

## **DUBBO 4 WD CLUB INC**

### **Savannah Trip      Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July to Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July**

Trip leaders George & Sally Ling, Hilux diesel.

Ken & Joy Johnston, Susuzi Grand Vitara petrol. Ron & Helen Murray, Ford 250 diesel.

Malcolm & Debbie & Brandon Murray (TOJO team) Toyota 80 ser. diesel.

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup>** 9.30 am Meet at Dubbo on Gil road, Lings Johnstons & Tojos assemble ready to start trip, club members of Len Wellington and Graham & Anita Knight are there to send us off (Knights are showing off their new car). Send off committee wish us well and wave us off into a stiff head wind.

We reach Gilgandra for morning tea and Coonabarbran for lunch, the wind has eased.

We reach Moree and at 4.00pm we are settled into the 'Gwyder Caravan Park' for the night and a swim in the parks own hot artesian pools. 377 km today

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup>** 9.25 leave park, morning tea is by the road and at lunch we are at St George where Ron & Helen Murray join the trip and we lunch at Apex Park. At 3pm we go through Surat and 1km further we camp at the 'Fishing and Restocking Club Park' a wonderful riverside park with toilets, water & boat ramp, free camping but donations are appreciated. Malcolm and Brandon launch a kayak and have a paddle on the Balonne river. 354 km today

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup>** The black feathered bush alarm clocks woke us up early this morning. A leisurely breakfast and we leave camp at 9.30am. It is quite overcast and cool. Arrive in Roma in time for morning tea and stop at the 'Big Rig' visitors centre. Continue to Injune for a fuel stop ... it is a bit early for lunch so we continue towards Rollaston. However there seems to be a lack of rest stops suitable for a lunch stop but finally we find a spot off the road and have lunch. Continue on to Rolleston for a stretch break and arrive in Emerald just before dark around 5pm. After some deliberation, it was decided to camp in a spot adjacent to the Botanic Gardens. Tojos spend the evening visiting relatives, whilst the remainder of us settle in for the night with about 30 other campers. 481 km today.

**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup>** We all meet at the Shell servo to fuel up and head out of Emerald just after 9am. We stop in Clermont in a nice park for morning tea. We celebrate Brandon's birthday with a chocolate cake and a cuppa, then back on the road to 'Belyando Crossing' for lunch. It was here we noticed the fuel price had gone over the \$2 mark at \$2.08cpl. As we continue north we notice the weather getting warmer and the wattle getting more yellow. One highlight was a sorghum paddock which had attracted large numbers of broilgas and a few emus. A couple more "stretching" stops before arriving into Charters Towers around 4pm.

Achievement for the day ... Sally drove for more than 10 mins on the sealed road!

George & Sally left the party to see their son in Townsville. The rest of us booked in to the Dalrymple Caravan Park. Some made their stay more comfortable than others!

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup>** Everyone got up and did their own thing before fuelling up and leaving Charters Towers at 10am. Debbie and Malcolm did some shopping, Brandon had to spend his birthday money!! Joy and Ken shopped, Helen and Ron drove up to the lookout of the first gold mine site - a great run and plenty of wild life, birds, rock wallabies and roos, read the history of the gold rush - wild place then. Had a good drive though calling at Fletcher Creek to look over camp site. Plenty of campers. Had morning tea then on to Greenvale for lunch. A narrow bitumen road, mostly timbered sides and lots of Braham cattle, beautiful ghost gums, picked a campsite just a few ks north of 40 mile scrub - off road near a dam, George and Sally go to 40 mile scrub but no sign of group then drive in to lava tubes campsite, make contact with group, then back out to rejoin group at 6.30pm

**Thursday 10<sup>th</sup>** Up by 6am - breakfast - pack - break camp at 7am to go to lava tubes (UNDARA) to check in for a 2 hr tour that starts at 8am. App 40 people in two 20 seater buses drive 6ks to tubes getting history of area from guide/driver. A wonderful experience to walk through the tubes and understand the making of the tubes. 10.30am morning tea at Undara then leave for Georgetown arriving at 12.30 to have lunch in a nice park along side river on town side. All vehicles refuel and head west. 20 ks from Georgetown we stop to look at large brick chimney- "Cumberland Chimney". Built by Cornish masons, the chimney is all that remains of a crushing plant contracted by the surrounding mines to crush their ore. The chimney was part of a large town including three hotels and a bank. Reach Croyden at 3.30pm enquire at caravan park and check in. 330 km today.

