

Around Australia in a 1927 Model T Ford

April 20 – October 9 2008

Celebrating 100 Years of Model T Fords



Gary & Marilyn Amesbury

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The Authors

Gary and Marilyn Amesbury.



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The Model T Ford Centenary Tour of Australia

This is a collection of our memories, Marilyn's diary entries and web site entries from our fantastic adventure tour around Australia in our 1927 Model T Ford between April 20 and October 9, 2008.

I dedicate this book to my wife and lifelong partner Marilyn, who helped plan and save for this adventure, assisted me in the design and construction of the camper then undertook the journey which took her away from our first granddaughter at two months of age. Marilyn was my constant support and organiser and I could not have completed the journey without her.

A huge thank you to my family, my son Jason and his partner Shannon who are the parents of our grandchild Ella, and our daughter Melanie and her husband Mark, for looking after our home and our business while we were away. Your support in this adventure was fantastic and we love you all very much

*Thanks also to some other very special people, **Dick Philips from Medicar Smash Repair** at Revesby for repairing and painting the Model T for me as a sponsor, so many people commented on the fantastic paint job all around the country. Thank you Dick, and your staff at Medicar Smash Repair.*

*A huge thanks also to **Engel Australia** for being my major sponsor, your support was invaluable and your products were irreplaceable and helped to make our journey an enjoyable one. Our 40 year old Engel fridge is still going strong and the 'converter' was very useful running our laptop and charging our mobile phones etc.*

Thank you also to all our friends in and outside the car club for the support and assistance given to us to enable us to undertake this once in a lifetime adventure. We hope you all get the opportunity to see this great country, there is something here for everyone and a whole lot more left over.

We hope you enjoy reading about our travels in our 1927 Model T Camper!

Gary & Marilyn Amesbury

The Model T Ford Centenary Tour of Australia

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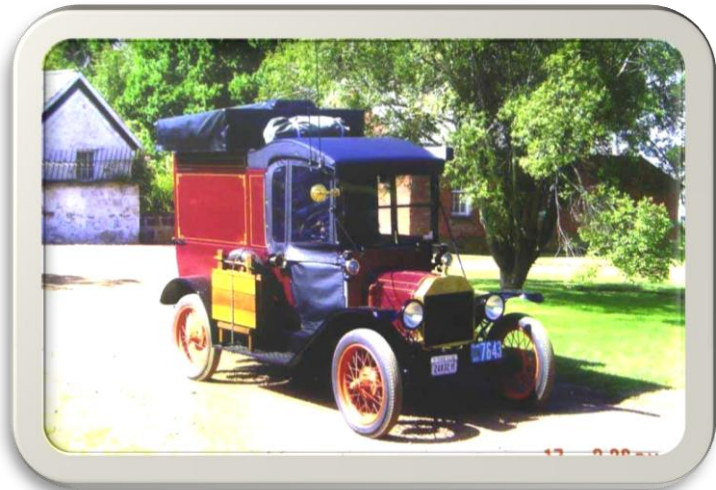
The Starters



Gary and Marilyn Amesbury

Milperra NSW

1927 Model T Ford Camper Van



Richard Day

Pitt Town NSW

1915 C-Cab Camper



Ian and Ann Whittle

Cowra NSW

1925 Utility Camper

The Model T Ford Centenary Tour of Australia

Bob and Margaret Wilson

Pymble NSW

1925 Roadster and camper trailer



Jim and Doris Miller

Michigan USA

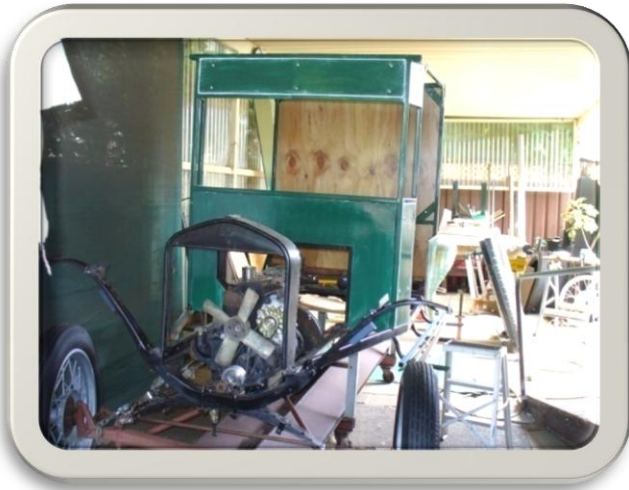
1927 Tudor (Two Door Sedan)

Glen Frohling

Glenbrook NSW

1927 C-Cab panel Van





Gil Whitehouse and Laraine Hoy

Minto NSW

1927 Utility Tray (under construction)

Jim and Ann McKern

Carlingford NSW

1927 Fordor and early style caravan



Geoff & Doreen Smith

Bargo NSW

Nissan Patrol and caravan

Backup vehicle

Toebee - Mascot

Roland Hulbert
Fairy Meadow NSW
Utility and caravan
Backup vehicle



Stan Bruce
Gymea NSW
Toyota Camper van
Backup vehicle

Paul and Barbara Woods

Blacktown NSW

Landrover and caravan

Backup vehicle



Chapter 1 – How it all began!

Well, I guess it all started while our Model T Ford Club members were on a charity run from Sydney to Brisbane to raise money for Camp Quality in 2003. We were all enjoying travelling along in our vintage and veteran cars and one evening I suggested that we should organise a trip around Australia, there had been suggestions made before but they were never acted on so this would be a first for us. As we discussed the possibility of such a journey it was mentioned that the 100 years anniversary of the Model T Ford was coming up in 2008 and maybe we should aim for that date as an incentive and celebrate the event.

Once we had decided that we were serious about this venture we had to start planning. The first meeting was planned for when we returned home from the charity run. At that meeting it was decided to put out an expression of interest through our club in Sydney and open it up to all Model T Ford club members around Australia. We received around 25 expressions of interest which was a bit of a shock but with five years planning ahead we knew the numbers would drop off towards the end which they did.

We started having meetings and allocating jobs to the members such as looking at an itinerary, which way did we want to go, where would we sleep/camp, would we all travel together or in small groups, what did we want to see and could we get any sponsors to help out with the cost of running an event like this. Over the next few years we began to build our cars and started saving like crazy. Ian and Anne Whittle suggested we should have a shakedown tour around Tasmania in January 2006, so this became the first milestone in our journey.

In January 2006 we travelled to Tasmania on the Trans Tasman ferry out of Sydney. The crossing was very smooth but some of our members were not very good sailors and had a pretty rough night. Once landed in Tasmania we were met by a member of the local Vintage and Veteran car club who escorted us back to their club for a BBQ lunch, we ate and chatted for some time and had a really good afternoon. As the sun set in the western sky we were escorted to our first nights' accommodation a few miles away and pitched camp for the first time in our converted Model T campers.

We travelled around Tasmania for seventeen days and covered most of the tourist areas. We even got to park on the lawns of Government House in Hobart, which was very handy as it was right next door to the Salamanca Markets! We returned to Sydney again by ferry and entering Sydney Harbour on a bright sunny morning was a breathtaking experience. We only had one vehicle breakdown on the tour and that was on the last day and this car is not going with us on the tour of Australia. We were happy with the way the cars handled the hills and all road conditions so it was now full steam ahead to get ready for the big event.

Our meetings became more frequent as the departure date grew closer. We had a competition to design a tour logo and the final choice was designed by Laraine Hoy. We had also managed to get a sponsor for a website so I got to work and built a site for us with a daily diary, monthly photo albums and a page of photos of the entrants. We managed to pick up a few more sponsors along the way with various products for us to use on our journey, some members managed to procure private sponsorship for their own cars which all helped us to continue with the tour. It was also decided that we would collect money for

the **Royal Flying Doctor Service** as this seemed to be the most appropriate charity for the areas we would be driving through.

We were very lucky as we approached a local smash repairer “Medicar” at Revesby to be a sponsor and they repaired the body panels on my camper and painted the whole car. They did a fantastic job and many people commented on the work on the tour. Engel Australia also came to our aid and sponsored my vehicle and supplied us with some products including the loan of a generator which we eventually bought to use in our caravan.

Finally the date to leave was approaching rapidly, one member was not ready so several club members went over to help him finish his vehicle off, we all did what we could and left him to do the final finishing.

The night before we set off, Richard Day and our American friends Jim and Doris Miller, slept over at our house as we lived closer to the departure point which was Peter Warren Ford in Warwick Farm.

Gary and Marilyn

Chapter 2 – The start of the East coast

Day 1 - April 20th 2008 – Warwick Farm to Karuah. (170 Km)

D-day, I don't think anyone slept well last night we were all so excited about today and after five years of planning and building our cars it is time to say goodbye to our families for six months. It was especially hard for us as we were leaving our first grandchild at only two months of age, beautiful "Ella".

Preparing to leave, Jim Miller & Richard Day



After a good breakfast we took a few photos of the cars and drivers in the driveway of our home then set off for Peter Warren Ford and the start of our epic adventure. We were one of the first to arrive and there was a little confusion as there was another car club having an event inside the car complex also. We drove in and parked in front of the Ford showroom and waited for the others to arrive.

A crowd was starting to build as family and friends came from all over to see us off, our club had made today their scheduled monthly run and were travelling with us to the lunch stop at Brooklyn on the way to Newcastle. Soon all the model T's had arrived except one, Gil and Laraine. They had only just finished building their car the day before and were having fuel problems on the way to the start. Gil's brother Martin went to help with the problem while the rest of us waited.

It is nearly 10:00 am which is the start time; Marilyn and I were there in our 1927 camper, Richard Day in his 1915 C-Cab camper, Ian and Ann Whittle in their 1924 Utility camper, Glen Frohling in his 1927 Panel van, Jim and Ann McKern in their 1927 Fordor and teardrop caravan, Bob and Margaret Wilson in their 1926 Roadster and camper trailer, Jim and Doris Miller from Michigan USA with their 1927 Tudor, Geoff and Doreen Smith as backup in a Nissan Patrol and Caravan with our mascot Toebee the Maltese/Shih Tzu cross, Paul and Barbara Wood in their Land Rover Four wheel drive and caravan, Roland Hulbert in his Ute and Caravan and no sign of Gil Whitehouse and Laraine Hoy.

The word was given to start the engines and suddenly tears flowed from everywhere. It was quite an emotional moment saying goodbye to our children and grand daughter but we did manage to drag ourselves away and headed out onto the highway bound for Newcastle.

For a while we both thought it was raining but that was just the tears in our eyes, although the weather did look threatening with dark clouds and a forecast for rain. It was quite a

magnificent sight, seeing all the Model T Fords rolling along the road, some on the tour and many club members along for the first stretch. The traffic was not too bad as we had chosen a route to keep us away from the busiest roads.

Not long after we started the Millers began to have problems, the car was playing up and missing and carrying on. The car boiled and this was a concern as we had only travelled a short distance so they pulled over and the McKern's and Richard Day stopped to help while the rest of the cars made their way along the road to Brooklyn. Unable to repair the car on the road they headed for the McKern's home which was close by where there were tools and spare parts and within the hour they had solved the problem and were back on the road.

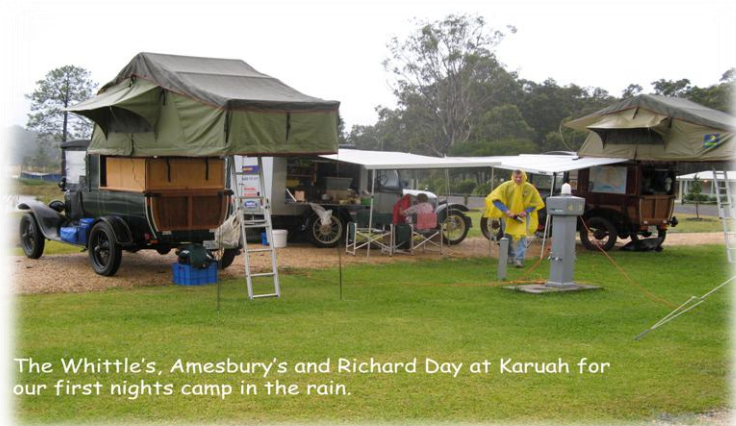
All the cars had been fitted with 40 channel UHF radios so we could keep in contact with each other, the only ones without were the Millers and we thought this was going to be a problem along the road as communication is very important especially when we get to the more remote areas.

The drive to Brooklyn went without a hitch and when we arrived there were more club members to see us on our way. The Millers were chugging along quite well but because they had no radio they overshot the lunch stop and headed out along the Newcastle Freeway with nowhere to turn around. The rest of us had a nice lunch and chatted with club members before getting back on the road with Karuah as our destination for the first night. The rain had started and visibility was poor but as we arrived at the caravan park the rain stopped for a while which was a good help. We booked in and tried to find a dryish site,

luckily our campers were small and we were able to setup on reasonably dry (puddle free) ground. It rained on and off all evening and into the night which is not an ideal way to start a holiday when you sleep under canvas.

Robyn Green, a great friend and club enthusiast arrived at our camp site unexpectedly, it was a very nice surprise for us all and we chatted for ages and shared our dinner.

Around 8:00 pm we received a call from Laraine Hoy saying they had passed the caravan park and were heading into Karuah Township but they had taken a wrong turn and had become bogged in a paddock. We grabbed one of the four wheel drives and a rope and took off down the road; Robyn



The Whittle's, Amesbury's and Richard Day at Karuah for our first nights camp in the rain.



Bob Wilson cooking his first dinner of the tour

Green took three more of us in her car as there were only two seats in the four wheel drive. Gil and Laraine were about five kilometres away in the rain and in a boggy dark paddock. We managed to hook the car up and tow them back onto the road with no damage done so they continued on to a motel for the night and we returned to the caravan park.

Day 2 – April 21st – Karuah to Port Macquarie. (218 Km)

We woke to a wet morning but our spirits were high as we are on the first days of our holiday, had a good breakfast and packed up wet and we were on the road by 8:30 am. Our first stop for morning tea was at Bulahdelah where we found a nice bakery and enjoyed the spoils on the side of the road. Onto Taree for lunch, there were a few showers throughout the day however we knew we were heading north to the sunshine state and this kept our spirits up.

After a nice picnic style lunch and a quick look around town we continued on to Port Macquarie where we were booked into the Lighthouse Beach Caravan Park. As we approached the town we were met by a TV crew from NBN 9 and they interviewed a couple of members then videoed us for the evening news. The Caravan Park was a very nice park but the weather was still a little inclement. After setting up our camp sites the local newspaper reporter showed up and took a few photos and interviewed a couple of members for their local weekly rag, (We were starting to feel like celebrities with all this media attention). A little while later some of the local car club members arrived and chauffeured all of us to the local Golf Club for a really nice dinner.

We also had family in Port Macquarie. Nicky and Brend and their three lovely children Jake, Gemma and Jas joined us for the evening which was great and we were able to catch up on a lot of gossip. At 6:30 pm we saw the NBN9 report on TV and everyone gave a big cheer as this was our very first TV appearance for the tour. After dinner we were chauffeured home again. We thanked our hosts and then prepared for bed after discussing where we would go the next day. The rain looked like it was easing off for the night and we kept our fingers crossed that it would go away.

Day 3 – April 22nd – Port Macquarie to Grafton. (234 Km)

Woke to the sound of pouring rain which immediately put a damper on our spirits knowing we would have to pack up in the rain. We all had breakfast then out of the blue our friend Laurie McGrath arrived – he had been to a Model “A” rally in Bathurst but left early and drove all night to get home to Port Macquarie so he could come and see us off. He lent Bob Wilson his good raincoat which would get a bit of use on the tour; we packed up slowly (still wet) and got ready to leave. Nicky, Brend and the kids arrived so we gave them a little drive around the caravan park in the T before we had to say goodbye.

We left Port Macquarie heading for Kempsey, as we drove along the weather improved and this brought a smile to our faces. We received a call from Gil and Laraine, they were still having problems and decided to go to Stan Bruce’s farm in Mooreland’s to try and do some repairs. Stan is going to be backup for Gil and Laraine and was to join us today but this will change a little until the repairs are completed. Gil has reported that the cam followers had broken and the motor would have to be pulled down to get the broken parts out.

We continued our journey north to Coffs Harbour and stopped for lunch at the Big Banana, we were lucky enough to get a parking spot right in front of the icon which made an ideal photo opportunity. We took the time to check out the gift shop while the other tourists



checked out our cars and campers. Soon it was time to get going again, so we headed off towards Grafton for the night. The cars were all running well which is how we would like the whole trip to go. As soon as we arrived at our camp site we set up to allow our tents etc to dry out for the first time on the trip.

Enjoyed a nice BBQ dinner and sat around chatting about how well everything was going so far, we made plans for the next day then retired for the evening.

Day 4 – April 23rd – Grafton to Byron Bay (168 Km)

What a great start to the day no rain and the sun shining through the clouds, we seem to have no trouble getting up early each morning so we can get on the road before it gets too busy. We decided very early that we would try to get up early and drive 200 – 300 km's and be at our camp site no later than 3:00 pm each day. We have heard that even the roadside rest areas further north are so popular with the "Grey Nomads" that if you are not there by 2:30 pm you will be lucky to get a space and with us all travelling together it will be harder still. The Millers from the States do not camp so they need to find a town with cabins or a motel every night which may become difficult the further north we go.

Anyway back to the story, at 8:30 am the Grafton Newspaper reporter arrived and interviewed the group and took several photos then it was time to leave.

We filled up with fuel then headed off up the now single lane country main road, no big hills yet but plenty of semi-trailers and B-Doubles on the road, we did our best to pull over when safe to do so but sometimes there is just no where to go. After a couple of hours we found a road side rest area and stopped for a break and stretch the legs as there is not a lot of room inside a Model T Ford. Whilst enjoying the break the rain returned which was our incentive to pack up and keep going.

At Ballina we called into Big W to pick up the oil that Shell is sponsoring us for. Big W management were very impressed that we had their logo on the cars as sponsors and disappointed that we didn't stay longer with them.

We drove straight through to Byron Bay where we had arranged for permission to park the cars around the base of the Lighthouse, what a unique photo opportunity for us and several stunned tourists, this is the most easterly point of Australia. We arrived around 2:30 pm and had to wait for a couple of slower cars to catch up; when they had all arrived the security guard opened the chain and let us drive up the ramp to the lighthouse. After a fair bit of jiggling and moving we finally got all the Model T's around the base for a photo, there were quite a lot of other tourists there and they thought this was great, as we moved back to take



the photos one young Japanese girl walked right in front of us – set up her camera on a tripod – pressed the self timer then proceeded to sit herself on our front mudguard without even asking. Instantly there was a combined shout from all our members and some of the public telling her to “GET OFF” – She simply ignored everyone, picked up her camera and tripod and walked off.

It is strange that some people seem to think that if a car is on display they can sit on it, in it or put their kids in it without asking! Well, they get the message very quickly let me tell you!!!

The local newspaper was supposed to meet us there but they never turned up, I guess something more exciting must have happened. After an hour or so we left the lighthouse and headed to our digs for the night at Suffolk Park. After setting up camp we all had a nice hot shower before dinner and socialising, this could become a habit - Eat, sleep, drive and eat again – not a bad way to pass the time of day and see great sights along the way.

Gil and Laraine are still back at Mooreland's with Stan, they have managed to strip the motor down after getting the car bogged in Stan's back yard, the rain had made the ground so soft that the Model T Ute just sank down to its axles. They tried to pull it out with a four wheel drive and that got bogged too; as a final effort they had to borrow a tractor to move both vehicles before they could start work on the “T”.

It was just as Gil had suspected some of the cam followers had broken off and others were very badly worn, we can only assume that these were not hardened steel as they are supposed to be, it seems that many of the replacement parts made in the third world countries are of very poor quality.

Day 5 – April 24th – Byron Bay. (0 Km)

Today is our first rest day and we all took time out for our first service and oil change. We also took time out to walk along the beautiful pristine beach even though it was still a little chilly. We are all getting into the holiday mood now and relaxing. NBN9 caught up with us again today and took some more footage for the evening news; they filmed us servicing the cars so at least there was a little action for the viewers to look at.

We started planning for tomorrow as we were heading into Brisbane; Since most of us have family and friends to visit for a couple of days, we decided to split into groups and meet up again on the way out of Brisbane.

Day 6 – April 25th - Byron Bay to Ransom/Brisbane. (240 Km)

Another beautiful sunny day greeted us as we clambered out of bed, Paul and Barbara Wood were going to stay in NSW as their caravan is due for rego and he can only pay for it in NSW one month before it expires which will be in the next couple of days. The McKern's, Millers, Wilson's and Roland Hulbert will be staying in Tweed for the weekend, Gil and Laraine have repaired the cam followers and have made it to Coffs Harbour but now there is a knock in the motor! All the other cars are running well with no major problems reported at this time.

As we got dressed and ready to leave one of our male members went to put on his black socks this morning and they turned out to be "Fishnet Stockings" – Should we be worried?

The Amesbury's, Richard Day, Glen Frohling, Geoff & Doreen Smith and Ian and Ann Whittle drove on into sunny Queensland, with an expected temperature today of 29 degrees guess we are heading the right way. We drove to a friend's place Phil Trow and his wife Colleen who were living with their parents (between houses) Ian was keen to get an additional main leaf spring to give his utility a bit of a lift. We stayed for lunch and a cool drink while Ian dismantled a rear spring and ground the eyes of it to be fitted at a later time. After lunch we drove on to our other friend's place "Geraldine and Malcolm" except the Whittles they had other friends to visit in the area. Richard, Glen and the Smith's were set up near Geraldine's craft cottage (she makes Quilts) and Marilyn and Gary stayed in the main house so we could catch up with all the goss! They have quite a large property which we drove around in a golf buggy. We were then let loose on Malcolm's ride on lawnmower which had two levers for the steering and acceleration – it was a little tricky to handle at first and Marilyn screamed the whole time she was driving it! We had a wonderful time catching up and had a real bed to sleep in for the first time since leaving home.

Day 7 – April 26th – Ransome Qld. (0 Km)

Still at Geraldine and Malcolm's place, they took us out for a drive to the local markets to see if we could bag a bargain, but before we left Malcolm, Richard, Glen, Geoff and Gary had to catch a few ducks (to earn their keep) the ducks were then put onto an island in the middle of Malcolm's dam.

We picked up a few items at the markets, the things we forgot like a couple of plastic drinking glasses. We then returned to Geraldine's home for lunch and afterwards she gave

us a Quilting demonstration which thrilled Doreen as she also does quilting. Geraldine runs classes and has some fantastic machines for sewing up the quilts, no need to mention she has quilts everywhere in her home and really nice ones at that.



Day 8 – April 27th – Ransome to Maroochydore. (130 Km)

Time to say goodbye to our friends and get back on the road, the Miller's, McKern's, Wilson's and Roland left Kirra Beach this morning and will catch up with us for lunch. The Queensland Model T Owners Group has invited us to a BBQ lunch at Caboolture which we were all looking forward to and meeting all their new members. The club has only been going for a couple of years and the members are spread out all over the state. The McKern's took a wrong turn heading out of Brisbane and took the scenic route to the lunch stop; the rest of us made it OK and were greeted by quite a group of people and Model T's. The lunch was fantastic and the homemade desserts provided by the ladies were delicious. After such a great lunch we all felt like having a siesta but we still had to travel a long way. Once again we split up as there were more friends and relatives to visit for some, the rest of us drove on to Caloundra and into the caravan park at Dickies Beach which was named after a ship wreck "The SS Dickie" whose bones can still be seen on the beach.

Gary and I continued on to Maroochydore to visit my Aunt Dora who had recently moved into a three bedroom retirement house in a fantastic village complex. We spent the evening talking and eating and Gary made himself very popular by slipping over in the bathroom and breaking the toilet seat lid (Bloody relatives).

Marilyn and I had taken a GPS unit with us on the trip and it is proving to be an invaluable asset, we would not have found Dora's place without it!

Day 9 – April 28th - Maroochydore to Tin Can Bay. (132 Km)

We had a leisurely start to the morning as you would expect in a retirement village and we were on our way by 9:30 and heading for Gympie. The Miller's, Wilson's and McKern's woke to the sound of native birds and went for a stroll along the beach before heading off, Roland saw more than he wanted to at the public shower on the beach! And Stan looked over the bones of the SS Dickie, Bob Wilson gave one elderly camper a ride in his T to the park gate and he graciously donated some money to the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

We arrived in Gympie around lunch time and met up with Richard Day and the Whittle's at the shopping centre, we all had some lunch and an ice cream then went to do some grocery shopping for the next few days.

When all the shopping was done we drove on towards a little place called "Tin Can Bay", we had never heard of it but we had been told it was a very nice spot so it was worth a look. When we arrived we were pleasantly surprised, it was a very nice sleepy little sea side resort with a couple of caravan parks, so we booked into one and set up camp. Then it was time to some maintenance and cleaning up before any sight seeing. While we were working on our cars a young lady named Annie came around to take some photos, nothing unusual about that we were quite used to this now as it happened every time we arrived at a camp site. Annie had some really good cameras and equipment and she spent a lot of time photographing all the cars until the light disappeared and then she was gone.

Day 10 – April 29th - Tin Can Bay. (20 Km)

Another beautiful morning with hundreds of birds singing in the trees overhead, we are really on holidays now! After breakfast it was a quick stroll about two kilometres to the marina where the daily ritual of dolphin feeding was about to happen. There was a small crowd of people hanging around and several rangers in the water, you could see a few dolphins playing just off shore and waiting for the command to come and get it! After a short talk by the rangers the dolphins lined up and members of the crowd were invited to feed them, Marilyn was right in there and I like all good husbands fought for a good position to get a photo of the event. This lasted about an hour which made Marilyn very happy, then we started walking back to camp. Along the way back poor Doris tripped and fell scraping her knee and knocking her face. We sat with her for a while then she managed to get a lift back to the caravan park with the McKern's.

Later that day Annie returned with a CD of all the photos she had taken and they were displayed in a fantastic slide show complete with appropriate music for the era of the cars. We watched the presentation on the laptop then thanked her for the gift. Apparently she has a small business in town doing just this and doing it very well. We asked her if she would like to be considered as the photographer for our up coming national rally in NSW in the Hawkesbury region and she said yes, so we sent the CD to the Rally committee for perusal.

We spent the rest of the day checking out the shops and other sites and getting ready for dinner. Gary found oil leaking out of our back axle onto the brakes so he had to take the brakes off clean the area up and set fire to the linings – No he didn't destroy them, this is the best way to get the oil out of the linings. Put it all back together and enjoyed the rest of the night.



Day 11 – April 30th – Tin Can Bay to Maryborough. (75 Km)

It's true what they say about Queensland – Beautiful one day Perfect the next! Yes, today is another great day, a little cool to start off with but the sun is shining and we are in a great place. After breakfast we drove down to see and feed the Dolphins again after which we all piled onto a small ferry which took us all around the waterways. We went through narrow channels where we looked for Dolphins and Dugong's which frequent this area. One was sighted by a couple of our spotters but it vanished as fast as it surfaced. We cruised on over to Carlos Point, part of the great Sandy Strait National Park, the entrance was very narrow and surrounded by high sandbars which made it a very protected little marina. We disembarked while the ferry captain became the bus driver and shuttled some back packers to their next destination. After a short look around the area the captain returned and we boarded for the return trip to Tin Can Bay.

On our return we were about to start on our 70 km journey to Maryborough when "Annie" the photographer asked us for a few more group shots in a nearby park.

Back on the road again and a lovely drive through thickly wooded forest country and on into Maryborough, we met up with our good friends Peter and Aida Cuthbertson who lived about an hour and a half inland from here. We found the caravan park they had recommended and to our surprise Aida had booked and paid for a cabin for us for the night. We had a really nice reunion and then found out that their son Brian, had been diagnosed with cancer in his left arm and of course he is left handed.

We spent the rest of the day with our friends visiting Aida's work place then onto their other son (Bobby, our Godson's) home and a tour of Harvey Bay. As we drove through Harvey Bay Marilyn noticed a fishing tackle shop and she disappeared into it, it was the one owned by a friend of her late fathers but the friend had recently sold up and there was now a new owner – fancy finding that without even looking for it!

The Woods had arrived in town after getting their caravan registered in NSW so we were all together again.

Day 12 – May 1st – Maryborough. (0 Km)

What a pleasure it was to have spent the night in a comfortable cabin, Richard joined us as he was on his own.

Bob Wilson had been networking and had arranged for us to put our cars on display at the local Ford dealership. This was really handy as the dealership was only half a block away from the street markets and that's where we headed to. There were some really interesting items for sale and the markets went for a couple of blocks on both sides of the street. When we returned to our cars Channel 7 had arrived and were interviewing Bob – he just loves talking about his car, he is really enthusiastic and tells a good yarn so we leave it all to him!

Later Marilyn managed to get a haircut at a nearby salon, and she was talking to the hairdresser saying what we were doing, the hairdresser was so impressed she organised for The Chronical to come down tomorrow morning and do a story on us.

Aida came past after work to bid us farewell and take Brian down to Brisbane as they have got him into see a specialist so we will say a prayer for him.

That night we all crammed into Jim and Doris's cabin to watch the TV report and see ourselves, it was a bit of a laugh. After that we all sat in the camp kitchen and had dinner and chin wagged until late, sometime during the afternoon we managed to service the cars and do some minor adjustments as we would be off again in the morning.

Day 13 – May 2nd - Maryborough to Gin Gin. (134 Km)

Today is Friday and there is a long weekend coming up, I didn't notice the day until later (Day 13). After our newspaper interview we left Maryborough and headed to Childers for morning tea. We stopped at Pioneer Park for a leisure break and a nice walk through town. After this break we continued north towards "Gin Gin" where we had lunch and again another walk through a picturesque country town with many colourful murals painted on the buildings.

After lunch all was going well so we continued our journey north up and down the rolling hills, some of the hills were getting quite steep and I (Gary) had to drop down a gear from time to time, as I started up another hill about fifteen kilometres out of town I changed back a gear and I must have had a senior moment and put my foot on the low gear pedal at the same time thereby dropping the car into low-low! There was a resounding BANG followed by very nasty grating and grinding noises. Quick as a whip I knew there was something wrong so I pulled over, luckily just at the crest of the hill. Everyone stopped behind me like a camel caravan, Richard had a look and decided it was not in the motor or gearbox and when we moved the car forward it was obvious it was in the diff. Well there was nothing we could do on the side of the road so we rang the RACQ who came out and took us back into Gin Gin. We were dumped on a green verge outside the RACQ depot about 50 Metres off the road – the tow truck driver said "you're on your own now", it's 2 pm on Friday of a long weekend. Ian and Ann Whittle and Richard were with us and the others had continued on their way to Rockhampton. As soon as we had settled we started stripping the car down to get the diff out, we managed to borrow a floor jack from a local tyre place which luck would have it was opposite us, and within an hour we had the diff out and on a rickety old timber bench. We took the jack back as the business was closing for the weekend then we started to dismantle the diff, it wasn't long before we found the damage – the crown wheel was bent! No one had ever seen this done before; we had seen broken ones but never a bent one.

Now the problem was, where do you find a crown wheel for a 1927 Model T Ford in Gin Gin on a long weekend?

Well, we decided to sleep on that problem and face it in the morning. We were camped next to an old stock yard and there was even an outhouse but the door was locked with a pad bolt and padlock, on closer inspection the old timber framework was very flexible and we were able to "prise" the door open without any damage and to our surprise there was a flush toilet in working order! – Bonus!

Tea was interesting, it worked out that between the 5 of us we had 6 loin chops, a couple of potatoes, pumpkin, frozen veges which we put into the dream pot with some gravy and thickener and had mush for tea, it was filling and that is all that counts when you are stuck on the side of the road.

