

# Eyre Peninsular to WA Wheatfields April/May 2016

## April 2016

Autumn again and it was cold - we had been using the fire for over a month now so it was time to get moving. A string of health issues were behind us and we were free to get on the road.

The general plan was to move through the Eyre Peninsular, across the Nullarbor, and up through the middle of WA to Marble Bar. This report details the first stage of the 2016 trip.



Newmans Rocks, Nullarbor (WA)

### Special points of interest:

- The Eyre Peninsular
- The Nullarbor crossing
- The WA Outback - especially the Norseman to Hyden track

## Eyre Peninsular

### The First Few Days

This stage started on 26 April.

Astute friends and family will recall that we were to stay at Mambray Creek in Mt Remakable NP for a few days first. We headed there and set up on the site we have previously chosen (16). This time it was school holidays and as busy as all get out. The park was full of happy kids playing, and that was alright. But the site right next to us was occupied by a large and especially noisy group. There was a heap of kids and one adult, a Maori woman. They yipped and yelled, howling like dogs and cooeeing from early morning to into the evening. Worst still, one of the kids played a guitar. As he only had three strings there was quite a bit of repetition (said with a degree of sarcasm). When he started at 7am that was the last straw - we moved on later that day. But not before we got a nearby geocache, on the riverside walk.



## Engine Point, Lincoln National Park

S34 44 21 E135 59 20

We drove down the East coast of the Eyre Peninsular and through Port Lincoln out to the national park. Our destination was Engine Point, a camp site right on the beach but with no facilities whatsoever. Happily, there was no one else camped there, although the rest of the park was brimful of school holiday and travelling campers. The view of the ocean from our front door was breathtaking; blue ocean and a mile of sky.

The weather was perfect during our stay and we enjoyed sitting outside in short sleeved shirts



although at home we had been bunnng wood for the past month. So we relaxed, drove around the park and generally enjoyed ourselves for the four days we spent there.

The second night was interesting; a storm event brought very high winds. Just before dusk the wind was gusting at 90 kms/hr and it was disconcerting to say the least. With

the van pretty much aimed into the wind anyway and with the stabiliser legs down the van stayed rock solid. I think the stabilisers are a very good idea indeed.

There is telephone and internet reception here.

## Walkers Rocks (Lake Newland Conservation Park)

S 33 33 34 E 134 51 20



It was hard to leave such a nice peaceful spot in the national park but we did need to keep moving. It was a cool and sunny day when we packed up and rolled out of the conservation park and headed past Coffin Bay and on the Flinders Highway to Walkers Rocks. This camp site is provided by the Elliston Council and has minimal facilities (a flushing toilet and a cold shower, both very basic amenities). There is a fee of \$10 a night per vehicle which is paid at a self registration booth.

One of the surprises here is the good mobile phone reception, both Optus and Telstra.

We had reasonably high winds but being in a sheltered spot we were comfortable and able to relax and enjoy the camp for two lovely days.

## Streaky Bar

We have previously stayed at the caravan park in the small town of Streaky Bay and it is one of our firm favourites. The town is fresh and neat and clean, and sited on a beautiful sweep of bay.

We set up at a spot right near the beach, with a view from our awning of the sparkling blue water and bay. There were happy groups of children playing on the beach and people were set up with chairs and a drink on the shore each afternoon.

Our top priority was to do the washing and do some chores like cleaning the floors and topping up the water tanks. There is a lovely bakery here and it was great to have coffee there and sample the fresh buns. And the Streaky Bay hotel is a popular spot so we made sure we had booked a table before heading out there for dinner.

Each of the two afternoons we spent here were spent with our chairs out on the beach in front of our van chatting with fellow travellers.



At the border we had to stop for a quarantine inspection (they peer everywhere in the rig, including the cupboard under the bed) and travellers either declare fruit and vegetables or hand them over to be confiscated. It is a long way before you can re-stock further Wsst. We carry tinned and frozen fruit or vegetables to see us through.

### **Yalata Rest Stop**

S31 24 35 E 131 26 51

This was just a simple rest stop but it is pleasant and we had spent a couple of nights here last year. Its main merits are its good gravel ground which gives a clean and solid space for the van if there is any rain. It did rain again while we overnighted here (sigh) but it was a calm and peaceful night and we were ready to head out nice and early the next morning.

The other main benefit of this spot is it had internet reception so we were able to check the emails and download the Advertiser newspaper to read. Just before we left home we decided to subscribe to the paper's digital version. Using our RAA membership we had a good deal, but the main advantage is that while we are away we can read the paper regardless of where we may be situated. There is an added element of fun in reading a newspaper in the middle of the Nullarbor or in the desert.

