

**Hi everyone**, all the newsletters we have been receiving have mentioned how fast this year has gone, here is another one! I'm glad we have a diary that gets written in religiously every day (well most days anyway), my memory is just not quite like it used to be! Now that we have ticked over 22 years and a few hundred thousand kilometres of travelling we are starting to slow down, yeh riight! *Check out our new photos and trips for 2014-15.*

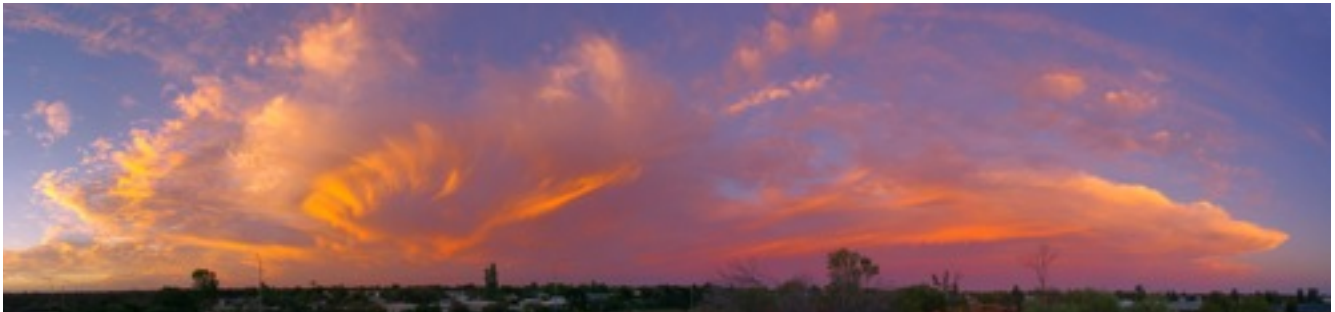
### **March Tastes - Caravan**

*John & Helen, Rod & Judy, Norm & Coral.*



It was a magnificent sunset the night before we left Port Augusta for Mt Ive, via Iron Knob and the lovely ladies who supply us with morning tea. Tony took everyone to the top of Mt Ive for the sunset while I cooked dinner. Everyone commented on the great views, but also the rocky track getting up there. Waking to overcast skies and a small rainbow, our day's drive took us down the Buckleboo stock-route to Mt Wudinna. Taking a short cut from Pidalpa rock, Tony found himself geographically embarrassed in an empty wheat paddock, so *over* a fence and back on the right track to be back to camp around 6. Out to Pete's pillars with the temperature rising to 40.4 degrees. Lake Gairdner was very white and dry, as was the surrounding countryside, so the large mob of feral goats in the trap yard were attracted in by the stock water. They provide extra income for the station owners. A small plane on his way from WA to NSW for a fly-in, dropped in for the night. They had been pushed sideways all the way by the strong hot north westerly. By morning it had swung around to a cool southerly, still overcast, and more rain spots, but the occasional drizzle kept the dust down. With more to come we had lunch outside the Kingoonya hotel. (under new management-again), and a large freight train rumbled through. It was still drizzling when we refueled at Glendambo, but it was clearing

by the time we got to Roxby Downs. There was no room on the mine tour bus for me so I went shopping (in the ½ dozen shops in town).



It is an expensive caravan park for a square of dirt but it has a great camp kitchen; and there was another beautiful sunset. Took a day drive to Andamooka where Helen and John brought out hot cross buns for morning tea, then out to Lake Torrens. Once again we took a left instead of a right and had to about turn to get down on the dry lake bed for lunch. Rod's side step bracket broke, but because it was Easter there was no one open to fix it. Showers overnight, cloudy sky, another red sunrise and a rainbow (great times to be in a caravan). Up the Borefield road with lunch at Callana creek in the shelter of the wattles, then out to Muloorina Station where everyone dined on a tender roast leg of lamb supplied by Norm and Coral. Frustrating doing a camp oven roast in drizzling rain, but it cleared at tea time, leaving a beautiful sunset and a fine evening. Bacon and eggs for breakfast, heavy dew from the rain, clouds to the far southeast, swans on the river, and the Easter bunny had been. Out to dry Lake Eyre south, then Farina and a few more friendly flies. The coal mine lookout near Copley was closed, so it was on to Italowie gorge for lunch and camp at Arkaroola. John and Helen stayed in camp while we spent the day touring the Gammon ranges; Yancaninna station, Yudnamutana and Wheel Turner. Lots of emus, some roos, and although the land was mostly green, we saw no stock. The next day was around Mt Jacobs backtrack, dry Stubb's waterhole, Nudlamutuna hut and back early. A great day but the flies were friendly. Down through Wearing gorge and lunch at Chambers gorge. The country there was very dry with very little water in the creek and only one feral goat to be seen. Coffee in Blinman then into camp on Angorichina station. The following day was overcast and the ring around the sun lasted all day. Our drive was a little more sedate than usual but still on hilly dirt roads. We met lots of motorbike riders, including one with a sidecar. Lunch was in Hannigans gap, then out through Moolooloo and Nuccaleena mine. We stayed to get wood while the rest headed back for coffee. Had to put a plug in a tyre (instead of the piece of wood) before we got back to camp. Weather was still heavy. Set up at Willow Springs and headed to Arkaroola for morning tea and a day run through the Flinders ranges. The weather clouded in and there was rain all around us, especially to the north. We drove to the lookout close to camp early in the afternoon, and the showers were still all around us. While everyone relaxed back in camp Tony and I headed back up for sunset, and the sun shone through just as we were getting to the top. I could hardly get my camera out quick enough.



