

9/3/13 – We left Port Lincoln, and headed towards Coffin Bay, which was duly “explored” in about five minutes – apart from the shop where John insisted on buying a dozen oysters – to turn into oysters Kilpatrick later that night. Our port of call that night was a small free camp called Farm Beach, right on the water. Friendly spot, happy hours happened each night, and John had his Oysters Kilpatrick. John met another ex Byron Bay patriot – John Flemming, a fellow fire brigade “fire”. I am losing count of the ex Byron Bay people he has met.



Farm Beach

Near Farm Beach lies Gallipoli Beach, which featured in Peter Weir's movie

Gallipoli. We had previously seen a mock-up of a tank used in the filming at a museum at Koppio. The tank had been left in the sandhills, before being moved down to the museum.



Unfortunately, before we left Farm Beach, John was not feeling overly well, so it was up to me to drive us into Elliston where we found a doctor available, who

diagnosed him with Benign Postural Vertigo, which sounds a bit scary, but after a couple of days on drugs, was back to his normal self again.

Based in a caravan park at Elliston, we met Kym and Anne, a couple in a tent from Tumby Bay. He was keen on fisherman, and invited us to join him at Locks Well, not far back down the highway. Well, 283 steps down to the beach, walking in the sand, 283 steps back up to the car-park, I had enough, and of course, John did not catch any fish. Kym, however caught 7 Australian salmon! While we were sitting at the lookout, we watched a sea lion surfing the waves, then spotted three schools of salmon in the surf, one not far from where John had tried to catch one earlier. We were not about to walk down the 283 steps again just for a chance of catching a fish. We had read that Locks Well was



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one of the most reliable locations for catching Australian Salmon – but someone must have told the salmon that this was John trying to catch them.

Kym gave us some fillets of salmon that night, which we smoked with butter, garlic and herbs. Absolutely beautiful!

There are some interesting cliff top drives around Elliston, showcasing their sculptures. Every second year a sculptor's festival is held, and a lot of the sculptures remain on spectacular cliffs tops. John is trying to copy the stance,



while I did the Eskimo kiss!



Just outside Elliston at Colton, is an old farm house/bakery, selling fresh wood fired bread from a little shed on the side of the road. All bread or bags of buns were \$4.00, payment by honesty system.

Bit quirky, but very nice bread.

Heading further along the highway, we turned off towards Calca so we could take a look at Murphy's Haystacks – an example of an inselberg formation, which were weathered and sculpted into their present form about 100,000 years ago. Geologists say the pink granite was laid down some 1500 million years ago at a depth of 7 to 10 kilometres below the earth's surface. Now the formations are exposed on the surface, and a great deal of erosion has occurred since the formation. The name "Murphy's Haystacks" came about when an Irish agricultural expert was the landmarks in the distance whilst travelling on a coach. The learned gentleman was very impressed, and informed his fellow passengers that the farmer must have harrowed his land to produce such a great abundance of hay. The original farmer of the land was a "Mr Murphy" and to this day, the landmark is known as Murphy's Hay Stacks.



We could have camped there for the night, but it was hot and dry, and no shade, so we moved on, eventually to find Point Westall, where we had ocean on three sides of us, to the north, west and south. Only stayed there for one night, there was threat of a storm the following day, so thought it better to move to a camp with was a little less exposed.



Which brings us to our current site – Haslam, between Streaky Bay and Ceduna. The fish are not biting, however have caught quite a few undersized blue swimmer crabs (and returned them). As it is a long weekend in SA, we decided to stay here until next Tuesday, when the “holiday makers” return to their jobs, so we can get back on to our job of being a Grey Nomad.....

I have been chatting on line through our forum with Barrie and his wife Di, grey nomads who are also on their way west. They have been ahead of us for quite a while now, both on the Yorke Peninsula and then on the Eyre, but we have finally caught up with them this morning. He sent me a message to say they were as Haslam – right across the park from where we are parked!

14/3/13 – In all our time at Haslam, despite trying very hard, we caught no fish, and only the few undersized blue swimmers. We left there two days ago, with an overnight stopover in Ceduna, at the A1 (dodgy) caravan park. Not the nicest of parks, but cheap to say the least. We could have travelled down a corrugated dirt road for 14km to pay \$12.50 per person per night for a bush camp – with no facilities, so decided to “splash out” and stay in town instead – and at least have one last hot shower for \$22.00. As we are now in a sort of no man’s land for water, we have to



forgo showers unless we find a roadhouse with a shower. No man’s land, being the Eyre Highway, which crosses the Nullarbor from Ceduna in South Australia to Norseman in Western Australia – a distance of 1194 km. A shop in Penong advertises they are the last shop for 1000 km, but unfortunately it closed – last week!