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup>** After getting fuel and a few supplies at the 'oldest shop in Oz' we head out about 9.20am. Just after Creen Creek we see a nest in a telegraph pole, such ingenuity to start it there and to have the nest stay there. 10.30 we go through Black Bull Siding and decide the caravan park at Croyden was a better stop last night. Arrive at Normanton for morning tea. A big Barra was at the beginning of town and when we went through town we saw a big croc statue that was a life size replica of the biggest croc ever caught in the world, 28ft. We leave about noon. Debbie and team stay to seek medical help for the flu then catch us up. At 1pm we arrive at Karumba, drive around town and get some prawns, then go to Karumba Point for lunch. 2.30 pm we leave Kurumba and back to Normanton where a couple of the party had a drink at the 'Purple Pub' while the rest went to the railway station (information centre) & after taking photos of the train and around station, right on cue 2 brolgas did a dance for us. As we left Sally tried to speak on the CB radio to inform us of grass hoppers and to slow down, but instead of the CB mike she had tried the hand held GPS unit - so we traveled through our first lot of grass hoppers. Joy and Ken had a bit of a scare with petrol, shortly after filling tank at Normanton their gauge showed half full but it was found they must have had an air pocket in the tank. Arrive at bush campsite on the Bynoe River at about 5pm, traveled 347 km today.

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup>** Leave camp 8.40am. Gravel road traveling through typical Savannah plains and Mitchell grass, lots of cattle, roos, wallabies, cockies and bustards, arrive at the Leichhardt River for morning tea. No water over the falls but did see a "freshee"

baking in the sun. Brandon found some dead cane toads and a live brown snake in a crevice. The snake did not want to be rescued. Back onto the bitumen and Burketown for lunch. Some had a counter lunch at the pub, only one pub there now, and others sandwiches in the park. A tour of Burketown before heading out to historic sites of 'melting down works' and 'Landsborough Tree' then out to the wharf on the river and finally back to a campsite on the high side of the Albert River - out of crocs way !!! Set up camp about 2.30pm and had a relaxing afternoon. 205 km today.

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>** 8.55am leave our beautiful Albert River frontage park and went the 4 ks into Bourketown and refueled, diesel \$2.02 cpl. Headed for 'Gregory Downs', gravel road, many broilgas, roos & a few bustard birds. Stop at park opposite 'Gregory Downs Hotel' there is a large play park and public toilets. Moving on we turn on to Adel Grove road and only one kilometer on go down to have morning tea on Gregory River, a freebie camping spot being enjoyed by 20 or so campers. A beautiful small flowing river, Brandon had a swim. Moving on, go past 'Adel Grove' and down to 'Lawn Hill National Park' and to gorge camping area, have lunch and make camp. Launch kayaks, some paddle on river and some do bush walks, very picturest on river. All have a late tea and cards finish at 11.30pm. 220 ks today.

**Monday 14<sup>th</sup>** A rest day !!! Canoeing - up to 6 kilometers in 2 levels, walking - any of 6 walking tracks from 1 hr easy to 5 hrs hard. Lawn Hill !!! What a jewel in the outback. No driving today.

**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup>** Some of us do early walks in the morning cool. Johnstones stay around camp area and Tojos, Murrays and Lings drive to 'Riversleigh Fossil Site D' on gravel road being only 48 ks from campsite. An interesting place with a unique & spectacular information shelter, easy walk around limestone hill top to observe fossil bones in limestone natural element. Drive on 3.5 ks to Gregory River for lunch, picturest pond with water lilies, water flowing over causeway. After lunch go on a further few ks, go by 'Riversleigh Homestead' and cross the 'O'Shanassy River', turn about and go back to Lawn Hill campsite, round trip 115 ks. When we get to campsite its good news that Ken is feeling much better and with Joy have done walks to 'Cascades' and 'Wild Dog Dreaming'.

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup>** 9.20 Break camp and head for Doomadgee. Reasonable gravel road - nice savannah scenery. 70 ks out Tojos team turn left and head for KFC (King Fisher Camp) by 'Bowthorn' so Debbie can meet with two of her outback students. Murrays, Johnstons, Lings turn right and head for Doomadgee. At 12.40 we fuel up at Doomadgee and head for KFC road intersection and have lunch then go to 'Hells Gate' and wait for Tojos. 3.15pm Murrays and Johnstones head for Robinson River campsite 200ks away.

Tojos drive into Kingfisher Camp through Bowthorn Station was a pleasant one over recently graded track. KFC was a pleasant oasis in an otherwise dry environment. A large waterhole provided a lovely grassed camping area under the white gums close to the waterhole. Had lunch in the campground and caught up with the Lamont family from Dubbo. Their 2 boys, Parker & Hardy are enrolled at Dubbo School of distance

Education for the year while they travel around Australia. Currently Rod (dad) is working with a fencing contractor from Warren on Bowthorn station. KFC would have made a great overnight camp, but we had to meet the others at Hells Gate Roadhouse. Left KFC at 3.30pm for the drive out through station tracks to meet the Savannah Way again, arriving at Hells Gate around 5.00pm. Sally and George have been patiently waiting, but also catching up with the owners (local) of the roadhouse. 5.30pm Tojos and Lings leave Hells Gate for campsite on the north west side of Robinson River. Slower than anticipated and drive 100ks in dark arriving at camp at 8.20pm. Johnstones have a problem with the back door of their car - it won't open. We are now on NT time. 424 km today.

