

## PERTH, DARWIN, ALICE SPRINGS, ADELAIDE, SYDNEY – April to June 2006

Day 1 – Sunday 30 April: Flew Auckland to Perth on Saturday 29 and settled into the Bel Eyre Motel at 8pm. Sunday was pickup day with KEA motorhome rentals at Freemantle.



We returned to the Bel Eyre to pack our suitcase items into the van, taking the cases around to KEA to have them send through to Sydney for us to collect at the end of our trip.

Following a large shop at Supa Value grocers we headed into the city and lunched at Meyer's Department store where the stained glass windows in the restaurant -----



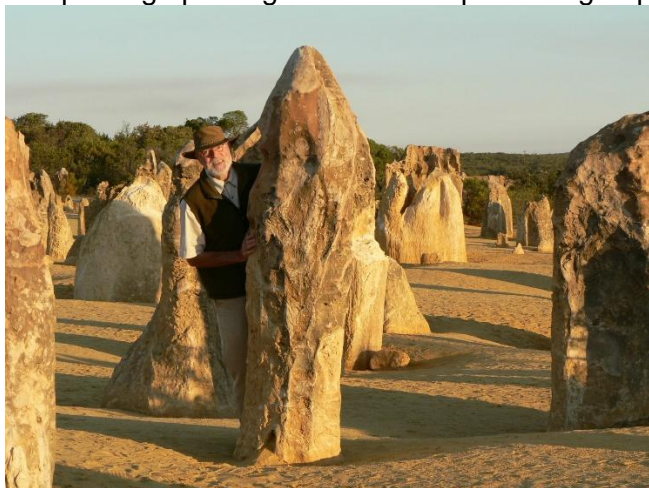
-----provided a great introduction to Australian flora and fauna. It was then off to the Perth International Big 4 Tourist Park where we received a 10% discount as a result of our NZMCA membership in NZ. The fountain at a roundabout outside the Park is a superb sculpture of the gumnuts from the Western Australian red flowering gum tree.

Day 2 – Monday 1 May: We headed north on Highways 1 and 95 through the Swan Valley wineries area continuing north toward Geraldton to turn west before Badginjarra to reach Cervantes Visitor Centre where we collected information on the Pinnacles Desert in Nambung National Park.

It was then south on the coast road 16km to the Pinnacles entrance arriving 5pm just before the sunset at 5:40pm.



After parking up alongside the main pinnacle group we had just over half-an-hour to -----



----- explore before the -----



----- sun went down. Then it was off to the Pinnacles Caravan Park for a restful night.

Day 3 – Tuesday 2 May: Away early for a walk along the Cervantes -----



----- jetty then through a white sand foreshore track -----



----- lined with saltbush plants and groundcover of coastal succulents. Continuing north we dropped in to Lake Thetis east of Cervantes to view loads of lake-edge stromatolites. In the above view Lexie is coping with the very windy conditions.



Stromatolites, are a 2 to 3 billion year old microscopic bacterial life form thought to be responsible for producing the atmospheric oxygen levels we now rely on.

**LAKE THETIS  
STROMATOLITES**

LAKE THETIS IS ONE OF THE FEW SITES IN THE WORLD WHERE LIVING STROMATOLITES ARE FOUND. OCCURRING AS DOMES OF LIMESTONE AROUND THE EDGE OF THE LAKE, STROMATOLITES ARE FORMED BY THE ACTIVITY OF MICROBIAL COMMUNITIES TRAPPING AND BINDING SEDIMENT AND PRECIPITATING CALCIUM CARBONATE FROM THE WATER. THE DOMINANT MICROBES ARE PHOTOSYNTHETIC BACTERIA CALLED CYANOBACTERIA (FORMERLY KNOWN AS "BLUE-GREEN ALGAE").

STROMATOLITES ARE VERY SLOW GROWING, AND THOSE AT LAKE THETIS ARE MORE THAN 1,200 YEARS OLD. FOSSIL STROMATOLITES SIMILAR TO THESE THAT HAVE BEEN FOUND IN 3,500 MILLION YEAR OLD ROCKS IN THE PILBARA REPRESENT THE EARLIEST EVIDENCE OF LIFE ON EARTH.

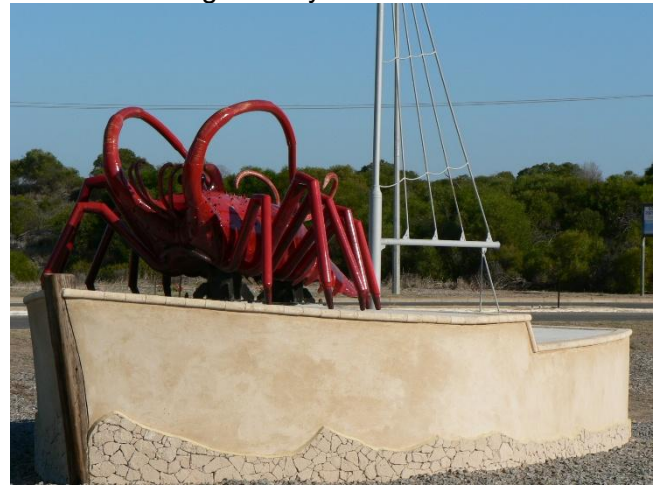
**PROTECT OUR ANCIENT HERITAGE.....**

THE STROMATOLITES ECOSYSTEM IS A VERY FRAGILE ONE. PLEASE HELP TO PROTECT THE STROMATOLITES BY NOT WALKING ON THEM, NOR REMOVING PIECES OF THEM, NOR CONTAMINATING THE LAKE WATER.



They grow into various shapes and sizes.

Further north at Port Denison and Dongara we were in lobster fishing country -----



----- with this sculpture in a roadside playground.

Further on up coast these -----

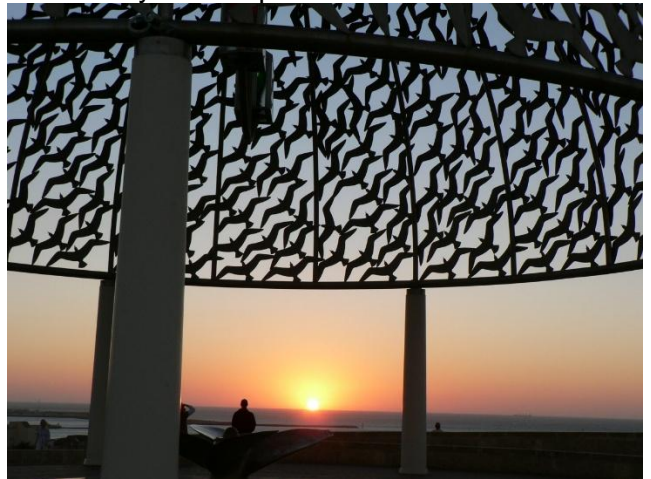


----- roadside rusty iron sculptures were intriguing, but we found that they were -----



----- a representation of the famous Leaning Tree of Greenough bent over to rest on the ground by the strong southerly winds.

We arrived at Geraldton as the sun was setting and immediately drove up to the Scotts Hill -----



----- National Memorial to the HMAS Sydney, recognising the ship's tragic loss at sea west of Geraldton in November 1941 with the deaths of 645 sailors. The canopy of silver gulls is referred to as "the dome of souls".

Day 4 – Wednesday 3 May: We spent the night at the Greenough Tourist Park -----



----- and headed out early morning for a daylight visit to the memorial with its statue of a woman looking out to sea for signs of shipwrecked sailors.

From the hill we looked down on St Xavier Cathedral which seemed worth a visit, -----



----- and indeed it was, both outside and inside. It was constructed between 1914 and 1938 following the design of Father John Hawes, a Catholic architect priest.

We spent much of the rest of the day at the Geraldton Museum -----



----- where alongside the modern building there was the recovered propeller from the Norwegian 5000 ton freighter "Stanford" wrecked on the African reef 20km south of Geraldton on June 24 1936.

At the Museum's Shipwrecks Gallery we learned of the mutiny by a section of the crew following the Batavia sinking. The Batavia was a Dutch East India Company vessel which was wrecked on the Houtman Abrolhos Islands off the coast from Geraldton in June 1629. Only 300 of the passengers and crew of 341 survived and made it to shore. The Captain took a lifeboat and sailed for Batavia (modern day Jakarta) for help, but on his return some 3 months later in command of the rescue ship Sardam he found that a mutinous group had massacred some 110 men, women and children. A trial was held on the islands with the massacre leaders executed prior the rescue ship taking 122 original members of the voyage back to Batavia. Sections of the wreck of the Batavia were recovered in the early 1970s and are now held at the Shipwreck Galleries in the Western Australian Museum in Fremantle.

Heading north late afternoon from Geraldton we passed moored -----



----- lobster boats near Gregory, then on into the coastal lagoon sunset before reaching Kalbarri for a night at the Murchison Top Tourist Caravan Park

Day 5 – Thursday 4 May: We headed out 13km south from Kalbarri along the cliff-top drive to -----



-----Castle Cove overlook and -----



----- the Natural bridge.

Along the walkways we saw ----



----- a Kestrel as well as a group of Welcome Swallows on the cliff-top fence rail.

We also took a cliff-top track -----



----- down to the beach -----



----- with more bird-life on the way.

We were now in -----



----- Banksia country as we headed north to -----



----- Hawks Head Lookout and -----



----- it's white barked gum trees (eucalyptus wandoo) endemic to this area.

Then it was on to Denham in the Francois Peron National Park located on a peninsula some 400km north of Geraldton for the night. Peron was a French explorer and naturalist who visited and documented Australian natural history in the early 1800s.

Day 6 – Friday 5 May: It was a brilliant sunny day as we left camp -----



----- and headed 100km south to the main Northwest Coastal Highway at Hamlin Pool to turn north to Carnarvon.

On the way we stopped off at Shell Beach where a predator fence and cattle stop crosses the narrow neck gateway to the Peron National Park between the Freycinet Harbour to the west and the

Lharidon Bight to the east. The fence is aimed at preventing goats reaching the park across the narrow neck – some 32,000 goats had been killed during the control measures to date.

Shell Beach at the sheltered edges of the Bight has water twice as salty as normal seawater, -----



----- resulting in tiny Cardiid cockle shells accumulating on the beach over -----



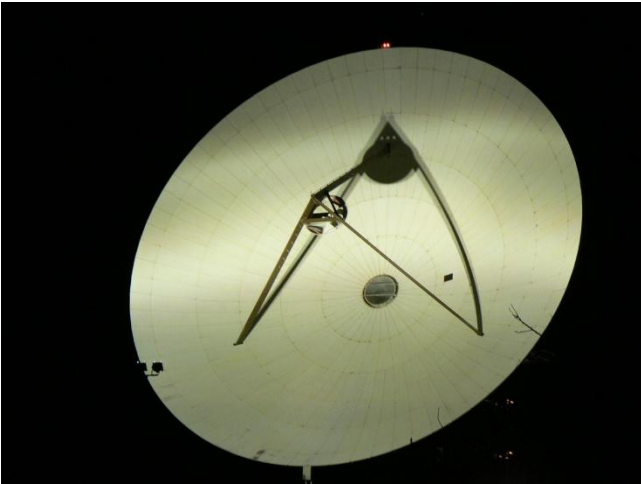
----- some 6000 years to cement together and form a soft limestone called coquina. The shell deposit extends over some 110km of coastline at around 8 to 9 metres depth and can be cut into blocks for use in construction.

On the way out to the main road north there were roadside goats feeding in the scrub. We detoured to the Hamlin Pool Stromatolites boardwalk -----



----- where we got a close-up view of these “living rocks” of many differing shapes to those we saw at Lake Thetis on Day 3.

By the time we travelled north 200km from Hamlin Pool to Carnarvon it was dark, -----



----- so our first view of the Carnarvon OTC satellite dish was via floodlights.

After checking in at the Top Tourist Wintersun camp we took the owner's recommendation re the top-notch pizza parlour in town, and feasted on a meal of Aussie bacon-and-egg pizza and salad.

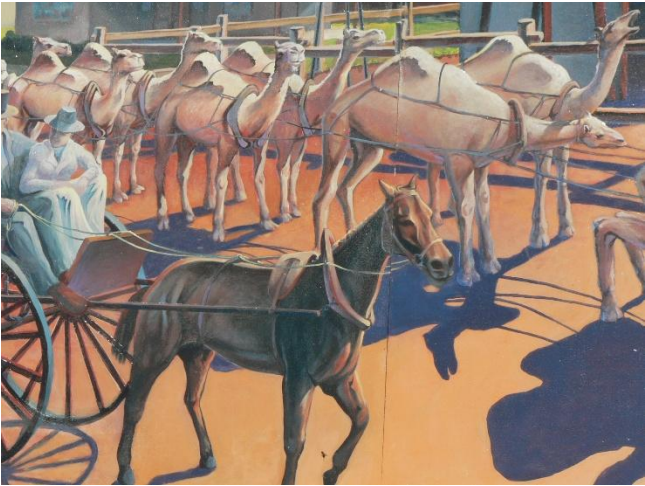
Day 7 – Saturday 6 May: After breakfast we took a walk from -----



----- Whitford Island tramline Station out to the board walk to the 1 Mile Jetty wharf. We later saw the rail cart unit -----



----- heading out to the wharf from the historic precinct where -----



----- there were excellent murals of the early ship loading activity.

Leaving town around midday and driving past banana plantations to head north we stopped to view the OTC (Overseas Telecommunications Commission) satellite dish. The first dish (12.8 metres wide) was commissioned in October 1966 as an Australian Earth Station to assist the US NASA as a tracking station for the Apollo moon landing program.



The larger second disc (29.8 metres wide) was commissioned late 1969 ready for the 1970s moon landings.

We reached the Minilya Roadhouse 130km north of Carnarvon around 1.30pm and lunched in the shade of a tree before heading on a further 240km to -----



----- Nanutarra Roadhouse, passing roadside ant hills on the way and crossing the -----



-----Ashburton River just before Nanutarra.



The countryside was surprisingly green following the recent April cyclone rains with the long flat road passing by rounded hills and through an area of large boulders.

