

NOTES FROM

VEHICLE TRAVEL

CANNING STOCK ROUTE

AUGUST – OCTOBER 2007

Laurie McLean & Lawrie O'Connor



PREFACE

Lawrie O'Connor and Laurie McLean joined the Division of National Mapping's Melbourne based Topographic Mapping Branch as Field Assistants in the 1967 and 1969, respectively. During the early 1970s they worked together in the field as members of the Aerodist measuring programme that established horizontal ground control networks to support the 1:100,000 scale National Topographic Mapping Programme.

Lawrie O'Connor left NatMap as a Technical Assistant Grade 2 in 1972 to return to his trade as a motor mechanic. In partnership, he established a successful prestige motor repair enterprise that operated out of suburban Melbourne for many years. Now retired, Lawrie lives at Berry on the New South Wales south coast.

Laurie McLean subsequently held several Technical Assistant and Technical Officer positions in NatMap's Melbourne office. In 1984, he took up a Principal Research Officer position in NatMap's Canberra office. In 1989, he transferred to Queensland's Department of Geographic Information and held positions in several Queensland departments prior to retiring as a Principal Advisor in 2006. Laurie now lives at Capalaba on Brisbane's eastern outskirts.

The 2007 Canning Stock Route trip was the first of an intended number of post retirement journeys we plan to make over coming years. In general, we plan to revisit outback places that took our interest all those years ago as well as places we didn't get to with NatMap but have always wanted to see.

The following pages were compiled simply as *notes for ourselves*. However, they might be of interest to others, particularly ex-NatMappers who have experienced this part of Australia.

Cover image:

Rocky outcrop between Wells 37 and 38 midday 10-9 07.

CANNING STOCK ROUTE Notes on 2007 Trip

Monday 6 August 2007

Departed Brisbane (Capalaba) in a new Mazda BT-50 DX+ freestyle cab/chassis 3.0 litre turbo diesel 4X4 utility around 11 am after refuelling at Matilda Capalaba Garage.

8 to 22 August 2007

At Berry preparing vehicle for trip. Had 80 litre stainless steel water tank and 175 litre steel fuel storage tank together with steel frame and second spare wheel carrier fitted at front of tray. This work together with fabricating of under tray firewood basket was undertaken by Rob Stone. Laurie O'Connor did most of the remaining work which included:

- fitting ply wood shelf over tank tops
- fitting ply wood insert to left side tray side to allow use as bench
- fitting high ply wood shelf to right side of canopy frame
- fitting wiring from auxiliary battery to new power outlets in centre consol and under canopy
- removing left rear seat cushion and fabricating webbing anchor point for WAECO fridge
- fitting fire wood basket and fire burner drum under tray
- sealing tray, drop sides and tailgate with rubbers and sealant to keep dust out
- fitting CB radio antenna and associated wiring
- modifying filler neck on main fuel tank
- drilling through the tap outlet on auxiliary fuel storage tank
- re-aiming headlights and driving lights
- fitting front protective screen (fabricated by Rosemary O'Connor)
- fitting breather tubes to both auxiliary tanks
- fabricating transfer hoses for both auxiliary tanks
- varnishing toilet seat, mosquito net poles, tray side bench and painting stretcher legs (Rosemary).

Thursday 23 August 2007

Departed Berry at 11.15 am.

Friday 24 August 2007 - fine, warm.

Departed Narrandera at 10.30 am after breakfast at the motel and putting thread tape on diesel filler of the reserve tank

Saturday 25 August 2007 - fine, warm

Departed Waikerie at 9.30 am.

Sunday 26 August 2007 - fine, warm

After breakfast at motel and a quick look around town, departed Streaky Bay at 9.45 am. Refilled from reserve tank on roadside just out of town. Then travelled to Ceduna where we refuelled both tanks. Stopped at Penong for lunch. Stopped at Nullarbor road house then travelled on to inspection station at border. Shortly after crossing the border the engine stopped as the running tank was empty. It took some time to get the engine primed and restarted after we refilled from the reserve tank. The check engine light stayed on until we reprimed it again that night and the next morning.

