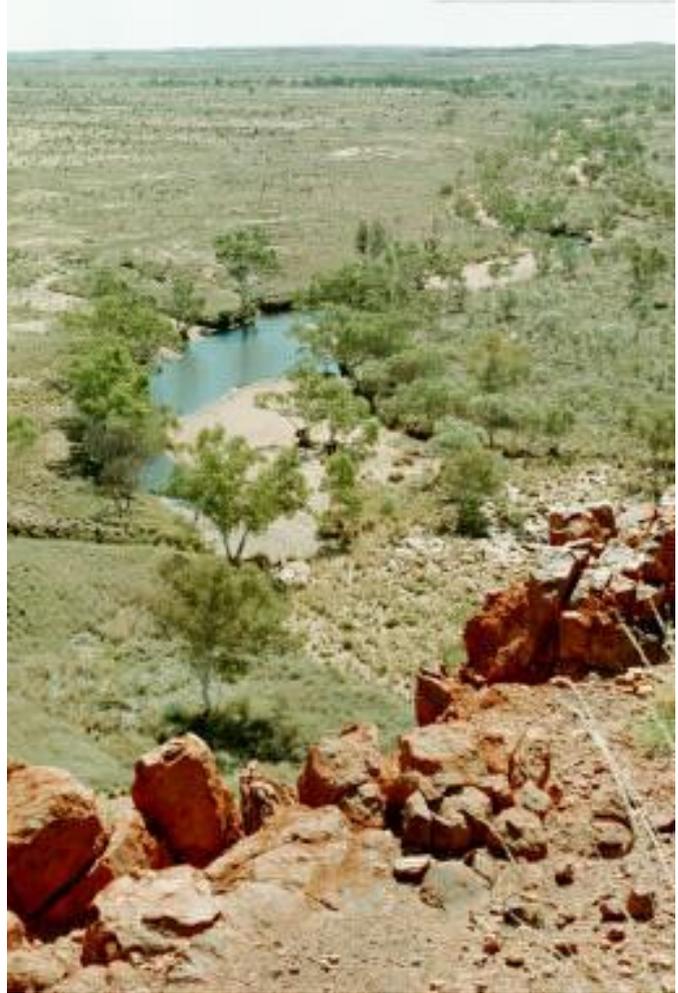


Figure 19 - Watrara Pool from nearby hill

a track looping round the south side of the hill reasonably close to our intended campsite. From the end of this track we blazed a bit of a trail through where we could safely bring the vehicles, removing a few hazardous rocks as we went. Then we walked back to the vehicles, this time via the riverbed. On arrival, we packed up the vehicles, explained our intentions to Tom and Gwen and headed off on the track around the bottom of the hill. When we got to the end of this track Morris and I drove the vehicles along our newly blazed trail, with Steve and Walter alongside and out in front to make sure we proceeded without any damage. Without too much difficulty or damage we ended up parked on the sand bar. Not long after we arrived at this new camp Tom and Gwen drove around to see if it was really a better camping spot or if we had just moved away from them. We assured them that it wasn't the latter and they agreed that it was a good spot to camp.

Tent and swags erected, fire ready to go, it was time for a well-earned beer. While we had our beer Morris and Walter took the opportunity to soak their feet in the cool water while Steve filmed some footage of proceedings. Later I took over the role of filmmaker and filmed Walter preparing and cooking the vegetables for dinner and

Steve cooking the sausages and steak on the barbecue plate. After dinner Walter experimented with taking a couple of long exposure photos of us at the campfire and of the fire reflecting on the river red gum's white bark. As the easterly was still blowing quite strongly Steve took extra precautions and tied his tent down to some large rocks. The rocks achieved their purpose and the only reason Steve got up sometime in the early hours of the morning was for a piddle.

Day 13 Watrarra Pool to Desert Queen Baths (DQB)

After breakfast and the camp packed up the first job was to drive back out of the riverbed onto the nearby track. This was accomplished reasonably easily and without any damage. Driving back around the hill again and into the camp where Tom was, we stopped to have a chat. Also parked here was the Land Rover 'Discovery' we had previously met at Durba Springs. They were heading out to Newman to pick up their new suspension. We suggested that they organise the parts to be delivered to Parnurr and to then pick them up from there, as it was a lot closer than Newman. This agreed to, Tom offered to organise it on his HF radio. So we left them to it. Tom saying that he would probably see us at Desert Queen Baths (DQB), our next destination. Off we went along the bumpy track back out to the main north south road. Once we were heading north we were able to travel around 70-80 kph on the well-graded dirt road but only for short periods between the sandy sections, potholes and detours.