Meanwhile back in camp an unusual roaring sound brought owner Carmel down very quickly. The rain dropping further north was flowing down the creek beside our camp, very brown and very fast, so Norm shifted their vehicle away from the creek edge (still with Coral inside the camper). All the creeks we had to go through to get back to camp were bone dry. The creek went down as quickly as it came up. On our last day there were a couple of nervous nellys as we tried out the new track around Willow Springs, but we ran out of time to finish the part past the locked gate. (Then there would have been some even more nervous moments!)

*After a couple of days r & r checking out the Fleurieu peninsular of SA, visited Jan & Duncan and chased fish for the day, (not very successfully). A most relaxing time, before we turned around and did the above trip again. (almost)*

## **April - Googs**

*Rob & Ellen, John & Elizabeth, Kerry & Peta, Laurie & Joy, Barry & Kathleen, Michael & Raewyn, Eddie & Heather, Peter & Gai, Gail & Kris.*

It was overcast as we left Port Augusta, which seems to be the normal thing on this trip, but it didn't stop our bus tour of Iron knob or enjoying the delicious morning tea provided by the community ladies. I was busy getting dinner ready while everyone went to the top of Mt Ive for the sunset. Morning brought fog and heavy dew, and as we drove out to Pete's Pillars, and as the day progressed the clouds built up. This time Lake Gairdner was very wet from recent rain. After Pidalpa rock and Wudinna it was on to Ceduna where most of the group went to the local hotel for dinner. After another dewy morning, we took a tour of a local oyster grower for oysters cooked and al la naturale for morning tea (for some anyway!) Shared our camp at Goog's lake with a couple of other camps, and the mossies and flies.



It was a full moon over the normally dry lake, but a good cover of water reflected the full moon beautifully. Calm clear night and morning but wet tents to pack up again. The sandalwood was in flower and we climbed mini Mount Finke for great views. Even though we camped over 4ks from the rail line we were close enough to hear four Trans freighters go through. I also collected dried quandongs near camp and cooked them in Roxby Downs the next night. Lunch was at Kingoonya in front of the hotel, where they would be celebrating its re opening that night. There was some suggestion we should stop for the evenings' frivolities but we had to continue. Lake Mary was bone dry and the ground was crowbar hard for the toilet but the wind dropped and it was a pleasant evening. Into Roxby early with time to shop and buy lunch. Dinner was also easy in the camp kitchen. After a tour of the copper mine, it was off to Andamooka where we had lunch and were shown how to cut opal. We took the track north through Mulgaria station, one of a number in the region now owned by BHP Billiton. A detour to see some thrombolites, then set up camp a few kilometres from the tallest nearby hill where we headed for sunset (a couple of minutes too late, but gorgeous anyway). The ground was dry and hard, another crowbar job for the toilet. The ladies walked in the morning, two headed south and had to be rounded up and turned north, while the speedy ones walked further than they intended when Eddie and Heather did a front tyre 3 kilometres from camp. Into dry Lake Torrens, then onto Lake Arthur for morning tea and a fossil hunt. The road after Mulgaria homestead had been graded but because there had been no rain, it was potholes and bulldust. Collected a few more rocks at lunch time, had afternoon tea at Copley then on to Mt Serle to camp. The country was still very dry with no stock around and the track to the Yudnamutana copper mine had some good gutters and holes, made for a few hums and ah's. Some took a right instead of a left. But were soon rounded up and put back on the right track, and Tony to put two plugs in Eddie's tyre. We set up camp at Arkaroola for two nights. First night was a brilliant orange sunset, and the next day a few drivers found to their amazement, what they and their vehicles were capable of. The flies were friendly and the bushes droopy. Did the echo bounce at Echo wall, walked into Chambers gorge, (still very dry) through Wearing gorge, Blinman and onto Angorichina. Roos had been digging at the spring in the creek line for water, but it was just damp sand. Barry did a tyre the next day as we drove over the ridges surrounding the station, then it was on through Hannigan's gap, Moolooloo and back to Blinman for afternoon tea. Went to the top of the hill near camp for sunset, but after waiting for the last rays it was lights on to head back to camp and a shower. Mixed my dates up so Mothers day came a week early. Set up early camp on Willow Springs and spent the day touring the Flinders ranges, but my photos aren't much good, I have to remember to change the setting from night settings to day

settings, changes the colour dramatically. Our tour of discovery on the new station track started under very heavy skies, with us dogging the showers for morning tea. It eased off and the new track went through very dry country, so the unconsolidated road was a collection of fine bull dust holes. The views were great, but the new section was a test for the brake foot of most drivers! It was back to camp for party night under a clear starry sky.