Arrived at Eucla at 6 pm (local time), stopped at the Eucla Motel where we had dinner.

Monday 27 August 2007 - fine, warm, windy day

Woke to roosters pre dawn after strong winds during night, departed Eucla at 9.45 am (local time) after breakfast. Travelled to Caiguna after stopping for lunch at Cocklebiddy. Found out from Caiguna locals that the track from Caiguna to Rawlinna was now closed for public access; phoned local station homestead who confirmed we couldn't drive through. Topped up fuel at Caiguna and then refilled from reserve at Cocklebiddy after returning there to pick up current public access track to Rawlinna. Travelled on after dark to Rawlinna

Homestead where Dennis Nash gave us directions to Rawlinna railway settlement on the Trans Continental line. Arrived after dark, saw lights of new lime mine north of line, only two rail houses now used many others removed. Travelled along Transline access road to stop at roadside camp site around 11 pm.

Tuesday 28 August 2007 - fine, warm, keen breeze

Travelled to Kalgoorlie; arrived circa midday. Obtained assistance to find accommodation from Boulder Tourist Information Centre - town booked out due to mine shut down and fly-in of maintenance crews, managed to get one night at Tower Hotel. Arranged repair of left side air bag for next day. Did washing at hotel laundry. Had dinner at the hotel.

Wednesday 29 August 2007 - fine, warm

Vehicle air bag helper spring repaired at Opposite Lock (John) \$30, air hose clip was damaged during initial fitting and had to be replaced. Couldn't locate replacement fuel transfer filter, had difficulty getting fresh water to top up tanks for Canning trip. Did banking, refilled both fuel tanks; purchased fresh food, groceries and coffee pot. Had lunch at The Dome cafe and departed Kalgoorlie at 3.15 pm; arrived at Leonora at 6 pm. Stopped at the Leonora Motel and had dinner at White House Hotel.

Thursday 30 August 2007 - fine, warm, strong breeze

After breakfast at BP roadhouse worked on seal for filler of reserve diesel tank and activated GPS unit. Departed Leonora at 9.30 am and headed south to look around Gawlia town site, State Hotel, open cut mine and mine museum. Then refuelled both tanks back at Leonora. Travelled north to Leinster for lunch, then on to Wiluna. Advised local Wiluna police of travel plans (expect to be on Stock Route for up to 30 day) and got advice from Shire Office on tracks. Refuelled at Gunbarrel Groceries store. Departed Wiluna 4.15 pm. Made roadside camp 18 kms along the Canning Stock Route; between Wells 2 and 2A at 5.30 pm, on stoney mulga flat with plenty of wood for camp fire. While setting up camp, discovered that reserve on-tray water tank has failed along back side seams about a third of the way from bottom of tank. Discussed whether to head back next day to get tank repaired but decided to proceed. Cold night, used beanies to keep heads and ears warm around camp.

Friday 31 August 2007 - fine, warm, strong breeze continues.

Travelled along CSR. Looked at Well 2A (10:00 am), the restored Well 3 (noon) and Windich Springs (3:00 pm) named by John Forrest in 1874 and Canning's 4A Water. Passed several south bound vehicles during day: 4 while still camped in morning, 6 vehicles on track as well as an Isuzu mobile home camper truck that was having difficulty with clearance through the scrub. After going into Well 5 (about 4:00pm), we camped for night at Well 6 (Pierre Springs) about 5:00pm. Well 6 is a pretty spot among tall river gums and has been restored with water available. The camp area had little firewood on site due to extensive use but there was a clean toilet. Two other vehicles (Landcruiser wagons) were also at Well 6 and were going north; Brisbane based Peter and Lyn Arnold and John and Allison Day.