Day 14 – May 3rd - Gin Gin. (0 Km)

After a disturbed night's sleep and knowing what the problem was we made plans to venture into town and enquire if there were any Model T Ford owners in town. Richard and Ian headed off leaving me to continue working on the diff, after a few enquiries one local man offered to drive them around to try and locate some parts, I also made some enquiries at the RACQ depot and we both ended up at the same place one street behind where we were dumped. The yard was full of old rusting farm equipment just the place to find some Model T bits but not this time. As we turned to walk away we looked across the road and couldn't believe our eyes – there in an old wooden car port was a Model T Ford! We went closer and saw a chassis and what looked to be a complete diff under a tree, the local man said he knew who the owner was so it was a quick trip back into town to locate him. Within half an hour we were back at the camp site with part of an old diff, which was under a tree less than 50 metres from our camp site! Marilyn & Ann could not believe their eyes as they sat by our campsite when the boys marched out of the paddock right behind them with a Model T diff in hand. We managed to recover a hemisphere (which was also damaged in my car, this is the part the crown wheel fixes on to) but there was no crown wheel.

A short time later a couple of locals came over to help and told us of a man in Bundaberg who had model T's, armed with his name I borrowed the white pages from the petrol station and found him and he had spare crown wheels. Gil and Laraine had now become one of our backup vehicles as they were now in a modern car having left their broken model T back in Brisbane, they were in Bundaberg so a quick call to them culminated in two crown wheels being delivered at no cost and the repairs were under way.



Gary working on the damaged Diff, while the car is balanced on old tree stumps.

Marilyn ventured over to the local police station to find out where we could borrow a floor jack, she thought they would know the locals and who would help us out and she was right. No one could believe that Marilyn did this, they were all gob smacked! Ann and Marilyn took the opportunity to venture into town to the local markets and shops while the boys played with the car, we had the diff repaired and back together but as it was getting late we decided to finish it off in the morning.



Some of the beautiful Murals painted on the buildings in Gin Gin NSW

Day 15 – May 4th – Gin Gin to Rockhampton. (275 Km)

We woke up today with renewed enthusiasm, Gil drove Marilyn to the Ampol service station to borrow a couple of floor jacks and in no time at all we had the diff back in the car and ready to go. Having repaired the car and feeling confident again, we headed for Miriam Vale for lunch then continued on to Rockhampton to catch up with the main group, all went very smoothly. Thanks to all in Gin Gin who helped us out on this occasion. Marilyn is feeling very nervous every time I change gears, but she will get over it!

The main group had been invited to a BBQ by the Rockhampton Car Club, Win TV turned up and interviewed the members who were now becoming minor celebrities (in their own mind), it's all a bit of fun.

We arrived at the caravan park around 4:30 and set up camp as usual, then we made arrangements to work on Ian's car, he needed to put in the additional leaf in the rear spring and one of the local car club members had offered his workshop for tomorrow.

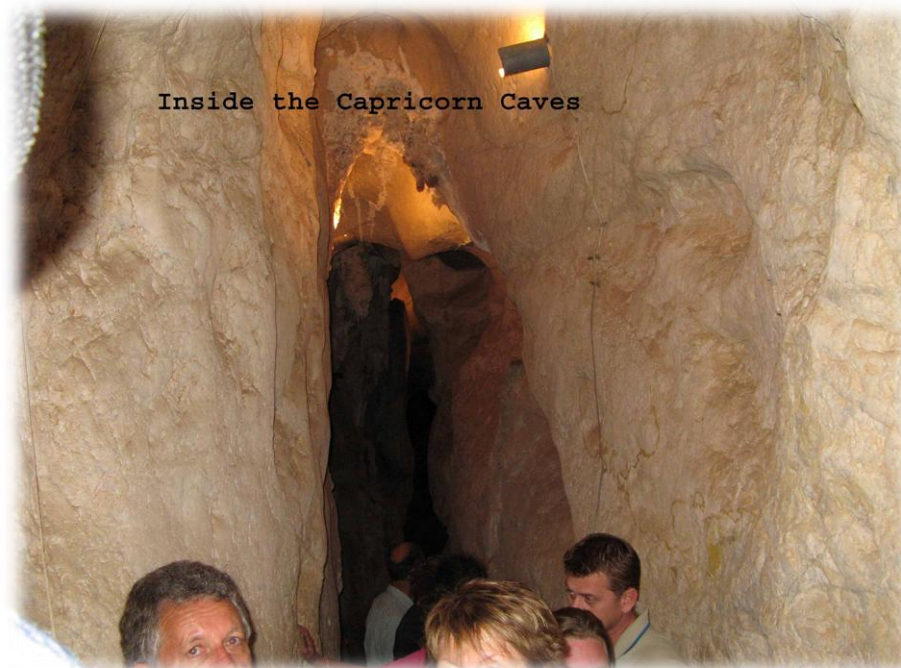
Day 16 – May 5th – Rockhampton. (40 Km)

Gary's Birthday, we didn't sleep too well last night as the caravan park was right on the main highway at the front and had a freight railway right behind with 100 carriage freight trains hauling coal running all night. Gary got a nice card from Ian and Ann and another from Geoff and Doreen plus a few small nick knacks which made the morning a bit of fun, Marilyn surprised Gary with some cards she had hidden away that were from our children; that was a nice surprise, it's times like these when you miss being at home with your family. After breakfast Ian and Geoff took off to work on Ian's rear end (I mean rear spring). The main group took the day for some sightseeing around Rocky. Geoff and Ian were finished by lunchtime and were back in camp happy with the modification, after lunch we went shopping for food and supplies as we had used up almost everything in Gin Gin. There were not many shops open like in Sydney, firstly because it was a long weekend and secondly because we were now in the country.

Back to camp for a little car servicing then we all had a nice baked dinner and an ice cream cake to celebrate Gary's 59th Birthday.

Day 17 – May 6th – Rockhampton to St Laurence. (190 Km)

We broke camp early this morning and headed to the Botanical Gardens, which along with the attached mini zoo were in dire need of some TLC. From here we continued our journey north to the Capricorn caves, there were kangaroo's lazing around all through the parkland which made Marilyn happy, the tour of the caves was extremely interesting. Other members of our group were here also and they had just completed their tour and were having lunch. Upon leaving the caves we took a wrong turn and ended up on an old highway which seemed to be heading in the right general direction so we decided to keep going,



after about thirty minutes we saw a sign to the main highway. Well this road turned into a gravel road after about one kilometre and went for a further twenty before we found the No 1 highway again, it was quite a good gravel road and the model T loved it – Just like the good old days!

We made it into Marlborough about six kilometres off the highway for afternoon tea, Richard and Gary checked out the local car museum while Marilyn and Ann checked out the gift and craft stores. From here we continued on for another hour arriving in St Laurence at about 5:30 pm and went directly to the showgrounds which was a free camping area with really great amenities. As usual we were pounced upon by the other campers wanting to take photos and asking questions, we are getting very good at answering them. Marilyn now knows all about the cars and our problems etc. Geoff and Doreen went into town and came back with a feast of fish and chips which we ate by candlelight then we settled in for a nice evening.

Day 18 – May 7th St Laurence to Mackay. (165 Km)

Another beautiful day dawning, the birds are all singing and a hearty breakfast was had by all. We were all back on the road again today with a stop at Carmila for morning tea. We thought the beaches up north would be spectacular but this one is very disappointing! The tide was well out and there were large clumps of grey sludge (which looked like rocks at first glance) the sand was a light brownish colour not the pure white you see on the brochures.

We continued our journey into Sarina which is a largish country town; we found a nice bakery and bought some pies for lunch which we ate while sitting on the median strip! It sounds a little strange but it was a wide grassed median strip with tables and chairs for the public to use, quite a nice town.

From here it was onto Mackay for the night, we arrived around 2:30 pm and went directly to the information centre to find out what there was to see in town – the answer was nothing – unless you travelled 80 kilometres out to see some Platypus! So it was off to fill up with fuel and shopping for more supplies. Marilyn stated “It is truly an experience shopping with Richard and Gary here I was just sending them down different isles to get the groceries, it was a little funny and hard and I know we forgot to buy things but that is OK”, then back to the caravan park for R & R. The skies at night are crystal clear up here; which Marilyn describes as a black sea sparkling with diamonds! The stars really are impressive.

Day 19 – May 8th Mackay to Eungella. (115 Km)

We had to take the “T” into town to get a muffler bracket repaired and while Richard and Gary did that Marilyn went window shopping in town. Afterwards we left town heading for the mountains and hopefully some Platypus spotting, we stopped for some morning tea beside a trickling river in a place named Mirian, then off again towards the mountains.

After some time we saw a sign that said “Steep climb 10 Km’s” That’s not the sort of sign you like to see in a Model T, we kept driving and Richard came over the CB and said – “This isn’t steep they don’t know what steep is!” then we saw another sign “Steep climb 1 Km” and after one kilometre the mountain went straight up! It was a slow struggle up the mountain, Richard went well but our car struggled so I had to stop on one hill, and I asked Marilyn to get out and walk up to make it easier – If looks could kill they could have buried me there and then! I continued up the hill in spurts of thirty metres or so with several stops to let the car cool down.

After about ten minutes Marilyn arrived in the back of a ute with the cattle dog, two older men had offered her a lift and she accepted (regardless of the consequences, at that stage she had passed caring what might happen to her!). One man got out of the cab and Marilyn thought that was nice of him but he just got out to help her into the back with the dog and buckets of sand! (I guess it beats walking up the hill) they caught up to us about three quarters of the way up the hill where Gary had stopped to replenish the radiator and Richard was making adjustments to the carburettor. After this Marilyn rode with Richard while Gary crawled up the steep windy last section of the mountain.

We finally made it to the top and pulled into a lookout to have lunch and give the cars a well earned rest; while we were eating we were joined by a bush turkey which jumped up on the table to share with us, if we had been a little bit quicker he could have been dinner!

After lunch we continued on down to “Broken River” and we were lucky enough to see a couple of young platypus playing in the river, there were also dozens of small turtles swimming around, all this made the trip worthwhile. Satisfied we had communed with nature we tracked back and found Eungella Caravan Park, it was right at the top of the hill overlooking a valley looking all the way back to Mackay, what a fantastic view, we just sat and admired it for hours before heading off to the local pub for dinner then into bed for a well earned rest.



Day 20 – May 9th - Eungella to O’Connell. (210 Km)

After a good nights sleep we woke to spectacular views down the valley to Mackay approximately 80 km’s away, there were Kookaburras sitting on the table also enjoying the view! Soon we were back on the road heading down that very steep hill, Marilyn was not looking forward to it but going down was much easier than it was going up. We stayed in low gear for a couple of kilometres to get the feel of the road then when we felt confident we completed the rest of the descent in top gear. We made it back to Mackay and went directly to the information centre to meet up with the Whittle’s and Smith’s. It was decided to head on over to the coast and see a pub with a reputation for a great view in a place called “Eimeo”. It was an old pub and was placed on a point with spectacular views out to Brampton and Cumberland Islands, the surrounding beaches left a lot to be desired so we continued on our way.

We arrived in Kuttabul where Bob and Margaret Wilson had friends who owned a caravan park; it was nice we were all together again. After a short break, we, Richard, Geoff & Doreen headed north as Richard is keen to get to Townsville to see his grandsons. Geoff &

Doreen ended up approx 30kms north of Proserpine and we ended up south as the wind was a bit strong and we were all tired, after all it was 3.30pm and had been on the road a lot today.

We settled into O'Connell Caravan Park set up camp and settled down for a well deserved cuppa and talk with the locals.

Day 21 – May 10th - O'Connell to Ayr. (185 Km)

In the morning we headed off to see Phillip Taylor and his wife, club members who own a cane farm near Prosser Pine. We spent a lovely hour there, Gary & Richard were in their element looking at the Sheds and seeing all the Model T parts, tractor parts and other junk. Richard could not stop talking about the size of Phil's lathe so his day was made. It was a lovely break and Phillip made us feel very welcome.

Philip Taylors Cane farm and his blue Model T



Off we went again as Richard is keen to get to Ayr to see his grandsons and we haven't got far to go. Pulled into Bowen for lunch and sat down by the port. It was very windy and one of the locals referred to it as "Blowin Bowen". This is where the Nicole Kidman's movie "Australia" was filmed and it's amazing how a large paddock at the end of town near the port could be made into an old town for filming. Throughout the town there were all different sorts of murals on

the walls of buildings so Gary & Richard stopped by a couple that suited their cars and took photos.

On the road again we met up with Geoff & Doreen Smith and travelled to Ayr we pulled into the local caravan park and Richard went out to see his son in laws parents who offered him a bed for the night.

We played cards with the Smiths, unfortunately for us gamblers we lost so we had to shout the McDonalds sundae which was next door as a late night treat for us all, it was a pleasant evening with just the two families.

The other group have left their friends caravan park and are staying in Bowen for the night.

Day 22 – May 11th – Ayr to Townsville. (95 Km)

Mothers Day! Marilyn was up early as usual and headed off to the shower which gave me the time I needed to dig into our secret hiding spot and recover the mother's day cards our children had entrusted to me before we left home. Marilyn was very pleased to get the cards and did receive calls from both the children a little while later, she misses them so much.

After breakfast we packed up and drove down to the local markets – all SIX of the stalls were buzzing with at least ten people in attendance! Not like the big smoke! Marilyn did manage to pick up one Christmas present – I start thinking about Christmas a week before hand! But Marilyn buys all year round.

From here we started out towards Townsville with a short stop to see Richard and his grand children, he decided to stay a little longer so we left him to enjoy his time with the kids.

The Smiths and us arrived on the outskirts of Townsville around 2:30 pm and decided to set up camp in the parking area behind the BP truck stop. This was probably not our smartest decision as big rigs were in and out all night and several of them left their motors and fridge units running which echoed across the parking bays, (They say we learn by our mistakes).

The other group arrived a few hours later and went directly to a caravan park on the other side of town except for Richard and the Whittles who joined us, the truck stop had great amenities and a good restaurant so we made good use of both of these. During dinner Ann Whittle asked Geoff for a loan of his blue singlet (which he was wearing) – Why asked Geoff, Ann replied “The truckies get free cuppa so if I dress like one I can get a free cup too” – Geoff just laughed and continued eating. When Ann went to the ladies Geoff stood up and stripped off leaving his singlet on Ann’s chair then he left after apologising to some of the customers still eating in the restaurant. We think this made the truckies night. When Ann returned she burst out laughing – but didn’t get her free coffee!

Day 23 – May 12th – Townsville-Black River (40 Km)

Well, what can one say, it was our choice as to where we slept last night, we were not the only ones but boy oh boy the big semi’s pulled in and out all night, so no one had a good night sleep.

Today we decided to take in the sights of Townsville, so after breakfast we made our way through town and up to the lookout at Castle Hill, the sign at the bottom said “Steep climb for two km’s” Marilyn wanted to jump out and run a mile after her last hill climb experience. Well this hill wasn’t even a challenge in fact the locals were jogging up it with ease and we even managed to pass a few, the view from the top was a spectacular 360 degrees from the ocean to the mountains. After a short break we drove back down to the Botanical gardens that we could see from the top of the hill. We walked through the strange looking trees and tropical plants which were huge compared to the plants back in Sydney. After morning tea we took a drive and a walk along the foreshores, there were very few shops open which was disappointing for the girls but the kids playground had a spectacular huge bucket on top which filled with water then tipped over to splash the kids, there was even a natural waterfall in the main street, all very nice and refreshing for us.

Found our way into town and the shopping mall not much happening as they were in the middle of renovating the whole place, Gary did manage to buy some sandals to get some sun onto his very white pommy feet.

From here we headed out to Black River some 20 kms away to a caravan park that the Smith’s had booked us into, the Smith’s have a little Maltese cross shiatsu (Toebee – our mascot) so we have to find pet friendly parks to stay in. Geoff and Doreen were already there and we had to find the place – it seemed to take forever to find and when we finally

got there we couldn't wait to leave. I am sure most of the residents were from the same family like hillbillies if you get my drift!

After doing domestic chores like washing we had a cooked dinner and played cards before retiring for the night.

Day 24 – May 13th – Townsville to Rollingstone. (60 Km)

We have a big day planned for today as we had to get back into Townsville for a trip out to Magnetic Island and a tour of the island in a stretch Jeep (luxury)! Our guide "Mal" was very informative and had a lot of local knowledge. He took us to very interesting places and we even got to sample some green tree ants Yuk! Apparently some "Bushies" drop these ant nests into a boiling billy to make Green Ant Tea. Mal said they have a nice honey taste if you bite their bum off but if you just lick them you will make a friend for life!



Our Stretch Limo on Magnetic Island



Marilyn feeding rock Wallabies on Magnetic Island

We saw a koala high in a gum tree and as usual they keep the best till last and we ended up in a rock wallaby colony near one of the old ferry wharf's. Marilyn had a ball feeding the wallabies as they came down the rock face for a feed, some had joeys in their pouches. It was hard to leave these lovely little creatures but we had to get back to the ferry and over to the mainland.



Hairy Caterpillar roadtrain in Bushy Parker Park Rolling Stone

Once back on the mainland we headed towards Cairns and found a really nice free camp site called "Bushy Parker Park" in a little town called "Rollingstone", it was a large wooded park with brick amenities but only cold showers, there were plenty of other campers there and as usual we met a few of them. Later on the weather changed and the heavens opened up so we sat in our Annex until our battery went flat so it was off to bed feeling contented with the day's events.

Day 25 – May 14th – Rolling Stone to Tully Heads. (165 km)

After a really peaceful sleep we woke to a beautiful pink sky, on the dirt road there was the worlds smallest road train – 15 hairy caterpillars travelling in a line nose to tail it was very interesting to watch. It was time for us to hit the road again we are off to visit Ellis Beach where we had morning tea and a stroll along the beach and through the little township. The beach was lined with coconut palms and coconuts were everywhere along the beach. From here we travelled north along the coast to check out the other beaches and sights; then we continued on into Ingham where we met up with the rest of the group. After some catching up and some shopping we decided to head to Cardwell for lunch.

As we pulled into Cardwell the skies looked a little threatening so we decided to do a “U” turn and park on the ocean side of the street where there was a nice grassed verge and views of the ocean. Just as we opened up to start making lunch the heavens opened and we all got soaked, some ran to our support caravans, we were lucky Richard managed to unroll his awning and we all stood under it looking very sad and very wet while we enjoyed our soggy sandwiches!



The rain stopped as fast as it started and it was fine again so another “U” turn and another 60 km’s to Tully Heads for the night. We booked into a very nice caravan park and we were all together again except for the Smith’s and their dog Toebee. We set up camp and dried out all our clothes then settled in for a comfortable evening.

Day 26 – May 15th Tully Heads to Cairns. (165 Km)

Last night we had some more rain, not what you want to hear when you live under canvas, we let the annex dry for as long as we could then packed it up still damp and got under way heading towards Cairns. We pulled into Mission Beach for morning tea and had a walk along the beach, still no white sands and palm trees they must keep these all in the resorts.

After morning tea we continued along the coast line until we reached the Bruce Highway then we followed that into Innisfail, it was a nice small town but we didn't have enough time to stop and have a good look around as we wanted to make it into Cairns and set up camp to try and dry out a little more.

We arrived in Cairns mid afternoon and booked into a very nice caravan park only three kilometres from the city centre, we set up and I made the annex detachable so we could use the car to get around town for the next few days, this was Marilyn's idea when we were building the camper, I do the practical stuff and she thinks ahead – it all seems to work out that way! We were camped under a large gum tree and to our delight five blue winged Kookaburras had landed and were all standing in a row watching us – these guys don't laugh like the Sydney Kooka's but they look the same except for the blue wings.



Day 27 – May 16th – Cairns. (50 Km)

Well, we are finally in a big town so we will be able to get a few things done, first it is off to Battery World to get a new deep cycle battery as our other one will not keep a charge, also managed to get a new battery for our GPS as it has been playing up as well.

From here we drove into town for a look around, we did a bit of window shopping and had a late breakfast at McDonalds. Afterwards we then walked down to the esplanade where there was a great swimming pool on the verge of the street which started off very shallow for the children and went out towards the sea to about six feet deep. We drove back to the caravan park to do a few chores when Richard arrived with his wife Gweneth who had flown up for a few days. They took us into town in their nice hire car for lunch and a movie of Gwen's choice who fell asleep half way through the movie which made us laugh. It was a great way to spend the afternoon.

After the movie we drove down to the night markets and spent some time looking at all the bargains and had a nice simple dinner at one of the local restaurants before heading back to camp. Marilyn exclaimed she almost felt normal again.



Swimming Pool in main street of Cairns

Day 28 – May 17th – Cairns. (0 Km)

Today we are going to be typical tourists; we are catching the steam train from central station up to Karunda. It is a fabulous old train with quite a few carriages and it took us along the coast then up a fairly steep mountain range through some beautiful rain forests. We were not far from Cairns as the crow flies but we had to wind around the mountains to get to the top. When we arrived we were met by a free shuttle bus which took us into the heart of Karunda and the markets, there were hundreds of them with some very unique items for sale, Marilyn did manage to purchase a few more Christmas gifts (more weight to carry)

After visiting all the markets and some parks and wildlife reserves we caught the Sky rail back down the mountain with a halfway stop to look at an interpretive centre. The views from the sky rail were spectacular to be so high above the canopy looking down to the forest floor and to see as far as the eye could see. We really enjoyed the day it had been a wonderful adventure.



When we arrived back home, Geoff and Doreen had arrived and they had dinner for all of us so that was a great way to finish off a terrific day!

Day 29 – May 18th – Cairns. (0 Km)

Still in the tourist mood so today it is down to the port and board a ferry over to Green Island, today is also Ann Whittles birthday so it's a double celebration. The cruise took around an hour and the water was a little rough with some waves blowing over the deck but we were all cosy inside. On arriving at the island we checked out the timetable for events and had enough time for a leisurely walk around the island, it was well set out with really nice foliage around the resort and sandy and rocky beaches. We visited the croc farm on the way around but we were too early for the feeding so we went and had a nice quiet lunch by the pool where we were attacked by local finches stealing food off our table.

After lunch we went for a cruise in a glass bottom boat to see the coral and local sea life; it was great to see all the different corals and fish as we floated slowly around in the boat and this was enjoyed by all. On our return we just had enough time to run down to the croc farm to watch the feeding and we were suitably impressed by the six metre croc jumping up for his chicken dinner! Marilyn and I also got to have our photo taken with a live croc – yes we held it in our hands all three foot of him – luckily his jaws were taped shut just in case he got hungry! (Not supposed to tell you that).



On returning to the mainland Ian and Ann went out to celebrate Ann's Birthday and Marilyn and I went to have dinner with a new friend of Marilyn's who lived close by and is also an MYOB consultant. Janelle cooked up a storm, there was so much food it was almost embarrassing but we did put a dent in it and any food you don't have to cook is always welcomed. It feels great to have been in the one place for so long we are really relaxed and enjoying life to the full.

Day 30 – May 19th – Cairns. (30 Km)

Our last day in Cairns, and time to do some maintenance on the cars in readiness for the next part of the journey, I had to get a new cradle made up for the new deep cycle battery as it was much bigger than the old one so it was off into the industrial area to find a fabrication shop. About an hour and eighty dollars later I had my new cradle, I was not happy with the price but what can you do? Back to camp and luckily the new cradle fitted in beautifully and the new battery was installed and connected up while Gary was doing his usual maintenance.

In the afternoon Marilyn went off with her new friend Janelle, they are both MYOB consultants so Marilyn is in her element – they are off to a local meeting then a dinner afterwards. Marilyn met a lot of new friends and had a good time and is almost back to normal!

Richard took Gweneth to the airport and saw her off then returned to camp to get his car ready, Richard and I decided to have take-away for dinner as we were baching, so off we walked up the street. After about half an hour we finally found a Pizza Hut and ordered in, and then we shouted ourselves an ice cream just for the hell of it! Then walked back (slowly) to camp to wait for Marilyn to return, she eventually arrived around 10:30pm and was very happy after enjoying the company of her fellow consultants!

The other group hired a mini bus and went to Cooktown for a couple of days; they will catch up to us along the way.

Chapter 3 – Across the top end

Day 31 – May 20th - Cairns to Mareeba. (160 Km)

Headed off to Port Douglas and at long last saw blue water and white sand along the shoreline just like the brochures, we stopped and had morning tea at Ellis Beach then went to Rex Lookout which was fantastic. When we arrived in Port Douglas we enjoyed a lovely walk through the township and had an enjoyable lunch at a café. The township was not as big as we thought it might be.

After lunch we headed off towards Mareeba and again up the mountains which was not as steep as Eungella but still went up in low-low gear. It is amazing how the landscape changed as soon as we reached the top of the mountain. Gone was the rainforest look, thick and green and was replaced with sparse trees, brown grass and very open.

Upon reaching Mareeba went to have a look around the Coffee Factory and who was there but the Whittles, Ian is a coffee connoisseur. From here we headed out and bumped into Gil, Laraine & Stan at the information centre in town, caught up with all their gossip then headed off to the local caravan park for the night.

Since we have settled in fairly early decided to have a nice lamb roast for tea which we cooked in our “Dream Pot” and it was absolutely delicious!

Day 32 – May 21st - Mareeba to Atherton. (45 Km)

It doesn't matter how late we get up or how much we muck around we always seem to be ready to rock and roll at around 8.30am. The Amesbury's and Days set out from Mareeba for Atherton.

About fifteen minutes down the road the car seemed to jump out of gear. Unable to select any gears we stopped, Richard checked the gearbox by cranking the motor all the gears were turning so we knew the problem was further back - so another tow back into Mareeba. We asked at the Ford dealership if we could use their facilities and were refused - no help at all from these people. We parked in a paddock across the road, jacked up the car after gathering hunks of timber from a demolition site next door, and took off the rear O/S wheel to find the wire wheel hub had split; the centre had separated from the flange. We removed the hub and found a machine shop where we had the hub machined and Mig-welded up until we can get a replacement. All back together we were back on the road and made it to Atherton for the night - a huge thirty km's away.

Marilyn was happy as her mother called and she heard all the local news from home, it was good just to hear her voice.

Paul Wood came over to visit us as he was staying in another park in town and gave us an update on the other group that had been to Cook Town, after a small glass of wine he left and we played a DVD to kill some time before bed.

Day 33 – May 22nd - Atherton to Innot Hot Springs. (90 Km)

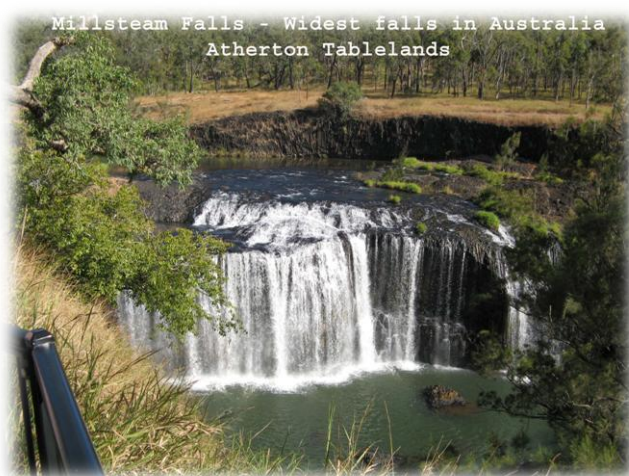
Today started off on a very light hearted note, (exert from Marilyn’s diary) we were running out of sugar packets for Richard so I asked him for some more, Richard gave me his plastic bag of salt, pepper, ketchup and sugar and said pull out the sugar first as that is what I use most of. So in dived the hand and out came a large square which looked too big for sugar and on the front was written “For men” (couldn’t read everything as didn’t have my glasses on) and I bust out laughing thinking it was a condom and from here I had the fit of giggles with tears running down my face (doesn’t sound as funny now I write about it but it was at the time) it worked out to be tissues for men?

After this humorous start to the day we were off to do some sightseeing, we started with a visit to the local lookout in Atherton which was terrific, you could see forever east but not the ocean and you realised just how high we were. Then it was off into town for a look at the Crystal Caves which was in the main street and then wandered through the main drag, it was delightful. After this we headed off for Ravenshoe (pronounced Ravens –hoe) with a few side trips along the way. Our first stop was at the town of Millaa Millaa then onto the Millaa Millaa Falls which were very pretty, we stopped for morning tea and to take some photos with the falls as the back drop.



Afterwards we continued along the road which was very windy and steep making it heavy going for the old cars. We called into Ravenshoe then shortly we reached the turn off to Millstream Falls - the widest falls in Australia. The falls were running well after all the rain that fell here earlier this year, its amazing to think back in Sydney people are on a high level of water restrictions and up here in Far North Queensland all rivers are running with water

and all waterfalls look great. After a very enjoyable lunch at these falls we headed off to Innot Hot Springs. On arrival we set up camp quickly then it was off to the hot springs for a relaxing soak for an hour or so.



It's lovely to sit and relax and listen to the family of kookaburras laugh as we organise tea, its amazing how many kookaburras we have been seeing, forgive us if we continually comment on this but we don't read back over the past days so we forget what we have written.

Day 34 – May 23rd - Innot Hot Springs to Mount Surprise. (168 Km)

Today we were treated to breakfast by the caravan park, every few days they provide a breakfast and today it is Pancakes, it sounded really good so we grabbed our plates and a fork and headed over to the pool area where the cook was already very busy. There were a few in the queue in front of us and the pancakes were going fast, soon it was our turn and the cook slapped a couple of nice thick fluffy black pancakes onto our plates! There wasn't enough maple syrup to make them taste good so we didn't bother going back for seconds! The caravan park allowed us to put our Flying Doctors tin out for donations in exchange for pancakes – well done everyone for your donations.

We broke camp and on the road again along the "Savannah Way" – this is a very romantic sounding name and we were hoping for some adventure along the road, a short distance along we saw a large sign indicating all vehicles should tune in to channel 40 on their UHF radios to keep in contact with the road trains that use this route. We all agreed to switch over and keep the talking down so as not to annoy the truckies.



A little further along this Savannah Way the road narrowed to a single bitumen lane with wide dirt shoulders, this was very interesting and also a little worrying. We did encounter several road trains with three trailers heading towards us so we had to get off onto the dirt shoulders to let them go by, they were not travelling that fast so it wasn't too much of a drama. We also had a few road trains come up behind us, but most of them just wanted a chat and were not in too much of a hurry so they just stayed behind until we reached one of the short overtaking strips and off they would go.

We arrived at Undara and drove into the Lava Tubes, this was one of the sights we all wanted to see, and we booked in for a 1:00 pm tour and had our lunch while we were waiting. At 1:00pm our lady guide arrived and loaded us up into a bus then drove us about fifteen minutes to the track leading down to the Lava Tubes. Our guide was full of information about the location and the family that owned the property which made the tour all the more enjoyable, we then explored three of the huge Lava Tubes which were very interesting, they were formed over 196,000 years ago when Lava flowed from an active volcano. The outer surface of the lava flow would cool down due to the colder air temperature allowing the hot lava to continue on down the hills for miles, this outer skin became the empty Lava Tubes after the hot molten lava had passed through.



After enjoying the tour of the Lava Tubes we started back towards the main road through a private property, as we came to the main gate in the middle of nowhere there was one car heading towards us so we had to pull up. Gary got on the CB radio and made a comment to Richard about meeting the only car on the road at that exact moment, to our surprise a ladies voice came back over the radio and said "even if you had pulled out I would have swerved around you!" We laughed and replied courteously to her and then continued on our way.

From here we drove onto Mount Surprise and booked into one of the two caravan parks, we chose the one behind the BP petrol station, it had a good collection of semi precious stones in the office, lots of birds and a Shetland pony next door which kept Marilyn busy for a while.

We decided to treat ourselves and ate out at the local takeaway which was at the front of the park, Richard and I ordered hamburgers and they were HUGE, real country size meals out here!