*A week of R & R, - down to Port Augusta, where they were having their warmest winter spell since 1921. On to Port Lincoln for a couple of nights, and a boat tour to feed the tuna, but we did not swim with them. Finished at Whyalla with a tour of the steel works and back to Port Augusta to stock up before the Desert Wander.*

## **May - Desert Wander**

*John, John & Pat, Stuart & Pauline, Laurie & Joy, Brian & Deb, Graham.*

What started as a very full trip had shrunk by the time we left. A call from Linda to say although they were fully packed and ready to go, Alan was in hospital having a triple bypass instead. He's healthy again and walking 10ks a day. Departure day was overcast and windy but improved as we travelled to Whyalla for a tour of the steel works and morning tea at the wetlands. West through the Middleback ranges, with assorted Iron mines on both side, Queen, Duke, Baron, Knight, Prince, etc, to Secret rocks (a massive granite whaleback) for lunch. On to Kimba, then the Buckleboo stockroute. Tyres down, but the track was damp and firm making driving easy even over the dunes. All the holes on Coprobinnie hill were full of water and not suitable for a large campsite, so back up the track to find a flat spot in the mallee. Plenty of wood for a fire and in bed by 10.30. Everything was wet from the dew, and a light shower blew in before we had packed up, but by the time we had gone back to the top of Coprobinnie hill the sky had cleared again.

John C climbed to the top of Mt Wudinna, lunch at Murphy's hay stacks, and then in through Streaky Bay to Ceduna. The night at Ceduna was cold and clear with a very heavy dew again, but we could have a fire to cook on and keep warm. The tents, wet in and out again from the dew were packed up, and shopping was done before we headed out. A visit to Astrid Oysters in Denial Bay for a tour and lots of samples, and supplies for further up the road. The track turned north off the Eyre highway at Nullarbor and we found the last sheltered campsite for quite a while. The resident dingo wasn't too impressed we had dropped in. The morning was 6 degrees, and everything was wet, but it was clear and sunny. Dozens of camels, 5 dingos, and a zillion flies. Morning tea was at Cook siding (no one in sight) and two freighters went through. One had to wait and swap its driver so we had a chat before they left. North of Cook the road deteriorated into a much better track. Up through Maralinga Lands to Voke's Hill Corner and on to the Anne Beadell Highway. Connie Sue Beadell had left her name in the book only a couple of days earlier (she was on a tour). Camped to the west of VHC and woke to an overcast sky and super flies. Just after lunch John C called to say he had a big problem, his fuel light



was showing near empty, but it turned out to be a problem with the feeder. It was to worry him until it was fixed in Esperance. By late afternoon it was looking rather dim for a campsite, continual spinifex and drizzling rain. Finally an old bit of road led off to the right. Spread out here was enough room, toilet went up in the middle in very wet sand, and eventually a fire was started. Put the tarp up and cooked tea and that is where Tony spent his birthday, no cake and no celebration. Everyone was damp by the time they went to bed and Laurie & Joy had a puddle in the middle of their tent so they slept upright in the Nissan. (bought a new tent in Esperance) The weather forecast was for clear skies and no rain, but they forgot to tell our area. Every morning it was heavy and overcast, and even if there was no rain the tents were usually wet from the heavy dew. The next camp was an early one at Ilkurlka, time to refuel, hang up all the wet bedding and clothes and dry the tents. Cooked a roast for tea and had the barbeque burning as well to keep warm by. Lovely hot showers, but we had to dodge those other ones that had blown in again and became quite heavy driven by the wind. The shelters are high and narrow, so it was hard to stay out of the driven rain. Into the tent and it drizzled all night. Sack the weather bureau! Packed up wet tents again, but at least the rain had stopped. The area west of Ilkurlka was burnt out early this year, 76 kilometres from horizon to horizon and again for 24ks further on. In a couple of years it will be green and healthy again. Another early camp (lunch time) at Neale Junction to dry everything, it was still overcast but no rain. Turned south on the Connie Sue, a great piece of road, still dirt but smooth for a change. The Neale breakaways are very scenic, nice for a camp but very damp at that time and much too early, so onto Seemore Downs, and the start of the Nullarbor plains. We found a good spot for camp, plenty of wood and the last suitable area before we hit the very stony road down to the rail line and Rawlinna siding. Our planned road south from Zanthus was impassable from 59 mm of rain, so we turned west along the line to Kitchener. Camped on Hampton Hill then followed a beautifully smooth road into Boulder for a long awaited hot shower. (except for the last three when the hot ran out!) At least the day was 20 degrees instead of the cold we had been having. Kalgoorlie for lunch, then Coolgardie to visit the grave of Ernest Giles, and camp