'Challenge' called Steve over the radio. To the right of us was the start of a range of hills running away from us towards the east. Taking up Steve's challenge we turned off the track and drove 'cross country' to the base of the nearest part of the range.



Figure 20 - View along top of range looking east

We all climbed to the top and were greeted, with what had by now become commonplace, another glorious view stretching off to the far horizon. On the South side we could see a group of camels way off on the flat heading east and a couple of kilometres out on the northern side of the range, a lone kangaroo determinedly bounding along as if he was on a 'promise'. The clarity of the air was truly amazing with no sign of any haze or distortion. Even with binoculars the view was clear and sharp for as far as you could see, a good 40-50 kilometres in some places.

Climbing down the hill to the bottom I declared that we might as well have morning tea, as it was nearly 1000hrs. It was quite hot in the sun and Morris suggested we find some shade first. Some time later we turned right and headed southeast towards DQB. Not far along we met three vehicles coming out. We pulled over to let them pass on the narrow track and as they pulled alongside we asked what the track was like ahead. They explained that it was a very rough 18 kilometres of track out to the DQB but that it was well worth a visit. We pressed on a bit further until we finally found a large tree near the track where we could park in its shade for morning tea.

Continuing along the track we drew alongside a cone shaped hill with what looked like a large cairn on top. We found out later that it was known locally as 'Tit Hill', it did bear a striking resemblance. Morris and Walter weren't interested in my 'challenge' to climb it as they had already experienced one 'challenge' for the morning. This left Steve and I to tackle it on our own while they continued on ahead. It was reasonably hard going as Steve and I scrambled up the steep sides to the top. From the top we could just make out the Toyota a few kilometres further up ahead winding along the track before it disappeared out of site over a rise. What from the ground had looked like a cairn was in fact a natural rock formation left behind as the rest of the hill had slowly eroded away over time. I was just able to reach the very top of this natural structure and placed another small rock right on the top making 'Tit Hill' another 45mm higher than it was. I trust this doesn't interfere with any surveys of the area!

Back in the ute again after climbing back down, we made contact via the radio with Morris and Walter who were, by then, quite a long way ahead of us. We just made out that they were nearly at DQB when their signal faded away. Steve and I continued along the rough track for another three or four kilometres and tried the radio again. Re-establishing contact we discovered that Morris and Walter had started to set up camp at the DQB camping area. One problem they had was a shortage of firewood, so they asked that we pick some up along the way. Keeping an eye out for firewood as we travelled on, we soon found some suitable dead branches that we piled up on the roof rack. Then finding a small dead tree near the track, rather than waste time cutting it up, we simply tied it to the tow bar and dragged it along behind us. We arrived at DQB complete with a now slightly smaller dead tree in tow. We joined Morris and Walter, who had been waiting for us to arrive so that they could finish preparing lunch with some of the stores that we were carrying. Apart from one other vehicle camped a short distance away from us there was no one else at the campsite until Tom and Gwen drove in and set up camp nearby.

Lunch completed it was time to explore. We headed off in the direction of the 'baths' armed with the usual cameras, water bottles as well as an empty 25 ltr water container to fill up and supplement our dwindling water supply. We filled the

container at the first pool we came to and left it on the side to pick up on our outward trip. This pool was quite spectacular as were the two higher pools. As we made our way further up the gorge the surrounding beauty made it obvious why this was considered the 'Jewel in the crown' of the Rudall River National Park. The gorge was similar in a number of ways to the gorge at Durba Springs and I would recommend any one in the area make a point of visiting it. At the last pool we had to stop as the only way around it was to swim and none of us were that keen.

Morris and Walter preceded us back down the gorge by about half an hour due to Steve and I stopping to take various bits of video footage. By the time we got back to the first pool Morris and Walter had washed, picked up the