Day 35 – May 24th - Mount Surprise to Croydon. (243 Km)

Woke to a beautiful sunny morning, had a quick breakfast then packed up, grabbed some fuel out the front when we spied a road train with three fuel tankers parked across the road, we couldn't resist the opportunity for a photo next to these giants of the road then we

were off again heading towards Croydon. On the way out of town we saw a sign asking all vehicles to go through a car wash to remove any grass and seeds to help stop the spread of some noxious weeds, Marilyn was travelling with Richard this morning and he said OK lets go through! – Well he went across fairly quickly and the water came on just passed the front door so they escaped getting drowned. Having watched this from behind I secured my side curtains then drove across – the water pressure was so great it blasted through under the side curtains and completely drenched me – we all had a good laugh and luckily it was a nice warm day so we continued on our way.



Back on the Savannah Way it was not long before we came across some roadworks – that's OK, but they were spraying water to keep the red dust down – well needless to say that nice wet red dirt sprayed up all over our nice clean wet cars and it really sticks!

There were lots of cars, caravans and road trains heading the opposite way, most were very courteous and we chatted to some of the truckies who couldn't believe what we were attempting to do. We stopped in Georgetown for morning tea and visited the information centre where the two ladies were very nice and helpful – they even went out to take photos of our cars. Back on the road and more single lane highway, we finally made it into Croydon and found a nice caravan park to set up for the night. We then walked through town but everything was closed, so onto the pub to have a cool drink which was served up by two German back packer young ladies. At the end of the bar was an open window and to our surprise this turned out to be the drive through bottle shop, it was weird to see a four wheel drive pull up to the window and order his slab of beer then drive off again. We have a friend at Narrabri, Naomi Hall who is married to a wheat farmer, she calls Marilyn City and she calls her Country and we have to say from a women's point of view we feel very citified out here in the country.



The Historic Police Precinct of Croydon

As we walked back to camp there were several Kites flying around looking for food, they are a fairly large bird of prey and looked quite impressive as they flew past us.

Gil, Laraine and Stan met up with us back at camp and we all talked about our different experiences, as they were now in a modern car they were able to go off and see more things on their tour of

the country. The others are a day behind us and have stayed at Undara and will visit the Lava Tubes tomorrow.

Day 36 – May 25th – Croydon to Normanton. (170 Km)

After a leisurely breakfast we packed up and then went for another walk around town, it was a beautifully preserved township with a police precinct; we looked through the police station and old court house and admired the lovely old street lights which complimented the era of the old homes. After our walk we drove four kilometres out of town to Lake Belmore, which was the town's water supply, and sailing club, it was a little windy so we didn't stay long.

It's time to get under way as we are heading to Normanton today about 150 km's away, after about an hour we stopped for morning tea in Leichhardt. At this point Marilyn commented on how many suburb names were the same as back in Sydney referring back to Croydon, Belmore Lakes and Leichhardt which are all neighbouring suburbs in Sydney.

Onward again and we arrived in Normanton around 12:30 pm, did a drive through to check it all out then tried to get lunch at one of the three pubs – No luck it is not peak tourist season so they only serve drinks! Well that didn't stop us we simply moved to the local park and made our own lunch. We had also met up with the Smith's and Whittles who were already set up in the caravan park a few km's out of town. After lunch we went to check out the old railway station where the "Gulf Lander" train leaves from, we booked a ride for the next morning and got talking to the driver (as one does) the next thing you know we are out in the shed having a personalised tour of the old AEG Motor rail with a crank start just like the Model T's, only bigger.

Roland Hulbert arrived and filled us in on what the other group had been doing. Apparently Bob Wilson had been having problems starting his car, and after fitting a new battery and towing the car around the caravan park they found there was no petrol in the tank!

Further down the road he burnt out two valves, managed to tow the car to a machine shop and had some new valves fitted and then he was back on the road.

It is getting late so we booked into the local caravan park right opposite the "Purple Pub" that was its name and colour! I think people will do anything out here to attract tourists.

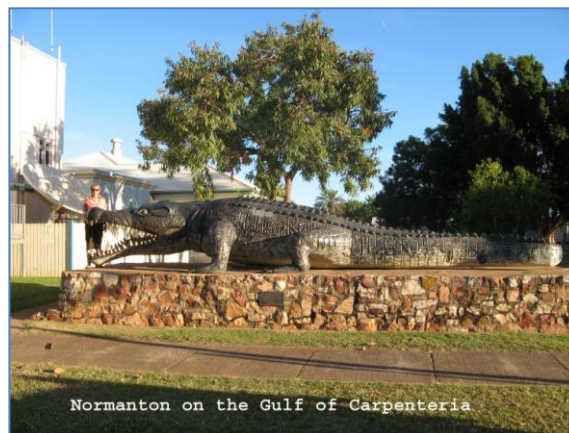
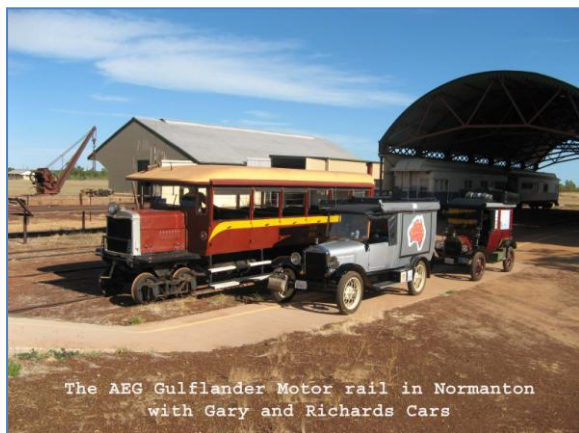
Richard suggested that now the temperature was starting to climb it may be better to get up and leave earlier and get off the road by 2:00 pm if we could – we all agreed!

Day 37 – May 26th – Normanton to Karumba. (73 Km)

Up at 6am to have breakfast pack up and get ready for our short trip on the Gulf Lander AEG Railcar. We drove down to the station and purchased our tickets then the driver gave us a very informative talk on the history of the Gulf Lander motor rail and all the people behind it. We then all climbed aboard for a very jerky and noisy 20 minute journey to a siding called Four Mile. Here the driver made us get out while he made a three point turn then picked us all up again for the return trip back into Normanton.

The Model T Ford Centenary Tour of Australia

Back at the station we heard more about the original workshops etc then we were invited to photograph our cars with the rail motor, of course we didn't hesitate and everyone got a camera full of photos.



After this adventure we headed north-west to Karumba, stopped for morning tea at Walkers Creek with everyone, Amesbury's, Days, Whittle's, Smith's, Gil, Laraine and Stan Bruce.

Back on the road to Karumba as the temperature climbed to around 30 degrees, made it to our camp ground by about 1:00 pm then went into town to see the Barramundi hatchery which was very interesting and informative. Later in the evening after an oil change we went down to the beach to watch the sunset over the ocean and had fish and chips for dinner. The sunsets over the ocean up here are unbelievable with lots of pink, another great day.

Marilyn is still amazed with the amount of birds she is seeing, at one stage she counted 26 hawks gliding high on the air pockets in the sky over our camp site. It's interesting how the bird life has changed, not seeing anymore cockies, kooka's or galah's even the landscape has changed dramatically!



Day 38 – May 27th - Karumba to Bourke and Wills Roadhouse. (281 Km)

Happy Birthday Doreen

It is a cooler morning today for the long drive south towards Mount Isa. We had an early breakfast and bid farewell to our friends, then Richard Day, Whittles and Amesbury's left and drove from Karumba back to Normanton where we stopped to pick up a few provisions. From here the road conditions were not the best, there were sections of rough road and many single lane sections where we met trucks and caravans going in both directions. We stopped for morning tea about 40 km out of Normanton at a rest area, then back behind the

wheel for more of the same scenery for miles and miles. Had lunch at another rest area about 60 km from the Bourke and Wills Roadhouse where we met a young French couple travelling around they were surprised to see our old cars out in the middle of nowhere.

After lunch it was a short trip to the roadhouse where we made camp for the evening and performed some minor maintenance on the cars, we rattled the tin for the Royal Flying Doctor to all who asked about the cars.

It is a little windy this afternoon and the cool breeze during the day made it ideal for driving the cars. The Smith's followed us later in the day but decided to free camp a little further down the road (80 Km) which was a shame as we were planning to have a birthday dinner with them for Doreen (we guess they wanted some privacy!!)



Before we went to the onsite pub/restaurant we were resting near our camper when a small helicopter flew in low and fast, landing just on the other side of the fence from us, the pilot unpacked all his gear before turning off the motor and heading into his shack for a shower. We guess out here this is the same as going to work in our cars or by train, these guys do the cattle round ups with these amazing flying machines (airborne drovers), how the other half live.

We all had a nice meal in the pub then Richard tried using the phone box to call home with some difficulty (we hope his wife Gweneth believes he tried) then we settled in for the night.

Day 39 – May 28th - Bourke and Wills Roadhouse to Mount Isa. (270 Km)

Gary and I were enjoying our first cuppa of the day at 6.15am (Gary is getting use to raising early) it was still dark when we heard the drover start up the helicopter, after a few minutes it lifted off and flew away into the dark, off to work, how interesting for us!

A very early start today on the road by 7:45 am, it was a cool morning so the cars were all running well. Drove for 80 km and found the Smiths at a road side rest area so we stopped for morning tea and a chat. Onward again to Cloncurry and Marilyn was over the moon as they had a Woolworths, so she quickly hit the shops for a pantry refill then we settled into the local park for lunch.

The scenery is interesting, it does change continually along this road. One minute it has lots of trees which are much smaller in height than the coast and the grass is long. Passed a man

about 200kms from where we stayed (to be truthful completely in the middle of nowhere) mowing the edges, this took our fancy but at least he had a job.

Back in the cars for the last stretch into Mount Isa, arrived at 3:00 pm went to the Information centre where Gary, Ian, Geoff, Richard & Roland booked an underground mine tour for tomorrow. We found a nice caravan park and set up camp for the evening. Later we had a phone call from Jim McKern in the other group, they have had a few problems with a Ring gear, brake bands etc and are ordering parts to repair the cars. Gil, Laraine and Stan are heading down to meet up with us and I believe Rowland is doing the same. Our group (group 1) is heading for Alice Springs, Group 2 have decided not to go to Alice Springs so they will spend more time in other places and we will all meet up again in Darwin - all going well.

Day 40 – May 29th – Mount Isa. (15 Km)

We didn't sleep very well last night, some of the local indigenous people living in the houses across the road from us started playing loud music followed by arguments and then a fight with children crying and women screaming.

Anyway after a quick breakfast, Gary, Geoff, Richard, Roland and Ian walked down town to the underground Mine tour, they had to don orange overalls, gum boots and hard hats, really looked the part. The tour lasted three hours and was really informative and realistic including blasting two work faces during the tour. On the way back to camp we got side tracked into Auto One and Super Cheap Auto where we bought a few (necessary) parts and oil. Meanwhile the Marilyn, Doreen & Ann went out for some retail therapy at the local shops including a trip to the local hairdresser.

After lunch we went back into town for shopping and to check the post office for my replacement wheel hub - It was there thanks to our friends in Queensland.

Went out to the club for dinner and Doreen won second prize in the raffle, \$25 worth of meat from the local butcher.

Day 41 – May 30th – Mount Isa to Avon Downs. (259 km)

We had a second very bad night as the same local people started partying around 11pm and went all night - several fights and police in attendance this time, didn't make for a good nights sleep. We did complain to the park owners but they stated that they had no control over the locals; but it made us feel better!

Off again, travelling towards the Northern Territory. Marilyn can't help thinking all the time that the landscape is not what she had expected – green trees everywhere very little red earth or barren patches.

A little further down the road we spotted a flashing light in the distance and thought there may have been an accident, as we drew closer we were waved to the side of the road by a lady police officer brandishing a hand held radar. As we stopped the police lady said "I couldn't believe what I saw when I looked through the scope so I just had to pull you over" she was a good sport and posed for a few photos while she breathalysed Gary!



We stopped and had lunch at Camooweal, and approx 1km out of town the trees disappeared and all you could see were brown plains – no trees! It was unreal, patches of bare earth and no trees.

We stopped at the border for a photo shoot and then travelled down to Avon Downs which is a lovely roadside stop over. Many others arrived with vans and tents setting up after us. For tea we had a lovely BBQ, compliments of Geoff & Doreen

from their raffle winning prize. It was lovely sitting under the dark sky in front of the log fire just talking and enjoying each others company. Meeting the other travellers at these rest areas is like a giant network, you get all the good news about where to stay and where to get the cheapest petrol, plus you get to meet new friends every day.

Day 42 – May 31st – Avon Downs to Barkley Homestead. (193 Km)

Today our destination is the Barkley Homestead, the weather has been cool and we had a tail wind which made the cars run very nicely. Again had several stretches with single lane road and a few road trains, caravans and four wheel drives. The countryside is filled with thousands of termite mounds from 30cm high to over 1.5 metres guess this is not the best place to build a wooden house!

Back on the road for the last stretch for the day, we arrived at the Homestead about 3:00 pm and settled in for the night, met lots of people as we usually do in the old cars.



Later we had a call from Jim McKern who had major problems and was now back in Cloncurry, the motor was knocking and he was unsure at the time if it was a bigend or a main bearing. We asked a fellow caravaner if he was going back via Cloncurry and he was so he took the spare conrod's to give to Jim in case this was the problem.

Chapter 4 – Down to the Red Centre

Day 43 – June 1st - Barkley Roadhouse to Devils Marbles. (324 Km)

Another cool morning so we set off early to get as far as possible as it is still a long way to Alice Springs. The cars ran well but Ian had to keep topping up his radiator with water as the fins have become separated from the tubes and are not cooling well.

Marilyn said its hard to believe that we have been on the road this long and she hadn't even read more than 66 pages of the book given to her from Caroline, haven't even done any crossword puzzles, time just seems to disappear.

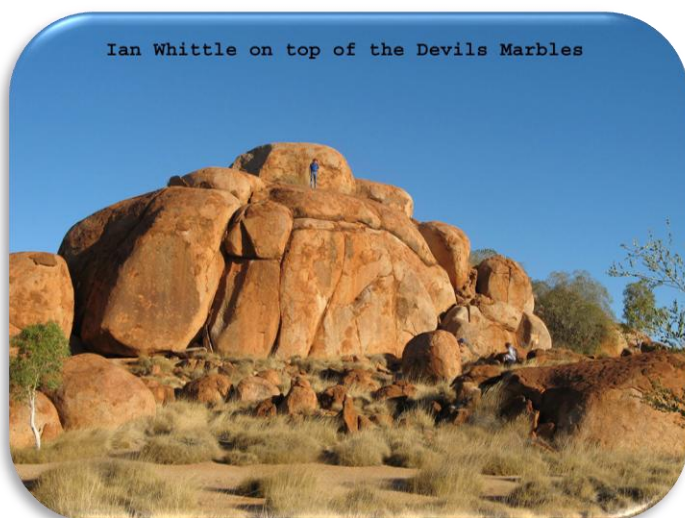
Note for Melanie from mum: “ You may need to toughen up if you are going to travel, morning tea time being the second rest area along the road would it have a toilet?, yeah no such luck so off to the pee tree. I went through the tall grass and behind the spindly tree only to squat down in what I thought was a clear spot only to have sharp points of grass stick into my bottom and to add insult to injury when I pulled up my pants it felt like I had grass caught in my pants so here I am walking back to the car shaking my right leg trying to get rid of this feeling of sharp grass sticking into me, I guess this is what you call roughing it.”

After morning tea we were off again quickly as the flies are starting to become a problem. Made it to the “Three ways” in good time and said goodbye to the Smiths as they were not going to Alice. Turned left and as luck would have it, so did the wind so we still had a tail wind. We stopped in at Tennant Creek for lunch and to fill up with fuel, the fuel is cheaper here than at the Three Ways. It was sad to see that all the shops had heavy steel bars over all the windows and so many indigenous people lying around with nothing to do but drink. Marilyn made a point of waving to them until they waved back! Which made them smile. The indigenous people don't worry her but the lock down does; it is a real shame that people have to live like this.

Arrived at the Devils Marbles for the night and managed a good photo shoot with the cars in front of the boulders before the tourists arrived.



The area is stunning with the giant boulders in stark contrast to the flatish red dirt. Richard and Ian climbed to the top of the highest rock formation to take some photos as Marilyn and I watched and took photographs of them high up on the huge boulders. Settled in for



the night with a fairly strong wind blowing which calmed down as the sun set.

Meanwhile the other group back in Cloncurry had met up with the local "Flying Padre" and at morning tea, Gary (the Padre) asked if any of them would like to accompany him in his plane, for the service at Boulia at 6pm. Doris, Jim and Margaret climbed into the Cessna at 1pm and were taken to Answer Downs for afternoon tea and then on to Boulia. They found it interesting to look down over the parched land and

mines. It gave them a better understanding of how drought impacts those who live on these drought stricken stations. At Boulia, they landed and hurried from the airport, up the road to catch the last "Boulia Experience" - explaining the sightings of the Min Min lights - very well done. As it turned out, nobody turned up for the church service so they all flew back to Cloncurry.

Day 44 – June 2nd – Devils Marbles to Prowes Gap. (260 Km)

Up early so we could see the sun rise and shine upon the rocks, it was a fantastic sight seeing the glowing red boulders come to life. The other campers were a little slower at rising but soon the place was buzzing as we all prepared for the next stage of our journey.

Stopped at Barrow Creek for morning tea which was enjoyable as it had a petrol station and pub all in one and the walls of the pub/shop were covered in paper money from all over the world, pictures of people who had passed through and business cards, so Marilyn put her card up on the wall as well, you never know, she might get a training call ha ha.



Further down the road we saw a small truck towing a Model A heading towards Darwin, they pulled over and signalled us so we pulled up, turned around and went back. It was Noel and Cathy Neil from Katherine (friends of ours through the car club), Noel and Cathy advised us they had heard from Jim McKern whose car is not fixable and he was shipping it back to Sydney and buying a modern car in Mt Isa to continue on the trip of a life time. It was lovely meeting Noel and Cathy and

they have invited us to stay with them in Katherine.

From here we went to Ti Tree for lunch which again was a very small town, with a petrol station come shop come pub etc.

About 5kms out of Ti Tree was a sign for the Mango Farm with mango ice cream so we diverted into the farm to get an ice cream, Whittles & Day didn't seem to object. This tin shed on the property was interesting as it was the only grocery store for surrounding farms and residences of Ti Tree, it's this or Alice Springs. The contents of the freezers were very interesting with everything from the mango ice cream to kangaroo tails (still fur covered), these are for the locals who throw them on an open fire to cook them and according to the shop owner they are delicious!

After a very enjoyable ice-cream and a long chat with the store owner we were back on the road for another 60 km's to a road side stop with toilets and water for the night, it's still early and allows us all a little R & R and a nice easy drive to Alice Springs tomorrow.

Day 45 – June 3rd – Alice Springs. (162 Km)

The mornings are getting colder as we head further south and last night was no exception, we slept well - apart from a couple of trucks that honked as they went past in the night. Had a nice breakfast then back into the cars for our short drive down into Alice Springs. We pulled into Aileron, a small town along the way, and took a picture of a very large statue of an aborigine with a spear on top of the mountain. There was nothing else around so we continued on.



A little further along the way we stopped for a photo at the Tropic of Capricorn and as usual had morning tea while we were stopped. An hour later we were approaching Alice Springs, Laraine, Gil and Stan had just arrived back into Alice after their trip to the geographical centre of Australia, They checked us into a caravan park while we shopped for food. The caravan parks are filling fast as the Fink Desert Race is on this weekend with 500 bikes and 80 dune buggies. We settled into our camp site and since the caravan park was extremely full the owners let us camp on their back lawn

which was quite a good spot, there was a very well stocked shop on site which catered for all sorts of caravan repairs, camping needs and a good selection of food items. After settling in and exploring the park we enjoyed a nice meal to end another great day.

Later we heard that the Wood's, Miller's and Wilson's had caught up with Jim and Ann-Maree in Mt Isa. They were pleased to hear that the McKern's had bought a Mazda 3, so that they can complete the tour. Their Model T will be taken home early next week.

Day 46 – June 4th – Alice Springs. (0 Km)

Today is a servicing and maintenance day to get the cars back into good order, the tyres are wearing faster than expected so we will be ordering some new ones from Henry's in Victoria to be posted to Darwin. Marilyn and Anne went into town compliments of our chauffer Roland for some retail therapy and to book a tour to Ayres Rock on Friday. The shopping centre is not as large as we would have thought but there was enough to cover all our needs.

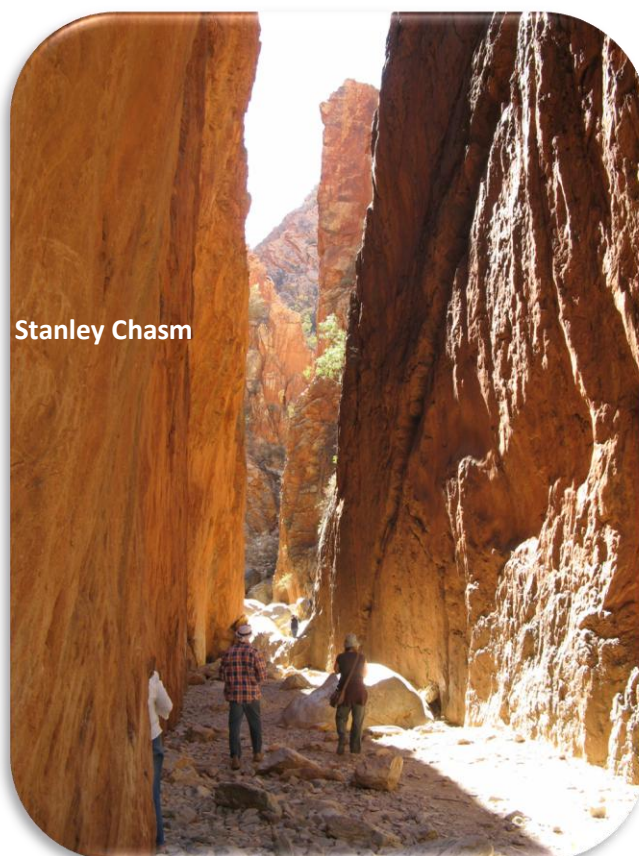
The other group is still well behind us as they will not be coming down to Alice Springs. The Woods stayed over to see more of Mt Isa, whilst the Mc Kerns finalised the purchase of their car. The Millers went on, staying overnight at Camooweal and enjoyed a fascinating tour of Freckelston's Store.

Day 47 – June 5th – Alice Springs. (113 Km)

We had a really good night last night despite the cold since we decided to leave our little blow heater on low all night which made our little annex quite comfortable and we were as snug as a bug in a rug. Richard, Gil and Laraine had organised a four wheel drive tour for today so we were up early to make sure they didn't miss their pickup. Afterwards we drove our T into town to the information centre then out to Stanley Chasm, unfortunately we arrived about fifteen minutes late and missed the best viewing when the sun is directly overhead, what we saw was still very impressive and the walk up to the chasm was a little rough. The Whittles and Roland drove out to see Stanley Chasm and on to Simpson's Gap.

When we all returned to the camp site the men went out to the National Transport Museum to see the history of Australian Transport, there were four Model T Fords and a selection of other vintage cars and a huge display of trucks, buses, road trains and army vehicles. Upon returning to camp we cooked dinner and settled in for the evening, when Richard, Gil and Laraine arrived back about 7:45pm so it was time for a cuppa and listen to their adventures of the day.

Stan's wife Robin arrived today for a week's holiday in and around Alice Springs and will be joining us for the tour out to Ayres Rock tomorrow.



Day 48 – June 6th – Alice Springs and Uluru. (0 Km)

Up before the sunrise at 5:00 am as today is the day we have booked a bus tour to Uluru or Ayres Rock well over 1,000kms round trip. Our tour guides Tic and Richard are fantastic and full of interesting information and stories.

We were greeted with breakfast as we boarded the coach of a popper, cheese & crackers and muesli bar in a plastic bag, different!

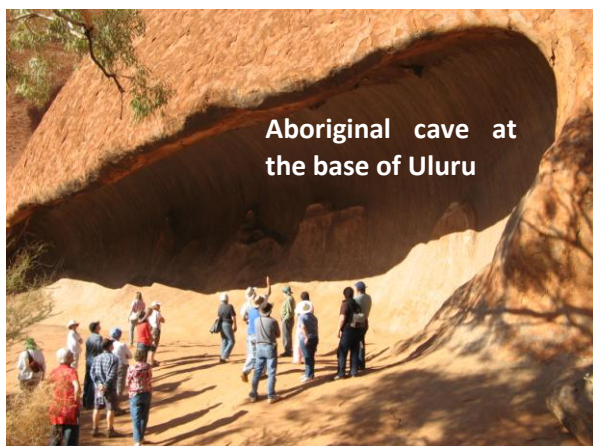
Stopped at Ebenezer Roadhouse for the morning tea break where we had a cuppa and lamington then back on the road, it was a long drive in but the drivers were entertaining. We arrived at Uluru around lunch time and were given a ham and salad roll and a piece of cake which was very nice and filling.



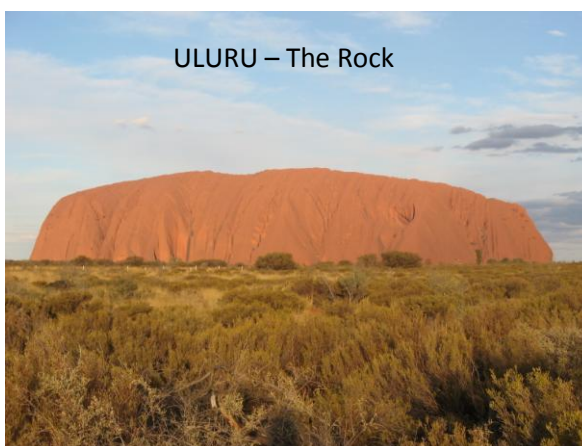
Gary & Marilyn at the Olgas

After lunch we had a tour of the cultural centre before going to see The Olga's which is another very unique rock formation, we walked around them, then onto Uluru where those who wanted to walk to the top got out, Gary had intended to climb the rock but once he saw how steep it was made a discreet retreat. We joined the others and had an informative guided tour around the base of the rock by the drivers who were well versed in the Aboriginal cultural stories of the rock.

From here we went to dinner at the Rock viewing area, we watched the sun set over the Rock. We were given "tubular steaks" (sausages) for dinner with a selection of wonderful salads and wine. As luck would have it clouds had started to gather and the sunset was not as spectacular as we had hoped but we did see different colours from red to brownish.



Aboriginal cave at the base of Uluru



ULURU – The Rock

After the sunset we were quickly herded into the bus for the 6 hour drive home, some of us took the opportunity to have a "Nana Nap" as it had been a long and fairly active day. The

tour was value for money with "Emu Tours" at \$179 per person for 18 hours of fun and entertainment.

Heavy cloud cover came in which is a shame as the Fink Races are on this weekend being the Queens Birthday long weekend. They reckon it usually rains on the Races. We arrived home around 11:30 pm and jumped straight into bed exhausted indeed from the day's activity.

Day 49 – June 7th Alice Springs. (0 Km)

Rain in Alice Springs! Yes we woke up to the sound of rain falling on our annex in the middle of the night and it didn't let up all day. All ten of us managed to squeeze into our annex during the morning as we had our little blow heater flat out trying to keep warm. This was a little like a university student stunt seeing how many people you can cram into a phone box! Except it was our annex. It was cold and wet and not very pleasant. Later Gil, Laraine and Stan and his wife Robyn went on a tour of the town to see the local sights and pick up some groceries.

In the afternoon the local car club members came over to see our cars and then took us out for a BBQ at their club rooms and presented the Whittle's and Amesbury's with their "Overlander" badges, these are issued to people who drive vintage or veteran cars to Alice Springs from a long way away and I think we qualified easily. Unfortunately Gary's badge had been misplaced so the presentation and photos were done with Ian's badge and they promised to send his to Darwin. We were then driven back to camp to start packing up to leave Alice Springs in the morning.

Chapter 5 – Back to the Top end

Day 50 – June 8th Alice Springs to Barrow Creek. (326 Km)

When we woke the rain had just about stopped but it was very cold and damp and everything was wet but we had to pack up and get on our way. We were on the road by 8:15am and heading north back towards Darwin and the promise of warmer weather. Morning tea was at a roadside stop still cold but no rain, we continued onto our lunch stop back in Ti Tree, a little shopping then back on the road and headed for a roadside stop about 40 km north of Barrow Creek, this was a very popular stop and we were lucky to get in for the night, we set up camp and hung everything out to dry, we managed to collect some firewood and light a fire and huddled around it telling stories until bed time. It was very windy all night so we didn't get much sleep, at around 4am we got up and took our tarp down as it was flapping and crackling very loudly in the wind - Dingo's were howling in the distance, just like in a spooky movie!

Day 51 – June 9th – Barrow Creek to Banka Banka. (297 Km)

Up again at the crack of dawn still cold (no heater as this was a free camp) but reasonably dry, had a quick breakfast then on the road searching for the sun. We stopped and had lunch and got fuel at Tennant creek.

A little further up the road we spotted a 2.5 metre carpet snake on the side of the road that woke us all up, then on past the Three Ways and stopped at a great place called "Banka Banka" it is a cattle station that has a camping area (no power), the office was also a small pub, after dinner they put on a slide show all about the Kidman cattle station they owned which in total was larger than the whole of Jamaica. We learned how to do water divining with a couple of pieces of bent coat hanger wire, and how to crack a stock whip. Afterwards we sat around talking with other travellers exchanging stories until bedtime and at last a pleasant peaceful night.

Day 52 – June 10th – Banka Banka to Daly Waters. (307 Km)

What a beautiful day and a great sunrise, had a leisurely breakfast then packed up, we must be getting more organised as we were ready to leave by 8.00am. Once on the road there were no roadside stops until we got to a place called Elliot, 180 km north, we had morning tea then set off again.

We had only been on the road a while when we heard Doreen call over the CB radio, she and Geoff were just ahead at Newcastle Waters, we stopped to say G'day and of course another morning tea, then we all set out for Dunmarra for lunch, this was basically just a petrol stop as many of the "towns" in this area are, some have a pub attached and a general store and post office!

After lunch it was a short but very hot drive up to Daly Waters, Marilyn was keen to get there as this is where her father used to go to fish. We were lucky to get in as it was very popular and we got the last powered site which we shared between the five vehicles,

Amesbury's, Days, Smith's, Whittle's and Roland Hulbert, the T's were parked on the dirt road through the camp area as that was the only space left.

After setting up Marilyn and Roland decided to have a swim to cool off, the water was very cold or it may have been that they were just extremely hot! Either way they were not in for long but at least they had cooled down and could enjoy the afternoon.

Later on we all went to the Pub for dinner and a show. The menu was Barra or Steak or half and half all for \$25. There was a good singer when we arrived then the singing chook man came on he was a bit loud but entertaining. After dinner Gary updated the web site then socialised a while before hitting the hay after a very nice day.

The cars are all going well at this time. We have heard that Buddy group two are in Katherine and staying with Noel and Cath Neil to do some maintenance on their cars.

It is so much nicer with the sun shining every day now and pleasant nights so we can sleep.

Day 53 – June 11th – Daly Waters to Mataranka. (173 Km)

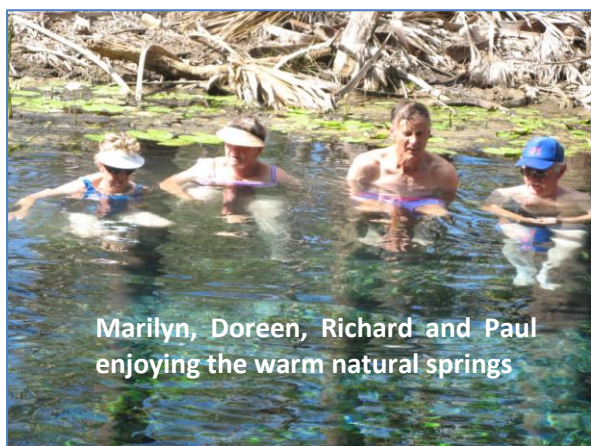
Up at the crack of dawn as the weather is getting hotter, we decided to leave early for our journey to Mataranka. We were away by 7:30 am and enjoyed the cool early morning drive. Stopped in at Larrimah for morning tea where we found an interesting pub called the Pink Panther and a great little WWII Museum, which had some unique photos of the troops in the area during that period. Then it was just a short trip into Mataranka where we booked into the Bitter Springs Caravan Park.