at Victoria Rocks, another massive whaleback. Due to rain and closed roads the trip was now in reverse, so instead of coming up the Holland Track we were going down except Graham who was not well and went straight to Esperance. The track was narrow and very good 4wding, (very challenging with an inch or so of rain), but it stayed clear and we had a good run to Hyden. Tony got hung up on a ledge in a bog hole and had to be snatched out by Laurie in his Nissan! Back into the rain again but the park at Hyden has a great under cover area. John C headed off early to get his fuel tank fixed in Esperance and we took the dirt road south. Lunch was in a roadside stop with over 20 species of wildflowers, it was the most we had seen in two weeks. Excellent dirt road but down into more heavy weather so we booked everyone into the same motel as Graham for three nights. He had seen the doctor and was ready to settle in for another few days. It rained heavily and the motel laundry was almost as wet inside from the driers as 7 lots of washing were done. The second day John had his fuel problems sorted out and a drive around the coast was in order for all, except there was oil dripping from under our new vehicle. Down to Toyota and they did a magic job of replacing the diff seal and having us ready to go again that night. Plans were to go to Lucky Bay but being a National Park (who had a planned burn get away from them recently) there were no fires, rain was predicted, a shelter with no sides, and it had been blowing a gale for two days. We decided to turn north once again, Graham back in tow. It was a wise move as Lucky Bay had 2 inches of rain the day we left Esperance. Followed the highway to Norseman for lunch, then onto McDermid rock to camp (another whaleback). Still very cool and the clouds had cleared but it was very hard to get the fire going, all the wood was wet. 10 degrees and back to overcast, we ran parallel to the Holland track back to Victoria rocks for morning tea. Visited Credo station (now part of WA Parks) the old Callion cemetery and the Callion open cut mine near where we camped for the night. Still overcast, we headed into Davyhurst cemetery, Waihi battery and saw two Mallee fowl. Lake Ballard was wet and greasy, but I managed to walk out to the nearest statue kicking the mud build up off my shoes as I negotiated the wet patches. Everyone else decided the bank was a good place to look from!



Niagara Dam was the next stop, still overcast with a cold wind but plenty of wood for the fire and sticky date pudding for dessert. The breakaways are great for photos and a popular place for prospectors. Kookynie was next, with a chat about what was the town by a local. All that remains is the council offices, and more prospectors. Got all the washing done and dried in Leonora before heading to the local hotel for a delicious dinner. Drizzled again overnight. The group went out to Gwalia for the morning, while I spent the day with a migraine, in bed asleep or hunched over the toilet throwing up. We were only stopping one night but all the roads were closed and I was rather pleased they were! Some out to tea, others had tea in the camp kitchen. Roads open again we headed out in a fog, with wet tents, (of course it drizzled again overnight). Along the old road to Mt Morgans townsite and cemetery, the road sloppy in patches and a little sideways motoring, then lunch in Laverton. Not much available for a healthy lunch, chips, hotdogs, pies etc, but the information centre did have nice coffee. Found a burnt out area to camp in, the rain had brought up lots of new plants and it would have been beautiful with all the flowers a few months later. Cold but clear night and heavy dew, but it was warming up, 29c in the sun and back into shorts. Had a talk with the manager of Yamarna station when he stopped to check us out. Tony had fixed Brian's mudguard in camp, and then his mirror fell off. John C's bash plate was rattling, so replaced the missing bolt then Brian's Toyota suddenly stopped with no power, just a broken battery terminal. Late lunch; and more nuts and bolts for John and Brian. 16 days later and back at Neale junction where we met two vehicles, hadn't seen many on our travels (except on the highways). Heading north on the Connie Sue from NJ, it was into Pt Lillian and Pt Sandercock, (great scenery and aboriginal graffiti) then Point Reetz, Syke's Bluff and Hann's tabletop hill. The bushfire stopped north of No 2 Parallel road and then it was back into the spinifex so camp was just off the edge of the road. Toilet and shower were built on the road side, but the hot shower was gorgeous. Spots of rain so put up the tarp, then the clouds cleared. Everything was wet to pack up but the clouds were breaking. Up onto the abandoned section of the Gunbarrel, into dry Lake Christopher, then Warrakurna to camp. Visit to Giles weather station for the weather balloon to go up into a windy, but brilliant blue sky, (forecast for cold tomorrow), passed a big mob of camels then turned off onto Sandy Blight road. Lunch was at Bungabiddy waterhole; full of water so we couldn't get far up the gorge. Camped in another burnt out area in the desert oaks, and decided to have morning tea on the top of the Sir Fredericks range.





