

Australia's Outback Highway - The Rewards are Worth the Effort



AUSTRALIA'S OUTBACK HIGHWAY (FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF AUSTRALIA'S GREAT EXPLORERS) Notes by Ron Manners

On the first day of Australia's GST (1 st July, 2000) four intrepid adventurers set forth to follow in the footsteps of:

David Carnegie, Major Peter Warburton, William Grosse, David Lindsay, Earnest Giles, Alexander Forrest, John Forrest, John McDouall Stuart, Charles Sturt, Harold Lasseter and Len Beadell.

This courageous venture was stimulated partly by the desire to test our survival skills and partly by the desire to momentarily escape the Federal government's \$450m advertising campaign and its unconvincing message that the GST (Goods and Services Tax) will "save our nation" (what additional tax ever saved any nation?).

The members of the team, under the thoughtful leadership of Commander Gavin Bunning were carefully chosen for their individual skills. These only became apparent as each day brought new levels of danger and challenge.

Peter and Libby Plaskitt, with extensive rural survival skills in many of the worlds trouble spots (including Australia and NZ) had traveled from Sydney to join the expedition and Ron Manners, with Swiss yodeling skills, thought to be necessary in readiness for the hazardous mountain ranges lying in our path.

The team members were equipped with special permits to enable one class of Australians to cross "another class of Australians land" and the question was asked "What outrage would ensue if that other class of Australians had to seek written permits to cross the rest of Australia (ie: the other roads)"?

The following daily notations may assist in identifying the thousands of photos taken as the two week adventure unfolded.

Sat 1 July, 2000

Depart from Perth after finding the two vehicles' space restrictions made it necessary to leave Ron's cigar humidor behind.

Gavin headed for York.

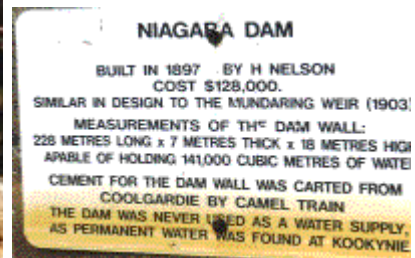
Amy's restaurant brings cheer on a rainy night in Kalgoorlie.

Sun 2 July, 2000

Peter turns back to Perth but is encouraged to continue the expedition.

Niagara Dam and warm welcome at Kookynie's Grand Hotel.

Detour to Yundamindra (to authenticate the exterior of our vehicles).
(With hindsight we should have visited the excellent Gwalia Museum at Leonora, but a pre-arranged appointment in Laverton prevented this).



Niagara Dam



The Grand Hotel at Kookynie

A Laverton presentation on the proposed Outback Highway, given by its enthusiastic Project Chairman Patrick Hill (0419 925 371).

Outback Highway developed into Australia's third major transport route resulting in substantial benefits for all who live along the highway.

The Outback Highway Brochure (<http://www.outback-hwy.gov.au>) gives particulars of the route for this proposed all-weather road linking the Stockman's Hall of Fame at Longreach, Qld, with the Mining Hall of Fame in Kalgoorlie, WA.

This highway will enable an east-west, west-east travel loop through Australia's red centre, returning home across the Nullarbor Highway.

We were also provided with the attached local map that covered the journey from Laverton to the NT border.



TJUKAYIRLA MUD MAP

Campsite "P" for the first night under the stars.



CAMPSITE 'P'



THE MORNING AFTER ICE ON THE SWAGS



A HUMBLE SHELTER



SUNRISE AT 'P' - NOTE THE BUCKET SHOWER ON TOYOTA

Mon 3 July, 2000

Libby's discovery that her sleeping companion for the night, had failed the survival test, result - one squashed field mouse.

Inventive juices flow as Gavin's headlight protectors compete with Peter's patent tailgate support.

Heading east again, we took our first of seven detours when we decided to visit **Empress Springs**.

An easy 1.5 hour drive north of the Tjukayirla roadhouse along the David Carnegie Road.

The spring is in limestone at the end of a tunnel which runs from the base of a seven metre deep cave. A chain ladder allows easy access to the cave.