Marilyn outside the Larrimah Hotel



A Huge Termite nest in Larrimah



Marilyn, Doreen, Richard and Paul enjoying the warm natural springs

As soon as we were set up we had lunch then a short walk to the natural springs for a leisurely swim in the tepid waters - it was great, we floated around for a couple of hours until we were all wrinkled! Back at camp we had a nice BBQ dinner then played cards and talked with other campers - many of which had been seeing us along the way for several weeks. One of these campers said he had written an article for a caravan magazine "On the Road" about our group and our adventure then he took a few

photos to send off with it! He said he writes a lot of special interest articles and if they get printed he gets paid, I guess this helps pay the bills and keeps him busy.

Day 54 – June 12th - Mataranka to Katherine. (116 Km)

Another warm morning so up early again for our days journey into Katherine, lots of driving and not much to see. Drove out of Mataranka and back onto the Stuart Highway but there was nowhere to stop for morning tea so we drove onto Katherine. As we approached Katherine Ian ran out of fuel, so we stopped and gave him a few litres to get him into town, and off he went. As we entered Katherine we got a red light - the only lights in Katherine and for the last 1000 km's. As Ian went to move off the car decided to stay still so we pushed him across the intersection into a servo to find he had broken an axle. Luckily Roland was carrying a spare axle that Jim McKern had picked up from Mark Herdman in Qld, so a quick phone call to Noel Neil (a model "A" man who we had met earlier on the way to Alice Springs) he had Ian's car on a trailer and back to his workshop in no time at all. Ian, Richard, Gary and Roland worked on the car and had the diff out and repaired and back on the road by 8:00 pm. Whilst the boys slaved away working on the T, the ladies sat under a lovely cool tree enjoying the breeze that flowed through and chatting to their hearts content.

The Smiths, Gil and Laraine along with Stan and Robyn joined us for the night at Noel and Cath Neil's home where we camped on their property for the night. Thanks a million Noel and Cath.

Day 55 – June 13th – Katherine to Darwin. (313 Km)

Up even earlier today and on the road by 7:00 am as the weather is quite hot, we stopped briefly for morning tea at Pine Creek which had a nice and shady park. Lunch was at a BP station at Adelaide River. After lunch the temperature was rising, it was up to 32 degrees, the landscape seems to be rising also, and we always seemed to be going up hill! You don't realise how many mountain ranges there are in Australia until you start driving around the country. Finally arrived in Darwin at around 2:00 pm and found our van park, we had been allocated almost a full row in the park for our group; we selected the best site, nice and flat with good shade from a large tree. We then had a nice cool swim before setting up camp for the night. Finally we are all together again in the same park at least for a few days.

Day 56 – June 14th – Darwin. (0 Km)

Marilyn awoke looking like a white mountain with red volcanos all over it. She was covered in midgie bites.

No time to sleep in today as we are all going on a bus trip to Litchfield National Park. Our pick up was at 7am and we had the whole bus for our group, first we headed down south for a Crocodile Tour, it was called the Jumping Crock Tour and it wasn't long before we found out why! We have to admit this far exceeded our expectations. We were only on the river for a few minutes before we saw crocs in the water and boy oh boy what big suckers they were, you can understand how they can take a whole person, their size was unbelievable, you see statues of crocs and think oh yeah! BUT yes we saw these big suckers. One of the crew members dangled some meat over the side from a pole with a

long piece of string attached, this attracted the crocks to come along side the boat, as the crocks went for the bait they would lift the pole up making the crocks jump up for the bait – some of them had half their body out of the water – it was a very scary sight!

After this interesting cruise we headed into the park where we had lunch at the Best Western Hotel this was also terrific, after a good feed in the air-conditioned comfort, we headed into Litchfield Park to see the waterfalls. They were spectacular and flowing rather fast, we got to swim in Florence Falls which was very refreshing and wonderful. Then it was back on the bus for the long drive back to our campsite

We also saw some HUGE termite mounds in the park, hundreds of years old. It was a nice change to let someone else drive so we could all enjoy the day.



A Very Hungry Croc



Marilyn finds the biggest Termite nest in Litchfield Park



Marilyn trying to souvenir the sign!

Day 57 – June 15th – Darwin. (0 Km)

As our caravan park is very close to the airport we heard all the aircrafts take off and land all through the night. The Air force was also doing night manoeuvres to add to the chaos. Some members have decided to stay longer at the caravan park while others like the Smith's have moved to the local car club grounds. Roland has had clutch problems with his modern car and had it towed to a repairer today to get a quote and hopefully get it repaired. The Miller's, McKern's and Wilson's went to the car show where Bob had his car and McKern's caravan on display and the Woods visited the WWII Underground Oil Storage tanks.

Rex and Norma Taylor along with Michael and Leslie North from our Sydney club were holidaying in Darwin and dropped in to visit our group at the van park, it was great to see some new faces around and catch up with what was happening back home.

Gary, Richard & Ian did the usual maintenance whilst Marilyn and Anne took advantage of the parks pool and floated around enjoying a nice relaxing time cooling off.

In the afternoon we all went to the Mindill Beach Markets where Marilyn managed to purchase a few more Christmas gifts, we met up with the Smiths and enjoyed a great sunset over the ocean while eating take away from the markets. The sunset was all that you hear about and better.

Gil and Laraine went to visit Gil's daughter and picked up the tyres which we had ordered from Melbourne, Stan's wife Robyn left for home at 1:30 am on Monday morning in one of those noisy jets.

Day 58 – June 16th – Darwin. (39 Km)

No rush to get up and get going today it is nice to be so relaxed, we thought we would do some local sight seeing before moving to the club rooms later today.

We followed the tourist mud map down to the heart of the Darwin Coast to do a tour of the WWII Storage Tunnels. Oh yeah we parked the car and followed the map walking miles up the road and finally asked someone only to be turned around and sent back the way we came. Finally found the tunnels and thoroughly enjoyed the talk and walk through these oil storage tunnels which after being finished were never used as the war was coming to an end. After the tour we went up to the viewing platform above the storage tanks only to see our cars parked across the road. The walk around the world was good for the waist line.

After enjoying the view we found we still had time left on the parking meter so headed to the shops where we enjoyed a leisurely lunch and walk around the stores. Then it was off to the club rooms to catch up with Geoff and Doreen Smith and Roland. The club rooms are terrific being a WWII Qantas hanger which is heritage listed and interesting for the Gary & Richard. Looking through the building you could see bullet holes through the steel girders from strafing during the war, the sheeting was also blown off when a bomb exploded next to the building.

We have all the comforts of home - our own toilet and shower and also a washing machine and a full kitchen. The hanger is open to the public and must be open every day so there is always something going on – we have been entrusted with locking the gates each night which is a very important job!

Day 59 – June 17th – Darwin. (0 Km)

Maintenance day today, Gary's new tyres have arrived so he changed over the spare one. Then we all just lazed around talking and enjoying ourselves. The Marilyn & Ann walked to the local shops which were very deceiving from the front but actually went for two blocks and had everything including three dress shops and quite a few designer shops as well, very interesting.

Geoff Smith had arranged to take his Nissan Patrol in for servicing at a local mechanic and Richard Day decided to ride along to keep him company. When they arrived at the workshop Geoff got out to speak to the mechanic who was a young man, the mechanic asked if the man sitting in the car was Richard Day and it turned out that he used to work

with Richard some years earlier in Sydney. What are the chances of pulling into a mechanic on spec thousands of miles from home and meeting someone you know!

Later that day Bob Wilson, the McKern's, Rex and Norma Taylor with Michael and Leslie North arrived for a look around the old Qantas hanger and have a chat; it was good to catch up with everyone again.

For tea tonight we decided to take advantage of the stove in the club rooms so we all pitched in and had a lovely baked dinner. Here we were 8 of us sitting in Darwin camping and enjoying a wonderful baked dinner – ahh isn't life great!

Day 60 – June 18th - Darwin to Kakadu. (213 Km)

Time to leave Darwin today along with Day & Whittles we headed out to explore Kakadu, having already seen Litchfield Park we were not sure what to expect. We decided to stop at a bush camp site for the evening at Aurora in Kakadu; it was a large camping area next to a resort which had a nice pool. Before setting up Gary and I decided to go for a swim so we could have a break from the others and just have 'us' time, the pool was glorious and we had it to ourselves. A tree next to the pool was literally covered with white cockatoos with pink necks playing and laughing with each other, also others were on the ground rolling around under the sprinklers flapping their wings or lying on their backs. It was so funny to sit in the pool and watch, they were delightful.

The temperature has been in the low thirties all the time with a little relief at night. We decided to use the camp BBQ for dinner and cooked up Pork Ribs and Chips, all was well until we sat down then we were attacked by about a million mozzies, this really spoiled a great meal. After dinner we watched a slide show delivered by one of the park rangers "Annie" she was very informative and really loved her job with a passion. We made plans for the next day and retired for the evening.

Day 61 – June 19th – Merl - Kakadu. (89 Km)

Up early as we were going on a guided walk around the billabong and surrounding lands. It was a lovely morning as we drank our first cup of tea watching the wildlife awake especially listening to the kookaburras which doesn't have a laugh like we know it in Sydney, it has a cackle of sorts. A dingo cautiously skulked around the outskirts of the camp ground whilst the magpies came looking for breakfast.

We met ranger Annie outside the Resort for a very informative walk and talk around the local billabong. Annie was very passionate about the Aboriginal people and had fantastic knowledge of the area, bush food and the local people. We made our way back to camp full of new and interesting folk-law and knowledge.

We packed up and made our way some 80 km to our destination, Merl, and the border store, we had lunch by the river and saw a four metre croc lurking around while a fishing boat was trying to get into the boat ramp. After lunch we went to the store only to bump into the other group who were staying in Jabiru and had just finished the walk we were about to start. As it was very hot we decided to go and find a camp back at Merl. Great camp area, all sites were in alcoves so it was like being on your own as you couldn't see the camp next to you, we left our chairs set up so no one else would park in our spot while we

went to visit the Aboriginal Art at “Ubir” - we arrived just in time to hear the ranger start her talk and lo and behold it was ranger Annie again! A very interesting talk followed by several aboriginal art galleries then a climb to the top of a large rock to watch the sunset over Kakadu - another stunning sunset.



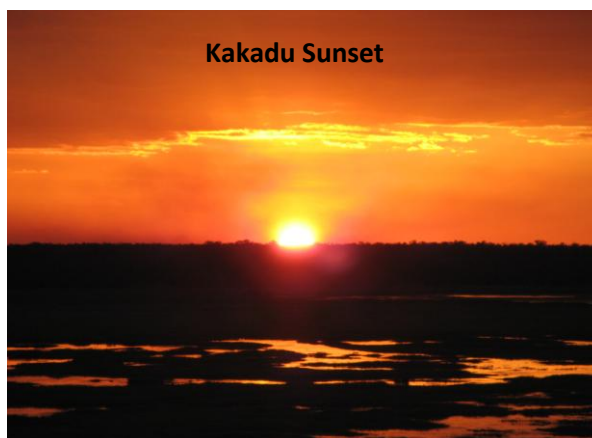
Arriving at the entrance to Kakadu



Our camp site in Kakadu



Aboriginal art in Kakadu caves



Kakadu Sunset

To sit here on top of the world (mountain) looking over the flood plains is indescribable, its hard to believe that what you believe to be a dry arid land is so lush and green with lots of trees and water. Wildlife is not as abundant as we thought it would be. After the tour was finished we did a quick retreat back to our camp site to pitch our campers in the dark with the help of thousands of mozzies.

Ian was late getting back as he had lost his CD case which bounced out of his car while crossing a bumpy floodway on the way back. A quick search with help from some strangers failed to find them so they returned to camp very disappointed.

Day 62 – June 20th – Kakadu – Coondia, Yellow Waters. (133 Km)

We needed to be on the road by 8am today to help Ann and Ian look for their lost CD holder and would you believe it Annie the Ranger opened the gates this morning and was thrilled to see us and now knows what a Model T is. When we told her yesterday what we were driving she nodded as if she knew what they were - she said it was easier then asking, just like us nodding (as if we understood) when she was telling us things about the country.

After searching for ages we finally found the CD holder so we could now set out towards Jabiru.

Upon reaching Jabiru we saw a huge bakery which of course the Gary, Richard & Ian just had to stop at and we have to say what a great shop, we enjoyed morning tea immensely before setting out to tour the town centre. Marilyn was excited to get to a town centre – but oh boy what a let down, grocery shop, newsagency, coffee shop, council office and souvenir shop. So we decided to head to our overnight stop and have a leisurely night.

The battery went dead tonight, Gary doesn't know why as we brought a 100 amp hour battery in Cairns and the only thing we are running on the battery is the fridge/freezer and two small lights (we also turn off the one we are not using) and tonight Marilyn did use the computer via the inverter but surely it should last longer than this, it is becoming a worry for us mainly due to the amount of frozen meat we have since we buy up for a week whilst in a big town with a Coles or Woollies.

Day 63 – June 21st – Kakadu to Pine Creek. (172 Km)

The first thing to do today is check the battery and of course it is under the floor so everything had to come out of the back of the camper! Eventually Gary found a wire which had become disconnected so that was repaired and we were back in business.

A lovely cool morning saw us make our way 3 km up the road to Yellow Water where we walked along the boardwalk to view the billabong and its bird life, we then moved on a further 2 km and visited the very informative Warradjan Aboriginal cultural centre. Our last stop in Kakadu was the Mary River Roadhouse for lunch. We all agreed it was well worth a visit to this heritage listed area and we have come away with many cultural experiences and stories that help us understand the people and the environment a little better.

We are camped at Pine Creek tonight, after taking a short walk around town we realise it is only by taking time to look do you get a true appreciation of what an area has to offer. We found a huge lake behind the town which is a result of the mining in the area; some of these mines are still working.

Day 64 – June 22nd – Pine Creek to Edith Falls. (68 Km)

It's Sunday morning and we awoke to a cloudy cool morning (even had our jumpers on) no need to leave early as we only have a short way to go. Marilyn and Ann walked across to the Sunday markets – a whole 4 stalls! Not really worth the effort but it was a break in our routine and made a nice change.

We set off for a leisurely drive to Edith Falls and after turning in off the main road we saw Bob & Margaret Wilson so we pulled over for a chin wag on the side of the road, afterwards we headed for our camp for tonight. We arrived at 11.30 am and set up camp after which we did a short walk to the lower falls which were very scenic, cascading down into a huge lake which felt too cold to swim in even though there were a few tough souls who had ventured in.

The camp area is lovely for a National Park it is circular in shape with little bays where you camp; thus you don't really know you have neighbours and are surrounded by native forest.

After a lovely lunch of cheese and tomato, peanut butter and jam sandwiches (this was all we had left) we headed off on the hike to the Upper Falls for a swim, this hike was 1.6 km's



one way and 1 km back the other way thus doing the loop. The Upper Falls were lovely and Marilyn sat in the water to cool off since it was all up hill to the falls. This walk even though it was long and over rough terrain was terrific and I am sure we will all sleep well tonight.

We dined on the last of our ration of meat tonight, minted chops, boiled potatoes and vegetables. I reckon we dine better on this trip than we did at home.

We are really glad we have the annex as the five of us (Amesbury, Day & Whittles) were in there eating tea away from the flies and a few mozzies and midgies, everyone is scratching at the midgie bites they are so annoying.

Marilyn was still concerned about the battery going flat again and the Whittles and Richard Day do not have any lights for all of us to sit under and eat and talk by so Marilyn suggested we use candles, they worked a treat hence leaving our battery lights for us to use to go to bed with.

Its 9.30pm getting to be our usual bedtime which is dreadful for Marilyn as she sleeps like the dead for 2 hours and then she is ready to get up but she just has to lie there dozing until 6.30am at which time we all get up. It's amazing, if we were back home we would want to sleep in but out here we can't seem to lay in past 6:30 am.

It was lovely last night, so we slept with the sides of our annex rolled up again which just leaves the fly screen sides for protection from the flies and mozzies and we could see the moon move across the sky whilst laying in bed, its fun watching people walk past knowing they can't see us.

Day 65 – June 23rd – Edith Falls to Katherine. (96 Km)

Another leisurely morning as we only had a few km's to go to Katherine which is our destination for the next couple of days. Arrived in Katherine filled up with petrol and groceries (food at last, we were on our last crumbs)

Then it was out to Katherine Gorge National Park for the night ready for the cruise up the Gorge tomorrow. We camped in a lovely National Park where wallabies roam around between the camp sites, its great to be sharing with nature. Flying foxes filled about 5 trees and whilst we were out walking late this afternoon they were all waking up getting ready to fly off for the night, they sound like cats fighting.

There are Curlews all around in this National Park and at night they sound like someone is being murdered and screaming - it is very unnerving. If you get close to one of their nests they stand perfectly still so you can't see them (or at least that's what they think) silly buggers!

I (Marilyn) am feeling a bit sad, no reason, I guess I am missing everyone at home and also my lovely clients and thinking of poor Melanie who is starting to battle through end of financial year all by herself.

Gary, Richard and Ian did their usual oil change and car servicing while they had the time.

Day 66 – June 24th – Katherine Gorge. (0 Km)

We were up really early this morning as we had to be at the boat ramp by 6.45am for our tour of Katherine Gorge. Geoff and Roland had to drive from their caravan park back in Katherine and were late, Roland just made it as the boat started to move off but Geoff had a call of nature at the last minute and missed the boat, we all felt really bad but the captain said he couldn't wait any longer or all the tours would be delayed. Once onboard our open ferry we were served a lovely breakfast as we travelled up the first gorge.



Katherine Gorge

It was wondrous watching the sun come up and shine on the gorge walls showing all the different red tones. We reached the end of the first gorge and had to get out and walk past an old art gallery of Aboriginal paintings which were quite amazing as they were half way up the cliff face, so I guess they were done before the valley floor was washed away over centuries.

The second gorge was far more impressive than the first; it's hard to believe that palm trees grow out the side of the sheer rock face. It was great how most of our group were on the cruise and it enabled us time to catch up to everyone and hear their news.

On our return, Geoff was waiting for us very upset, he tried to get a refund but the office would not give him one, they did offer him a place on a later cruise but he did not want to go on his own so he left very upset and annoyed at the loss of all that money.

After a leisurely morning tea the Amesbury's, Whittles & Day decided to take a walk to the lookout which included over 200 sheer steps up the side of the mountain, it was worth the effort to see the river and gorge from such a height. After much debating it was decided rather than going down the sheer steep rock steps we would take the 2.8 km trail home which ambled through the bushland of the National Park.

We reached our camp by about 11.30am and all fell into our chairs with exhaustion and there we sat for an hour or so watching the wonderful sights of nature. Small green parrots were swooping past and landing in a flowering gum tree which had green leaves and yellow/orange flowers so these birds blended in so well it was hard to spot them in the branches. Wallabys are still roaming free around the camp sites, it is just great. Gary, Richard and Ian are doing small maintenance work ensuring all is "A OK" for our continuing journey tomorrow.

This afternoon we collected Australian things to give to Jim Miller for his 81st birthday. We ended up with genuine Aussie flies, genuine Aussie ants, Orange gum blossom, an Aborigine sharpening tool (a smooth rock), Katherine Gorge rocks, Gum nuts, an Aussie lunch box, Aussie bean pods and genuine Roo Poo. This gave us all a good laugh whilst we were searching for the items and for his birthday card we picked two very large green leaves together on a branch and Marilyn & Ann wrote happy birthday on them in red texta.

Day 67 – June 25th – Katherine Gorge to Victoria River. (231 Km)

Back on the road again with a quick stop to wish Jim Miller a Happy Birthday and give him our great Aussie present, they were staying with Noel and Cathy Neil just outside of Katherine, and then into town for fuel and more supplies then back onto the main drag towards our next stop, Victoria River.



Preparing for an invasion with an inflatable rocket

Along the way there were many army trucks participating in war games, and in the distant we could see a huge army truck with a missile loaded on top, we were feeling a little nervous but as we got closer we saw it was just a blow up model, so we stopped for a look. We took the opportunity for a photo

and embarrassed the poor soldier just sitting there waiting to be bombed!

We continued along the Victoria Highway to our destination and set up camp, the McKern's and Wilson's were there also, kangaroos and heaps of bird life were everywhere, this is a really nice place to stay for the night. Later on just after dark everyone wandered down to the bridge over the river to see if we could spot any Crocs, as it turned out we were the only old crocs around. The night sky was black and Marilyn commented that the stars looked like diamonds floating in the black sky they sure did – you can see so many more stars out in the country even the Milky Way was bright and huge.

Day 68 – June 26th – Victoria River to Timber Creek. (92 Km)

Marilyn was up early so she could watch the sun come up and hit the mountains behind us and she was not disappointed, it was magnificent, the whole mountain was a rich dark red which glowed.

Today we were heading for a rest area west of Timber Creek but our journey was cut short, as we entered Timber Creek there was Jim Miller lying under his Model T. We stopped to see if we could help and found that the motor had developed a loud knock.



Jim Miller looking for a knock!

After checking the big ends we re-assembled the car and the knock was still there, we decided to book into the Caravan Park and worked on the car in the shade. The Wilson's and McKern's arrived and booked in also so all the T's were in the one place again as Richard and the Whittles were travelling with us.

Believing the problem was the con rods we tried to contact Roland who had gone fishing and was carrying the spare rods. After several unsuccessful phone calls and

UHF calls, Jim McKern and Bob Wilson drove about 60 km checking out all the side roads leading to the river - No luck so they returned to camp. We asked other travellers to be on the lookout for them just in case.

Richard pulled the motor down again, head off, sump open and pulled out number two piston. The Piston was badly scored from a previous problem when he ran out of water, the cylinders were all blue and cylinders two and three were cracked from the valves to the cylinders and about one centimetre down the cylinder walls.

We decided to leave the car until the next morning and think about the problem.

We walked down to the river with the camp owners who feed the fish and crocodiles at 5pm and after this nice display decided it was our turn to be fed so back to camp for the night.

Day 69 – June 27th - Timber Creek to Saddle Creek. (117 Km)

The weather is quite warm around here so we got started early on the Millers car. As the big end was OK the piston was replaced and the centre main bearing was removed, this proved to be the offending part and had been beaten down a little. Richard took the cap to a nearby workshop and using a precision 9" angle grinder removed a pre-determined amount of material. The cap was then re-fitted and it fitted perfectly without any shims and felt good. The motor was re-assembled and the Millers were on their way with Stan following as their back up support. The McKern's and Wilson's left for Kununurra earlier that morning as there was no need for everyone to stay back.

Gil and Laraine and the Woods' arrived as we were packing up to leave, they booked into the caravan park and we left for a rest area named Saddle Creek about 117 km up the road and a little closer to our next stop in Kununurra. The rest area was almost overflowing with caravans but we managed to squeeze into a small area, we cooked up all our vegies and potatoes for dinner so we would not have to hand them in at the W.A. Border.

Chapter 6 - The Western Australia Adventure

Day 70 – June 28th – Saddle Creek to Kununurra. (250 Km)

Excited about our next destination we were up early as we had heard that there were markets on in Kununurra and we love markets. As we approached the W.A. Border we realised that we had to set our watches back another one and a half hours so now we had plenty of time to get to the markets.

We arrived in Kununurra around 9:00 am and went directly to the markets which were quite large and very busy. We then shopped at the IGA store which was owned by our host, for the next few days Bevan and Bernice Spakman. The Miller's, Smith's, McKern's and Wood's were all at the markets so we got directions from them and then made our way to the Spakman's home called "Tiger Lodge", which was a beautiful spot on the Ord River with 25 acres of Mango trees and beautiful lush green lawns and their own private caravan park for friends. The owners were away for the weekend and would be back tomorrow afternoon.

We made use of the Canoe and Paddle boat while others tried their hand at fishing; this is such a beautiful and restful place we could stay here forever!



The Spakman's very impressive driveway in Kununurra

Day 71 – June 29th – Kununurra. (0 Km)

Well it certainly was an early start today, the birds were up at the crack of dawn which was 5:00 am so we were all up by 5.30 am.

After a leisurely breakfast Marilyn managed to do a little bit of washing whilst she had the facilities and then it was off into town as we had all agreed to put on a BBQ for our hosts the Spakman's later tonight, as a thank you for having us. No one wanted to give up their time to go to town to buy the meat & salad so Roland and Marilyn volunteered only to find out that the ones with modern cars were going to town anyway for the car boot sale, What a bunch of lazy !!!!!.

After organising the meat and salad we ventured off to the local car boot sale which had some good items for sale then back to the house for morning tea and a cruise up the river compliments of the Spakman's. The boat would only carry 10 passengers so we split the group in two and we got to go first. What a lovely cruise, 4 hours long up the Ord River it was magical and Gary and Annette who managed the IGA store gave up their Sunday to give us a very informative tour and made the trip very interesting. We saw a "freshy" (fresh water croc), lots of pelicans and amazing trees growing out of the cliff faces. Some of the group even managed a quick swim in the cool waters before we headed back to the lodge.



We returned to Tiger Lodge for lunch then the other half of the group went on their cruise. After a very lazy afternoon tea Roland, Marilyn and Gary went into town to pick up the meat that we had ordered for the BBQ and upon our return we had decided that we would delegate the cutting up of the salad and pre dinner nibbles. Upon asking two of the other "ladies" to cut up the salad one replied "And what are you going to do Marilyn?" Marilyn bit her tongue and walked away extremely upset since she had

given up her time and been into town twice with Roland organising all the food and gifts for our hosts. We decided at this point that in future we would look after ourselves and not bother about the others who never offered to help, we had plenty of other friends in the group who always put their hands up to assist and we got on fine with them, this seemed to be the general feeling among most of the others.

Before dinner Bevan took Gary and the other guys on a little tour of his "Toy Box" this was a large room about a triple garage size and it contained his toys, a collection of vintage bikes, cars, a jeep and other memorabilia. Bevan also relaxed after work by mowing the lawns (with his ride on mower) between the mango trees which looked like bowling greens.

At dinner time Gary did all the cooking, once again no offer of help from the others but we remained quiet so as not to upset our very gracious hosts. Later on Gary presented Bevan

and Bernice (our hosts) with a certificate and an “Around Australia cloth badge” as a memento of our visit before retiring for the evening.

Bernice did show us one country secret while we were there and that was to sprinkle Listerine around to keep the mosquitoes away – and it seemed to work quite well!

Day 72 – June 30th – Kununurra. (27 Km)

Today we have all booked on a flight over the Bungle Bungle Ranges, so it was down to the airport by 8:30 am, we were split up and put into four eight seater planes which all took off at the same time. We flew over Lake Argyle which is 18 times the size of Sydney Harbour in the dry season and 52 times the size in the wet season. All was going well until the ride got a little rough then the paper bags supplied began to fill rapidly; Richard and Marilyn were the only two on our plane that did not get sick. Some people in the other planes were sick too but not from our group. The flight also flew over the Argyle Diamond Mine which was really impressive from the air. The Bungles were outstanding and Marilyn took hundreds of photos as she could because poor Gary just sat there very still and her heart went out to him. On returning to earth we were given a DVD of the flight so we can see it all again (or for the first time for some). Upon our return Gary, Ian and Ann headed straight to the cars and threw blankets onto the ground and collapsed.



Lake Argyle from the small plane



The Bungle Bungle ranges



Argyle Diamond Mine

Richard and Marilyn enjoyed a leisurely morning tea before heading into town to stock up on groceries leaving the others to rest, upon their return it was decided not to go to Lake Argyle for the night but head back to the Spakman’s so they could rest.

Gary spent the rest of the day recovering back at the Spakmans home.

Day 73 – July 1st – Kununurra to Leycester rest area. (266 Km)

Its amazing how early we are getting up, it's only 5.30am and the birds have woken us up again so here we sit enjoying a nice hot cuppa whilst watching the sun come up showing us magnificent colours of pink slowly turning to bright orange before the sun breaks through the horizon.

We said our goodbye's to the Spakman's then headed off to the main road. The Millers left first to keep ahead of us in case of troubles, Stan followed a short time later then Richard, the Amesbury's and Whittles headed off for a nice leisurely drive to Leycester Rest Area about 60 km south of Turkey creek. The road was leading to Wyndham where the Smiths and Roland had gone the day before, as we turned off onto the road to Broome we could hear the Smiths calling on the UHF radio, coming from the opposite direction so we were all close together. We stopped for a quick morning tea on the side of the road, then on to our rest area for the evening.

Here we sit enjoying the company of the Smiths, Whittles, Day and Hulbert, this group is good as we all get along and enjoy each others company. Played cards to help pass the time and just laughed our heads off as the sun sets at 5:30 pm and it is a long time to bed time, usually in bed by 8:30 pm which is a little early but we do get up early also to get on the road and avoid driving in the heat of the day.

The other members took an extra day and visited Wyndham, Croc Farm (closed) coffee shop (closed) Shops (closed) the whole town was closed by 2 pm. Enjoyed the views from the lookout where the five rivers joined.

Day 74 – July 2nd – Leycester to Mary Pool. (213 Km)

Up at the usual time 5.30am, the birds were a lot quieter and sounded small. We travelled to Halls Creek in time for morning tea. This town was refreshing in the amount of shops it has – three grocery stores, hardware, general store and two petrol stations but when all is said and done you could walk from one end to the other in 5 minutes so you judge for yourself how big the place is (yes I know I am a city slicker).

Nothing much to do except drive from place to place at the moment, the scenery is great and constantly changing. We have seen wild horses, kangaroo's, dingo's, pigs and a few snakes, salt and fresh water crocks. There is also an abundance of bird life with the Blue Winged Kookaburras waking us up each morning with there strange raucous call, their nothing like our Kookaburra's back in Sydney but very pretty to look at.

Today we are driving to Mary Pool which is a free rest area 118 km West of Halls Creek, as we arrived it was well off the road and across a much worn weir; we found a nice shady spot and set up camp. The Smith's and Roland arrived a short time later and joined our little group where we had cows roaming free through our camp site.

The place was buzzing with lots of other campers and they kept coming in until quite late and the whole area was full to the brim. Gary decided to have a shower and set up the portable unit in the scrub next to our camp, as he entered and prepared for his wash our friends rushed to get their cameras and tried to photograph him in the shower – who knows why! But Gary was a wake up to them and all they got was pictures of his hands and



balding head. The other group McKern's, Wilson's and the Woods stayed a few km's further back at another rest area. The Millers and Stan had driven on to Fitzroy Crossing to get accommodation.

Gary & I took a leisurely stroll up and down the river watching the crocodiles sunning themselves on the other side of the bank (hope they don't come to visit on our side).

We enjoyed Beef Stew for tea tonight (no no we brought the beef from the supermarket).

Day 75 – July 3rd Mary Pool to Fitzroy Crossing. (188 Km)

We left our leafy camp site at around 7:30 am still not used to the time change in W.A. and drove towards Fitzroy Crossing with a nice tail wind up until morning tea which was at a cliff lookout. There were several push bike riders camping at the lookout with a Toyota Prius as their support vehicle. As we were about to leave they asked if they could have a photo with the Model T's, the Prius and the bike riders for a magazine article.



Morning Tea stop atop a windy Hill

Geoff and Doreen joined us for morning tea and reported that Roland had got another flat tyre on his caravan, as we were leaving Laraine and Gil arrived and asked about Roland then took off towards Fitzroy Crossing to try and find him, unfortunately he was in the other direction!