Looked awful steep and all round, water worn? rocks. Enough area for all of the vehicles but we were nearly frozen and blown off the top, damn it was cold! Watched everyone come up the rutted section wondering why they weren't climbing. Poor Joy nearly had heart failure when Laurie couldn't go any further and had to back down the track, seems he forgot to put it back into 4wd as they turned off the main track. No wonder the Nissan wouldn't go up. It was easy the second time, especially with the hubs locked in! With the round rocks (and some earlier traffic chewing it up) it was quite scambly, but all made it for a hot coffee (rum would have been better) While we had lunch, Pat picked up a Bessemer pot and some other utensils someone else had left behind and we found a nest of beautiful green ants. Passed two vehicles, the first for many days. Was hoping for a great sunset at our camp in the Davenport ranges but even though there was some cloud, it was a fizzer. Nibbles night was on Glen Helen station on our last night in the bush. Up to Tyler's lookout, then a lovely drive into Goyder's Pass, would like to have stayed in there a bit longer but the day was passing quickly, lunch at Ellery Big Holes and into Alice Springs. Magnificent sunset best for the whole trip, but by then we were in having dinner and I did not have my camera!

## **June - Kimberley**

*Graham & Sandra, Garry & Heather, John & Judy, Paul & Helen, Bruce & Belinda, Bob & Margaret, Jeff & Sandra, Duncan & Jan, Jim & Pat.*

We had a couple of spare days in Alice before we headed off again. All out for a welcoming dinner but we had to wait for our meal, so by then we were nearly chewing our arms off. Back to overcast cool weather, showers and 9 degrees. Running repairs at lunchtime when a piece of Graham's camper broke and the back fell down. We drove out through Glen Helen and Tyler's Pass, instead of up the highway but it was a long day before we got into camp. Rock hard for the tent pegs and a heavy overcast sky, but plenty of wood. Good run up the Tanami but we were scratching to find a campsite once we turned off onto the road to Lajamanu. Found a spring marked on the map and headed in hoping. Big flat clear area, wood, running water that soaked back into the ground after 100 metres and a beautiful sunset, nothing could have been better. Fuelled at Kalkarinji and visited the local art gallery. The ladies were very busy, with an exhibition coming up.

Had lunch the next day at Marella Gorge, (a magnificent deep crack in the ground) then on to Palm Spring, Caroline Pool and Hall's Creek. Rugby was on the screen at the pub so some went to have tea and watch it, others stayed in. The show was in town and there were lots of people in the park as



well. Departed after fueling and grocery shopping and set up camp in the Bungles for two nights. Caught up with Paul & Helen (from another trip) on the way in and they camped with us. We split into two sites because we did not want to be squashed up, set up the shower (cold) and settled in. Most walked into Mini Palms gorge, with lunch at Echidna Chasm, then a lazy afternoon. Morning walk in Cathedral Gorge where Jan played a mouth organ recital that echoed around the walls, then 10 later enjoyed helicopter flights, including me! Everyone headed out individually to meet again in Hall's Creek for morning tea, then on to Mary River for lunch, along with dozens of vans and mobile homes camped there already. Two tawny frogmouths in the tree above us, were not in the least perturbed by all the attention. Set up camp at Fitzroy Crossing, then went down to the old cemetery (which is fast disappearing into the river after each flood), and the old Fitzroy hotel for a drink. The sky was getting heavier with rain in the distance, but still clear enough for a red sunset in the west and a rainbow to the east. Jim and Pat opted for a little luxury camping in a tent with ensuite, and went down to the resort for dinner. We had the barbeque alight and most ate in the gazebo although it was quite hot and humid inside. We helped Margaret and John celebrate their birthdays with a cake and when it started to spit rain, all headed for the shower and bed. It rained all night (30mm in fact) tents weren't too bad being up on lawn but had to walk through 6" of water to get into the car. Packed up wet tents, (except Jim and Pat), and headed out to Geikie Gorge for the boat cruise, still under a heavy sky but it did hold off for the trip up the river. From there it was into Broome for three nights. Shopped, refueled, did the touristy things, had nibbles on Cable Beach watching the sun go down (behind the clouds) and the camels walk past, the markets on Sunday morning and dinner at the nearby hotel. Leaving Broome we had morning tea and a tour of Willie Creek Pearl farm, then lunch on the edge of the mudflats before we followed the road north to Kooljaman. Garry, Duncan, Helen & Bruce tried their hardest to catch a fish but it was windy and the fish were very scarce. Toured Lombadina, bought half a dozen loaves of their fresh bread and went out to the beach for lunch. The palm topped gazebos from years past were just piles of debris, ruined by the last storm, so we sat in the shade of the cars to eat. I had the company of two local dogs, one stopped each time I did, the other took immense delight in watching the waves coming in, then dashing head first into the breaker. He did it time after time, wandering up and down the beach and watching until the wave was right. It was comical to watch him doing it. Did some repairs on Jeff and Sandra's camper, and Jim and Pat had a flat battery. Visited the hatchery at One arm Point, fished off the beach, visiting Cygnet Bay Pearl Farm where two lucky ladies bought pearls. Back in camp Garry caught two golden trevally which they had for tea, some went to the restaurant and the rest sat around after dinner for a general chitchat. Back south we called into Beagle Bay Church, lunch and fuel at Roebuck Plains roadhouse and onto the Fitzroy River to camp. There were a few freshwater crocodiles on the sandbank and reports from the fishermen of a couple of bigger ones further along kept everyone away from the river bank. A very pleasant night under the stars. Derby was the next stop after the prison tree, long trough and Frosty's pool. The caravan park was a very busy place with extension, and a long wait for the washing machines. We had dinner out on the mudflats, so we could have a fire, and it is great being away from the clutter of caravans. We took two float planes out to the Horizontal falls for most of the following day. The sky was clear but there was quite a lot of smoke from controlled burns in the hills.