From Nanutarra we turned off onto Highway 136 to head for Tom Price mining town and the Karijini National Park, reaching House Creek -----



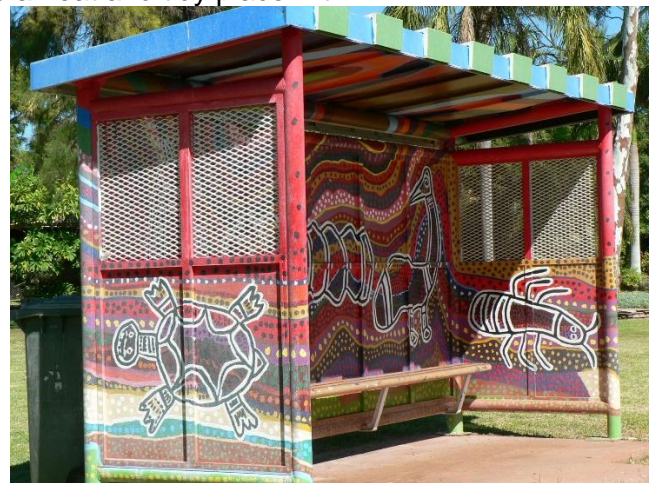
----- for our overnight stop as the setting sun enhanced the landscape colours.

Day 8 – Sunday 7 May: Leaving House Creek 7.15am we turned off Highway 136 to head to Paraburdoo, a major iron ore mining town where we took a break at the local park -----



----- where several cockatoo were screeching and squawking while swinging on the ropes of the ANZAC Memorial flag poles.

Further on at Tom Price we found the township to be a neat and tidy place with -----



---- a well landscaped park and a nearby bus shelter providing a good example of Aboriginal art.

At the entrance to Tom Price township -----



----- there was this Terex diesel electric haul truck, one of the fleet of 17 "Jolly Green Giants" used at the Tom Price mine 1976 to 1987 to carry 154 tonne (170 ton) loads of iron ore from mine to rail loading area. This was the first haul truck with a diesel electric power unit used in the mining industry. Cost new in 1975 was \$675,000 (or \$5.5 million today).

So it was off to the Karijini National Park 80km east of Tom Price where the rusted steel Visitor Centre building -----



----- is in the shape of an iguana lizard. We were able to view the indoor sculpture of the lizard -----



----- and compare with the smaller ring-tailed bicycle dragon lizard we saw on the walking trail

Around the outside of the Visitor Centre -----



----- rusty steel silhouette sculptures reflected the role the local people played in the pastoral economy.

We drove to the nearby Fortescue Falls with its steep access track-----



----- where several visitors were cooling off in the pool below the falls.

The Gorge Rim trail from the falls led to the 3-Ways lookout -----



----- and its views into the deep forested gorge.

We then headed past the Circular Pool -----

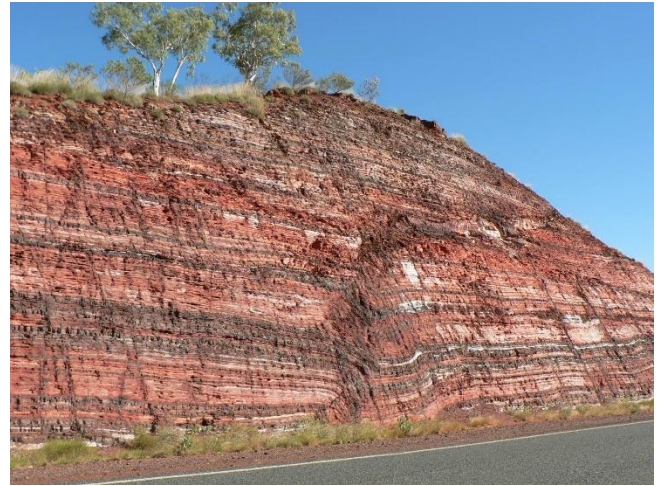


----- and back to Fortescue camping area for the night, being impressed by the variety -----



----- of flowering plants on the trail-sides.

Day 9 – Monday 8 May: We headed out early to Highway 95 north past the Munjina Gorge lookout down to -----



---- the new section of road and cuttings with multi-coloured rock layers.

Lush flowering plants lined the roadside with -----



----- the red and black Sturt's Desert Pea becoming our favourite.

Reaching Highway 1 junction we travelled north-east to South Headland -----



----- and the salt works (with iron ore train passing by) -----



----- and a view of the extensive salt pan areas on the way into Port Headland town with its historically themed artworks.



The iron ore ship loading facility at Port Headland was huge, with red dust from loading activities coating buildings along the waterfront/

Day 10 – Tuesday 9 May: We visited the port area -----

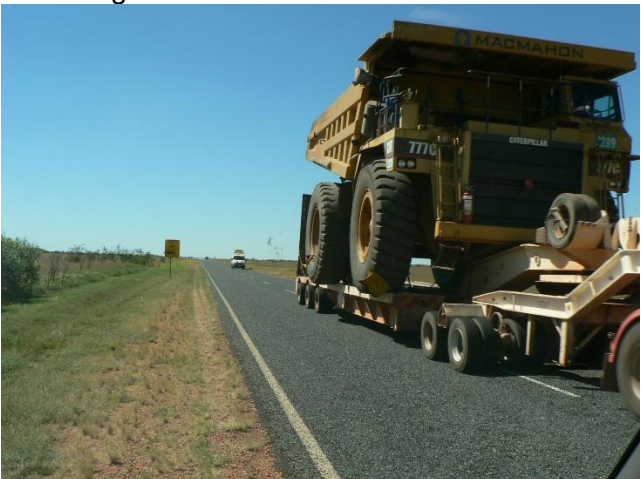


----- where the ore ships were truly enormous. Port Headland is the world's largest bulk export port by tonnage at 500 million tonnes annually.



The ore trains coming into town were also enormous bringing iron ore in from as far south as the Paraburdoo mine we passed on Sunday.

Continuing north east on the road to Broome there were several -----



----- "wide load" vehicles carrying mining equipment such as this haul truck, and several areas with ant hills right at the road edge. We overnighted in the Stanley 24hour rest area at 80 Mile Beach for the night.

Day 11 – Wednesday 10 May: A long day on the road again to turnoff at Roebuck Junction and head west to Broome, the historical pearl fishing capital of Australia. Booked in to the Cable Bay Caravan Park where the beach became alive with people as sunset approached.

There were offshore pearl luggers -----



----- on a sunset cruise and -----



----- camel caravans, one of the iconic tourist experiences associated with Broome.

Day 12 – Thursday 11 May: Out to the KEA depot for the morning to get a repair job done on the van's bumper and talked to two ladies in the office. One had been in Broome 30 years, arriving when the population was 300 (it is now 17,000). The other lady came 5 years ago (population then 7,000) and said 400,000 visitors came through the airport last year.

Broome's pearl diving history is on display everywhere throughout town from the jewellery shops, -----



----- to the Chinese Market, -----



----- the street side diving sculptures, and the Japanese cemetery with its 707 graves reflecting the danger that pearl diving posed in the late 1800s early 1900s.

Today modern boats serve the cultivated pearl industry -----



----- with the historic pearling jetty displaying the old Sam Male lugger and a chest of large pearl oyster shells.

In the afternoon we drove out to Gantheaume Point -----

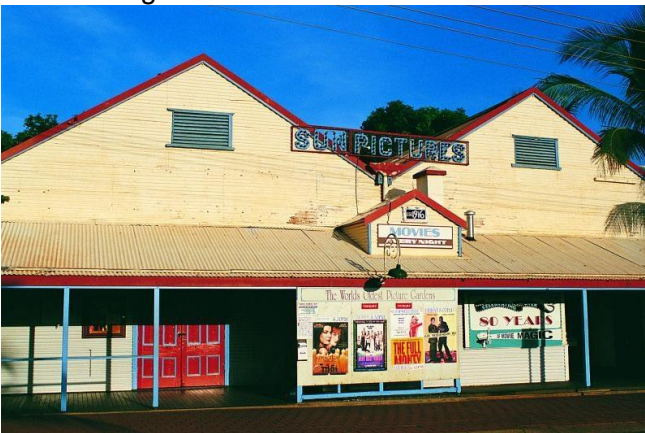


----- with its lighthouse high above the rocky foreshore -----



-----and representations of 130 million year old dinosaur footprints. The original prints can only be seen off-shore at very low tide.

That evening we went to the Sun Pictures outdoor movie theatre -----



----- (internet photo above) with its deckchair seating and -----



----- saw the movie "8 Below" about eight husky dogs in Antarctica that were recovered after getting left behind in a storm.

Day 13 – Friday 12 May: After taking a trip out to Willie Creek Pearl Farm we called in at -----



----- the local crocodile park, but after viewing the dusty and cobwebby visitor shop decided to take a photo of their stuffed croc through the fence, rather the tour the park.

Back on the road east heading for Derby there was lots of heavy transport rigs -----



----- including these two carrying large haul trucks. Eventually the two transports stopped roadside to let us pass along with the queue of traffic that had built up behind.

Day 14 – Saturday 13 May: Derby was an overnight side trip for us off the main Highway 1 east. The town is a loading area for zinc and lead concentrates -----



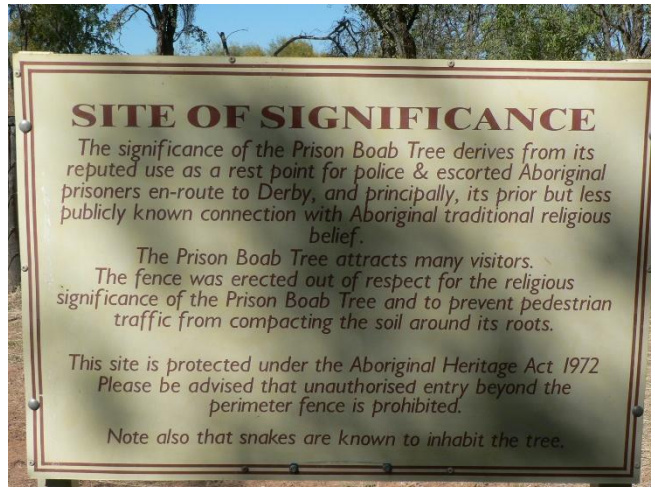
----- which are loaded by conveyor onto an 80m long 4,500 tonne capacity barge which is towed by tug 20 nautical miles out to an anchored ore carrying ship in the King Sound.

The area around Derby is boab tree country -----



----- with the road east lined with these trees. Their size is can be huge (compare my height alongside the tree above right).

The 1,500 year old "Prison Tree" outside of town illustrates -----



----- the potential for such a tree, when hollow, to house a person. However, its use as a prison is largely viewed as a myth, with its real significance associated with aboriginal religious ceremonies.

Along the highway from the Prison Tree was "The Long Trough" -----



----- at Myalls Bore where up to 1000 cattle at a time could drink. Ground water from 332m depth was supplied to the 120m long trough by windmill powered pump (viewed away in the distance in the trough photo).

On the way to Fitzroy Crossing for an overnight stop, approaching the Erskine Ranges -----



----- we saw all around us huge smoke plumes from annual burn-off of the rangelands.

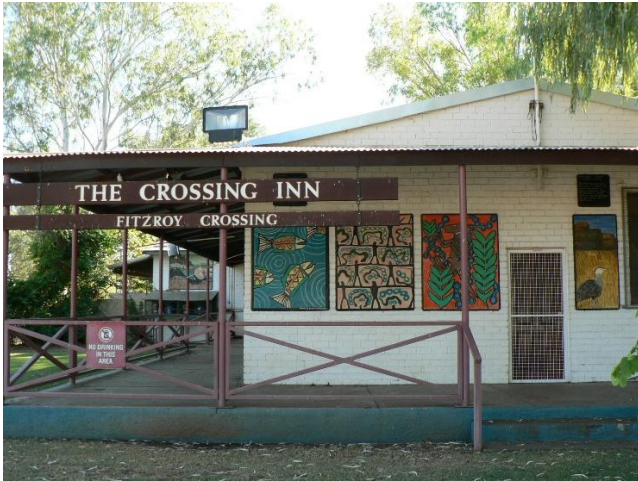


An abundance of wildflowers lined the road as we chased -----



----- the rising moon into Fitzroy Crossing.

Day 15 – Sunday 14 May: The original Crossing Inn on this site was established in 1897.



In 2000 the Inn sponsored local youth to paint the walls of the hotel with mural art works.

What we found interesting re the permissions for outdoor consumption of alcohol was that -----



----- the verandah around the hotel was out of bounds, but the nearby Billabong Park gave specific permission for drinking (with Lexie holding a beer can from the discards around the park).

The Fitzroy River floods regularly during the wet season with two historically large events recorded -----



----- by a couple of signs at the old Post Office (now a backpackers hostel).

On the way to the Geikie Gorge National Park 17km up river we looked in on -----

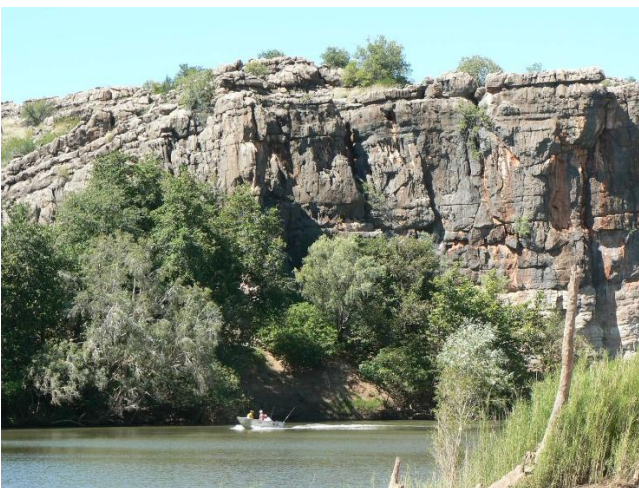


----- the river crossing via concrete causeway at Kurnangki.