Roland caught up to us all at Fitzroy Crossing and immediately went and bought two more new tyres for the van. Roland then went about

80 km out of town to a rest area for the night, the rest of us settled into different van parks and made camp for the night. We enjoyed the evening watching the kangaroo's grazing around our camp.

We received a text message from Stan that he and the Millers had arrived in Derby, later he contacted us to see if we would like to participate in the Boab Festival Parade tomorrow and we said we would do our best to get there on time, 261 km's before, 3:00 pm.

Day 76 – July 4th – Fitzroy Crossing to Derby. (280 Km)

Everyone was excited this morning so we were up and on the road early heading for "Derby", to participate in their "Boab Festival Parade" later today, we were on our way by 7:15 am to make the best of the cool part of the day. We stopped for a quick morning tea with Roland and the Smith's who were at the rest area first, then on towards Derby. The Boab trees were becoming more frequent with a whole range of shapes and sizes. As we approached the turn off to Derby there was a huge Boab tree being photographed by Chanel Nine for the Boab Festival, they also got a few photos of our cars as we arrived.

Into Derby and found our caravan park, had lunch and a rest, The Wilson's, Gil and Laraine, McKern's, and Stan are all at the same park and the Millers are staying in a cabin.

At 3:00pm we made our way to the Civic Centre and took our place in the parade, there were a lot of children both aboriginal and white Aussie's and they were all having a great time. This is the first town we have come to where the Aboriginals have integrated well with the rest of the population and it was great to see it all work so well.

One of the Boab Festival Floats with Aboriginal Children on board



The Parade ran for about 30 minutes and finished at the local oval where there was a carnival and Mardigras. We stayed for a while then drove down to the wharf to see the sun set and the tides which rise and fall some 11 metres! That's a lot of water moving very fast in a short time. There was a charming little take away fish and chip place so we decided to have dinner here. After dinner and another beautiful sunset we returned to camp to set

up for the night. After checking what was on in town we made plans to see the markets then work on Jim Millers car the next day and we managed to stay up until 10:10 pm.

Day 77 – July 5th – Derby. (0 Km)

Today is a rest day in Derby for all to relax and do some sight seeing. Roland picked us up and took us into town to the CWA Markets which were like the other country markets we have been to – 4 stalls, we certainly are spoilt at home in Sydney. After this excitement we went to see the prison Boab tree which is estimated to be 1500 years old. It was very large with a small opening on one side and would hold up to 20 people or maybe a few more. This was used by the early settlers mainly to hold Aboriginals who were forced to work in gangs; the tree was also used to hold other prisoners as a temporary holding cell, with only one small opening it was very easy to guard. There was also the longest feeding trough nearby but that was less impressive – I suppose it is a sort of attraction for people who like to see all the worlds biggest and longest items!

After returning to town the Marilyn & Ann treated herself to a hair cut whilst the Gary, Richard & Ian worked on the cars in the afternoon, later we had a BBQ dinner while we were all together in the one place which is becoming a rarity now on this trip as we prefer to travel in our small groups.

Bob Wilson let it be known that he is feeling alone and not part of the group



as he is the only Model T in the group he has been travelling with. Truth be told he wants to travel with Richard as he is not happy with his car, we all feel if he wants to travel with us that is OK but he has to keep to our routine.

Day 78 – July 6th – Derby to Nillibubbica rest area. (114 Km)

The Amesbury's, Whittle's, Day, Smith's and Roland left Derby today to move a little closer to Broome where we were all booked in on Monday. There were no roadside rest areas along the way so we finally stopped for morning tea under a large Boab tree, the trip here was pleasant as the road was lined with wattle trees in full bloom, it was glorious. From here it was not far to Nillibubbica rest area which we had chosen for the night so we were able to settle in before lunch, we met a lovely young couple travelling around in their beautiful motor home bus which had everything you could think of.

Toebee our mascot decided to go for a walk in the scrub and was nearly out of sight before Doreen realised he was missing; Geoff, Gary, Richard and Ian ran after him and eventually rounded him up just as he was disappearing out of sight.

It was very hot and dusty but the evening brought a cool change and we all played cards until bed time and had a few good laughs and Marilyn's famous Rocky Road for dessert that she made again much to everyone's delight.

Day 79 – July 7th - Nillibubbica to Broome. (172 Km)

Just a short trip today into Broome, we arrived at our caravan park by 10:00 am and booked in, the site we were given was not a very good one as the wind was blowing quite strong and it was right at the end of the row. We went to the office to see if we could change the site as there were a few empty sites – we were told they were all booked – but after a couple of minutes they did manage to shuffle a few people and give us a better site, we are lucky as Richard and us manage to only use one site which makes it easier to squeeze us in.



Marilyn next to a replica of the Dinosaur footprints

We then took the cars and drove around town and out to Gantheaume Point near the lighthouse to see the "Dinosaur footprints". The ocean was a beautiful turquoise colour with white sandy beaches and contrasting red cliffs - it was fantastic, seeing is believing. We walked around the lighthouse and we could see from left to right an uninterrupted view of this beautiful coastline and were lucky enough to see turtles swimming around. After this we

headed to Broome Port where we enjoyed a leisurely walk along the very long public pathway to the end of the pier passing many keen fishermen along the way

We then arranged to go to see Malcolm Douglas at his wildlife farm for a photo shoot for our sponsor, Engel Australia. Malcolm was great and spent about an hour with us taking all sorts of shots with the three T's and a huge croc (Fibreglass). After the photo shoot Malcolm invited us to look around the wildlife park which was different from anything we have ever seen, hundreds of crocks, Dingo's, Kangaroos, birds and all sorts of animals and snakes. The settings for the animals were done in a way that it looked as though they were actually in the wild.



Gary, Malcolm Douglas and Marilyn wrestling a Huge Croc!

The McKern's, Woods, Gil and Laraine, the Millers and Stan Bruce arrived in town around 2:30 pm and booked into their accommodation. Paul Wood blew a tyre on his caravan just before the park and Gil stopped to help him change it.

Day 80 – July 8th - Broome. (18 Km)

Day two in Broome and time to look around a little more, we went into town and walked through the shops and did the tourist thing checking out all the pearl shops, then went back to camp for a rest in the afternoon and to do some maintenance on the cars (this never stops) afterwards we all jumped into a cab and went to the "Deckchair Theatre" to see Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skull. Everyone from the group had the same idea and we all ended up at the theatre to watch the movie - it was different, a little cool in the open air part but good fun. After the movie we caught a cab back to camp and into bed.

Day 81 – July 9th – Broome. (25 Km)

More of the same today just relaxing and getting ready for the next drive, we went for a walk to the Buddha Temple and the local shops. Roland's friend Jan had arrived late last night so there was some catching up to do as he was staying at the same park as us.

Gary and I had another photo shoot with Malcolm Douglas at his Croc farm in town this time; it was a bit of fun and filled in an hour before sunset then we went down to Cable Beach to watch the camels walking along the beach, had dinner and an early night.

Day 82 – July 10th – Broome to Stanley. (237 Km)

Left Broome today but before we left we drove the Model T's down onto Cable Beach and arranged for the Camel train to walk past behind the cars for a photo opportunity, got them going both ways and got lots of great shots.



After this we drove to a road side stop named Stanley for the night and everyone was there except the Smith's who were ahead of us at this time, we sat around a camp fire and told stories and sang songs. We met a few of the other campers and one older couple who wanted to show us their little "A" frame caravan.

Later we heard a call over the CB radio from Stan asking where we were, Laraine grabbed her mike and replied "Hi Stan, we are at Stanley rest area", "Where" Stan replied, "Stanley rest area" replied Laraine, Stan being a bit of a lad decided to have some fun with Laraine and replied "Can you spell that for me", Laraine fell straight in and replied "S.T.A.N.L.E.Y."

rest area, We all had a little chuckle at this knowing what Stan was like and how gullible Laraine was.

That night a couple of young enthusiastic foreign visitors kept us up yahooing till the early hours of the morning; they were harmless but annoying not considering the other campers around them.

Day 83 – July 11th Stanley to Pardoo/Sandy Beach. (195 Km)

After leaving Stanley Rest area heading south the landscape became very flat as far as the eye can see, just like what we had expected to see in the NT. We drove to Pardoo Roadhouse where most of the group decided to stay but Richard, the Whittle's, and Amesbury's drove out to the cape and stayed at Sandy Beach right on the ocean it was a fantastic place. Marilyn and Ann enjoyed walking along the beach collecting shells.

We met some of the locals when we tried to drive out onto a beach and got our cars bogged in the soft sand; thankfully the young fellas gave us a push and got us back onto the hard sand so we could keep going.

After setting up camp we walked along the beach and chatted with the other campers then had a late dinner watching the sun set and retired for the night to the sound of waves gently rolling over the pristine sands.



Gary being rescued by locals



Our Camp site at Sandy Beach

Day 84 – July 12th – Pardoo to Peawah Rest area. (258 Km)

Up to see the sunrise this morning a light blue ocean layered on pink and purple horizon and while enjoying our breakfast we watched a pod of Dolphins frolic in the surf which made Marilyn very happy. After breakfast we packed up and drove the 11 km of dirt road back to Pardoo Roadhouse then onto the main highway where a short way down the road we met a group driving Chamberlain Tractors to Darwin; they had come from Esperence in WA and were meeting up with other Tractor drivers from Qld and NSW in Darwin. We had a chat and took some photos then we were all on our way again. We were amazed how these guys communicated as Gary and I had to talk loud to be heard, these drivers had on ear muffs as the tractors were so noisy.

Peawah Rest area which was deserted when we arrived but very shortly we had half a dozen other campers around us. This rest area had a long drop which had not been maintained,

when Geoff went to use it, he lifted the lid and it was full up to the seat, so we had to dig a few holes under the bridge as required. One couple came over and spent a lot of time chatting with us, later the man brought over a pair of Night Vision binoculars which we all had a look through and to our amazement saw hundreds of moths and other insects above the trees and small bats chasing and eating them.

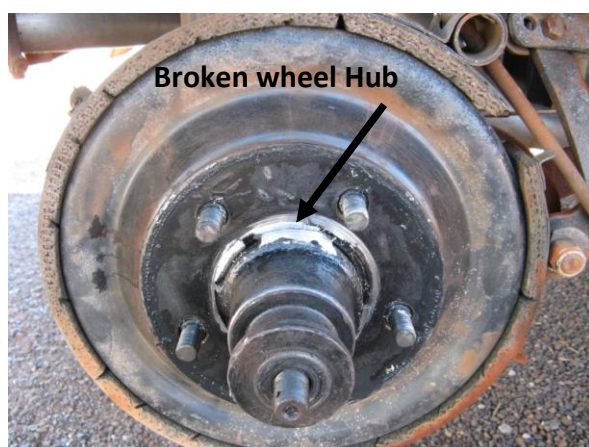
That night the wind came up and blew down our annex, so Gary was up in the dark hammering in more pegs to keep it up for the rest of the night, didn't sleep very well.

Day 85 – July 13th - Peawah to Karratha. (140 Km)

I, (Marilyn) was amazed this morning as I walked out of the camper to be greeted by a magnificent sight of red soil, white ghost gums, green patches everywhere and sky of pale pink and pale blue with sun shining on the landscape, it took my breath away as you don't get sights like this in the suburbs at home.

Still very windy this morning so we packed up with great difficulty, the Whittle's and Amesbury's set off for Roeburn an historic village while Richard waited for Bob Wilson to catch up in his Model T and be his support for the day. We arrived at Roeburn after having enjoyed the trip and seeing Sturt Desert Peas in flower along the road. We went directly to the information centre which was also the old gaol, had a good look around and a cuppa then decided to move on.

The Whittle's took off and we were to follow only the car would not reverse, so I got under the car and adjusted the reverse band only to find that did nothing. Further investigation found my repaired wheel hub had broken again after 8,987 kms



After repairs were done in the car park, Richard arrived with Bob Wilson and the Woods, Stan Bruce and the Millers. It took a couple of hours but finally my T was back on the road again (Thanks to everyone's help with the repairs) and on to Karratha with the Smiths, all the others went out to Cape Sampson for the night which proved to be a very windy night in a very beautiful place.

When we arrived in Karratha all the caravan parks were booked out by the mine employees so we had to stay in the overflow area which was on a grassy area outside the golf club but at least they had really good amenities. After we settled in and had a cuppa we went for a drive into town looking for somewhere to eat dinner, the only place open was McDonalds –

so we ate there in the cool then returned to our camp site to play cards again for the evening – we are not really card sharps but it is an excuse to socialise and eat lollies and cakes etc and play cards, we haven't missed watching TV or even the news we are just having a ball meeting people and seeing the country which is totally different to what we had expected!

Day 86 – July 14th - Karratha to Fortescue River roadhouse. (105 Km)

After breakfast the Amesbury's piled into the Smith's car and we all went for a tour of Karratha and Dampier, had a look through the visitors centre for the North West Gas Pipeline, it was very interesting and the video was very informative. It seems the gas is stored in porous sandstone below the sea so when it is released it does not leave an empty hole as some people thought.

A photograph of an informational sign for the Northwest Shelf Development Project. The sign is white with black text and is mounted on a wooden post. It lists technical specifications for the North Rankin Trunkline Pipe Section.

NORTHWEST SHELF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT	
NORTH RANKIN TRUNKLINE	
PIPE SECTION	
TOTAL LENGTH OF PIPELINE	134 235 KILOMETRES
MAXIMUM WATER DEPTH	125 METRES -LAT
STEEL QUALITY	A.P.I. 5LX-65 - WOODSIDE SPECIFICATION
PIPE DIAMETER	1016 mm (40")
PIPE WALL THICKNESS	23.8 mm (0.938")
CORROSION COATING	ASPHALT ENAMEL WITH TWO GLASS FIBRE LAYERS AND OUTER FELT WRAP
CORROSION COATING THICKNESS	6.0-7.2 mm
CONCRETE DENSITY	3043 Kg/m ³ (190 lbs/cuft)
CONCRETE THICKNESS	76 63 57 mm 3 2.5 2.25 INCH
PIPE WEIGHT IN AIR	1410 1270 1180 Kg/m
PIPE WEIGHT SUBMERGED	300 207 137 Kg/m
TIME OF INSTALLATION	MAY TO DECEMBER 1982
COATING CONTRACTOR	STEELMANS - MKI
INSTALLATION CONTRACTOR	E T P M / CLOUGH

Did some more shopping then drove onto Fortescue River roadhouse for the night. The Smiths arrived a little later with Roland and Jan, Richard arrived just on sunset after having a great time exploring Karratha and Dampier with the Whittles. The Whittles decided to stay at Miaree Pool 18 Km South of Karratha and will catch up with us tomorrow. The others are still back at Point Sampson for another night. The McKern's along with Gil and Laraine have gone off to Tom Price mine in their modern cars and will rejoin us later in the week.

Day 87 – July 15th - Fortescue River to Barradale Rest Area. (233 km)

Today is just one of those days out in the middle of nowhere, Gary did some maintenance on the car before we headed off for the day. We stopped at Nunatarra Roadhouse for lunch and filled up with fuel then on to Barradale rest area for the night. We arrived there about 2pm which was nice and early so we could take our time setting up our camp and relaxing for a few hours before cooking dinner, sometimes it is just nice to sit and do nothing and appreciate where you are! Wildflower season is on its way as we are now seeing more and more of them.

Day 88 – July 16th – Barradale to Exmouth. (198 Km)

Up early today and on the road by 8:00 am for our trip into Exmouth, the wind was generally kind to us and only became a head wind for short periods. We arrived in Exmouth at around lunchtime and managed to get into a caravan park in their overflow area - which was basically the back of another site.

Once settled we went walking to check out the town which was very small - a dozen or so shops and a couple of restaurants. We decided to eat out tomorrow night and use up our supplies tonight. The night was spoiled by some noisy young neighbours, who returned home late and drunk, but nature got its revenge on them over night – the wind came up and totally collapsed their annex!

Marilyn's trivia question for today "When was the last time we saw clouds" – thinking caps on and we all agreed it was at Alice Springs.

Day 89 – July 17th – Exmouth. (0 Km)

Lay over today which includes doing the chores – washing, so up bright and early to beat everyone else to the laundry before 7am got there at 6.50am and low and behold all 3 washing machines in use so much for the notice not before 7am, finally got a machine at 7.30am and did the washing before sitting down to contemplate outings for today.

First we walked into town to the PO to post a parcel home, boy we sure collect a lot of junk. Upon arriving home ha ha got a phone call from Geoff and Doreen to say they were at the information centre so I invited them over for a cuppa. After much persuasion finally talked Geoff into staying tonight and they were lucky enough to get a spot in the dog owners section of the caravan park.

After they had settled in we had lunch and they took us for a drive up to Thomas Cater Gorge how spectacular the gorge was as we travelled up the mountain top, we were literally on top of the world and could see to the ocean across the flats. Geoff kept his eyes dead ahead glued to the road as he has a fear of heights and he didn't want to stop at some of

the best photo spots because of this!



In the afternoon the rest of the group arrived in town and setup camp at the same caravan park, but a fair way from us which is good, as we are tired of them being rude to us most of the time now.

The Whittle's, Day, Smith's, Roland Hulbert and us all went out for Chinese tonight, it was terrific and a great change. We needed the walk home as we had eaten more than our fill, still managed to sit around and

gossip for a while longer and make plans for the next day before hitting the sack.

Jim & Doris Miller and Stan volunteered to look after Toobee whilst the Smiths had dinner, unfortunately they were camped in a no dog section and someone dobbed them in and the Millers were asked to leave the park. Upon major apologies and begging they were finally allowed to stay.

Day 90 – July 18th - Exmouth. (0 Km)

Woke up to rain falling this morning so all plans were cancelled and we spent the day working on the cars, local shopping to restock our supplies and just sitting around - Just like being on holiday's, luckily our annex is large enough for six of us to sit in and talk, eat and play games while the rain continued throughout the day – we can't complain as we have only had about five wet days so far on the trip!

Day 91 – July 19th - Exmouth to Lynden River. (190 Km)

Time to leave Exmouth, after a very windy night without much sleep we packed up and prepared to leave. As the sun got a little higher the day improved so we decided to drive out to see the lighthouse which was at the top of a fairly steep hill, it was freezing and extremely windy. Took a few usual photos T's in front of lighthouse and we were lucky enough to see a few whales out to sea spouting as they breached the surface.



From here we drove out to see the "Mildura Wreck", but couldn't see much as it was high tide. We walked along the beach and collected some shells for a while, not that we had anywhere to store them but it was fun and relaxing.

Back into town for morning tea at the local bakery, and then back on the road towards Coral Bay. There were very strong headwinds so going was slow but we finally arrived. It was a beautiful beach side holiday area so we went for a walk along the beach and saw a glass bottom boat about to leave - we managed to convince the driver that we would pay on our

return so he let us board for the one hour viewing of the coral which was only metres from the beach, it was superb viewing with so many different types of coral.

On returning to the beach Gary got some sand in his right eye from a gust of wind and tried to flush it out with eye drops - (unsuccessfully). After paying for our coral viewing trip we left Coral Bay as all accommodation here was full. Lucky for us, I (Marilyn) had been practicing driving for this sole reason "an emergency", the other ladies thought I was mad at the time, and none of them were able to drive a Model T. Marilyn drove Gary's "T" to Lynden River rest area where we caught up with Geoff and Doreen Smith, Roland and Jan for the night. On our arrival Richard, Ian, Geoff and Roland set up our camper as Gary was still indisposed with a sore eye and now wearing an eye patch for some sympathy.

Day 92 – July 20th Lynden River to Carnarvon. (204 Km)

I (Marilyn) set off driving the T first as Gary still had a patch over his eye, I cannot drive for too long, so after the first hour I was lucky enough to see a service station and pulled in. After emerging from the ladies, Jan and Ann advised me that the Model T had a flat tyre I thought they were joking but when I got back to the car here were all the guys changing the tyre for Gary who still couldn't see properly. This was the first flat tyre for us in 11,500 kilometres! Just my luck.

After the new tyre was put on Roland took over the driving and Marilyn drove Roland's modern car towing the caravan behind with Jan to keep her company. We arrived in Carnarvon at 1 pm. First stop was to drop Gary off to the hospital and then had a round table conference as to where to stay and it was decided that we would have the caravan park in town because if Gary was admitted it would be closer for Marilyn to walk.

The guys again put up the annexe for us and just as Marilyn was about to head off to the hospital she received a phone call to say Gary was outside waiting to be picked up.

Richard picked Gary up and he arrived home with a patch over his right eye and had to put drops in every 2 hours and the alternative hour put cream in. It was very difficult for him to see and very frustrating as well.

The rest of the afternoon was just lazing around when Richard got a phone call from family and he decided that he would head home from here, this news made us all very sad.

Richard decided before he left to do an oil change and he did one for Gary whilst he was doing his own.

Tonight was spent with Richard and us just talking about all the good, bad and ugly times we had together. Richard is very easy to travel with, we will miss him terribly.

Day 93 – July 21st – Carnarvon. (0 Km)

It was with a very heavy and sad heart that we bid Richard Day goodbye as he headed off in his T towards Sydney, he needed to get back urgently due to family reasons, and this has put a damper on the whole day. We walked down to the town and did a quick shop around (not much) picked up a few groceries that we could carry and went back to camp. After a leisurely lunch we decided to hire some push bikes and go exploring.

We rode down to the One Mile Jetty, then had a ride on "The Coffee Pot" tram which took us three quarters of the way down the One Mile Jetty as a fire last year had destroyed the last section. We walked around the museum and had a lovely ice block and then rode our bikes back to town, by this time our knees were killing us, in total we rode approx 8 km's.

For the last hour pre dusk we rearranged our camper now that we don't have Richard travelling with us. Then we played cards with Roland, Jan, Ian & Ann until bed time.



Day 94 – July 22nd - Carnarvon to Hamelin Pool. (235 Km)

Time to move on again so we packed up a little later than usual and were ready to depart by 9:00 am. Filled up with fuel then out to the OTC satellite dish to climb it for a great view and a photo opportunity. We heard Bob Wilson over the CB heading for Denham near Monkey Mia to see a long lost relative. Jim & Doris Miller with Stan as back up were on the road too heading for the Overlander Roadhouse.

After a couple of hours we stopped for morning tea at a parking bay as all the rest areas seemed to have disappeared!

As we continued on up the road we saw a "T" flag hanging on a rest area sign and we found Geoff and Doreen Smith at their camp site. They had seen Bob Wilson go by and the Miller's and Stan had stopped for a cuppa so we knew all were well.

Travelled onto Wooramel Roadhouse for lunch and fuel and were told about a great little caravan park at Hamelin so that's where we all headed for the night. The Millers and Stan had already booked into the Overlander Roadhouse which they said was a dust bowl and possibly the worst place they had ever stayed.

We set up camp at Hamelin then walked to the top of a hill with our bottle of wine to watch the sunset; over the hill was a shell quarry where blocks had been cut out of the compressed shells to build houses in the early days of the settlement out here, these are now heritage listed and our toilet block is made of shells, very interesting.

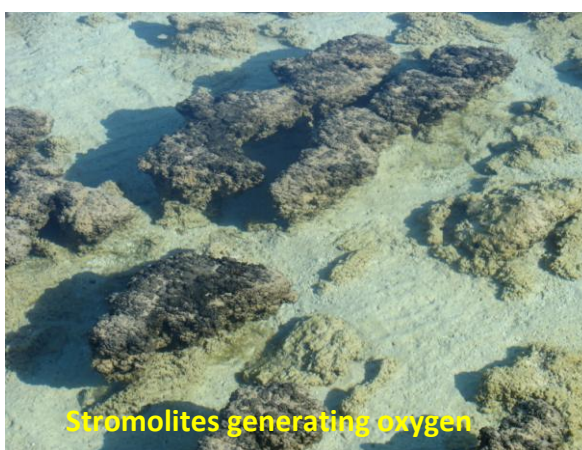
Had dinner in the cold as the whole camp site ran on a small generator and no heaters were allowed, then we played cards to stay awake until bedtime.

Day 95 – July 23rd - Hamelin to Denman. (105 Km)

This morning we decided to go for a walk to see the “Stromolites” (the oldest living creatures which produce oxygen). We had to pass the shell quarry where they used to mine large blocks to build with (the amenities block in the caravan park was built from these shell blocks) then onto the jetty which was extremely well done in the shape of a triangle which went out into the ocean and back so you could walk out amongst the “Stromolites” very easily. The most remarkable thing was the water was so clear that it appeared there was no water at all.



Marilyn posing on the shell quarry



Stromolites generating oxygen

After a brief morning tea we packed up and headed to Denman to try our luck with accommodation as we had been advised that Monkey Mia was full up so there was no camp sites available. Along the way we pulled into Shell Beach, a very remarkable beach, no sand - just covered in millions of shells (so tiny it was unbelievable). We also pulled into a few little bays on our way here and the colour of the water was an incredible aqua blue going out to dark blue as it reached the depths.

We arrived at Denham and were asked to go into a photo shoot outside the Denham Discovery Centre in the centre of town for the local paper here and up at Carnarvon. Whilst doing the photo shoot we were approached by a local indigenous person who is on their brochures and does the local indigenous tours, he asked if we would like it if he put a special tour on for us “T” people tomorrow, of course we jumped at the opportunity of learning about the locals and arranged to meet him up at Monkey Mia the next day.



After all this we settled into our caravan park for a quiet afternoon and after dinner we took a walk along the foreshores and walked out on the local boat wharf to see people fishing and it was unbelievable, the water was approx 4-5 metres deep and so clear you could see the fish or squid you were about to catch. We cannot get over how clear the water is here in WA.

Had a stupid lady come over today and said “You must get tired of people asking if they could take pictures”, Marilyn’s answer was “Do you want me to be honest or polite” that didn’t deter her she just stood there and took lots of photos. It is sad but some days we just want “ME” time to set up and rest.

Sitting by the camper enjoying quiet time overlooking the water and watching the sun set, there are a lot of clouds tonight and the colour of the sunset didn’t disappoint, it was bright red absolutely fantastic.

Day 96 – July 24th – Denman to Fowlers Gap. (85 Km)

Very motivated today as we are off to Monkey Mia to see the dolphins, you know how Marilyn is with animals! We arrived just in time for the second feeding and it was just splendid. There were 9 dolphins with a couple of baby ones in tow which were being very playful. After seeing two lots of feeding we did a wander around the resort. Our free tour with the local indigenous guide did not eventuate, what a shame we missed out on all the local knowledge.



From here we headed back to town to put our name down for Fowlers Gap, a free camp area on the ocean. We enjoyed a leisurely lunch at the local café enjoying the spoils before filling up the petrol tanks and heading out.

What a glorious spot at Fowlers Gap and all for free, (but no amenities). We had our own private beach section on this bay. There were only the four of us here for the night – Whittles, Smith’s, Roland and us. How much would you pay in Sydney for a waterfront

position like this, golden sand, turquoise waters with stingrays, lemon sharks and dugongs swimming by, it is just unbelievable and words don't do it justice.

Roland took time out to change the oil in his ute, he managed to straddle a deep rut to give him access to the underside of the car – very ingenious!

After a lovely tea sitting looking at the water and watching the sunset and the wonderful pink skies we all just sat and enjoyed good company and talked.

Day 97 – July 25th – Fowlers Gap to Billabong Roadhouse. (176 Km)

The sky is really overcast today and a little damp but we still enjoyed sitting outside watching the day break and the ever changing colour of the sky (not looking forward to heading south to the cold weather), after breakfast we drove back up the road to "Eagles Bluff" to see the view from the boardwalk. The boardwalk was at the top of the cliff and gave a fantastic view of the bay and a small island, the water was crystal clear you could see anything moving in the water, unfortunately because of the cold weather there was nothing there.

We drove back to the Overlander Roadhouse for fuel, and then headed south towards Nerren Nerren rest area. We decided to stop at the Billabong Roadhouse for a shower and lunch, the manager "Jacque" came out and asked if he could take a photo of the cars - Marilyn replied "I will swap you for a powered site for the night" and he agreed so we all had a free nights accommodation and showers. Marilyn admitted she felt tired and worn out but could not believe she had said that to the owner – She must have been desperate.

Ian worked on his car and Gary changed one tyre which was worn out, we bought dinner in the roadhouse and watched a little bit of TV but we have lost interest in this medium now as there is so much more to see out here, then we all went to bed.



The Miller's, Wilson's and Stan Bruce are heading further south to get some repairs done on the Millers car in Perth.

Day 98 – July 26th Billabong Roadhouse to Batavia. (Geraldton) (213 Km)

Started the morning with a shower – a rain shower – we packed up then did a photo shoot in front of the Billabong Roadhouse for the owner as a thank you, Jacque printed the photo

off immediately and we signed it and he put it on his wall of fame! We look forward to going back there one day to see if it is still there.

From here we drove south and away from the rain and into Northampton where we met up with Bob and Mary Taylor who were the custodians of the local historic railway museum, we had met up with them about a month or so ago and they invited us to drop in as we came down the west coast. We had lunch with them and a guided tour of the rail museum and their personal collections, it was all very interesting.

Back on the road we drove on to Batavia Caravan Park for the evening and made plans for the next day. The Whittle's met up with people they had met about a month ago who live in this park and they were invited out to dinner so the rest of us had to do it tough with home cooking.

Later we heard that the Wilson's and Miller's were sighted heading for Cervantes along the coast road, so they are getting close to Perth and a good rest.

Day 99 – July 27th – Batavia. (Geraldton) (0 Km)

We decided to stay another day in the area to do some sight seeing so we drove into Geraldton in the modern cars with Geoff, Doreen and Roland, first we went to the street markets then to the docks, we visited the museum which was great and Gary managed to pick up a great drawing of a Model T Ford for his collection. From here we drove to the HMAS Sydney memorial and enjoyed the spectacular monument and the views out to sea,



HMAS Sydney Memorial lookout

then did a little shopping before the Whittle's and Amesbury's decided to treat themselves to a movie which was "Don't Mess with the Zohan" a real spoof on spy movies which was ridiculously silly but just what the doctor ordered for us all, while the others returned to the caravan park.

After the movie we caught a cab back to the van park for a relaxed dinner and a good nights rest.

Day 100 – July 28th – Batavia to Gingin. (360 Km)

Heading towards Perth today, the Whittle's and Amesbury's are driving straight down the main highway while the Smith's and Roland Hulbert take the scenic coastal road. The Miller's, Wilson's and Stan Bruce are already in Perth and making arrangements for their repairs.

The weather is poor with continuing rain and wind making it slow going and cold, there is not much to see along this section of the Brand Highway so it is just as well the weather is poor. We called into a small town called Dongara, just about everything was shut except the bakery and the information centre. We took refuge from the rain under the veranda of the pottery club as there was a table and chairs there and no one around. We continued our trip until lunch time and pulled into a fuel stop where once again we found an abandoned veranda with tables and chairs to have our lunch.

Here we decided to head for "Gingin" a name I will never forget, as we passed the 25 km post we ran out of forward motion - a quick check revealed a broken axle on the drivers side. You may recall we broke our crown wheel near Gin Gin on the East Coast! There was no phone reception where we stopped half way up a hill, so the Whittle's drove to the top of the hill where they contacted the NRMA and relayed messages back to us over the UHF Radio, after three hours it was dark, raining and cold the road service replied there were no tow trucks available until tomorrow! You can imagine our delight at this news!!! Here we are stuck half way up a hill on a two lane highway just on the dirt verge in the pouring rain with no lights, cold, wet and a little angry.

During this wait Gary had walked up the hill and contacted Geoff Smith to advise him of our predicament, they had already set up camp for the night but both he and Roland packed up and drove the 100 km's to sit with us as our support vehicles. What great friends and fantastic support they are for us. How can you repay this friendship?