Which brings me to our current camp – Scotts Beach – a free camp in the Fowlers Bay Conservation Reserve. The sand dunes here are phenomenal! I have never seen so many, between here and Fowlers Bay, looking on Google Earth, is just a mass of

white! We are camped on a flat just behind the dunes of Scotts Beach, where John is attempting to catch some King George Whiting for tea. I, on the other hand, am making some mince up to have with macaroni!

(We had mince with macaroni for dinner!)

We walked around the cape to view the beautiful sand dunes in the distance – the sand is so white and clean – no pollution at all.

These sand dunes are slowly encroaching on a small village called Fowlers Bay, already two of the streets have all but disappeared.

The Sand Dunes at Scotts Beach



The water situation is – we can carry 300 litres, 100 of that is dedicated filtered drinking water. We plan to be on the plains for at least 2 weeks, so have to conserve as much as we can, by using zero-bac instead of soap and water to wash our hands, baby bum wipes to wipe down our bodies, instead of a shower, APC every second day – until we find a roadhouse, where we can pay to have a shower. The road houses won't allow you to fill your tanks, but will happily sell you bottled drinking water.

The roadhouses also sell very limited grocery lines, but I doubt I will need to shop, as we filled the freezer in Port Lincoln, and did a pretty big top up in Ceduna. The issue is that by the time we get to the WA border, I have to have used up all fruit and vegetables, as the quarantine check point is very rigid, they come into the vans and check cupboards, fridges, everywhere. Then, there are still no shops for a further 713 km. I am hoping the supply of frozen and tinned vegies will keep us alive! Anything we have left before we cross the border will of course be cooked up prior to going through quarantine, but I think I have the quantities pretty well sorted.

17/3/13

We enquired at the Visitors Information Centre at Ceduna as to buying a golf pass. There are 18 fairways across the Nullarbor between Ceduna and Kalgoorlie, some at established golf courses (Ceduna and Kalgoorlie) but the rest are just at roadhouses on the way. Built in 2009, the idea was to get people to stop more frequently on their crossing, take a break, and play a round of golf. The course is an 18 whole, par 72 course, situated along 1,365 kilometres of the Eyre Highway from Ceduna in South Australia to Kalgoorlie in Western Australia. Well, I don't know just how many grey nomads are doing that, as the price is \$70.00 per person to play all 18 holes, get a score card, and have it "certified" at the end. Not too many grey nomads have \$140.00 to spare on that sort of entertainment. So we did not buy the score card. (We did, however, buy a second hand set of clubs for \$20.00 in an op shop in Cleve).

Our next stop over was at Nullarbor (the Roadhouse), where we camped in the "caravan park" behind the roadhouse, paid \$20.00 for an unpowered piece of dirt, another \$1.00 each for a shower, and then .15cents per litre for 60 litres of water to top up our water tanks. We had to do stay here; it is an iconic place to stop. Another van pulled in beside ours sporting Qld Number plates. After they finished setting up, they came and joined us for a happy hour. Normally living at the Newmarket Caravan Park, they know our friends Sherry and Tony, a couple from Cairns we met during our stay in Bowen.



While we were at Nullarbor Roadhouse, we did (despite not having paid for the privilege, have a silly hit and miss with our \$20.00 golf clubs on the aptly named "Dingo's Den".



The Eyre Highway changes just before Nullarbor Roadhouse, the trees disappear - Nullarbor means "No Trees", and that is exactly what you see – no trees, only salt bush, which grows to about 1 metres.



It really is a treeless plain

The highway at many times is close enough to see the Southern Ocean, and we took the advantage of pulling off to the many cliff top lookouts, the most spectacular being at Head of Bight, the highest point that the Great Australian Bight bights in the mainland Australia.

The cliffs travel for approximately 100 km, while further west the Baxter Cliffs continue the journey for a further 400 km on the Western Australian Side of the border. Every year, the southern right whales come in to Head of Bight for a bit of R&R on their journey, where

they mate, give birth and wait for their babies to grow enough to travel back towards the Antarctic.