Saturday 1 September 2007 - fine, warm light, light breeze (start odo: 6,447 – 234.3 km from Wiluna)

Heard magpie and butcher bird at dawn. Didn't get away from Well 6 until around noon due to taking wrong north bound track and winding up amongst heavy sand; had to deflate tyres to get out and then reinflate once ready to go on. Stopped for lunch at Well 8 (ruins) and arrived at Well 9 *Weld Springs* about 3:30 pm. Weld Springs was Forrest's Camp 46 on his 1874 expedition. Forrest named it in honour of Governor Weld. Near the well were the remains of a stone hut that Forrest's party built as defence against hostile aborigines. Proceeded to roadside camp on stony mulga flat near McConkey Hill north of Well 10 at 4:45pm. 4 vehicles passed during day heading south, 3 when on our detour near Well 6.

Sunday 2 September 2007 – fine, warm, calm (start odo: 6,544 – 331.2 km from Wiluna)

4 south bound vehicles passed camp about 8:30 am. Departed camp about 9:30 am. At 10:00 am we looked at Well 11 *Goodwin Soak* (ruins on saltbush covered claypan). Also looked at the restored Well 12 (11:45 am) and stopped for lunch at Well 13 from 12:50 to 2:15 pm. Visited Wells 14 and 15; the latter at about 4 pm. Well 15 had been restored and near by was a small plaque: *Joseph Edward Wilkins was killed by natives 15 miles east of this well some time during September 1936. His remains were recovered by Detective Larsen's Police Patrol and interred in Wiluna Cemetery on 28 October 1937. Grave No 248. RD & SW.* Moved on to roadside camp 19.7 km north of Well 15; stopping at 5:30 pm. Our camp was in a clump of mulga. During the

day we crossed 38 sand hills. (For the whole trip, we decided to only count the crossing of significant sand hills requiring use of four wheel drive.) Refuelled from reserve tank at 6,670km; 457.3 km from Wiluna.

Monday 3 September 2007 – fine, warm (start odo: 6,681 – 468.5 km from Wiluna)

Departed camp at 9:30 am and stopped briefly at the ruined Well 16 about 10:30 am. We passed the Calvert Range turnoff about 11:15 am and looked around the Canning's Cairn area about 11:30 am. We then travelled on to Durba Springs, arriving at 12:45pm (odo:6,741 kms). The springs are situated on a grassy flat within a natural amphitheatre with scattered river gums. The date palms referred to in some of the literature had been cut down and removed due to their adverse impact on the flow of water from the springs. There was a clean toilet at the site. We stopped for a leisurely lunch until 3:15pm and afterwards visited *Killagurra Gorge* and *Spring* (Canning's 17 Water) with its aboriginal rock art. We returned to Durba Springs for the night as this pretty spot was superior to anything else in the area. Had to collect some fire wood on the way back in because, as with most of better camp sites on The Stock Route, extensive use exhausts supplies of fire wood nearby. We were joined by the Arnold/Day party as we got back to Durba Springs. Saw some butcher birds and some green and yellow parrots around Durba and heard a mopoke owl in the evening. Crossed 5 sand hills during the day.

Tuesday 4 September 2007 – fine, warm, light breeze (start odo: 6,755 – 542.1 km from Wiluna)

Had short chat with Peter Arnold in morning when he borrowed a set of hex keys. Departed Durba Springs at 9 am. From near BM FX 18 detoured about 20 km to west of route to look at Rocky Gorge and the Diebil Hills; arriving around 11:15 am. On the return along this detour had to back up a couple of times to get over one of the sand hills. Stopped for lunch at (restored) Well 18, used one of our GI buckets on a rope to draw water from it which we used for personal washing. Departed Well 18 at 4:30 pm and drove on to Onegunyah Rockhole that contained a small amount of dirty/animal contaminated water. Drove back about a kilometre from the rockhole to camp for the night on a stony mulga flat at 5:45 pm. Crossed 36 sand hills during the day.

Note:

At least on his early charts, Canning did not give names to all of wells or other water sources he established. On our journey, we noted that some wells were given names that we could not source to the Canning material we carried. For example he did not give the name *The Granites* to 2A Water even though it was dug as a tank in granite. Nor did he give the name *Lumba* to Well 49, this was a nearby native well where his bore did not yield a satisfactory flow rate. To avoid perpetuating possible inaccuracies, I have used only well and water names I could readily source to the Canning material we carried.