water container and proceeded back to camp. Steve and I also decided to have a

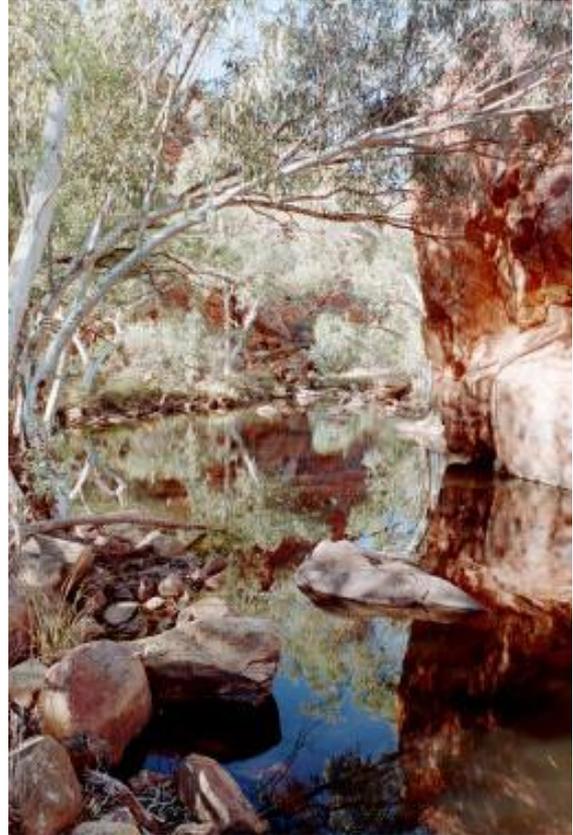


Figure 22 - Desert Queen Baths



Figure 21 - more Desert Queen Baths

wash, after all it was the 'Desert Queen Baths'. Stripping off our clothes we waded into the pool. It wasn't cold, it was bloody freezing and we were only in the water to just above our knees. Feeling brave (or foolish) Steve ventured in deeper until he squatted down with the water up to his neck. Not to be outdone, I did the same but went completely under the water. Luckily I had had a bit of a wash before attempting this daredevil trick as no sooner was I under than I was back out on dry land. We both agreed it was the coldest skinny dip either of us had ever had but now back in the warm sun we certainly felt refreshed. We probably smelt a little less offensive as well. Back at camp we found Morris and Walter already into the beer. Not a bad idea we thought so soon joined them. The campsite had also grown in numbers while we had been away. There were now no less than ten vehicles spread out over the camping area.

After dinner Morris cooked up another of

his delicious dampers but this time following the instructions he had read in a book by *Jack Absalom*. Mix ingredients to taste, only knead a small amount to leave as much air in the mix as possible. Place in cast iron camp oven, preferably one with a lip around the edge of the lid. *Morris lines the camp oven with aluminium foil to stop the mix sticking to the sides*. Dig out some hot coals from the fire and place to one side of the fire. Position the camp oven on top of the coals and place more hot coals on the lid (the lip helps hold the coals on top). Lift lid after half an hour and check if sufficiently cooked then cut into chunks smear with butter, jam etc. and enjoy. We invited Tom and Gwen over for supper of damper and coffee, which was enjoyed by all.

We didn't get to bed till nearly 2100 hrs this night and we were kept awake for a while by the dull noise of the other campers around us. We were not used to this extra noise, unlike the other nights camped on our own in the 'deafening silence'.

Day 14 Desert Queen Baths to Carawine Gorge

As Tom and Gwen travel relatively slowly they like to get away early in the morning so as not to hold any one up on the track. We said goodbye to them as we were starting breakfast. After leaving the campsite ourselves we made a detour to a steep track we had seen the previous day heading up the side of a hill to a large cave. Morris drove to the top, discovered there was nowhere to turn around, dropped Steve off and then reversed all the way down the very steep track to the bottom. Walter and I parked the ute at the bottom and walked up to the top. We looked around the cave, took a few photos, and then Steve cheekily yelled to Morris that he was ready to go down. Morris obligingly drove all the way back up again and picked Steve up. Not wishing to miss an opportunity Walter and I clambered on the bull bar and hitched a lift back to the bottom.

We then proceeded out along the very rough track back toward the main north south road through the park. As we passed 'Tit Hill' again the extra height on the 'nipple' was just visible from the track.

Arriving back at the intersection where the DQB track started we turned right back on the main north/south road heading north again. Not far along this graded track we passed the Northern limit of the Rudall River National Park. A few kilometres further north and we passed the entrance to 'Camp Tracey', a Uranium Mining Camp capable of accommodating 80 people and includes offices, laboratories, workshops and an airstrip, but all in caretaker mode waiting for a favourable market to enable them to start mining again.