It was named after Queen Victoria, by explorer David Carnegie during his epic 1896 trek from Coolgardie to Halls Creek in the Kimberley Region of WA. An aboriginal man led him to the water which proved to be of immense value to the five members of the party and their camels.

A most interesting visitors book is stored in a weather-proof metal box at this site.

Campsite established at "Fork" (where the old road forks from the new).



EMPRESS SPRINGS - FROM ABOVE



EMPRESS SPRINGS
- FROM BELOW



CAMPSITE 'FORK



KEOGH PATENT TRIPOD

Tues 4 July, 2000

A day of proclamations ...

- RBM - "today is Satchmo's birthday".
- ! GLB - "my world has suddenly turned brown!"
- ! PJP - "I've lost my glasses!"
- ! Mark Stein of the Warakurna Roadhouse - "I'm not printing anymore maps until they stop straightening the roads around here"
- ! Mark Stein, again - "No meals left as the last lot ate everything"

Detour # 2 to Giles Meteorological Station and Len Beadell's Bulldozer display plus the Rocket remnant

Selected a camp (having had a "p", then a "fork", what should come next?).

Onward to Gill Pinnacle Creek Camp.

Ernest Giles - The Explorer.

Ernest Giles was born in Bristol, England in 1835. He came to Australia in 1850. By 1861 he had learned sufficient bushcraft to undertake safaris along the Darling River.

He met two men in Melbourne in the 1860's who were to assist with his later expeditions - William Tietkins (explorer) and Baron von Mueller (Victoria Government Botanist).

Giles first explored westwards from the recently completed overland telegraph line (Adelaide to Darwin) in August 1872. He had 3 men, a dog, and some horses. He failed to reach Mount Olga due to the boggy nature of Lake Amadeus (which he named).

His second expedition commenced on 4 th August 1873, with Tietkins, Gibson and Andrews. They reached Mount Olga on 14 th September 1873 and proceeded on to the Warburton Ranges where a lack of water stopped them.

They retreated to an area south of the weather station site, and were held up for two months with sickness. On 16 th January 1874 they travelled north through the area surrounding the weather station.

In April 1874 Gibson was lost whilst exploring an area west of the Rawlinson Range - the Gibson Desert is named for him. The party returned to Mount Olga and Ayers Rock in June 1874. Giles eventually succeeded in crossing the centre of Australia (west to east) in 1876.

He was something of an eccentric, giving colorful names to the features in the area. Under von Mueller's influence, his botanical collections were first class.

He turned to gold prospecting in the 1890's. He contracted pneumonia, and died on 20 th November 1897, aged 62, and is buried in the Coolgardie Cemetery.

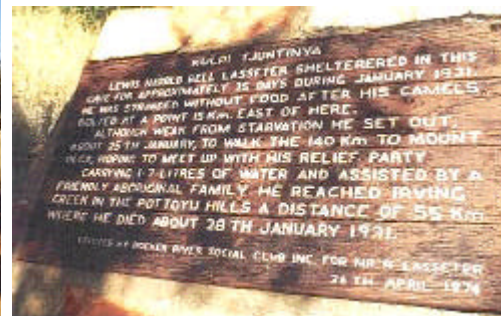
....information courtesy of The Giles Weather Station



Wed 5 July, 2000

Early morning Gill Pinnacle climb.

Docker River, followed by lunch at Lasseter's Cave.





LASSETER'S CAVE

Photographic excursion to the Olga's for a walking tour and sunset.

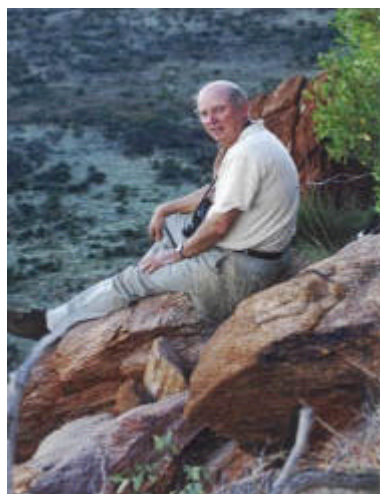
The joys of a hot shower and bed at "Sails in the Desert" near Ayers Rock, where an overdue bag of laundry was "lodged for processing".