View from Head of Bight of Bunda Cliffs

The Nullarbor Plain is actually only part of the Eyre Highway, stretching from the Roadhouse at Nullarbor in South Australia to approximately Balladonia in Western Australia. The terrain is flat, no trees to be seen for miles, and the Bunda and Baxter Cliffs offer spectacular views over the South Ocean.

Our last stop over on the Eyre Highway on the South Australian side was at Koonalda Homestead, a property which was abandoned back in 1988, and is now managed by National Parks.



The house is made of sleepers from the Indian Pacific line at Cook, and is in a state of disrepair, but interesting all the same. Also on the property is a cottage, which was probably the either the station managers cottage or the shearers cottage, and a well preserved and very interesting shearing shed.



But, the most fascinating is the “car cemetery”. As the homestead used to be on the old Eyre Highway, and served as a road house, before the new highway was built, as cars broke down, they just sort of ended up at Koonalda – and they are still there today!





The homestead is about 14 k off the highway, but a further 7 k north is the Koonalda Cave, a sinkhole which has exposed limestone caves travelling further under the landscape. We saw the cave, and other blowholes while we were there. We have since spoken with someone who was there before us, he was at the blowhole when it was expelling air – he was able to hold a hankie over the hole and it fluttered like a little flag.



We heard that there was a blond dingo in the vicinity, and we had a visit on our second night, he (she?) dug around our sullage area, chewed through an elastic bungee rope, and clawed up over one of our chairs. No harm done, we felt sort of privileged to have had the visitation.

We were hoping to see wombats, they were around as we saw their recent scats and their wombat holes (below), but did not get to see one in real life.

The bird life, however, was interesting, with babbler and Port Lincoln parrots, not to mention all the bunnies we saw.

Our first night at the homestead we shared a sunset with Chris and Denise (some fellow campers) and two Pauls who worked for SA Government. The Pauls were out in the national park checking for weeds and came back to the homestead for their campfire dinner and swag



night, so we all shared their campfire.

While at the homestead we cooked up the last of our tomatoes, capsicum, carrots, mushrooms, onions etc., or salsa, made a lamb casserole and then cooked up the last of the onions – everything to be frozen, as next stop was to be WA border, where no fruit and veg could pass. We even dumped our now depleted herb garden.

18/3/13 –We crossed the border at Border Village with no issues. We had nothing to hide and nothing to declare, but they still come into the van to check that you are not trying to smuggle things in. So, we are now officially in Western Australia.



21/3/13 The highway remains treeless, until you reach Balladonia Roadhouse, which houses an interesting little museum, featuring bits of Skylab, which returned to earth on 12th July 1979, scattering space debris across an area from Esperance to Balladonia. At the time, the local shire council presented NASA with a littering fine, and President Jimmy Carter even rang the Roadhouse to make his apologies.





Not far out of Balladonia, you reach the “famous” 90 mile straight (146.6km) – the longest straight stretch of road in the Australia.



The Eyre Highway is interesting in that along many of the long straight stretches, there are Royal Flying Doctors Service Airstrips – using the highway as their runway. I am glad that at no time did we meet a plain coming in the opposite direction.



After a couple of overnight roadside stops, we arrived at Fraser Range Station, the first station settled on the Nullarbor in 1872 and now hosts caravan park in the bush on private property, just off the highway. We were keen to do a sunset OKA tour here, however as there had been fairly heavy rain a few days prior, the tracks were washed out, so the tours were not happening.

We did however, at the recommendation of Steve and Jim, who we previously met at Port Lincoln, do the 6k bush walk around the scenic rim of the property.

Brodie would have loved it! We walked, scrambled, rock-hopped, all the time the plain below us in full view, there was



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never any thought that we might get lost.

The summit was reached, and yes that is a microwave in the cairn! Where else would you put the visitor's book.