A few kilometers past 'Camp Tracey' we met Bruce and Julia travelling in the opposite direction. Stopping for a chat we discovered that while we had been in the Rudall River National Park they had continued further along the CSR than we had, as far as Well 33. The CSR was closed from Well 33 north due to flooding, so they headed out west along Wapet Road passing through the Punmu Aboriginal Community (mentioned earlier P33) where they were able to refuel with diesel. Continuing on to the Telfer Mine Road where they then turned south heading into the

Rudall River National Park from the north, opposite to us. They also mentioned a spot 20 or so kilometres further along the road we were on where they had camped over night and suggested it would be a good place for us to stop for morning tea. We eventually parted company heading off in opposite directions, Bruce & Julia to DQB and us to the morning tea spot they had mentioned.

The morning tea spot was yet another picturesque spot in an otherwise bland landscape. A few hundred meters from the road was a neat little picnic area complete with built in barbecue adjacent to a reasonably large billabong. According to the map we were in the vicinity of 'Moses Chair'; what ever that was. We enjoyed some left over damper from the previous night with our morning cuppa. Topped with marg and jam it was a delicious accompaniment to the scenery and the 'serenity'.

Morning tea finished we hit the road again. After a reasonably smooth 50 kilometres or so we came to the Telfer Mine Road, even smoother and very wide. We were now able to 'belt' along about 80-90 kph. Twenty or so kilometres along this road we caught up to Tom and Gwen, who were pulled over to the side of the road. It turned out they had lost their map, so with the aid of our maps Morris gave them instructions on how to proceed to Carawine Gorge, our camping spot for that night. While Morris was showing them the way I suddenly noticed that my mobile phone had a strong signal. This seemed amazing, as we were still a long way from anywhere. The last time we had a signal was about 13 days previous. Not wishing to waste an opportunity I quickly rang Hazel and I was soon talking to her while I was right out there in the middle of nowhere and watching a camel wandering along a few hundred meters away. Isn't modern technology marvellous? Well yes and no really. While it had worked for me, Morris's new CDMA type mobile phone refused to pick up a signal yet it is supposed to be better in country areas! We realised later that Telfer Mine Site probably had a mobile phone tower and that was where the phone signal must have been working through.

Saying goodbye to Tom and Gwen we were off again. Next stop was an abandoned copper mine site that Morris remembered from when he had travelled this area some 20 years earlier. We all stretched our legs amongst the numerous piles of bent and twisted corrugated iron, huge pile of about 50 well rusted 44 gallon drums, old engine and motor parts and various other bits of junk that many years ago all served a useful purpose. There was also a couple of deep and dangerous pits or shafts running into the side of the hill as well as straight down. While we were exploring all this stuff a heavy droning noise captured our attention. Looking out toward the main road we saw a road train consisting of a prime mover pulling four long trailers, probably heading out to Telfer Mine. After half an hour or so we were able to pry Morris away from all the old dilapidated engines, his mind still in deep thought about the perceived rebuilding and restoration projects that they had conjured up.

Not far from the old mine we turned off the Telfer Mine Road on to the Woodie Woodie Rd which needless to say heads out to the Woodie Woodie Mine. The road was in the middle of some major reconstruction with various gangs of workers and heavy machinery working on it. We only travel 10 kilometres along this road before turning off at the Carawine Gorge turnoff. Although Morris had been to Carawine Gorge some 20 years earlier he deliberately hadn't told us much about it. He said he

didn't want to get our hopes up by building the place up too much. Well he needn't have worried. On arrival we were all very impressed as we drove off the end of the