GILL CREEK CAMP



GILL CREEK



GILL PINNACLE FROM ABOVE



GILL PINNACLE FROM BELOW

Thurs 6 July, 2000

Geko's breakfast, visitors centre, climbing Ayers Rock (each to their own chosen level).

*Mental Note. Next time, wear rubber soled joggers. My plastic soled joggers tended to "skate" (I recalled similar problems with these shoes during a midwinter visit to The Great Wall of China). "Skated" down Ayers Rock to photograph the "Wall of Shame" brass plaques to commemorate those who have fallen to their death.

Ayers Rock for sunset "champers".



AYERS ROCK



AYERS ROCK



CLIMBING AYERS ROCK



AYERS ROCK



CLIMBING AYERS ROCK



CHANGING COLOURS OF AYERS ROCK



Another hot shower.

Laundry returned to me with notification sticker.



We've tried and tried but we feel that more time is needed to remove the stubborn stain on this garment. Also it is possible that there could be injury to the colour or fabric.

This has been called to your attention so that you will know it has not been overlooked.



TRAINING A FRISKY CAUGHT CAMEL AT CURTIN SPRINGS HOMESTEAD (FOUR BEER-KEGS FULL OF WATER REDUCE FRISKINESS)



AUSTRALIA'S GEOGRAPHIC CENTRE

On the road again via the Lasseter highway, (breakfast at Curtin Springs Homestead), Finke-Kulgera Road via the Finke Aboriginal Community (Goyder Stock Route, with lunch at Goyder Creek), pause for photo at the sign to the Lambert Centre (geographic centre of Australia), and the exciting Finke river crossing near New Crown Homestead (with assistance from the friendly bulldozer driver). Heading South at Eridunda, instead of North to Alice Springs was a departure from the official Outback Highway, this suited me as I had visited Alice Springs and Longreach (with its impressive Stockmans Hall of Fame) a couple of weeks before, from the Brisbane end. The S.E. loop that we took also suited our time constraints. Onward to our detour # 3, to Old Andado Homestead where we were greeted by our famous hostess Molly Clark, one of the great battlers of Central Australia.



FINKE RIVER CROSSING



FRIENDLY BULLDOZER DRIVER
SUGGESTS AN ALTERNATIVE TRACK

Molly was delighted to hear of my role with the Mining Hall of Fame as she is the founder of the National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame in Alice Springs (brochure attached). Molly took delight in signing me up as a life member of her Hall of Fame (if nothing else, it proves my versatility).

Also visiting Molly was Andrew Harper (camelier)
<http://www.outbackcamel.com.au> and <http://www.camel.aust.net.au>, email:
harps@mcmedia.com.au.

Molly's warm hospitality enjoyed by all.

Old Andado was one of the highlights of our trip and was a great "detour".

It is important that any intending visitors do as we did, phone before arrival (Phone: 08 8956 0812).



OLD ANDADO



OLD ANDADO VIEWED OVER A
SIMPSON DESERT DUNE



WALKING BACK TO OLD ANDADO



BEING "SIGNED UP" BY MOLLY

MOLLY CLARK AND GUESTS BEING
"SIGNED UP" BY MOLLY



WARM DESERT HOSPITALITY



COLD DESERT SLEEPING



FAREWELL TO OLD ANDADO

Sat 8 July, 2000

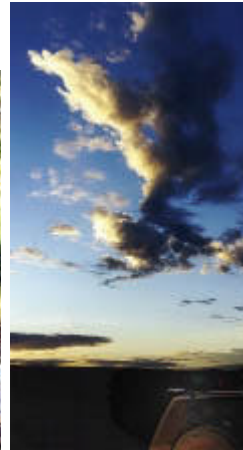
Pre-sunrise walk into the sand dunes to witness the sunrise on the Simpson Desert.

Watching the colors change as the sun's rays accentuated the contours of the sand dunes, "trying to step on the plants so as not to disturb the perfection of the sand dunes".

Returned to Finke River crossing, then to Mt Dare/Bloods Creek/Abminga Creek for lunch before establishing camp at Eringa Billabong.



ERINGA WATERHOLE



ERINGA
WATERHOLE



ERINGA WATERHOLE

A late night philosophical discussion on how Giles, Eyre, Carnegie and all other early explorers managed without Engel car-fridges or two-way radios or satellite phones, as we were finding them absolutely essential.



