

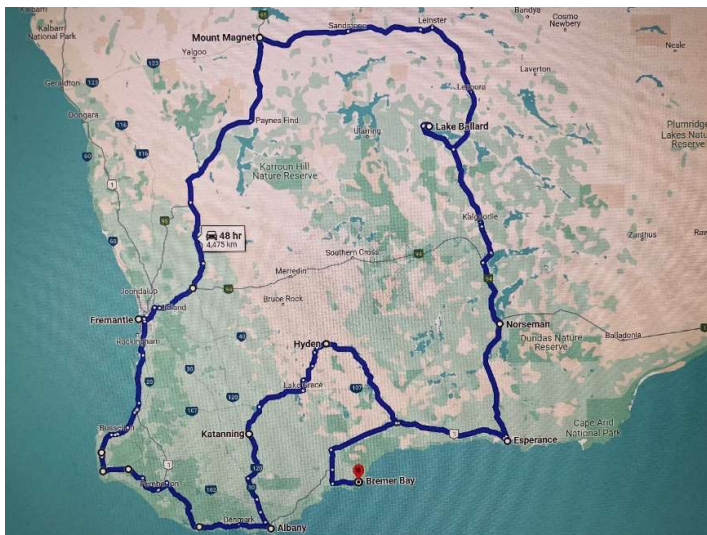
[Trip to Western Australia 10 April to 1 July 2024](#)

To read about our travel to Western Australia, just scroll down. There is an entry for each day of our travel on this 12 week journey.

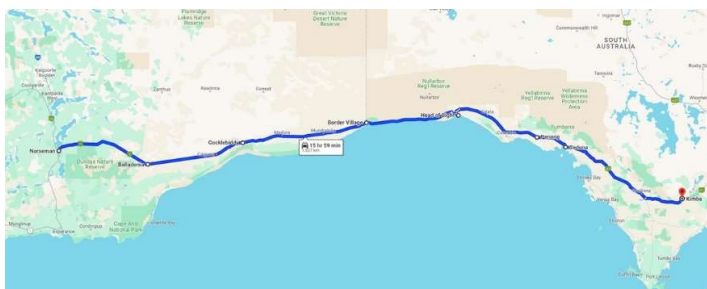
For a breakdown of expenses for this trip go to the last page

The three maps below show:

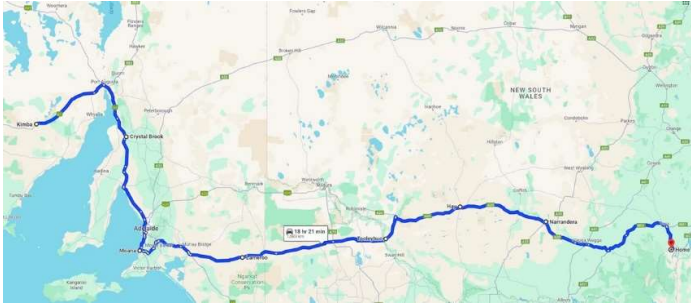
- 1) our travel route around the southwestern part of Western Australia – travelling clockwise
- 2) our return travel from Norseman to Kimba
- 3) our travel from Kimba to Canberra, via Adelaide.



- 1) Our route from Norseman to Norseman travelling in a clockwise direction.



- 2) The first section of our trek home, showing stops along the route, starting on 15 June and ending in Kimba SA on 24 June. This is the reverse of the route we travelled when we started the trek from Kimba across to WA.



3) This is the route we are taking from Kimba to Canberra, via Adelaide. This route is like the that taken from Adelaide to Kimba at the start of our journey. However, on the travel out of Adelaide we went via the town of Melrose and not Crystal Brook.

Wednesday 10 April 2024

Well, we left Canberra at 09:00 this morning and had a pleasant drive down to Jugiong. We stop at Jugiong every time we pass this way as the Long Track Pantry serves great coffee and food. They also sell some great condiments, and we tend to stock up on some as we pass through the town.

After a leisurely break we continued our journey onto Narrandera via Wagga Wagga; well, that was the plan anyway.

As we approached Wagga, about ten kms out, a utility vehicle came towards us, and the vehicle threw up a small rock that hit my driver's side window. Talk about an explosive device going off; there was a loud bang and the entire window shattered, The only thing preventing the glass from covering me was the tinted film that I have on both front side windows. This kept the shattered glass together.

We pulled over as I was shaking as it was all a shock. We sat on the side of the road for several minutes and Maree rang Ford to see if they could repair the territory window. They put us on to Windscreens O'Brien in Wagga; so, we headed there.

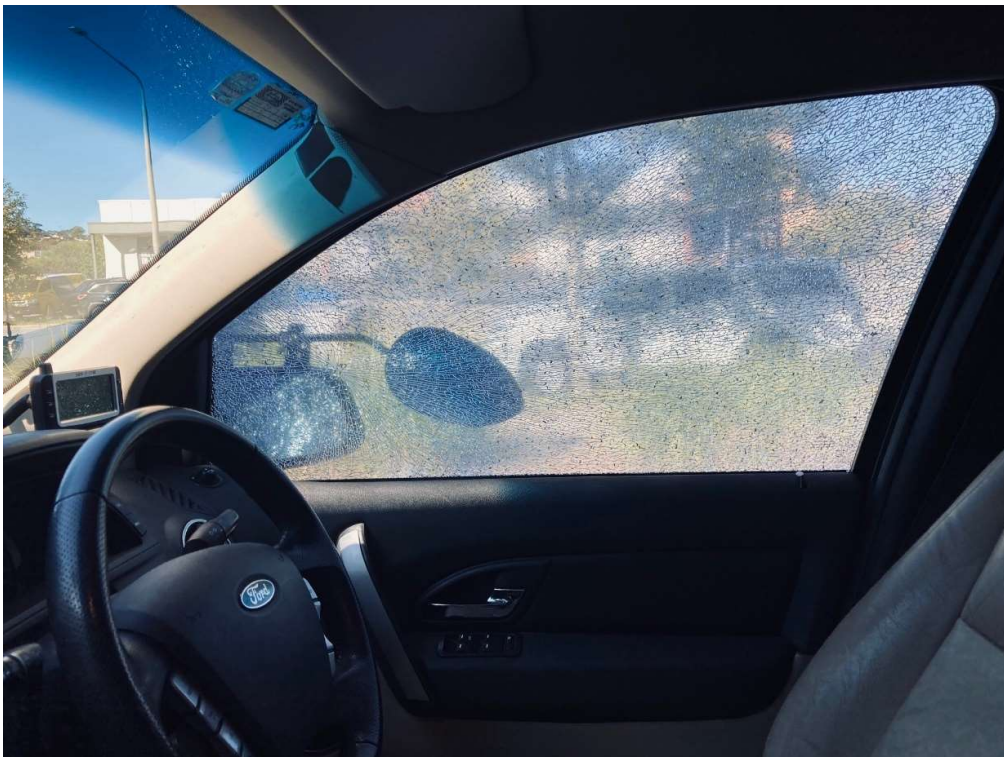
On arrival they examined the damage and checked for a replacement from their stock. Unfortunately, they did not have one but found that Albury had one in stock. They contacted Albury and decided for them to replace the smashed window, Before we departed for Albury, Windscreens O'Brien in Wagga put two lots of adhesive sheeting over the window to keep it in place until we reached Albury.

So, we left Wagga and headed for Albury. It was difficult driving not being able to see out the side window. I had Maree sit in the back seat behind me so she could confirm that it was clear to cross intersections and roundabouts. On arrival in Albury we were met by the O'Brien team, who sat us down and started to do the paperwork. As we had full glass cover with NRMA, the replacement, including new tint for the window, was covered without cost to us. So, a double win, repairs made and no cost. Windscreens O'Brien in both Wagga and Albury provided excellent support and service. They are highly recommended.

By 16:00 they had completed the work so we decided we would stay in Albury for the evening and reroute our travel across to Adelaide. We need to be in Adelaide by 13 April to attend my Father's 95 birthday party on the 14th. After the party, on the 15th, we will commence our trip across to WA. So tonight, we are staying in the Albury Showgrounds and will have dinner in the van.

I prepared several meals in advance of the trip so that we can just eat without having to spend time preparing food or going out for dinner. Tonight, I just need to veg out so a quick trip to our freezer where I selected the precooked taco meat, onion, fried bean and salsa mix, popped it all into the microwave, followed by the tortillas and dinner is served. So quick and easy tacos tonight.

Here is a picture of the shattered window.



Thursday 11 April 2024

I am happy to say that we both got a good night's sleep last night. I think the events of the day wore us both out. It was quite chilly when we awoke this morning. So much so that I put the diesel heater on for Maree. We can't have her cold now can we!!!

We left Albury around 09:00 and decided to head to Violet Town, 146 kms from Albury. We stopped here for a coffee and a bite to eat and to decide where we would head to for tonight's stop.

VIOLET TOWN



The sign on entering Violet Town

Violet Town is located just off the Hume Freeway 185 km north-east of Melbourne and 30 km south-west of Benalla. The town was named by Major Thomas Mitchell, the first European to pass through the district in 1836. On his Australia Felix exploration he noted that the swamps and marshes in the area seemed to have a profusion of wild violets and named the district Violet Ponds. When the government laid out the village they called it Violet Creek. Some of the early settlers thought there was more evidence of Honeysuckle than Violets and, for a time, the settlement was known as Honeysuckle Creek. Violet Town, however, persisted.

In 1846 the Royal Mail Hotel was opened, and the village began to grow but it wasn't until the discovery of gold in the north-east of the state – which produced large numbers of itinerant prospectors who passed through the area – that the town expanded to include three hotels, a bakery and a school. In 1873 the railway arrived, and the village moved closer to the line. As the town grew the floral theme was adopted for the streets so that now there is Cowslip, Tulip, Daisy, Dahlia, Crocus, Hyacinth, Lily, Orchid and Rose Streets.

On the 7th February 1969 Violet Town was the site of the train collision between the Sydney Melbourne overnight express passenger service, the Southern Aurora, and an Albury bound goods train. The Southern Aurora was scheduled to stop at the crossing loop to allow the Albury bound goods train to pass. However, the driver of the Southern Aurora had suffered a heart attack and the Southern Aurora proceeded through the crossing loop into the path of the goods train. Nine people died in the collision.

Details of the crash can be found at: <https://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/such-was-life/violet-town-railway-disaster/>

After coffee we decided we would drive on to Elmore, 108 kms from Violet Town, and stay overnight in the caravan park, such as it is. We stayed in the Elmore caravan park on a

previous trip. However, on reaching Elmore we decided to continue onto St Arnaud, a further 135 kms from Elmore, as that would put us closer to Adelaide. On our way from Violet Town, we passed through the small town of Colbinabbin, where we stopped to view the rather impressive Silo Artwork.



Silo Art in the small Victorian town of Colbinabbin

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RAILWAY IN THE COLBINABBIN DISTRICT:

The original German settlers established farms along the Mount Camel Range, (the top of the hill to the west of the township) and built a school, a post office and a community hall to serve their families. In August 1881 a Colbinabbin Railway League consisting of farmers agitated for a railway line to enable the transportation of produce and livestock to Melbourne, in 1913 construction of the line was completed. It extended from Rushworth to Colbinabbin West of the Cornella Creek costing \$42,970 for the 121 miles of track. It took sixty men to build 1 mile of railway line per week. The line was then extended to the current site of the silos. The Colbinabbin West community realised that it would be impossible to run the train tracks up and over the hill to the town, so it was decided to establish the township in a more suitable location down on the plain, to be known as Colbinabbin East. Thus, Colbinabbin Village settlement was established in 1893 and by 1913 was a bustling township. This is the present site of the township. The first trucks of grain left Colbinabbin Railway Station in February 1914.

From Colbinabbin we continued our drive on to St Arnaud.

The drive was uneventful, and we have driven this route before as it takes us through the large town of Bendigo. We didn't stop in Bendigo on this trip as we wanted to get to St Arnaud where we could unwind and relax for the evening.

There is free camping in St Arnaud behind the Sporting Club. So, we took the opportunity of the free site and then went to the club to have dinner and a few wines. The evening was

reasonably quiet as there were only a few regulars in when we were there. We were there early at 18:00 as we didn't want to be driving back to the site to late at night. The site is only about 500 metres on a dirt road behind the club, but as we were camped in the bush, we thought it best to drive. As it happened, as we returned to the van after dinner, three large kangaroos bounded in front of us. Not a real issue as we were driving slowly, and they were at least 20 metres in front of us. You just need to be prepared for the bouncing boys to jump out in front of you when driving in the bush.

So, after a long day we decided to watch an episode or two on Netflix and then settle down for the night.

Friday 12 April 2024

This morning was quite cold outside, so I stayed in bed a little longer than usual and as Maree was still pushing up the zzzz's, I got up and put the diesel heater on for her. After about fifteen minutes the van had moved from 6 degrees to a comfortable (hot from my perspective) 17 degrees. The heater is very effective and very quiet and economical to run.

We decided to have breakfast at the local bakery and have a look at some of the artwork on the silo and along the streets in St Arnaud. Breakfast and the coffee were very good but Maree said the service was terrible. I was outside minding the table while Maree did the ordering.

So, after breakfast the first port of call was the silo art.

The Silos at St Arnaud, titled 'Hope', were painted by Kyle Torney, a local artist, and work was completed in 2020. The artwork celebrates the rich gold mining history of the area.





After viewing the silo art, we had a quick look around town at the other artwork on offer.

Following is only some of the street art that is available for viewing in the town.





After leaving St Arnaud we headed for Keith where we are staying for the night. Our drive to Keith took us through the small town of Rupanyup. There is a silo that has been painted in this town.



The Silo Art at Rupanyup was created by artist Julia Volchkova on the huge metal grain storage bins. The work was inspired by two young members of the local Rupanyup Panthers Football and Netball Club.

After viewing the artwork, we continued our travels through Horsham and Nhill before arriving in Keith at the showgrounds. We try and select the showgrounds in each of the towns we visit as our first preference for an overnight stay. The main reason being that we do not need all the add on facilities provided by a lot of the caravan parks. That is – jumping pillows, kids playgrounds etc. A nice wide location to park in away from the crowds is the way to go for us.

Now we are parked next to some large gum trees (not under them of course) and no one else nearby, well when we arrived and setup that is. There are a couple of other vans here now, having arrived after us, one being closer than I would like, but hey, some people think they need the protection of being near other people.

Well, it is time to hit the sack for another night. Hope you are enjoying being with us as we travel. Tomorrow, we hit Adelaide until Monday, when we start the trip in earnest – heading away from South Australia and into Western Australia.

Saturday 13 – 14 April 2024

This morning, we left Keith for Semaphore in Adelaide. Before starting out we had breakfast at a quaint little café called Henry and Rose.



It was quite busy with the locals coming in for their morning coffee and breakfast. We can highly recommend the food and the coffee. The coffee was served in interesting cups manufactured by Huskee. It is a modular, reusable cup that repurposes waste coffee husks, a by-product from the production of coffee. We are going to purchase some when we return home.

Well, it is time to head off. Our journey took us through the small town of Coonalpyn that is part of the silo art trail.

The artwork is excellent, but it is difficult to really get good photographs as the silos are very close to the highway and there is multiple signage that is difficult to remove from the images without losing the full perspective of the artwork. Hopefully you will get to appreciate the artwork from the images we were able to take. I have also included an image of the information board that gives some background to the children used in the artwork. Enjoy the photos.





The 30-metre mural on the silo operations at Viteria grain silos was the flagship project in Coorong District Council's arts lead regional renewal program 'Creating Coonalpyn'.

SNAP CHAT FILTER

In describing his design concept, artist Guido van Helten said:

"...representative of growth in creativity, community spirit and local identity In contrast to historical or industry focussed designs, which rely on nostalgia of the past, this design brings together the simplicity of playful interactions with the silo's structure architecturally and hopes to serve as a catalyst for creative thinking to the artworks audience and the community of Coonalpyn in the future."

"...the design does not focus attention on portraiture, or the children's faces entirely and instead brings together movement around the circular and architectural features of the silo complex. The completed work will incorporate the south, east and north faces promoting an interactive viewing ... encouraging visitors to park and walk around the silo to photograph different viewing points."

Reef (5) Blake (6) Clara (9) Kiarah (6) Macey (5)

SILo ORDER: Clara ● Blake ● Reef ● Kiarah ● Macey

MEET THE SILO KIDS: HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

#COONALPINKIDS #VITERIASILOMURAL #SILOKIDS

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Oh yes, I almost forgot to mention the image of the “Tin Man”. This is a statue built out of the empty spray cans the artist used to complete the mural on the silos.



After Coonalpyn we headed off to our destination for the day, the Discovery Caravan Park in Semaphore.

We are here for two nights. We have come into Adelaide as my father, 95, is celebrating his milestone birthday tomorrow, 14 April 2024. We are celebrating over a lunch in Seaford.

Following is some information I thought I would share with you about my father's life over the last 95 years.



A great picture of Dad giving a salute

My father was born on the 14 April 1929 to Henry and Lily Ringrose at 52 Guthrie Street in Radford, a suburb of Nottingham, England in a terraced house like those seen in the TV soap, Coronation Street.

My father had three siblings and was the youngest of the four. His sister Mabel was the eldest followed by his brother Henry and sister Winifred.

At the age of ten my father was to leave the junior school he attended and go to another senior school after the summer school holidays. However, this change never eventuated as one of my father's uncles and aunts wanted to live closer to the centre of Nottingham and asked his dad whether they would be interested in swapping houses with them so they could move from the outskirts of Nottingham. His uncle lived in a rural area close to the woods and this location did not suit them, although his uncle's house was new and had a large garden alongside the house. Well, my father's dad jumped at the opportunity to swap houses as he was a keen gardener and having a garden and a new house was too good an opportunity to pass up.

At the age of 14 (1943) my father's school days were over and it was time to look for work. He found work with John Player and Sons, a cigarette manufacturer, where he worked 48 hours a week for the large weekly wage of "one pound". My father worked there for four years before being called up for National Service at the age of 18 (1947). As this was shortly after the Second World War all fit men were serving in the armed forces. My father at 16 (1945) was doing a man's job and he maintained that he would never go back to John Player and Sons after completing his two years of National Service (1947 – 1949).

Also, at the age of 14 (1943) my father joined the local platoon of the 1st Company Sherwood Forest Cadet Battalion and during his four years' service (1943 – 1946) he rose to

the rank of Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant, the second highest noncommission rank of the army.

During his 18th year (1947) two things happened while he was in the cadets. Firstly, he was selected to take five other cadets to a large parade in London to represent the Sherwood Foresters. This parade consisted of cadets from every regiment in the United Kingdom and the salute was taken by Princess Elizabeth. Secondly there was a contribution made by the parents of a deceased officer of the son's sword. The sword was to be presented to the cadet of the year and my father was selected to be the first recipient of this honour. Unfortunately, Dad was called up for his National Service (1947) before the date of the ceremony to present him with the sword.

For the National Service there were two special battalions where ex cadets were sent to serve; one was in Derbyshire about 40 miles from Nottingham and the second was located at Pinefield Camp in Elgin Scotland. My father said he must have drawn the short straw as he was sent to Scotland and there would be no weekends at home for him. At the camp Dad went through 20 weeks of intensive infantry training and by the time he had completed his training he was extremely fit.

Following the training Dad was transferred to the Midland Brigade Camp at Strensall Yorkshire. Shortly after Christmas in 1947 Dad was given ten days embarkation leave and was told that he would be joining the Royal Warwickshire Regiment Second Battalion, B Company in Jerusalem Palestine. My father served here until the unit pulled out two days before the country was renamed Israel. In 1947, the United Nations adopted a Partition Plan for Palestine recommending the creation of independent Arab and Jewish states and an internationalized Jerusalem. The plan was accepted by the Jewish Agency and rejected by Arab leaders. The following year, the Jewish Agency declared the independence of the State of Israel, and the subsequent 1948 Arab Israeli War saw Israel's establishment over most of the former Mandate territory, while the West Bank and Gaza were held by neighbouring Arab states. My father certainly saw history being made.

In the latter days of his time in Palestine, Dad became the Batman* for a Captain.
(*a Batman is a servant to an officer, but the officer must pay the servant an amount each month).

After pulling out of Jerusalem, the British left in transport convoys over the Sinai Desert to Egypt. In Egypt the troops were sent to various camps. The Royal Warwickshire's went to Qassasin, an old World War 1 camp. It was here that my father became Batman to a new officer who happened to be the same age as my father. The previous officer and other NCOs had returned to the United Kingdom to form a new B Company.

After two months in Egypt, Dad was reading the Company Daily Orders and saw that a Batman was required by Brigade Headquarters to travel to Salonika in Greece. My father volunteered for the transfer, was accepted, and he was transferred to the transit camp at Port Said. Unknown to my father at the time, his eldest sister Mabel and her family were on a ship immigrating to Australia. The ship arrived in Port Said three days after my father had

sailed for Greece and unfortunately, they had just missed out seeing each other by a few days.

On arriving in Greece, Dad found out that Brigade Headquarters was going to be located at a small hotel and he was to be Batman to an Irish Captain who was the Catholic Padre. My father soon found out that the Padre was partial to Irish whiskey and Dad was only Batman for six weeks as the Padre was required to return to the United Kingdom.

The replacement Padre was a Captain in the Paratroop Regiment. My father learned later that he had dropped with the Paratroopers at the Great Battle of Arnhem where he was wounded. The Battle of Arnhem was a major battle of the Second World War at the vanguard of the Allied Operation Market Garden. It was fought in and around the Dutch towns of Arnhem, Oosterbeek, Wolfheze, Driel, and the surrounding countryside from 17–26 September 1944. My father said that the Captain was real gentleman and was a pleasure to work for.

My father was in Greece for ten months before returning to Southampton for Release and arrived back home in Nottingham about 11pm on a Saturday evening in (1949), being welcomed home by his parents. After one week's leave Dad needed to look for work once again. Fortunately, one of my father's friends was a foreman at the Raleigh Bicycle Works and he arranged an interview for him in the lining and Transferring Department. My father got the job.

