

Hi everyone, it's hard to believe 12 months has gone and it's time to report on those days already. We clocked up over 43,000 kilometres crisscrossing the country, meeting new people and enjoying the time we had with those who had been with us before.

We had fewer trips in 2012 (with the first one in April) but in January we flew to Sydney then on to Perth. We stayed three nights, celebrating Australia day on the banks of the Swan River with brilliant fireworks both natural and Chinese made, cruising to Fremantle in +40c heat and trying to adjust to Perth times! Our journey back was on the Indian Pacific with a tour of Kalgoorlie at 12.30am (yes am) in a wind with a chill factor of -5 (so it seemed after Perth). We checked out the area around Cook for next year, ate like kings (and Queens) and enjoyed the whole experience. From Sydney we sailed up the Parramatta River, before heading home by train. Tony was 'trained' out by the end and it took me days to get my time clock back to normal, but one day we might go again.



April - 12 day Simpson Desert Hay River

Robert & Ellen, Bob & Margaret, Laurie & Steve, Peter & Gai, Paul & Helen, Paul & Helen no 2, Jeff & Sandra, Mal & Robyn, Bruce & Belinda.

Our tour departed from Broken Hill in a sunny, cool morning. Cobham Lake was full to overflowing, orb spiders were everywhere, and there were copious amounts of seed heads. We camped at the Aboriginal camp ground in Tibooburra, great showers, plenty of space, and three-corner jacks all over. It was hard to get out of bed with a temperature of 4c. Morning tea was at the dog fence, but I had a migraine so I was wiped out for the day. We had a choice of sites on the Innamincka common, and there was plenty of water in the Cooper so we put the yabbie nets in; result, only 2 very small fish. Visited Will's tree & Burke's grave, and over the Burke & Wills bridge (where there was a lot of bird life) to the Dig Tree for lunch. The dunes around our campsite were criss-crossed with bulldozer tracks put in by exploration crews; they must know every square inch of the continent. Tony was sick in Birdsville so he missed out on tea at the pub. It was dusty as we headed into the desert, there were a few flowers left, most of them had gone to seed, and we saw a group of 4 dingoes, the most we have ever seen together. Tony, still only 50% was in bed early again, but he had improved by the morning. Even deep in the desert there were big flocks of budgies making the most of the seed heads,

numerous rat holes from the last plague, and lots of rabbit holes. Paul and Tony did the Toyota waltz rounding up a herd of female and juvenile camels across the dry bed of Lake Caroline. We have seen it bone dry, covered in water, and this year with a covering of tall grass. No one had used the northern track back out, however we managed to follow the occasional bare patches along the over grown track until we were over the river. It then became an extended detour around the vegetation until we found the main track again. There had been little traffic so was it was bouncy and slow, with overgrown and burnt out patches. It was great to have a hot shower and wash our hair at Batton Hill where we were the only campers. Morning tea was at Goyder's Pillar, then out to Jervois station for fuel & lunch. In the fires this year Jervois lost 80% of their feed, two years ago they were flooded. The grader was still working so the Plenty highway was in good condition considering it is all sand. It was a touch of luxury to have five nights in Alice Springs in a room I didn't have to put up, a shower every night, & two meals I didn't have to cook and wash up after! Am I getting soft?