### **Eucla Clifftops**

S 31 38 17 E 129 23 16

Again, we had enjoyed this spot last year, but although we had a million dollar view and a magical site to view the ocean in splendid isolation, the weather was the issue. We could see from the

internet that stormy weather and high winds were coming in (and indeed we did have an eagle's eyeview of the late evening thunderstorm which rolled across Eucla over to our right.

So after enjoying a lovely night (which was surprisingly free of high winds or heavy rain), we



pulled out in the morning. Access to this site is along about a km of rough and rocky track which was potholed and overgrown with vegetation, but nothing which gave us any issues or concern. We do like this spot but it is not for camping in windy conditions. There was Telstra internet reception, very poor and only available with an external aerial.

### **Olwolgin Rest Stop West of Madura**

**S31 56 43 126 43 57**

This was an unremarkable spot which was chosen due to it being about where we needed to stop for the night, and because it was bound to be quieter than the busy Moodini Bluff stop further to the East. Why was it likely to be quieter? Because it has no toilet. It was a pleasant enough spot and we took a track down the back among the trees and bushes, and enjoyed a calm, peaceful night. I would choose this spot again on future trips. On this trip it was raining, as it had been all day and so we did no exploring around the area, but rather sat and read until dinner time.

### **Newman Rocks - Nullarbor Crossing**

**S32 6 53 E 123 10 15**

We are obviously creatures of habit, as we deliberately again chose a spot we have enjoyed a few times before. Newman Rocks is in the Shire of Dundas and is a semi-permanent waterhole at the base of a massive granite outcrop. There are no facilities other than a rubbish bin. We camp well back from the water's edge, up on the high section overlooking both the valley below and the pool itself. The appealing feature for me is the rocky base which is neat and clean to camp on in damp weather. And there is so many spots to camp that it is easy to find a nice quiet spot.



The next day was a lovely drive. Early in the day we covered the 140kms to Norseman on the highway and arrived early enough to do several pressing tasks. First we visited the Information Centre (a wonderfully helpful bloke gave us road updates and a mud map of the area to the West of town where we were headed. At the centre we were able to fill up with water (good potable water) and access the dump point for a small donation. As our water tanks were low and we put in several hundred litres of water, we gave a larger than usual donation. It was well worth it!

Then we had lunch at the café in the main street which makes delicious pies on the premises, and we followed all this giddy excitement with a visit to the IGA store.

From Norseman we followed the good gravel road due West along the Norseman-Hyden Road. After recent rains there was no dust and the road was in perfect condition. This is a fascinating stretch of road, and we called in to see Lake Johnston (a salt lake) and Mc Dermid Rock. (At the time of writing this report this road is reportedly closed due to rain and what are now muddy conditions).

This is really interesting terrain along the track, with patches of woodland, salt lakes and then

more open areas of scrub. A fascinating area which would benefit from a longer stay. We have always planned to do this track in the past but the route was never suitable for our destination.

### **The Breakaways - Norseman**

S32 16 38 E 120 15 45

What a nice surprise this spot was! We had driven past a couple of nice spots closer to Norseman (I thought Mc Dermid Rock looked really nice) but this spot was recommended by our friend Judy and it was lovely. There are limestone cliffs against which you can camp, and fireplaces have been placed for campers. Apart from that the only facilities are the drop toilet which was not far from our camp. We had the ensuite site!

We had a visit from a ranger who is employed by a conservation funded body with links to the indigenous people who have been granted native title to the area. He said with the granting of title came anticipated changes in where people will be allowed to camp in future. They want everyone herded into the central area, a location at present which is affected by water and very boggy. Apparently the concern is that when children camp here they interfere with bird nesting in holes in the cliff face. It is unclear to me how the changed camp sites will affect that....The ranger stated it was his opinion that camping should not be allowed at all so I am fearful for future camping here altogether.



We enjoyed a couple of lovely nights camped under the stars and with warm days to sit outside and read or chat. And there was a geocache here so that rounded the stay off nicely.

The next day was a long day's travel. We left the Breakaways reasonably early after a leisurely breakfast of toast and coffee followed by the luxury of fresh bananas from the Norseman IGA, and we pulled out in bright sunshine at about 8am. The road continued Westward in great shape although it was a bit dustier by now.

We looked at the old pub at Forrestonia Plots as we drove past (a Government initiative which gave farmers plots of land, now deserted and instead turned into a lovely camp site with absolutely no facilities except for the pub, a derelict old corrugated iron shed. Some wag wrote on the outside wall that they don't take Amex there...