In the Raleigh Bike office were two foremen and a beautiful young lady by the name of Doreen Allsebrook. After a few weeks my father had taken a fancy to her. Doreen's sister also worked in the Department and told Doreen my father's eyes followed her whenever she left the office. So, a date was arranged, and this led to the eventual marriage of almost 65 years, when Doreen passed away on 8 December 2016. Over the years after my father's father passed away at the age of 61, Dad's mother left England to join her daughter, Mabel, in Australia. This was then followed by my father's brother Henry and his family immigrating to Australia. After repeated letters from Dad's family in Australia saying what a good life could be had in Australia, my Dad and my Mum decided that the three of us should also immigrate down under. The decision to immigrate was a hard one for Mum to make as she came from a very large family, (Mum was one of thirteen children). Henry, Dad's brother nominated the three of us and we all sailed from Tilbury Docks in London in 1958. I was three years old at the time. Like most families there have been ups and downs, more good than bad, but the decision to migrate to Australia was the right one. My father and my Mother never looked back and went on to have two more children, Ian and Denise.

I hope you found this interesting.

Monday 15 April 2024

We departed the Semaphore caravan park and headed to Melrose. There are two routes, so we took the more scenic option through the Clare Valley, Yacka and Laura. We thought we would spend tonight in Melrose so we can go to the 'Over the Edge' café for breakfast

tomorrow. We stopped at this café on a previous trip and the food was excellent and it is always good to support local businesses.

Laura

Laura is a small service centre located on the eastern slopes of the lower Flinders Ranges. It has an impressively wide main street which has been beautified by stands of peppercorns and gumtrees. The town was the boyhood home of noted Australian vernacular poet C. J. Dennis whose most famous creation was *The Sentimental Bloke*.

There is a statue of C. J. Dennis in the centre of the main street. Dennis remembered his time in Laura with affection. In 1932 he recalled his childhood writing “In sifting through these memories I can discover nought that could be set down in malice, but a very great deal that gives me constant happiness to recall.”



Background on C.J. Dennis:

Clarence Michael James Dennis was born in Auburn, South Australia in 1876. His father was a publican and in 1889 he took over the Beetaloo Hotel in Laura. C.J. was first published in the *Laura Standard* when he was 19. His real fame came with “*The Sentimental Bloke*”, a cycle of poems about an Australian innocent which caught the zeitgeist perfectly. It was

published in 1915, at the height of World War I, was an immediate success, requiring three editions in 1915, nine in 1916, and three in 1917; by 1976 fifty-seven editions had been published in Australia, England, the USA and Canada, selling over 285,000 copies.

It was written in a broad vernacular that working class Australian soldiers would have loved and it was really meant to be read aloud. The most famous section was the hilarious, very Australian, rewrite of Romeo and Juliet titled "The Play". (source Aussie Towns).

From Laura we drove on to Wirrabara to see the silo art.

Wirrabara

Wirrabara sits on the banks of the Rocky River in the Southern Flinders Ranges. Wirrabara gets its name from a corruption of two words from Kurna (Adelaide Tribe) language "wirra" and "birra" gum trees and running water and in the local Nukunu language "wira" "parl" gum trees with honey and water.

The area was first settled by Europeans in 1844 when the White Brothers took up pastoral leases northwest of what is now known as Wirrabara. They called the leases the Charlton Run after their hometown in England. Later the owners changed the name of the run to Wirrabara from which the town took its name when it was established in 1874. The owner of Wirrabara Station at that time was A. B. Murray, breeder of the famous Murray Merinos.

Today Wirrabara has an active timber industry, healthy farming community, creative business owners and a township that supports both the old and the new.

The main reason for our visit is the silo art in this town. In April 2018 Sam Bates, or as he is otherwise known 'Smug' visited the town of Tumby Bay during the 'Colour Tumby Street Art Festival'. It was here that Smug met the organiser of the festival, Dion Lebrun. The local Wirrabara Community did not want a local resident painted on their silos, so Smug chose Dion Lebrun to be the inspiration for the Wirrabara silo Art.

The artwork also depicts the rich history of the area, which has strong ties to the forestry industry as well as referencing the beautiful local flora and fauna for which the area is also well known for. The Viterra Silos at Wirrabara took Smug three weeks to complete in October 2018.



Silo Art in Wirrabara

From here it is onto Melrose, the end of today's journey.

Melrose

The reason we came back to Melrose was to revisit a great cafe they have in town, "Over the Edge".

'Over the Edge' Melrose is a bike shop and café; they sell homemade products using local products. The last time we were here we decided to have a late lunch rather than just coffee. I found their menu very interesting and different. For example, I had the marinated lamb burger with fennel masala. Talk about a burger packed with intriguing and interesting flavour. I enjoyed the burger so much I couldn't stop saying to the staff how much I enjoyed it. Maree had the soup. Sorry, saying soup is an understatement. This soup was packed with flavour: pasta, vegetables and infused with homemade pesto and served with sourdough bread infused with fresh garlic. I know it was Maree who had the soup but of course, being the cook of the household, I just had to try it. Guys you must stop at this great establishment in Melrose. What a gem.



Some pics I took around the town.





Some background about this town.

Melrose, because it was officially proclaimed in 1853, can proudly claim that it is the 'oldest town in the Flinders Ranges'. This quiet and attractive town, which is nestled below Mount Remarkable, has had a colourful history characterised by farming on very marginal land and mining poor deposits of copper. Today it has several interesting historic buildings and there are pleasant bush walking tracks in the surrounding countryside.

There are many walking and cycling tracks in and around Melrose. It has been estimated that there are some 75-100 km of mountain bicycle tracks in the area. This has made the area a magnet for mountain biking enthusiasts.

As well as the tracks, there is, of course, Mount Remarkable and Mount Remarkable NP. Mount Remarkable is popular for bush walking, with trails for all ages and abilities. The park is filled with a wide variety of animals and birds such as goannas, emus, echidna, and kookaburras, which can be seen walking around the park. Besides these, it is home to 117 native bird species, including Australian ring necks and wedge-tailed eagles. A unique mixture of arid and temperate flora intermixing within the region makes the Mt. Remarkable a biodiversity hotspot. Temperate trees common in the Great Dividing Range such as White Box, Long Leaved Box, Grey Box and South Australian Blue Gum have a presence here. The unique Sugar Gum is a forest forming Eucalypt that is a relict tree of wetter times in South Australia.

Well, we decided to have dinner in the van tonight as we need to use some food we packed for the trip. Maree had prawns and salmon and I settled for chevapchichi and fried potato. Both enjoyable.

Well, it is time to retire for the evening. Tomorrow, we head to Kimba.

Tuesday 16 April 2024

Today we will travel to Kimba, 222 kms from Melrose. But before we left, we had breakfast at the 'Edge'. Maree ordered the Belgium Waffles and I settled for the focaccia with sun dried tomatoes, prosciutto, salami, mozzarella and pesto. This was washed down with nice coffee. I took a picture of Maree's breakfast which amazed us both. Even more so the fact that she was able to finish it all. We both said at the same time "We won't need lunch" after eating both our meals.



Well, on the road again and the first stop will be Iron Knob.

Travelling the Eyre Highway from Port Augusta, after travelling around 60 kms you arrive at Iron Knob. We saw the mining dump trucks going about their daily routine moving the iron ore from the open pit.

IRON KNOB History

Iron Knob is a near-perfect example of the changing fortunes of mining towns. There was a time when Iron Knob and the nearby town of Iron Baron were hugely productive with a population at Iron Knob of over 3,000 workers all employed by, or working for, BHP. The town itself was in the heart of a semi-desert area – the annual rainfall in this environment is rarely more than 200mm – some 54 km from Whyalla and the shores of the Spencer Gulf. Today it is typical, struggling, mining town with closed shops and empty houses but with a resilient local population who are determined to keep the town alive. It is driven by iron ore prices and when they rise the town is rejuvenated. It is important for visitors to understand that Iron Princess, Iron Monarch and Iron Knob are all connected to the town of Iron Knob.

Mine closure and re-opening

Quarrying for iron at Iron Knob and Iron Monarch ended in 1998. When the quarrying stopped, the town population declined to 200 and Iron Knob was under threat of becoming a ghost town. However, due to rising prices of housing elsewhere, the town has attracted new residents seeking low cost residences. A home could be purchased for approximately A\$35,000–70,000 and vacant land could be purchased for less than A\$15,000. In 2010, OneSteel (later Arrium) announced that it would return to Iron Knob to reopen the Iron Monarch mine. The Iron Monarch mine was prepared for reopening by Arrium in 2013. Both Iron Monarch and Iron Duke continued to produce iron ore for export and for smelting at the Whyalla Steelworks until 2018, when both Iron Monarch and Iron Princess were placed into care and maintenance. In 2022 the Monarch pit was reactivated.

After leaving Iron Knob we continued our drive to Kimba. At about 70 kms from Kimba we decided to pull over and take a break and admire the countryside. Long flat sweeping plains of red dirt and saltbush.





After our break we drove on to Kimba.

Kimba at last and only 12:30, in time to get some lunch, but first, park the van in the free campground (donation) and then walk into town to see that silo artwork we travelled to see. You can see from the image that it is quite impressive.



Kimba is a pioneering town that was established in 1915. It's located at the halfway point (between Sydney and Perth) across Australia on the Eyre Highway right at the top of the Eyre Peninsula. It's surrounded by endless wheat farms growing golden in the sunlight, which was the inspiration behind the concept for the silo art. The Viterro Silos at Kimba were painted by artist Cam Scale in September 2017. The mural stretches over five and a half silos, standing proudly at over 60m wide and 25m high and depicts a young girl standing

in a wheat field. She is overlooking a magnificent purple sunset viewed through endless wheat fields which blend into the real thing behind the silos.

I tried to fly the drone for images but we were just inside the restricted perimeter, so only ground shots for this one.

We then wandered around the town, did some supermarket shopping and then headed for the Big Galah'.



Not as impressive as some of the “BIG” things you get to see travelling around this great country.

Further on our walk we came across a billboard that showed us that Kimba is halfway between the east and west coasts of Australia as the crow flies. The billboard also had details of the history of Kimba.

A HISTORY OF KIMBA

As recently as a long lifetime ago, in 1908, the first permanent settlers sowed the first grain and grew the first crop in Kimba district. Long before this E.J. Eyre had skirted the area on his journeys of exploration during the 1840s, and from 1872 pastoralists had attempted grazing both sheep and cattle. Earlier still these were the lands of the Pangkala aboriginal people for whom the small springs, soakages and rockholes provided sufficient water during their seasonal forays from the coast. In the early 1900s strong overseas wheat markets and a demand for additional farming land by growing numbers of young farmers led to the opening up of the last of the Mallee lands for agriculture. Where possible crops were sown on natural plains, while loggers with their team of horses or bullocks cleared the Mallee scrub,

and axemen 'mullenized' the stands of native pine and black oak, retaining the best timbers for fencing and building. Until 1913 when the railway from Port Lincoln was extended to the new siding named 'Kimba' the pioneers obtained their mail and supplies from Cowell over rough bush tracks. This isolation was much relieved by the advent of the railway which brought regular weekly communication with the outside world. The proclamation of the township of Kimba in 1915 coincided with the influx of settlers to the new area, and boosted confidence in the potential of the district. Businesses of all kinds were attracted to the town and the young community worked together to provide social, educational, medical and administrative facilities. In 1926 the railway was extended to Buckleboo. This period of rapid growth

was checked by the great depression of the 1930s. Following World War II progress was restored with increasing prices for wool and wheat. As evidence of more recent developments bulk grain silos dominate the siding where wheatstacks once stood and pipelines bring an assured water supply from the Poldia basin and the River Murray. The relatively few decades of Kimba's history have been influenced by seasons and markets but most of all by the spirit of cooperation of its people. The surrounding district is one of the largest wheat growing areas in the driest state in the driest continent in the world. The area can be viewed from the Whites Knob lookout, northwest of town.

RAINFALL 340MM



Edward John Eyre Sculptures. (The following information is provided by the District Council of Kimba).

Edward John Eyre, born in England in 1815, is remembered as the first man to cross this continent from Sydney to the Swan River. He was the first man to record his exploration of the three sides of the peninsula named in his honour. Lake Eyre and the Eyre Highway are also named in recognition of his skill, perseverance and courage as an explorer. In 1838 he led an expedition from Streaky Bay. Passing through sandy terrain and scrubby vegetation, Eyre reached the Gawler Ranges where he identified Sturt's Pea. Water had been scarce, and Eyre was glad to find a good supply at Baxter's Range, near Iron Knob. The expedition ended at Depot Creek, near Mt Arden.

In 1840 this trek was reversed by Eyre's overseer, John Baxter. Recent rain had ensured adequate water, and the party was able to follow the tracks made by their wagons the previous year. Meanwhile Eyre explored the eastern side of the peninsula. It was very hard for the horses to penetrate the dense vegetation. Feed was scarce and water more so. About 45kms east of where you are standing, Eyre found good grass and a spring of water. He was so relieved that he named the place Refuge Rocks, "for such they were to us in our difficulties". At Port Lincoln, Eyre arranged for supplies to be shipped from Adelaide.

In 1841 Eyre left Port Lincoln and headed Northwest to Streaky Bay where he met John Baxter. Arrangements were made to ship supplies to Fowler's Bay and the party set out for W.A. Poor feed and shortage of water so weakened the horses that they were not able to carry all the provisions wanted by the men.

Eyre was determined to explore beyond the Head of the Bight and was very aware of the difficulties ahead. At Fowler's Bay he sent non-essential supplies and four men back to Adelaide by ship. It was at this stage that Wylie joined the expedition. He was from King George's Sound and had accompanied Eyre on previous trips. Lack of water, scarcity of feed, difficult terrain and extremes of weather all combined to make this trek along the coast so arduous that men and horses perished. Fortunately for Eyre and Wylie, a whaling ship was anchored at Rossiter's Bay and the two survivors were able to recuperate sufficiently to finish the trek to Albany.

Erected in November 2011, these stunning figures are an artistic tribute to Edward John Eyre and the indigenous men on whose bush skills he so often relied.

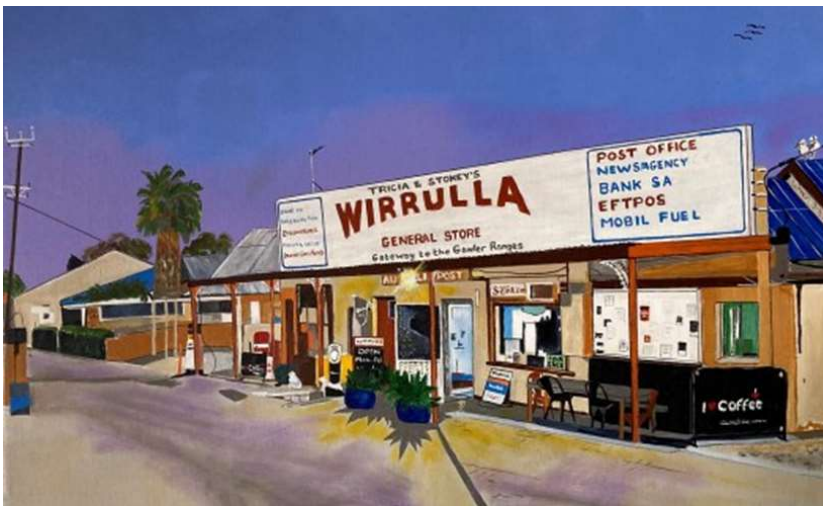


Well, that is all for today. We hope you are enjoying the blog as we travel across to Western Australia.

Wednesday 17 April 2024

Following breakfast, we refuelled and headed off to Ceduna, where we will stop for three days. The journey was uneventful which is always a good thing.

As we had been travelling for just over two hours, we decided to stop for lunch at the next town. The next town was Wirrulla. Wirrulla is a small grain belt town located 90 km from Ceduna. The town is a focus point for many of the surrounding agricultural districts and features several silos to store grain from the surrounding areas, no artwork on these silos though, but a great general store that served us a very enjoyable lunch.



The Wirrulla General Store.

Well, we are now in Ceduna and we decided to try the Big4 park for our stay. I would not recommend this park. It has a terrible layout, considering it is the newest additional location for Big4 Ceduna. The park is set out over two different locations. The area we are in, I have found out, was previously a petroleum site. Probably the reason there are no permanent fixtures. Everything is new and transportable. The parking is such that I cannot even get the awning out and we can't sit outside as there is nothing to see, except the next caravan two metres away.

The last time we were in Ceduna, in 2021, we stayed at the Foreshore Caravan Park which was very nice. The only problem with the Foreshore Park is that it is very tight to get into spaces; but in hindsight, far superior to the Big4. Oh well, we are only here for three nights.

Dinner was at the van tonight. I made Rogan Josh curry with prawns. Very enjoyable, but Maree found it a bit hot,

Night all.

Thursday 18 April 2024

We awoke to a chilly morning, so I put the heating on for Maree. After breakfast we did the laundry and went for a walk around town, looked in a few shops and stopped at the bakery for coffee and cake. From here we headed off for a drive around Denial Bay.

DENIAL BAY

Denial Bay is the name for both a small bay on the coast of South Australia, and a small fishing town built at the bay. The bay was named by explorer Matthew Flinders on 7 February 1802. Flinders had hoped that bay was bigger and would have provided better access into the inland of South Australia. This was not to be and so he named it Denial Bay.

One of the first European settlers to arrive here was a sheep farmer, William McKenzie, who built a house in the area in 1889. In 1889 he was allotted some 17,800 acres and built a homestead 2 miles west of the present-day Denial Bay township.



MacKenzie Homestead Ruins. This location also housed a small village

McKenzie also built a “wooden landing” in 1892 in Denial Bay. This landing, known as “Mac’s Landing”, was used to load and unload goods from the visiting ships. At low tide the landing could be reached by horse and cart, with produce being loaded on to the platform. As the tide returned small rowboats, called lighters, from the sailing ships would gather the local produce and deposit passengers and incoming stores on the landing ready for pickup. The landing was used until the jetty was built in 1909.



Mac's Landing in use in Denial Bay

At his homestead in 1890, McKenzie established a small village known as "Mac's Town". The town consisted of a Blacksmith's Shop, Post Office, Saddlery, Slaughter Yards, Several Cottages and a Police Station. As well as acting as the local Justice of the Peace, Mac was host, friend and guide to dozens of early settlers as they arrived.

Mac's Town was the social hub of the district. His dining room accommodated 50 guests, but you wouldn't think that looking at the homestead/town ruins in the photo we took today.

Many early settlers started in the district by working for Mac until obtaining their own farm.

We started to walk onto the jetty in Denial Bay, but the wind was blowing a gale. So, we took photos and headed back to the car. The jetty today is only a third of its original length.



Jetty built in 1909 to replace Mac's Landing

From Denial Bay we headed back into Ceduna and out to Thévenard.

Thévenard is a port town 3 kilometres south-west of Ceduna and is named after nearby Cape Thévenard, which in turn had been named after Antoine-Jean-Marie Thévenard, a French admiral. The port at Thévenard handles bulk grain, gypsum, salt and zircon. Thévenard is a terminus on the isolated Eyre Peninsula Railway network and receives several trains daily of bulk gypsum from the Lake MacDonnell mine at Kevin near Penong.



The Bulk Grain and Mineral Facility in the Port of Thévenard with a large salt pile in the foreground

The existing jetty has two berths each capable of handling ships of 198m length overall and 28m beam with a berthing pocket 30 metres wide and 9.8 metres deep. A gantry supports a load out conveyor and a discharge boom with a travel length of 160.5m, capable of bulk loading grain at 750 tonnes per hour and gypsum at 950 tonnes per hour, into ships holds with a maximum outreach of 18 metres.



The jetty in the Port of Thévenard that services the Bulk Grain and Mineral Facility

The most spoken language in Thévenard, other than English, is Greek. Thévenard is also home to the St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church. Greek immigration to Thévenard has been important in shaping the town's culture and it is believed (so they say) that the eating of barramundi was introduced to White Australia by the Greeks from Thévenard.

Thévenard also has history relating to the shipping vessel Eleni K that now rests on the bottom of the waters between Goats and St Peters Islands, not far from Thévenard.

THE ELENI K

The single-screw steamer, Eleni K (originally Johns Hopkins) was built at Baltimore in March 1943, for the United States War Shipping Administration. It was one of 2,742 mass-produced Liberty Ships, constructed to carry troops and cargo during World War II. The vessel was 441.7 feet (134.6 m) in length, 57.1 feet (17.4 m) breadth, 27.9 feet (8.5 m) depth and 7,245 gross tons.

Following the war, the Liberty Ship, Johns Hopkins, was sold and renamed Thetis (1946) and Santa Elena (1956). In 1960 it was purchased by the Eleni Shipping Company, Greece, and renamed Eleni K. Eleni K arrived in Thévenard, South Australia, in mid-1966. Shipping authorities considered it unseaworthy, and it was taken to Port Adelaide for repairs, before returning to load bulk wheat. On 29 September 1966 the Eleni K departed Thévenard with 7,776 tons of wheat, bound for Port Lincoln where a further 2,000 tons was to be loaded. The Harbourmaster was concerned about the loading of the vessel and ensured that its master took written responsibility.

A design fault recognised early in the development of Liberty Ships was their tendency to crack around midships, yet this cargo was divided between the forward and after holds, leaving the centre hold empty. Approximately 90 minutes after leaving port (and only 10 minutes after the pilot disembarked) the Eleni K broke its back and buckled in the area of the No 3 (or central) hold. The engines were stopped, and the vessel anchored, but sank soon after. In mid-October the German freighter G I Nickelson salvaged 1,770 tons of wheat using suction equipment, under difficult conditions, but further salvage was halted on 25 October 1966.