May - 23 day Gulf

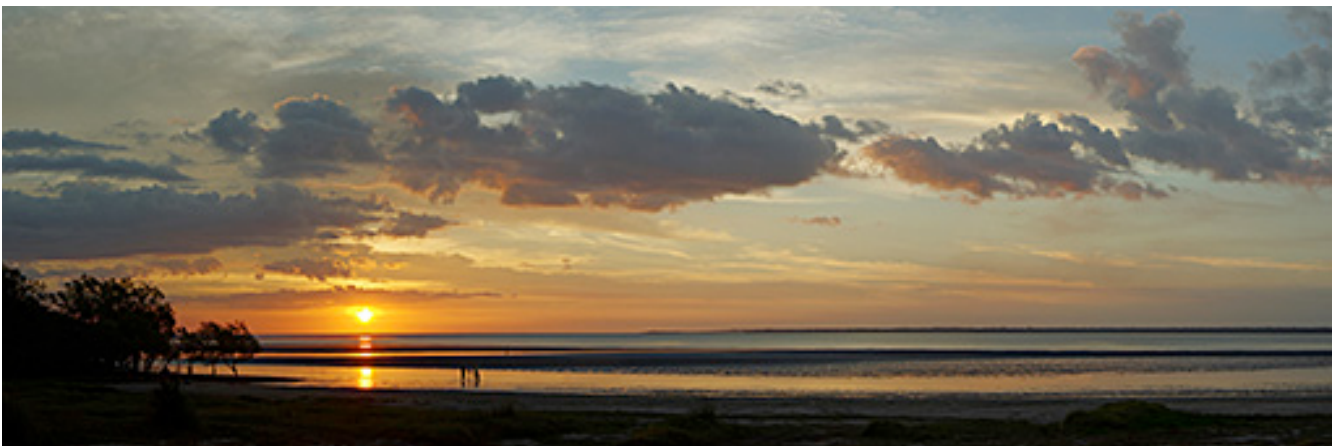
David & Anne, Alan & Linda, Michael & Raewyn, Duncan & Jan, Ken & Di, Leon & Judy.

The weather was starting to warm up as we left Alice Springs, and it was a lovely drive out through Yambah station and onto Binn's track. There was only one other camp when we arrived at Policeman's waterhole, so we could spread out, but no fish for the fishermen. It was hot and windy at Banka Banka but great for drying the washing, and it kept a large fire on the horizon blazing. Across the Barkley stock route, it was green and more green with cattle everywhere. Campsites that weren't buried under grass were a bit scarce so we picked a spot on a creek line popular with the cows and settled in. Fuelled at Cape Crawford then on into Butterfly gorge with no one else in sight. Lovely! It was warm enough for a swim, and we shared the pool with three water monitors and two wallabies. There had been no other traffic except the ranger out to the western lost city, so the track was slow and bumpy. We saw mickey bulls, brolgas and a Jabiru, and the expressions of awe as we arrived at our destination were well worth the bouncy track. Back in camp those who went for a swim jumped out again when a snake wriggled through but it was just a tree snake not looking to cause any trouble. It was a brilliant sunset, but the only place I could get high enough to see over the trees was from the