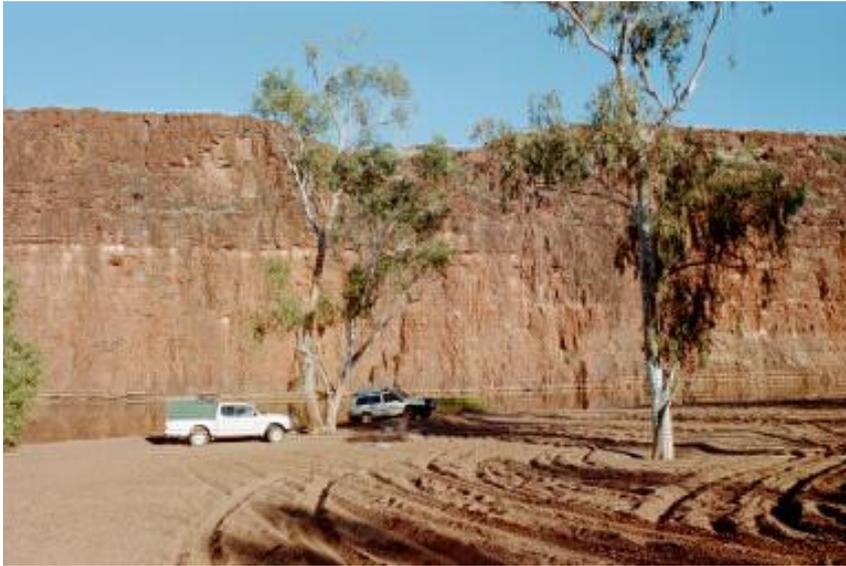


Figure 23 - Cliff face at Carawine Gorge

track onto some very coarse sand and pebble river flats lying parallel to a large body of water, which was part of the Oakover River. On the other side of the water was a very large sheer sided cliff face rising straight up from the waters edge and proceeding about 100 m in either direction. We soon discovered that any noise made in this area (even the ripping open of a can of beer) was quickly echoed a split second later off the

face of the cliff. It was quite spooky. A couple of large pelicans came in for skid type landing on the surface of the water, wings outstretched and feet acting like brakes.

Morris discovered another puncture in the back left tyre on the Toyota. Actually it was more of a gash in the tyre this time probably caused by a stake. Due to the soft nature of the pebbly sand we decided to use my bull bag to raise the vehicle and change the tyre. After four attempts of cautiously repositioning the bag under the vehicle and using the exhaust from my ute to blow the bag up, the glue on the fitting on the bag, via which the hose was attached, gave way. I suppose I can't complain, I purchased the bull bag second hand from a fellow traveller during a trip around Australia in 1979. Still with a nasty puncture to fix, Morris resorted to the good old faithful hi-lift jack with a thick aluminium base plate underneath to spread the load on the soft ground. He repaired the tube but decided not to risk the tyre, so replaced it with one of the spares he carried on the roof rack. By this time Tom and Gwen had arrived and set up camp nearby. After dinner they came over for a chat around the campfire before we all retired to bed.

Day 15 Carawine Gorge to Marble Bar

We were up at daybreak and were rewarded by the spectacular sight of the rising sun shining on the face of the cliff slowly bathing it in an orange glow from the top down to the water. The moment was caught on film by Walter and on video by Steve. Tom and Gwen were underway early while we were still organising breakfast. After breakfast we packed up and were soon leaving this tranquil spot behind.

Back tracking along the Woodie Woodie road the way we had come in, until we reached the Ripon Hills Road where we turned left heading for Marble Bar. What a

surprise! It was a newly sealed bitumen road of freeway quality. We found out later that the people of Marble Bar had dubbed it as the 'road to nowhere'. It had been built at the cost of millions of dollars to shorten the distance from the Telfer Mine to Port Hedland. However there was a 20 kilometre section of road between Marble Bar and Port Hedland that was still unsealed even though various governments had promised to seal it over the past ten or so years. As you can imagine this was a contentious issue with the locals.

After zipping along this magnificent blacktop for half an hour or so we came to another area of road works complete with a "stop" person. We were held up here for 15 or 20 minutes, as this area was still being completed. We had caught up with Tom & Gwen again, so we had a yak with them while we waited. Eventually the "stop" person was informed via radio that we could proceed on. We were off again next stop Marble Bar. As we approached the outskirts of Marble Bar we were in amongst yet more road works, this time on the main street into town. After passing through the middle of town we pulled up in the driveway of Morris's brother, Kevin's house.

Initially there was no one home but after a short while Helen arrived home followed a short time later by Kevin. We were all invited in for morning tea and catch up on the gossip and news of the last few weeks. This was our first taste of civilisation for two weeks and, although we were all a bit scruffy and probably a bit on the nose, we all behaved ourselves well.

Kevin and Helen have another house five or so kilometres out of town referred to as 'the block'. Its quite a large house and includes six full size bedrooms complete with beds as well as all the usual rooms. It was built in the early 70's and was used for most of its life to house elderly male aborigines, hence all the bedrooms. Helen's mother and stepfather were currently staying there but they were more than happy for us to share with them. The main reason Kevin and Helen still lived in town and not down 'the block' was that it was out of reach of the town electricity supply, therefore requiring it to have a diesel generator to provide electricity for all of today's 'modcons'. The generator is not only noisy and costly to run but also an inconvenience.