DESERT DUNES



DEWDROPS ON NATIVE GRASS



SIMPSON DESERT DUNES



SIMPSON DESERT DUNES



SIGNS OF NOCTURNAL ACTIVITY



FOUR ANT -HIGHWAYS LEAD HOME

Sun 9 July, 2000

Pre-dawn awakening by birdlife, later combined with Macca's broadcast birdlife, causing RBM to invest a small fortune in a satellite phone call to Macca (Australia All-Over).



KEEPING WARM DURING EARLY CALL TO "MACCA"

Noted the bony bream fish winter "die off", around the edge of the Billabong.

Off to Dalhousie hot springs for a swim (38-43C) and on to Dalhousie ruins for lunch among the date palms (with a curious dingo eyeing us off).



DALHOUSIE SPRINGS "HARD TO BELIEVE,
THIS IS MID-WINTER"



DALHOUSIE RUINS



LUNCH AMONGST THE DALHOUSIE PALMS

Mon 10 July, 2000

Early departure for Oodnadatta with a visit to the Pink Roadhouse (where RBM paid \$13.95 each for 36 exp. colour films, compared to Perth price of \$9.45), and to the Oodnadatta Rail Station Museum.

Lunch at Algebuckina Bridge which spans the Neales River.

It's length at 578 metres makes it the longest bridge in SA.

We photographed the wrecked car which lay by the southern abutment of the bridge.

Many years ago, it had been trying to cross the flooded river by way of the rail bridge and was pushed off by an on-coming train. The driver managed to escape by climbing outside the bridge railing but his dog jumped into the river and was lost.



ALGEBUCKINA BRIDGE



CAR vs TRAIN

Our precise schedule was starting to slip and so by two-way radio, we agreed to "crank up" the speed a little.

"I think we just passed a car parked in the middle of that creek".

A memorable visit to the William Creek Hotel where planes line up in the car park.



WILLIAM CREEK HOTEL



STURT PEAS

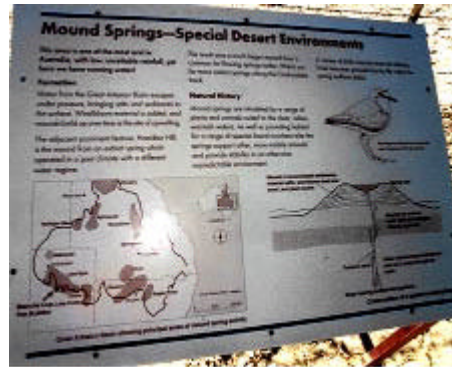
Supreme Commander Gavin then fearlessly led us across a lakebed to discover an ideal camp site at the almost inaccessible Warburton Mound Spring (alongside Beresford Hill).



WARBURTON MOUND SPRING



OUR MOUND SPRING'S CAMPSITE



WARBURTON MOUND SPRINGS

Tues 11 July, 2000

Again we found our swags all iced up and the ice on the Toyota windscreen extended the crack.

Washed in the warm water flowing from the Mound Spring outlet, then off at high speed to Marree. Just past the dog-proof fence we came upon Australia's newest and yet to be publicly reported tourist attraction; "PlaneHenge".



PLANE - HENGE



FLORAL WINDMILL AT PLANE-HENGE



PLANE-HENGE, ANOTHER DESERT SURPRISE

Our first sighting of Lake Eyre South was from the Oodnadatta track.

Arrived in Marree just in time for our two hour, (500km) airborne inspection of Lake Eyre at this most opportune time.

Lake Eyre Flood History (to July 2000)

Lake Eyre National Park covers an area of 8430 square kilometres. It has filled, or had water in it a number of times in the Twentieth Century, including 1956, 1971, 1974, 1976, 1989, 1997. The most extensive flooding occurred in 1974 when the lake filled to capacity with up to 34 cubic kilometres of water.

The main river systems which feed Lake Eyre include the inland river systems of the Diamantina/Warburton, the Thomson/Barcoo and Cooper, the Georgina/Eyre Creek, the Peake, Neales, Macumba, & Hamilton Rivers.