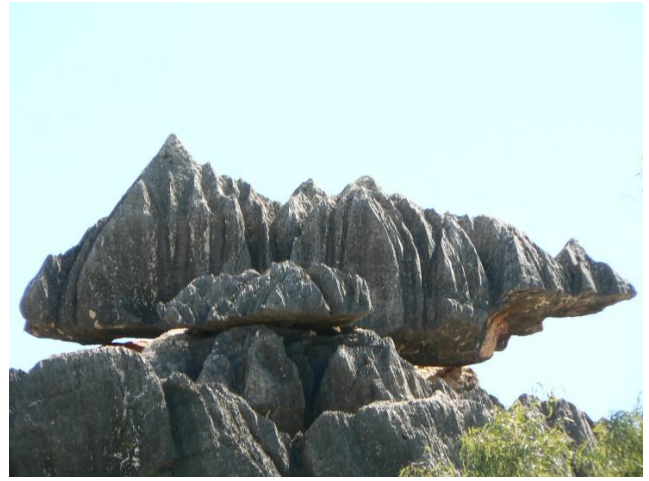
At Geikie Gorge we walked the wide expanse of gravel and sand bed river flats -----



----- where at the water's edge away in the distance we eventually reached the channel, with the general wet season level etched into the rock bank.



Limestone rock formations on both sides of the river were -----



---- quite unusual

Back to Fitzroy Crossing to join the main highway east we set off for Halls Creek -----



---- passing roadside fires and stopping briefly at the turnoff to Wolfe Creek. The crater at Wolfe Creek was used for several location shots for the 2005 Australian horror movie “Wolf Creek”. We could not take the road the 130km distance to the crater as our hire motorhome could only be driven on sealed roads (although travel on short dirt roads was permitted to access scenic or cultural attractions). When we checked in to the caravan park at 5pm the office lady said she was going to watch the movie on video that night – she said it was a pity the main location shots were not filmed here at Halls Creek instead of Hawker in the South Australian outback.

Day 16 – Monday 15 May: The Russian Jack statue outside the Shire office in town honours all pioneers of the Kimberley Region by commemorating the extraordinary mate-ship between two of the 1885 goldmining fraternity when Ivan Fredericks (Russian Jack) ----



----- carried a sick mate 30km in a bush-made wheel barrow to seek medical help in Halls Creek. The second Jack statue in Halls Creek commemorates the legacy of Jack Jugarie, a Jaru Elder and skilled Police Tracker. In 1997 at the age of 70 he walked 350km cross country from Halls Creek to Wyndham using his tracking skills to navigate by the stars and find food and water on the way.

Leaving Halls Creek and passing the -----



----- rather unusual water tower, we headed north 370km toward Kununurra, with one river crossing on the way. Prior to Kununurra we made a side visit to Wyndham where 5 rivers converge on the Cambridge Gulf.

Wyndham Port originally provided access to the Kimberly area and the 1860s gold mining activities around Halls Creek. The port subsequently served the export meat works up until 1985 as cattle ranching grew.



The larger than life Warriu Dreamtime Statues at Wyndham 3 Mile depict early aboriginal life while -----

-----the Mt Bastion Five Rivers Viewpoint -----



----- provided wide views beyond the port area.

Leaving Wyndham -----



----- we passed a baobab lined avenue, and 30km out we visited The Grotto, where some 140 steps down into the bottom of the gorge there was a 90m deep pool. Needless to say we remained at the top.

We reached the Kununurra Top Tourist Park at dusk, and after a really hot day on the road were happy to pay an extra fee for power to run the air conditioning in the van.

Day 17 – Tuesday 16 May: We took a morning walk of 4.5km at the Mirima (Hidden Valley) National Park -----



----- exploring tall grasses and towering sandstone cliffs -----



----- through to the Mini-Bungles where -----



----- we were able to climb to the viewpoint looking over and into these layered domes.

From Hidden Valley we headed into the Ord Valley plantations area down Ivanhoe Road and -----



----- the BaraBara cafe (now the Ivanhoe Café) to relax in the shade over an early lunch of eggplant and zucchini focaccia plus mango-banana smoothies. This was the first time we experienced the use of an electronic handheld buzzer to call us when our food was ready.

After lunch we travelled down Ivanhoe Road to the Ivanhoe Crossing across the Ord River, passing Irrigation channels -----



----- supplying water to mango orchards and sugarcane fields

Ivanhoe Crossing is a causeway on the old Darwin to Wyndham Road. However the high river level following recent rains -----



----- had closed the crossing. The photo on the right (from the internet) shows a 4WD negotiating the concrete floodway during a regular river level well below the 350mm depth marks on the bollards.

The crossing is a great barramundi fishing location -----

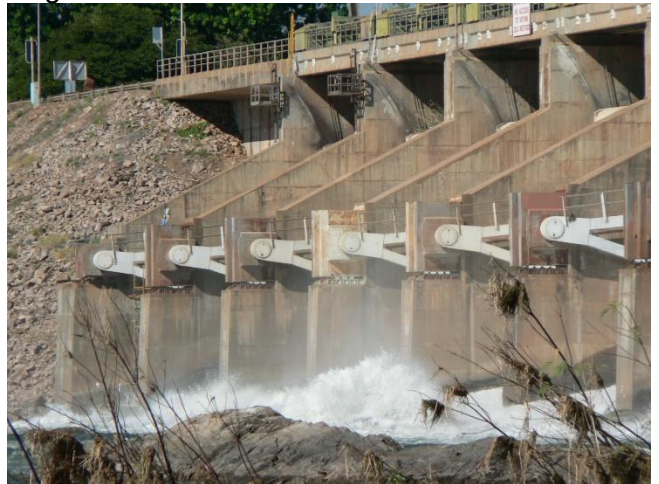
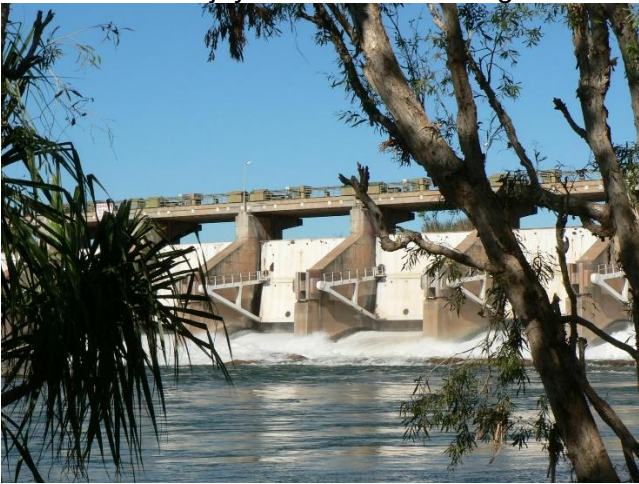


----- with two fishermen trying their luck, no doubt being quite aware of the warning notice not to fish from the causeway.

From Ivanhoe Road we visited the Hoochery -----



----- where we enjoyed a modest "tasting" before heading out of town to -----

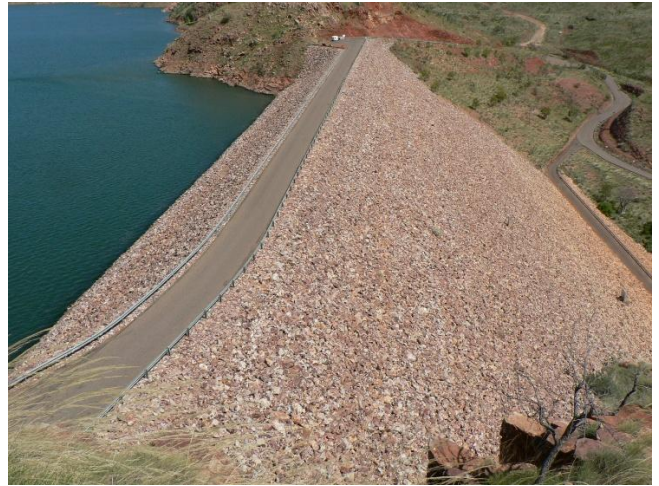


----- the Diversion Dam that feeds the valley's irrigation channels.



Our final stop for the day was the Kelly's Road lookout, a popular place to view the sunset.

Day 18 – Wednesday 17 May: Headed east on Highway 1 to the Lake Argyle turnoff south to cross -----



----- the Lake Argyle Spillway Bridge then reaching the Lake Argyle Resort from where we visited the dam lookout.

Below us was the cruise boat jetty and after lunch we -----



----- joined 20 others at 2.45pm for the Lake Argyle Cruise's 3 hour sunset cruise.

Cruise company owner Greg gave us an excellent commentary on the trip, explaining that the original dam which created the irrigation lake in 1971 was raised 6 metres in 1996 to provide for a power generation station. The lake is now the second largest man-made reservoir in Australia containing 21 times the volume of Sydney Harbour. Currently the lake was 2 metres above normal level



So we took off at speed to head across to the eastern shore to hunt for local wildlife.

First it was a group of -----



----- rock wallabies followed by a freshwater crocodile -----



----- distinguished by its long narrow jaw, then a group of catfish looking for a feed from the boat.

We moored up lakeside as the sun began to set -----



----- for a swim (for those who dared) -----



----- and to socialise over wine and nibbles before heading back to base.

Day 19 – Thursday 18 May: From Lake Argyle Inn -----



----- we headed up to the nearby lookout for a last look at the lake and dam before heading out to the main northern highway towards Katherine.

It was not long before we crossed the border into the Northern Territory passing through a Quarantine Stop for traffic heading into Western Australia.



The first fire prevention sign we came across was a warning one related to protecting local wildlife.



Highway 1 was now called the Victoria Highway and at the turnoff to Halls Creek there was this warning sign re fuel availability.



Once again we were greeted by loads of roadside flowers as we journeyed to -----



----- pass through Victoria River and on to Katherine where at the Knotts Crossing Resort we had site No. 341 with an on-suite washroom and toilet.

Day 20 – Friday 19 May: The on-suite gave us the opportunity to do a full clothes wash and air the van bedding with great drying in the wind. After lunch we took the -----



----- low-level bridge over the Katherine River -----



---- out to Springvale Homestead where the tourist sign withstood the force of the recent floodwaters from Cyclone Monica (April) which knocked over other road signs. A tree branch had got caught on the top of the sign when it was submerged by the high water level.



The homestead area is graced by the shade of several Rain Trees, these South American natives being planted in 1879.

On the way back to town we viewed the last steam engine of the 1889 to 1976 narrow gauge North Australia Railway which ran from Darwin south through Katherine 500 km to Birdum. After the bombing of Darwin in February 1942 the residents of the city were evacuated by the train to Birdum.



Nearby at the Visitor Centre we learned of Jabu Peter Sing, a local stockman, whose statue with horse was a 2002 celebration of the role of stockmen in the development of the Northern Territory.

Katies Bistro at the Resort gave us the opportunity to dine out in style, with us sharing entrée of crocodile spring rolls followed by Lexie going for the grilled barramundi and me having buffalo medallions and kangaroo schnitzel. The medallions tasted like cattle stockyards, with the dark meat of the kangaroo like a cross between steak and veal and having a distinct flavour of its own.

Day 21 – Saturday 20 May: Drove some 30 km east out to the Nitmiluk National Park -----

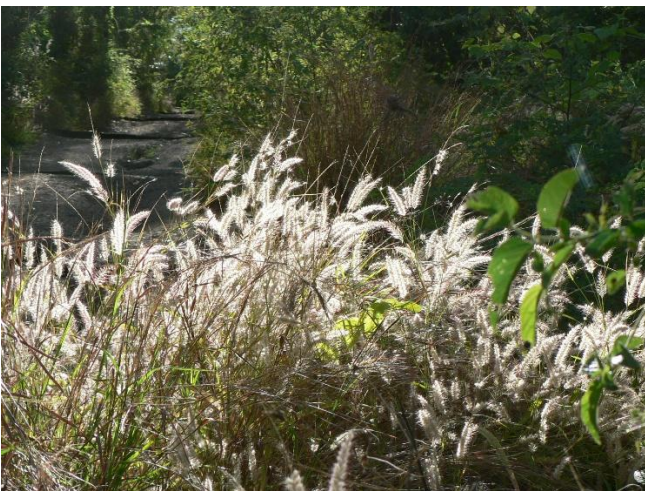


----- which has as its logo a copy of a painting by an aboriginal artist depicting Bolung (the Rainbow Serpent) plus the cicada (called Nitmi from its song "Nit nit nit nit") together with freshwater mussels, fish and rocks. In the Jawoyn language, *Nitmiluk* means "place of the cicada dreaming".

The Park provides cruises through the first three of the 13 gorges upstream of the Visitor Centre as well offering canoe hire and information on the several walking tracks. We discussed walking options with an Aboriginal ranger and decided on the 8.4 km 3½ hr walk via Windolf to Pat's Lookout.



The track had a reasonably good surface with a steady climb to the plateau on the high ridge above the Visitor Centre and carpark.



There were loads of flowering plants -----



----- and many rock formations above us as we walked.



There was a stream crossing of loose stones (with a chain "hand rail") that required some care, but after 2 hours five minutes walking we reached Pat's Lookout where two young ladies were resting ----



---- while enjoying the view of the gorge and watching a cruise boat below. Good views ----



---- down then up the gorge were obtained nearby before we headed back ----



----- through a forested area to take a set of steep steps as a shortcut from the plateau down to the Visitor Centre.



There were photos at the Centre showing flood levels during the April 2006 cyclone event with only the ventilator at the Boat Cruise building sitting on the bank high above the river (photo from August 2024) showing above the water level. However that 2006 level was 1 metre lower than the 1998 flood.

Day 22 – Sunday 21 May: We knew that Foss and Jean Dodds were to be in Katherine this day and during our travels had exchanged emails with them regarding our whereabouts. I left Lexie in the main shopping area carpark and went to the Art Gallery to get internet access and email them “where are you”? Meanwhile Foss had dropped Jean off at an internet café to email us, but he then found Lexie in the carpark, so when I returned they were have a great catch-up chat. Then Jean turned up and we hunted around for a café or restaurant for lunch, eventually finding -----



----- the “Cheeky Croc” at the Best Western hotel. Then we took off north on the road to Darwin to Edith Falls while Jean and Foss headed south.

Further north we called in at the Pine Creek Goldmine where underground mining via deep shafts was replaced in the early 1980s by an open pit operation (rather like Waihi in the Bay of Plenty). The pit operation became uneconomic in the 1990s after extracting 764,000 ounces of gold (\$393 million in 1995 or \$896 million today) and after closing down in 1995 the pit was flooded to a depth of 135 metres.