None of the above was a deterrence to us, having just spent two weeks away from any form of civilisation, it was more of a novelty. On our arrival we introduced ourselves to Helen's parents, who soon made us most welcome. Steve and Morris had soon picked out a bedroom and unloaded their gear into it. Walter and I were unsure about sleeping in the same house as Steve and Morris with the bedrooms only separated by thin walls! We also were not sure about sleeping in proper beds for a couple of nights then returning to our swags for the trip home. We were quite comfortable in our swags and in fact were enjoying the novelty of them. We decided to set up our swags on the grass outside and the opposite end from the bedrooms. Later when Kevin realized we had decided to sleep out rather than with a roof over our heads, I think he thought perhaps we were showing signs of becoming a bit feral. Sleeping arrangements aside, it was great to have a hot shower and wash our hair. We also washed our clothes, pillowcases, tea towels, towels and indeed anything that looked like it ought to be washed. The clothes hoist was soon completely chockers as we aired out our sleeping bags as well as hung out the washing.

Time to do some exploring in and around Marble Bar. Steve had all but run out of videotape so the first stop was into town. There are only three shops in town and although ordinary videotape could be purchased none had the small version that Steve's camera required. We did however purchase some bread, teabags and more Wheetbix. We then headed out to the 'Marble Bar' itself, which is actually an immense band of jasper that crosses the bed of the 'Coongan river'

Day 16 Marble Bar

Climb Mountain

Day 17 Marble Bar

0800 hrs travelled about 35 km out of town to Talga Talga where Kevin has a gold lease. Kevin's method of prospecting is to nut out where the old creek beds lay, often buried by a thick layer of dirt. To remove this upper soil he has a fairly old bulldozer on site. To start the dozer is interesting in itself. Although it is primarily a diesel engine it actually starts on petrol complete with spark plugs, distributor etc. Then once running, a lever is thrown increasing the compression and changing from a petrol air mix to one of diesel. After a moment or two of spluttering it leaps into life as a fully functioning diesel engine. I know this is nothing new to those that know of such things, but I thought it was pretty interesting.



Once the upper soil has been removed, the old creek bed is revealed shown by a distinct change of colour in the dirt, if one is digging in the right place, that is. The next stage is to run a metal detector over all the moved dirt and the now exposed creek bed. This is when you start to locate the old nails, tin cans, small bits of iron ore etc. If you are in the right place, and have an element of luck on your side, the ultimate reward is ***Gold nuggets***. Kevin showed us a few the night before just to prove it could be done. So while Kevin pushed metres of dirt around, Morris and I took it in turns to run the metal detector over the diggings.

Late in the afternoon after many old nails, sardine tins (which indicate it was once a rich diggings) and bits of magnetic rock had been dug out and carefully removed so that we didn't locate them again, and not long after Morris had proclaimed that "...this is nearly as boring as fishing...", we actually found what we had spent all day looking for, ***Gold***. Well, it was a bit of rock with gold in it. Kevin later guesstimated that it was worth between \$40 and \$80, but that was before we heard on the news that the Reserve Bank had sold off its gold reserves and that the price of gold had plummeted.

Stone chip

Gold Bullet case Kevin Bulldozer

Roorack Comet mine Simon & Kate

Day 18 Marble Bar to Karijini

Karijini – Camera Batteries
Sleeping in a swag
Mr South Australia – Radio on
Water

Day 19 Karijini to 85k South of Newman

Toilet - No 2s - hand wipes

Day 20 85k South of Newman to Home

Breathalyser RBT
Damaged mudflaps left rear

Home Again

Cleaning
Repair

Burning rubbish

Appendix A Crew/Vehicles/Etc.**Crew**

Name	D O B	Home Address	Wife	Home ☎
Morris Gordon Danks #	11/08/47	204 Mortimer Rd. Wellard 6170	Barbara	9439 1399
Bernard Desmond Webb*	19/09/53	78 Arundel Drive Wellard 6170	Hazel	9439 2268
Stephen Scott Smallwood	30/11/54	8 Millport Drive Warwick 6024	Jenny	9447 5171
Walter John Hill	29/07/65	1 Chamberlain Circle Bateman 6150	Jan	9310 6085

Vehicles

1999 Toyota Landcruiser 4x4 Station Wagon (white)

Reg. No. **KWN 179**

Mobile Phone 0429 903 220

Pierce & Simpson UHF CB Radio

* 1998 Mitsubishi Triton 4x4 V6 Clubcab Ute (white with green canopy)

Reg. No. **KWN 496**

Mobile Phone 0419 903 218

GME TX 4000 UHF CB Radio

Garman eMap GPS

Itinerary (approx)