Wednesday 5 September 2007 – fine, hot (start odo 6,841 – 628.6 km from Wiluna)

Added half a litre of oil to engine and adjusted tyre pressures to 20 psi front and 30 psi rear. Departed camp at 8:45 am. Backed up a couple of times to negotiate heavy sandy going between two tightly spaced sand hills around 9:20 am near abandoned Pajero wagon. Stopped at Tropic of Capricorn marker at 10:15 am (6,865 km) and shortly after at Well 19 *Kunanaggi*. Reached Savory Creek at 12 noon (6,891 km). Although there was plenty of (salt) water in the creek, the dry weather crossing was quite useable. Stopped for lunch in clump of casuarinas from 12:30 to 2 pm. Reached the turn off to Well 20 at 2:30 pm (6,908 km) but as it was around trip of about 20 km in and out decided to move on. Stopped briefly at the north western arm of Lake Disappointment around 3 pm. Reached Well 21 (ruins with some water) at 4:15 pm (6,938 km). Made camp beside the track on a small scrub and spinifex covered claypan at 5 pm. We called this the olive grove camp. Heard a mopoke to the east in the evening. Crossed 47 sand hills during the day. Repaired wiring to fridge fuse holder after tea.

Thursday 6 September 2007 – fine, hot (start odo: 6,954 – 741.0 km from Wiluna)

Departed olive grove camp at 8:45 am. Arrived at Well 22 (ruins) at 9:50 am and at 10:15 am stopped briefly at the remains of a burnout Prado. We reached Georgia Bore at 10:45 am (6,988 km, 775.5 km from Wiluna). The bore was sealed and was operated from a two-handled hand pump to deliver excellent drinking water that was in keen demand from the local bees, finches and galahs. (There is a plaque stating: *Georgia Bore: This bore was drilled and equipped by CRA Exploration Pty Limited for the use and benefit of all travellers on the Canning Stock Route. July 1991.*) We put about 30 litres of water into the vehicle's underbody tank. Stopped for lunch and departed Georgia Bore at 1 pm and soon after joined the Talawana Track. (This track was put in by Len Beadell in 1963 primarily as an access track for National Mapping's geodetic survey work. I had last driven over it from Balfour Downs to Windy Corner in 1972.) Arrived Well 23 (ruins) at 1:50 pm (7,010 km, 797.7 km from Wiluna) and at Well 24 (ruins but water in soak) at 2:30pm (7,025 km, 812 km from Wiluna). Refuelled from reserve tank at Well 24 *Karara Soak*. Shortly after leaving Well 24, we left the Talawana Track

and continued on the CSR. Passed a number of camels before arriving at Well 25 (ruins) at 4 pm (7,049 km, 835.9 km from Wiluna). Stopped at Well 26 (restored in 1983) at 5 pm. Looked at visitors' books at Canning memorial near the well. Six pages of visitors to well since May 2007 were recorded in the second book as well as a few other pages of 2007 visitors in the first book. Camping at well constrained by lack of firewood so travelled on a further 11 km. At 6 pm, camped for night on a stony flat near a small rocky residual where someone had left a handy supply of solid firewood. Crossed 24 sand hills during the day.

Friday 7 September 2007 – fine, hot, (start odo: 7,081 – 868.4 km from Wiluna)

Departed camp at 8:30 am and about 9 am (7,087 km) stopped at memorial plaque; *Canning Camp 1907 to west rediscovered 1983 well building party Ian Johnson*. Stopped at Well 27 (ruins, water) at about 10 am; looked around the well area for aboriginal artefacts with limited success. Reached Well 28 (ruins, no water) at 12 noon (7,147 km) and Well 29 (ruins, no water) at 1:45 pm (7,173 km). Stopped at Well 30 *Dunda Jinnda* (ruins, no water) for lunch between 3:15 pm and 4:40 pm (7,239 km, 1,066.8 km from Wiluna). Country very scrubby north of Well 30 so drove on into the early evening dark to find a suitable clear spot to camp at 6.45 pm. Crossed 66 sand hills during the day. Dingoes were heard during the night and in the morning we discovered that one had made off with one of our plastic washing bowls. Fortunately, I found the bowl in a clearing in the scrub about 50 metres from the camp the next morning.