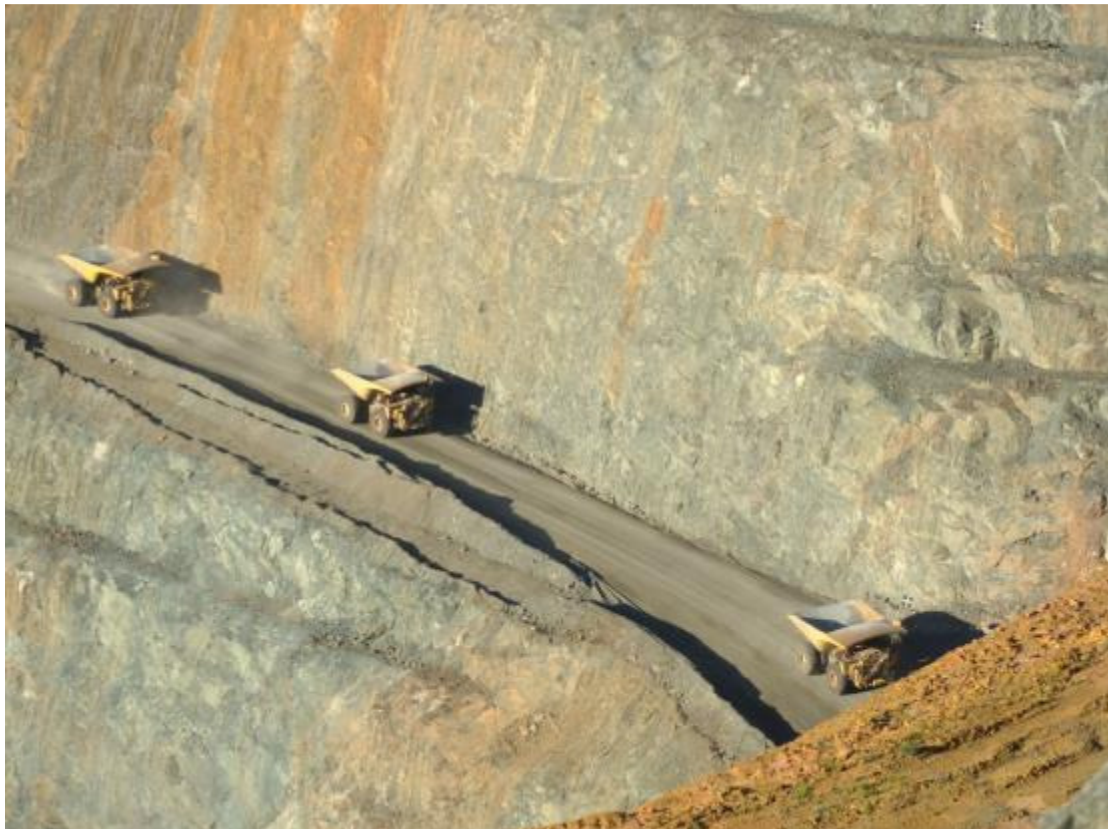
22/3/13 – Norseman – and the end of the Eyre Highway. We worked out our total water and fuel consumption.

- We were on the highway from Ceduna to Norseman for 11 days/nights.
- We used a total of 210 litres of water - for toilet flushing, washing, cooking and drinking – an average of 19 litres per day. This includes the 60 litres we bought at Nullarbor
- We only had 2 showers in the van in 11 days!
- 316 litres of diesel @ Average of \$1.83 per litre
- 3 nights paid for caravan parks (\$64.00) – one at Nullarbor Roadhouse, two at Fraser Range (where we were able to have showers)
- 8 nights bush camping
- Best bush camp was Koonalda Homestead on South Australian side in the Nullarbor National Park

26/3/13 – In Kalgoorlie, we met up with Steve & Jim again. They invited us to join them on the “History of Hay Street” tour, which was hilarious (with them) but very interesting – learnt a lot about the containment of the prostitutes, about the “starting posts” and were shown several working “rooms”. I felt that it was the chaperone for three naughty boys! That evening, we all dined together in style at the Palace – and spent way too much money, and drank way too much wine!



The gold mine here – The Super Pit – is run by the Kalgoorlie Consolidated Mining Co. You can go up to the lookout to see into the pit, which is enormous at approximately 500 metres deep, about 1.5 km wide and about 3 km long. The dump trucks look like little Tonka Toys as they wind their way down empty into the pit, and then labour back up again, this time filled with rubble weighing 240 tonnes, which may, or may not contain gold, but, the mine produces 2 ½ tonne of gold per day. The trucks operate 24/7, and the rumbling never stops – you can hear it from the caravan park, 5k away. The dump trucks are worth around \$4.5 million, each tyre alone worth around \$40,000. \$4million per year per truck for diesel,



We were able to join a mine tour, a 2 ½ hour bus trip which took us down into the mines to other lookouts, not normally accessible to the public.