toilet steps. That night there was another group in, but I don't think they heard the commotion at 2am when Duncan & Jan's back window in the Colorado shattered with a bang. It was tarped up and stayed that way for the rest of the trip. While camped at Borroloola, some went out to the Bing Bong loading facility, and all enjoyed a fish feast compliments of the park manager. Heading east, campsites once again were a bit scarce but we found a flat dry swamp surrounded by trees and blue, wandering jew flowers. Thousands of tiny native bees that must have worked all night flew in and disappeared inside a stump nearby at 8am. All you could hear was a quiet high-pitched hum. At Kingfisher camp a kookaburra came in for breakfast, and the day was spent fishing, croc spotting and cruising on the waterhole. The fish were not hungry, but a couple were caught and cooked for dinner, and Michael & Raewyn gave Tony a delicious fruitcake for his birthday. In through Lawn Hill station, Ken had trouble with the clutch on his Rodeo, but it was just out of fluid. While we had lunch at the ford on Lawn Hill Creek, we collected some wild figs that I made jam with, a bit pithy but they tasted ok. Camping at Lawn Hill we visited Adel's grove for coffee and ice creams, a hidden little copse on the creek, walked around to Indarra falls, had a swim and canoed up the gorge. Some walked to the stack and the cascades that were nearly dry. Floods had choked the top of the falls with debris and the water couldn't get through. We went outside the park each night for a campfire and to cook tea. On the last night we had tea, followed by savoury damper (cooked by the ladies), scones, fig jam and cream. Meanwhile the clouds built up and the lightning flashed. As we headed back to camp it started to rain and it rained all night (and the next morning as we endeavoured to packed up). At Adel's grove we were told the road was blocked by their supply truck (but they didn't know where) and we would have to go via Riversleigh. It was still drizzling but Tony decided the road wasn't that bad. The truck was 15ks out on a greasy patch neatly parked down the middle of the road. After chatting with the driver we drove down the edge of the road beside him and continued on. The rest of the road was gravelled and caused us no problems. There were lots of trucks and caravans at Gregory, and being on the asphalt we decided that it would be pertinent to head to Normanton and not north to Burketown through black clay country. It was a good move because they closed all the dirt roads the next day. Lunch was hamburgers and chips under the awning at Burke & Wills roadhouse. The owners had been left with a heap of food when the Gregory rodeo was cancelled due to the rain. Camp was set up in Normanton and after a night of rain we headed to Karumba and the Barramundi fish farm. Duncan & Jan were having trouble with water in their fuel filter. It was cleaned out but still caused problems later on. Saturday it was out to Critters camp on the train, then the Burke & Wills tree, and on to the Flinders River for a spot of unsuccessful fishing. On Sunday some had planned to do a fishing charter but the skipper had a heart attack at 1am and was flown out by the flying doc. We had barra for tea at the pub instead. It was still windy, but cloudless and dry at long last. The road to Cobbold gorge was in excellent condition, and the boat cruise up the narrow waterworn gorge is fascinating. After dinner we watched an old ABC article on Robin Hood station. The family were doing a lot of work on the resort area with a new swimming pool and barbeque area; Out through Forsayth with lunch on Jardine water hole where the resident bull wasn't happy when we disturbed his girls. It was blowing like blazes and overcast as we climbed Kilgani volcano, and it rained at Undarra so it was umbrellas and good walking shoes for the tour of the lava tubes. We had the bus shelter, so we were able to eat undercover and have a campfire as well. Just for something different it was drizzling again at Lynd Junction where we had lunch. We were told a truck had chewed up the road further down, and all we

could see to the south was more drizzle. Tony drove down a few kilometres and decided that the dirt road to Hughenden was definitely out. The asphalt to Charters Towers was considered a safer bet, hopefully just above the big band of weather covering the gulf area. Some were lucky to get a cabin, and it was back into the tents for everyone else. Tea was at the 'all you could eat Chinese buffet then back to camp where it bucketed down again all night. The trip was to finish in Barcaldine but because of a basketball get together (washed out) and a mix up in bookings, we had to head to Longreach the long way. Dirt roads were out, so it was through Hughenden and Winton on the asphalt. Duncan and Jan's car was still playing up and Ken and Di arrived in town on the smell of an oily rag. Our last night was in a motel with a very nice dinner in their restaurant,

*Heading home the next morning it was still overcast and muggy but we stuck to the asphalt and stayed in motels all the way. Duncan & Jan were a bit behind us and got caught when a flooded creek closed the road. We had 12 days at home catching up on paperwork and restocking the van for our trip to Cape York. It was to start at Tidal River but with only one booking we decided to cut it short and start up in Atherton on the 17-day version. Guess what, 12 days later it was drizzling again as we headed back north via Morundah, Cobar and Innot hot springs. A swim in the thermal pool to relax and it was back on the road.