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>** In the morning we get the morning sun and see it's a nice campsite on a flowing river. Packed up camp and had a leisurely walk down to the Robinson River with its pandanas and picturesque waterholes. Left camp around 8.50 am NT time. The road to Borroloola seemed to improve as we got closer to town and finally bitumen. We arrived around 10.15 for morning tea which we had at the boat ramp on the Macarthur River. Joy and Ken remained in town to try and fix their car door while the rest of us headed out to 'Bing Bong'. There is not a community at Bing Bong, but rather a port loading facility where the large (4 trailer) road trains would bring their ore to be loaded at the mining company's private port facility. A channel had been dredged 3.5 km out to sea so that the ore ships could use the facility at Bing Bong. We drive 4 km to a boat ramp for lunch on Mule Creek which feeds back into the gulf. The water looked lovely for a swim but the crocodile warning signs were enough to prevent any further thoughts about that! We return to Borroloola for fuel and food supplies and then head out around 2pm. The turnoff to Roper Bar is about 18 km out and it was on the dirt again, but it is a great drive with lots of creek crossings and occasional bulldust holes to keep it interesting. We arrive at the 'Southern Lost City' in time to do an afternoon / sunset walk amongst the amazing rock formations and stacks. *One of the best walks in Australia to do.*

Joy and Ken miss the turn to Lost City and carry on 30 ks to Butterfly Springs. They are worried about running out of fuel. Malcolm and George drive in to see them at 8pm, and see a buffalo on way. Fuel fears are allayed and Joy and Ken will come back to Lost City in the morning leaving their trailer at Butterfly Springs. 376 km today.

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup>** Keen photographers are up early this morning to get sunrise pics of astounding formations. Joy and Ken arrive and do a walk. We leave Lost City at 10am and head for Butterfly Springs where we have morning tea and a swim. The spring, a little waterfall, is still flowing but alas no butterflies. The Johnstones hitch back up to their trailer, put in two jerry cans of fuel and we leave at 11.30 towards Roper Bar. At 1.00pm we lunch at Towns River campsite, an hour later we have a stretch beside a large billabong with lots of water lilies and we reach Roper Bar at 3.55pm. Some fuel in cars and an ice cream and it's off for a look around. There is only the general store/fuel bowers and a caravan park on the east side of the river, the community live on the west side of the river. We look over the new boat ramp, walk over the old police station come jail, see the causeway crossing, The Tojo team and Johnstones drive down to the river and across the weir and back. We leave for Materanka at 4.45pm. Gravel for 30 ks then

we're riding the bitumen. We hit the Stuart Highway on dusk and go the few ks to Materanka Springs, We book in, Ken isn't feeling well so Johnstones get a cabin while the rest are camping. We set up camp - order meals - sit down and relax. After dinner some go for a moonlight swim, 425 km today.

**Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>** Leave camp about 9.30am after most of us had a 'dip' and a stroll around and taken photos. Fuel up at Materanka town at \$2 pl and head south towards Barkley Highway. You can feel the temperature drop with every kilometer. At 12.20pm call into Daly Waters at 'peak hour'. Daly Waters Pub... now this is a pub with character. We had lunch and look around this quite unique little place. Frank 'the chook man' was busy doing his burnt etchings in wood. Afternoon tea at Renner Springs road house then off again to 3 ways where we admire the mural of a road train with a real Bull Bar on the front. Fueled up at \$2.25 pl and head east to our camp about 70 ks towards Barkley Roadhouse. Arrive at campsite at sunset, have happy hour, dinner & game of cards. A good Day. 618 km today.

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup>** Break camp and on the road at 8.30am. The road stretches in front long and straight, we are lucky the wind is from the south/west - feel sorry for those towing vans going west. A saddening thought is the evidence of crashes on this straight level road - one could die of boredom. 9.30am have done 114 ks and are at Barkley Roadhouse and have morning tea. The diesel here is \$2.38pl. 12 noon at Avon Downs rest stop we have lunch, another 80 ks to Camooweal, get fuel (D \$2.09cpl) and ice creams. A dust storm has been keeping pace with us a few kilometers south of us. At 4.05pm (AEST) we reach Mt Isa and go to pre booked sites at 'Sunset Caravan Park'. There are good facilities at a camp kitchen and a telly room where we play cards. Of pleasant surprise today was lack of flies. 555 km today.