Another time while we were at the lookout, we timed our visit for a “blasting”. Almost every day, there is a planned blast, and if you are lucky enough to be at the lookout, you get to feel the build-up as sirens blare out the warning that in 30 minutes the areas has to be cleared, for about 5 minutes, you hear the safety warnings and count down, then see and feel the blast. We were lucky, and caught the blast on both video and camera.



29/3/13 – Before our friends, Steve & Jim departed, had dinner again at an Irish pub, then, on their advice, took a drive out to Lake Ballard. The road takes you over old mining roads, through deserted/ghost towns like Broad Arrow (tavern),



Ora Banda (tavern),



Siberia (cemetery)



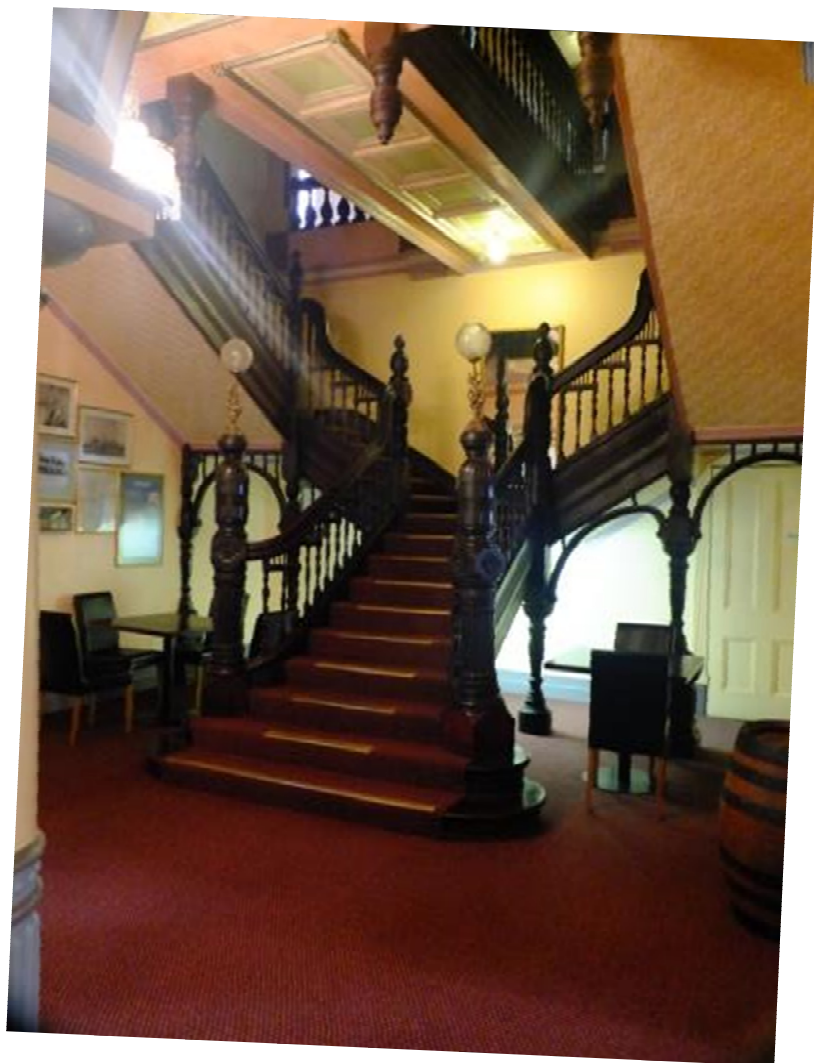
and Davyhurst (nothing left), finally reaching Lake Ballard, where Antony Gormley has created carbonised steel figures, derived from laser scans of the inhabitants of Menzies, a small township km away. The scans are then mapped in three dimensions,

the cross-sections then taken throughout the body and reduced by two thirds. The end result the sculptor refers to as an "insider". Displayed on the salt lake they look like space creatures in the shimmering light.



Kalgoorlie Boulder is a beautiful city, despite being a gold mining town, the run down, empty buildings in Boulder, the magnificent hotels and business houses in Kalgoorlie both add to the beauty of this gold mining area.





We left Kalgoorlie just after Easter, with our next stop planned at being Esperance.