Saturday 8 September 2007 – fine, hot (start odo 7,239 – 1,066.8 km from Wiluna)

Departed road side camp at 9:00 am and at about 9:15 am stopped at Well 31 (ruins, no water, 7,240 km from Wiluna). Telephoned *Kunawarritji Community* to let them know we would be arriving this morning and would be wishing to purchase fuel and supplies. Arrived at Kunawarritji at 11:00 am (7,291 km, 1118.7 km from Wiluna). Purchased 138 litres of diesel at \$2.80/litre for a total cost of \$386.40 which gave an average fuel consumption between Wiluna and Kunawarritji of 12.34 litres/100 km; 23.01mpg. Topped up water tanks from hose at manager's house. Purchased some fresh fruit, frozen meat and bread, and other supplies from the store, had a shower and used the washing machine to wash up all our dirty clothes. Had lunch while the clothes were washing and departed Kunawarritji at 2:00 pm. Visited Well 33 *Gunowaggi* that now has a wind pump and plastic tanks nearby. Then picked up the old WAPET Sahara track and travelled to Kidson air strip (4:00 pm) and returned a few kilometres to the WAPET No 1 drill site for night camp at 5:00 pm. I had spent many weeks in this area with National Mapping between 1969 and 1977. (The Kidson No 1 well had a depth of 14,539 feet. It was spudded on 21 November 1965 and abandoned on 20 July 1966.) Crossed 6 sand hills during the day.

Sunday 9 September 2007 – fine, hot, windy (start odo 7,403). Repaired sand flag holder and departed Kidson Well site at 9:30 am. Returned to Well 33 (11:00 – 11:30 am) to find the Arnold/Day party camped there as well as an Austrian couple coming south in their left hand drive Nissan Patrol. Topped up water tanks from the bore tank near Well 33; excellent water. Bypassed Well 34 *Nibil* and arrived at Well 35 *Minjoo* (ruins, water in 12 inch plastic bore case) at 1:00 pm (7,490 km). Tracks amongst tight sand hills around Well 35 were confused. Noted display of ruined shock absorbers beside the track near the well. Extensive casuarina forests north of Well 35 had been burnt out recently. Stopped for lunch amongst the casuarinas. Visited Bungabinni Native Well (foul smelling water) at 3:45 pm (7,512 km) and Well 36 *Wanda* (ruins, water) at 4:30 pm (7,524 km). Stopped for night between Wells 36 and 37 at 5:00 pm between the sand hills on a paperbark and melaleuca flat with casuarinas to the north. Crossed 42 sand hills during day.

Monday 10 September 2007 – fine, hot, strong breeze (start odo 7,530 km)

Departed camp at 9:15 am and arrived at Well 37 *Libral* (ruins, water) about 10:40 am (7,548km); confusion of tracks on way into well that is situated on a claypan amongst sand hills. The claypan was covered with dead ti trees and that area appeared to be badly salt effected and looked very poorly. Around the well were the graves of 4 men who had been killed by aboriginals during the early 1900s. Near Well 37 was a sign: *Drover Thomson's camp site. James Thomson 38 years, George Shoemith 32 years and part Aborigine Chinaman 25 years were killed within 120 yards of this spot by desert natives on the night of 25-26 April 1911. The tragedy was discovered by Tom Cole's droving party who buried Thomson and the other two 80 yards NE on 30 June 1911. The bodies were exhumed and reburied by Sergeant RH Pilmer's punitive expedition 120 yards at 27 degrees from Well 37 on 3 November 1911.* On the slope of the sand hill were the 3 graves with Thomson and Shoemith side by side within the one single timber rail enclosure. Chinaman was beside them in a separate enclosure. Respective timber head markers were S, T and Chinaman RIP with a sign stating: *replica of original*