Widespread rains have fallen across the outback during February and April 2000. These rains have brought about a prolific resurgence of activity and breeding of bird, animal, aquatic and plant life in the SA Outback. While these rains have covered extensive areas of outback Australia and flooded a number of inland rivers, Lake Eyre has increased to back up approximately 75% coverage at present. However, water from the Warburton River flowing into the lake is still flowing.

Our flight took us to the north of the lake and demonstrated the abundant birdlife, finishing with a visit to the famous Marree man, who is celebrating his second birthday.

Detour # 4

Later we drove (Marked Y) and then walked to the waters edge of Lake Eyre in Madigan Gulf at Level Post Bay, to visit the spot we identified from the air (Marked X).

This ran us into darkness so a suitable campsite was located with a little more difficulty than usual.

CENTRAL AIR SERVICES LAKE EYRE AND MARREE MAN INFORMATION SHEET

MARREE

- Marree used to be called Hergott Springs.
- Marree meaning "place of possums".
- Turn of the century had population of 600.
- The Ghan train used to pass through the town.

MULOORINA STATION

- 53 Km north of Marree next to the Frome River.
- Established as a sheep station in 1882.
- A camel depot in the 1920's.
- Owned by Elliot Price from late 1930's.
- Used as a base camp by Donald Campbell in 1963 & 1967.
- Today owned by Elliot's grandchildren Malcolm and Trev.
- 1 million acres in size, includes a large area around Lake Eyre.
- 1 sheep for every 32 acres, 1 cow every 64 acres.

LAKE EYRE

- Located in the driest area of the driest continent.
- Evaporates 2 metres of water each year.
- One - Sixth of Australia's Continent drains into Lake Eyre.
- 13th Largest Lake in the World, 3rd Largest Salt Lake in the world.
- Lake Eyre North - 144km long and 77km across.
- Lake Eyre South - 24km long and 64km across.
- Connected by Goyder Channel.
- Deepest part is Madigan Gulf at 15.2 metres below sea level.
- Lake Eyre is on average 3.3 metres below sea level.
- Lake Eyre when full can hold a capacity of 30 cubic km of water.
- Jackboot Bay's colour transformation is due to high level.
- Belt Bay is where all the fish wash up on the shores when the lake is full.

WILDLIFE

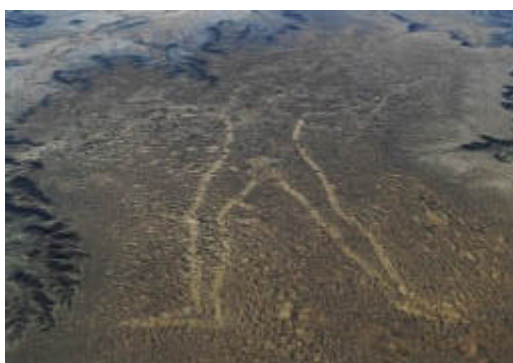
- Birds come from all ends of Australia as far as Perth (WA).
- Pelicans, Banded Stilts, Sea Gulls, Black Swans, Billed Gulls.
- Bird's nest in colonies on the Southern islands in Lake Eyre.
- 2000 Pelicans on Hughes Island and 1000 on Silcrete Island.
- Fresh water fish such as the Boney Bream and Golden Perch.
- Frogs, Lizards-Thorny Devils, Shrimp are some of the life.

MARREE MAN

- Discovered in late June 1998 on Crown Land 60km west of Marree.
- Made using a 10-disc plough going around the outline 16 times.
- 4.2 km tall making him the largest man-made work of art.
- Marker pegs every 10 metres placed with the use of a dill.

DOG FENCE

- 6000km in length, from Yalata (SA) to Jambour (QLD).
- Built at turn of last century, finally linked in the 1940's.