The vessel "ELENI K" lying with a broken back

In November 1966 the Eleni K was refloated and towed to its present position between Goat Island and St Peter Island, approximately 20 kms from Thévenard, where it was grounded in 11-13 m of water. The towing operation, by the tug Tusker, took four days and proved difficult, with the towline parting twice. Finally, on 17 November 1966 the vessel was flooded in the fore and aft compartments, and awash at the weather deck at high tide.

Today the extensive remains of the Eleni K provide one of the best shipwreck dives in South Australia. The relatively intact vessel is sitting upright, with the top of the bridge about two metres under the surface.

The original anchor for this vessel remains as a monument in Thévenard.



Eleni K Original Anchor

Friday 19 April 2024

We did not do anything today other than to take it easy. Tomorrow, we leave Ceduna and head to Esperance for a week, overnighing at Yalata, Eucla, Cocklebidy, Balladonia and Norseman along the way. The distance by road between Ceduna and Esperance is 1,404 kms.

Saturday 20 April 2024

We left the caravan park in Ceduna around 09:30 for the 202 kms drive to Yalata. Only a short drive today and there isn't much to see on this part of the trip, unless you travel into Fowler's Bay, 143 kms from Ceduna.

FOWLERS BAY

Fowlers Bay is located on the edge of the isolated flatlands of the Nullarbor Plain between Ceduna and Nullarbor. It is at the eastern extremity of the Great Australian Bight.

History (sourced from the SMH – Fowlers Bay – Culture and History, 1 January 2009)

The bay was almost certainly first sighted by the Dutchman Pieter Nuyts who sailed across the Great Australian Bight in 1627. It was not explored in any detail until 1802 when Matthew Flinders, slowly circumnavigating Australia in the Investigator, explored the Bay and named it after his lieutenant, Robert Fowler. Flinders and his men went ashore here thus becoming the first Europeans to step onto South Australian soil. It is interesting that the name Fowlers Bay was not officially adopted until 1940. Prior to that it was variously known as Port Eyre, Tarambo and Yalata – a local Aboriginal word which meant something like 'shellfish' or, perhaps, 'oysters'.

The existence of seals in the area and the access to the whales in the Southern Ocean saw a small settlement, known as Yalata, grow up in Fowlers Bay in the early 1800s. It was from this settlement on 25 February 1841 that Edward John Eyre, accompanied by a white man named Baxter, and three Aborigines one of whom was named Wylie, attempted to cross the Great Australian Bight. They reached the present site of Eucla on 12 March 'after having passed over one hundred and thirty-five miles of desert country, without a drop of water in its whole extent, and at a season of the year most unfavourable for such an undertaking'.

On 29 April, after the party had been dogged by lack of water and seriously deteriorating conditions, the two Aborigines murdered Baxter, took most of the remaining supplies, and disappeared into the desert. In his remarkable book *Journals of Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia and overland from Adelaide to King George's Sound* in the years 1840-41, Eyre vividly recounts the fears which he experienced: 'At the dead hour of night, in the wildest and most inhospitable wastes of Australia, with the fierce wind raging in unison with the scene of violence before me, I was left, with a single native, whose fidelity I could not rely upon, and who for aught I knew might be in league with the other two, who perhaps were even now, lurking about with the view to taking away my life as they had done that of the overseer'.

This fear of the local Aborigines was to emerge again in the 1870s when, after a Court House had been erected at Fowlers Bay, the government decided to make an example of an

Aborigine who had been found guilty of murder. Gallows, government officials and mounted constables were all shipped from Adelaide to teach the local Aborigines a lesson in British justice. The Aborigine was duly executed, with much pomp and ceremony, in front of other Fowler Bay Aborigines.

Sand Issues in Fowlers Bay (source Wikipedia, Fowlers Bay, South Australia)

The large sand dunes near Fowlers Bay have been moving closer to the town, and by the 1970s covered the Kent Town dwellings up to the last chimney top. By the 21st century, both Kent Town and the High Street had been covered. The dunes have moved approximately 75 m towards the new main road into the town in the decade preceding 2021. It is feared that climate change might be exacerbating their movement owing to the added stress on the vegetation caused by aridity. The CSIRO has estimated that rainfall will decline by around 30 per cent in the region by 2100, which will impact the plant life significantly and affect their ability to hold the dunes.

For several years before and including 2021, residents of the town have been working to stabilise the dunes by planting new vegetation such as boobialla trees and other native plants, and the South Australian Government approved funds to help pay for the revegetation of the ridge that causes the greatest risk to the town.

YALATA

Yalata is an Aboriginal community located 200 kilometres west of Ceduna on the edge of the Nullarbor Plain in South Australia. Yalata is governed at the local level by the Yalata Community Council, one of the several local government bodies in South Australia classified as Aboriginal Councils. Yalata Land is held in trust under the Aboriginal Lands Trust Act 1966 and covers an area of 456,300 ha,

The Yalata Roadhouse, where we are staying tonight in the secure caravan park, is situated 94 kilometres to the east of Nullarbor Roadhouse and 51 kilometres west of Nundroo. The Yalata Lands surrounding the Roadhouse are now occupied by the Anangu people. Originally many of the Anangu people of Yalata lived in the spinifex country far to the north around Ooldea, in the vicinity of where the Indian Pacific Railway now runs. Anangu people were forced to vacate these areas for several reasons, not the least of which was that the sands around Ooldea soak had begun to drift because of the railways overusing supplies.

In the 1940s and 50s areas around Maralinga and Emu were used for Atomic Testing by the British Government of the day. Around this time the Australian Government resumed much Anangu land to be used for the Woomera Rocket testing Range. These actions forced many Anangu people to settle more permanently in the Yalata area. In recent times much of the spinifex country has been returned to the Anangu people. Today the Anangu people still retain very strong links with their traditional lands – just as their ancestors have done for many thousands of years.

Entry into the Yalata community is by permit only. This includes the lands down to the Bight.



Yalata Caravan Park



Yalata Caravan Park

Sunday 21 April 2024

We left Yalata around 08:30 for the 300 km drive across to Eucla. We will cross the WA border today, finally. It has been seven days since we left Adelaide and 12 days since leaving Canberra. But we are taking it leisurely, staying a few days in some places and just overnighting in others. We are limiting our drives each day to under 300 kms. We are

averaging 90 kph as this is the recommended speed for towing my overall weights with the Territory, plus the winds are quite strong on the open flat plains of the Nullarbor and the lengthy road trains that pass us travelling east needs to be considered. The Eyre Highway is a good, sealed road but at times does get narrow and of course, at the time a road train is bearing down on you.

We stopped along the way at the 'Head of Bight' whale watching centre, Nullarbor Roadhouse, Great Australian Bight Scenic Lookout (magic views), and the other lookouts before we reached Border Village and the WA/SA Border Quarantine Station.

Great Australian Bight

Head of the Bight is a bay located in South Australia at the most northern extent of the Great Australian Bight. It is one of two locations on Australia's south coast where southern right whales come to calve during their winter migration, the other being located off Point Anne in Western Australia's Fitzgerald River National Park.

The Great Australian Bight is a large oceanic bight, or open bay, off the central and western portions of the southern coastline of mainland Australia. The bight is generally considered part of the Indian Ocean, although the AHS classifies it as part of the Southern Ocean. Its coastline is characterized by cliff faces and rocky capes, making it an ideal location for whale-watching. This oceanic feature was first encountered by European explorers in 1627 and was accurately charted by English navigator Matthew Flinders in 1802. The Great Australian Bight came into existence about 50 million years ago when the supercontinent Gondwana broke apart, separating Antarctica from Australia.

The Bight's waters are highly biodiverse, especially in zooplankton, due to specific ocean currents. However, more research is needed to fully understand the region's complex ecosystems and the potential impacts of human activities, such as resource extraction. Southern bluefin tuna is a popular fishing target in the Bight, and there have been attempts to explore the area for oil and gas since the 1960s. However, these proposals have faced significant opposition due to the potential environmental impacts.

Some images of the Bight that we took today between the “Head of the Bight” and the Border Village Roadhouse (WA/SA Border).







Along the route between Yalata and Eucla, we stopped at the Nullarbor Roadhouse for a coffee and food. Following are some images taken at and around the Roadhouse. Not a lot to see around this location.



Nullarbor Roadhouse and Whale Mural



Nullarbor Roadhouse – Lots of sandy soil



Nullarbor Roadhouse – Lots of sandy soil



Mural of the Nullarbor painted on the restaurant wall.

After our coffee we continued our way to the Border Village, 184 kms further on. Border Village also has the WA/SA Border and Quarantine Station. After passing through quarantine, it was only a short drive to the caravan park at Eucla which is our final destination for today.



Our site for the evening. You can see the Great Australian Bight in the distance. A lovely view from the caravan

EUCLA

The Central Western Time Zone covers a small area of the Nullarbor, stretching from the eastern side of Caiguna to Border Village on the South Australian side of the dividing line. At the border checkpoint, there are three clocks showing the time in Adelaide, Perth and Eucla.

While staying at this park we came across this interesting piece of reading material:

THE NULLARBOR NYMPH

It was Christmas in 1971 in the bar of the Eucla Motel where the Nullarbor Nymph was created. Locals including kangaroo shooters, fishers, and a bus driver were sitting around the busy motel bar, drinking beer, and telling stories, when out of the beer came some made-up yarn about a naked sheila living in the desert with the kangaroos. At the time they had laughed at the speculation about the half-naked white woman who ran with wild Kangaroos around the bush land of Eucla. Before the drinking was over, everyone thought they may have seen such a woman!

In the bar was a PR bloke from Perth, heading east looking for work. He was broke and couldn't pay his motel bill so he told the motel owner, Steve Patupis, he would put his Eucla Motel on the map instead. Steve will not deny the Nullarbor Nymph was good for business, yet he maintains he was not involved in her creation.

One of the main authors of the myth sent out the story to a newspaper of a naked woman with long blonde hair, running with the kangaroos on the Nullarbor at Eucla. The Nymph story went crazy. Journalists and news crews were coming in by the planeload. They came from Adelaide, Sydney, Perth, and the US. The BBC even sent a full TV documentary crew. The story was a monster, and the locals were feeding it.

One journalist was not buying it and he wanted to get home. He took Mr Scott (one of the original creators of the Nullarbor Nymph Myth) who liked scotch, into the motel bar. "Of course it's bullshit, mate!" he finally slurred. "And you bastards are goin' for it."

The journalist phoned the story out from Eucla's phone box for the Sunday Mail's front page, "Nullarbor Nymph a Hoax".

Monday 22 April 2024

This morning, we left Eucla for the small town of Cocklebiddy, located 272 from Eucla. The scenery is just one continuous flat plain until we reached the town of Madura. Madura is a popular roadhouse on the Eyre Highway across the Nullarbor Plain. We stopped here for a coffee and refuel (\$2.57 for diesel) before heading up to the lookout. The most dramatic feature in the area is the Madura Pass where, after hundreds of kilometres of flat terrain and the road suddenly rises from the Roe Plain.

The following sign was on the wall in the Madura Café. Can you work out what it says. I'll tell you after a few days. Leave a comment if you think you have worked it out.



The following images were taken from the Madura Lookout. The long flat plains were what most of the scenery was like as we travelled between Eucla and Madura, a distance of 181 kms.





After taking in the view, we headed off to our final destination, Cocklebiddy, 91 kms from the lookout.

COCKLEBIDDY

Cocklebidy is a small roadhouse community located on the Eyre Highway. Like other locations in the region, the site consists of little more than a roadhouse. The current business name of the roadhouse is the Wedgetail Inn, and they have built a large enclosure that houses two large wedge tail eagles. Like most other Nullarbor establishments, this place also provides a caravan park and hotel-motel facilities. It also has an emergency airstrip for the RFDS.

When we arrived, there was a microlight aircraft sitting next to the fuel bowisers; not sure if he was refuelling or just having popped in for lunch. While I was looking at the aircraft the owner came out and started to wheel the plane down to the airstrip where he started up and took off to destinations unknown. I was adding water into the caravan tanks at the time he was pushing his aircraft to the strip, but Maree was able to get these two pics of the plane. The plane (EuroFOX) cruises at 90 knots (166 kph).



Well after refuelling the car and the filling the water tanks in the van (*I purchased 100 litres for our tanks that will cover us for showers for the remainder of our drive to Norseman at \$2 per 10 litres, very reasonable given the location. We do not use the tanks for drinking water and always purchase 10 litre bulk water bottles from supermarkets for drinking. If we did use the tank water, we would boil it first as you do not know the quality of the water in some of these rural towns*) we went and located a powered site for the night. We also decided to eat in the restaurant tonight and have a night off from cooking.

Tuesday 23 April 2024

We left around 07:30 local time for the drive to our next destination of Balladonia, 247 kms from Cocklebiddy.

Around 65 kms from Cockle biddy we came across the sign for the longest straight road in Australia. So of course you must take that cheesy photograph.



Aerial view of the road we are about to travel.



After reaching the end of the straight road it was only a short drive to the Balladonia Roadhouse/ Hotel Motel Complex and Caravan Park.

BALLADONIA

Balladonia takes its name from the Balladonia Station and the homestead which was built in the area after the first settlers arrived in 1879. It has been suggested that 'balladonia' is a local Aboriginal word meaning 'big rock by itself' but this is not listed in The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia.

The Balladonia complex contains a cultural heritage museum which covers the history of the local area from its Aboriginal Heritage through European exploration and settlement to the history of the Royal Flying Doctor, the construction of the Eyre Highway, information on the lives of early settlers and detailed information about the local fauna and flora. The highlight of the museum is its collection connected with NASA's Skylab space station which crashed nearby in 1979.

The caravan park here is open flat land set amongst some eucalypt trees. The fees are higher than the other parks we stayed at in Yalata, Eucla, and Cocklebiddy which charged \$30 for the site. Here in Balladonia, it is \$50. A lot of people complain but in the scheme of things, does it really matter. Also, it is well publicised on camping Apps that this location charges \$50, so you can know in advance and if you do not like it then plan to stay elsewhere. Yes, all the caravan parks along the Nullarbor are basic but they all offer power, showers and toilet facilities and access to food if you do not want to cook.

I found the park quite quiet despite being close to the Highway and being amongst the trees was nice. Images follow of the park. You make the call to whether you would like the open area and happy to pay \$50 for a site; we were, and we are self-contained.





Tonight, we cooked in the van. Tomorrow, we head off to Norseman. Norseman is a short drive of 200 kms from Balladonia. As the Telstra signal is only 3G in Balladonia the signal is

too weak for our 5G & 4G broadband WIFI I installed in the van so we will connect the external hard drive and watch some pre-loaded movies or TV shows before heading off to bed. Until tomorrow. Nite all.

Wednesday 24 April 2024

This morning was another early start to the day. With the small changes of time in this area we are finding ourselves waking up earlier than usual. So, we might as well get on the road. Our destination today is Norseman.

Unfortunately, there isn't any place to stop and have a coffee on this leg of our journey other than making our own coffee of course, and there are plenty of rest areas available to use for a break.

As we drove along the scenery slowly changed to a wooded forest with a mix of various eucalypts. It wasn't long before we were travelling through the Great Western Woodlands. The boundary of the Great Western Woodlands runs from the Nullarbor Plain in the east to the Western Australian Wheatbelt in the west; from north of Esperance through to the inland Mulga country and deserts that are found north of Kalgoorlie.

The following image is what we were viewing as we drove along the Eyre Highway through the Great Western Woodlands. The forest is just incredible with endless views of these magnificent trees and their exuberant colours. We plan to stop on our return journey and take the time to enjoy this woodland.



As we left Balladonia quite early, we arrived in Norseman around 11:00. We were able to check into the caravan park here in Norseman at this time which was perfect. Gave us the time to setup and look around town.

NORSEMAN

Norseman started life as a mining camp. When gold was discovered in 1892 it was known simply as the 'Dundas Field' and the town which sprang up was simply called 'Dundas'. By 1894 it was known as 'Norseman' and had, reputedly, been named after a horse, 'Hardy Norseman', owned by a prospector named Laurie Sinclair. It has been claimed that 'Norseman' kicked at a large nugget on a site which Sinclair later pegged and discovered a substantial reef. Today Norseman, the horse, is honoured by a statue in the town.

During Norseman's early days camels were used to bring freight and mail to and from the town. The roads were made intentionally wide to ensure the camel trains had room to turn around. These corrugated iron sculptures now stand proud on the Prinsep Street roundabout as a tribute to this piece of history.

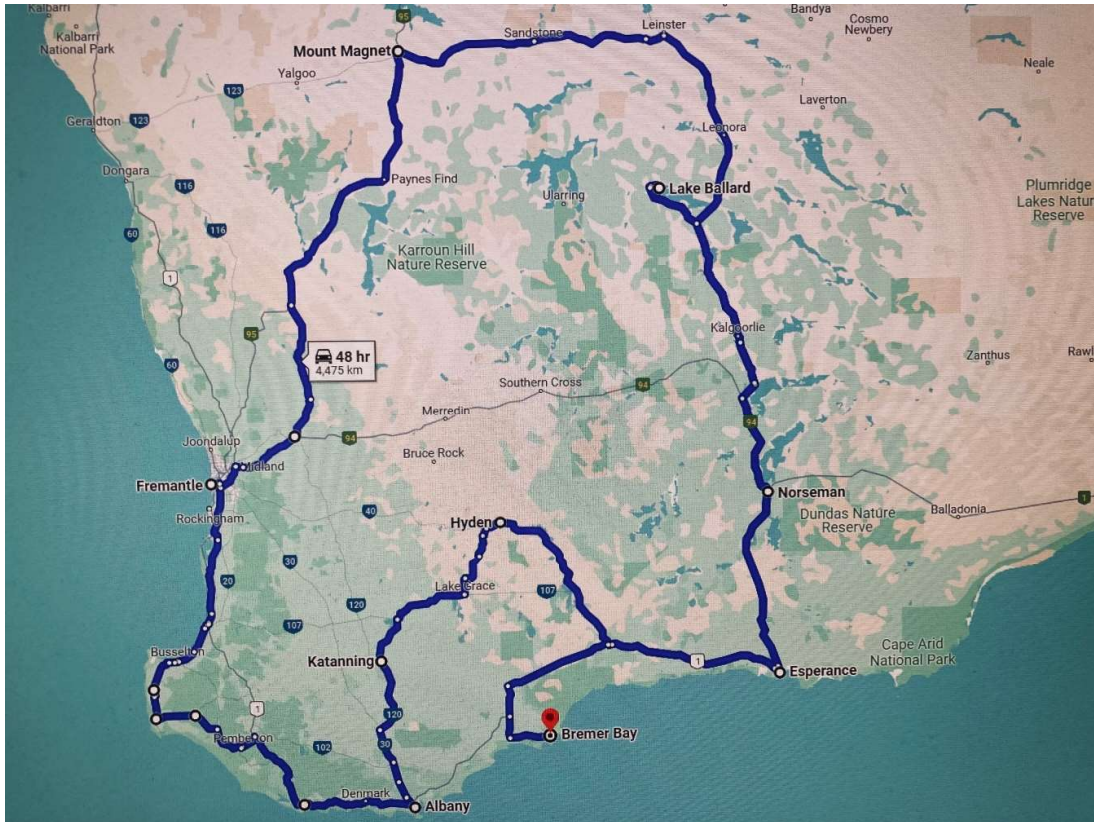


The following image is a photo we took of the mural on the side of the Information Centre wall. The painting is titled, “The Woodlands on the Wall”, and depicts the local wildlife around Norseman. The artist was Brenton See, and the work was completed in July 2020.



Well, that is all for today. I hope you are still enjoying our blog and following us as we travel through Western Australia, the lower half anyway.

The map that follows is the route we are now taking from Norseman in a clockwise direction.



Our route from Norseman to Norseman – Clockwise

Thursday 25 April 2024

As today is Anzac Day, a National Day of Remembrance in Australia and New Zealand that broadly commemorates all Australians and New Zealanders “who served and died in all wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations” and “the contribution and suffering of all those who have served”, I start today off with the ***Ode of Remembrance***:

They shall grow not old,
as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
We will remember them.

We will remember them,

Lest we forget

We left Norseman late this morning as the drive down to Esperance is only 200 kms. Along the way we stopped at a small town called Salmon Gums.

SALMON GUMS

This town is located on the Coolgardie-Esperance Highway. The name is derived from a prominent stretch of *Eucalyptus salmonophloia* (Salmon Gum) trees which formed a landmark in the town's early days.

The first potential use of a townsite was as a watering spot for the proposed Esperance to Norseman Railway, since Salmon Gums is roughly halfway between these two towns. Land for a town-site was set aside in 1912 and the name was recommended in 1916. This land lay within the tribal boundaries of the indigenous Kalaako. The town was gazetted in 1925, when the Esperance to Salmon Gums section of the railway was completed.

Settlement of the area received a boost after the First World War when returning soldiers were given grants of land in this and many other areas around the state. These grantees became known as soldier settlers. At the time Salmon Gums was regarded as being on the fringe of arable land. The low soil fertility and marginal average rainfall meant that yields were poor prior to the 1950s. As a result, the land was not in high demand, so the opportunity cost to the government was quite small.

Agricultural research was boosted prior to the Second World War by the establishment of the Salmon Gums Research Station. In 1949 a similar station, the Esperance Downs Research Station was established near Esperance. Research at the latter quickly led to the discovery that soil in the Esperance region was deficient in trace elements, reportedly phosphorus, copper and zinc, and the addition of these greatly improved fertility and crop yields. Since then, the region, including Salmon Gums, has become a successful producer of wheat, sheep and cattle.

We arrived at Esperance around 12:30pm and headed directly to the caravan park. The caravan park we are staying at was the last on our list for selection, but the only one in town with a vacancy for us. The site is a combination of concrete, house bricks and dirt. So not the best of options. Also, there isn't any scenery to speak of, but as we do not intend to spend all of our time in the van, it doesn't really matter about the view, I guess. The parks for the rest of the trip have already been booked, just to ensure we get the park we want.