Looking down a disused vertical shaft access to the underground workings, and then from the mine lookout a view over the pit lake.

At Adelaide River we visited the War Graves Cemetery -----



----- which was a sombre but peaceful place commemorating the -----



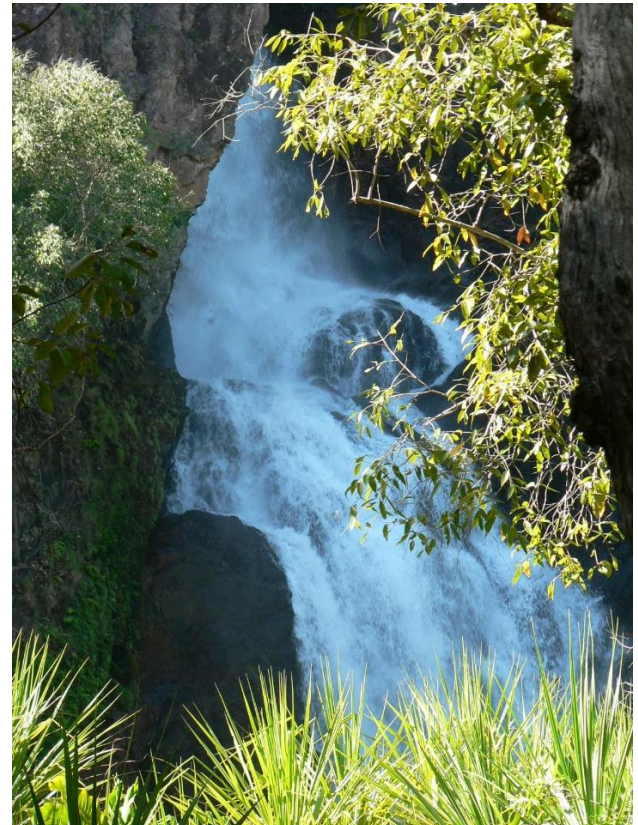
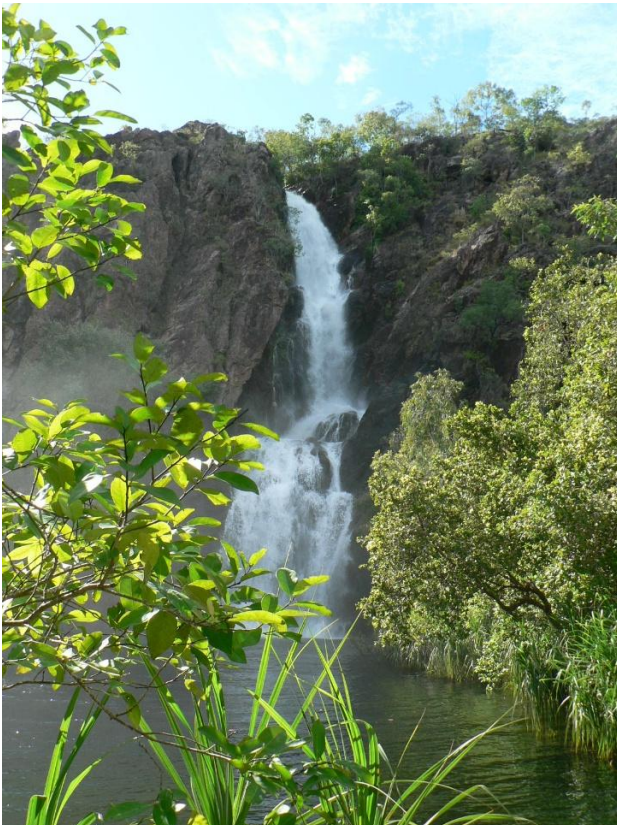
----- Northern Territory servicemen and women who died in this area during the Second World War. It was opened in 1942 following the first of the Japanese air raids on Darwin.

We detoured west 12 km off the Northern Highway to reach the Batchelor Big 4 Holiday Park as the sun set, and were told that the bistro at the nearby hotel/motel offered a \$12 Sunday Roast at its restaurant.



So off we went for our evening meal and shared our table with Clive and Marion from Adelaide. They were on a \$4000 fly/drive holiday package in the Northern Territory. As there is no speed limit on the open road in the Territory Clive said they recently tried out their rental Toyota Corolla at 170kph (!!). [We generally never went faster than 110kph with an occasional run at up to 130kph as diesel consumption increased significantly if you maintained speed at that high level for long.]

Day 23 – Monday 22 May: The side trip through Batchelor was to visit Litchfield National Park and the Wangi Falls.



The Falls were spectacular with a loop track up to the river providing -----



----- a stiff but manageable climb to the walking trail, -----



--- the river, and the lookout over the surrounding countryside.



There were several other waterfalls at Litchfield including the Tomer and the Florence Falls.

At the Buley Rockhole there were -----



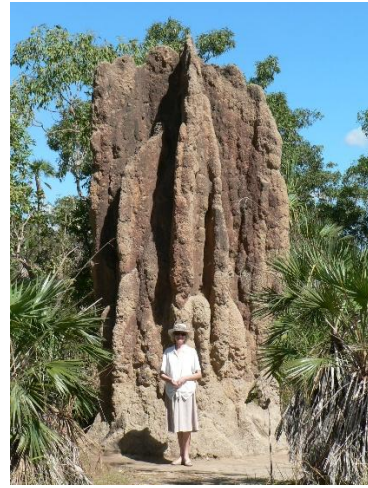
----- several cascades along with a pool busy with swimmers.



However, it was a goanna [monitor lizard] that posed for us before swimming off that we found fascinating.



On the road out we stopped off at the Magnetic Termite mounds. These were aligned thinly north to south so that their flat sides faced eastern morning then western afternoon sun to maintain warmth.



Then nearby there were the Cathedral Termite mounds, some being truly enormous.



Tulip ferns were everywhere, and at different stages of development with the seed pod in a mature plant looking like a pineapple

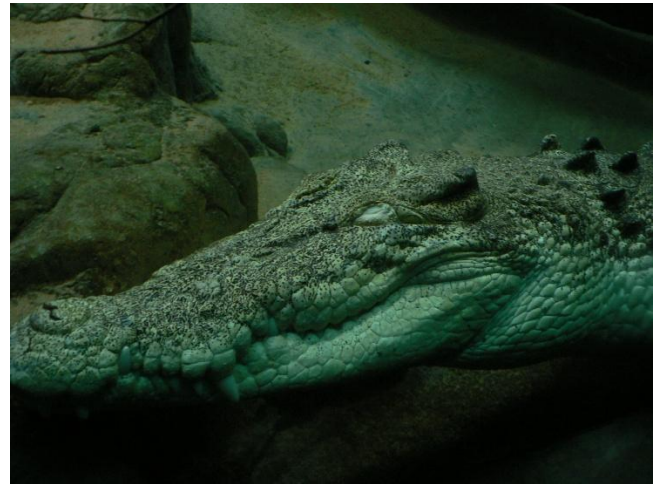
Back out on the main road north we headed to the side road to Berry Springs and -----



----- the Territory Wildlife Park for a late afternoon visit. There was stacks to see, including their lazy freshwater crocodile, -----



----- plus birds including pelicans and this channel-billed cuckoo.



There was also a Nocturnal House which included green spotty frogs and an Aquarium with a dozing saltwater crocodile.

Closing time 5.30pm had us on the road to Darwin where we checked in at dusk at the Lee Point Resort Caravan Park on the far north-east side of the city.

Day 24 – Tuesday 23 May: During the morning shopped and lunched at the Casuarina Mall where there were lots of Aboriginal folk with the ladies wearing neat and brightly coloured dresses. Afternoon we visited the historic 1883 to 1979 Fannie Bay Goal, then the Art Gallery and Museum where we viewed the Christmas Eve 1974 Cyclone Tracy galleries (chilling stuff) before returning to the Mall and the 5.30pm movie screening of the Da Vinci Code.

Day 25 – Wednesday 24 May: Parked in the city near the -----



----- Assembly Building and visited the ruin of the old Town Hall destroyed during the 1974 Christmas Eve Cyclone Tracy which killed 66 people and destroyed 70% of the city buildings.



At the nearby Christchurch Cathedral all that was left after Cyclone Tracy was the stone porch and gateway. The new cathedral was constructed around the historic porch in 1976.

Following the 19 February 1942 Japanese's bombing of Darwin a set of secret tunnels were constructed within the foreshore cliffs to store fuel supplies. However the war ended before they were completed so 2 of the 6 tunnels were eventually used for aviation fuel storage during the 1950s



The tunnels were opened to the public on 19 February 1992 on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing.



The measurements above are in metres with the capacity 3.8575 million litres.

At the Aviation Museum there was a B52 bomber gifted by the USA as Darwin was a strategic base for these aircraft during the 1950s Cold War.



There was also a replica Spitfire (the Grey Nurse) and the wreckage of a crashed Japanese Zero fighter.



The Japanese pilot survived the crash and was imprisoned at Cowra Prison Camp NSW where on 5 August 1944 he was involved in leading the revolt and breakout at the camp when 234 Japanese prisoners and 3 Australian soldiers died.

The Hidden Valley Resort Big 4 Holiday Park was our last night in Darwin.

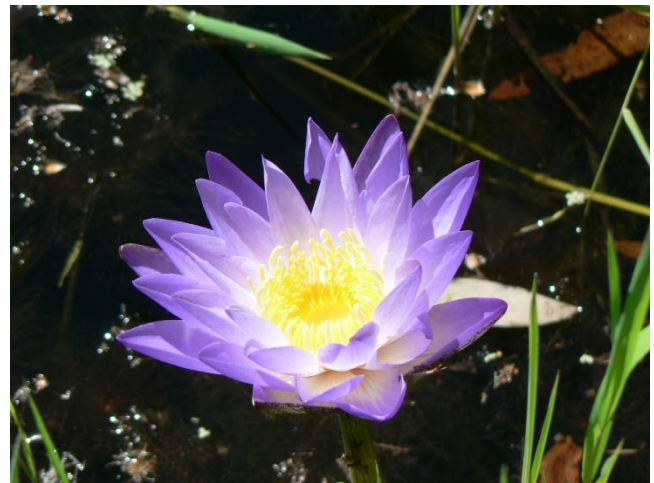
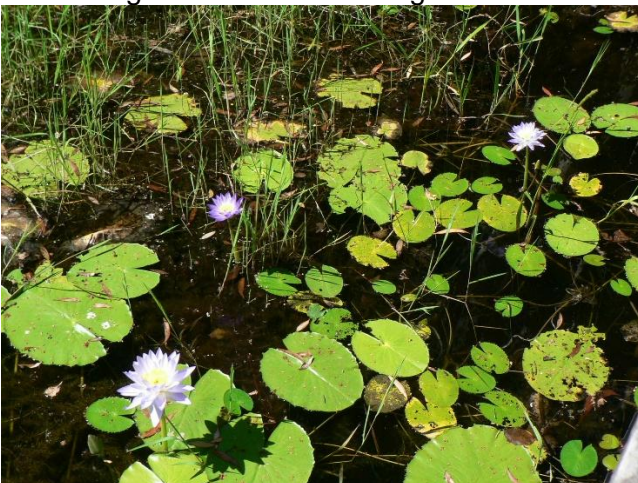
Day 26 – Thursday 25 May: After a shopping stop at Palmerston City south of Darwin centre we headed out on the Arnhem Highway and diverted -----



----- into the Fogg Dam Nature Park via the recently flooded access road. There was loads of birdlife there -----



----- and a great boardwalk through the bush into the wetland -----



----- with its carpet of water lilies.

Back on Arnhem Highway there were roadside feral water buffalo attended by large and small birds -----



----- that feed on the ticks and insects living on the buffalo's hide

At the Window on the Wetlands Visitor Centre got a great view -----



----- from its hilltop location across farming areas and natural wetland areas.

Inside the Centre were excellent displays -----

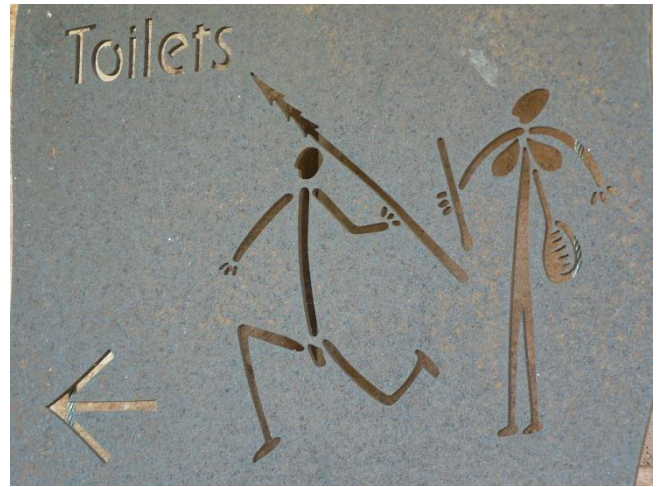


----- of wetland and forest life.





Nearing Kakadu National Park there were roadside fires everywhere, at times restricting vision ahead.



And into Jabiru, the National Park township, we saw hints of the type of Aboriginal Rock Art that attracts thousands of visitors annually.



Locally a huge clean-up was under way dealing with treefall from April's Cyclone Monica. We stayed amongst fallen branches at the Kakadu Lodge Campground with its 200 spacious sites.






## Look Up

**A** boriginal people believe Mimi spirits painted these sorcery figures.

Mimi spirits are so tall and thin they can put paintings in unlikely places. They simply lift the rocks down, paint them, then put them back into place.

Although Mimi spirits are invisible to most people, they taught Aboriginal people to paint many of their traditional designs.






Back in Kakadu we photo'd the Mercure Kakadu Crocodile Hotel, -----



----- with this aerial view from Google Earth, and this view of the eye in the head from the driveway toward reception.