We had the thrill of swimming nose to nose with lemon sharks, (with a fence in between) riding fast through the swirling waters of the outgoing tides, and enjoyed a fish and salad lunch. Home in time to enjoy the Horizon Power Float Parade, (part of the Derby Boab Festival) with lots of adults and kids participating and visitors and locals watching. The show that had been in Hall's Creek was also in Derby as part of the festival. Off again into Windjana gorge to set up camp among a myriad of other tourists, and a walk through Tunnel Creek. There were quite a lot of resident freshwater crocodiles just lazing around. On to Silent Grove to discover they had changed the campground around and we had to wait for other campers to move out. It was the busiest time the parks had experienced with grounds filled to overflowing and several medical emergencies as well as their generator being out of commission. Had a swim both above, (and below the falls for the more adventurous). Solar powered showers that were in the shadow of the trees most of the day weren't quite as cold as the falls. Called into Adcock gorge, then Galvan's gorge for a swim, (not as many people there),



stopped at the Gibb River hoping to camp but there were already campers in for the night so it was on to Miners pool on Drysdale Station. It is a big campsite with only a couple of other camps in so we had heaps of room to ourselves. Garry tried a spot of fishing for several small fish and Helen made bread and rolls in the camp oven(not to feed the masses). The road wasn't too bad and we made good time out to Mitchell Plateau. Parks had changed the camp sites around and there was no site for tour operators, just group sites and a large day parking area. Tony found the ranger and did a tour of the ground on the quad bike. We used up two sites and some of the road but it wasn't too bad. Finished the day off with a swim in a small pool near camp, cool and wet enough to wash off the dust. Had an early start out to the falls, Judy and Sandra stayed home, some went out by helicopter, and the rest did the walk in and out. The water at the falls was very refreshing and the rocks were very slippery. The grader had nearly finished as we headed back out to the King Edward River for lunch and a walk amongst the aboriginal rock art. There was a lot of traffic as we drove back to Miner's Pool to camp again. Bob and Margaret had a few heart stopping moments as they came around a corner with a rocky ledge, a reverse camber and headed straight for an oncoming vehicle. With some deft footwork and the odd prayer/expletive, both vehicles travelled on their merry way, much more sedately. The

campsite was a lot fuller that night but we still had quite a large area (put our hats on backwards & turned up the music!). Drysdale sold a record amount of fuel that week - 4990 litres @ \$2.35lt. We added to their record fuel sales and departed with a lot of other traffic. The Gibb River road was in great condition, it gets better every year, but dusty and the radio was not getting out as well as it should. Lunch was on the Durack River, and over the ranges to Home Valley to join the other 70 or so vehicles in camp. We were looked on enviably as we had quite a large area of grass to ourselves, (just hemmed in on most sides) and we could even have a fire. We were surprised to meet up with Shirley and John who have been on one of our caravan tours and were parked right next to us. Across the low flowing Pentecost River and onto the Karunji track that goes around the base of the Cock- burn Range. There are gutters, rocks, bull dust patches and mudflats, a great little drive. There were also a lot of gorgeous, long eared, big eyed Brahman calves at the station waterhole, a few birds and a couple of vehicles before we stopped at the top of the Bastion Range above Wyndham for lunch. Way off in the West Arm was a livestock carrier coming in to load the cattle down in the yards below us, but that was to happen long after we had gone. Spent some time in the bird hide at Parry's Lagoon, but the water was low and there were not a lot of birds close by. It was then off to Parry's Lagoon for a mango smoothie/coffee/icecream.



Out across the burnt paddocks past a large dust/ash willy willy and onto the highway into Kununurra to set up camp. Once again there were people everywhere and they had to put our camp down on the

beautiful green grass along the edge of the lake. A bus picked us up for the last day of our travels taking us out to Lake Argyle for a cruise around the lake, a fish and salad lunch, and the Durack's home stead. We then went by boat down the Ord River with its impressive towering rock walls, fast water, and large homes, and back at camp just after sunset. Time to shower and dress for dinner in town to end a very full day.