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup>** A day for our own thing. Tojos went to the information centre/ museum where there was a good collection of Riversleigh fossils. Murrays went on an above ground mine tour and then to an auto electrician to diagnose battery problems. Johnstones went to the Suzuki dealer and the RACQ to try and get their car door fixed. Lings went looking around town and shopping. At 1.30pm all but Johnstones went driving out 13 ks to Lake Moondara and then on to Warrina Park which is a beautiful setting adjacent to the lake. An attraction of the park were 10 or so peacocks. Debbie visited the 'School of Distance Education', Murrays got a new battery, Johnstones were left with an unopenable back door, Lings fridge is on the last quarter of its cooling element. Diesel is \$1.79cpl - 4 cents ( \$1.75) with Woolies or Coles voucher. Camp kitchen is much utilized and TV room is used for cards.

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup>** Packed up and left 'The Isa' around 9am. It was a much cooler morning than we were used to - perhaps it was acclimatizing us for the drive south? We traveled through all the interesting hill and rock formations south to Cloncurry arriving there around 10.15am. The radio had been used to convey all the interesting facts that had been gleaned during our stay in Mt Isa. Had morning tea at Mary Kathleen Memorial Park - a great spot with some history of the ex-mining town by that name. Joy and Ken fuel up and join us there. About 110 km down the road we came to the small village of

McKinnley. We wander through the famous 'Walkabout Creek Hotel' with its Crocodile Dundee Memorabilia and a quick drink ... because it was there! A roadside stop on the almost grassless plains had to suffice for our lunch break. We arrived in Winton mid afternoon for a fuel and ice cream stop before continuing towards Longreach. Joy and Ken call it a day and check into the camping ground at Winton, might catch us up tomorrow. We find a great campsite/rest stop about 24 km before Longreach. Manage a campfire and a game of cards before it rained all night. 620 km today.

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>** Very wet!! Packed up in the rain and left at 8.30am for Longreach. Joy phoned to say they were staying put. All went to Quantas museum and book into 747 tour. Interesting morning, had lunch in town park under shelter - still raining. Head off to Blackall, rain all the way, a lot of road trains. Arrive about 3pm, decide to book into motel, not many vacancies, Tojos and Lings are in one motel and Murrays in another. Joy rang to say she and Ken were going to head home tomorrow. All went out to dinner before settling into a game of cards at Murrays motel room. 246 km today.

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>** Blackall is known as the place of the first artesian bore and "Jacky Howl the shearer and the woollscour. 8.30am leave motel to go to the 'Blackall Woollscour' 4km out. The massive Blackall Woollscour is the only steam-driven woollscour remaining of the 52 which once operated in full swing across the country. Mechanical wool scouring required hot, soft water and Blackall's bore water was perfect for the job. At its peak, almost three million liters of bore water flowed each day, of which 910,000 liters were used in the scour. The free flowing waters of a bore sunk in 1906 still flow at the wool scour. Tour begins at 9am, a short video then go in a group on a guided tour. Extremely interesting from hot pressure bore and water turbine for electricity to boiler and washing and hot air from boiler for drying. Back to town, fuel up and head to Tambo then on to Augathella for lunch. 3pm we reach Charleville and fuel up, interesting garden plots up main streets - many flowers and different colored stemmed spinach. Head for the border, showers most of the day. At 5pm we go into 'Nardoo Station' to camp, Tojo team were there 6 years ago. There are 15 or so sitting around a camp fire, this looks good. We camp on lawn. There are about 20 other vehicles - some vans and some trailers. There is an enclosed camp kitchen and covered dining area. There are hot springs here and a set up of 2 spa pools and a hot spray 'sheep dip'. Some utilize these pools for a welcome hot soak. Sally cooks 'pizza keich' for all our group, Helen does caramel dumplings, with custard or ice cream, for sweets. A game of cards in the kitchen before going to bed, ...could be worse! 471 km today.

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup>** Ron and Helen leave at 8.30 to go on alone to visit friends at Bourke. Tojos and Lings leave at 9.15am. At Cunnamulla we stop for fuel. 11am we reach Barringun and NSW border and it's good to see the sun, we have morning tea adjacent to the pub. We lunch at Bourke at the river 'WHARF' park. Home stretch now, at Nyngan, fuel up and stop at Lings ex-house block where their home was burned down 5 years ago. 5.45pm Dubbo. Tojo team have Lings spend the night at their home. We go to the South Dubbo bowling club to join many Dubbo 4 x 4 club members for tea. 668 km today.

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>** Lings head home to Fern Bay. Joy Johnstone phones to say all well and heading for home to Orange the next day.

Lings trip meter: Dubbo return Dubbo 7,979 kilometers.