grave marker. Separately, amongst the ti tree on the claypan was McLennon's, the other grave. It was in a similar enclosure with a wood cross head marker with a semi circular metal plate: *RIP Sacred to the memory of W McLennon who was killed by natives 1922*. A sign on the grave stated: *HC&LE Wood memorial project*. (Apparently, John Vincent McLennon was a member of Locke Oil Prospecting Syndicate Expedition. He was killed 56 km south of the well to where his body was brought for burial.) After leaving Well 37, stopped briefly at rocky outcrop and cave at 12:15 pm to get good views of the surrounding country (7,566 km). At 1:00 pm (7,577 km), also stopped briefly at Well 38 *Wardabunni rock hole* (dry). Shortly afterwards stopped for lunch under some white gums where a fairly tame magpie readily took some food scraps we threw to it. Several north bound vehicles passed while we were having lunch. At 5:00 pm (7,617 km) reached Well 39 *Murguga* (ruins, water) and continued on another 4 kilometres to stop for our first sandy camp site amongst a patch of casuarinas. We crossed 67 sand hills during the day. However, from the start of the day until past Well 37 much of the travel was along the tops of sand hills because of the dense scrub in the valleys between.

Tuesday 11 September 2007 – fine, hot, calm (start odo: 7,621 km)

Departed the casuarina camp at 9:00 am. Reached north side of Tobin Lake about 9:45 am and at Michael Tobin's grave to the east of Well 40 at 10:20 am; the country had been recently burnt out. (Michael was one of two Tobin brothers on Canning's initial expedition in 1907. He was speared by an Aborigine and his grave marker was erected by Canning's second (construction) expedition in 1908. The stone marker reads: *Sacred to the memory of Michael Tobin speared 6/4/07. Erected by MWS Dept 08*.) We returned to Well 40 *Waddawalla* at 10:30 am and refuelled from the reserve tank (7,640 km). Well 40 was a ruin submerged in a large pool of smelly water that was a 100 or so metres long. Edges of the water and nearby scrub were salt effected but ducks were swimming on the water. Between 12 noon and 2:00 pm (7,668 km) stopped for lunch at the restored Well 41 *Tiru* situated on a badly salt effected ti tree and samphire flat. Four NSW vehicles from a family group were at the well when we arrived, we had let them past as we came out of Well 40. They didn't stop long and appeared to be in some hurry; we later heard that they came from Alice Springs to Kunawarritji in around 8 hours driving time. We had sighted 11 camels during the morning. Stopped at Well 42 (Canning's 42 *Water Guli*) at 4:30 pm (7,725km) it was a ruin with a small soak of smelly water on the south side of a small lake. We reached the north side of Guli Lake at 4:50 pm and continued on until 5:00 pm until we were 7 kilometres past Well 42. Here our roadside camp for the night was near a bloodwood tree on sandy ground next to BM FT74. We crossed 48 sand hills during the day.

Wednesday 12 September 2007 – fine, hot, light breeze (start odo: 7,732 km)

Departed camp at 9:15 am and at 10:00 am (7,747 km) stopped at Well 43 *Billowaggi* (ruins, no water but some damp earth). At 11:45 am (7,789 km) stopped briefly at Well 44 (ruins, no water, only a short dry drill hole). At 12:30 pm (7,804 km) stopped at Pijillinga clay plan for lunch until 2:00 pm. We stopped in the shade of a small white gum at the edge of the dry claypan. (It held water when Canning's construction party reached it. After being on hard rations they reportedly became ill after feasting on ducks bagged from the clay pan.) Stopped at small rocky outcrop just south of Gravity Lakes about 2:30 pm (7,812 km) where the Arnold/Day party passed us. We reached the north side of the Lake about 3:00 pm, there was some water toward the middle of it. At 3:45 pm (7,830 km) stopped at ruined Well 45 (no water); welcome to Shire of Halls Creek sign was nearby. Continued on to night camp at 5:30 pm (7,856 km) at restored Well 46 *Kuduarra* that had two fair sized brown snakes in residence just above the water and below the timber shoring. Nevertheless, the water was good and we used it for personal washing. The Arnold/Day party together with two southbound guys, Michael and Phil, in a Landrover Defender were also camped at Well 46 for the night and we joined them for drinks after tea. During the day we crossed 88 sand hills including the highest on the CSR. Owing to churned up approaches that restricted track speed, we had to back up several times to get over a few of the higher sand hills.