Location	Date	Contact Name	Contact Phone	Comment
Warwick	21/07/01	Smallwood's	9447 5171	1030 hrs Departure
Wiluna	23/07/01	Police Station	9981 7024	Report to
Cotton Creek (Parrngurr)	30/07/01	Ian Simpson	9176 9009	Refuel - 200 lts each
Camp Tracy	05/08/01	Rob Alcock	0415 110 210	Visit
Marble Bar	07/08/01	Kevin Danks	9176 1024	Stay 2 x nights
- Mining Registrar	07/08/01	Helen Mitchell	9176 1044	Kevin's partner (work)
Marble Bar	07/08/01	Police Station	9176 1005	Report to

Additional Equipment

GME EPIRB

Food for 16 days

Electric Winch

Bull Bag

St Johns 'Off Road' First Aid Kit

RFDS HF Radio

Call Sign **VZO 571**

100 lts of water

2 x snatch ropes and 16m s/s cable

Kangaroo Jack

Uniden UH-050XR UHF hand held CB radio

**Appendix B The Canning Stock Route - Travellers
advice booklet**

Appendix C List of Provisions

Food	Initial	Additional Cotton Ck	Additional Marble Bar	Left over
'Action' Anzac biscuits	1 kg			0
Aluminum foil	10 m			2 m
Apples	7 kg			
Bacon	4 x 1 kg			0
Baked beans	12			4
Beer	6x30			0
bicarb of soda		1		1-
Bread	6	4	4	0
Carrots	9 kg			2 kg
Cheese	2 kg			0
Coffee	150 g			
Cordial	1			1
Dried Apricots	1 kg			
Dried peas & beans	850 g			
Flour	10 x 1 kg			4
Honey	1			
Jam	1			
Margarine	4 x 500 g			½
Noodles	15 pkts			10 pkts
Onions	4 kg			0
Paper towel	2			1
Potatoes	10 kg			0
Rice	6 x 1 kg			4
Salt & pepper	1 + 1			
Spam	6			4
Sugar	1 kg			500 g
Sultanas	500 g			
Tea bags	100		50	20
Tin Ham	6 x 340 g			0
Toilet rolls				6
UHT milk	24 x 1 ltr			1
Vegemite	1			
Weetbix	3 x 1 kg		1 x 500 g	¾ of packet

Appendix E Radio Stations & ABC TV in WA

Note: Italics indicate Commercial stations.

Location	Latitude	Longitude	AM		FM		ABC TV
Wyndham	15° 28'	128° 06'	6WH	1017	6ABC RN <i>WAfm</i>	107.7 <i>102.9</i>	10
Kununurra	15° 46'	128° 44'	6KW	819	6ABC RN <i>WAfm</i>	107.3 <i>102.5</i>	9
Koolan Is.	16° 08'	123° 47'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR 6ABC FM	107.7 106.1 104.5	
Derby	17° 19'	123° 38'	6DB	873	6ABC RN <i>WAfm</i>	107.5 <i>102.7</i>	8
Broome	17° 58'	122° 14'	6BE	675	6ABC RN <i>WAfm</i>	107.7 <i>102.9</i>	8
Red Hill	18° 00'	122° 12'			6ABC RR	96.3	
Fitzroy Crossing	18° 11'	125° 36'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR <i>WAfm</i>	107.7 106.1 <i>102.9</i>	58
Halls Creek	18° 14'	127° 40'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR <i>WAfm</i>	107.7 106.1 <i>102.9</i>	8
Port Hedland	20° 18'	118° 35'	6PH 6NW	603 <i>1026</i>	6ABC RN	95.7	7
Shay Gap	20° 30'	120° 10'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR	106.3 107.9	2
Dampier	20° 40'	116° 43'			6ABC RN	107.9	29
Karratha	20° 44'	116° 52'	6KP 6KA	702 <i>1260</i>	6ABC RN	100.9	54
Roebourne	20° 47'	117° 09'			6ABC RN	107.5	9
Onslow	21° 38'	115° 07'			6ABC RN	107.3	8
Pannawonica	21° 39'	116° 20'	6PN	567	6ABC RN	107.7	11
Nullagine	21° 53'	120° 07'			6ABC RR	106.3	50
Exmouth	21° 57'	114° 07'	6XM 6LN	1188 <i>747</i>	6ABC RN	107.7	8
Marble Bar	21° 10'	119° 44'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR	107.5 105.9	8
Wittenoom	22° 14'	118° 20'			<i>WAfm</i>	<i>102.9</i>	66
Tom Price	22° 42'	117° 47'	6TP 6KA	567 <i>765</i>	6ABC RN 6ABC RR	107.3 99.3	10
Paraburdoo			6PU 6KA	567 <i>765</i>	6ABC RN	107.7	6
Newman	23° 22'	119° 44'	6MN	567	<i>WAfm</i> 6ABC RN 6NEW-FM	88.9 93.7 92.9	7
Carnarvon	24° 53'	113° 40'	6CA 6LN	846 <i>666</i>	6ABC RN	107.7	7
Denham	25° 55'	113° 32'			6ABC RN	107.5	8
Warburton	26° 08'	126° 35'			6ABC RR	106.1	69
Meekatharra	26° 35'	118° 30'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR <i>WAfm</i>	107.9 106.3 <i>103.1</i>	8
Wiluna	26° 35'	120° 14'			6ABC RR	106.1	69
Cue	27° 26'	117° 54'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR	107.7 106.1	10
Kalbarri	27° 42'	114° 10'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR <i>WAfm</i>	107.7 106.1 <i>102.9</i>	9
Leinster	27° 55'	120° 42'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR 6ABC FM	107.7 106.1 104.5	10
Mt Magnet	28° 04'	117° 51'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR <i>WAfm</i>	107.3 105.7 <i>102.5</i>	8
Yalgoo					6ABC RN 6ABC RR	107.7 106.1	10
Laverton	28° 38'	122° 24'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR <i>WAfm</i>	107.7 106.1 <i>102.1</i>	10