*For us it was time to service the work truck, and head back east via Dunmara, Alice Springs, Port Augusta, Mildura and home. A week home to prune, weed, pay bills and see the family and it was off again to Byron Bay, via Peak Hill, Rathdowny to see Ian & Ruth (from Birdsville Caravan Park), Ron & Marie, and Linda & Alan (who was fighting fit again).*

## **August - Trans Caravan**

*Bill & Ruth C, Bill V & Mary (with a broken arm), Bob & Pam, Brian & Anne, Kerry, David & Alex, Paul & Elizabeth.*

Paul & Elizabeth phoned to say they would have to meet us later in the trip because they had blown the water pump in their jeep. We met everyone else the day before leaving to have photos at the most eastern point and dinner that evening was a most enjoyable affair. It was foggy as we set off but the day improved as we headed inland. No special morning tea at Texas because of a family death, but everyone enjoyed their little museum. Fuel and lunch was in Goondiwindi, then through cotton country around Boomi to St George. Kerry was having trouble with the fuses blowing in his fridge, so a temporary repair was done until he could get the right ones. We got a rock through the headlight cover, luckily it wasn't hard enough to break the light as well. Bill replaced his fuel filter and a call from Paul to say they were still waiting for their jeep to be fixed. Searched unsuccessfully in Bollon for koalas while Tony put some gunk in the front tyre to stop it leaking, (rim failure) also eventually unsuccessfully! By lunchtime in Cunnamulla there was a full on head wind blowing, but also lots of wildflowers along the road. In the evening the wind swung around to the south, and it was a clear moonless night. Fuelled in Thargomindah and Bob put a tyre in to be mended. They wouldn't do it because it was a rock fracture; and Paul rang to say his water pump was fixed but they had put a hole in his radiator putting it back in! Out to the Dig Tree via Burke & Will's bridge and camp. Tony put the rod in and three nice perch caught themselves. Gutted and hung out to dry on the back of the truck they proved just too tempting for a feral cat, and it made several attempts to satisfy its hunger. Had to shoo it off the table after I had filleted the fish, then under the bonnet (which was up for the light) to get the scraps wrapped up in the rubbish bag and later to a wire cage set up in the bushes along the river bank. We did have a nice feed of fish though. Up through Arrabury and into Haddon Corner where Paul and Elizabeth were waiting. There were a lot more flowers after rain earlier in the year. Finally into Birdsville where Paul bought 4 new tyres (his new 2nd hand Jeep had very basic tyres) and Brian had new brake wires to the caravan fitted. Rocks don't do them much good at all. Spent the next day in the desert with a trip out over Big Red to Eyre creek and back, surprising a few drivers just how good their vehicle and their driving could be! Everyone over Big Red from the west! Arrived back to a big convoy of assorted RV's in the caravan park. Explored Carcoory, lunch at Bedourie and into Boulia

early. Brian's caravan door was stuck, took quite a bit to get it open again, and David took Alex to the clinic for a tickly cough. It was a hot night even with the wind around to the SE. Paul bought a 5th tyre to complete the set, (\$40 cheaper than Birdsville), refueled, those without facilities in their vans had showers, and went through the Min Min centre. Out onto the Plenty where Bill and Ruth, and Brian found their anderson plugs had broken off. (more repairs) The country was dry, with very few flowers. The road was not too bad, stones, bulldust and small corrugations, but the grader was working hard after Huckitta station. Jervois had only had 3" of rain for the year, and after a year of fires things weren't looking too good for them. We put something through a back tyre and had to replace it, front one still leaking slowly! Camped just off Binn's track, dry and dusty but plenty of room. Kerry walked into a low branch during the night and had a very red eye in the morning, luckily no major damage. Into Alice Springs for three nights, where we had to say farewell to David and Alex who were heading home. Our happy, 5 minute, 3 minute, 1 minute caller would be missed by everyone. Much to their dismay, Bill and Ruth's new caravan was letting in more dust than it should, so a call to the company saw someone fly out and spend the day fixing the problem, well they hoped it would. Mary had been doing very well with her broken arm, but she was not feeling very well so to allay any worries for continuing the trip, a day was spent at outpatients. An Xray showed that her arm was healing nicely, but it meant another wait for results as we headed further west. Brian was also waiting for a new fuse for the fridge, so they caught up with us not long after. Scones and strudel for morning tea, and a late lunch at Gosse Bluff. The country was looking better after early rain. Fuelled at Papunyah where the natives (and the police) weren't happy, an eye opener for everyone! We were happy to be leaving town. More and more flowers to be seen including Sturt's desert pea as we crossed the border, and some of the country had been burnt out earlier in the year. Bob was having more problems with his van, the auto lighting on the gas fridge wasn't working (fixed). There were areas of snowflake amongst the spinifex, the odd camel or 3, and Well 33 on the Canning has been pine-poled in and date palms planted! The grader was working west of Kunawarriti and the road thereafter was in great condition. Lots of flowers, including the white dragon tree and brilliant tinsel bush. Warming up as we waited, (and waited) to fuel up at Punmu (not unusual), and found the toilet door had fallen off in our van (fixed). Dust problem seemed to have been fixed in Bill's van as well, but Bob was not well with a persistent chesty cough. Headed into Carrawine gorge for two nights with our fingers crossed that there weren't many campers in, and we had the whole end to ourselves. Several other vehicles arrived soon after. Cooked date and pumpkin scones for afternoon tea, and Tony and Bill V tried fishing (the water wasn't very deep, just right for swimming. Tony caught three catfish, but Bill didn't get a look-in until he changed his hook setup. It was tea time and getting dark, so he left his baited line in the water and waited for the bell to ring. Problem was the fish was stronger than the stake, and the fish, line and rod had disappeared out into the river.