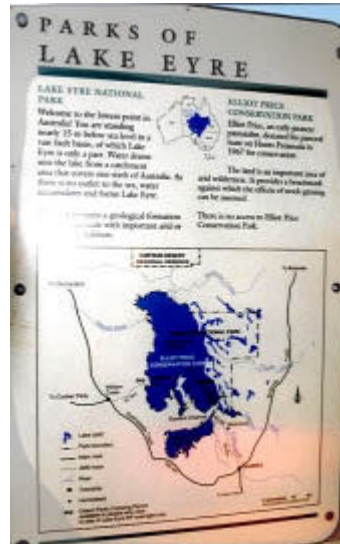
MARREE MAN (CELEBRATING HIS 2 ND X & Y MARK THE SPOTS LATER VISITED ON BIRTHDAY)



FOOT



AIR PHOTO SPOT "Y"



AS SUN SETS ON LAKE EYRE (AIR PHOTO SPOT "X")



Wed 12 July, 2000

Detour # 5 to the Ochre Pits (5km before Lyndhurst).

Left our campsite near Muloorina Homestead to return to Marree and then on to Leigh Creek minesite tour. The ochre quarries are of great significance to our Aborigines as they once provided a rich source of multi-coloured ochre used for ceremonial purposes.

This particular quarry was an important focus of well defined trade routes extending north into the NT and QL and south to the coast.

An amnesty arrangement allowed aborigines far removed from this area to visit and take large amounts of ochre.

No European mechanical mining has occurred in this quarry.



LYNDHURST OCHRE PIT

Lunch at the Quandong Café in Copley before heading off for our next destination, Arkaroola.

At Angepena Homestead we were confronted with two alternative routes to Arkaroola, one being a road that everyone seemed to use, the other being a dotted line with road-closed signs.

Naturally, we took the "road least travelled".

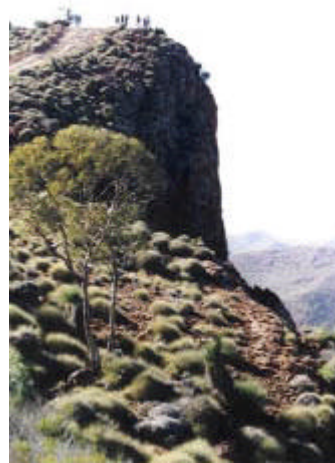
This constituted detour # 6 and provided an excellent opportunity to practice our driving skill.

We still managed to arrive at Arkaroola in time for a magnificent feast of emu cutlets, followed by a philosophical discussion on how badly we felt about missing out on the GST introduction fiasco.

This "pain" was partly solved by contemplating the GST's application to the profession of prostitution. (Would prostitution be classed as a "business input", or a "business output"?)



ARKAROOOLA RIDGE TOP TOUR



ARKAROOOLA RIDGE TOP TOUR



ARKAROOOLA RIDGE TOP TOUR



ARKAROOOLA RIDGE TOP TOUR



BOLLA BOLLANA CREEK



BOLLA BOLLANA CREEK LUNCH



RBM'S FINAL CEREMONIAL CIGAR

Thurs 13 July, 2000

Soaking up the special attractions of Arkaroola (see attached map)

- Early morning philosophical discussion on how good it felt to be alive
- Breakfast in a geological setting
- A four hour Gammon Range Ridge Top Tour, a sub-zero experience in open topped 4WD's. A remarkable story of how the incredible drill-site access roads provided by Exoil NL, in their 1970's search for uranium, now provide this fantastic infrastructure, enabling this Eco-tourism facility to be

economically viable. Note the suspected presence of the high grade gold plug at Mt Gee, currently subject to litigation.

- Bolla Bollana Creek lunch where I enjoyed my final ceremonial cigar.
- Peter and Libby then visited the Nooldoonooldoona Water Hole (Noodlesinyadoona) and chased yellow footed rock wallabies at Bolla Bollana Creek, (whilst Gavin and Ronaldo carried out some running repairs).
- Arkaroola is the product of the imagination and energy of one man, Reg C. Sprigg. He deserves detailed coverage in our Mining Hall of Fame (further particulars at <http://www.arkaroola.on.net/regsprig.htm> This website also takes you to the Arkaroola/Flinders Ranges history, geology, flora and fauna pages with accommodation particulars).



Finished the day with a memorable meal, whilst we summarised a day of remarkable activities followed by a late night philosophical discussion on the emerging link between Australia's growing Eco-tourism, "sounds of silence dinners" and "dinners in the dirt" and "opera in the outback", the Outback Highway Project, the Year of the Outback 2002 Project, several heritage projects including the various Halls of Fame.