Appendix

Location	Latitude	Longitude	AM		FM		ABC TV
Geraldton	28° 46'	114° 37'	6GN 6GE	828 1008	6ABC RN 6ABC FM 6JJJ FM BAY-FM 6GGG	99.7 94.9 98.9 98.1 96.5	6
Leonora	28° 53'	121° 20'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR WAfm	107.3 105.7 101.7	8
Menzies	29° 42'	121° 02'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR	107.7 106.1	10
Eneabba	29° 49'	115° 16'			6ABC RN	107.7	46
Leeman	29° 56'	114° 58'			6ABC RN	107.3	5A
Dalwallinu	30° 17'	116° 40'	6RN 6DL	612 531			46
Jurien bay	30° 18'	115° 02'			6ABC RN WAfm	107.9 103.1	59
Kalgoorlie	30° 45'	121° 28'	6GF 6KG	648 981	6ABC RN 6ABC FM 6JJJ FM	97.1 95.5 98.7	6
Lancelin	31° 01'	115° 20'			WAfm	102.3	53
Southern Cross	31° 14'	119° 19'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR WAfm	107.9 106.3 100.7	9
Merredin	31° 29'	118° 16'	6MD	1098	6ABC RN	107.3	8
Northam	31° 39'	116° 40'	6NM 6AM	1215 864	6ABC FM 6JJJ FM	98.9 98.1	
Perth	31° 57'	115° 51'	6RN 6WF The Eagle 6PR	810 720 1080 882	6ABC FM 6JJJ FM 101-FM 100-FM Sonshine MMM 6EBA-FM 94.5-FM PMFM RTR-FM	97.7 99.3 101.7 100.1 98.5 96.1 95.3 94.5 92.9 92.1	2
Norseman	32° 12'	121° 47'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR	107.3 105.7	7
Mandurah	32° 32'	115° 43'	6MM	1116			
Narrogin	32° 56'	117° 11'	6NA	918			57
Wagin	33° 19'	117° 20'	6RN 6WA	1296 558			8
Bunbury	33° 20'	115° 38'	6TZ 6BY	963 900	6ABC FM	93.3	5
Collie	33° 22'	116° 09'	6CI	1134			
Argyle	33° 33'	115° 46'			6ABC RN 6KW/T	107.5 105.9	69
Ravensthorpe	33° 35'	120° 02'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR	107.5 105.9	11
Busselton	33° 39'	115° 20'	6BS	684			
Katanning	33° 41'	117° 33'	6WB	1071			7
Esperance	33° 51'	121° 53'	6ED 6SE	837 747	6ABC RN 6ABC FM	106.3 104.7	10
Bridgetown	33° 58'	116° 08'	6BR	1044			56
Nannup	33° 59'	115° 45'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR	98.9 98.1	32
Manjimup	34° 15'	116° 09'	6MJ	738			
Augusta	34° 19'	115° 09'			6ABC RN 6ABC RR	99.1 98.3	56
Albany	35° 00'	117° 52'	6AL 6VA	630 783	6ABC RN 6ABC FM 6JJJ FM	96.9 94.5 92.9	7