ESPERANCE

So much of the Western Australian coastline, particularly the coastline along the Great Southern Ocean, is beautiful. Turquoise waters, white sands, granite rocks edging the beaches. The beaches which lie just to the west of Esperance – West Beach, Chapman's Point, Blue Haven Beach, Salmon Beach, Fourth Beach and Twilight Beach have incredible views. The white sands, the gently rounded granite cliffs, and the ocean changing from aquamarine near the shore to a deep blue out near the islands of the Archipelago of the Recherche, make Esperance one of the true wonders of the Australian coastline. The sand dunes, pushed to heights by the unforgiving 'Esperance Doctor', are 50-60 metres high. They are so white and so battered by the winds of the Southern Ocean that there are places

where the sand has drifted across the road. Below the road the white sands of the beaches and small bays are edged by smooth and dramatic granite rocks and displays of wildflowers. This is one of those areas where the sights are so overwhelming that it really does take your breath away.

Following are images of West Beach, Chapman's Point, Blue Haven Beach, Salmon Beach, Fourth Beach and Twilight Beach.











There are some nice flowers growing in the dunes along the coastline that I photographed as we stopped at the spots in the images above. However, this one is called Gazania (*Gazania linearis*) and is regarded as an environmental weed in Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia and as an emerging or potential environmental weed in parts of Western Australia, including the Esperance coastline. Apparently, this species invades coastal habitats, as well as grasslands and open woodlands in inland areas. It can severely alter the vegetation structure in plant communities by replacing and suppressing native plants.

A shame as it is a nice looking plant.



Tonight, we decided to go out for dinner. The restaurant *33 degrees* was highly recommended, so we decided on this establishment, and we were not disappointed. We did forget it was a public holiday and of course there was a surcharge, 15%, on everything we had. But we still enjoyed ourselves. The following image is the *33 degrees* restaurant and there were a lot of people coming and going for drinks and meals. A great evening.



26 April 2024

Today is a rest day and we are just wandering around the town and doing a bit of shopping. So, nothing more to add for today. I'm cooking dinner tonight at the van and we are having Prawn Laksa.

27 April 2024

Today we took a drive out to "Stonehenge". That's right, Esperance has created an accurate replica out of granite stones of the famous prehistoric megalithic structure on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, England.

Following is the information and the photos we took as we walked around the structure.



Stonehenge Full Circle in Esperance, WA

The Esperance Stonehenge is a full size replica of the original Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, England. It has been erected to show what the original would have looked like around 1950 BC. It consists of 137 stones of Esperance Pink Granite that were all quarried locally less than 1km from the current site of the Esperance Stonehenge.

Fact Sheet

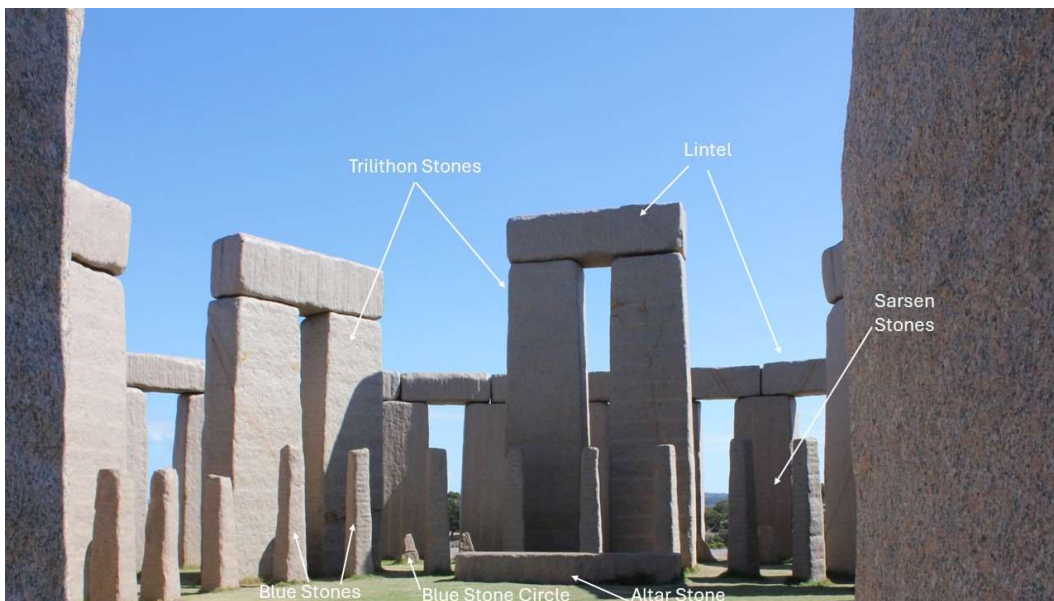
10 inner Trilithon Stones form a horseshoe and weigh between 28-50 tonnes each with an 18 tonne lintel laying over each pair reaching a height of 8 metres. Inside the Trilithon Horseshoe stands another smaller horseshoe of 19 blue stones. Lying at the base of the tallest Trilithon Stone lies the Altar Stone which weighs 9 tonnes. Outside the Trilithon Horseshoe lies a circle of 40 smaller stones that are referred to as the Bluestone Circle. The perimeter consists of 30 Sarsen Stones weighing 28 tonnes each with 8 tonne lintels lining the top. Together they reach a height of nearly 5 metres. The entire structure is free standing with the Trilithons kept in place by the Lintels.

Summer / Winter Solstice

The Stonehenge was built to align with the Solstices in Esperance. On the morning of the Summer Solstice – 21st or 22nd December – the sun's rays align with the Heel Stones and the sunlight shines through the gap in the Heel stones and shines through to the altar stone. The sunset of the Winter Solstice (21st June) repeats the same alignment in reverse. The site does not go into explaining the history of Stonehenge, as we found out when a tourist asked these questions. So I will add background to the history of Stonehenge that stands on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, England.



Esperance Stonehenge View through the Heel Stone.



Background to the Stonehenge Site in the England.

Stonehenge is a prehistoric megalithic structure on Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, England, three kilometres west of Amesbury. It consists of an outer ring of vertical sarsen standing stones, each around 4 metres high, 2.1 metres wide, and weighing around 25 tons, topped by connecting horizontal lintel stones. Inside is a ring of smaller bluestones. Inside these are free-standing trilithons, two bulkier vertical sarsens joined by one lintel.

The whole monument, now ruinous, is aligned towards the sunrise on the summer solstice and sunset on the winter solstice. The stones are set within earthworks in the middle of the

densest complex of Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments in England, including several hundred tumuli (burial mounds).

Archaeologists believe that Stonehenge was constructed in several phases from around 3100 BC to 1600 BC, with the circle of large sarsen stones placed between 2600 BC and 2400 BC. The surrounding circular earth bank and ditch, which constitute the earliest phase of the monument, have been dated to about 3100 BC. Radiocarbon dating suggests that the bluestones were given their current positions between 2400 and 2200 BC, although they may have been at the site as early as 3000 BC.

One of the most famous landmarks in the United Kingdom, Stonehenge is regarded as a British cultural icon. It has been a legally protected scheduled monument since 1882, when legislation to protect historic monuments was first successfully introduced in Britain. The site and its surroundings were added to UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites in 1986. Stonehenge is owned by the Crown and managed by English Heritage; the surrounding land is owned by the National Trust. Stonehenge could have been a burial ground from its earliest beginnings. Deposits containing human bone, date from as early as 3000 BC, when the ditch and bank were first dug, and continued for at least another 500 years.

Following are more images of the Stonehenge replica in Esperance WA.







Stonehenge – View of Heel Stone from Inside the full Circle



28 – 30 April 2024

We are just lazing around over the next couple of days. Doing the usual domestic chores of washing and shopping. So, nothing to add until we depart Esperance for Hopetoun on Wednesday morning, 1 May 2024.

1 May 2024

We left Esperance this morning around 08:30 for a leisurely drive to our next destination, Hopetoun. We are travelling via Ravensthorpe as we want to see the silo art in this town and to deliver some groceries to a friend we met on our travels. She has come down with Covid and is now stuck in a motel in Ravensthorpe until Friday 3 May. When she rang us to let us know we offered our assistance and she asked if we could shop for her if she gave us a list of items. Not a problem and we were happy to help.

So with goods in hand, we headed off with our first stop being a very small town called Munglinup, located in the Shire of Ravensthorpe in the Goldfields–Esperance region of Western Australia. The town lies on the South Coast Highway between Ravensthorpe and Esperance and close to the Munglinup River. The river for most of its course defines the boundary of the Esperance and Ravensthorpe shires. The surrounding areas produce wheat and other cereal crops, and the town is also a receival site for Cooperative Bulk Handling.

As we were travelling to Munglinup, a road train went passed us and threw up stone that hit the windscreen. The impact was loud, and we expected to see the window crack. But nothing appeared so we continued to Munglinup, where we stopped for a coffee and then continued our drive onto Ravensthorpe.

After travelling another 30 kms or so I glanced up to the top of the windscreen as a line caught my eye. Yep, the stone impact did caused a crack to appear. When we stopped to examine the crack, it was obvious where the impact had occurred. Right on the edge of the top of the windscreen and we all know if a stone hits anywhere near the edge it is going to crack. So, on the road again and we kept an eye on the crack. By the time we reached Ravensthorpe the crack was 10 to 15 cms long.



You can see the crack running from the impact point to the adhesive sticker.

We enquired in town about repairs, but we were told the closest place was Albany. The chap I made enquiries with had those small round adhesive circles that Windscreens O'Brien sell to assist in stopping a crack spreading until we can get the windscreen replaced. He said that if the crack continues not to worry about it as the windscreen will not break, which was reassuring to hear. So, with the adhesive added to the crack we then rang the NRMA to see if our car insurance would cover the replacement. I wasn't sure it would as we had only just made a claim to get the driver's window replaced in Albury.

To my surprise I found that we were still covered for this problem, and we are now booked into Windscreens O'Brien in Albany on Tuesday 7 May for the windscreen to be replaced. Both Windscreens O'Brien and the NRMA also said not to be concerned if the crack spreads across the glass as it will stay in place. So that was also good to hear from the experts. This means we can continue our planned route from Hopetoun to Albany, via Hyden (Wave Rock), Newdegate and Katanning, arriving in Albany on Monday 6 May.

So, feeling more relaxed we headed off to the Motel to pass on our shopping to Helen, say our goodbyes and wishing her safe travels, and then headed off to Hopetoun.

Hopetoun

Hopetoun is primarily a beach resort town. It is known for its white sand beaches and its range of water-based activities – boating, surfing, swimming, fishing. The beaches stretch along the coastline in both directions from the town. The harbour, and the subsequent settlement, were originally named Mary Ann. When the town was surveyed in 1900 its name was changed to Hopetoun in honour of Australia's first Governor General, Lord Hopetoun.

We are staying at the local caravan park for two nights and have a nice, secluded location within the park.





The water and the white sands are just over the rise in the above photo. There is a walking track to the beach, and it is only about 200 metres. The following images were taken from the end of this walking track.



It was quite windy on the beach and there was rain in the area.



It was quite windy on the beach and there was rain in the area.



2 May 2024

Today we woke to the sound of rain on the caravan roof. It was quite wet outside but as the day progressed, things started to dry out as the clouds parted and allowed the sun to shine.

We decided to wander around the town and try the local store and coffee shop. A great find. We were looking at his menu and he said he didn't do breakfast, only lunch and dinner. We asked if he had any cakes and he said that he could make up some vanilla slices for us to go with our coffees. This was simply amazing. Not only did he make the vanilla slices himself he did all the preparation in front of us.

This had to be the best vanilla slice I have ever had. When I commented on them, he said that he had been voted in the top three awards for his vanilla slice in the district. He has even had people travel 400 kms to experience his vanilla slices.

We had started to eat the slice when we suddenly remembered “photo”. Maree had more left of hers so here is a pic.



The vanilla slice, or what is left of it. Very gooey and fresh and excellent flavour.

That is all for today. Tomorrow, we head off to Hyden for the night so we can visit Wave Rock. It will be interesting to see what the windscreen crack does during the next drive of 240 kms.

3 May 2024

We headed off to Hyden around 09:00. We passed through Ravensthorpe as we wanted to see the silo art in this town.

The murals capture the lifecycle of the “Banksia Baxteri”. The murals depict delicate flower buds to vibrant full blooms and from developing seed pods to their subsequent drying out and opening. This species of Banksia is native to Western Australia and can be found exclusively between Esperance and Albany.

The murals also feature depictions of the Honey Possum and the New Holland Honeyeater, both of which play crucial roles as the primary pollinators for this Banksia species. These animals add an additional layer of significance to the artwork, showcasing the interconnectedness and delicate balance of the local ecosystem.

The murals were painted by artist Amok Island.

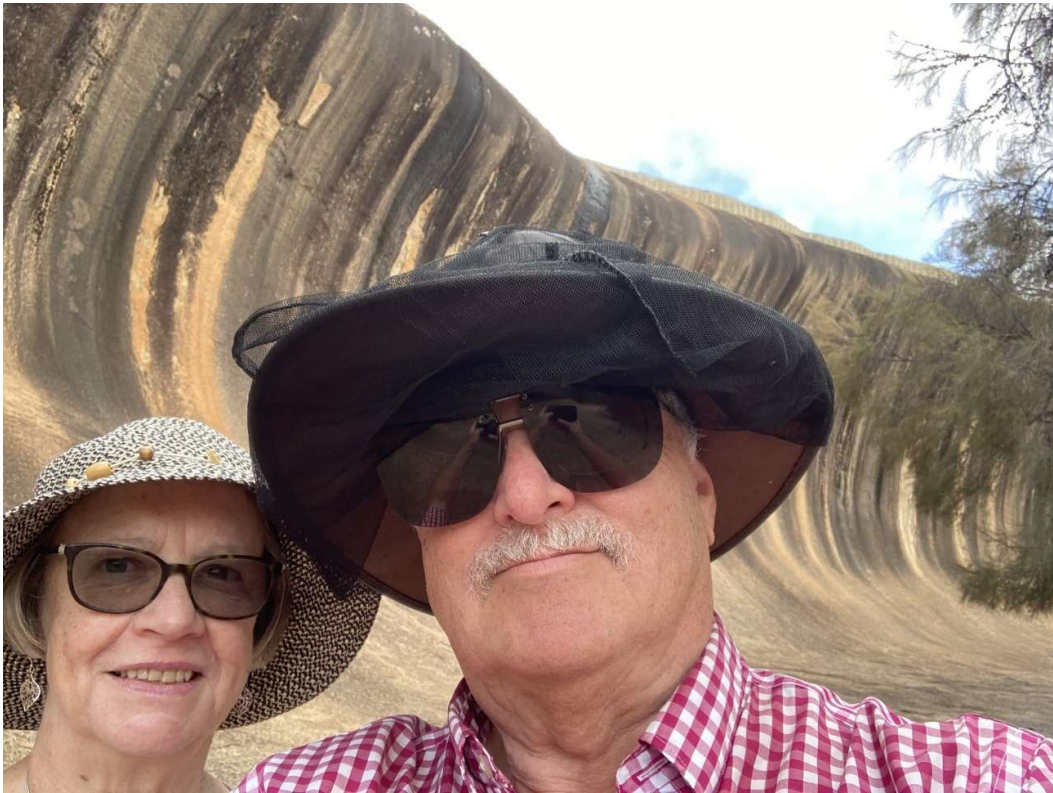




The above images were on one side of the three silos. I was unable to get back far enough to get them all in one photo. The following image is the back of the silos and the continuing story of the start to end cycles of this flower.



After viewing the silos, we headed off to Hyden. The main reason for travelling to Hyden is to see "Wave Rock". The following images show Wave Rock, views from the top of the Rock Walking Trail and an unusual rock formation.









After spending about an hour walking around this site, we headed off to our campground.

The campground is very large and on private property. The sites are unpowered, but they have provided modern flush toilets for the use of campers. There is also another section of building accommodation referred to as “The Silos”. Following are some images of our campground.



View from drone at our camping location in Hyden





As you can see the campground is large and the Salmon Gums are just incredible. They look simply stunning in the setting sun. Also, the night sky tonight was superb. It was pitch black with no lighting around at all. The star clusters were just incredible to watch as we sat outside with a glass of wine.

Oh well, it is starting to get chilly, so Maree and I are heading back inside the van for the night. But what a sight of the night sky.

4 May 2024

This morning, we headed off to Newdegate where there is more silo art for the viewing. The trip down to Lake Grace, about 52 kms from Newdegate, was uneventful – and the crack in the windscreen has slowed its progression to the other side, only having moved another 3 centimetres since last night.

When we arrived in Lake Grace, we decided we would stay in this town tonight. So, we went to the caravan park here, checked in, unhitched the van and headed into town to get something to eat.

Well, as with Esperance on a weekend, everything was closed. The local coffee shop had about 12 people inside but when we opened the door a waitress told us they were closed. It was only 11:00 am; so not sure what was going on. So, we went to the roadhouse in town, grabbed a bite to eat and a coffee, then headed off to Newdegate.

Newdegate is a small town in the Great Southern agricultural region, located 399 km south-east of Perth and 52 km east of Lake Grace. Doing the trip this way meant we could leave the van in Lake Grace, drive to Newdegate and then return to Lake Grace. It was nice to drive without the van in tow for a change.

Following are the images of the artwork on the silos in Newdegate and some photos I took with the drone of the area surrounding the silos.



Silo Art in the town of Newdegate WA taken from the drone. You can also see the workmen filling the grain train containers. They are the figures in yellow jackets.

In May 2018 the CBH Group Newdegate grain silos were transformed into a tourist attraction for the town and surrounding areas when they were painted by artist Brenton See.

The Newdegate Silos feature the Western Bearded Dragon, the Red-Tailed Phascogale, which is a rare marsupial found only in the Western Australian Wheatbelt. A mallee fowl, which is another local bird of the area and finally on the last silo is a symbolic depiction of the region. It features a shape resembling a drop of water, which is half-white and half-teal. The white represents the salt lakes, and the teal represents the freshwater lakes and the rain. In the background are coloured squares showing how the land appears from above, green for the bush land areas and brown, orange and red for the dirt and rocks.



The grain silo terminus in Newdegate taken from the drone



Maree reading the silo art board and Steve controlling the drone taking the images of the silo artwork.

Tonight, we are heading off to the pub for a meal and then relax before heading off to Katanning tomorrow.

5 May 2024

We have arrived in Katanning after a short drive of 150 kms. We are staying in a free camp area provided by the Shire of Katanning. The area is asphalted and caters for a max of seven caravans. There is access to drinking water and there is a dump point. It is a Self-Contained Site.



On the way to Katanning, we passed through the small town of Pingrup. The main reason for travelling through this town was to see the silo art.



The Silo Art in Pingrup WA.

Featured on the silos are figurative depictions of the town's iconic Pingrup races, its Merino sheep, its people, cattle dogs and even the blue tractor found in the main street of town.

The artist took 15 days and 230 litres of paint to create the mural, which entailed a series of artworks on three individual silos, each 25 metres high and 15 metres wide. Working with rollers and brushes atop a boom lift from dawn to dusk, the artist, Evoca1, battled high winds and several days of rain.

Pingrup: is a small town in the Great Southern region of Western Australia. The name of the town is Indigenous Australian in origin and was the name of a lake that is close to the townsite. The meaning of Pingrup is most likely taken from A.A. Hassell of Jerramungup (1894) recording of Pingrup (bingerup) meaning 'place where digging'. The Noongar Dictionary gives the meaning for Pingrup as "place where they are digging or have been digging". The name first appeared on charts of the area in 1873.

Primarily producing wheat and other cereal crops it's also known for its pink lakes and its famous country Pingrup Races. What started out in 1919 as good old fashion Picnic Races and later Sports and Foot Races in 1950, over time the whole concept was changed to the Pingrup Races that Pingrup is known for today.

6 May 2024

Arrived Albany after driving through hilly country. Good to leave the flat landscape behind for a while. Stopped at a nice Cafe in Cranbrook, 'Kaffe 107' about halfway between Katanning and Albany. Best country town Cafe experience. Staff were great, chatty and happy to serve. Great coffee and cake and my brekkie wrap was the best.



We arrived in Albany and went directly to the caravan park. Nice wide sites here and plenty of room to spread out for a few days.



we have found it quite windy so have put up a makeshift windbreak. Works perfectly. I must get around to getting a proper side screen that fits.

7 May 2024

This morning, I left early to get the windscreen replaced on the territory. It only took them a couple of hours to do the replacement and we had the car back by 10:00. We picked up the vehicle and then went shopping and wandered around the town, had a coffee and cake at the local DOME chain of restaurants and then took it easy for the rest of the day.



We caught up with the same friend we met several days ago as she is staying in the same park. So, the three of us decided to have dinner at the van tonight. Cooked pork loin on the Weber with veg so we had a good evening.

Tomorrow we will take a drive to see what the coastal routes have to offer.

8 May 2024

We spent the day driving through the Torndirrup National Park and I have uploaded the photos that we took as we travelled through the park.

The Torndirrup National Park is home to a range of spectacular natural wonders and is one of the most visited national parks in Western Australia. Torndirrup National Park has many impressive rock formations on the coast. These include the Gap, Natural Bridge and the Blowholes all shaped from the local granite. The park is along the coast on the west side of King George Sound and consists of a range of cliffs, gullies, blowholes, beaches and promontories.

A large array of floral species can be found within the park, including the woolly-bush, peppermint tree, swamp yate, various banksias and karri forest. Coastal plants such as native rosemary, banjine and thick leafed fan flower are found in the heath. The park is also home to the very rare Albany woolly-bush and the critically endangered blue tinsel lily of which only a single population exists.

Fauna such as kangaroos, bush rats, pygmy possums and short-nosed bandicoots are found within the park. Many reptile species are also to be found, including tiger snakes, bardick, Birdlife includes honeyeaters, wattlebirds, button quail, western rosella and a variety of seabirds. Whales and seals can be seen from the cliffs of the park in the correct season.

The first location we visited was the historic Cheyne Beach Whaling Station.