June - 17 day Cape York

John & Helen, Bill & Ruth, Kerry, Tom & Louise, Norm & Coral, John & Margaret, Peter & Judy. Our Cape York tour started with a drive around Tinaroo dam and a barbeque lunch by the lake. We departed in misty low cloud but it changed to cloudy and hot the further north we went! Lunch was at the Quinken display at Laura then onto Artemis station for the night. The station is popular with the birdies looking for the golden shouldered parrot, and now with our group who did an evening walk with the station owner's daughter and her entourage of 12 or so dogs. The station is finding the going tough, and relies on income from their trucks working on the local roads. The birdies cranked up the donkey heater for hot water when they came back from a night searching but went too far and the pressure valve blew off. We eased off the heat, and when they stood under the shower for ages and ran out of hot water, they complaining bitterly. Even though the country was dry, morning dawned

misty and the tents were wet from heavy dew. In Weipa Peter's fridge wasn't working too well, while Tom spent several hours sorting out his fridge problems. The fridges were all working overtime in the heat. Bill and Ruth spent the afternoon cleaning the dust out of their van and sealing up every nook and cranny. They did a good job because it was much better up the track. We left the vans opposite Heathlands' ranger station and headed out to Captain Billy landing for the day. The tide was out so we could walk right around the headland and check out the caves for the resident bats. The sandy road from Heathlands was badly corrugated but the main road was excellent, the road gangs had been working hard. Camp at the Jardine meant no hot water and no toilet paper, so it was cold showers and supply your own paper. There was no water at all the next morning as we left the vans in camp and headed back to Virilya Point. We passed twenty-five vehicles and trailers on their way out so there should not be many left out on the beach. Wrong! We don't know where they all camped, but at least now there are some decent toilets. The weather was just beautiful for a day on the beach. We crossed the ferry one at a time and headed into Seisia for six nights. The weather decided to throw a spanner in the works with wind and showers but we managed to have a cooking fire every night and the long shelter we had came in very handy for drying washing and powering the jug and toaster. The day we went to the tip there were people everywhere but we managed to get photos without someone else's face or behind. We drove along the beach, had a few oysters for afternoon tea (and a few for supper) then back through the rainforest drive. Our trip to Thursday and Horn Islands by ferry was windy and cloudy but a great time was had by all. It was cool, but some of the tougher male members of our group went into the pool for a swim. The showers hung around and an organized fishing trip was cancelled due to the wind. Judy & I flew out to the tip by helicopter, but it would have been much nicer a half-hour longer and without the drizzle. I have now been there by 4X4, (then foot), boat and helicopter. Heading south again we stopped at Fruit Bat and Twin Falls for a swim. There were cars everywhere, and some very worn-out older motor bike riders who didn't have the energy to get back on their bikes to continue north, and it was only day two??? The road works were a bit greasy, so it was foot off the pedal and back to the quarry for camp where we cooked tea before the rain settled in for the night. We had showers and sun, showers and sun, until we drove out of the weather and back into dust by the time we had lunch at the Weipa turnoff. There was still a lot of school holiday traffic, and it was surprising there had not been a lot of accidents because people were so impatient passing those in the front. The dust was thick and not everyone had someone in front with a radio telling them of oncoming traffic. There was a man killed in a head on, on the track to the tip the week after our trip finished. The road out to Lakefield NP was dusty with more traffic, there was only one lotus flower open at Red lily lagoon (that we could see) and Tony had fun getting all the vans into our campsite. He also had trouble getting the fire alight, but the stars came out while we had dinner, then it drizzled again overnight. The track across the Battlecamp range into Cooktown had road works happening in several places making the surface very greasy and with the vans behind lots of extra care was needed. Tony spent over an hour cleaning the truck and van with a high pressure wash before we left Cooktown. From there it was down through Charter's Towers, visiting Ron & Marie and John & Pat in Brisbane for lunch, then had tea with Fred and Joy in Toowoomba and camped the night on their driveway. It was then on to Casino where we left the van while we spent the next 28 nights in the tent.



July - 28 day Transcontinental

John & Elizabeth, Barry & Phyllida, Kerry & Peta, Robert & Rita, John, Kate & Karen, Clive & Annie, Lea & Ann.