The Bowali Visitor Centre had some very good exhibits including a long neck turtle rock drawing showing the seasons -----



----- along with wildlife including these Kakadu Magpie Geese of which some 3 million -----



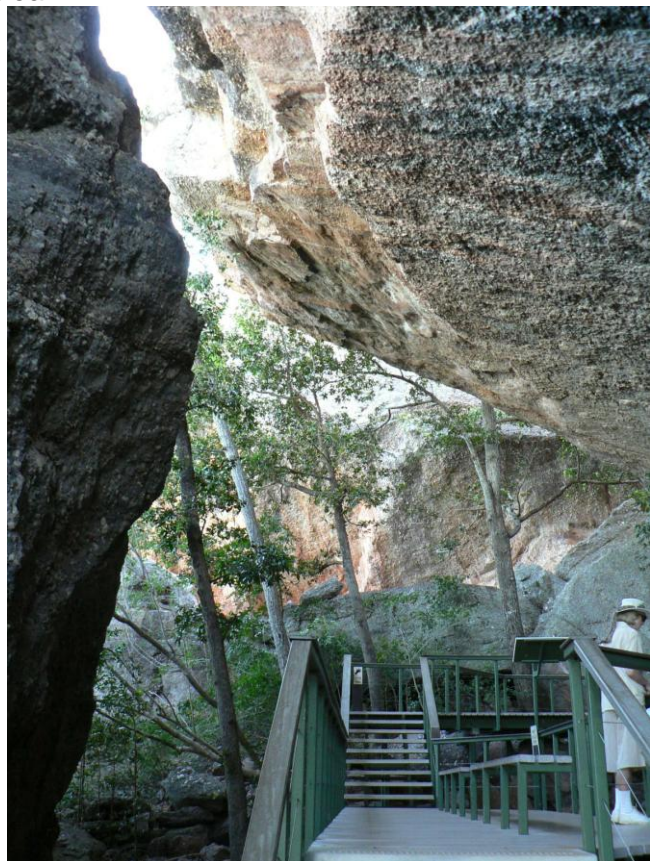
----- occupy the local billabongs at the end of the dry season. There were also displays relating to settler activities.

Leaving Jabiru we headed not far south on the Kakadu Highway (A2) to Nanguluwurr Rock Art sites on Nourlangie Road-----

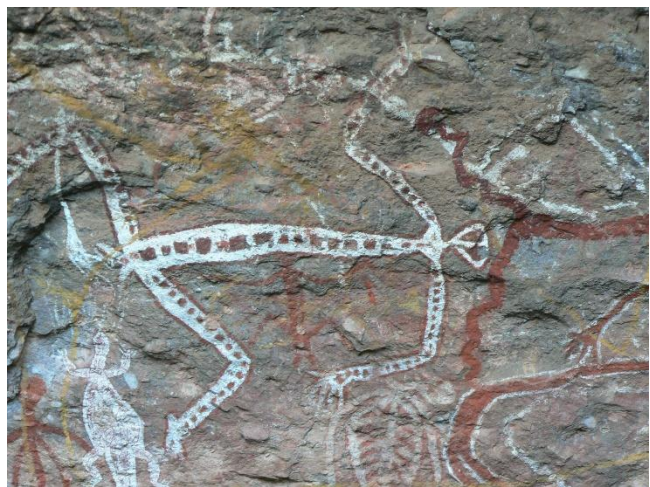


----- viewing massive escarpments on the way in.

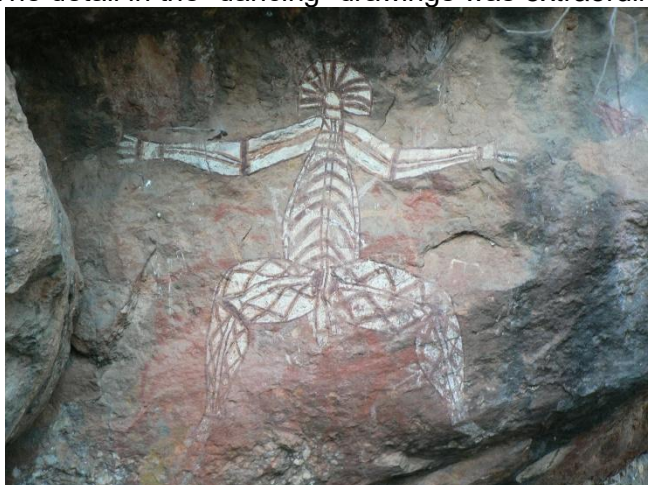
There was a steep climb up to the Rock Art shelter area -----



----- where a huge overhang protected the drawings.

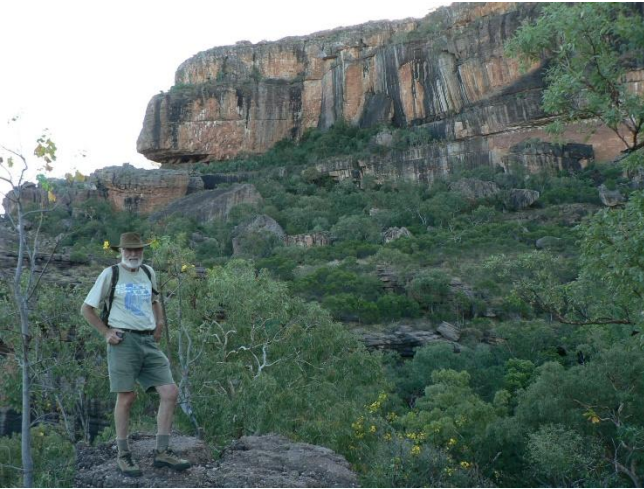


The detail in the "dancing" drawings was extraordinary -----



----- as was that in the drawing of Nabalwinjbulwinj (above) as well as that nearby of a woman.

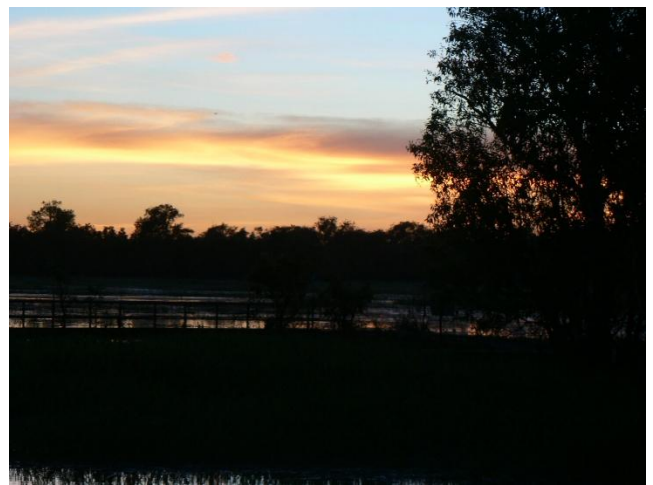
Nabulwinjbulwinj is a dangerous spirit who eats females after striking them with a yam. There were many drawings of spirit ancestors who created the landscapes, wildlife, and the aboriginal people and their way of life.



Each of the landmarks we could see had a legend or story associated with them.

As the afternoon drew to a close we drove further south to Cooina to position ourselves for the sunrise Yellow Water Cruise next day.

Day 28 – Saturday 27 May: After putting up with howling dingoes waking us through the night it was a 5am get up to prepare for the 6.15 pickup bus to the Yellow Water Cruise boat dock.



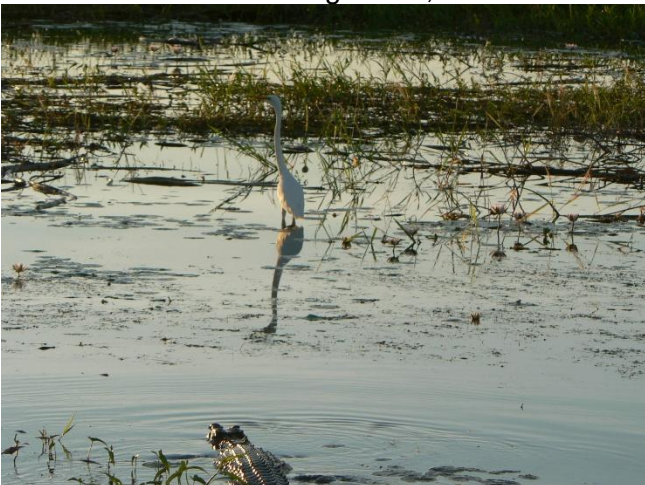
It was still dark when we arrived at Reception to board the bus with the first signs of dawn showing at the dock.



There were two boatloads of us on the cruise, with all eyes peeled as we headed into the still calm water of the Yellow Water Billabong on the lookout for crocodiles.



It did not take long before we sighted several very close-up, and as the sun rose we experienced the extensive birdlife becoming active, -----

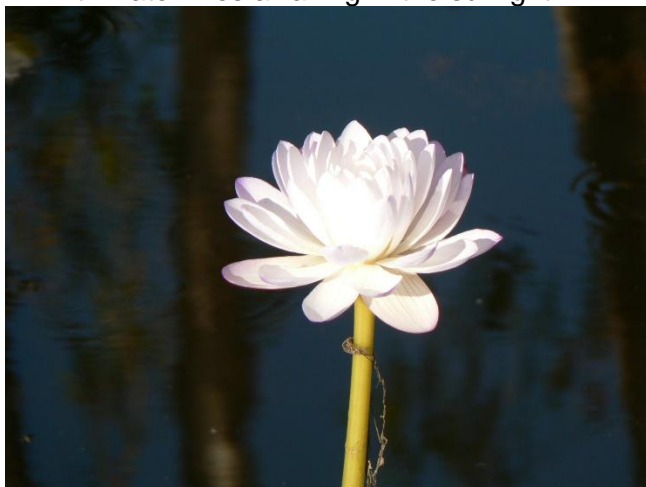


---- with some of them seeming to dare the crocodiles "catch-me-if-you-can".

We headed then closer into the wetlands -----



----- with water lilies awaking in the sunlight -----



----- and opening out as we watched, then the long-toed “Jesus” birds (Comb-crested Jacana) walking on the water and floating vegetation surface while feeding.

We also had close encounters with some of the large variety of birds, -----



----- wading (Egret) -----



----- and perching (White-breasted Woodswallows).



There were also birds nesting (Jabiru), and -----



----- flying (Magpie Goose).



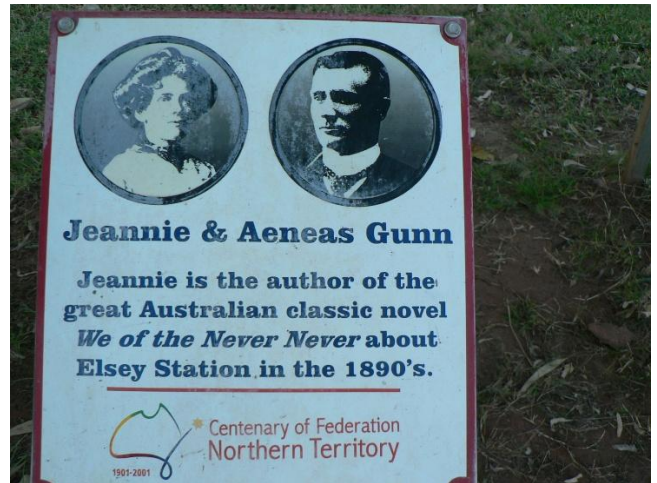
Returning to disembark at the dock we found a couple of lazy crocodiles sunning on the river bank.



After returning to camp and having a late breakfast we had a quick look at the Aboriginal Warradjam Centre before heading out on the road, and found this useful comparison between our traditional 4-seasons and the Aboriginal 6 seasons.



We had a fast drive south-west out to Pine Creek on the Stuart Highway, then south to Katherine where we stocked up on supplies. Heading down Hwy 1, at Mataranka we diverted east to Elsey Station and the Elsey Cemetery National Reserve -----



----- which we reached at dusk to view the memorial to Jeannie Gunn and husband Aeneas.



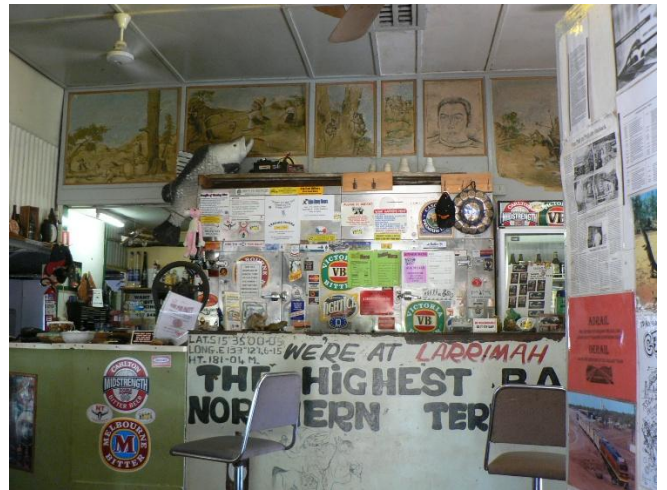
Aeneas arrived in Australia from Scotland and after marrying Jeannie from Melbourne became Manager and part owner of Elsey Station in 1902, but died early of Blackwater Fever (Malarial Dysentery) in 1903. After leaving Elsey for her home town of Melbourne Jeannie wrote two books, "We of the Never Never" (1908) and "Little Black Princess" (1905), this latter book chronicling the childhood life of an aboriginal girl Bett Bett. Jeannie passed away in June 1961, aged 91. Bett Bett (Dolly Bronson) passed away in Darwin in 1998 aged 95.

It was dark when we reached an overnight rest area where we camped with 8 other camper vans.

Day 29 – Sunday 28 May: On-route to Larrimah we side tracked into Gorrie Airfield, one of the many World War II sites which accommodated some 150 military units in the early 1940s.



The Larrimah "Wayside Inn" was a really quirky place, often referred to as the Pink Panther Pub, -----



----- and touting itself as the “Highest Bar in the Northern Territory”.

There were assorted animals out the back, -----



----- including a sparring kangaroo and dog, -----



----- an emu, -----



----- a couple of donkeys, -----



----- and a tame buffalo.

We stopped down the road at -----



-----Fran's Devonshire Tea House at 9am for some sustenance before getting back on the road south.