A few people went searching but the evening was getting dark and it was hard to see much at all. Bill persisted and headed downstream thinking it would float away with the current, but the fish had other ideas and headed upstream. As he headed back to camp he felt the rod in front of him and pulled the lot in, rod, hook and fish! Cold and wet, Bill had his revenge when it was cooked for dinner. Temperatures increasing, it was on to Marble Bar, the country much greener after last year's fires. There was plenty of water, pelicans, ducks and cormorants in Chinaman's pool (very empty last year) then out to the jasper bar, flying fox and the old mine, and dinner at the Ironclad Hotel. While we did a run to Coppin's Gap, Doolena gorge and along the old railway line, Pam took Bob to the towns' medical clinic. Later in the day we had a phone call to say they were both on their way to Port Hedland with the Flying Doctor. After a lovely day it was back to camp in time for Tony to take Bob's car and caravan to South Hedland so they didn't have to find their way back to Marble Bar. Kerry followed him in our vehicle. ½ hour out of town they had a call to say all was well and both were out of hospital and waiting for them to arrive.



Bob and Pam stayed the night (meeting us the following day in Newman) while Tony and Kerry arrived back in Marble Bar around 8.30pm. South through Nullagine to Newman. There were lots of purple and royal mullas along the road and heaps of traffic as we passed Gina's Roy Hill mine. The fine powder was like driving through a thick dust storm. Bob and Pam (both on antibiotics) met us in camp, some went out for dinner while others utilized the camp barbeque. I cooked all day for our Trans Ball, Tony had his wheels balanced, washing was done, groceries and fuel bought. We departed town after the mine tour and morning-tea, and onto a huge claypan on Three Rivers to camp. It was a lovely night for a ball, and Brian, who said "he had never won a thing in his life" was Queen of the Desert 2013. The road to Mt Augustus had been graded and was in excellent condition, but it is a notorious stretch for doing tyres. There was one area of emubush in full flower (brilliant colours) but generally flowers were scarce. Lots of other campers in, and the powered section was quite crowded, but we had lots of room out on the dirt with the fireplace. Out for sunset viewing to find a tyre deflating, put a plug or three into it the following morning. The day was spent exploring the area, Bob and Mary were feeling much better, and the day was spent

exploring the area. Sunday was Father's Day, stopped at the old Cobra homestead where Parks has been doing a lot of restorative work, then around to the Kennedy Ranges. There were more wildflowers, and camp was in an area of copious flowers. Gascoyne Junction has a big new service station and caravan park to replace the one washed away two years ago but it wasn't open. Several of the dunes were covered in pink parakeelya, but the land became drier the further west we went, eventually having no flowers at all. Set up camp at Hamelin station then went down to Hamelin pool for a walk. We left at 7.30am on our day to Steep Point, Kerry went with Bill and Ruth for the day. A drive along the headland went to the blowholes that were working very well due to a big swell and onshore breeze and we saw four whales. A day or two earlier a couple had nearly been washed off the top of the cliffs by huge waves, this day it was more sedate. Took photos at the point, then went back past the camp area full of fishermen there for a competition. Had a good run back to camp for party night around the fire bin, before a light shower of rain sent everyone to bed.

*The trip over we headed north to Carnarvon to vote in the elections. Back to the Kennedy ranges to explore the west and east sides, Lake Ballard to take some star photos, Niagara Dam (raining) Leonora (washing) camp on the Great Central road (wildflowers and a howling north westerly), Yulara, Oodnadatta track, Farina, Quorn, Port Germaine (crabbing) Winkie (visit Bob and Pam - different ones) Mildura (visit family) and back home. 847,390 tyre kilometres travelled on tours in 2012-13 (all vehicles & caravans, not including getting to the starting point and home again for everyone – us: add another 54,400ks) four? punctures/stone fractures.*

We had a great year meeting lots of new people and seeing lots of country in a different condition, but we also said goodbye to several good friends. If you have a health problem, don't brush it aside, see someone about it, we want to see you for many years yet. We hope you have a healthy, safe 2014, and look forward to seeing you all again.

*Brenda & Tony*