Panorama View Historic Whaler's Station



Maree and the Old Whaler's Vessel at historic whaler's station

Whalers had been recorded at Cheyne's Beach in the 1840s with a commercial fishing operation being established there in 1920. Whaling recommenced there in the early 1950s and the Cheyne's Beach Whaling Company was formed by a family syndicate of eight fishermen.

The station was established at the Frenchman Bay site in 1952. The industrial facility was built to process whales caught in the area and is composed of several large steel and concrete sheds and workshops, smaller timber-framed offices and amenities buildings along with tanks and boilers. Much of the station was constructed from old mining equipment. The station produced a total of 500 long tons of whale oil during the 1953 season. Following a disastrous season in 1962 with record low catches the International Whaling Commission

ended whaling of humpbacks from Antarctic stocks so the company commenced hunting sperm whales instead. The company employed over 100 staff. Whaling continued from the station until 1978 when the last whale was legally caught in Australian waters.

We left the whaling Station and made our way back to Albany, stopping to look at the interesting scenery along the way.



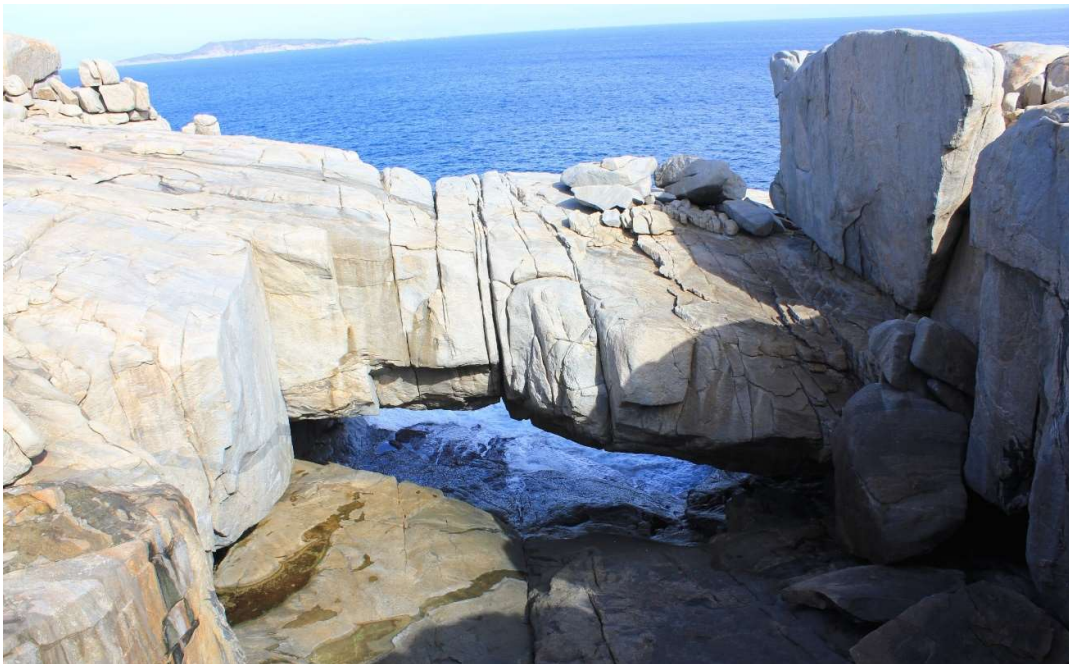
View of the Salmon Holes – named after salmon looking for calm waters close to the beach



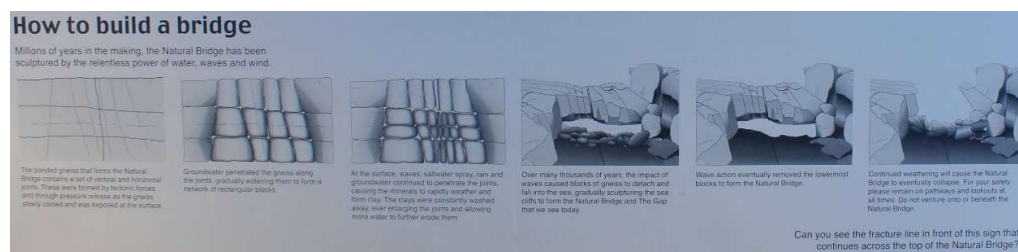
Jimmy Newells Harbour – a small, protected harbour named after a fisherman driven into the inlet by a sudden squall



Jimmy Newells Harbour – a small, protected harbour named after a fisherman driven into the inlet by a sudden squall



The Natural Bridge – carved from ancient granite by the forces of nature.



How Natural Bridge developed over time



View from The Gap lookout with two fishermen

What's in a name?

There are two distinctive rock types at The Gap and Natural Bridge that resemble granite, a common rock on the south coast.

Granodiorite

Granodiorite is an igneous rock rich in silica. Like granite, it formed deep within the Earth's crust by the slow cooling of molten rock or 'magma'.

When Antarctica and Australia collided, parts of the crust melted and magma was formed. The magma was squeezed into the much cooler gneiss and solidified as flat-lying sheets or 'sills' of granodiorite.

You can see these striking features as darker bands, cross-cutting the lighter coloured gneiss in this rock wall and the rock face at The Gap. Crystals of quartz, feldspar and mica form an interlocking mosaic in granodiorite, making it a very hard and strong rock, resistant to weathering.

Gneiss

Gneiss (pronounced 'nice') is a metamorphic or 'changed' rock. The gneiss in Torndirrup National Park was probably originally an igneous rock such as granite, but slowly changed under extremes of temperature and pressure during continental collision. It now displays a characteristic 'foliation' - a repetition of alternating thin layers or bands of different minerals.

The darker layers contain minerals with more magnesium and iron, whereas the lighter layers contain minerals with relatively more silica. The metamorphic process caused the very distinctive striped appearance of the surrounding rock pavements and in the walls of the sea cliffs.

The rock types found at The Gap and Natural Bridge

From here we left the National Park and headed to Sand Patch Peak lookouts.



Sand Patch Hill Lookout



Sand Patch Hill Lookout



Sand Patch Hill Lookout

9 May 2024

Today we started with a drive to view the Water Tank artwork. These water tanks are located on the Bunnings Warehouse site.



Water Tank Artwork – Albany, WA



Water Tank Artwork – Albany, WA

The Albany Water Tank Art has become a local landmark and a popular tourist attraction since its inception in 2020.

Covering the two massive water tanks, the stunning indigenous artwork spans across 64 panels. It's a tribute to the region's rich marine life and pays homage to the deep connection with the land's original custodians.

Enhanced with vibrant colours and intricate details, the mural captures the essence of the sea creatures that inhabit the waters surrounding Albany, showcasing the awe-inspiring treasures found within the ocean.



Water Tank Artwork – Albany, WA



Water Tank Artwork – Albany, WA



Water Tank Artwork – Albany, WA



Water Tank Artwork – Albany, WA



Water Tank Artwork – Albany, WA



Water Tank Artwork – Albany, WA

10 May 2024

Nothing to report on today. We leave tomorrow for Bremer Bay so just doing some shopping and getting things around the van in order.

11 May 2024

BREMER BAY

Bremer Bay is a quiet little village on the southern edge of the Fitzgerald River National Park. It is essentially a sleepy holiday resort and angler's retreat. After visiting the area in 1831, the bay was named after Sir James Bremer by John Septimus Roe, captain of HMS Tamar, onboard which he served as a lieutenant from 1824 to 1827. The area was first settled by Europeans in the 1850s.

The van park where we are staying is set amongst trees and is very peaceful.



The beaches in the area all have clean white sand. The water is turquoise in colour, especially when the sun is shining, as it was the day we arrived. We took plenty of photos which follow.



Blossom Beach, Bremer Bay



Native Dog Beach, Bremer Bay – so named from the dingoes that frequented the area before they were wiped out by settlers to make way for sheep farming.

12 May 2024

This morning, we headed out with the drone to get some video footage of these beaches.

Tomorrow, we head to Denmark which is 220 kms from Bremer Bay, travelling west along the coast.

13 May 2024

We headed off around 09:30 to Denmark. As we travelled to Bremer Bay from Albany, we thought we would take some inland back roads to get down to Denmark. This turned out to be a good idea as we travelled along the perimeter of the Stirling Range National Park and had some great views of the mountain range.

We eventually arrived in Denmark, and we were surprised to find that this was quite a small town. Both the townsite and the Denmark River were named by the first European explorer to discover Denmark, Dr Thomas Braidwood Wilson, a surgeon, and he named the town after his esteemed colleague Alexander Denmark.



Our site in the caravan park, a large Big4. Our location is close to the beach.



Last night we had some visitors, and they were casually eating around the van. This was until some idiots let their dog off the leash and it immediately started chasing them all. Fortunately, the dog failed to catch any of them.

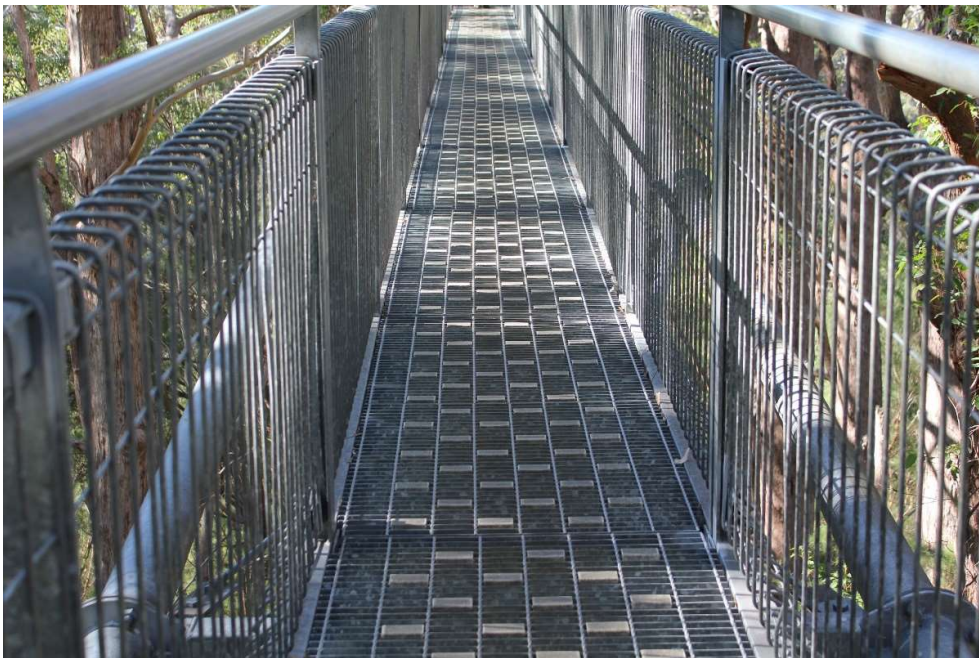
14 May 2024

This morning, we drove down to the location of the “Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk”. Maree did this walk without me as I have issues with the heights and walking along open wired pathways 40 metres above the ground. The Tree Top Walk sits within the Walpole-

Nornalup National Park and Walpole Wilderness Area, offering spectacular views over densely forested hills. Maree took a lot of photos and I have attached a few of them.



Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk



Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk



Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk



Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk



Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk



Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk



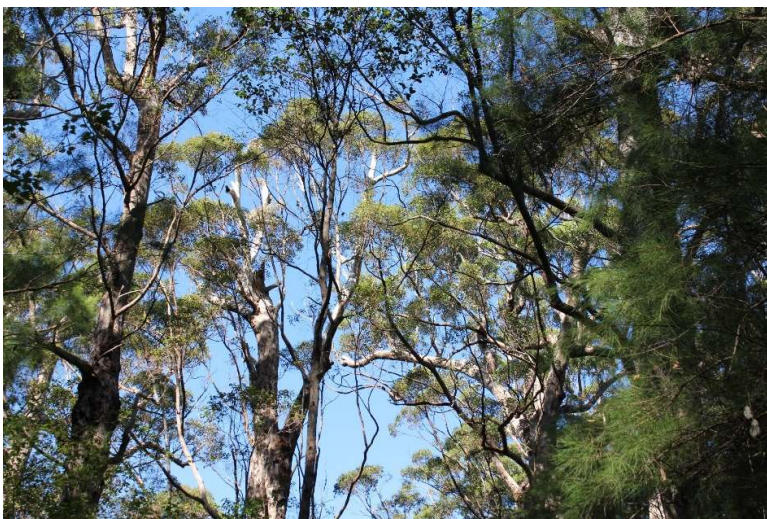
Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk



Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk



Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk



Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk

From the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk, we travelled towards the coast to see the Green Pools and the Elephant Rocks.



Green Pools – William Bay NP



Green Pools – William Bay NP



Elephant Rocks – William Bay NP



Elephant Rocks – William Bay NP

From here we headed back to the caravan, but first we stopped at the beach near the caravan park. Once again, the beaches have clean white sands.



White sands beach near our caravan park in Denmark



White sands beach near our caravan park in Denmark



White sands beach near our caravan park in Denmark

15 May 2024

Today was a leisure day so we headed into town for a coffee and cake and then headed out to Ocean Beach with the drone. The following images were taken with the drone at a height of 50 metres.



Drone footage of Ocean Beach in Denmark WA



Drone footage of Ocean Beach in Denmark WA



Drone footage of Ocean Beach in Denmark WA



Drone footage of Ocean Beach in Denmark WA



Drone footage of Ocean Beach in Denmark WA



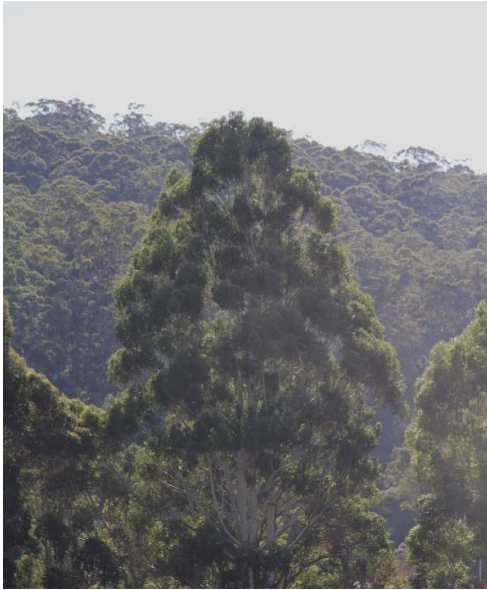
Drone footage of Ocean Beach in Denmark WA



Drone footage of Ocean Beach in Denmark WA

16 May 2024

Today we left Denmark for Pemberton. Pemberton is located in a forestry area and there are tall Karri, Marri and Jarrah trees throughout the region. Karri was extensively logged in the past for the high quality timber and the high quantity of wood available per tree. Old-growth karri is still logged like jarrah despite a public perception that this practice was stopped years ago. Indeed in 2012 karri collected from a timber mill was carbon-dated to nearly 600 years old, double the age karri was thought to reach. This finding was disputed by the mill manager, but the head tester reaffirmed the findings. This prompted 27 environmental groups to protest for complete protection of the karri forest. This wood was destined for woodchips and paper production. In the past, karri timber was used for heavy construction purposes. Despite most of the karri forest being logged and cleared for pasture in the past, it grows back well not needing seeding, unlike most Eucalyptus.



Karri Trees

The road to Pemberton was Highway 1, our national highway, however, many kilometres of the road was only just wide enough for a car and van and a road train to pass each other. I was just waiting for another crack in the windscreen. So, it wasn't the most relaxing of drives but the town of Pemberton and the surrounding area is well worth the effort of getting here.

17 May 2024

Today we went on the Pemberton Tramway Tour. The Pemberton Tramway Company is a privately operated tourist railway in the southwest of Western Australia, which conveys tourists through deep forests, meandering through towering Karri and Marri trees. The tram stops at the Cascades to allow tourists to walk around the area before returning to Pemberton.

The Lefroy Brook at the Cascades changes from a gentle flow in the summer to a raging torrent in the winter. The Lefroy Brook is also home to a population of pouched lampreys. We did not see any though.

The pouched lampreys enter rivers from the ocean to spawn and has a marine parasitic pre-adult stage, where they grow from approximately 10 cm to 60 cm and feed on large fish.



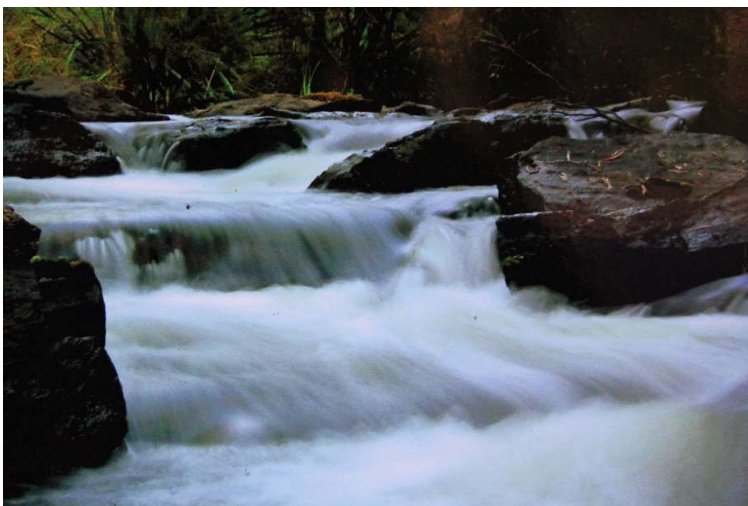
Sub-adults then enter freshwater rivers during winter and spring, moving upstream prior to spawning in the following year; at this time of entry into freshwater they cease feeding (for up to 18 months), and live off their fat reserves, the males developing their gular pouch during this period. Adults die shortly after spawning. Large numbers of lamprey can sometimes be seen below barriers (natural and artificial), as they are held up during migration. Their oral disc (sectorial) allows them to climb vertical obstacles, such as rock bars, waterfalls and weirs.

The larvae are eyeless and live buried in sandy stream sediments. They filter-feed on plankton, algae and suspended organic material for up to four years before metamorphosing into their vibrant silver-blue juvenile form, marked by the appearance of eyes, the formation of the oral disc and teeth, and then migrate to the ocean during high flow periods in winter.

We took some photos of our walk around the cascades.



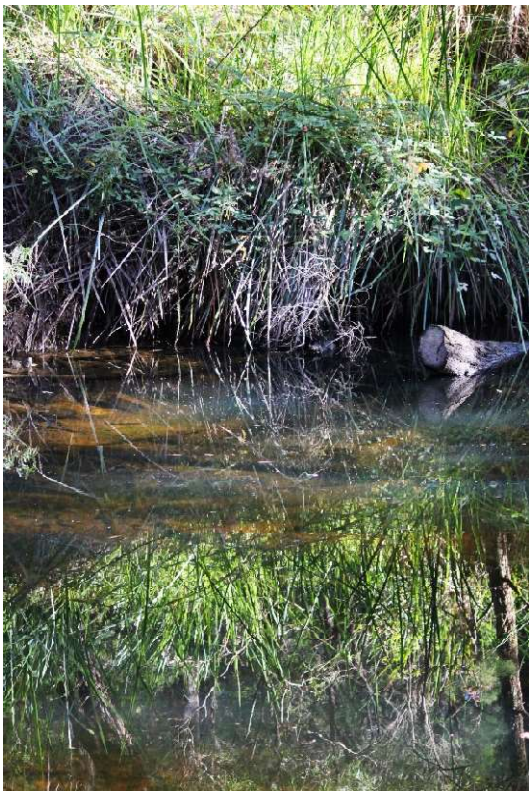
Waters flowing through the Cascade at normal speed



Cascade falls taken at speed of eight frames per second.



This tree perfectly reflected in the still waters; hence being upside down



Grasses above reflected in the still stream waters below



Reflected tree trunk in the still waters of the Cascade



A fern in the Pemberton Cascades



Pemberton Tram that was used for the tour.

Our neighbour in the caravan park just came by to ask if we had seen a quokka in the wild. No, we haven't; actually, we have never seen one. So, I grabbed my phone to get a pic of the little guy eating something behind our caravan. I was only able to get a few seconds of video of the little guy before he scampered off to the bushes.

Some information I sourced about our Quokkas.

A quokka has a stocky build, well developed hind legs, rounded ears, and a short, broad head. Its musculoskeletal system was originally adapted for terrestrial bipedal saltation, but over its evolution, its system has been built for arboreal locomotion. Although looking rather like a very small kangaroo, it can climb small trees and shrubs up to 1.5 metres. Its coarse fur is a brown colour, fading to buff underneath. The quokka is known to live for an average of 10 years.

Quokkas have a promiscuous mating system. After a month of gestation, females give birth to a single joey. Females can give birth twice a year and produce about 17 joeys during their lifespan. The joey lives in its mother's pouch for six months and after leaving the pouch, relies on its mother for milk for two more months, and is then fully weaned around eight months after birth. When a female quokka with a joey in her pouch is pursued by a predator, she may drop her baby onto the ground with the joey producing noises which may serve to attract the predator's attention, while the mother escapes.

18 May 2024

Today we went to Windy Harbour for the day. On the way we were almost taken out by a kangaroo. I braked heavily and he decided to brake as well, and he turned and went back the way he came.

Windy Harbour is a unique holiday settlement on the south coast of Western Australia, situated on 190 hectares of Crown reserve and surrounded by the world famous

D'Entrecasteaux National Park. Windy Harbour consists of leasehold holiday cottages, fisherman leasehold cottages and a camping ground.

When we left Pemberton, we decided we would stop in Windy Harbour for a coffee and something to eat, as we hadn't had any breakfast before we left. The town is only 56 kms from Pemberton and an easy drive, without the van in tow. However, unbeknown to us, there is no café or other food outlet in Windy harbour. So, we spent the morning travelling around all the scenic spots before heading back to Pemberton with tummies gurgling. When we arrived in Pemberton we went to a local café for some late lunch as we were both hungry by then.

Anyway, I have attached some of the photos we took of the area around Windy Harbour.