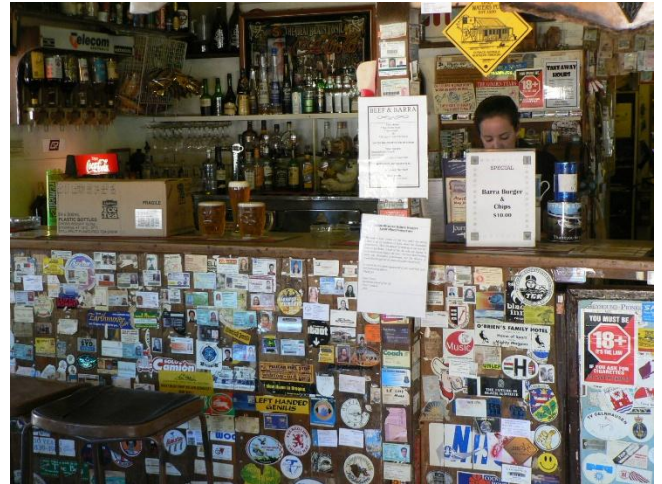


Fran was a gem, winning recognition as a provider of Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. There was a notice on our way out "Don't Forget your BBQ Frozen Buffalo or Camel Sausages".

Continuing South the next stop was Daly Waters where Stuart Highway 1 becomes Stuart Highway A87. The airfield has this large hanger -----



----- at Australia's so-called first International Airport, and the township is home to another quirky pub with -----



----- Australia's most remote traffic light, and offering a \$10 Barra Burger and Chips -----



----- and a Beer Garden festooned with jandals (flip flops) on poles and a huge wall of vehicle number plates. There is also a drinking sign which has two fine print statements, on the left "In America they Have – George Bush, Johnny Cash, Bob Hope & Stevie Wonder" and on the right "In Australia we Have – John Howard, No Cash, No Hope & No Bloody Wonder".

Continuing our big Day on the road (550km) we passed through Newcastle Waters -----



-----with its Drovers Memorial recognizing the role that the township played as a cattle droving destination 1788 to 1988. There was extensive roadside flooding further south with -----

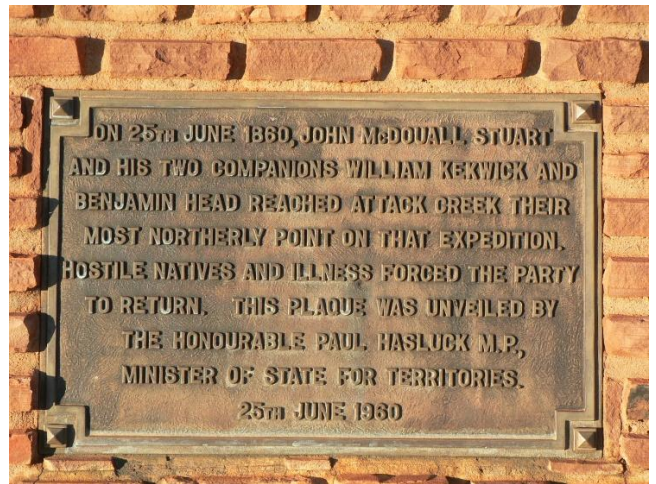


----- birdlife everywhere -----



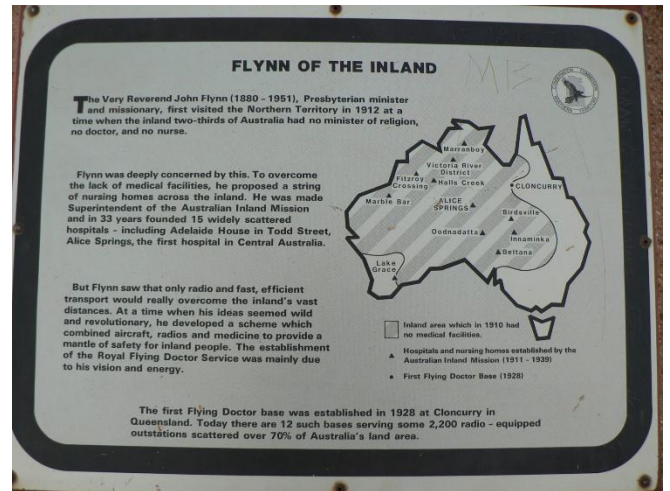
----- and lush flowering vegetation stimulated by the wet season rains.

On through Elliot and Renner Springs then taking a side road to Churchill's Head (the rock with timber beam representing his head with cigar) -----



----- before reaching the Stuart Memorial at Attack Creek where 25<sup>th</sup> June 1860 the John Stuart Expedition turned back in the face of an attack by "hostile natives".

At 3 Ways (where Stuart Highway meets Highway 66 coming in from Mount Isa, Queensland) we stopped off at dusk at the Rev John Flynn Memorial.



Flynn, following a 1912 visit to the Northern Territory and noting the lack of medical facilities in the inland two-thirds of Australia, established the Inland Mission setting up 15 widely scattered hospitals, then the Flying Doctor Service, and eventually the School of the Air serving children on remote cattle stations.

Day 30 – Monday 29 May: After overnight at the Tennant Creek Holiday Park we headed out on the road to Alice Springs with our first stop at the Devils Marbles (Karlukarlu) with their incredible variety of rock formations. There was even a split spherical rock similar to the Split Apple Rock in Towers Bay north of Kaiteriteri, Tasman Bay, NZ.





Devils Marbles split rock

Split Apple Rock, Tasman Bay, NZ.

At Wycliffe Well we called in at the Roadhouse to check out their UFO display.



With local reports of UFO sightings in the 1980s the new owner in 1985 decided to capitalise on these stories and created displays related to its local reputation. However a devastating flood in 2022 ruined the buildings and the Roadhouse no longer operates with the site being abandoned

Travelling on through Barrow Creek and Ti-Tree we reached Aileron village and Roadhouse with -----



----- the 12m tall Anmatjere Man sculpture on the nearby hill. The figure is modelled by sculptor Mark Egan on an important Anmatyerr leader and rainmaker, and is a tribute to Aboriginal heritage and leadership (hilltop view on the right from the internet – my photo of the same view was too dark).

The pub at the Roadhouse contained a collection of several original paintings by Albert Namatjira, -----



----- and in the outdoor yard Mark Egan had provided a sculpture of two “perentire” lizards (goanna) labelled “DESERT MERMAID & Her Lover”. Goanna hold an important place in Aboriginal culture and are known by different names by different tribes.

We then set off on a high-speed (135kph) dash to Alice Springs, but found the Top Tourist Park at town entrance full from a large “Tag Along” group (a luxury service offering personalised and escorted group tours). However there was room for us at the Stuart Caravan Park where we booked in at dark for three nights, navigating our way to Reception through a group of begging Aboriginal folk at the main gate.

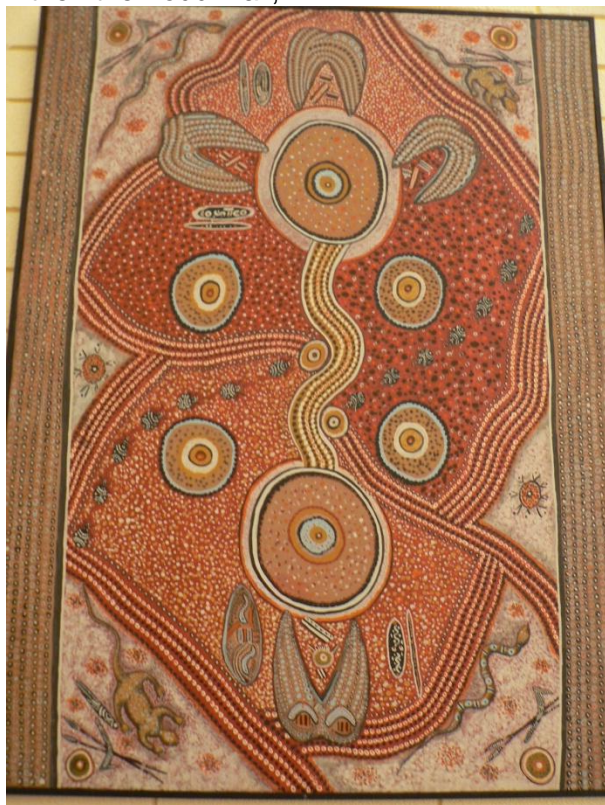
Day 31 – Tuesday 30 May: A day in Alice Springs catching up on housework in the morning.



In the afternoon we visited the Rev John Flynn Memorial Church -----



----- then the Todd Mall, -----



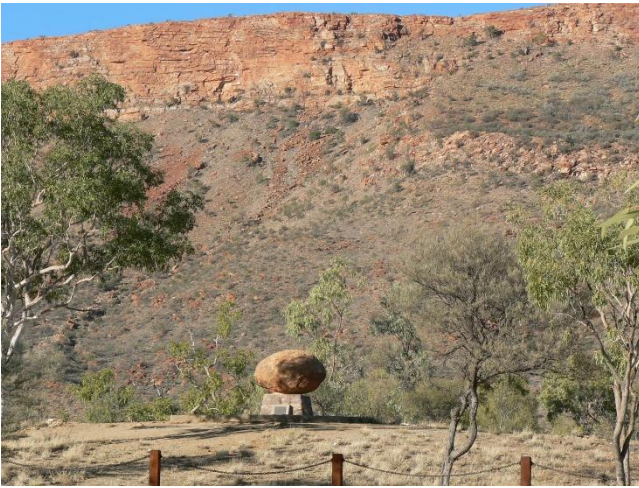
----- and viewed Aboriginal art works in local galleries, -----



----- before taking in the views from Anzac Hill.



Day 32 – Wednesday 30 May: This was a day trip west towards the interior from Alice Springs calling in at -----



-----at the Flynn Monument and grave site outside of town. The original stone boulder grave marker was taken from the Devils Marbles location south of Tennant Creek, and as the Marbles are a highly sacred women's site the use of the stone here became for 20 years a source of controversy between the Warumungu and Kaytej peoples of the Tennant Creek area and the European custodians of the grave site. Eventually the local Arrernte people of Alice Springs offered a replacement stone from a sacred Caterpillar site in recognition that Flynn's life work was for all people of central Australia. (The Caterpillar Dreaming is a creation story of the Arrernte people.)

First stop was Simpsons Gap -----



----- with its ochre walls, -----

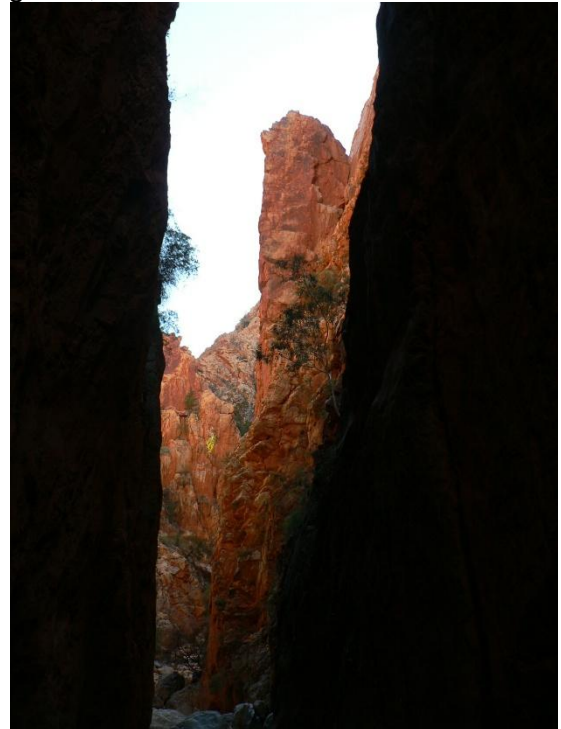


----- sandy beach, and reflecting pool.

There was a longer walk into the Standley Chasm -----



----- with its much rougher walking track lined with ghost gums , -----



----- but a great viewing experience at and beyond the narrow chasm pathway.



Further west the Ellery Creek Big Hole was a surprise with its lush vegetation and tree lined edges.

Next stop west was the Ochre Pits -----



----- with their spectacularly coloured geological layers.

Then it was Ormiston Gorge -----



----- with its cool shady lagoon,-----

----- and rocky trail (which we did not take).

Not far away was the Glen Helen Gorge which contains one of the nine permanent waterholes on the Finke River.



The dark shape on the eastern face of the gorge is the late afternoon shadow from the Four Sisters opposite on the western wall.

Nearby at the Glen Helen Homestead Lodge we visited -----



----- the historic homestead where in the dining room there was this photo of the young Albert Namatjira and his wife Rubina whom he married at age 18. They had five sons and three daughters.

Day 33 – Thursday 1 June: We headed south of Alice Springs through Heavietree Gap on the Stuart Highway to go left on Ross River Road to Emily Gap, Jessie Gap and Corroboree Rock.



Anthwerke (Emily Gap) is a registered sacred site to the Arrernte people, and home to a large rock painting associated with the dreamtime story of three caterpillar beings (Yeperenye, Ntyarike and Utnerrengatye) who formed the gap.



The art work has been preserved in excellent condition.

Atherrke (Jessie Gap) is also associated with the Three Caterpillars storyline and also with the Emu storyline where white sand against the eastern ridge represents the emu fat.



Corroboree Rock is an 800 million year remnant of quartzite ridge, with the valley behind reminding us of Arizona landscapes.

Back towards Alice Springs we called in at Frontier Camel Farm -----



----- but did not take advantage of the camel rides on offer. Rather, I spent time photographing the many crested pigeons that made the farm their home.



So it was farewell to historic Alice Springs as we -----



-----journeyed the long straight highway south into the sunset to camp at Eridunda Roadhouse for the night.

Day 34 – Friday 2 June: After a cool night in Eridunda camping area at the junction of Stuart and Lasseter Highways we took off west on the road to Uluru to the Kings Canyon turnoff at Boxhead Rest Area. After a stop at Kings Creek Station for lunch we headed through to the Kings Canyon Resort at Petermann in the Watarrka National Park and were checked into their camping area by a young Maori from Oamaru who was one of the team at the Resort Reception.

Back down the road to the Kings Canyon access road we kitted up with head net fly protection at the Kings Creek walkway entrance and headed up the canyon.



The trail was paved with large flat boulders ----- with spectacular rock walls -----



----- showing thin sedimentary layers in places --- on the Canyon Rim walkway



----- and a view up to the foot bridge over a chasm



Birdlife (such as this Pied Butcher Bird) occupied trees along the trail with the viewing platform at the end of the walk marking the location of the entrance to a sacred place (behind us) accessed only by fully initiated Luritja men to undertake special ceremonies.