Whales were passing through while we took photos at the Byron Bay Lighthouse, then we had a delicious (& noisy) welcome dinner at the club. Glenlyon dam was nearly full, and we were the only ones in camp. There was still light misty rain as we set up but it cleared for dinner and campfire. The stars came out and heavy dew settled in so we were all in bed by 9pm. Off to join the folks at Texas Museum for a delicious morning tea while the sky continued to empty. Lunch was at Goondiwindi on the banks of the Macintyre River dodging the rain, and because it didn't let up we stuck to the asphalt to St George. There was one last shower after putting the tents up and with the clouds gone it was a cool damp night. Being in the middle of July, I suppose we had to expect it. The tents were put out to dry while we had lunch at Cunnamulla. The caravan park in Thargomindah has a great camp kitchen, so while tea was cooking on our open fire, I cooked a walnut and currant damper in the camp oven. Guaranteed not to burn in there! The Cooper was higher than normal and after a visit to the Burke & Wills Bridge and then the Dig tree we camped in the mulga, where it had been burnt out, but there were daisies and snowflake everywhere. The further west we went the less there was, typical of desert storms. Birdsville was a busy place with heaps of Nissan owners, there to help celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Simpson crossing by the Sprigg family. We could hear the music from their dinner at the racetrack in the Caravan Park, and getting a shower was almost as bad as it is at race time. The Nissans were heading out into the desert in groups of 10 and we managed to stay ahead of them until well over the other side. There were flowers out and the track was in reasonable condition, even better because we were going against the normal traffic flow. SA Parks have fenced in a new camp area at Purnie Bore that was already a dust bowl and very uninviting. We saw two dingoes, and four camels, the latter are becoming harder to find in the desert. Dalhousie was already crowded so we had a swim and headed out to find a camp. It was a lovely evening, but the wind roared in around 10pm and everything flapped for quite a while. We fuelled up at Mt Dare, called into the Geographical centre and headed up the old Ghan line to camp in the desert oaks. The next morning it was 3.9c. Lunch was at Chambers Pillar then on into Alice Springs and a motel bed for three nights. No time for relaxing though, with vehicle checks, washing and shopping to be done, and dinner at the Tavern.

Back on the road again the young aboriginal guide at Wallace Rock Hole gave us a very entertaining tour of the gorge and rock art. Morning tea was at midday and lunch was an hour later at Hermannsburg. A healthy? lunch of scones with jam and cream or apple strudel and cream then a wander through the historic precinct. There were still plenty of flowers along the way and I picked wild tomatoes at Sandy Blight junction to make some relish. We had a few vehicles go past that evening and the air was so still we were soon covered in a fine layer of dust, but everyone stayed up til 9.30 enjoying the fire. It was -3.2c again in the morning. We stopped to chat to a man who was riding 70-100kms a day from Geraldton to Alice Springs on a pushbike raising money for the Fred Hollows foundation. There were two caravans already at Jupiter well so we went further in under the desert oaks, and Barry ran a shuttle service bringing water up from the well for hot showers. That evening we celebrated Phyllida's birthday with champagne, lamingtons and a birthday cake, and listened to a Len Beadell tape, but the neighbour yelled at us because it was too loud. The morning was much better it was only -.5c, warm enough eventually for shorts. The road was also in excellent condition having been graded all the way from the border to Telfer. Just beat two vehicles into the only campsite for miles. It was dusty, but the birds came in for a drink and we had pancakes, berries & cream for dessert. We rescued a small monitor that was in one of our fire logs. Still in hibernation mode, he came out with a burnt tail tip, so we put it in water to cool it down, gave him a drink and put him in the bushes. It was found next morning half buried under our back wheel (luckily before we took off) so dug him out, and put him into a hollow log and buried him in under a bush. We checked on him again on our caravan trip. The log was still buried but with the weather being warmer he had woken up and moved on. Well that's what we hoped anyway. Camp was set up on a smooth claypan in Rudall River, a great dance floor for our Trans ball. As we drove into Desert Queen baths there were a few wildflowers but no camels, which is most unusual for that area. After the long walk in some had a swim, but with the temp of the water about 10c, it wasn't so inviting. Everyone dressed for an evening of frivolity and Barry was an elegant Queen of the Desert. The next day it was 45.6c in the direct sun, quite a change from the cold mornings. In Newman there was a great rush for the free washing machines and driers and they were worked until late in the evening. Lee and Ann did three tyres by the time we got to Mt Augustus, the road between there and Three Rivers is notorious for wrecking tyres. We can take vehicles anywhere all year and not have a puncture until we hit that piece of road! That evening we helped John celebrate his birthday then spent the next day exploring the rock and all its gorges. The next morning we stopped for morning tea (and vanilla slices) in a flower garden, it was just beautiful. The rain had been sporadic so the flowers were just in patches. Honeycomb gorge in the Kennedy ranges was spectacular, even in the middle of the day, then on to Gascoyne Junction. The pub, part of which was built in 1913 was washed away in a big flood in Dec. 2010. It was hard to believe as we stood there that there would have been so much water. A campsite was a bit hard to find but the old road junction to Meeda hidden behind the dunes was just what we needed. The area had been burnt out, but there were pink daisies everywhere. The rain had missed WA early this year so the wild flower season was not going to be great, but the few kilometres around the turnoff to Shark Bay was brilliant, with pink, yellow and white daisies. The road out to Useless Loop was in excellent condition and there were flowers all the way out to Steep Point. Photos were taken at the coast and a gorgeous sunset was a great start for our party night.