This is known as "Nature's Window"



Sandy Island



Salmon Beach



Salmon Beach



Cliffs along the coastline



Cliffs along the coastline



Cliffs along the coastline



Cliffs along the coastline

19 May 2024

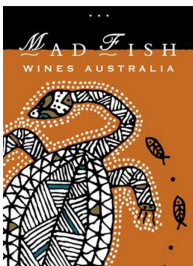
Today we drove 132 kms to Margaret River where we are basing ourselves for five nights. After arriving we went food shopping and set the van up for the next few days.

20 May 2024

Today we only went for a short drive to Howard Park Winery.

Howard Park Wines are Margaret River and Great Southern wine specialists and a family-owned winery owned by the Burch family, which is responsible for such brands as Howard Park, MadFish, and Marchand & Burch. With an established winery based in Margaret River, Western Australia and vineyards in the Great Southern, the Burch family are the first Australians to gain ownership in the production of a French Burgundian Grand Cru.

Maree and I visited this winery almost 20 years ago and enjoyed their MadFish range, So we ended up buying some wine from the winery in the MadFish Brand. They have changed the label of the MadFish range from this one (1):



(1)



(2)

to this one (2). I prefer the older one

We spent the rest of the afternoon shopping for dinner as we have met up with the person we keep bumping into on our travels and we have invited her for dinner.

21 May 2024

Today we travelled to Busselton for the day.

Busselton

Busselton is a seaside holiday resort characterised by green parks, a collection of significant historical buildings and an impressive jetty. It is an idyllic location lapped by the Indian Ocean and with impressive pure white beaches.

Busselton is named after the first settlers in the area – the Bussel family. In 1832, only two years after they had settled at Augusta, John Garrett Bussell led a party north and discovered the Vasse River area. He moved to the area in 1834. As early as 1835 people were starting to call the main settlement on the Vasse, Busselton. In a letter written in 1835 Fanny Bussell wrote: “The town at The Vasse is named Busselton in honour of its first settlers”.

The Busselton Jetty is one of the wonders of the district. It extends out into the quiet waters of Geographe Bay. The original jetty was built of jarrah and completed in 1865. The first jetty was 160 metres, but drifting sands and the shallowness of the bay resulted in the construction of an additional 131 metres to the jetty in 1875.

An extra extension was added so that today it is 1.8 km long. It is recognised as one of the longest jetties in the world. It was closed to shipping in 1972 and damaged by a cyclone in 1978.





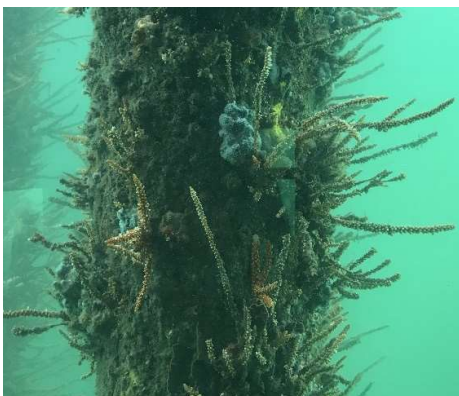
Cyclone Alby

In 1978 Tropical Cyclone Alby swept down the coast of WA. During the night winds of up to 175 km per hour buffeted Busselton and the Jetty. Together with enormous waves and a strong storm surge, a 700m section of the Promenade Jetty was damaged beyond repair, the force was so strong that a 30m section was washed up on the beach intact. The skeleton jetty survived due to the weight of the railway lines.

The next morning close to 3,000 people gathered on the foreshore in total disbelief at the destruction of the Jetty. A group of passionate locals organised a massive clean-up effort which included 600 volunteers and 50 pieces of machinery. This amazing community effort established the nucleus for the Busselton Jetty Preservation Society.

The jetty is now used by fishermen and holiday makers. There are several activities connected to the jetty. A train travels 1.7 km to the end of the Jetty where there is an underwater observatory where you descend 8 metres via a spiral staircase and a guide to inspect a forest of vividly coloured tropical and sub-tropical corals, sponges, fish and invertebrates. There are eleven viewing windows at various levels within the observatory where you can inspect some of the 300 marine species that live beneath the Jetty.

We took the train out to the observatory and spent an hour with a guide who spoke about the history, development and the species of corals, sponges, fish and invertebrates.







At the end of the jetty is a signpost with different cities listed and their distance and a sign telling you how far you are out to sea from the shore.



22 May 2023

Today we headed south to the Augusta and Cape Leeuwin. The main reason for this trip was to visit the famous Jewel Cave and the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse.

Augusta is a modern town dependent on professional fishing, timber and the local tourist industry. For the tourist, Augusta is surrounded by major attractions; The Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse and the location where the two oceans (Southern and Indian) meet with spectacular sprays; the white sands of Hamelin Bay; and the fascinating Jewel Cave.

Our first stop of the day was to undertake a tour of the Jewel Cave. As there are walkways erected in the cave where you walk over chasms descending 200 to 300 feet below, Because of this I decided that I wouldn't do the walk, a decision also supported by the tour guide. Maree said the cave was spectacular and she took lots of photos. I can only show a few on the site.

Jewel Cave, Augusta

Jewel Cave is the largest show cave in Western Australia, with three massive chambers of incredible beauty. The cave is an extremely well decorated cave, containing many examples of delicate helectites, cave coral, pendulites, a very large stalagmite called 'The Karri Forest', and examples of flowstone such as 'The Frozen Waterfall' and 'the Organ-pipes'.



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta. This is known as the "Bacon"



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta



Maree took the photo during her walk through the Jewel Cave in Augusta

Fossilised remains of several Tasmanian Tigers or 'Thylacines' have been discovered within Jewel Cave's chambers, safely preserved more than 3000 years after the marsupial became extinct on mainland Australia.

Cape Leeuwin



Maree's view from top of Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse

Located 8 km south of Augusta, Cape Leeuwin is a rocky headland which Matthew Flinders described as 'the southern and most projecting part of Leeuwin's Land'. The walk to the lighthouse and the view across the Great Southern and Indian oceans, is an essential part of any exploration of this beautiful and dramatic coast. We were able to see exactly where the two oceans meet as the photos below show. As a plaque on Cape Leeuwin points out, "At various times of the year the differing ocean currents, waves and swell patterns are evident in the waters around the Cape. This can create unusual conditions in the nearby waters. The Antarctic Circumpolar Current (in the Southern Ocean) circles Antarctica west to east ... its northern edge turns north and heads up along the western Australian coast. From May to September each year the Leeuwin Current (in the Indian Ocean) transports warm tropical water southwards around Cape Leeuwin."



Image shows the actual meeting point of the Southern Ocean and the Indian Ocean



Image shows the actual meeting point of the Southern Ocean and the Indian Ocean



Image shows the actual meeting point of the Southern Ocean and the Indian Ocean



Image shows the actual meeting point of the Southern Ocean and the Indian Ocean



Image shows the actual meeting point of the Southern Ocean and the Indian Ocean

Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse and Waterwheel



Maree at top of Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse with oceans meeting in the background

The Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse was built from local limestone between 1895-1896. The building had been suggested as early as 1881, but the state lacked the financial resources and there were problems with the bedrock. At the time of construction there was also a waterwheel which was built in 1895 to tap a spring and provide water for the workers

building the lighthouse. It continued to operate until 1928. Today it stands idle and calcified with limestone.

When completed the lighthouse, which used a kerosene wick lamp, was the largest of its kind in the world. It had an intensity of 250,000 candelas and could be seen 40 km out to sea. In 1925 it was upgraded to vaporised kerosene and in 1955 a radio beacon was installed. It was manually operated until 1982 when it was converted to electricity. In 1992 it was automated.

Maree did the tour to the top and she had to ascend using a 186-step spiral staircase, using the same staircase for the return walk down to ground level. There are seven floors that you can stop at as you climb your way to the top. The lighthouse was officially opened by Sir John Forrest on 10 December 1896.

The foundations reach 6.7 metres below the surface to the bedrock below and the light is 56 m above sea level and can be seen 48 km out to sea.



Entrance Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse



Maree taking a photo from the top of the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse. She is approximately 40 metres above the ground.

Views along Hamelin Beach

Hamelin Bay is one of the many special places in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. It was named after J.F.E. Hamelin, a French explorer who sailed along the coast in the late 18th-early 19th century.



Looking out to the Southern Ocean

The bay changed when, in 1882, a timber merchant, M.C. Davies, gained a 52 year lease on the local karri forests and established coastal shipping at Karridale, Hamelin Bay and Flinders Bay. The bay's remnant jetty was abandoned shortly after 1900 when five ships were wrecked during a violent storm. It became derelict and later was burnt leaving no more than a few pylons and weathered timbers.



Looking out to the Southern Ocean

The coastline here is extremely dangerous.



The treacherous coastline

In 1996 at Gracetown a section of the cliff face collapsed resulting in the deaths of nine people. In certain conditions, it is still possible to see some of the ships that have been wrecked and the bay, with its pristine white sand, is breathtaking on a sunny day.

23 May 2024

Today we decided to have a rest day. So, all we did was walk around the town, do the washing and catch up with the blog from yesterday's outing to Augusta.

24 May 2024

Today we left Margaret River for Bunbury. It was a short drive, so we chose to drive through the forests on the back roads. Lovely scenery along the way.

We are staying at the Bunbury Foreshore Caravan Park. They certainly pack them in and there isn't a lot of space. They still manage to charge \$55 a night though.

We are relaxing today and will get out and about tomorrow.

25 May 2024

We had some rain and wind last night. I had to get up and take the awning in as I was concerned that by morning, I would have to go looking for it.

We went for a drive round the foreshore of the town and took in the sights.

We started out by visiting Bunbury's art scene, headlined by the striking Wardandi Boodja at Koombana Bay. Wardandi Boodja is a five and a half metre corten steel bust located on the foreshore. The sculpture represents a Noongar face and seeks to merge traditional sculpture and advanced fabrication technology to create a striking contemporary artwork that pays deep respect to the Noongar people.



It has been designed in such a way to recognise all the families of the region while representing not one person but all people.

Corten steel, is a group of steel alloys which were developed to eliminate the need for painting and form a stable rust-like appearance after several years' exposure to weather.



Not far from this statue and opposite Koombana Bay is a great lookout that gives great views of the surrounding area. A few of the images Maree took follow.



The lookout. Interesting design



We then headed to another lookout along the coast.



Some Banksias growing around the base of the lookout

From here we drove around to the Lighthouse Lookout.





From here we drove along the coastline for a while, taking in the views of the rough seas pounding against the rocks.

26 May 2024

This morning we went for a walk around the town looking at the street art. The street art was about the “Rediscover Bunbury”, established in 2014 as an annual festival where local and international street artists put their creative mark on the city. The walls and electrical boxes of the city are now graced with works by of some Australia’s best street artists.



Bunbury Street Art

The man-behind ReDiscover Bunbury is the Andrew Frazer, a multidisciplinary local artist inspired by stories of hope, despair, redemption, pain and forgiveness. His narrative-based art continues to draw upon these experiences that connect us all through shared stories. From public murals, illustration, hand lettering, design and arts management, the artist’s work continues to expand and refine as a testament to his passion for personal growth.

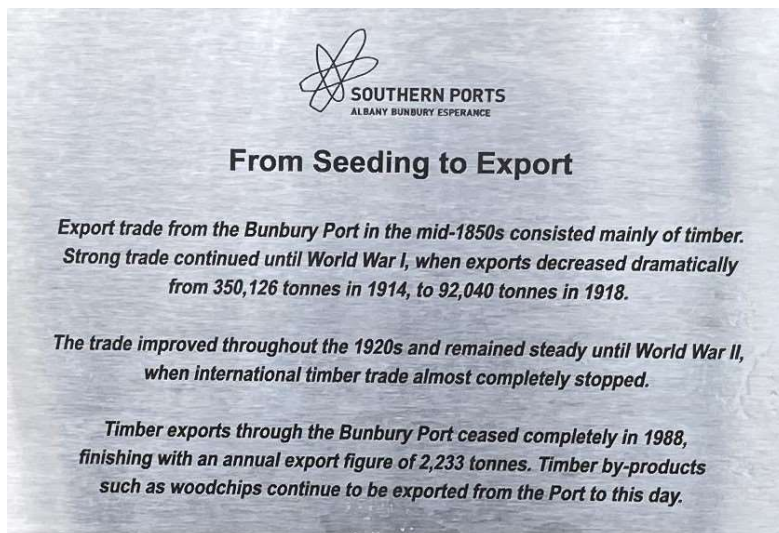


Bunbury Street Art

We enjoyed walking around the town looking at the artwork. However, the only issue we faced was not knowing what story the images were portraying. We came across only one that had a plaque explaining the background to the mural.



Bunbury Street Art



Plaque describing the above street art image



Bunbury Street Art



Bunbury Street Art



Bunbury Street Art



Bunbury Street Art



Koolambidi Woola translates to 'celebrating young people' – Koolambidi meaning 'young people aged 12 to 25 years' and Woola meaning 'celebrate'. The artwork celebrates the new park. Here there's a basketball court, obstacle course (for big and little kids), massive beach climbing net, skate park, basketball court even mini golf.



The following video is of the Re. Discover Jam Wall.

27 May 2024

Today we left Margaret River for Fremantle. We are staying in Fremantle for seven days. The drive up to Fremantle was in heavy rain for most of the trip. The weather brightened up a little long enough for us to setup the caravan. Then it started raining again and did so for most of the evening.



28 May 2024

Today we went into town. We spent the first 20 minutes driving around as it was pouring with rain. The rain abated to a drizzle, so we found a carpark and went for a walk. We stopped for a coffee and a bite to eat and then headed off to Kathmandu to get me a waterproof jacket. The two I have in the van are designed for warmth and aren't waterproof.

I managed to find one that is waterproof, breathes and allows me to battle the elements and staying dry; wearing this jacket and my waterproof overplants.

So, after a wander in and out of the shops we can across this statue in the park.



The sculpture commemorates Pietro Giacomo Porcelli



Close up of the sculpture of Pietro Giacomo Porcelli.

Porcelli was born in Bisceglie, Bari, Italy. His family migrated to Australia and Pietro Porcelli studied at the New South Wales Academy of Art. He later returned to Naples to study sculpture and drawing with D'Orsi, the President of the Royal Academy. His first commissioned work was the life-sized bust of Sir John Forrest, situated at the main entrance of Parliament House in Perth. He also created the full-sized statue of Alexander Forrest, Sir John Forrest's brother and a great surveyor and explorer. The Alexander Forrest statue stands at the entrance to the Supreme Court Gardens.

As I write today's blog it has started pouring with rain, again. The weather is 95% chance of showers for the next few days. So, we are staying around the van today and will venture out again tomorrow.

18:50 local time. We have just seen weather report that winds during the night will pick up to 40 kph with gusts up to 60 kph. Not sure of our protection in the van park so Maree and I

have just pulled everything down, as you can see if you compare the photo above on 27 May with the one below.



29 May 2024

I woke up at 3am to the sound of pouring rain and gale force winds. The winds were so strong that the caravan was rocking from side to side. I could hear other people outside frantically taking in their awnings. I am glad I put our awning in and took all the shade cloths down and stowed loose items.

The storm continued for the rest of the night and didn't start to ease until around 7am. I didn't get any more sleep after 3am. The areas around the park had tree debris all over the place. Fortunately, no damage to our van and no leaks either. The torrential downpour was a great test to see if there were any areas on the van where water could get in.

By 10:00am the worst of the storm was over, and we decided we would head out and get some breakfast.

The adventure for the next two days was to travel across to Rottnest Island, tour the island, stay overnight and return the next day. As we were aware a few days earlier that there may be a storm coming through Fremantle, we decided to cancel the entire trip. It was fortunate that we did as the storm was so severe that no ferries were running between Fremantle and Rottnest for the entire day. So, we couldn't get across even if we wanted to.

We have been able to get our money back for the accommodation and the tours on Rottnest. The ferry company does not provide a refund, but we do have twelve months to use the existing booking we made. So, we will need to think about perhaps flying over for a week and do the tour of Rottnest. We will pick better weather next time though.

So other than going out for breakfast we didn't do anything else. It was too wet and the on again/off again rain and strong winds kept us from doing anything at all really. So, we stayed in the van for the day.

30 May 2024

Last night was a lot calmer with only gentle rains and winds of 20 kph with only occasional gusts up to 40 kph.

So, we decided we would go back into Fremantle and have a look around the shopping district. They do not have shopping malls here or in Perth, so we just wandered around the few shops we came across.

As the rain and wind had abated Maree suggested we go into Perth for a look around. So, we headed off to Kings Park and Botanical Gardens.

The gardens in Kings Park are lovely and very well maintained. The views from the park of the city and surrounds made the visit to Kings Park well worthwhile.

The following photos were all taken today and you can see the contrast of weather in them, especially the last one where the skies really cleared up, for a short while anyway.





There is also a State War Memorial in the park. The memorial honours the fallen from all wars in which Australia has participated. The area comprises of five main elements: the Cenotaph, Court of Contemplation, Flame of Remembrance, Pool of Reflection and ANZAC Bluff Commemorative Plaque.

The Cenotaph

Unveiled in 1929 to commemorate those who died in World War I, the granite Cenotaph is a 18 metre obelisk set atop a podium over an under croft and crypt. The internal wall of the under croft lists the more than 7000 members of the services killed in action or who died of wounds or illness in WWI. The outer walls of the under croft lists more than 4000 Western

Australian Navy, Army, Air Force, Merchant Navy and Women's Services members killed in action or who died of war related wounds in WWII.



The Cenotaph



The Cenotaph

Flame of Remembrance

The Flame of Remembrance burns continuously. The four torches of the Flame represent the Navy, Army, Air Force and Women's Services. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II lit the Flame of Remembrance in the year 2000 from the Eternal Flame at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.



Pool of Reflection

The granite walls of the pool are inscribed with lettering inviting visitors to the memorial to "Let Silent Contemplation Be Your Offering" while lettering inscribed on the opposite side reads "We Will Remember Them".

Plaques surrounding the pool honour the fifteen Victoria Cross and two George Cross recipients from Western Australia across the Boer War, First World War and Second World War.



While visiting Kings Park it started to rain again. So, we decided to leave and we will return to Perth on another day this week when the weather brightens up. Perth is only 18 kms from Fremantle.

31 May 2024

We didn't do anything special today. We drove to Hillary's Harbour to have lunch on the coast but other than that we decided to stick around the van park due to the weather and the number of trucks on the road demonstrating against live sheep exports. A worthy cause but causing chaos on the streets and better to steer clear.

1 June 2024

Today we repacked the car and got the van in order as well as shopping to restock the van with essentials ready for our trip into the interior on Monday. Our route from Fremantle to Dalwallinu, Payne's Find, Mt Magnet, Sandstone and Leinster won't provide many opportunities for supplies. Also, there is a warning out for severe weather and thunderstorms with gale force winds for this evening commencing from around midnight continuing into Sunday late morning. The heavy rains, however, are expected to continue until late Sunday afternoon. So, everyone in the park has secured everything around their abode. The winds are expected to exceed 70 kph with gusts over 100 kph.

We are looking forward to leaving Fremantle and moving to some dry weather.

The wind is picking up as you can see with the trees, so the cold front is on its way as you can see from the BOM radar image below.



The view around 4pm this afternoon. Nice blue skies but strong winds as you can see in the trees.



The weather that has started.

2 June 2024

The night was continual torrential rain. The wind wasn't so bad, but the rain kept us awake for most of the night. I just took a picture from a similar point to the one above. Dark skies and strong winds. The rain just keeps on coming.



We have just returned from Brunch at a little Bistro on the beach. The image below shows what the weather is like now on the coast.



We will not be doing anything more today. Just getting the inside of the van ready for our departure tomorrow and we also need to make a few bookings for our days ahead.

3 June 2024

After a rather quiet night, weather wise, we awoke to a clear day and no rain for a change. After seven days here in Fremantle with the weather we have experienced, I wished we had not decided to stop here. We would have been better off heading inland rather than staying along the west coast.

Today we departed Fremantle and headed inland. We are staying at small town 300 kms from Fremantle. Our reason for heading in this direction is to spend one night in the town of Dalwallinu (Xantippe).

Maree and I decided we would stay in towns working through the alphabet. Just something we decided to do with a requirement we must tow the caravan and stay in the van one night in the town that has a post code. All easily achievable until we found that the only town in Australia (having a post code) beginning with 'X' is Xantippe. So, we had to travel to this town to allow us to mark 'X' off our list.

On the way to Xantippe our route took us through the town of Northam. There is silo art in this town so another reason for us to travel this route.

Northam

Northam is a town in the Wheatbelt region of Western Australia, situated at the convergence of the Avon and Mortlock Rivers. It is the largest town and regional centre in the Avon Valley region of the Central Wheatbelt.

The area around Northam was first explored in 1830 by a party of colonists led by Ensign Robert Dale, and subsequently founded in 1833. It was named by Governor Stirling, probably after a village of the same name in Devon, England. Almost immediately it became a point of departure for explorers and settlers who were interested in the lands which lay to the east.

This initial importance declined with the growing importance of the nearby towns of York and Beverley, but the arrival of the railway made Northam the major departure point for prospectors and miners heading east towards the goldfields.

The silo art



Northam Silo Art

The Northam CBH Group silos is a fully operational site and one of the busiest in Western Australia. Each artist painted four of the massive 16 grain holding complex with Phlegm completing the left and HENSE completing the right.

PHLEGM's work depicts his signature whimsical characters in fantastical transportation devices down each silo. Northam has a rich history in ballooning so he may have drawn his inspiration for his Leonardo Da Vinci style devices from this.

HENSE painted his silos simultaneously. Working across all four silos as one, each design bleeds into the other to produce his customary abstract patterns in explosive blocks of fluorescent colour.

From Northam we headed to Dalwallinu. As mentioned above we want to spend the night in the van in Xantippe. Unfortunately, for security reasons, we must stay in the adjoining town for the night as they do not allow free camping in Xantippe.

Xantippe

Xantippe is a rural locality in Western Australia and 30 km east of Dalwallinu. It is the only place in Australia whose name starts with an X.