We returned to camp at the resort around 5pm, and took the Sunset Walk -----



----- to a viewing point to watch the sunset glow on Carmichaels Crag at the end of the George Gill Range.



Day 35 – Saturday 3 June: During the morning we took the Resort Ridge walk-----



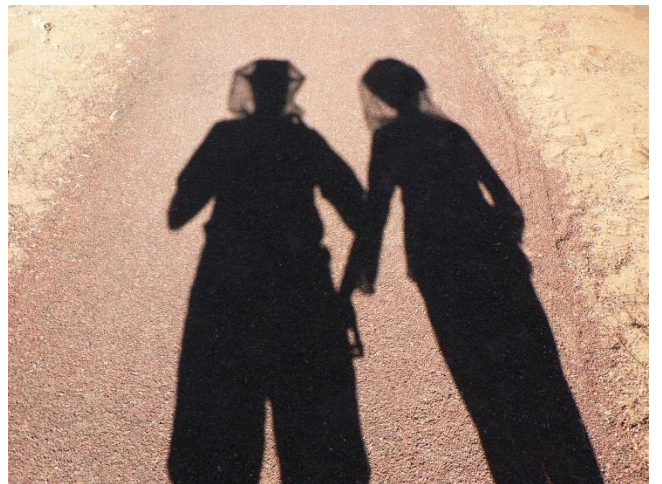
----- with a view of the half-moon beyond the top of the rocks.

Then it was back 20km on the Kings Canyon access road to Kathleen Springs with its -----



-----permanent Serpent Spring waterhole used to supply water troughs at the nearby cattle yards (now disused), with the timber fence preventing cattle reaching the spring. The base of the storage tank filled by a windmill pump (now dismantled) is just over the fence here.

Cattle tended to roam up to 16km to graze on desert grasses during the cool of the night before returning at daytime for water.



We really appreciated head net protection against bush flies this hot day.



Back up the road we drove into the Aboriginal Village of Lilla (with its misspelt road sign) before returning to the Resort for our final night. Lilla is a base for Aboriginal Guided Tours providing cultural background to the Watarrka National Park. The access road in to Lilla is lined by young desert oak (sheoak) trees.

Day 36 – Sunday 4 June: Out to the Lasseter Highway and back to Eralunda junction with the Stuart Highway, we then headed south -----



----- passing through Kulgera Roadhouse and on to the border between South Australia/Northern Territory.

Across the eastern side of the road at the border was -----



----- the last of the mulga tree groves with their bunches of autumn seed pods. From the border through to Coober Pedy it was scrublands and dry grasses.

There are no roadside fences here, so we needed to be on the -----



-----watch for cattle on these long straight stretches (Mt Cavanagh photo from Google Street View), and also kangaroo, but in fact most kangaroo we saw were roadkill carcasses from night-time collisions with vehicles. And now in South Australia we were back within a designated speed limit instead of the no speed limit of the Northern Territory.

This was our longest travel day of the trip (753km from Kings Canyon to Coober Pedy) -----



----- with an excellent road wending its way through flatlands via sweeping curves between straights with the occasional cattle stop marking a boundary fence between adjacent grazing properties.

Day 37 – Monday 5 June: As we had stayed and explored Coober Pedy thoroughly during past trips, we had a short walk around town -----



----- visiting the underground bookshop -----



----- and photo'ing this "Bogger" (an underground front loader from an opal mine).



Then it was onto the road south past the "Welcome" sign greeting north travelling traffic and heading 540km to Port Augusta.



Stopped for a lunch break at Glendambo Roadhouse with its sign “POPULATON – 30 people, 300 horses, 3,000,000 flies”. Then close-up views of Lake Hart on our left before passing through Pimba to cross country views on our right -----



----- of Island Lake.

Traffic was light for the late afternoon run through to Port Augusta, but we had to -----

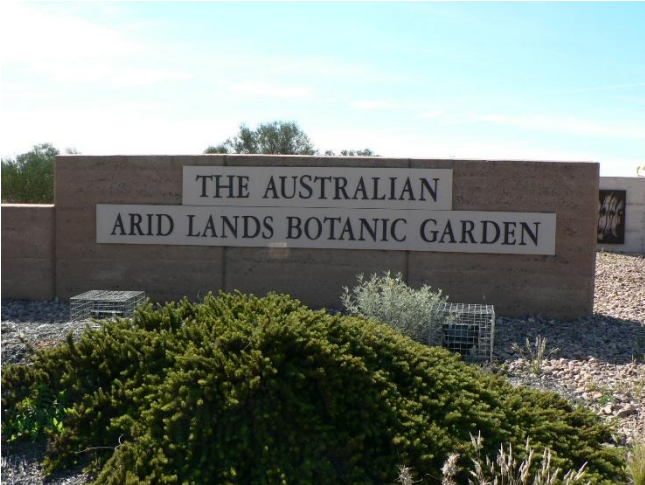


----- pull over to let an oncoming wide load escorted by motorcycle police pass by going north. Then at our final rest stop for the day it was -----



----- a large tanker that travelled by before we headed into town, bypassing the fried chicken takeaway and picking up a whiting fish and chips meal from “Flippin’ Fresh” for our tea at the Big 4 Top Tourist holiday park.

Day 38 – Tuesday 6 June: The main visit today was the Arid Lands Botanical Garden which we explored after driving north from town (past Ian’s Western Hotel and Ian’s Chicken Hut again), spending morning and early afternoon on several walks.



The impressive entrance gates were flanked by panel silhouettes of outback flora and fauna -----



----- such as the Sturt Desert Pea and a Bearded Dragon Lizard.

There was a long access drive from the main road gates into the garden Visitor Centre -----



----- with this "caution" sign warning drivers of local wildlife.

There were birds and plants galore -----



----- with the plants all labelled -----



----- with common and botanical names, -----



----- this one being Eucalyptus Ceratocorys (Horn Capped Mallee).



The most numerous birds were swallows, a couple perched here on a dead tree at the eastern boundary of the garden, beyond which we could see the Western Myall tree on which the silhouette at the main gate is based.

From Port Augusta we travelled east over Horrocks Pass to Wilmington and on to Melrose for an overnight stop.



We drove up and over Horrocks Pass late afternoon to then look back at the sunset behind us as we arrived in Melrose.

Day 39 – Wednesday 7 June: We used the Melrose Historic Walk brochure to explore town -----



----- up past Jacka's old brewery to -----



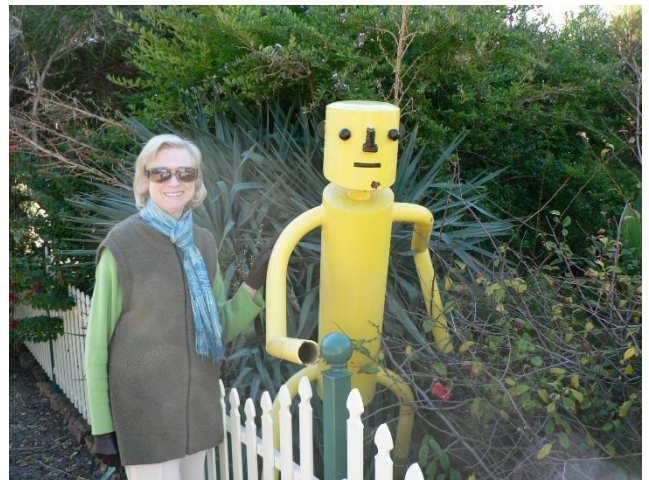
----- the cockatoo tree.



Just along from the brewery there was this huge gum tree in the middle of the street, and on the main street these modern stainless steel art works ----



---- opposite the historic hotel.



There was even art work in several front gardens.

Our destination for the day was Clare some 160km south of Melrose passing ----



----- farming landscapes on the way.

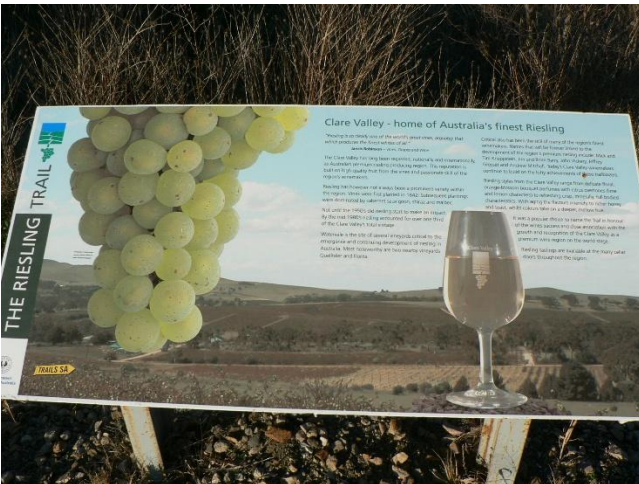


We stopped off at Stone Hut village (photos below from Google Street View) -----



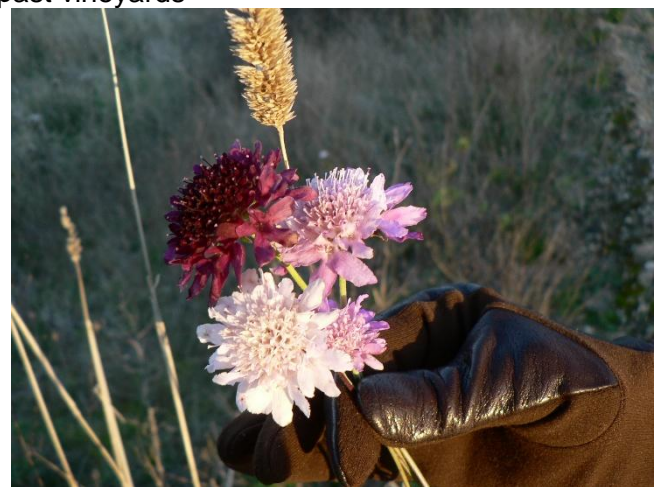
----- where the bakery sold gourmet pies (emu, goat, rabbit, steak and crocodile). Two old guys outside the bakery saw the Queensland number plates on our van and said “So you are from the \$2 a banana state”. We explained we were from NZ but agreed that bananas were very expensive as we had paid \$12.98/kilo recently up country. They said the prices were ridiculous as there were plenty of NSW bananas available. [Note: It was tropical Cyclone Larry that wiped out 90% of Queensland’s banana harvest earlier this year.]

Late afternoon we reached -----



----- the Clare Valley Riesling Trail-----

----- where we visited a section of its walking trail past vineyards -----



----- following the old railway, long since closed. Wild flowers lined the trail in places – a special spot.

Day 40 – Thursday 8 June: After a morning dealing with 63 new emails from home it was time to visit a winery, so lunchtime we left -----



----- the open space of campsite 101 at Christianson Caravan Park and headed along a “wobbly” backcountry road -----



----- to the Skillogalee Winery and Vineyard restaurant for an excellent meal and conversation with other diners.

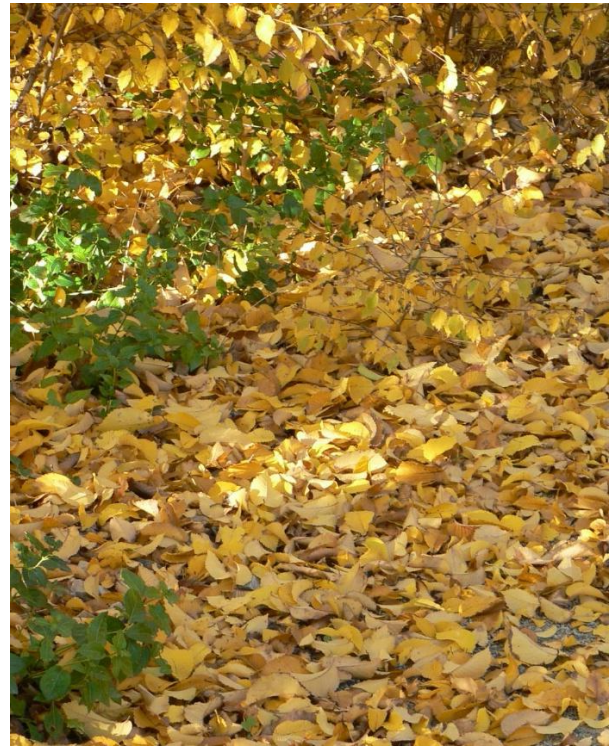
On the way back to town we called in at the Sevenhill winery established 1851 by Jesuits who planted grapes to produce sacramental wine.





While I visited the cellar Lexie re-acquainted herself with Frontenac, the ginger cat Mascot for the winery that we first met in 2000.

For our final afternoon experience at Clare we went back to the walkway on the old railway to enjoy the autumn colours.



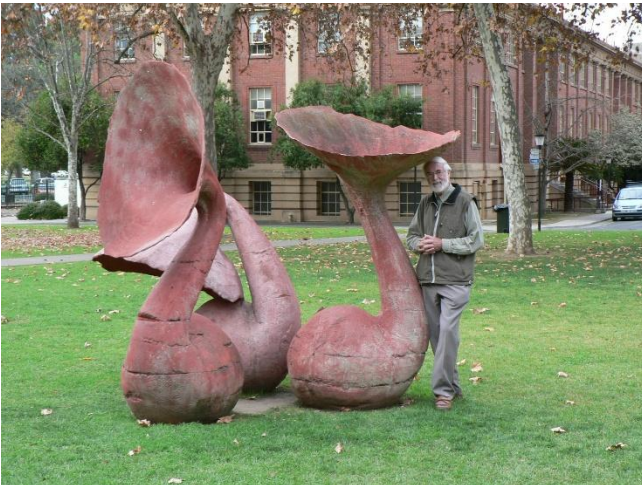
Day 41 – Friday 9 June: Today was our drive through to Adelaide for Queens Birthday weekend (Australia’s holiday is the second week in June.). We checked in at the Adelaide Caravan Park before 12 noon to site 30 (having used that site in October last year) then went straight into the city where we spent the rest of the day. I downloaded work files at an internet café while Lexie explored Meyers, then David Jones. Returned to camp 5.40pm.