*Leaving the Zuytdorp cliffs we travelled via Geraldton, Merredin, Caiguna, Ceduna, Peterborough, Bourke, Glen Innes and back to Casino to pick up the van to start our Trans Caravan tour. Doesn't the back know it when

you sit that long in the car with 5 minutes stops (sometimes even 15!) Our caravan was safe in John's garage but someone had tried to break into his house, smashing three windows. Luckily they didn't get in, but it made a bit

of a mess. We phoned the police, had the windows fixed, got my hair cut, grabbed some groceries and it was off to Byron Bay. Did a few touristy things, spent a couple of nights on the beach, met up with Sandra & Len, and had dinner with Alan & Linda. Ah, time to relax!



August - 30 day caravan Trans

Jim & Pat, Ron & Marie, Sue & Merette, Eddie & Heather, Gayle & Kristine, Jim & Kathy, Harold & Carol, Gerard & Jan.

Well, the trip started off with two less vehicles, one was T-boned on its way up to start the trip, wrecking the vehicle (both occupants were ok) and the other one had some health problems. Gerard (who had back problems) was in two minds whether he should proceed, but they went and Jan drove the whole trip. There was another group of caravans at Glenlyon, the dam was still high and everyone was fascinated by how quiet the kangaroos around the camp were. Along the dam wall we spotted pairs of Murray cod searching for a spot to spawn. Spring had come early and the wattles and emu bushes along the road edge were in flower. Jan celebrated her birthday at St George, (and it was Gerard's later in the trip). The countryside was dry until we got to the Cooper floodplains where the grass was still high and green from the floods. We put some pots in the creek and got a few yabbies. Areas that were burnt out last year were covered in snowflake and daisies, and the flowers continued as we headed to the Dig Tree and our camp on Browne's creek. It was dry, and between the rocks and the hard ground, digging the toilet was a lot of hard work! It was hard to believe, but just over the road were daisies, emu bushes, sea heath and fan flowers. We arrived in Birdsville in time to set up the caravans and watch the cup run. Sunday we headed out to Big Red to have a play, watching those who could, and those who couldn't. There was a young, downy covered chick in the eagle's nest, and