Mining Hall of Fame (Kalgoorlie)

<http://www.mininghall.com>

Stockman's Hall of Fame (Longreach)

<http://www.outback2002.com.au>



National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame

email: npwhf@dove.net.au



National Road Transport Hall of Fame (the latter two both at Alice Springs).

What to do about these random bursts of excitement, all these parallel movements?

At the very least, let's get them all talking to one another, as they provide a richly textured backdrop to the upcoming "Year of the Outback 2002" Project (<http://www.outback2002.com.au>)

Fri 14 July, 2000

Detailed tactical review undertaken as we moved toward our final destinations.

Decision made to take one final detour # 7.

Instead of the direct road from Arkaroola to Parachilna, a decision taken to detour via the Flinders Range National Park and:

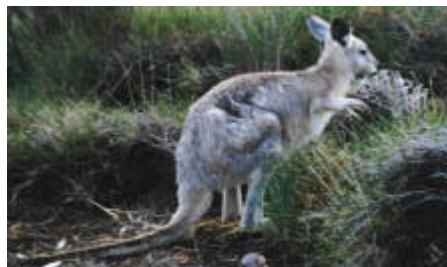
- Wilpena Pound.

Ron

WILPENA POUND is just a neat simple basin with very resistant walls of the 600 million-year- old Pound Quartzite sloping up into the air all the way around. So as the country eroded away over the millions of years, the great ramparts were left, above the country around. Many other basins in the moderately folded Flinders Ranges were not quite so clean and symmetrical, or lacked a uniform tough rock type to form such a rim. This simple geological story hides the wonder of how such hard rocks can be folded and warped under pressure and a little heat over geological time, flowing like glaciers do at the surface, or the way bone and wood can be bent under steam. Isn't Wilpena a wonderful little place. I had to chair a tourism study on the locality when I was in Adelaide, as the govt wanted to promote it. How is it now?

Regards,

Ross



AUSTRALIA'S FRINDLIEST KANGAROOS MUST BE IN THE FLINDERS RANGE

- The famous tree of Harold Cazneaux (grandfather of Dick Smith). Photographed and named by Cazneaux as "The Spirit of Endurance" with his magnificent words to match.
- Brachina Geological Gorge. A 20km geological trail, a pathway through the rock sequence which reveals its history - a corridor through time.



THE CAZNEAUX TREE



The result of this "Wilpena-Brachina" detour was another spectacular day of true treasures of Australiana.

Departed Brachina Gorge at sunset after Gavin captured photographic evidence of the yellow footed rock wallabies, then headed north for the last time to our final night together at The Parachilna Pub (Prairie Hotel).

We arrived within seconds of our pre-booked "feral anti-pasto, followed by feral mixed grill" dinner appointment, a mini-glitch when there was no trace of our accommodation or dinner booking, but some Donga beds were located and the dining experience was worth the debate.

The proprietors of this fine establishment were absent in Adelaide receiving a Hospitality Award for their most interesting development. It lines up well with the emerging arsenal of Australiana destinations.



THE PRAIRIE HOTEL (PARACHILNA PUB) - THE HISTORIC FRONT ELEVATION



THE HI-TECH AND TASTEFUL SIDE ELEVATION



FROM PARACHILNA'S PAST

Sat 15 July, 2000

Our Parachilna Pub breakfast was followed by a rapid re-pack of the two vehicles before Caper # 1 (Nissan) with Peter and Libby headed south to Adelaide, for their flight to Sydney, and Caper # 2 (Toyota) headed west with Gavin and Ronaldo who were intent on conquering 2,590km to Perth in time for Sunday nights home cooking with Jenny.

We still made it despite a blown tyre just west of Eucla. Out came the swags until we were in a tyre-changing mood at 5.00am Sunday. On the road again, but the blow-out had lost us our shower-time.

We still arrived in Perth at 7.00pm Sunday, looking very much as though we had travelled in the path of Australia's early explorers, but for several years rather than our brief two weeks.

Total kilometres = 7,190km

Total words = 2382



THE EAST-WEST SPLIT



"THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT IT'S NOT RAINING"



MAP OF JOURNEY