Thursday 13 September 2007 – fine, hot, windy (start odo: 7,856 km)

Stopped at Well 46 until about 11:30 am to have morning tea and scones prepared by Lyn and Allison. South bound group of vehicles arrived just as we were leaving. Stopped at Well 47 (ruins, no water) at 1:10 pm (7,888 km). At about 2:00 pm stopped on the summit of Mount Romilly (one of three nearby prominences that Carnegie named after his brothers in law in 1896) to gain good views of Carnegie's South Esk Tablelands and the other surrounding country. At about 3:25 pm we were joined by the Arnold/Day party as we stopped at Crown Head near the entrance to Breaden Valley and at 3:50 pm we all stopped at the head of valley (7,942 km). Track through the valley was fairly badly eroded and wheel rutted; owing to its dark soil nature this

terrain would be difficult in the wet. Between 3:50 and 4:35 pm we walked to Breaden Pool and nearby Godfrey's Tank; both were dry. At 5:15 pm we were at Twin Heads, passed Mount Ernest and Chinaman's Hat and stopped briefly at a burnt out Ford Explorer at 5:35 pm. At about 6:00pm, we stopped for the night at the restored Well 49 (good water) situated on a ti tree and melaleuca flat. Arnold/Day party camped nearby. We crossed 28 sand hills during the day and there were no more significant crossing after this day. Total significant sand hill crossings on our trip were 495.

Friday 14 September 2007 – fine, hot, breeze. (start odo: 7,972 km)

At Well 49 we refuelled from the reserve tank and visited the nearby grave: *Jack Smith May 23 1939 RIP (reconstructed for George Lannagan Boss Drover 1939)*. Apparently, Smith died after his horse fell on him. Departed Well 49 at 9:20 am and at about 9:35 am met Heidi Douglas coming into the well for water with her horse, *Gumby*; 2 camels, *Gypsy and Pam* and a red Kelpie, *Furphy*. (A vet from Deniliquin, Heidi was heading south on the CSR as part of her 2-year ride around Australia for Father Chris Riley's *Youth off the Streets* charity. She was waiting for a companion to join her for part of the coming journey but had to move away from the well to get enough feed for her animals; returning every few days for water.) At 10:45 am (8,006 km) we stopped briefly at Well 50 (ruins, no water) situated on a grassy and scrubby claypan of powdery soil that was breaking down to bull dust in places. At 11:30 am, (8,028 km) stopped at ruined Well 51 *Weriaddo*, the last well on the CSR. Next to the well was a wind pump with a turkey nest dam nearby, the vanes of the pump were turning but no shaft was connected and the dam was dry. However, there was water in a concrete well between the pump and Well 51. The area had been burnt out recently. At 11:50 am (8,035 km) we saw the waters of Lake Gregory a kilometre or so to the east. At 12:15pm we stopped at the last sand hill crossing, a *not counted one* as it only required 2WD to negotiate. Shortly after we were passed by a large convoy of vehicles heading south. At 1:45 pm (8,126 km) we reached the Halls Creek – Tanami road just outside the sadly run down Bililuna Aboriginal settlement. The road was vastly improved from when we last travelled it in 1971. Between 3:30 – 4:55 pm we stopped for lunch and a look around at the Wolfe Creek meteorite crater. The tourist access road into the crater was very badly corrugated; especially the last 10 km or so from the abandoned Carranya homestead. During the lunch break we removed the sand flag from the vehicle. At 7:30 pm we arrived at Halls Creek and booked in to the Kimberley Hotel for the night. We enjoyed a meal of grilled barramundi and a couple of bottles of white wine by the pool. With a standard shared twin room, dinner and breakfast the total cost was \$300 for the two of us. The accommodation was compounded with gates locked later in the evening.