with water still in Lake Napperanica there were lots of birds and plenty of food. Four vehicles went out to Eyre Creek for the day, and some went back into Birdsville. Harold & Carol (and many others) got stuck behind a large vehicle (with duals) having problems on the second dune. It was the backup for an overseas motorbike tour and the driver 'not understanda the English' There was a lot of traffic heading across the desert after the races and when we came back the track was atrocious. The western side was lovely, but the east side, oh my god! Harold & Carol joined us again after waiting at Big Red all afternoon. The next day we joined lots of others still leaving town and headed north to Bedourie with the promise of a warm swim. Bad news, the cleaners were coming (expected days earlier!) and sorry, the pool was shut. One year out of three we have been able to enjoy their hot artesian water. Had the Min Min experience in Boulia, checked out the dinosaurs, had cappuccinos for morning tea, and a hot shower and hit the trail once again. Eddie & Heather's problems started when the water tank fell off their AVan, Jim & Cathy had to change a tyre on their van, and the Plenty east of the grader was chopped out and rough. Once again the night air was still and we wore the dust of a drill rig passing through, then Ron & Marie found they had dead batteries and no power in their caravan. Their solar panels were not recharging either, so it was a good thing we would soon be in town. We did the tourist drive through the Gardens to Alice Springs. The wind was hot and there were fires burning around Alice. We still couldn't have a campfire in the park because of a fire ban, so most went out for tea. Then the weather changed and the temp dropped with a cool southerly blowing. Eddie had his water tank plasti-welded, added more straps and tightened up the clips on the van. Ron bought new batteries for the caravan, Gerard was starting to feel better, and with everyone fuelled up, fixed up and restocked we continued west. Morning tea was in Hermannsburg, lunch in the quartzite walls of Gosse Bluff and camp with the views of Mereenie Bluff. The next camp was east of the WA border but once again we were plagued by dust from passing traffic. We wondered where they were all coming from when one turned in. The local police (and most of the other traffic) were heading home from an aboriginal music concert at Kiwikurra. We had a chat before they took off with lights flashing and siren ringing (egged on by our group of course). They still had a ways to go before they were home in bed. Eddie wrecked a tyre, the chainsaw played up, and Jan & Gerard found a mixture of UHT milk, water and wine in their camper trailer. But, we did have Jupiter Well to ourselves and enjoyed the luxury of a hot shower. The country had been burnt out, but flowers were everywhere, and the tinsel bush was truly magnificent. Stopped for a walk on Lake Dora looking for little salt-dehydrated things, then settled in camp for the evening. There was a fire on the horizon and the smoke created a very red sunset. Jan & I tried for some star photos of the windmill, but Jan's camera kept putting wiggles in the lines. They say practise makes perfect, but by the end of the trip we still could not work it out. We fuelled up at Punmu, and only had the two petrol vehicles to go when the mail plane came in and the refueller took off. 1¼ hours later we were off again. Our next stop was Carrawine pool, a delightful spot. The day was hot so we spent quite a lot of time in the water, not deep but refreshing, I made quandong slice, Jim & Cathy did a walk of discovery, and we celebrated Gerard's 70th birthday early so it was in the bush. Jan, Gerard & I were up for sunrise on the gorge wall, the only cool part of the day. With the car air conditioner on, it was into Marble Bar (one of the hottest towns in Australia), a temp of 35c in the shade, 55.9c in the sun. Thought we might have afternoon tea and a swim at Chinaman's Pool, but all that was left was a tiny, slimy green pool of water. It was back to the caravan park to sit under the sprinklers only to find the town bore for