Fortunately Gary had already contacted the W.A Veteran Car Club and Alex had found a man - Ian Adams who then drove from Perth to Gingin some 80 Km with a car trailer to rescue us and take the car to the club rooms where we would be able to work on it tomorrow.

We all booked into a caravan park for the night at Gingin around 10pm in time to relax get warm and plan our movements for the next day.

Day 101 – July 29th – Gingin to Perth. (0 Km – Passengers)

We were all up early to head for Perth, The Smith's ferried the Amesbury's into Perth while Roland and Jan followed the Whittle's to their friends home and then onto their own accommodation.

Marilyn rang the NRMA in Sydney this morning to complain about the bad service we had received being Gold Members. Their answer was they didn't receive our phone call and if we wanted to be reimbursed for last nights accommodation then we had to take the car to a licenced repairer and get them to check the damage and fix the car. We would like to see that, as most of the mechanics today can only work on modern cars that plug into computers to tell them what is wrong.

After dropping the Smith's caravan at Marilyn's brother Wayne's home in Atwell, we headed for the club rooms to start work on the car, as we arrived they were unloading the car off the trailer and rolling it into the inspection area which had a pit to work in. We managed to get the car jacked up and the diff out and partly disassembled by night time so had to pack up and head home for a hot shower and a hot meal. Stan reported that the Wilson's car was being worked on elsewhere so everyone was covered for the moment.

We heard that Richard had made it home today back to Sydney, we will miss you buddy - take it easy and try to relax now you are home and we hope to see you in Echuca.

Day 102 – July 30th – Perth. (0 Km)

Happy Birthday to our darling son Jason. Marilyn is feeling a little home sick, she misses the children so much but it will not be long before we are back home again.

Today the whole group got together with the members of the W.A Veteran Car Club and had a BBQ and met the members. Alex Kirkman arranged it all and it was a great success, the Lunch and Morning tea was catered by the ladies and the food was delicious and all were well fed. When the rest of our members arrived they all watched Geoff and Gary working on our car and Jim and Stan working on theirs and not one of them offered to lend a hand! I guess you find out who your real friends are at times like these!

Gary and Geoff continued to work on Gary's broken axle as we were short of some tools and had to improvise quite a lot. Geoffrey Logue arrived with our safety hub all nicely machined up and then ran Gary around to get the bearings and other items needed to complete the job. After assembling the diff it was discovered the other safety hub was also damaged so another new bearing will be required to fix that one.

Bob Wilson reported his car should be fixed by the morning after a new timing gear was fitted and a hardened valve seat inserted.

Jim Miller took the time to file and scrape the centre main bearing and make a few adjustments while we had the use of the club facilities.

Ian Whittle is waiting on a new timer to arrive to fix his miss then we should be all fine again to continue the trek across the southern part of the country.

We said our goodbyes to Jan as she will be heading back to Sydney leaving Roland to cope on his own for the rest of the trip.

Enjoyed a lovely tea supplied by Wayne, Dee & Leon, its great having family to visit.

Day 103 – July 31st – Perth. (0 Km)

Today the group was invited to the Whitman Motor Museum for morning tea, unfortunately only one model T was present as all the others were being repaired for various reasons.

Bob Wilson picked up his car after the museum visit – let's hope all goes well from here to home for all the T's

Gary and Geoff worked on Gary's car again today and finally had it back on the road about 3:30 pm ready to head south for a few days while the others visit in Perth. Many thanks go out to all the members of the W.A Veteran Car Club for their hospitality and assistance, special thanks to Ian Adams who drove from Perth to Gingin to transport our T to the club room for repairs and also to Geoffrey Logue who arranged machining and ran Gary around for spare parts for two days.

Marilyn and Doreen kept themselves busy today doing all the running around for us, firstly they had to pick up a second hand windscreen wiper motor for Geoff's Nissan Patrol, then off to pick up some spare inner tubes for our T ! (Just in case) and finally off to the Whitman Motor Museum to represent the workers – and get a free morning tea.

All in all it was a very productive day, the car is all fixed and ready to go again and so are we! After the last few days we were a little stressed so Wayne suggested a nice relaxing Spa which he had outside on the verandah, it was great, nice and hot with lots of bubbles and a nice glass of wine to top it off, we were really relaxed now and had a good nights sleep.

Day 104 – August 1st – Perth to Bunbury. (195 Km)

Had a slow start to the day, we needed to repack the car after the repairs, then it was off to the shops to re-stock the fridge etc, morning tea then fill up with fuel and finally on the road south again. The weather was intermittent rain and cold so not a pleasant day for driving. I (Marilyn) have to say I am feeling a little bit nervous about the car, I just want Gary to be able to drive his car home now we are more than half way. We still cannot believe the amount of Black Boys (Native Trees) on the side of the road and especially the size of them. Sometimes they are bunched up in groups and look fantastic.

The Smiths were our back up for the journey south, we don't mind the weather as travelling with Geoff and Doreen is great, they are so easy to travel with and we play cards at night or watch a video or just sit around and talk. We couldn't ask for better companions.

We drove through Mandurah and on to Bunbury for the night, checked out the information centre and saw a few shops where warmer clothes were purchased. We set up camp and had a nice dinner of minted chops with boiled potatoes and vegies, then as usual played cards with Geoff and Doreen and Toebee of course.

It became very windy during the night with several rain storms so we didn't get much sleep.

Day 105 – August 2nd – Bunbury. (0 Km)

A cool but dry morning greeted us, so we decided to spend another day in Bunbury. After checking the papers we hit the garage sales as Geoff and Doreen were going into withdrawal as they are avid garage sale enthusiasts, using the GPS to get us around we managed to get a few good items then off to visit the Dolphin Discovery Centre. From here it was back to the camp site to re-tighten the axle nuts and a little R & R after our rough night.

Richard rang to say he had arrived home safely but did some big miles each day to reach Sydney in 10 days. I also spoke to Roland who had decided to spend another day in Perth then follow the Miller's and Wilson's along with Stan on Monday on their trek down south.

The Whittles are spending time with their daughter who flew into Perth yesterday for 10 days.

All the T's seem to be running again after the maintenance work in Perth, lets hope they all keep going well as there are still a lot of Km's to do to get back home.

Doreen cooked us a lovely tea of bacon and eggs followed by an enjoyable evening of playing cards. Doreen is hooked on Rummy Rumble which we taught her.

Day 106 – August 3rd – Bunbury to Margaret River. (110 Km)

We awoke to blue skies this morning which certainly made the heart happy. Gary and Geoff checked the wheel and tightened some nuts before we all headed off to the Info centre at Bunbury to check out where we were heading today.

On the way out of town we called into some local markets which was a lovely diversion for a Sunday, then we headed off towards Margaret River stopping off at a Cheese Factory for some sampling of cheese which was followed by our lunch on our running board in their car park.

We continued onto Margaret River where we had a walk around the shops before heading to the local caravan park for the night. There certainly are a lot of wineries in this area, it makes one wonder how they all make a living.

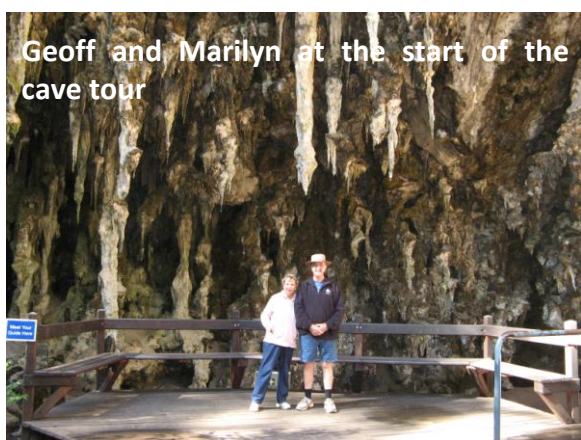
Day 107 – August 4th – Margaret River to Nannup. (108 Km)

We left Margaret River behind and headed south, visited one winery but we were not impressed as it was only 10am so we headed to Caves Road and into the National Park to visit Lakes Cave. It had been raining quite heavily around here and as we drove down the old country road Gary hit a large pothole which he didn't see as it was full of water and just looked like tar, this put a large flat on the rear wheel rim, so he had to change the tyre and tried to hammer the rim back into shape the best he could.

The landscape has changed and is now more bushy, like we have back home and the trees are higher, black boys everywhere and believe it or not white Lilies between the trees in clumps and along the edge of the road also in the farms just growing wild, what a glorious site.

We just missed one tour of the caves so we had morning tea while we waited for the next one and looked over the souvenir shop and cave displays.

There were three hundred steps down to the cave and once inside it was a really stunning and beautiful cave full of active stalactites, straws and shawl formations all suspended above a receding lake, the reflections were fantastic and the only bad part was the three hundred steps we had to climb to get back to the cars!



From here we set off for Pemberton but missed the turn off somehow and ended up at a little place called Nannup! We found a caravan park and drove in, we haggled to try and get both vehicles onto one site to keep costs down and eventually won, it didn't make much

difference as there was only one other caravan in the park and we could pretty much park anywhere we wanted to and the sites were huge. We set up camp and within fifteen minutes members of the local car club were down to check out the car and have a chat! That bush telegraph really works well in these little country towns!

Whilst talking to a local Marilyn mentioned how lovely to see so many Kookaburras laughing their heads off only to be informed that they were a pest here in WA – how sad, it is great listening to them laugh their heads off at us morning and night. When we had all settled down and set up for the night we had dinner and settled in for a good nights sleep listening to the soft rain.

Marilyn's heart sunk low overnight with the sound of the rain, she knows that there is not much we can do about it but it is easier and more fun for us if the sun is shining but we guess all travellers think the same as we do and we should not be too sad as we are very lucky to be here and pray every day that we are one of the four Model T's left that makes it home.

Observation by Marilyn – It is amazing how many towns in WA end in “UP”

Day 108 – August 5th – Nannup to Denmark. (270 Km)

We awoke to a cool but dry morning so we had a walk down to the flooded river before heading off today. One tree in the middle of the river had several markers on it indicating the flood levels over the past years. The highest one was about 6 metres above the current water level and about two metres above the banks, so I guess most of the town would have been under water at that time! As we finished doing our last minute checking before leaving, a car load of car buff's turned up to see the T in all it's glory.



We had a long and very hilly drive today from Nannup to Denmark, even though we took the advised route to keep away from the “BIG” hills but the scenery was beautiful, it is unbelievable one minute it is dense forest then green rolling hills and farms, there is also many National Parks and Nature Reserves. We have also seen a variety of animals from cows, sheep, deer and emus along with some very tall trees in the Kirra Forest.

We stopped and had lunch in Pemberton then on to Denmark for the night, we didn't see much today as we were tired and opted to stay home and rest with the heater on. The weather was cold and showery again and we all wished we were back up north where it was nice and warm.

Day 109 – August 6th – Denmark to Albany. (85 Km)

Just a short drive from Denmark to Albany today, but first a visit to the industrial area as we had heard of a model T owner there. After a few minutes we located the Plant Welding factory and found the owner who was a Model "A" Ford owner with a Model A truck and a tourer waiting to be restored. His son was the one buying up the Model "T" parts and between them they intend to build a small museum on five acres about fifteen minutes out of town. The son helped us remove a rusty old wheel from a good wire wheel hub that we had purchased from the Perth Club so the visit was very fruitful on all counts. Gary and Geoff were in their element and enjoyed meeting these new friends and chatting about their cars.

Next we went to see a display of Barometers at the information centre, this included the worlds tallest Barometer which was about ten metres tall all the way from Europe – it was very impressive and interesting.



After a quick trip to the bakery where Gary bought Geoff an Eckles cake (which is an English delicacy) we were on our way to Albany. We arrived there about 1:00 pm and located the caravan parks and chose to stay at the Rose Garden Park at Emu Point on the bay a little way out of town.



After setting up we went back into town to look around as Albany is quite a large town and a working port. We visited the WWI War Memorial at the top of the highest hill; it was quite windy but very impressive with stunning views of the bay and the town. Back to camp - dinner - cards and bed.

Day 110 – August 7th Albany. (0 Km)

Happy Birthday Marilyn! she is ?? year's young today this is four years younger than me! Her morning started off well with phone calls from Jason, Melanie, her aunt Dora and she rang her mum so she could wish her well.

Today we did the sights of Albany, which is situated on a fantastic bay with several islands surrounding it, and it could give Sydney Harbour a run for its money. Went to the old Whaling Factory for a guided tour which was extremely interesting and informative, we had no idea that the Blue whales were so huge, standing next to a skeleton of one made us feel like an ant next to a human! We then treated ourselves to a great Devonshire tea, Marilyn's favourite before heading back into town.



One of the last Whaling Vessels



The skeleton of a huge Blue Whale

The weather is still intermittent rain but we are trying to make the best of it, so we did some shopping and bought new shoes and a few other nick-knacks then back to the camp site.

Around 6 pm we went to a place called the "Squid Shack" out at Emu Point Marina and had dinner for Marilyn's Birthday - it was the best seafood we have had so far on this trip, Salt and pepper squid, fish and chips - one serve was enough for two people and the owners were really friendly and helpful. If you are ever in Albany go and check it out. If you are a pet lover they allow your dogs into the indoor/outdoor dining area, Toobee was pleased!

Day 111 – August 8th – Albany to Williams. (286 Km)

Light rain fell early this morning and made everything wet for packing up but we still managed to get away by about 8:30 am. We drove north back towards Perth and stopped near Mount Barker for morning tea at a roadside rest area. The sun has broken through and it is finally getting warmer in the car. The car is running well and the Albany Highway is great with a few steep climbs.

We made it to Kojonup for lunch and visited the info centre as we usually do, then back on the road for the last stretch into "Williams". We booked into the only van park in town and did a little maintenance on the car.

We heard that The Millers and Wilson's along with Stan were in Margaret River for a couple of days and that the Whittles were in Bunbury.

We are all over the place at the moment and will meet up on the 23rd in Norseman to cross the Nullarbor together.

Day 112 – August 9th Williams to Atwell/Perth. (165 Km)

We left Williams after breakfast and headed back into Perth, nothing much to see along the way except ever changing bushland. Made it back to our home base Wayne and Dee's place in Atwell around 3:00 pm exhausted, and settled in for the evening.

Day 113 – August 10th Perth. (0 Km)

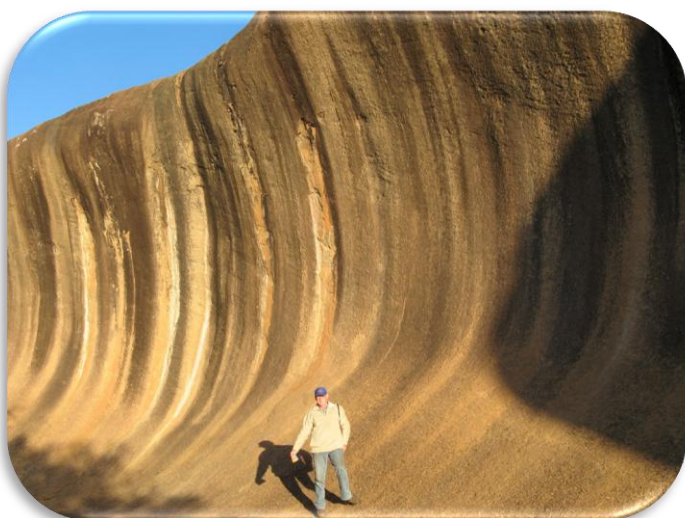
Today Geoff and Gary went into Perth to visit the Leonardo De Vinci Machines exhibition, which is the main reason we headed back to Perth early, we had seen an advertisement that said the display would finish today and they really wanted to see it. The display was fantastic, Leonardo De Vinci was so far ahead of his time with his thinking and designs. After spending several hours at the exhibition they toured the city and all the specialty shops, visited the Perth Bell tower which has an amazing collection of bells with a lot of history. Marilyn and Doreen enjoyed retail therapy for the day, you just never know what you could miss out on!

The train system here in Perth is absolutely fantastic, clean, fast, on-time and cheap. The rail from Atwell to the city is located in the centre of the freeway and the train passes the cars which are doing 100 kph, the train is capable of 130 kph along the long straight sections.

Later today we heard from Stan. He reported that he, the Millers and Wilson's would be heading for Pemberton tomorrow. Their cars are both running well. The Whittle's were heading back to Perth with their daughter so she can fly home to Sydney tomorrow.

Day 114 – August 11th – Perth to Wave Rock. (0 Km)

Geoff took his car in for a service this morning then the Amesbury's and Smith's drove out to see Wave rock some 300Kms away (in the Smiths car). Booked into a caravan park and were the only ones there. It was a very interesting park as it had a museum attached to the office run by one lonely old man. We had a quick look around then went out to see the Wave Rock as the sun was going down. We took a few shots of Wave Rock and also The Hippo Yawn - another rock formation about 1.5 km away. As the light was fading we decided to return to the camp site and cook dinner in the camp kitchen which we had all to ourselves and return



to Wave Rock in the morning to see it in a different light. We had booked into two cabins side by side; well actually it was two small rooms in one building. We took the executive rooms which were identical to the standard rooms except they supplied the bedding and they had a reverse cycle air conditioner instead of a bar heater, they were clean and comfortable and that was all we needed.

Day 115 – August 12th – Wave Rock to Perth. (0 Km)

Today we were up to see the sunrise, then after a quick breakfast we returned to Wave Rock to see if the colours were better in the morning - and they were. We walked along the top of the rock to get a different view while the Smiths enjoyed a walk along the lower level. We then visited the local gift shop & lace place where there were two Model T Fords being used in the display.

We decided to return by a different route and followed what is known as the "Tin Horse Highway". This is a section of the country road where the farmers have created a variety of interesting and comical sculptures using old farm equipment and drums - mainly focused on horses to attract people to their race meetings. We took 30 photos and did not get them all. It was a great diversion.



We continued on back to Perth which seemed to be a long way off, finally arrived around 4:00 pm and settled down for a relaxing evening watching the Olympics on TV - something we haven't seen for over 16 weeks. Our hosts Wayne and Dee looked after us very well.

Day 116 – August 13th – Perth. (0 Km)

Today is a bit of a rest day, the Smiths are heading off to spend a couple of days alone at a caravan park and Dee, Marilyn's sister-in-law is taking Marilyn out for a belated Birthday lunch and lots of girly gossip. Gary spent the day working on the Model T to make sure all is right for the next leg of the journey. When the girls returned from lunch we all headed out to the airport as our daughter Melanie was arriving to spend a few days and attend an MYOB conference here in Perth with Marilyn. Melanie presented us with a beautiful photo on canvas of our only grand daughter Ella who we are missing very much, she was only two months old when we left on this trip.

We enjoyed the evening catching up with Melanie and hearing all the news from back home.

Day 117 – August 14th Perth. (88 Km)

Marilyn and Melanie are off to their first day of the conference today so I will be all alone (Yippee!). I thought I would do a little shopping as we needed a small gas heater for crossing the Nullarbor as we have heard it can get very cold along the road. I located a BCF store

(Boating, Camping and Fishing) and got some basic directions on how to get there, well I am not the greatest navigator and trying to drive a Model T at 60 kph on a 100 kph freeway is very stressful. I eventually found the store and located the unit I wanted along with a supply of gas cylinders, Marilyn will now be happy and warm on these colder nights.

Day 118 – August 15th Perth. (70 Km)

Marilyn and Melanie are off again for their second day of their conference so once again I have been left “Home Alone”. So it is lucky that I have made an appointment to see our major sponsor - Engel Australia, the manufacturers of portable fridge/freezers and other great camping equipment. I arranged to meet Geoff and Doreen Smith at the location and we were well received, the managers and staff loved the car and how it was set up and sign written with their Logo, we were given some promotional items to give away along our route, they also gave me a generator to use on the trip back to Sydney which would come in very handy at those roadside rest areas. Then a few photos for their web site and we were off home again.

The Smiths went touring and I returned home to do a few chores and pick up some items from the local shops. One shop I went into “Super Cheap Auto” to purchase a few items which I paid for by credit card. As the receipt rose out of the printer the owner looked at it and said “Amesbury, I used to work with a man with that name in Sydney but he’s been dead for some time now” – it turned out to be my father! this man also new my nephew very well! Small world isn’t it! – That night I related the story to Wayne and Dee and it turns out Dee cleans this mans home – How’s that for a small world?

Day 119 – August 16th – Perth. (0 Km)

Marilyn and Melanie have finished their conference and our hosts Wayne and Dee have offered to show us the sights of Perth and Fremantle. We started in Fremantle with a drive along the beaches and we stopped to look through the central Markets – this was great, lots of different items that we don’t see in Sydney so we had to buy at least a few things. Wayne also bought some beautiful huge Strawberries which we all devoured quickly; we then



Marilyn, Melanie and Gary in Kings Park overlooking Perth

stopped in at a pub Wayne knew for lunch and afterwards watched as the cannon was fired from the historical prison overlooking the bay.

From here we drove into Perth and into Kings Park, the views were fantastic and the park was amazing. There were several weddings there for photos, what a fantastic backdrop for them. After this we all returned home for a rest and dinner and a turn in the hot spa!

Day 120 – August 17th – Perth. (0 Km)

Our last day in Perth, and we were treated by Wayne and Dee to a tour in their boat around some of the small islands off the coast of Fremantle. Unfortunately there were no seals to be seen today and the water was a little rough so we dropped anchor in a sheltered area and had a nice floating lunch before heading back to port and home for a rest. Melanie is not a good sailor but she did enjoy her turn as captain and driving the boat.



The Whittles left Perth today headed for York and the car museum before heading off to Hyden and Wave Rock.

The Wilson's are in Esperance for a few days and Bob is replacing his exhaust manifold to stop an annoying leak, they will then be heading for Norseman then onto Kalgoorlie to meet up with their son.

The Millers are in Albany with Stan and have made repairs to his engine, they should be back on the road on Tuesday with a little luck and then they will head on out to Esperance.

Day 121 – August 18th Perth to Northam. (129 Km)

Today is Melanie's last day with us and we feel very sad. We spent the morning packing and just hanging with each other. Dee came home from work at lunch time and we all enjoyed a last meal together before heading off to the airport early to meet up with Gary Johnston (Marilyn's cousin on her dad's side)

It was amazing to see Gary, we haven't seen him for at least 10 years and he looked the spitting image of Spence (Marilyn's dad) it was eerie and Marilyn couldn't help but stare at him. It was a wonderful hour we all spent talking and catching up. We had half an hour before Melanie had to leave so we said our hellos to Aunty Nancy and Margaret who had just arrived from Sydney for Gary's daughters wedding. (more relo's).

We went to see Melanie off through the gates and we were denied access as Gary had his big pen knife on him so we had to say goodbye at the x-ray machine. It was with a sad heart that we left the airport and headed out to Northam to catch up with Geoff and Doreen who very graciously stayed nearby just in case we needed them what great friends they are. Toebee was overjoyed to see us, which cheered us up no end as we were feeling sad after saying goodbye to Melanie and we had a great evening playing cards with our friends.

Day 122 – August 19th - Northam to Burracoppin. (259 Km)

We woke this morning to the sound of Kookaburra's laughing, what a great sound and a great way to start the day. It is a little cold this morning but a nice hot shower made us feel better. As we returned from the shower a huge hot air balloon glided overhead so quiet and majestic in the cool morning light.

After breakfast we packed up and headed for York which is a classic old country town with a very good vintage car museum, so after a quick visit to the bakery for morning tea Geoff and Gary went to the Museum while the Marilyn and Doreen checked out the shops in town. There was a good selection of cars, bikes and memorabilia in the museum so Geoff and Gary were happy with our brief stop over.

After this we continued on our way enjoying the scenery, Marilyn was particularly impressed by the number and size of the Black Boys or should we say Australian native grasses, on the side of the road, we have had one for years and it doesn't seem to grow at all and here are all these wild ones doing great!

We stopped for lunch on the side of the road and soon after it began to rain so we packed up quickly and continued onto our over night stop in "Burracoppin", a very small town where the only public building we could see was a Tavern. We camped across the road in a park area, overgrown and a little rough but it had stopped raining and we enjoyed another lovely evening.

Day 123 – August 20th - Burracoppin to Southern Cross Rest Area. (177 Km)

We had a rough night sleeping and by 5.30am early morning noises of cows mooing woke us up. At least it was different to the Kookaburras waking us, it wasn't very cold this morning but Gary still got out and put our new gas heater on. It was OK but as it doesn't have a built in fan, it took ages to take the cold or cool edge off the air, but trust me something is better than nothing.

What a lousy start to the day. Our battery was dead flat and it took ages of cranking to get it going. As soon as it started we took off knowing that the Smiths would be able to catch up to us in their modern car only to find that our CB radio was not working and there was nothing we could do about it at this time.

Finally we pulled over at a Road House at Carabin to get petrol so out came everything to let Gary climb in the back of the camper section to try and work out what was wrong with the wiring, everything has worked wonderfully since we left home (from memory). Finally found the problem so all our goods and shackles we stacked back in and we hit the road.

We arrived at Southern Cross for morning tea and had a leisurely walk around before heading off to our overnight road side stop a couple of km's down the road, the car starting spitting and spluttering so we pulled over again and Gary with Geoff's help were again working on the motor whilst Doreen and Marilyn sat like lady muck in their car. After about half an hour and points all cleaned, we cranked the car as the battery was still flat and we were back on our way again. There is still something really wrong with the electrics at this time, then down the road a little way we find out that the CB was not working again.

The car travelled well for a short while then started to miss again, finally reached our nights rest area coughing and spluttering so we quickly looked around for a section we might like to stop in only to have the car conk out so here we are in the spot the car choose for us.

Gary and Geoff changed clothes while we got lunch then it was time to work on the car. Three hours later we got organised for the night. For some reason the batteries went flat, Gary believes it was the solenoid so our lovely new battery purchased in Cairns was dead flat. On with the Engel generator to start charging as these batteries can take a couple of days to fully charge.

Day 124 – August 21st – Southern Cross to Coolgardie. 121 Km)

Arose to a glorious morning and the battery was still flat not enough charge to start the car but the boys got it going and we took off leaving Geoff and Doreen to finish packing up their van and catch up to us down the road.

We arrived at Yellowdine for morning tea and a walk around town 20 shops in all if you were lucky.

After morning tea we left only to stop down the road about 1 km out of town WHAT A NIGHTMARE DAY WE ARE HAVING my heart goes out to Gary who is now getting very stressed and annoyed. This time it was the points, after they were cleaned and put back we were on the road again with all fingers and toes crossed hoping we get to Coolgardie without anymore troubles.

The scenery is constantly changing and we passed through a patch of Salmon Gum Trees. The trunks looked as though someone went along and painted them with oil.

Arrived at Coolgardie by lunch time and set up camp. The wind was fairly strong so Gary after much pressure from me decided to try out an idea (I'm the ideas person) and that was putting up the annex walls around the kitchen so that the heat from cooking etc would help keep us warm and then at bed time just put the mattress on the floor.

All went up well and looked great so it was off to Kalgoorlie for a spot of shopping and sightseeing. Saw Bob and Margaret Wilson in town and caught up on all the gossip from them before heading off to Coles for a last shop before crossing the Nullarbor.

I must comment it was lovely and warm cooking tea tonight then it was off to watch a movie with Geoff and Doreen on a seven inch portable DVD player with very little sound – we all huddled in close together and strained our ears to watch and hear the movie.

As we were getting ready for bed it was then Marilyn remembered why she hated camping so much, its getting down on your knees to crawl into bed on the hard lumpy floor.

Day 125 – August 22nd – Coolgardie. (0 Km)

Today was another lazy day in Coolgardie, drove to Kalgoorlie again for shopping and some sight-seeing. Saw Bob Wilson again driving around in his "T". We stopped and had a nice Devonshire tea at one of the many pubs in town.

From here we went to the Royal Flying doctor head quarters to hand in our collection tins and had a look around, then headed back to Coolgardie for more maintenance on the car

and enjoy each others company, dinner and bed. We received a text message from Stan, The Millers car is back together now and they will test drive it in the morning, if all goes well they will travel to Norseman tomorrow.

Day 126 – August 23rd - Coolgardie to Norseman. (167 Km)

What a lovely morning to be heading out of town, blue sky and sun shining, it was just lovely and heart lifting

We packed up and were on the road early, there was very little traffic on the road apart from the occasional road train and over size loads heading west. The car ran very well after the battery had two days to charge up. The scenery was very different to what we had been experiencing in the past – no black boys (native plants), scenery just like we have back at home gum trees and shrubs.

Arrived in Norseman around lunchtime and booked into the only caravan park, set up our camp for the night. A short time later Roland arrived and we all enjoyed lunch together and a catch up. Later on we drove into the Norseman township - very small and quiet, went to the lookout and saw what there was to see, then a little shopping and back to camp.



The Wilson's arrived in the afternoon followed by the Wood's after their visit to Kalgoorlie.

The Millers arrived just before dark and settled into a cabin, Stan and the Whittles arrived an hour later so all the "T's" were in and ready for tomorrows crossing of the Nullarbor.

We had quite a lot of catching up to do as we had been apart for a couple of weeks now, then off to bed for a good night sleep before the Nullarbor!

Chapter 7 – Across the Nullarbor

Day 127 – August 24th – Norseman to Afghan Rock Rest Area Balladonia. (206 Km)

We wanted to get away early this morning before the breeze sprung up as the last couple of mornings it was coming in from the east and we certainly didn't want to have a head wind.

Left about 8am with Bob and Margaret Wilson in tow and finally turned east towards home and as we hit the Eyre Highway our hearts lifted with joy, we were missing our family terribly, we did about an hours driving before stopping to stretch our legs, then back on the road again for another hours drive to morning tea at which time most caught up to us, so as usual there was a lot of chin wagging going on.

Back on the road again and still as far as the eye could see it was dead straight so strange and we haven't even hit the longest straight bit of road yet. The scenery is now becoming constant with large gums surrounded by smaller shrubs. What is strange though is there are sections of totally dead gums surrounded by green shrubs – really freaky.

Called in to see Newman's Rock which is a huge rocky base not what we expected but it gave us a chance to get out and stretch our legs once again.

Had lunch at Balladonia where everyone turned up so we took a group photo. After lunch The Smiths, Whittles and us headed out of town 5 km's for a free rest area, the others stayed at the roadhouse. The rest area was lovely and we had our own little pocket where we camped and were able to set up a fire for tonight.

The men collected firewood and Roland dropped off what he had collected before returning to his camp site for the evening. It was so mild that we all ate tea in front of the fire and then just sat around the fire talking as per usual (no wonder I never get time to read, still up to page 78 in the lovely book that Caroline gave me.)

Day 128 – August 25th - Balladonia to Moondim Bluff Rest Area Cocklebiddy. (369 Km)

Once again it was up early and get going before the winds came up. We were also going to cross another time zone and loose 45 minutes out of our day. The vegetation was thinning out and guess that is why they called it the Nullarbor which means "No Trees". There were some huge majestic eagles along the way and if they were sitting on road kill that's where they stayed. They were not moving for anyone especially our old cars – they just gave us a dirty look as we went by.



We had to stop for a photo at the start of the longest straight stretch of road in Australia – 146.6 km of dead straight driving – in a modern car it would be easy but in the old T's it was a long drive!

We called in to see the "Air Blowhole" which was an opening in the ground just off the road and the wind was really howling through it. A little further down the road we stopped to look at Midura Bluff. The views from here were breath taking, we

were really high and the plateau below looked lush and green. The Whittles decided to stop at Madura for the night and the rest of us went a little further.

We stopped at Cocklebiddy and the Wilson's, Millers and Stan decided to stay there for the night as they required either a room or power to camp. The Smith's and Amesbury's continued on down the road to a free rest area called "The Bluff", which was a little further than we had expected so we arrived just on dark and set up camp quickly. It was a nice area with lots of trees and Marilyn was impressed with the "door" on the long drop. It was a piece of red string fixed to one side with a bent nail to hook on the other side and a little piece of paper in the centre which read "Occupied" – Almost burglar proof!