Day 42 – Saturday 10 June: Worked in the van during the morning, then to Westfield Marion for lunch and a movie, “Separate Lies” with Tom Wilkinson and Emily Watson. Evening meal at Spargos in the Mall. Purchased 3 bananas at a deli for \$7.55 (just over \$2.50 each!!!).

Day 43 – Sunday 11 June: Morning walk along the -----



----- Torrens River Walkway near camp before heading to city to visit the University and Art Gallery.



The city has some spectacular outdoor art works as well as the historic fountain at the entrance to Adelaide Arcade.

Day 44 – Monday 12 June: Drove out to Glenelg and took a one hour walk along the beach fronting -----



----- the Promenade and then out along the Jetty -----



----- before heading back via the beach to the old town hall in Moseley Square. For our last evening in Adelaide we went back the Westfield Marion and dined again at Spargos.

Day 45 – Tuesday 13 June: Today we began our journey east toward Sydney, our final destination. We diverted from the M1 freeway into Hahndorf for lunch -----



----- at the Hanhdorf Inn (Google Street View) where Lexie had a simple chicken pie while I tucked in to a meal of German Vienna and Kransky Wursts with Bavarian Mustard.

Back on the road we crossed the Murray River at Murray Bridge and followed the river south via the A1 down to Tailm Bend where we turned left to head cross country via B55 to Wynarka and then Karoonda for a rest stop. Alongside the railway at Karoonda were -----



----- these massive grain silos, which if you check today via Google Street View have had striking art work added with the trees in front removed and then reproduced in the mural.

Day 46 – Wednesday 14 June: We spent overnight at Loxton Big 4 Riverfront Park and awoke to -----



----- dense fog. This cleared as we reached Kingston-on-Murray where we were in pelican country.

Our next stop was Banrock Station Winery and Wetland where the Pacific Heron (sculpture below) -----



----- is one of the 191 bird species in residence.



We lunched at the hillside restaurant before -----

----- taking off on the Black Swan Walking Trail -----



-----where we were able to look back across the wetlands to the visitor centre and restaurant.



The 1¼ hour walk involved -----



----- both dirt tracks -----



----- and boardwalks -----



----- with several hides to view the extensive birdlife.



Back on Highway A20 we passed through Cobdogla, Barmera to Berri Big 4 Top Tourist Riverside Park overlooking the Murray River.

Day 47 – Thursday 15 June: We checked out the Berri Information Centre before heading east.



It was located in a decidedly strange building, with a great view across the river from its riverside deck.

Then it was a short run to historic Art Deco Renmark Hotel -----



----- and across the road on the riverside moorings the historic paddle steamer "PS Industry".

Launched in 1911 the Industry operated as a river maintenance vessel until it was laid up in the 1960s. Subsequently a restoration group refurbished it and in 1995 it was recommissioned as an historic steam powered passenger vessel, now offering cruises around 20 days/year on specified Sundays.

On the road to Mildura we first travelled through wheat country, then entered the Sunraysia region around Mildura with fields of sultana and raisin grapes.

We arrived at the outskirts of the city and passed under the -----



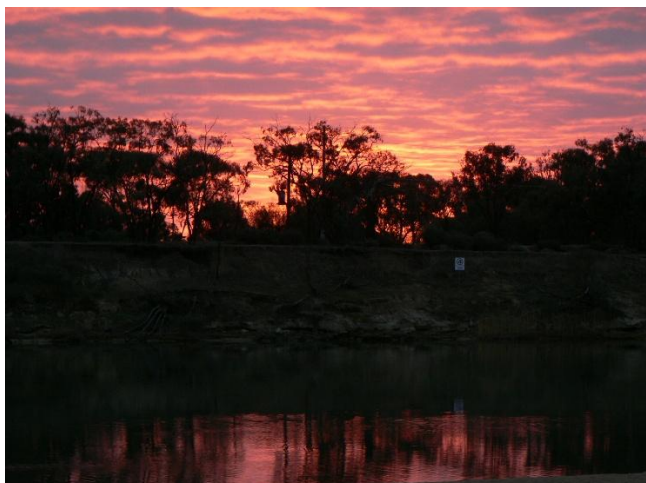
----- large Dunlop archway before proceeding through town to the Kings Billabong Lookout -----



----- and the Bruce Bend Walkways where we saw plenty of birdlife as well as river boats.

Late afternoon after shopping in town we headed for the Apex Park River Beach Holiday Park.

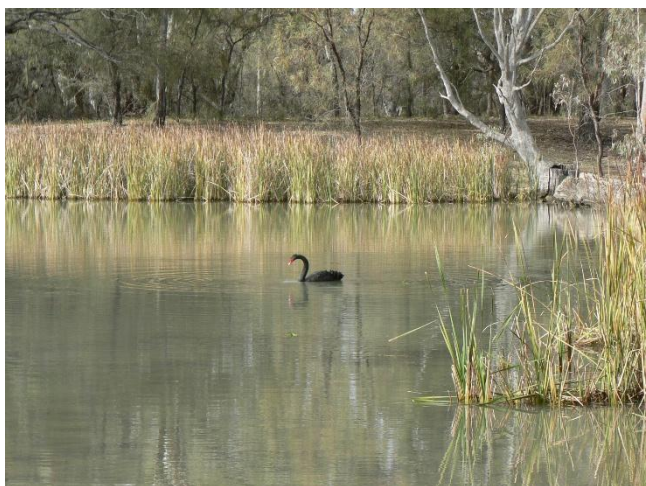
Day 48 – Friday 16 June: Woke to a great sunrise across the river from our campsite.



After breakfast headed into town to get supplies and by noon were back at Kings Billabong to take the dirt road -----



-----into the parking area for the Nature Walk trails.



We could see loads of birds from the trail, but the bird hides provided plenty of wildlife information -----



----- as well as great views across the billabong and wetland areas.

After lunch we called in at the Visitor Centre and watched a video on production of Sunbeam sultanas and raisins ----



---- which are now harvested after drying on the vines.

Our final experience in Mildura was a visit to the Australian Inland Botanic Gardens some 6km north of town -----



----- with its spectacular Rose Garden.

Then it was east to Balranald for the night and the local caravan park on the banks of the Murrumbidgee River.

Day 49 – Saturday 17 June: A long trip today (588km) from Balranald via Hay and Wagawaga to Yass.

Before leaving Balranald we visited River Bend and Memorial Drive, where ----



----- the dirt road wended its way alongside the river through a grove of gum trees.

At Hay we lunched at Sandy Point on the river -----



----- before heading away east for the long drive to Wagawaga then Yass. (Lexie often took camera shots of the sunset behind us during early evening travelling.)

Day 50 – Sunday 18 June: A rest day in camp dealing with housework in the morning and a walk into town in the afternoon.



There were a group of wood ducks (male and female) in the local park as we passed the railway bridge -----



----- and through the highway underpass to the main street which was very quiet, being Sunday afternoon.

Day 51 – Monday 19 June: To Sydney on the Hume Highway (M31). At the entrance to Goulburn stands the Big Merino which -----



----- in our photo does not show the scale well, so I have added a Google Earth Street View. It is indeed impressive at over 15m high. Built in 1985 as a monument to Goulburn and the local district's fine wool industry, it is modelled on "Rambo" a stud ram from the nearby Bullamallita property.

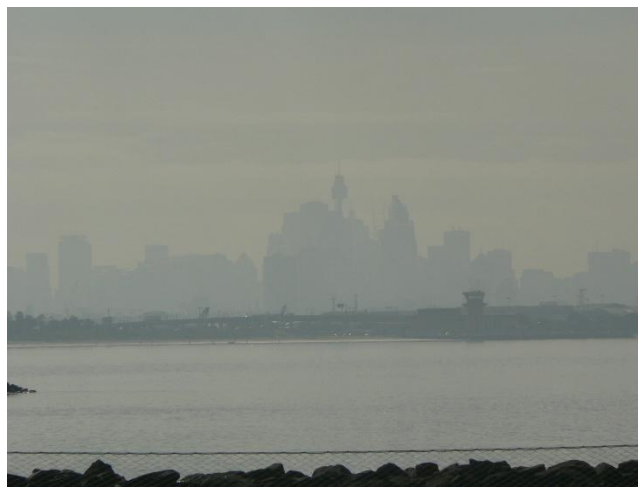
The highway into Sydney eventually became Toll Highway 5, taking us through to Rockdale where we navigated into Ramsgate and the -----



----- Grand Pines Tourist Park for a 5 night stay. (This Park has been replaced by a townhouse development since we were there in 2006).

Day 52 – Tuesday 20 June: In the morning I travelled by bus and train to central Sydney to recce access and location of the Standards Australia office, the venue for a 3-day meeting on development of the joint Australia/New Zealand on-site wastewater standards.

Back in Ramsgate for the afternoon -----



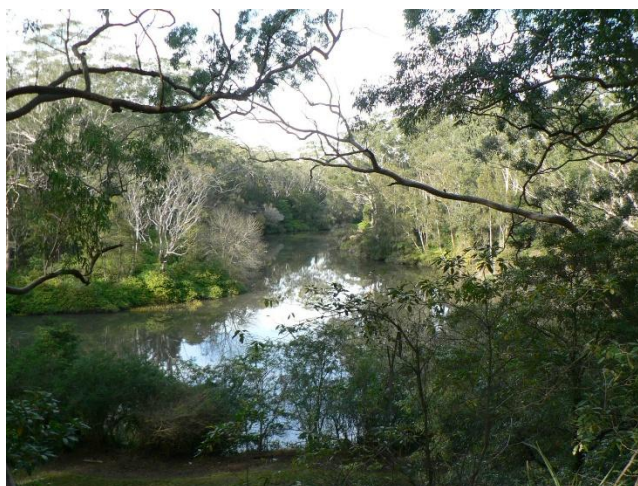
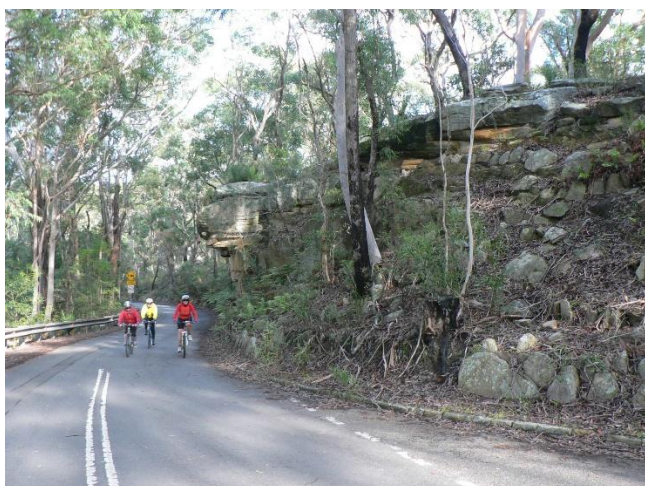
----- we walked the local beach across the road from our camp, and viewed the murky city skyline across Botany Bay.

Days 53, 54, 55 – Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 21 to 23 June: Three days of Standards meetings in central Sydney.

On Thursday evening we drove from Ramsgate to Glebe, a suburb in the near west of the central city and spent a great time with Margaret Cody, Lexie's special friend from their travelling days in the UK and Ireland in 1960.

Day 56 – Saturday 24 June: We left Ramsgate and travelled out to the KEA depot at Milperra to collect our suitcases that had been shipped across country from Fremantle to await our arrival in Sydney. Then it was across Sydney past Homebush and Olympic Park to North Ryde and Lane Cove Holiday Park.

Day 57 – Sunday 25 June: We took a morning walk within the Lane Cove National Park -----



----- down past the cycleway to the riverside, -----



----- and then a walking trail on to Cottonwood Glen.

Leaving Lane Cove we headed north through St Ives to Monavale then down to Warriewood Beach where -----



----- we had a cuppa in the parking area with a cliff top view.



The nearby beach was a haven for surfers.

A short distance south at Narrabeen Lakes was the Sydney Lakeside Big 4 Holiday Park, a huge facility with not many campers in residence.

After an early check-in we drove a short distance to Collaroy Beach -----

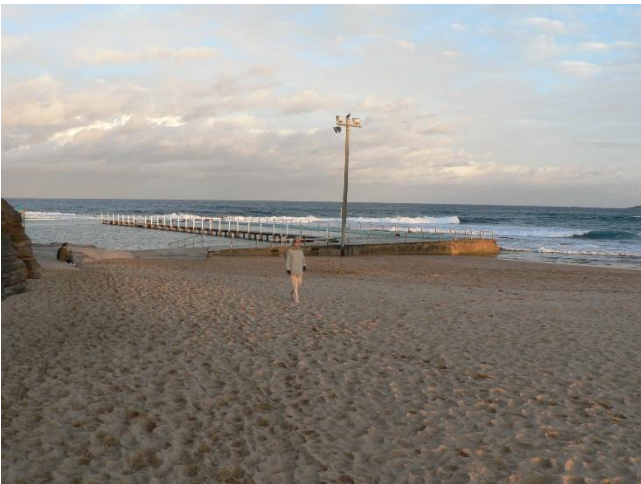


----- and parked up for lunch at the very busy Surf Rock Café on the beach boardwalk -----



----- where we shared a delicious Moroccan Lamb pizza with Rocket Pear Parmesan Salad

Our afternoon beach walk took us to -----



----- the Collaroy Rockpool which provides sheltered saltwater swimming during high tides.

Back to camp after an afternoon exploring Collaroy we -----



----- spotted wildlife in the Narrabeen Lagoon at South Creek before reaching camp and settling in during sunset.

Day 58 – Monday 26 June: Today was packing in the morning followed by an afternoon movie and dinner at the The Sands Bistro.

Day 59 – Tuesday 27 June: Drove through to Manly and after lunch at the Ocean Beach Café headed into Sydney via the Harbour Tunnel toll road and through to the Ibis Hotel near the airport. After unpacking the van into the hotel, I drove out via the M5 tunnel (4km long) to Milperra to hand back our trusty campervan at the KEA. Depot. It was then a taxi back to the Ibis.

Day 60 – Wednesday 28 June: Flew home to Auckland after a cracker time travelling Western Australia and across country to Sydney.