There are two theories about the origin of the name – either it was named for Xanthippe, the wife of ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, or it translates to “looking for water from a deeper well”. The locals reportedly favour the second explanation. Due to the most notable building in the area which is a large water tank.

The building of the tank began in 1923 and completed in 1927 and was originally intended to supply water to Dalwallinu but because of problems with pumping water over the hills it ended up supplying local farms in the area.

Surrounding the water tank is the Xantippe Nature Reserve, which is a popular spot for tourists, offering 360° degree views from the top of the granite rock. In 2019 Xantippe was used to represent the letter “X” in a set of collectable Australian one dollar coins. The set included a coin for each letter of the alphabet.

So although we cannot camp in Xantippe for the night we drove out to Xantippe and took the following photos and videos.





The XANTIPPE water tank is the only town in Australia beginning with 'X'. Maree and Steve visiting the Xantippe Tank in Xantippe WA. In case you are wondering who took the photos, I put the drone up in front of us for the selfie.

The tank is unusual in the fact that the water flows along the pipe, level with the bottom of the tank, then flows upward to enter the tank at the top. A walk along the track following the pipe (see image) takes you to the granite outcrop where water is collected, a low wall has been erected to channel the water from the rocks into the pipe.



The pipe leading from the tank at ground level

4 June 2024

We have left Dalwallinu and are on our way to Paynes Find. There is nothing else here in Paynes Find other than peace and tranquillity in the outback, and hopefully, clear skies to see the stars in all their glory.



We have arrived at Paynes Find. It isn't as quiet as we thought it would be as there is major highway resurfacing happening just before the turn off into the Paynes Find Roadhouse. Not a problem for us with all the road crews staying here.

Paynes Find is a former gold rush settlement with a rich seam of pioneering and prospecting history approximately 600 kilometres north of Perth in the Mid-West region of WA.

The town is named after the prospector, Thomas Payne, who was the first to discover gold in the area and was the first to register a lease for gold mining with the Mines Department. As a reward for his discovery, he was allowed to crush his first find of gold-bearing ore through the State Government Battery, free of charge.

By the 1930s the town had prospered, and the population was estimated at about 500. In 1987 the battery was sold to the Taylor family. The Gold Battery is now a tourist attraction and still operates today, making it the only working gold battery in Western Australia.

We have a powered site for the night. They charge \$10 per person, and they do not charge for power, which I found very surprising thinking about where we are in the start of the outback.

The roadhouse here operates 24 hours a day. They provide full meals, also 24 hours a day. The staff are very friendly and can't do enough for you. Fuel prices out here are reasonable at 2.10 per litre for diesel. So, we will have dinner in the restaurant tonight and a few drinks from the bar. A night off from cooking for me.



Yes, the flies are that bad during the day.

5 June 2024

A short drive today from Paynes Find to Mount Magnet. The road is quite busy with several road trains, up to 55 metres in length needing to pass us. I purchased UHF radios for this trip so we can easily converse with the truckies to coordinate overtaking.

At one stage a lead vehicle for a wide rig following went past and they advised by radio that the width was 7.5 metres. For this rig, taking up both lanes of the highway, required us to park on the side of the highway while the transport went past. It was a huge piece of mining equipment.

We soon arrived in Mount Magnet where we are staying at the local caravan park for the evening.

Mount Magnet

Mount Magnet is a small township which now survives on a combination of gold mining and services for the surrounding pastoral area which has some of the largest sheep stations in Western Australia. The country is marginal and desert-like with an annual rainfall of only 228 mm per annum. Today the town has little to remind the traveller of its importance around the end of the 19th century. Perhaps the clearest evidence that it was once an important centre is the extraordinary width of the main street.

Mount Magnet is one of those towns where the name is self-evident. It was named by Surveyor Robert Austin in 1854. When he passed through the area Austin noted that a hill near the present townsite had magnetic ironstone which played havoc with his compass.



Mount Magnet, WA – main street. The streets are wide as in the early days of bullock trains, they needed wide spaces to turn them around.

The image below is of the land that we travelled through from Paynes Find to Mt Magnet.

The scenery is quite impressive.



6 June 2024

Today we left Mount Magnet for Sandstone. The area we are travelling through is all part of the WA outback and although most of the scenery is flat, red soil and trees, it is lovely country.

Sandstone is only 148 kms from Mount Magnet so we just cruised leisurely along the highway at 80 kph. We didn't have any road trains travel up behind us so there was no real need to go any faster. We could just enjoy the scenery as we drove. That is not to say that

there were no road trains heading in the other direction. We passed quite a few three and four trailered road trains and we had to move over to edge of the road for each one. The edges of this highway are mainly jagged with about a 10 centimetre drop to the clay siding. Not an edge you want to travel over with a car or with caravan.

We arrived at Sandstone around two hours after departing Mount Magnet. We took the opportunity to stop on route for a stretch and to stop and enjoy the scenery and the peace and quiet.

Sandstone History

Sandstone was formed because of the gold strike at 'The Adelaide mine', owned by George Dent and the Hack brothers, Wilton and Theodore. All three of them were from South Australia and had spent eight years in the area digging for gold. They struck a reef on New Year's Day in 1903 and news quickly spread. Within a month, 60 acres of land around their lease had been pegged.

A town began to form, and as the population moved from nearby Nungurra to this site, many buildings were relocated. Dent and the Hack brothers sold the mine to Hans Irvine in November 1903 when they had dug as far by hand as they could. All three walked away very rich men.

The mine then became part of the Black Range Mining Company. 700 tonnes of ore were extracted from the mine between 1903 and 1916, and 930,000 ounces of gold were produced in those years. By 1907 Nungurra was a ghost town, as everyone had moved to Sandstone. The townsite was gazetted as Sandstone in 1906. The original "Adelaide" mine is a few hundred metres from the town centre. The mine has been known by many names – "The Adelaide", "Hack & Dents Mine", "Hacks Mine", and "Hans Irvines Find". The Hack brothers were memorialised by the naming of Sandstone's main street after them, and also by the name given to a miner's cough – "Hack's Cough". George Dent was overlooked, and the Dent family has been endeavouring to rectify that for years with the Sandstone council.

By 1907 the population of the town had swelled to around 6,000 and it had four hotels, four butchers, two banks, and a staffed police station. A brewery was also constructed in 1907 by an Irishman, I.V. Kearney, to satisfy the local demand.

In 1910 the Sandstone Branch Railway was completed between Mount Magnet and Sandstone. The Jundoo Dam was completed in 1910 to provide water for the steam trains; the dam could hold 16 megalitres of water and cost £5,000 to build. Most of the original dam works still exist.

A state-run battery operated from 1904 to 1982. The battery treated a total of 135,809 tons of ore, producing 115,787 ounces of gold.

There is a natural tourist attraction in Sandstone, London Bridge. It is located 3 kilometres to the south, is a natural bridge, and part of the Sandstone Heritage Trail.



Maree and Steve in front of London Bridge – Sandstone, Western Australia

Following are some images and videos of the Sandstone area.



Drone views of Sandstone, Western Australia



Drone views of Sandstone, Western Australia



Drone views of Sandstone, Western Australia



Drone views of Sandstone, Western Australia



Drone views of Sandstone, Western Australia



Drone views of Sandstone, Western Australia

We also discovered that Sandstone has two water tanks with art work. The two tanks feature native fauna, flora and historical elements involving the rich gold and pastoralist in industry the town was built on. Unfortunately, we could not get all the images due to fencing and other obstructions, even using the drone.



Maree and Steve in front of the water tank art



Rear view Sandstone water tanks

Sandstone Murders

Raymond and Jennie Kehlet were reported missing after failing to return from a camping trip in 2015 with their friend, Graham Milne. Mr Kehlet's remains were located 12 metres down a disused mineshaft after an extensive land search, but Jennie Kehlet remains missing to this day.

Eight years after that investigation failed to turn up any leads into who killed the couple, a 'Good Samaritan' conducted his own search of the area and located a garment down the mineshaft buried under rubble at the base.

This prompted police to mount a massive excavation of the base of the shaft over 12 days and the investigation is ongoing.

7 June 2024

This morning, we left Sandstone and drove 150 kms to the next town of Leinster. As we were getting into the car, we noticed that we had picked up a hitch hiker who had attached itself to our UHF radio aerial. I am still trying to determine from the internet what type of insect this is.



A grasshopper of some sort.

Leinster

The township of Leinster lies 368km north of Kalgoorlie and is often described as an oasis in the desert. Residents refer to it as either the 'home of the wedge tail eagle' or 'the jewel of the northern goldfields'. Leinster supports a vibrant lifestyle and a population of around 1000 people.

Large scale mining in the area began in 1897 when the East Murchison United Company (EMU) began working on alluvial gold deposits. WMC Resources Ltd purchased the operation in 1989, renamed it 'Leinster Nickel Operations' and began recommissioning the operation. Leinster was first established in 1976 as a company town supporting the nickel mine of the Agnew Gold Mining Company, it is now run by BHP Nickel West. It takes the name from nearby Leinster Downs Station. Prior to mining activities, the land was pastoral. Large stations in the area include Leinster Downs, Pinnacles, Yakabindie, Yeelirrie and Weebo

We are staying one night in Leinster and will have dinner at the local tavern, where we have been reliably informed, serve great meals. Well, the recommendation for the tavern was spot on. The meals were great and large. I had the chicken parma and Maree decided on the beef nachos as she wanted something smaller.



As you can see, she was quite startled with the size of the dish. We ended up taking two full disposable plastic containers, provided by the bistro, back to the van to have tomorrow for lunch.

8 June 2024

We left Leinster this morning and headed south to Menzies. Menzies is where we will head inland again to visit Lake Ballard and the laser sculptures. We are planning to stay at the dry lake for two nights, however there is rain about in Menzies and light rainfall has been predicted for Lake Ballard.

The road out to Lake Ballard is sealed, however, the last six kms when you turn off the highway is unsealed. So, we will do the visit tomorrow without the van and see if the unsealed section is still dry enough for the van and the territory (which is only 2WD).

Anyway, as we drove down to Menzies we passed a sign for the “Thunderbox Lookout”. We didn’t stop as we didn’t realise what the Thunderbox was. It is a large mine site. Maree managed to get a photo of the excavation that is happening.



The mine is named after the colloquial Australian term for a toilet, thunderbox, which was given to the site in its early exploration days because the only available toilet on site was a 44 gallon drum on top of an old drill hole.

The mining site is a mesothermal lode gold deposit located at the southern end of the Yandal greenstone belt in an area where several major shear zones converge and join with the Perseverance Fault. (Mesothermal deposits are formed at a depth of 1.2 – 3.6 km and at about 200 to 300°C)

Mining at Thunderbox is by bulk, low-cost open pit and underground methods. Current open pit mining involves an excavator in backhoe configuration supported by a fleet of rear dump trucks. The underground operation is a modern mechanised trackless mine employing a combination of long hole open stoping methods based on ore zone widths. Paste fill has

recently been introduced to maximise recovery of the orebody and ensure stability of the mining areas. (Long hole open stoping is a form of sub-level open stoping which involves excavating ore in a series of horizontal or sub-horizontal levels, known as “stopes.” In long-hole open stoping, a series of vertical or inclined holes are drilled from the top of the stope to the bottom).

After passing the “Thunderbox” we pressed on to the small town of Leonora. The town looked like a ghost town as there were no people around and nothing was open, except for a café and general store. Not sure if this is because it was Saturday or whether business had permanently closed. You can see from the images below how deserted the main street is, except for a few vehicles of people passing through the town.



History of Leonora

The first European explorer to visit the area was John Forrest in 1869.] On 21 June 1869 Forrest's party made camp near a conspicuous hill, which Forrest named Mount Leonora, after his six-year-old niece Frances (Fanny) Leonora Hardey. In 1895, gold was discovered in the area by prospector Edward "Doodah" Sullivan at the Johannesburg lease just north of the current townsite. In the following two years several rich finds resulted in rapid development of the area. The Sons of Gwalia gold mine brought Leonora to the attention of the world. By 1897 a residential and business area had been established, and the town was gazetted as Leonora.

Leonora had a single track passenger tramway linking the town and nearby Gwalia, from 1901 to 1921. Initially steam driven, the service was electric from November 1908, and petrol powered from 1915.

A reverse osmosis desalination treatment plant was opened in October 2005 to improve the quality of the town's water supply from the Station Creek wellfield by reducing the naturally occurring high levels of salinity, nitrate and hardness. It was designed to supply 2.5 million litres of treated water per day.

In 2010, the Rudd government relocated asylum seekers from Christmas Island to the "Leonora Alternative Place of Detention", an immigration detention centre, previously used as a mine workers' hostel, in Leonora. The Abbott government closed the facility in February 2014.

After stopping for a coffee, we headed on to Menzies.

As mentioned above, the reason for stopping here is to travel out to Lake Ballard. So the weather will actually determine how long we stay in Menzies. It will be either two nights or three. We will have a better idea when we travel out to the lake tomorrow.

There is not a lot to do in the actual town of Menzies, other than a quick exploration on foot of the interpretive panels and old buildings, which we will do if we stay a third night.

09 June 2024

This morning, we left early to go out to Lake Ballard to see the sculptures created by British sculptor Sir Antony Gormley.

In 2003, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Perth International Arts Festival the *Inside Australia* exhibition was commissioned. The artist and Turner Prize winner Antony Gormley installed 51 metal sculptures over an area of 10 square kilometres on the bed of the lake. Each sculpture represents a local resident of Menzies, derived from the laser scans of the town's residents. The statues were to be removed at the conclusion of the festival but remain as a tourist exhibition. According to sources, it is the largest outdoor art gallery in the world.

Following are the images we took today.



Lake Ballard Female Statue



Lake Ballard Female Statue



Lake Ballard Male Statue



Lake Ballard Male Statue with Maree standing alongside; wearing the fly net as the flies were atrocious



Lake Ballard Male Statue



Lake Ballard Male Statue



Lake Ballard Male Statue



Statues in the distance



Two statues with Hill in Background



Lake Ballard

Statues with footprints leading to them and away. It was so muddy today following rains that we could only walk out to see two of the 51 statues.

9 June 2026 – PM

This afternoon we went for a walk around the town of Menzies looking at the “Our Place” exploring and interpreting the heritage of Menzies WA.

In the early 1900s there were more than 10,000 people living in this town. Shenton Street, the main drag, was a major commercial centre and a bustling hive of life and activity. There were 13 hotels, three banks, its own breweries and cordial factories, a Post Office with a staff of 26, a school with 205 pupils, a public library and four churches.

Although it doesn't look like it now, Menzies was indeed a 'happening place' in those glorious gold fuelled years. To assist the visitor, imagine what it would have been like to be here then, a series of rusty steel figures have been erected, reflecting just some of the folk who lived here long ago,

The prosperity was not to last, as gold production fell alarmingly. By 1910 the population of Menzies had dipped below 1000, and the decline was hastened by the onset of WW1. Almost as quickly as it had blossomed, boomtown Menzies faded away – but it left a rich legacy behind in its evocative old buildings and the stories that go with them.



Grow your own – or buy from the “Dalian”

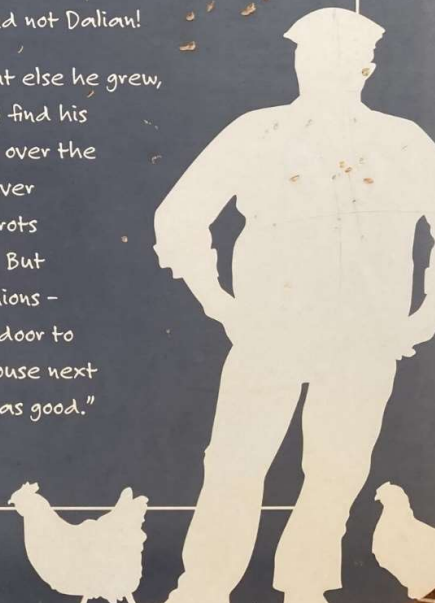
Marj Strickland (nee Newland)

*Wongi people often bought fresh food from
European migrants living around Menzies –
or grew their own*

“We used to buy grapes, two bob for a bread basket full from little Angelo. He was Italian, and lived down at the railway cottages.

With our language we referred to Italians as “Dalian”, and when one of my daughters was growing up she always thought, “There’s a Dalian person!” It wasn’t until she was older, when an Italian man came to the door and she came and said “there’s a Dalian man looking for you...” - and they were all looking at her and saying “what the hell’s a “Dalian”? Then she realised it was “Italian” and not Dalian!

Anyway, old Angelo - I don’t know what else he grew, but he had chooks - and we used to find his chook eggs where they laid them all over the place. But Mum used to grow stuff over here too - big rows of cabbages, carrots and silver-beet were the main ones. But she also grew beetroots and spring onions - we had a big vegie patch over next door to Mrs Heggetty, who had a boarding house next to the Lady Shenton Hotel. And it was good.”





*"Telegram for Jimmy McGuigan at Mt Ida? Hmm,
its only 65 miles — I'll be there for lunch..."*

One of the many bicycle couriers who delivered mail
all over the goldfields



“This trip? Building iron, bags of flour, and cases of tinned dog, all going to Mt Malcolm”

“Ahmed” the Afghan cameleer, one of dozens who plied their trade from Menzies



Doing it tough, in the transition time

Joyce Nudding (nee Newland)

Wongi people were expected to make the transition from traditional lifestyles to the white-man's world in little more than a generation. No wonder many found it tough going!

"We lived in town, but most of the weekends we were out in the bush. The living was coming from the bush - the cultural side of things, and food too. Everything was from the bush. Families stayed in town and worked - we kids had to go to school. But when they weren't working, into the bush we went. That's just the way it was in those times.

People were living over at the creek still. Poor souls - had nowhere else to go, so they lived out there in the camps. All the old relatives - old Alec Brown, mum's first cousin, he lived over there. He had two kangaroo dogs - one called Whitey - he was a good hunting dog, and we used to go hunting with him.

Uncle Devil-Devil - he was living there too, with his wife Kitty Wells. They lived down at the camp in humpies there at the creek. Last time anyone lived there would have been early 60s."





Let's dance!

Joan Tucker

Wongi people learned to dance the "white fella way" early on – but had to wait decades before being allowed to attend local events

"My mother, Myrtle Cordella, was a half-caste child - she was picked up near Yandal Station and taken to Mogumber Methodist Mission (at Moore River). The missionaries there taught her to dance - but other missions like Mount Margaret were more strict, and no-one was allowed to dance because it was seen as being against Christian beliefs.

Mum and her future husband, James Brennan, learned the old style ballroom dances at Moore River, and after they were married and came back to Kalgoorlie they used to go to the hall where they held dances for Aborigines. There was piano and piano accordion, and Jim used to sing as well - songs by Vera Lynn and Mario Lanza. They were pretty good, and won competitions - I remember climbing under the tables to watch them!

I learned to dance by watching them. In 1958 (I think) I went to the first cabaret that Aborigines were allowed to attend here at the Town Hall. It was a big show - there was someone important in town, maybe a Royal visitor? I was dancing with Richard Linder there - we were only young, about six or eight I think..."





Saturday mornings at the shop

Joyce Nudding (nee Newland)

Like young people everywhere, local Wongi teenagers were keen to earn some pocket money wherever they could

"Her brother, Hector - he was the first lad that worked for old Charlie Lane, at Templeman's shop next door to the garage, with the petrol bowser. He pumped the petrol, and did odd repairs.

And I went in on the Saturday mornings and worked for old Mr Templeman in the old general store in the late 1950s. I was around 13 then. I used to weigh potatoes - you used to buy them in a brown paper bag. You get them out of the big hessian bag and put them on the scales, seven pounds of potatoes, and put them in the brown paper bag and roll the tops down.

And sugar was weighed this way too, into various weights. Scoop it out of the big bag and put it on the scale, then thread the twine through the folds in the top and fold the paper down till it's tight - carry the sugar like that..."





Taking tucker to the train

Joyce Nudding (nee Newland)

Wongi people look out for each other – the culture dictates that they share resources, especially food

"Well the train used to come through from Leonora or Laverton, going to Kalgoorlie - used to arrive here about lunchtime. Or the train could be coming from Kalgoorlie, going to Leonora and it still arrived here about lunchtime. My mother would be watching to see if there were any Wongi - they start waving from over there, then she would get me and Margie to take some food over to them...

Didn't matter who it was - and sometimes we were running with a billy can of tea too, usually black tea, with a bit of sugar in it. Like I said, damper, or tins of meat - or cold meat, usually wrapped up in a bit of a cloth. You would take that up there to the train and give it to them. That's their lunch.

Usually the people didn't have any money to buy food - and old Mrs Butcher used to run the little canteen rooms up there. She used to sell stuff like pumpkin scones - big pumpkin scones - and ham and mustard, and her mustard was pretty hot! But anyway, if you didn't have money to buy that you'd miss out on something to eat, so our job was to run and take tucker to the train..."





*“My lungs are giving out — but the only work
to be had around here is underground...”*

In honour of the underground miners from all eras of mining



*"Step inside, you handsome man —
my sheets are clean and my price is keen..."*

The "red light lady"



*“Stop fighting over the barmaid, you two —
or I’ll thump you both!”*

The Reverend John McTig – reputed to be very handy with his fists!
(The good Reverend went on to marry a local barmaid,
having defeated all his rivals)



*“How on earth do I STOP
this infernal machine?”*

Local mining Warden, William Owen,
test riding the first motorcycle in Menzies

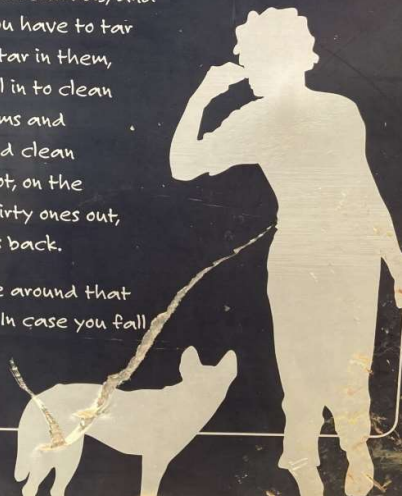


Wongi people did much of the "dirty work" around Menzies - like clearing the night-cart (toilet) pans.