Doreen cooked dinner tonight as we cooked last night then we finished the evening off – you guessed it – playing cards.

Day 129 – August 26th - Cocklebiddy to Eucla. (125 Km)

There was no rush this morning as we had to wait for the Whittles to turn up from their camp back in Madura. Whilst we were waiting we had a game of cards with Geoff and Doreen. The Whittles radioed in to say they had just past our camp – GREAT, no worries we are off again.

Down the road 60 km's we stopped for morning tea at Mundrabilla Road House and then off to Eucla for our nights stop over. We were in early enough to do some much needed washing. It is a lovely park perched on top of a hill or mountain which looks straight out over the flat plains to the ocean where you can see lovely white sand hills and light blue water. This will be our last stop before we go into South Australia. This is basically the end of the Nullarbor Highway.

A very leisurely afternoon was had just wandering around and talking with the others as we are all together again for the night.

You can feel the tension between the members in their modern cars and the other T owners. It's a shame really as we all started out friends in Model T's but they seem to have a grudge against us because their cars failed and ours are still going (don't know).

We really are living high on this trip, I reckon probably even better than at home (ha ha). We had fish and chips tonight cooked at our camper and which we shared with Geoff and Doreen, it was terrific.

Day 130 – August 27th - Eucla to Nullarbor Roadhouse. (234 Km)

We were up at the usual time so we could get on the road and pull into all the scenic spots marked on the map. The first stop was breath taking with views to the east and west along the rugged coastline. It really was spectacular with a rugged cliff face and so high up with clear blue water lapping at the walls of the cliff far below. The winds were strong so the ocean was covered with white caps.

Unfortunately for us all other roads into the coast were closed due to erosion but we did go into the Nullarbor National Park and that view was fantastic. We had lunch here before heading off to our overnight camp site.

Poor Gary battled head winds all day – so much for the advice that we would get tail winds all the way across going from west to east!

Arrived at the Road House and were advised that we could not peg down in the camping ground as it had electrical wires running underneath so we opted for a spot behind the dongers which also gave us protection from the winds. Geoff and Doreen put their caravan beside us which gave us even more protection from the wind.

There was a small plane parked at the front of the roadhouse and it made regular joy flights over the area and coastline, they probably made more money from that than from selling fuel!



My God it gets cold when the sun goes down. The Road House is powered by a generator so with all caravans etc putting on their heaters and cooking at the same time the power went down and even when it wasn't down it was not very strong, so we had to be careful what power we used.

Another young couple arrived and huddled in close to us for protection in their little two man tent, they are braver than we are they must have been freezing so we offered them the use of our little blow heater for which they were very grateful.

Chapter 8 – The South Australia experience

Day 131 – August 28th Nullarbor roadhouse to Penong. (250 Km)

What a cold and windy morning, it's just like it is coming off the snow. The sunrise was magnificent and unbelievable, seeing is believing, all the bright reds and pinks etc.



Just one of the Mother Whales swimming along the coast

Left at 9am and headed off to the “Head of the Bite” to see the whales – how fantastic, we must have seen over 40 whales with their calves just slowly swimming down the coast and playing right in front of us, we stood for absolutely ages. There was one mother whale that rolled over onto her back and put her two giant flippers up in the air whilst her baby swam over her head around then over her tail

Be careful reading this may offend – from Marilyn - Wherever you stop you always have to have a comfort stop so this morning was no different but it certainly was a challenge.

Went to the long drop toilets (this means that the toilets were built up a ramp so the waste could drop down into a hole and dissolve) these toilets were beautiful and clean and naturally sat down only to find the wind howling up the tube, so what was supposed to go down was blown back up all over your backside. Then after wiping myself down I had to jump up so that the toilet paper would not fly out what an experience! Hopefully never to be repeated.



Back on the road and headed for our destination, we were amazed by the number of dead wombats on the side of the road as we drove along, they out numbered the kangaroos. It's a shame really when you think about it, all that land around and only a narrow strip of road and the poor animals walk out just as a car or truck goes by, what are the odds?

We arrived at Penong, a small town with an alternative life style, lots of windmills to pump their water. They drive trucks to get money when needed and lead a simple life, still bound by State laws and ordinance but they have a little more say in how things happen locally. We set up camp down in a very sheltered corner of the local caravan park us, Smith's, Wilson's,

Miller's, Stan and Roland, this is a good group to travel with. The owner of the park also flew a helicopter and today he was transporting a large drum of water from here to a nearby mine. The barrel was suspended below the helicopter by a very long rope which looked a little precarious to say the least.

Day 132 – August 29th – Penong to Streaky Bay. (196 Km)

Kate Crawford, a lady who had been emailing us along the way from Queensland was on the phone early this morning to catch up before we hit the road. We did leave early hoping to miss some of the wind which we did for the first little bit but then it caught up to us.

We arrived at Ceduna and who should meet us there but the President of the Vintage Car Club Trevor Roberts who sat and had morning tea with us all. After doing a bit of grocery shopping we were directed towards Smokey Bay to call in on Grant and Linda Cotton and see their collection of cars. I love the country way of giving you an address – turn towards Smokey Bay and it will be the first new big shed on your right which it was!

After having a look around the shed and his Model T, we sat and enjoyed a nice lunch with both Linda and Grant before heading into town to see the rest of his collection of Model "A" cars.

Time was getting on so we pushed off towards Streaky Bay where Kate Crawford and John Ayers live and their directions to us were as you are heading into town we own the double storey house on the left with a white sign with our names on it, and we will leave our "A" Model out front, we found them easily and introduced ourselves, they had offered us a room but as we had the camper Marilyn asked if Jim, Doris and Stan could stay instead. We then left to book into our caravan park about one kilometre away on the beach.

After tea we (Amesbury's, Smith's and Wilson's) went back to Kate and Johns for supper and to finally meet them properly after corresponding for weeks by email, it was a great evening for all and the whole group was going to have dinner with them tomorrow at the local Pub. What a terrific couple.

We have met so many fantastic people along the way; many have emailed us from our web site and have been truly thrilled to meet such a crazy bunch of people doing this trip.

Day 133 – August 30th - Streaky Bay. (0 Km)

Today was maintenance day for Bob Wilson, he went to Kate and John's place to change his oil and rotate the tyres as they had offered the use of their workshop.

*Unfortunately there was a very bad incident at the caravan park where one of the members who is now in a modern car abused Marilyn for sneaking out last night and not inviting them, Marilyn was devastated by this savage verbal attack and was shaking and crying as the abuse was so unexpected and unwarranted. I wanted to go over and punch the guy but Marilyn wouldn't let me – I later told him that **we** had been invited over last night for coffee as we were the ones communicating with our friends for several weeks and that the rest of the group was only invited to the dinner at the pub. He did sort of apologise to Marilyn a couple of hours later for his outburst and then tried to blame us for his wife wanting to divorce him!!! and throw herself out of their car on the Nullabor. Where did this come from – I think they have some serious personal issues to resolve, and they will be doing it without our help as after this we can no longer be friends.*

When all had calmed down, the Smith's and Amesbury's drove into town to see the Powerhouse Museum but it was closed – so we rang the phone number on the sign and within an hour it was opened for us (Roland, Stan and the Millers joined us) and inside they had 368 fully restored and working stationary engines, outboard motors, old chain saws and even a Model T engine on a stand in running order. The two guides started several of the engines for us and were a wealth of information; we all made a donation to the museum and left delighted at the experience.

A little more sight seeing around the area then it was back to camp to do a little maintenance on the cars and then change for dinner which was at the Pub with Kate and John. Everyone attended so we had 18 people at our table, the food was great and the conversation very busy. A great night was had by all - Our thanks go out to Kate and John for their friendship and hospitality.

Day 134 – August 31st – Streaky Bay to Middle of No Where Road Ares - Elliston- 26kms south (173 Km)

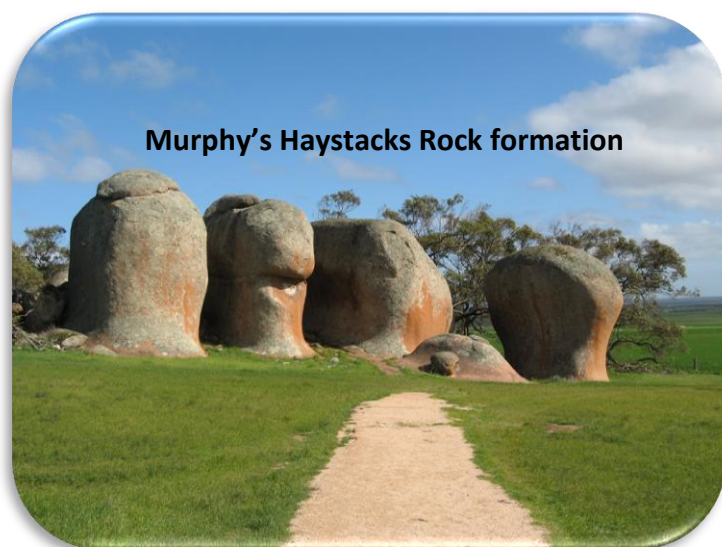
What a night! The winds came up and the side of the bedroom pushed in and out with the gusts but no wind came in, then it rained on and off. When I woke for about the 10th time through the night it was still gusting and Gary was sleeping so I decided just to lay and hope that the wind and rain would stop before he awoke. He needs the sleep as I am sure he didn't get much last night.

By the time I got up at 6.30am the rain had stopped and the clouds looked as though they were clearing so we packed up in dryness which was a relief.

Roland came to bid his farewells as he leaves us today to head off back home for an overseas trip before rejoining us in Echuca, We will miss our buddy.

All went well and we were on the road at our planned time of 9am, Jim Miller sandwiched between us and the Wilson's so hopefully he wouldn't wonder off the beaten track too

much, which he has a bad habit of doing!



We called in to see Murphy's Haystacks which is a cluster of extremely large boulders nestled into the landscape and had lovely shapes sculpted by the weather. After this we headed down the road for morning tea at Port Kenny

On our way to Elliston we passed a farm house with a very small old rock building from which they sell home made bread for \$3.00 a loaf/cob/rolls so of course we swung in and got a cob for lunch

which we enjoyed with our meal at Elliston. While we were standing around talking we found a strange coin on the ground, no one could identify it so we put it away for further investigation at a later time.

After lunch the Smith's and us left the Wilson's, Miller's and Stan at Elliston for the night and headed off to find the rest area in the camps book, no such luck. Sometimes the book is not very clear. We managed to find our own spot so here we sit in the middle of nowhere right on the side of a lovely blue lake with white sands with the Smith's and a million dollar view for FREE. After dinner we watched a movie "The Fallen" which was a bit scary then we had to leave the nice warm caravan and return to our camper in the pitch black silent night – very spooky! I don't think I have seen Marilyn move so fast on this trip, it was a really dark night with no lights to be seen for miles around.

Day 135 – September 1st - Elliston to Port Lincoln. (162 Km)

Today is actually our three quarter point around Australia (time wise). After a good nights rest, the boogie man didn't get us, we had a leisurely breakfast and slowly packed up as we had to wait for the others to catch up. We were still on the road by 9:00 am, we stopped at a little place called Sheringa, a small fuel stop with a very interesting shop and a bottle shop all rolled into a caravan park.

Had morning tea then drove on through several showers and gusty winds into Port Lincoln. The Wilson's, Miller's and Stan set up camp in town while the Amesbury's and Smiths drove another 10 minutes up the road to a pet friendly caravan park. Set up in the rain and settled in to update the web site and diaries. Hope the weather is better for tomorrow so we can have a good look around town. Port Lincoln is quite a large town and working Port so there is much to see.

Day 136 – September 2nd – Port Lincoln. (0 Km)

Up and about at the usual time and then it was off into town to do some shopping. Found a great shop called Cheap as Chips and ended up spending over 2 hours in there looking around and buying, it had a lot of different things to Sydney, managed to get a few Christmas presents also, Marilyn is always on the prowl for different things.

After exhausting ourselves shopping we went across the road and yes you guessed it to the bakery for a cuppa and cake, Gary and Geoff sure can sniff out these shops.



After refreshing ourselves we went for a drive around town to see the sights and we ended up buying a lovely wall plaque that contained opals and cockle shells.

After all this we went back into town to pick up some groceries to last us for a couple of days then back to camp for some R & R.

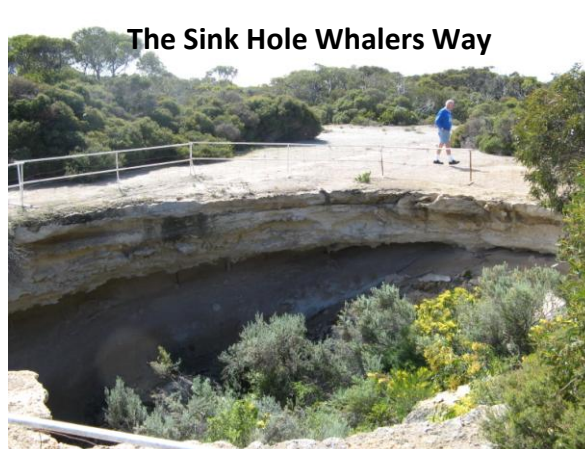
The rain clouds have lifted and it was a lovely day but lets hope tomorrow will

be warmer, fingers crossed. We all enjoyed a BBQ at the nice BBQ area just behind our tent. We all wish we were back up north where it was a lot warmer and much more enjoyable but every day is a new experience and that is what this trip is all about.

Day 137 – September 3rd – Port Lincoln. (0 Km)

The Wilson's and Miller's supported by Stan left Port Lincoln today bound for Whyalla or Port Augusta depending on how well they travel. Bob Wilson had a close call when leaving town as a local did a "U" turn right in front of him and he had to take evasive action.

The weather has improved and the sun is out and the wind has dropped so it looks like it will be a good day. The Amesbury's and Smiths stayed in town an extra day and went out to see "The Whalers Way" it is a scenic drive along the southern most tip of the Eyre Peninsular, fantastic views but you really needed a four wheel drive and that's where Geoff and Doreen Smith came into force.



The Sink Hole Whalers Way

We drove around this deserted area populated only by a few kangaroo's and emus'. The scenery was magnificent, spectacular and incredible – how do you describe aqua ocean seeping out to dark blue that has an enormous swell due to the blowing wind and to see the waves crash against the rugged coast line is just wonderful with the spray coming high into the air. The vegetation was ever changing with lots and lots of wattle in full bloom so it was bright yellow everywhere followed by pig face in bloom, so many different colours amongst Black Boys with wonderful tall spears with groups of kangaroos grazing amongst all this.



Treakstone Crevasse was different – a thin crack running from the edge of the cliff inland with water surging up spraying the rocks.

We had lunch at a rest area which even had a flush loo about fifty metres away. There was also a huge sink hole right in the middle of one of the dirt roads which could have been a nasty surprise to anyone travelling at night.

After this adventure we returned to camp and just relaxed, we will be packing up in the morning and following the others in to Port Augusta.

Day 138 – September 4th – Port Lincoln to Cowell. (157 Km)

We don't have far to travel today so we had a leisurely start to the day, once on the road we headed to the small town of Tumbly Bay, this is a really nice small town with old buildings and a great Bakery. We looked around town and had morning tea then off again heading for Cowell. When we arrived in town just after lunch we found all the others were still here so we booked into the caravan park then went to the Pub for dinner to celebrate Jim McKern's Birthday. We must be civil even if it is sometimes difficult and painful to do so.

Day 139 – September 5th – Cowel to Port Augusta. (203 Km)

Awoke to a wonderful sunrise and our hearts just lifted, spring is just around the corner. It was lovely looking out towards the water.



We all met at the local petrol station he was thrilled to see us and just had to have a photo shoot of us filling up so he could put it in the local tourist newspaper.

Nothing to look at, it's amazing how when a town finishes there's just nothing until the next town, just scrub and flat land with dark red/brown earth. We stopped for morning tea and lunch on the side of the road in the sunshine, it was just wonderful. It is just great to stop where ever and enjoy the scenery and birds etc, no other people about and hardly any other cars.

Watching the Flinders Rangers on the way in, they almost look unreal in the distance as if they have been painted against the background of the blue sky.

We arrived in Port Augusta early afternoon and after setting up camp we went into town for a quick look see. Our first stop is nearly always the information centre to see what is on offer (unless there is a bakery around of course!).

The weather is fantastic so we all sat around outside enjoying a nice cuppa and relaxing.

This evening we enjoyed watching "The Notebook" on DVD with Geoff and Doreen.

Day 140 – September 6th – Port Augusta. (23 Km)

It was all stations go this morning as we needed to be out at the airstrip by 8.30am for a photo shoot with the Royal Flying Doctor. The publicity photographer was very good and took lots of pictures of the cars on the runway with the RFDS plane next to us.

After the photo shoot it was back to camp for a well earned cuppa before heading off into town for a look around.

After lunch we all had a rest before heading off to the local car club for a BBQ dinner. What a lovely evening it turned out to be, the people were just terrific and it was lovely to meet

them. We paid for the BBQ dinner and all monies raised went towards “Relay for Life” in honour of one of the member’s wife who had just passed away from cancer at the age of 51.



Day 141 – September 7th Port Augusta to Port Germein. (80 Km)

On the road again and heading for Port Germein a short distance down the coast, it is a nice day and we had a head wind to start with but this eased off as we got away from the flat coastal area and closer to the Flinders Ranges. We turned into Port Germein just about morning tea time and drove to the town centre, as we pulled up to the "T" intersection near Australia's Longest wooden jetty, we lost forward motion - Yes we had broken another Axle! Happy Fathers Day to Gary!

Not very happy with this happening in a remote coastal town. We pushed the car around the corner then walked up to the local caravan park about 50 metres away to book in. Gary explained our problem to the manager and he immediately rang his friend who used to be the local mechanic – a few minutes later the man arrived in his Ute, his name was Dale Hollitt, he took Gary around to his workshop and offered him the use of his hoist and facilities. We had to get the car to the workshop but no one had a tow rope so Marilyn went to the local Police station which was next door to see if they could help. Marilyn told the story to the officer and asked where she could get a tow rope, the officer said “Tow ropes are illegal, but if you don’t tell anyone you can borrow my snatch strap”! which we did and within an hour the car was on a hoist and starting to be dismantled. Dale asked Gary if the car would be finished by this evening and he thought it may go over into tomorrow, Dale

said that's OK but I have to go to Alice Springs tomorrow for work – so when you are finished lock up and hide the keys! Gary couldn't believe what he was hearing – country people are really different to city folk and much more trusting.



Gary and Boyce in the workshop



Geoff and Gary working on the Axle

At the same time I (Marilyn) was told of a man, a Mr Schultz who lived near by and had some Model T's, Bob Wilson took off to visit him and returned an hour and a half later with several axles, keyways, a bottle of red wine and an invitation to a BBQ the next day! It appears they have a vineyard and also make their own wine. Geoff and Gary managed to get the car almost finished by evening then we went to dinner at the local pub with Boyce and Mary Schultz and the rest of our group to celebrate Fathers Day, we had a great evening. Isn't it funny how things work out in the strangest places. The Shultz's will be joining us in Echuca in a few weeks time.

Our special thanks go out to Dale, who lent us his workshop and left us there on our own to complete the repairs.

Channel 7 rang Marilyn today to inquire if they could run a segment on the trip on Sunrise tomorrow at 8.40am, of course she said yes, it's always a pleasure to see ourselves on TV and feel famous for a few seconds.

Day 142 – September 8th - Port Germein. (12 Km)

Not much sleep last night as the shower in the cabin had a very slow drip, drip, drip, and the bed was strange so I tossed and turned. Poor Gary slept like a log after a hard day yesterday.

We turned the TV on as soon as we were up to wait to see if we were on Channel 7 and behold at exactly the time they said there was a little spiel about the tour and a picture of the cars at Denham in front of the Information Centre.

After breakfast Geoff and Gary went back to the workshop to change some tyres over and finish off the car, while we were doing that Marilyn made a great pea and ham soup with a bone left over from a leg ham prize Bob Wilson won a couple of days earlier.

When the car was finished Gary returned to camp and cleaned up and had a cuppa then off we went to see Mary and Boyce's place. They had a wonderful property with a large vineyard and a few empty paddocks, but we were more interested in the rusty stuff! Boyce showed us his collection of Model T parts which were almost enough to start his own factory! He also had a nice collection of restored cars and one World War One Model T

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Boyce's collection of Model T Fords and spare parts!



Ambulance. After this we enjoyed a nice BBQ lunch which Mary organised and Gary cooked. We all had a great time and made some new friends who we will remember for a long time.

After lunch we returned to camp then we decided to walk out on Australia's longest wooden jetty which was 1.25 miles long, it was a great experience but we had hoped to see some dolphins or whales but that was not to be, Marilyn was very disappointed. The jetty is so long because the bay is very shallow, the locals drive their tractors out about half a mile to launch their boats – it's a really weird sight to see these tractors drive off the beach and into the ocean and just keep going!

We had worked up quite an appetite so Marilyn's Pea & Ham soup went down well shared with everyone, the others supplied meatballs and rissoles so we all had a good feed.



Day 143 – September 9th - Port Germein to Adelaide. (248 Km)

We broke camp and left early today as we have a long way to go before we were to meet up with members of the Adelaide club who were driving up to meet us.

We stopped for morning tea at Snowtown (renowned for the murders many years ago where the bodies were found in drums). The town is very small and has pulled itself up and is trying to make the town attractive to visitors.

From here we headed straight for Port Wakefield to meet up with the Adelaide Club for lunch and a much deserved break. It was good to meet club members who gave up their time to escort us into Adelaide. The other members of our tour were here also so we were all back together for a short while.

The scenery over the last few days has become typical farm land and we saw the most wild life in the one place since we left home and would you believe it - it was 15 rabbits grazing on the side of the road.

Our guides left us at Gepps Cross and then we all went our own way to stay with friends etc at different locations all over Adelaide.

We made our caravan park by 3 pm and began setting up so that the car could be detached from annex bed section, as we have to put the car on display Friday night and Saturday morning. We had the Smiths and Millers over for tea tonight and we had cooked Apricot Chicken in the Dream pot. Really have to say yet again we have been eating extremely well on this trip. After tea we had an enjoyable game of cards.

Day 144 – September 10th – Adelaide. (0 Km)

We are finally in one place for a few days so we took time out to do some maintenance on the cars then the usual shopping and washing duties. We needed to clean the cars up to display them at the club rooms on Friday night then again at Victoria Square on Saturday Morning for a civic reception.

We spent the day just relaxing and being typical tourists, then Marilyn was whipped away by a fellow MYOB consultant in Adelaide to attend one of their meetings, Marilyn has been in withdrawal having been away from the office for five months now, so she was really looking forward to this meeting. Marilyn was feeling normal by the end of the night even though it was for a short time, she is thoroughly enjoying the travelling but misses her home comforts, privacy and family a lot.

There are only the Smiths, Millers and us in the park at this time, the others are spread out all over the city visiting friends and relatives – We are hoping to catch up with our niece Joanne and her daughter Paige Lee while we are here.

Had a little rain this afternoon, hope it doesn't hang around too long.

Day 145– September 11th – Adelaide. (0 Km)

After being in the Model T for five months we decided to spoil ourselves and hire a car for a couple of days, Geoff gave Gary a lift to pick it up then Marilyn and I headed to Mount Lofty to see the sights from this high vantage point. Gary used to live in Adelaide a lifetime ago

and boy has it changed. The view was spectacular but very windy and cold so we didn't stay long. From here we headed up into the ranges to Hahndorf, an old German town famous for its beer fest, we spent a few hours walking up and down the main street and visiting every shop until we were completely exhausted.

After a kerb side lunch we drove back into the city and went for another walk through Rundle Mall, we hadn't been in a large shopping centre for a long time and Marilyn was lapping it up. Finally we meandered back to camp for a good rest. Paul and Barbara Wood arrived at our caravan park today after their little diversion to Burra and were camped only a few metres from our site.

Day 146 – September 12th – Adelaide. (27 Km)

It was lovely to wake up to the sounds of kookaburra's laughing at us so early in the morning; we miss all the beautiful things of nature.

We decided to go to Victor Harbour today – BIG MISTAKE – we headed off at approx 9am and had asked Geoff and Doreen if they would wish to accompany us since they have been so good taking us here and there for many months so it was our way of returning the favour as we have a hire car. Since it was so early Doreen kept dropping hints re McDonald's breakfast so we stopped for a leisurely 2nd breakfast at McDonalds and as luck would have it there was a St Vincent De Paul next door so yes that is correct we went browsing. Finally got underway and headed to the Freeway only to find it closed (poor GPS was having a breakdown re calculating all the time) we finally found the main road we needed and got to Victor Harbour at lunch time.

We headed off to the Bluff before stopping at the Harbour for lunch looking for a protected spot as the wind was howling. After lunch we unfortunately had to leave so our time at Victor Harbour was very limited as it was a long way down there.

On the way back we tried to get onto the Freeway only to find it was closed going that way. We later found out that it is open from the south to the city from 2am to 12.30pm then it reverses for the going home peak hour traffic. The Freeway is only 2 lanes you see.

After getting home by 3 pm we had to get ready for the display tonight, we left for the Sports Car Club rooms around 4 pm and had to drive through peak hour traffic not knowing exactly where we were going, we managed to get directions from a car next to us and relayed the message to Geoff via CB radio. When we arrived at the club house which was a beautiful old mansion, we had to leave our car in the parking lot as it was too tall to get into the club room and on stage with the other two T's. There were lots of people at the meeting and Jim Miller, Bob Wilson and Paul Wood got up to speak about our trip, we were all presented with some publications created by club members which was very nice.

After the meeting we were given a tour of the place which was huge and even down into the catacombs beneath which were more club rooms and storage areas. We enjoyed chatting with the members over supper then returned to our various homes.

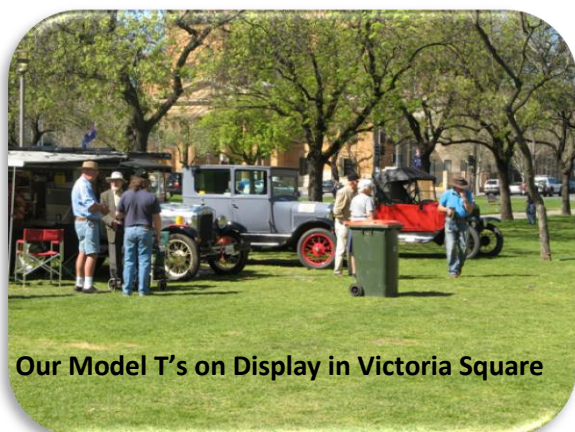
Day 147 – September 13th – Adelaide. (22 Km)

Today is the big day we are off into Victoria Square to be on display with the other Model T cars from WA who drove across the Nullarbor raising money for the Royal Flying Doctor Service and with the backing of the Lions Club in Toodyay.

First up was an interview with Gary on ABC radio at 7.30am then it was spit and polish to get ready for today. We headed off at 9.30am into the city square and were very lucky getting a lovely green patch of grass to set up on, it's a rare occasion that cars are allowed onto the park. We opened up the bedroom side and laid the bed out so people could see where we have been sleeping then put the awning out over the kitchen side to give us shade for the day. (It is amazing how many people thought we just slept under the stars as we did not have the annex walls up on the bedroom side.)

It is a glorious warm to hot day with a slight breeze and here we sat on the grass on Victoria Square with seventeen other Model T's from SA, the three T's from WA, and our three from Sydney.

After the formalities of being welcomed by the Deputy Mayor of Adelaide, The President of the SA Model T's, Toodyay Lions Club and Gary (Chairman of the Centenary-T-Tour) we were able to sit back and enjoy talking to the locals about our trip and meeting the drivers of the W.A. T's.



Our Model T's on Display in Victoria Square



Gary giving his speech

We were just across the road from the Chinatown Markets so Marilyn and Doreen went for a leisurely stroll through looking at the shops and fresh food and upon their return we were all given vouchers for a sausage sizzle and drink provided by the Lions Club which was great.

We headed back to camp about 2.30pm after talking our heads off and meeting a lot of extremely nice people. The wind blew up quite strong this afternoon and we were worried if our annex at the caravan park would be still standing, lucky us, yes it was thanks to a few fellow campers who tightened the ropes when they got loose.

Tonight we had dinner with Joanne and Paige Lee (Gary's niece and her daughter) it was great to catch up with them and Joanne is looking very good and Paige Lee is getting more mature and quite beautiful now she is nearly 15.

By the time we went to bed the wind was still gusting and the lighting and thunder with heavy rain was on the menu so Marilyn said a quite prayer that it would all be over by morning.

Day 148 – September 14th – Adelaide to 42 Mile Rest Area. (262 Km)

It's time to leave Adelaide and continue our trek around the country. After packing up we headed out of town and after much consultation with many locals it was decided that we would take the route down south and cut across inland to meet up with the Freeway at Crafters as the hills were still a little steep this way but did not go on and on like the main highway.

As we approached Crafters Gary had to pull over and adjust the low bands and unfortunately whilst he was taking something off he broke the gasket so had to make a new one before completing the job. The Smiths, Millers and us decided that we would have morning tea after this adjustment before hitting the road again.

Once we were on the Freeway all seemed to be going well but Gary said the car was bouncing around so we pulled over again and borrowed Jim Millers spare wheel then off we went again and all was well.

The wattle trees are magnificent and so many different colour yellows and types of wattle, it looks great, yellow down both sides of the road.

We pulled into Tailem Bend for lunch which was a nice small town with only Mitre 10 and Foodland open but we are getting used to this now and ensure that we have supplies with us.

After lunch we headed to Policeman's Reach to leave Millers there, the Smiths along with us headed out to our free camp for the night.

What a lovely spot, Gary managed to drive into a little cleared area that just fitted our bedroom section and I had a little room to cook with before touching the tree that was close by – our own private camp section.



After a lovely tea we played cards with Geoff and Doreen. The weather caught up to us and at about 1am in the morning the wind blew up and came in strong gusts with the tarp making a noise which made it hard to sleep. By about 3am Gary got up to check the tarp and ropes which were still in place, don't know how as the wind was unbelievably strong.

Day 149– September 15th – 42 Mile Rest Area to Kingston SE. (73 Km)

We were up early as we hadn't slept much due to the strong winds, and after looking up into the skies we decided to pack up as quickly as possible as grey clouds were coming in.

We headed off towards Kingston (the Smith's and us) and after an hour it was impossible to drive as controlling the car was near impossible due to the strong winds and occasional rain. We made it into Kingston for morning tea where we met up with the Miller's, Wilson's and Stan. Bob Wilson was suffering from Hypothermia as his little roadster has no side curtains and the howling wind and rain drained all his body heat, we put him into the Smith's caravan with a heater on and thawed him out with a hot cuppa.

Gary took his bouncy wheel to a tyre place and managed to get it balanced and now it was about a kilo heavier due to all the lead weights they had to use, we returned Jim Miller's wheel to him and then filled up with fuel ready to tackle the next section. After discussing our options with the locals, they advised us to stay in town as two Semi-trailers had been blown over on this stretch of road a couple of years earlier during a similar storm. The winds were gusting at 120 km's per hour so we decided to stay!

Just a little windy on the beach at Kingston SE



We booked into the local caravan park and shared a cabin with Jim & Doris Miller. The cabin was a godsend as the winds were howling all day and that is no exaggeration. After veging out to recover from the drive we decided to go for a walk down to the ocean to watch the high waves roll in. The wind was so strong sometimes it was impossible for Marilyn to walk and she was blown backwards so she hung onto me to ensure she was not blown over.

