

TRIP REPORT FOR DESERT TRIP 2010.

We departed on time from Port Augusta, with Greg catching up a day later at Ceduna. From Ceduna we headed towards Maralinga, expecting a reasonable track. Instead we found a 4 lane beautiful gravel road. Yes, mining has found this remote area. They are mining Mineral sands and transporting it to Ceduna port. The last section was a bit slow and rough which brought us back to reality. Met up with Robin Matthews (the caretaker) and found a camp site. The area is well worth a visit with some sheds etc in good condition. The airstrip is something to see with a gigantic apron. It is all sealed and they actually trap the run off water, channel it to a dam and pump it to a tank system for use in the camp. We had a full day tour of the various drop sites, found lots of glass and inspected the different firing systems. They used balloons, towers and did drop one from an aircraft. Seven main bombs were detonated and up to a couple of hundred small devices. Robin hosted us to a BBQ that night and we departed next morning a little wiser and perhaps subdued. Tracking west on the old Caravan track that had been put in place by rabbit trappers we turned North towards Vokes Hill Corner. It looked very much like rain, so, we pushed on to a shed tank for camp. Some rain over night was enough to make us stay there for a day. Very heavy rain made rivers of the track and caused the tanks to over flow. A rush to save the camp ovens and Mal's tent, with some frantic shoveling. Vokes Hill Corner came and went with next stop the Emu village remains and bomb site. Through the dog fence we struck some deep water with levels covering the bonnet of the Hilux. Peter Sheils had a fire in his Ford which burnt the main battery cable and all the other wires encased in the loom. After a couple of hours of cutting and joining the ute was mobile again— minus a starter. Push starting was the order of the day until Alice Springs. Up the highway to the border then turn West again to Mulga Park then Curtin springs, Yulara, Docker river to Giles. Camp here then to Surveyors General corner. 300 k just to see a peg. Back to Giles to refuel and on to the Sandy Blight Junction Road. We reached Bungabiddy Rockhole for camp and a most spectacular sight it was. Another landmark was a tree blazed by Teitkens(an early explorer who was with Giles, then took a party of his own back to this country. He had identified the area around Maralinga as good grazing land and put down two wells looking for water, unsuccessfully. If he had found water the history of the area would have been quite different.) which is in a bad state of repair, white ants etc. Proceeding on to Kintore we put some fuel on board and tracked back to the Sandy Blight Junction. I knew there was some road here, but we found a track all the way to Yuendumu. One thing that was a bit different here was getting pulled up by the local law. With lights flashing he probably thought he had a big drug running convoy. Through Yuendumu to Alice Springs we had a couple of lay days, where Peter was able to get his starter motor. Down to Chambers Pillars via the Rock Carvings and on to Finke and the Lambert Centre. The Finke river had been closed for some time and we were lucky to be able to cross. Past Old Crown to Hamilton some really nice water holes along this stretch. Oodnadatta, camp, then on to William creek. The road to Haligans bay is in dispute as the SA parks have declared it a public access through Anna Creek station, but are not prepared to help with maintenance. It will be interesting to see what develops from this. A nice camp at Coward springs, everyone having a swim. A storm threatened and a flurry to batten down the tents. Nothing eventuated and it wasn't till next morning when we found two creeks had run a banker that night. One causeway had about 4 inches of water still running and there were fish swimming up this water. Two dingoes were catching and feasting on the easy meal. Next stop was Andamooka

opal field where we found the town nearly washed away from a downpour the week before. A 4 wheel drive to Lake Torrens and on to camp near Roxby Downs. We called in to Woomera and found some activity around the old detention centre where new gates are being installed. Port Augusta for fuel and on to Quorn. Blacktop to Broken Hill and on to Menindee lakes. Very spectacular with lots of water. Home via Ivanhoe, Wellington and Merriwa.

I traveled 9292 klm averaging 11.9 per 100.

I want to thank, Greg, Peter and Judy, Peter and Fran, Lindsay and Jeannie, Geoff and Clemy and of course Beth for a great trip.

Mal Duff.