"We never had any health and safety equipment - like no gloves or anything. We just had to go do it like that, you know. Once a week, every Friday night - oh yeah, it was smelly, and they (the pans) were pretty full! The worst one's were at the pub. Yeah, 'cause by the time you get to the pub there's usually about two or three pans you've got to get out of there..."

We took the pans to the dump out there, to the depot. Clean them out afterwards, and usually on Saturday's you have to tar them up again. Put the tar in them, and you got to put phenol in to clean them all up - kill the germs and everything. You wash and clean the pans out at the depot, on the ramp. We take all the dirty ones out, and bring the clean ones back.

Should have put a fence around that dump really, for safety. In case you fall in at night time..."





*"A one-pound white, straight from the oven —
that'll be seven pence please"*

Baker Barnes, a well known identity in early Menzies



Cooking up a kangaroo

Marj Strickland (nee Newland)

Not surprisingly, Menzies Wongi were (and still are) very partial to a well-cooked kangaroo!

"We used all of the kangaroo, nothing was wasted - and when you got the meat - well the delicacy was the kangaroo tail. But the men always had first choice of the meat because they cut it. And the backbone was Dad's favourite because that was the choicest piece.

They cooked it in the ashes, and we always had some for the next day. The kids used the jawbone for a toy gun, to be played with.

The intestines were cleaned, and the liver and the heart and all that sort of thing were all put in and it made a pudding. It was hung up in the tree. And that was eaten cold, and sliced up with a nice bit of damper or something the next day. It was lovely! It's like black pudding."





Making ends meet

Joyce Nudding & Marj Strickland

*Simply staying alive meant doing whatever
had to be done – or whatever could be done
– to earn a crust*

"Dad had a 'marine licence' here in Menzies - he'd buy scrap metal and copper, and he used to do all the bottles, back when beer and things were all in bottles - no cans. We used to go and collect all the bottles from out the back of the pub - they'd go in big wooden crates, and he'd sell them in Kalgoorlie.

Our father taught me and Margie to drive trucks - he taught us like boys. We'd go to all those old places - Mulline, and Ullaring and Mt Ida and every other little town around here - and collect scrap metal, all the old horse shoes and drums and stuff at the rubbish tips and things like that.

The other thing was while we were out collecting scrap we also collected dead wool. We had no gloves - just picked it up off those stinking dead sheep! Dreadful job - but now the Health Department wouldn't be too impressed with that..."





*“Carry him carefully, young Joe Wright —
the fever is enough for him to deal with...”*

Matron Andrews, first nurse appointed to
Menzies Hospital in 1895



*“What on earth made you think you could rob
the Post Office and get away with it?”*

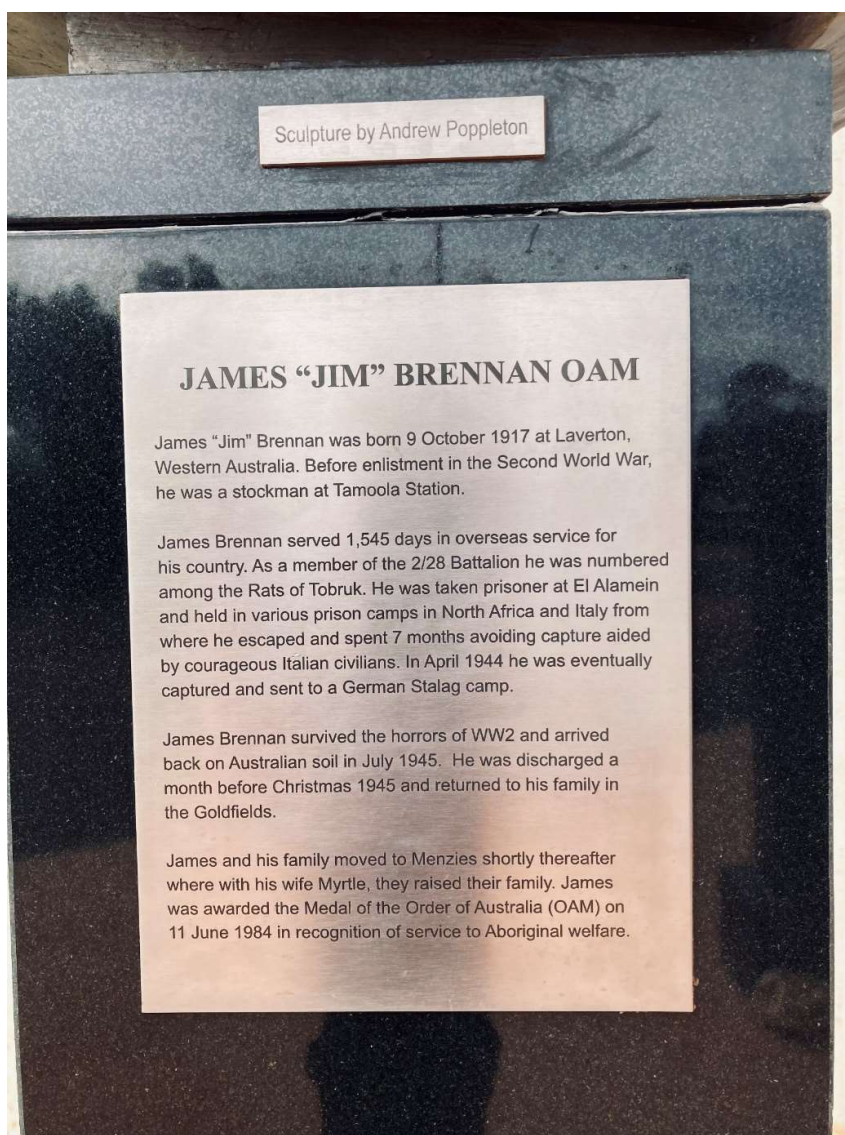
Constable Samuel Evans, one of the first policemen
posted to Menzies, 1895



The historic Town Hall.

Around the left corner of the Town Hall is the memorial to WW1 and WW2.





Sculpture by Andrew Poppleton

JAMES "JIM" BRENNAN OAM

James "Jim" Brennan was born 9 October 1917 at Laverton, Western Australia. Before enlistment in the Second World War, he was a stockman at Tamoola Station.

James Brennan served 1,545 days in overseas service for his country. As a member of the 2/28 Battalion he was numbered among the Rats of Tobruk. He was taken prisoner at El Alamein and held in various prison camps in North Africa and Italy from where he escaped and spent 7 months avoiding capture aided by courageous Italian civilians. In April 1944 he was eventually captured and sent to a German Stalag camp.

James Brennan survived the horrors of WW2 and arrived back on Australian soil in July 1945. He was discharged a month before Christmas 1945 and returned to his family in the Goldfields.

James and his family moved to Menzies shortly thereafter where with his wife Myrtle, they raised their family. James was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) on 11 June 1984 in recognition of service to Aboriginal welfare.



Following are some images of more of the historic buildings in Menzies, WA



Menzies Post Office



Menzies Pioneer Store

10 June 2024

This morning, we left Menzies for a short, 94 km drive, to the small town of Broad Arrow where we will stay overnight. The only thing here is a tavern with some quirky architecture around the inside of the tavern. We are staying here in the free camp at the back of the tavern, and we will repay their hospitality by having dinner. We move on to Kalgoorlie tomorrow for three days but they were booked out for tonight so we couldn't stay an extra

night in Kalgoorlie, and picked Broad Arrow for the night: a free camp out the front of the pub.

Broad Arrow Town

Broad Arrow is a 'Ghost Town' located 38 kilometres north of Kalgoorlie on the road to Menzies. The town was gazetted in 1896, and at its peak during the gold rush, it had 15,000 residents, eight hotels, a soft drink factory, two breweries, a hospital and a stock exchange. By the mid-1920s the rush was over, and the town was virtually abandoned.

Significant finds of gold came out of Broad Arrow, and it is rumoured that you can still find gold there today. Known originally as *Kurawah*, it is said that Broad Arrow changed its name when a prospector found gold and marked his way back to the spot with Broad Arrows. The one building here today is the Broad Arrow Tavern which was built in 1896 and is considered an authentic outback pub known for its cold beer and its excellent Broady burgers. Back in 1971 the pub featured in the long-forgotten movie, *The Nickel Queen*, which starred Googie Withers and radio announcer, John Laws. It was directed by Withers' husband, John McCallum.

Here are some images I took around the tavern this afternoon.





Broad Arrow Tavern – Bras hanging from ceiling. There were some interesting sizes hanging up there



Maree giving all the bras a good look over



11 June 2024

After a reasonable night's rest, I have come down with a cold, we left Broad Arrow for Kalgoorlie. We will be staying in Kalgoorlie for three nights.

On the way we passed the Paddington Gold Mine.

The Paddington Gold Mine is located 5 km south of Broad Arrow. The mine opened in 1985, under the ownership of Goldfields Limited, mining ore in two open pit operations, the two original open pits being active until 2002. In 1994, the processing plant was upgraded to be able to handle 3.0 million tonnes of ore per annum. In 2007, the mining tenements were enlarged through the acquisition of the Mount Pleasant and Ora Banda properties.

Underground mining commenced in April 2009 with the cutting of a portal at Norton's Homestead deposit at Mount Pleasant, 18 km south-west of the Paddington mill, and was expected to deliver mill feed from December 2009 with a grade more than 6.0 g/t. Production performance of the mine was below plan in 2008-09, having been scheduled at 145,000 ounces and achieved only 137,000.

Chinese company Zijin Mining now holds the rights to the Paddington Mine.

I stopped and took some images of the processing plant in operation.



Paddington Gold Processing Plant



Paddington Gold Processing Plant

12 June 2024

We won't be adding anything for today. I am almost over my cold/flu, but Maree is in bed with the start of hers. It is also pouring with rain and that is to continue for most of the day. So, we are pretty much staying in the van today.

The weather is predicted to improve for tomorrow so we will head out and see some of this town and the surrounding areas then.

13 June 2024

Well, we haven't been able to get out and about today. Maree is still quite unwell but is on the improve. I got her out of the van this afternoon and we went to a local café for a bite to eat and then did some shopping for our journey home. The supermarket shopping was mainly for meals we can cook in the van both with and without power as the journey across the Nullarbor will have us staying at several unpowered sites. We have a full kitchen which includes a gas oven and that has been useful for roasting meats and other oven based dishes when we are only staying overnight, and I do not want to unload the car to get the weber out.

Drinking water is also scarce as you travel across the Nullarbor, ie you cannot fill water tanks at several places we stop at. We do not use the tank water for drinking anyway, always purchasing 10 litre bottled water for our cooking and drinking purposes. We carry a fifteen litre plastic water container that we fill with the bottled water to use inside the van. This is of course supplemented with both red and white wine.

14 June 2024

We both had a reasonable restful sleep last night and we are ready for our last stop on our loop around the southwestern and goldfield regions of WA, Norseman. Tomorrow we will start the long journey home to Canberra, popping into Adelaide to pick up my sister who will be joining us in Canberra for a while.

On our way to Norseman, we stopped at the lookout of the Super Pit mining site in Kalgoorlie.

The Fimiston Open Pit, colloquially known as the Super Pit, is an open-pit mine in Kalgoorlie. It was Australia's largest open cut gold mine until 2016 when it was surpassed by the Newmont Boddington gold mine, also in Western Australia. The Super Pit is oblong in plan view and is approximately 3.5 kilometres long, 1.5 kilometres wide and over 600 metres deep.

Images of the mine follow on the next page.



Scenes of the Super Pit in Kalgoorlie

The Pit is owned by Northern Star Resources. The mine produced 456,000 troy ounces (14.2 t) of gold in 2019 and employs around 1,100 employees and contractors directly on site. The mining is via conventional drill and blast mining via face shovels and dump trucks. Around 15 million tonnes of rock are moved in any given year, consisting primarily of waste rock.

Gold within the Golden Mile lode system is unusual in that it is present as telluride minerals within pyrite. To recover the gold, the ore must be crushed, passed through a gravity circuit to recover the free gold present in some of the higher-grade lodes, and then subjected to flotation to produce an auriferous pyrite-telluride concentrate.

The concentrate is then treated at an Isa Mill Ultra Fine Grinding (UFG) mill at Fimiston and then cyanidised, or trucked to the Gidji Processing Plant, 20 kilometres north of Kalgoorlie. At Gidji, the concentrate is treated in ultrafine grinding (UFG) mills, and then subjected to cyanide extraction of the gold.



The haul truck making its way up to the top of the Super Pit

Most of the gold mined in the Fimiston Open Pit occurs within ore lodes formed by ancient shears in a rock unit called the Golden Mile Dolerite. The gold mining area of Kalgoorlie-Boulder-Fimiston has long been called the Golden Mile because of the geographical concentration of rich mines in that area, even though the lodes occur in an area over 2 km in length and 1 km in depth.



Scenes of the Super Pit in Kalgoorlie



Scenes of the Super Pit in Kalgoorlie



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Scenes of the Super Pit in Kalgoorlie



Super Pit Face Shovel Bucket. The bucket weighs 68 tonnes, the size is 38 cubic metres, and the cost is \$1.1 million. I hate to think what the machine the bucket is attached to costs.



Maree inside the Super Pit Face Shovel Bucket. The shovel bucket holds 70 tonnes of ore, and it takes four loads to fill the tray of the haul truck. That is an awful lot of Marees.....

15 June 2024

Today we left Norseman to start the journey home. We are only driving 194 kms today to the location where Skylab components rained down on the small community of Balladonia. As we stayed here on our inbound journey, there isn't much more to write about the place or anything else of real interest to talk about. So, it is dinner in the caravan and an early night.

16 June 2024

Today we headed off quite early for our next stop of Cocklebiddy. Cocklebiddy is only 243 kms from Balladonia so another short drive today. Once again this is a place, we stopped at on the drive across and there isn't anything to add that I didn't write about on the way over. So, it is a relaxing afternoon and we will have dinner in the van. Tomorrow, we head off to Border Village for the night. Border Village is a new location for us on this trip.

17 June 2024

Today we left Cocklebiddy for the South Australian border. We are staying at the Border Village tonight which is located on the SA/WA border, with the WA quarantine station. You do not stop on entering South Australia as the border quarantine station for South Australia is located on the approach to Ceduna, 480 kms from Border Village.

Border Village is a settlement within the locality of Nullarbor on the Eyre Highway at the border with Western and South Australia. The settlement, which is 12 km east of Eucla, was named in 1993 by the South Australian Geographical Names Advisory Committee following a suggestion provided by the RACWA. The settlement is located about 5 kilometres north of the cliff line separating the Nullarbor Plain from the Great Australian Bight.

There isn't a lot to see here, except for the "Big Kangaroo".



On the way to Border Village we passed through the town of Mundrabilla.

Mundrabilla is approximately 72km from Border Village. The roadhouse has become a popular stopover for most travellers in part due to its isolation. Due to its location, during the summer, temperatures consistently rest in the 30's, however the "Nullarbor Doctor"

arrives nightly in the form of a cool southerly breeze, ensuring you rest easily throughout the evening. The isolation and unique location mean there is nowhere else in the world like Mundrabilla. The place is an oasis in the outback where travellers can witness the only renewable energy power station on the Nullarbor suppling clean green power all day, where you are able to play a hole on the world's longest golf course or just relax and watch the sunset in the basin of the Nullarbor.

Maree found some local artwork on one of the building walls.



We commented as we were travelling today that we had not seen any emus. Then we saw two walking next to the Highway, fortunately they kept a straight line. Then we found this artwork in Mundrabilla. So, three emus today.

Tomorrow, we hope to free camp at "The Head of the Bight" for two nights. We are hoping to see some whales. We rang the visitor's centre, and they said there have been a few sightings. So, fingers crossed.

18 June 2024

This morning, we headed off to the "Head of the Bight". On the way over to WA we stopped here to see if there were any whales to see but we were too early in the season. So we thought we would stop here for the night and spend tomorrow at the visitor centre viewing platforms.

The drive to "Head of the Bight" is only 209 kms so we took it slowly as the winds were quite strong today. We then stopped along the way at Nullarbor Roadhouse to refuel and to get a bite to eat. The diesel fuel here is the highest we have paid for the entire trip, \$2.88 per litre. So far, the average cost of fuel for the entire trip is around \$2.10 per litre. So not much difference to what we pay in Canberra daily.

The only thing to see at Nullarbor Roadhouse is the mural painted on the side of the building.



From Nullarbor Roadhouse we drove the final 14 kms to the “Head of the Bight” free campground.

There are no facilities here at all, so we made sure we were prepared for our evening with batteries fully charged and water tanks full. This is an image of the camping site. Nothing here at all.



For dinner I made a salmon pasta bake in our caravan oven. We also had our diesel heater on as it was a little cool in the evening with the winds howling outside.

19 June 2024

We headed off to the visitor’s centre viewing platforms around 08:30 this morning. The platforms are 12 kms down the road towards the cliffs. The charge to get in was \$7 each which isn’t a bad price, and that covers you for the entire day.

So, we paid for our entry and were told that there were two whales in the bay, but they seem to be keeping themselves further out. We went down to the cliffs and started scanning the area. It was about 15 minutes after we started looking for the whales when we spotted a mother with her calf. The pair had decided to come in closer to the cliffs. We only got to see them swimming along for about five minutes before they headed back out to sea. We stayed around to about 10:00 but as we had not seen any more sightings, we decided it was better to head off rather than stay another night here.

We returned to the van, hitched up and headed off to Penong. Penong is only 200 kms from the campground and only 80 kms from Ceduna. We decided that we would stay in Penong for three nights for a break.

The township of Penong is a small wheatbelt settlement on the western edge of South Australia's wheatbelt which is characterised by dozens of windmills which pump the local water supply from a large underground basin, the Anjutable water Basin. The town and the surrounding district are so dry that the underground water is supplemented by rain water and water which is carted by truck from a reticulated water supply connected to the Tod River pipeline some 15 kilometres east of Penong.

We do not plan to do a lot over the next couple of days. Tomorrow we will go to the windmill museum and take a walk around this small town.

Tonight, we decided to have a meal at the local pub, which comes highly recommended.

20 June 2024

Today it is blowing a gale, so we decided on a walk through the town and the outside Windmill Museum, showcasing old, new, small and big Windmills, including 'Bruce' the biggest windmill in Australia.



For more detailed information on the Windmill Museum, pop over to the following website: <https://caravancorrespondent.com/2021/10/12/penong-windmill-museum/>

Following are more photos we took of the windmills in the Museum.



21 June 2024

Today we relaxed in Penong. It has been good to have a few days break after all the driving from WA.

22 June 2024

This morning, we left Penong and travelled to Ceduna, This is a very short trip of only 70 kms. We are staying here for two nights to do some food shopping before setting off to Adelaide via Kimba and Crystal Brook.

Our van site for the next two nights.



The site may not look like anything special but the access to the beach and the views are great.

23 June 2024

The views from the Shelly Beach caravan park. The beach is just a short walk from our site. It is a great swimming beach when the tide is in, otherwise it is a short walk to the water.



24 June 2024

Travelled from Ceduna to Kimba. Nothing to add that differs from the journey across to WA. We are returning by the same route to Kimba.

25 June 2024

Today we travelled to Crystal Brook. Crystal Brook is a quiet rural service centre in the heart of some of South Australia's most productive sheep and wheat country. It describes itself as the town "Where the Flinders Begin". The charm of this quiet town lies with its shady peppercorn trees and its feeling that time has stood still.

The explorer, Edward John Eyre, passed through the district in 1839 and, being a questionable speller, recorded on his map 'Chrystal Brook'. The spelling was corrected to Crystal Brook when William Younghusband and Peter Ferguson established a pastoral property by that name – 'Crystal Brook Run' – which extended to Port Pirie and covered 145,000 hectares.

The Big Tree Goanna, unlike many other big things, looks realistic and only a few times larger than the real thing. It is erected in the Main Street of Crystal Brook. The sign read '*Varanus varius*, vulnerable species native to this area. This goanna is depicted in an aggressive pose. Goannas and other reptiles can be seen in their natural habitat at the nearby Bowman Park. This goanna was constructed and erected by local voluntary labour. Perhaps erected to encourage tourists, who knows.



26 June 2024

We have now arrived in Adelaide staying at the Moana CP for two nights. This stay is to get two new tyres for the territory, seafood from my nephew for the journey home and just to be with family. We leave Friday for Lameroo.

27 June 2024

A quiet day today visiting family. Tomorrow we will depart early and drive through to Tooleybuc, 497 kms from Moana. We often stop in Tooleybuc, a free camping location at the back of the local Sporting Club in remote NSW and have a meal at their bistro.

28 June 2024

Today we arrived at Tooleybuc and free camped behind the sporting club. There is nothing more to add today as we were driving all day.

29 June 2024

Today we drove to Narrandera and staying at the Lake Talbot Caravan Park. This is a nice park, and we stay here regularly when we pass through Narrandera. We are just relaxing and will cook dinner in the van tonight.

30 June 2024

Today we are in Jugiong. We decided to stay here as it gives a short drive of 113 kms tomorrow to Canberra. We are both looking forward to getting home.

1 July 2024

Today we arrived home in Canberra.

Following are statistics of our travel:

83

Days Travelling

Distance Travelled – Kilometres

Total for Towing Vehicle	12,331
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Total for Caravan	10,451
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Expenses

Restaurant and Café	\$3,903.04
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Supermarket	\$2,874.45
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Caravan Park Sites	\$3,007.31
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Fuel Diesel	\$3,613.44
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Total	\$13,398.24
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Average Daily Expense	\$161.42
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Fuel – Litres

Total	1,775
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Average Cost per Litre	\$2.09
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We hope you have enjoyed following us as we travelled across to Western Australia. Join us again when next we travel.

Cheers

Steve and Maree