Day 150 – September 16th – Kingston to Dartmoor. (232 Km)

Woke up to the sound of silence! The winds had dropped but there was a little rain around so we packed up quickly to get on the road before the weather changed again. We were heading for Mount Gambier today to see the Blue Lake, all the T's and backup vehicles travelled together. We arrived in Mount Gambier just before lunch and went to the information centre for directions, Gary took off to try and find some diff oil from one of the fuel depot's in town, and he returned an hour later with four litres SFT120 mineral oil so

The Model T Ford Centenary Tour of Australia

thick you could cut it with a knife! They actually had Model T Fords listed in their catalogue and had the right oil for the job.

Drove around the lake and took a few photo's but as the weather was overcast the lake was not the beautiful blue we expected.

We all decided to continue on, the Amesbury's and Smith's went to a roadside rest area called Dartmoor for the night and the others continued on a little further to find a caravan park.



Our Campsite at Dartmoore



Carved nursery rhyme tree, Dartmoore



Chapter 9 – Victoria and the Rally

Day 151 – September 17th – Dartmoor to Colac. (260 Km)

The weather is still holding on the good side for the moment so the Amesbury's and Smith's were on the road early to meet up with the others along the road to Portland.

We drove through lots of small towns along the way but there was nothing to stop and look at. The Amesbury's and Smith's turned off before Portland to stay on the A1 and headed towards Geelong. The Millers, Wilson's and Stan continued on into Portland to have a look around.

The wattle trees are magnificent - bright yellow and really bushy, they are lovely to watch as we travel through this rural country side.

The Amesbury's and Smith's continued on through Warrnambool and found another rest area a few km's before Colac, very small and no where as nice as up the west coast. The others were heading for the start of the Great Ocean Road and we are not sure where they spent the night.

Day 152– September 18th – Colac to Geelong. (101 Km)

It was up early this morning to get on the road again. Its sad that we have decided not to go along the Great Ocean Road but in hind sight it was a smart move as the road is windy and hilly and the winds sprung up today which would have made the trip a nightmare.

Its amazing we have been watching the dry wall (a fence made of stones) it has gone on for at least 5 kms along the road and even divides paddocks. Its hard to imagine that someone has collected all those rocks and stacked them on top of each other at least 3 feet high and this goes for kms down the road. Can you imagine how long this would have taken them, years upon years?

We arrived in Geelong by morning tea time and headed to the Information Centre which was in a stupid place with no parking – what are people with caravans to do, it was hard for us in the vintage car and to make matters worse every parking spot had a parking meter which gave no change.

After booking into a caravan park and setting up camp, Geoff and Doreen lent us their car so we could go shopping and upon returning their daughter Sue and her husband Mike had arrived so we all enjoyed a nice afternoon tea with lots of catching up.

Sue and Mike supplied a lovely BBQ for tea tonight and I supplied Rocky Road for dessert followed by a great game of Rumble Rummy and few glasses of wine.

Day 153 – September 19th - Geelong (0 Km)

Geoff and Doreen lent us their car as they were going sight seeing with their daughter Sue, and Mike. We headed off into Melbourne to visit the MYOB head office and meet with Marilyn's account manager Michael Kormas and Manager of all CC's, Rick Van Dyke.

Michael reckons that Marilyn is a celebrity here at MYOB as we were allowed upstairs where the account managers sit, no one is allowed up stairs. Gary and I spent a pleasant hour or so there before heading back to Geelong.

We arrived back mid afternoon and enjoyed a relaxing afternoon. The remaining three Model T owners and passengers left in this rally along with our support drivers had a meeting tonight to discuss the itinerary as the drivers feel the cars are beginning to feel a little weary, so it was decided that from Echuca we would head home via Yass, as to take the cars across the mountains along the coast road could be very painful for them so they picked the simple no fuss way, now we should be home around the 9th Oct 2008 – about nine days shy of the 180 days.

Gary did the changes to the itinerary on the web page and sent a text to Laraine so she could inform the others. This change was only for the Model T's on the run, the others in their modern cars were free to continue with the old itinerary if they wanted to.

Day 154 – September 20th – Geelong to Ballarat. (87 Km)

Up at the usual time but no hurry as we were not leaving until 9am heading for Ballarat. The day started off with Laraine ringing Gary quite early to complain regarding the itinerary changes and thinks we should have involved the others in modern cars. Gary advised her that there were only three Model T's left on the rally, and they had two back up vehicles. The other moderns had gone their own way since Mount Isa and have only been interested in supporting the T's since Adelaide, or even bothering to contact us with information for the Web page.

Geoff and Doreen love to go to garage sales so they got the local paper and we organised a few to go to before leaving Geelong. No luck at the garage sales but you never know what you may find.

By the time we were ready to go the wind had blown up and was gusting quite strongly, at some stages Gary was down to about 42 kph and battling all the way. We only had 80 km's to do but it was hard going for the drivers so we kept stopping so they could get out stretch their legs and give their arms a rest. We made it into Ballarat around lunchtime and made our way to the Information Centre at Eureka Stockade and located a pet friendly caravan park just a couple of kilometres up the road.

We arrived at Shady Acres Caravan Park by late afternoon and set up camp. The owners let us share a site with Geoff and Doreen in between two cabins for protection from the wind, and only charged us for one caravan and 2 extra people so we were lucky.

Day 155– September 21st – Ballarat. (0 Km)

It's off to Sovereign Hill today with Geoff Smith, Doreen didn't feel up to walking around all day and opted for a rest day. We purchased a day ticket and one also for the show at night. Sovereign Hill is still as good as last time we went through. It's great to see the people dressed up in the period costumes and acting the actual part. We did some gold panning and the little bits I found I gave to a little girl who was getting upset that she had not found anything yet.

It was hard work walking around the Hill as the wind was gusting rather strong and a bit cool out of the sun.



Gary & Geoff panning for Gold!



Soldier re-enactment at Ballarat

We walked all around the township looking at the tents in which miners and families lived – how can we complain that it's cold at least I have an electric heater. Marilyn enjoyed the gold pouring display and ended up buying a lovely gold and glass necklace with gold floating around in it with a gold bow on top and gold lace around the edge her memory token for the whole tour.

After a very tiring day of sightseeing we headed home in time to have an early tea before heading back to the night show "Blood on the Southern Cross" which is a light and sound show. This was fantastic and so realistic, when you heard horses coming you would turn around and look to see them and you followed the voices around as if the people were actually there.

The Smiths and us were still pumped up after the show so we called into McDonalds for an ice cream sundae before heading back to camp for bed.

Day 156 – September 22nd – Ballarat. (0 Km)

This morning was overcast and it started raining as we had breakfast, the wind was still gusting but we had a protected camp site. Prior to heading off into town for a look around and a bit of shopping we went next door to look at some new caravans, they are beautifully done these days but very expensive, OK if you have a spare \$28 to \$95,000.

IT IS FREEZING and we have had the heater on all day and the air is still cool Gary and I are becoming miserable as it's hard to get warm.

Bob Wilson called to see what we are doing tomorrow as they are thinking of staying another day as the weather report said cold, wet and windy, we advised him we would wait until tomorrow morning before making a decision.

Day 157 – September 23rd - Ballarat to Castlemaine. (85 Km)

This morning upon rising we checked out the skies and they were light grey and looked as though it may be OK so we decided to get going as it was too cold here and we would take our chances at Castlemaine so we rang Bob and advised that we were leaving.

We made Daylesford by mid morning and had a nice walk around town and did a bit of Christmas shopping before heading off to Castlemaine. We called Geoff and Doreen to see where they were and they were now ahead of us so they pulled into a rest area to wait for us to catch up, upon our arrival we all had a nice morning tea. After the break we continued on into Castlemaine and booked into a nice caravan park.

Gary and I decided that tonight we were going to get a cabin as we both were so cold and it's hard to function when you are so cold. We have a lovely cabin with a heater in it – it's just like being at home.

After lunch Geoff and Doreen took us up to the “XXXX Antique and Old Wares museum” and what a wonderful place it was. There were about six old houses full to the brim of bric-a-brac and Antiques with lots of cast iron statues all around, it was well done and well worth the visit. After this we headed into town for a walk around and then Gary and I walked back to the caravan park.

I have to say it is just luxury having a cabin, it feels like home as it is a very nice cabin. After lazing around for the rest of the afternoon we had tea and watched a video with Geoff and Doreen.

Day 158 – September 24th - Castlemaine to Bendigo. (55 Km)

Another short day today as we only had 37 km's to travel to Bendigo, we packed up and had an easy drive arriving by morning tea, so we went directly to the Info Centre to find a pet friendly caravan park for the Smith's. It turned out that the closest park to town was the pet friendly one so we advised all the others by text so they could join us later today. Gary spent the afternoon cleaning his car (underneath) to get rid of some of the excess oil and dirt. We just relaxed around the park for the rest of the day.

The Wilson's, Miller's, Wood's and Stan Bruce arrived with Ann McKern towing their teardrop van, as her husband Jim had flown home to Sydney from Adelaide to repair his Model T so they could have it in Echuca for the Rally. Everyone settled in for the evening and some had a BBQ for tea before cards, scrabble and bed.

Day 159 – September 25th Bendigo. (0 Km)

Today is a sight seeing day so we all went our separate ways into Bendigo, the Smith's and Amesbury's first stop was the Bakery for morning tea as usual, then into the city to check out the sights and shops. We went to Bendigo Pottery and had a good time there browsing and talking to the potter.

Geoff and Gary also took time out to give blood at the local Red Cross, we had not had the opportunity at other locations around Australia and they obviously have way too much blood just for themselves.

In the main shopping street Gary checked out the hat shop for dress up hats but they were far too expensive, very nice but too much just for dress up. We received a call from Bob Wilson advising that “Win 9” were coming to the park at 1:00 pm to do an interview with the Model T Group, so we headed home and gave the T a bit of a spruce up in readiness. The interview went well and took some time with 3 drivers all talking about the trip, after a nice dinner of bacon and eggs we all sat around various TV sets in the park and caravans and watched the news to see ourselves; it was a good report with some good shots of the cars.

Day 160 – September 26th Bendigo to Echuca. (104 Km)

Today we are heading into Echuca - Moama for the start of the Model T hub Rally, we only have 91 km's to travel so it was a leisurely pack up and exit from Bendigo with a quick stop in at the grocery shop for more supplies.

Arrived at our caravan park around noon and booked into our huge cabin and proceeded to unpack the car for the following week. I think the car rose about three inches when it was unpacked. We prepared dinner and waited for Richard and Gweneth Day to arrive from Sydney, they finally arrived around 7:00 pm exhausted from their very long day of driving all the way from Pitt Town near Sydney. Everyone else had arrived and settled in except the Whittles who will be here tomorrow.

Day 161– September 27th – Echuca. (6 Km)

Oh it's great to sleep in a fixed bed and not have to pack up your house in the morning. We decided to go into town with the Smith's and have a look around today and buy some more food supplies, checked out all the shops and enjoyed the rather warm day as the temperature rose to around 30° Celsius. After lunch Gary did some maintenance on the car whilst Marilyn organised a big BBQ with all the people who had arrived for the Rally from our club and our tour, there was plenty to talk about and many things to catch up on, a great time was had by all.

Day 162 – September 28th – Echuca. (21 Km)

Today is check in day for the rally and we will get all the rally info for the next week, but first a visit to the local Markets down by the Murray River. There were hundreds of stalls and I think everyone bought something, Gary managed to pick up a nice chain block and tackle and Marilyn found some different things for Christmas presents. We dropped into Rally Headquarters around 11:00 am and booked in and received our Rally packs with heaps of great goodies for the 100th anniversary celebration tour. We managed to spend a lot of time catching up with friends from Australia and overseas then it was back to camp for the afternoon.

The Whittles have arrived and settled in as have dozens of other keen Model T Rallyers.

Tonight is the official welcome and opening of the Rally, it seems strange that the opening will be held in Moama NSW and the rally was in Victoria! (Just across the bridge).

It was a good night with much more chatting and meeting going on before we were thrown out and headed home for a good nights sleep.

Day 163 – September 29th – Echuca. (146 Km)

Today is day one of the Model T Hub Rally, which is a drive from Echuca to Kyabram via Merrigum about 120 km's round trip. First we had to drive across the bridge into Victoria and pick up our directions from the Port of Echuca; this caused the cars to overheat sitting in a queue and moving very slowly. Once on the road we enjoyed the scenery and being part of a continuous column of Model T Fords as we drove along.

We had a brief stop in Merrigum for morning tea and a quick look around town then on to Kyabram for lunch. All the cars were parked on a huge reserve while everyone had lunch and browsed the local stores.

After lunch we were directed out of the park in two locations so that we would all pass each other in the main street travelling in opposite directions for the video. After a delayed start all went well and we continued our drive back to Echuca.

Day 164 – September 30th – Echuca. (202 Km)

Day two of the rally is a longer drive, we are heading off to Bendigo which is about 100 km's south, as we headed out of town there was a couple sitting outside a café who waved as we went past, then we suddenly realised it was Kate and John from Streaky Bay in South Australia so we did a "U" turn and went back. They had driven over to check out all the cars with the possibility of purchasing one in the future, we had a good chat then we were off again. It was a long drive passing through Rochester, Elmore, Goornong and Huntly and into Bendigo. We stopped in to visit Bendigo pottery and had a good look around and then purchased a nice water dispenser for home, then in to town for a ride on the historic Tram which was really informative and explained the history of Bendigo and pointed out the homes of some of the more prominent early settlers.

After a leisurely lunch we headed back to Echuca, another long drive back along the same road which was a little boring for us as we had done this only last week!

Day 165– October 1st – Echuca. (18 Km)

Marilyn awoke today with thoughts of her mother as it was her birthday and she is turning 80 today, my what a special day.

Day three of the hub rally and it will be a relaxing day, firstly we drove down behind the tourist information centre and into a wooded reserve where we put our cars on display for the locals to peruse, we also had to vote on which car we liked best in the different years and categories. Gary took the time to make scones in his "Dream Pot" which kept the visitors interested, we all enjoyed these for morning tea with strawberry jam and whipped cream – Yum!

We were very lucky because as we sat enjoying the day a large branch fell from the gum tree right next to where we were parked and it missed our car and members by literally inches! After lunch we had to move and re-assemble at Victoria Park and were directed where to park, later there was an aerial photo taken from a small plane and the cars had been placed to form the Ford Logo and the year 2008 which looked quite impressive. After the photo we had a pre-arranged cruise on one of the Murray River Paddle Steamers for about an hour which was great, Gary even got to steer the boat for a while, but so did a lot of other "kids" who were given a special certificate for the experience.

On our return we walked back to Victoria Park where the committee had organised a BBQ dinner inside so we all sat down and had a good filling meal followed by a slice of Centenary Birthday cake. All full up we staggered back to our cars and made our way back to our accommodation for a good rest and a nice cuppa!

Day 166 – October 2nd – Echuca. (254 Km)

Today will be another long run from Echuca to Barham via Torrumbarry where we stopped to look around the Torrumbarry weir, it was quite a complex set up and even had a set of water steps to allow the trout to swim upstream past the weir for breeding. We took the time to have morning tea and then continued along the Murray River route into Barham and parked in a nice park along the river front. Across the road was the “Border Flywheelers club” with a huge selection of stationary engines and other interesting flywheel steam contraptions. Here we were served with lunch and boxes of fresh oranges for us to help ourselves to (I presume to prevent scurvy!).

After a great lunch and a good look around the club area we began our return trip to Echuca via “Cohuna” where we stopped for a quick look around as it was getting a bit late in the day, then back in the cars and the long drive back to camp. It is amazing how tired you get from driving a Model T all day, I don’t know if it’s the vibrations or the concentration or the fumes but we always sleep very well after a long run in the T.

Day 167 – October 3rd – Echuca. (134 Km)

The last day of the rally today and we are off to Shepparton and the SPC factory outlet, there was a lot of traffic on the road and with all the model T’s slowing it down some of the modern cars and trucks were taking unnecessary risks to get past them, putting everyone in danger. We finally made it into Shepparton but instead of going to the park for lunch we went directly to the SPC factory outlet and checked it out. We bought a few items then had a walk up and down the main street looking in all the shops but nothing took our fancy so we went back to the SPC outlet and had lunch in their café.

After this our small group returned to Echuca to get ahead of the slower cars and have a clear run back to camp. As it was the last day we started packing up our cabin ready to depart tomorrow after breakfast.

Tonight is also the final dinner, so we scrubbed up and dressed nicely then headed to the club and managed to get a good seat with all our buddies. The food was terrific and there were many prizes awarded to members for various things, we also passed the Flying Doctor tins around and they came back so full we could hardly lift them. Richard Day and Ian Whittle received prizes for their cars from the display day which was good and our table won its fair share of raffle prizes also.

Unfortunately the evening was spoiled again by the same person that attacked Marilyn back in South Australia, only this time he verbally attacked another lady – he doesn’t have the guts to pick on any of the men! Well I guess he will have a few less friends by the time we all get back home, the rest of us get on just fine – it’s a real shame he spoiled it for everyone.

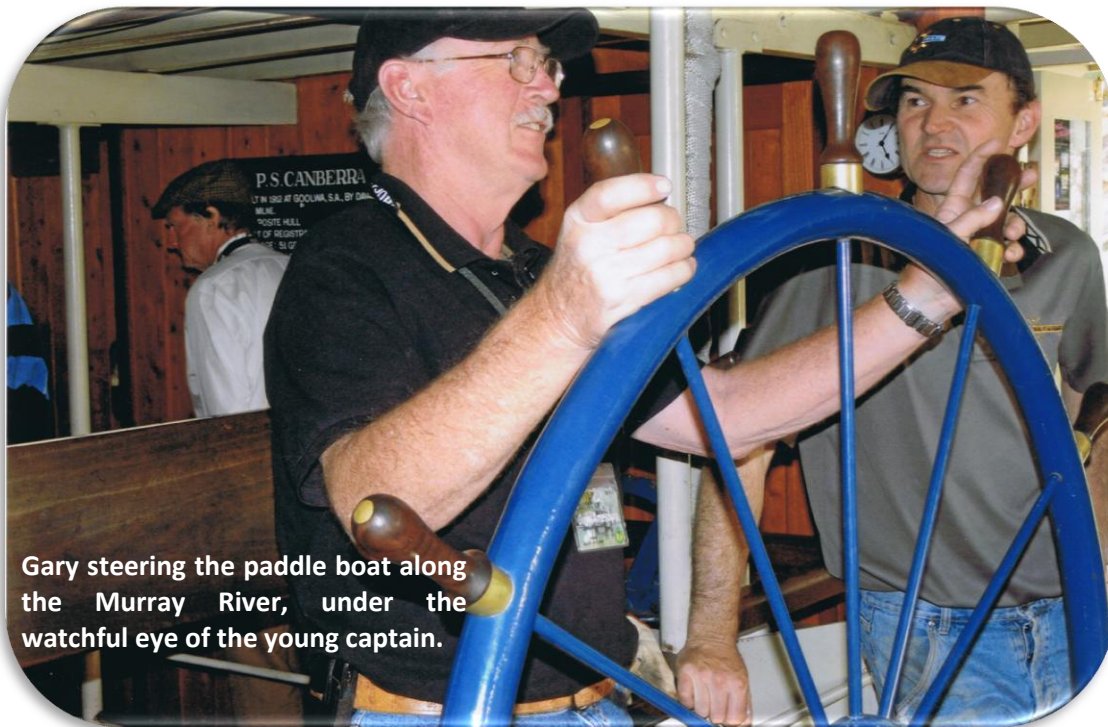
We returned home for a good nights sleep with a full stomach and some good memories from meeting all our old friends again.

Day 168 – October 4th – Echuca to Ovens River (181 Km)

Another special day today, it is our daughter Melanie’s birthday, we are thinking of you sweetpea.

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Today is the final event for the 100 years celebration Rally in Echuca, so after packing up the camper and checking the cabin we left the Caravan Park for breakfast at the Sports Club where everyone was busy saying their last good-bye's. The Wilson's left before breakfast as they wanted to get to Albury for the night to catch up with some friends, The Miller's and Amesbury's with the Smith's as support headed for Yarrawonga for the night. There was no accommodation for the Millers so they drove on to Wodonga, while the Amesbury's and Smiths stopped in at Ovens River rest area which was a fantastic picturesque spot complete with black swans, white geese and a multitude of other bird life. It was so nice when we pulled up we just put out the chairs, cracked a bottle of wine and sat and watched the scenery for about an hour. After this we set up camp then went for a walk to investigate the area, we met a couple of other campers fishing and having a good time, back to camp for dinner, cards and bed. I recommend this site to all nature lovers and campers it's great.



Gary steering the paddle boat along the Murray River, under the watchful eye of the young captain.



Echuca-Victoria
Harry and Pauline Power
September 2008.



Richard & Gwen resting in our camper at Echuca

Chapter 10 – The last stretch – Heading for home

Day 169 – October 5th – Ovens River to Gundagai. (261 Km)

We got up this morning and the lake was covered in slowly moving mist and you could see the black swans swimming around then tail up in the air as they plunged their heads underwater looking for food. The mist was moving but it was so different to what we have seen anywhere else on the tour. The mist slowly disappeared as the sun came up and it was just great to sit there and watch the reflections of the trees in the water, you couldn't help but keep taking photos.



We headed out a bit later than usual due to day light saving starting but that's OK we are slowly heading home.

The farms are so lush and green it was great, there were lots of ducks around, also saw some rabbits but we know the farmers won't be happy with them.

Marilyn was feeling very sick today (first time for the whole trip so I guess I have been very lucky).



We stopped at the original Ettamogah Pub for morning tea and a photo shoot, it is a most interesting pub with all the sayings around the place it just makes you smile and laugh.

We stopped again at Holbrook for lunch so that Gary and Geoff could look at the submarines and finally ended up in Gundagai for the night.

I am not sure if it is easier driving for Gary, being on a two lane highway most of the time there were also lots of hills so he was really stressing about holding up trucks.

Doreen cooked tea for us tonight as Marilyn layed down as soon as the camp was set up.

Day 170 – October 6th - Gundagai to Goulburn. (185 Km)

The Amesbury's and Smith's left Gundagai and drove on to Yass, the weather has changed to cold, windy and rain once more. We arrived in Yass around 12:00 noon and had lunch with the Wilson family, it was nice to meet them all and sit inside a real house for a change. After a short stay we continued on into Goulburn for the night opting to stay in a Caravan Park because the wind was too strong in the rest area and there was no where to peg down our annex as the area was all bitumen.



The Wilson's stayed in Yass with their family and the Miller's stayed another night in Wodonga.

Day 171– October 7th – Goulburn to Bargo. (175 Km)

Getting so close to home now but still a lot of hills to climb, 45 km's North out of Goulburn half way up a steep hill we ran out of forward motion - again! Another broken axle so close to home. We rang the NRMA and arranged a tow to a nearby workshop where Geoff Smith and Gary once again removed the diff and replaced the axle. This time they lapped the hub onto the axle shaft after noticing that it was only touching in two places and must have been the cause of the previous breaks as they have only happened since we fitted the new wheel hub in W.A.



This is the last thing we wanted especially so close to home!

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Paul and Barbara Wood and the Wilson's stopped at the breakdown site on their way home, nothing they could do so they continued on to their homes.

Day 172 – October 8th - Bargo to Milperra and Home. (75 Km)

Hopefully this will be the last day of our trip, with the Model T all fixed; we set off for the last few kilometres, all went well even though the traffic along the M5 was horrific with hundreds of semi-trailers and fast cars it was probably the worst days travel on the whole trip.

We made it to Peter Warren Ford and dropped in to get our book stamped for the last time and also looked into the possibility of holding the final dinner there, the reception was good and it looks like a possibility.



We arrived home around lunch time and spent all afternoon with our family and especially our grand daughter Ella, who is now eight months old and a real gem.

Bob Wilson rang to say he and Margaret were home safely, Richard day was home with his whole family the Whittles are back safe and sound, Stan and Roland are also back to normality and the Smith's are enjoying their grandkids at home.

Our greatest thanks go out to Geoff and Doreen Smith who were our constant backup and companions for the whole trip, Thanks also to Stan and Roland for their fantastic support for the Model T's and for their friendship. Special thanks go out to Richard Day and Ian and Ann Whittle who were our Model "T" group members and helped to make the journey special and memorable, Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the people around Australia who have assisted us in so many ways; it has been a pleasure to meet so many fantastic and generous people, also for the support for the "Royal Flying Doctor Service". We hope to meet you all again on our next trip (in a modern car this time).

Tour Statistics

<i>Total distance travelled in the Model T Ford</i>	<i>20,988 Kilometres.</i>
<i>Total Fuel Used</i>	<i>2800 Litres</i>
<i>Total Fuel Cost</i>	<i>\$4,645.11</i>
<i>Average Fuel consumption</i>	<i>7.49Km/Lt or 17.6 MPG</i>
<i>Most expensive fuel</i>	<i>\$2.10 per Litre at Three Ways</i>
<i>Tyres used in Total</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Flat tyres</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Repairs</i>	<i>1 Crown Wheel,</i>
<i>.....</i>	<i>1 Wheel Hub</i>
<i>.....</i>	<i>3 Axle shafts</i>
<i>.....</i>	<i>1 set Points</i>
<i>.....</i>	<i>1 deep cycle battery</i>
<i>Accommodation</i>	<i>\$3016.10</i>
<i>Food</i>	<i>\$2916.07</i>
<i>Fun</i>	<i>\$2247.30</i>
<i>Miscellaneous (Tours, Flight, attractions etc).....</i>	<i>\$9,529.54</i>
<u>Total cost for the whole trip</u>	<u>\$22,354.12</u>

Gary and Marilyn Amesbury.

The End.

HERO'S

My hero is Gary John Amesbury who

On the 20th April 2008 with a group of extraordinary people we set out on a trek to drive our 1927 Ford Model T around Australia. All are hero's in their own right but this is about one special hero my love, my rock and definitely

My Hero.

There were eight Model T's and four support vehicles and everyone was riding on a high and anxious to get away on this wet, cold and miserable day but we had the promise of things to come to keep us going.

My hero Gary John Amesbury was the first to do major damage to his T and I feel it takes a real man to stand up and say "*It was my fault I changed gears too fast*". My heart sunk to the pit of my stomach as I feared we would also be leaving the tour as another Model T had. After being towed back to town and left to camp on the side of the road in Gin Gin Queensland on the Friday of a long weekend, Amesbury, Day and Whittle changed the crown wheel. Luckily the part was located literally directly behind where we were camped in an overgrown paddock - my hero had not complained once.

After the repairs were completed we cheerfully carried on up the East coast of Australia enjoying ever changing scenery. It wasn't until we reached Port Stephens and turned left up over the ranges towards Mt Isa that the next problem hit us.

We had just left Mareeba heading towards Atherton when in the middle of nowhere we just coasted to a halt - no gears. We were again towed back into town and left on the side of the road but all was fixed that day. This time we had cracked a wheel hub.

The rest of the T's travelled along well with not much trouble. Only three brave T's turned left at the Three Ways to go to Alice Springs and that was my hero Gary along with me of course, Day and the Whittles. Modern cars that come to visit Alice Springs were Whitehouse/Hoy, Stan the Man Bruce and Rowland Hulbert - the rest of the group headed to Darwin to wait for us.

Upon spending time in Alice Springs we headed up to Darwin to catch up with everyone. From Darwin we all continued along following Highway 1 towards Western Australia stopping at Kunanurra where we all were invited to spend a couple of days with the Spakman's at their own private caravan park on their property.

From here we continued to travel west towards the coast breaking into small groups so not to hold up traffic too much.

Travelling down the West Coast of Australia, Stan Bruce pulled in behind Jim and Doris Miller and Bob and Margaret Wilson to be their back up. While Geoff and Doreen Smith and mascot Tobee along with Roland Hulbert pulled in behind the Amesbury's, Day and Whittles as their back up.

The Amesbury's were travelling well and approx 100 kilometres out of Perth when they broke an axle believe it or not north of Gingin Western Australia. My hero Gary got out of the car and kicked the tyre looking very sad indeed. It was late and we were stranded on a small dirt verge on Highway 1. The road service in WA left us here as they had no one to come and tow us into town but thanks to Ian of the Perth T club who drove over 100 kilometres at 9pm with a car trailer we were saved from spending the night on the verge. How can you ever thank a stranger for going out of his way like this?

After running repairs in Perth the Amesbury's with the Smith's as backup, headed down the coast via Margaret River to Albany and back up inland to Perth before heading towards Kalgoorlie whilst the others after a break went towards Albany to Esperance then up to Norseman and Kalgoorlie.

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From Kalgoorlie everyone headed towards Norseman where all T's gathered so we could cross the Nallarbor together. Boy what a sight!!

My hero, Gary was on the way to Adelaide and turned into Port Germain for morning tea when he broke another axle but in true form got out of the car and swore. All was fixed within a day due to the generosity of locals Boyce and Mary Schultz. On the road again heading towards Adelaide, by this time it was only the Amesbury's, Wilson with backup Smiths going it alone.

Prior to the National Rally the three remaining Model T owners/passengers and their back up vehicles had a meeting and it was decided to change the original itinerary, due to the fact that those 3 remaining T's were very tired by this time. The drivers would not just give up and had done lots of repairs to the T's and at this point the cars had each travelled over 20,000 kilometres, this a feat in itself for such old cars.

There was resistance from some of the modern cars regarding this change and by this time the McKern's were eager to complete what they could of the remaining trip in their T from Echuca.

My hero's heart was lifting with joy after leaving Echuca as we were heading home to Milperra in Sydney to see our new granddaughter Ella and the rest of our beloved children and their partners Jason and Shannon, Melanie and Mark. All was going well and we were leaving Goulburn and knew we would be home that night - you could feel the excitement in our car BUT we did it again! We broke another axle – our third this time just north of Goulburn near Mittagong – **WHAT A BLOW** for Gary who in true hero style just got out of the car and threw his hands in the air and kicked an empty can by the side of the road – to be so close and have this happen, now it would take another day before we would reach home.

All repairs were done and we drove into Milperra in style late the next day stopping at Peter Warren Ford who was a sponsor of this trip just to prove to the salesmen we made it. They were astounded to think a car so old travelled so far in such a short time frame.

To sum up all of the above – some of the unsung hero's were the back up vehicles who chose to travel behind the T's and travel at 60 kilometres or less an hour. How hard would that be in a modern car towing a caravan I ask you – would you do it for six months?

These back up vehicles and their partners were in many cases the ones who really saved the day driving us around, picking up parts, helping to repair our vehicle and most of all keeping our moral high when it was low.

So to Geoff and Doreen Smith, Stan (the man) Bruce and Roland Hulburt I say to you 'THANK YOU SO MUCH'. Gary and I cannot put in words how much your help and friendship has meant to us over these last six months.

To the last two Model T's who travel with us to the finish line Bob and Margaret Wilson and Jim and Doris Miller thanks for your support, friendship and help over the last few thousand kilometres.

To Richard Day and Ian and Ann Whittle thank you for being our travel buddies for most of the trip you gave us some great memories and plenty of laughter. To Glen Frohling we thoroughly enjoyed your company especially watching you set up each night – how could a car that small fit in so much camping equipment in it, it was amazing to watch you, thanks friend.

To the other moderns Paul and Barbara Woods who constantly put their lives in the line of danger by being our film crew and always happened to be right there when things went wrong, Jim and Anne-Maree McKern and Gil Whitehouse and Laraine Hoy thank you for travelling with us and we hope that you have memories of these last six months that are as good as ours and hope they will last you a lifetime.

To my very special hero **Gary John Amesbury** what can I say –

You battled through many repairs and maintenance on the T - you did so without ever complaining I am sure there were unsavoury words spoken when I was not around. Every morning and every

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afternoon as we set up and packed away our home of six months you never muttered a word come rain, hail or shine. You drove all the way without every complaining regardless of how tired you were (except the two emergency times that I had to drive).

You are my love, my life, my everything and I would do all this again with you any time in modern car or Model T. I love you very much. Thank you for the wonderful memories and for being my **SPECIAL HERO.**

Marilyn