watering gardens turned off automatically at 3pm, foiled again. Instead of cooking in the caravans we had tea at the Iron clad hotel outside under the stars. On Gerard's birthday we went out to Coppin Gap, and had to come back the same way because the great little short cut back is now the haul road for a gold mine. There was a hot north westerly blowing and a huge smoke plume up behind the ranges, adding some to our carbon woes! Quite a lot of the region had been burnt out. It looked, as well as felt like Hades might! As we headed down to Newman it was getting warmer and windier, but the scenery is ruggedly beautiful. The washing machines worked flat out, Eddie & Heather had a tyre fixed and I made the supper for our Trans ball. The Inland highway was a busy trail of oversize vehicles moving equipment for the mines, but we stayed out of their way and received their appreciation over the radio. We set up camp on the edge of a huge claypan, with a flat floor for our ball and a huge shallow lake as a back drop. A RIO drill rig and crew went through, (the huge ball of dust drifted away from us) and the cows, horses, finches, budgies, stilts, crows, spoonbills and a dingo came in for water. The dance floor was a bit cracked and dusty (but the best we could find), and Harold was Queen of the desert, beard and all! Everyone was in bed by 10pm but the moon was setting over the water as I packed up. Out came the camera and it was after midnight by the time I was in bed. The breeze picked up along with the dust and the temperature, and the road to Mt Augustus struck again when Eddie did another tyre. Tony took the A-Van off and hooked it to the Mahindra to get into Mount Augustus. Their last tyre went just before afternoon tea. We were thinking that we would have to do a 1000 km round trip to Carnarvon the next day to pick up some new ones, but there were no 18" low profile ones to be found. The W.A.A was rung to pick up the vehicle and van. Meanwhile everyone else explored the mount and gorges some even climbing to Edney's lookout. The truck picked up Eddie & Heather while we travelled via the Bangamall inn, the Kennedy Ranges and Gascoyne Junction to the Highway. A desert storm had dumped on one sand ridge and there was a brilliant show of daisies and parakeelya, but mostly it was very dry. We had a phone call from Eddie to say he couldn't get any tyres, and were pleasantly surprised to find them in camp when we arrived. They hired a vehicle and towed their van down to join us for the run out to Steep Point. We left 7.30am under an overcast sky, while Eddie & Heather travelled out with Gayle & Kris. We saw a couple of whales with young ones, and although it was cold and windy the rain held off until after we had a group photo. Our last night at Hamblin Station was party night around the fire, still overcast, and a light shower of rain with a rainbow, but the heavier shower held off until everyone had had their fill.

*While everyone headed in different directions, we went to Carnarvon, then the Coral Coast for lunch where we ran into Fay & Chris who were there working. It was then on to Exmouth for two nights, with Jim & Cathy and Ron & Marie. We followed Ron up to Nanutarra Road house where we turned right to Tom Price and Paraburdoo, then into Karijini NP for three nights. It was hot, windy and overcast, but we walked into most of the gorges (although not to the bottom of two) and took lots of photos. Even though it was hot, the water in the gorges was quite cold. Back in Newman two dust willies tried to blow us out of the caravan park, I washed everything I could lay my hands and did a little bit of shopping. From Newman it was south again on the Inland highway, along with the hundreds of over-size loads heading north and south, picked about 15 kilos of ripe quandongs (had seen them 6 weeks earlier when they were green), then cleaned and cooked them at Kalgoorlie. It

was hard to adjust from the 40's in the Pilbara to almost freezing weather across the Nullarbor. We nearly got blown away in Ceduna, and it was that cold the night we stopped on a side road near Peterborough that they had snow only a couple of kilometres away. Back home, everything washed, cleaned and packed away, the garden weeded and vegies planted. Tony decided not to have his shoulder operated on, it had improved over the months we were away, and seeing there was a new vehicle arriving, he would be busy having to swap all the accessories over. That job is nearly finished, along with a new body, but it won't look any different, the car not Tony. He wasn't going to be driving a truck either, but so far he has been to Sydney five times! We will see what happens at the end of next year.

We hope you all had an enjoyable 2012 and if you are a bit worse for wear we hope 2013 is a much happier healthier year. We would also like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Safe 2013, and we look forward to seeing you all again sometime soon.

Brenda & Tony