Saturday 15 September 2007 – fine, hot (start odo: 8,343 km)

Had a farewell breakfast with Peter, Lyn, John and Allison at the Kimberley Hotel; unfortunately the cook chose that morning to resign so the offerings and the service suffered badly as hotel management tried to plug the staffing gap. Filled the vehicle's underbody water tank before departing the hotel at 9:30 am. Visited Old Halls Creek and the China Wall. We were delayed for sometime returning on the outskirts of town as police blocked the road to give passage to vehicles entering the sports ground for a memorial service for a young Aboriginal man who had committed suicide some weeks before. Filled vehicle running tank and adjusted tyre pressures for highway running at local service station. (After filling reserve tank later in Broome, average fuel consumption between Kunawarritji and Halls Creek was calculated at 14.60 litres/100km; 19.45mpg.) Returned to hotel for lunch prior to departing Halls Creek at 1:30 pm. Arrived Fitzroy Crossing at 4:30 pm. After looking around the town and at the run down Crossing Inn (now owned by an Aboriginal corporation), we booked into the Fitzroy River Lodge motel for the night. Before dinner we washed our clothing in the caravan park section of the lodge. Dinner, bed and breakfast cost \$300. (Not long after our visit alcohol controls were strengthened in Fitzroy Crossing, by the look of the town and some of its people such reform was sadly needed.)

Sunday 16 September 2007 – fine, hot (start odo: 8,683 km)

Unlike Halls Creek, breakfast in Maxine's restaurant was very nice. Departed Lodge at 9:30 am. Looked around the Crossing Inn area, visited pioneer cemetery on south bank of the Fitzroy, then briefly visited Geikie Gorge before heading to Broome. Stopped for a snack lunch at run down Willare Bridge roadhouse prior to arriving in Broome at 5:00pm. Visited Gantheaume Point just before sunset. Spent the night at the run down Ocean Lodge motel (\$160 twin share) and had dinner in China town.

Monday 17 September 2007 – fine, hot (start odo: 9,120 km)

After booking out of motel (as an upper level bathroom started leaking into ours), had a pleasant breakfast on the verandah at Matso's Brewery overlooking Roebuck Bay. Visited Broome jetty and refuelled both fuel tanks at the BP depot, also visited Bedford Park before completing purchase of food supplies. Departed Broome at 1:30 pm, stopped at the Roebuck roadhouse (at the Port Hedland turnoff) for a snack lunch and arrived at Derby at 5:00 pm, after stopping to look at the prison boab on the way into town. Spent the night at the King Sound Resort hotel; it was not there in 1974 when I last visited Derby. Interesting display of aircraft crash relics in saloon bar. Dinner, bed and breakfast cost \$300.

Tuesday 18 September 2007 – fine, hot, humid (start odo: 9,403 km)

Looked around the town and jetty, topped up fuel tank and departed Derby at 10:00 am. Stopped briefly at the Lennard River crossing caravan store then headed south east into Windjana Gorge (12:15 pm, 9,563 km) for lunch and a walk up the gorge. Shortly after 2:00 pm, we stopped at the stone ruins of the Lillimilura police station. (Here on 31 October 1894, Jandamarra killed his boss Special Constable William Richardson to free some of his own tribal elders that they were taking as prisoners to Derby. The resulting aboriginal *uprising* resulted in several more white and supposedly many hundreds of aboriginal deaths. Jandamarra was killed by an aboriginal tracker on 1 April 1897.) We travelled about 35 km further south to Tunnel Creek where we walked about 700 metres through the underground water course to the other side of the range it passes through. Just about to leave the car park, we detected a deflating left rear tyre; by the time we replaced it with the underbody spare we had been at Tunnel Creek from 3:15 to 5:00 pm. We returned to Windjana Gorge for the night; stopping along the way to collect wood for the camp fire and arriving at 6:00 pm. A ranger came around to collect the night camping fees and advised there was no charge for Vietnam veterans.

19 September – 5 October

NW coast to Darwin via Kununurra thence to Mt Isa and Blackall.

6 October 2007 – fine, warm (start odo: 14,354 km)

After having breakfast at the motel and refuelling from the reserve, we left Blackall at 7:45 am for Roma. Before leaving Roma, we refilled from the reserve (14,846 km) and continued on to Brisbane; arriving at Capalaba at 9:00 pm.