We continued through increasingly urbanized farming tracts and arrived at Hyden in time for lunch. On the way into town we pulled up at Wave Rock to have a good look at this iconic feature. What a travesty of commercialism. They charge \$10 to park there (with no signs directing you) and all surrounded by a caravan park. We were appalled by the commercialism and said nope, not for us. We have seen equal rock features for free!

Hyden provided a great day use rest stop with nearby toilets and a tap with good town water. So we filled up our van's watertanks and walked over to the nearby café for lunch and did some shopping at their general store. The range was reasonable and the prices were similarly not too bad considering the isolation. After refueling we were ready to continue.

At this stage we debated staying at one of the smaller caravan parks along the way to Narabeen (further West) or heading over to the bush camp near Bruce Rock where we had stayed last year. It was out of our way and definitely cost more in fuel than a night at a caravan park but the appeal of a nice bush camp was too hard to resist. So we headed over to Kwolyin.

### **Kwolyin Bushcamp**

**S31 55 48 E117 45 34**

This is a peaceful and pretty spot which we enjoyed last year on our way home. Halfway between the small towns of Bruce Rock and Quairading, and set in a natural bushland, it has an immaculate toilet block and camp kitchen as well as a gas barbeque and gas stove top, all completely free. It is done to encourage visitors and their injection of much needed dollars is valued. We think it is one of our favourite Australian bushcamps.



Anyway, we were delighted to see the elderly couple camped here who were also in the same spot last year on our visit. They live in Perth and come up for a break from time to time. They have a small coaster bus and a shower tent, and camp near the toilets so they don't need anything bigger, they claim. They cook over an open fire and have a shower tent for the daily ablutions. Good on them!

We stayed three nights and enjoyed lovely sunny, crisp days. The flies were very friendly but we did our best to ignore them....

After the nice stay at Kwolyin, it was time to move on (we do have to get to Marble Bar eventually!) so we headed over to the little town of Bruce Rock where we did our grocery shopping at the IGA (Gosh there are a lot of IGAs in country Australia - what a

wonderful franchise arrangement) and headed North to the camp site at Beringbooding Rock.

### **Beringbooding Rock**

**S30 33.522 E118 29.718**

This is a really lovely camp spot with a flushing toilet, and a water tap, courtesy of the water tank (and the local Shire). Beringbooding Rock has the largest rock water catchment tank in Australia. It was built in 1937 and when it was built held two and a quarter million gallons of water. "Sustenance Labour" was used to build the tank at a cost of 10,000 pounds.

Beringbooding has an amazing balancing boulder, the huge gnamma hole called "Kangaroo Rock Hole" and some of the Kalamaia Tribes paintings of hands in a cave at the rear of the rock. Have I mentioned before that there is a lot of granite outcrop "Rocks" in this region?

Anyway, we had a delightful spot to back the van into one of the designated bays and so we were able to enjoy three warm and sunny days, with truly freezing nights.



On the second day a van which had also been camped at The Breakaways arrived, and the couple stayed a night here too, so we had a Happy Hour with them and the



other South Aussies who arrived a bit later.

We climbed the rock (as you do) and again marvelled at the Kangaroo Hole gnamma (a rock hole formed in the granite from erosion by water and wind). This is a special place indeed.

Mind you, the biting midges made havoc with me, and I had itchy bumps all over I am not so good at resisting scratching itches....

Beringbooding had Telstra internet but it was not good enough for phone.

### **Westonia**

Because we had internet at Beringbooding Rock, we were able to check the weather forecasts and knew heavy rain fronts were closing in so we packed up and moved East to the little town of Westonia, which has a great little caravan park. Westonia is about ten kms North of the Great Eastern Highway, and about 45 kms from Merredin). Its main merit during rain is its cement slabs for the vans and the incredibly cheap rate (\$15 a night or \$80 a week) for a powered site. So we paid for the week and settled in happily. There is a pub within walking distance as well as a coffee shop and a small co-operative run general store. The town is really, really friendly, and we thoroughly enjoyed our time here. There is internet and Telstra phone service but no Optus.

Being on town power at the caravan park meant we could easily do chores like all the washing (including sheets, towels, pillowcases and the quilt cover) and I slaved over a hot keyboard to publish four earthcaches relevant to the district. An earthcache is a specific geocache which has published co-ordinates and a description on a geological feature at the site, as well as requiring people to accurately answer geology-related questions on the feature. It takes a bit of work to provide the geological description of the feature and the questions to be answered. I had a bit of a theme going with the earthcaches all featuring local granite rock outcrops. They were all four published within an hour of being submitted. I was so pleased with myself!

On the night we went to the local pub for drinks, a Saturday night, it was the event of a footy match on TV which involved the Freo Dockers. It would be fair to say this town supports the Freo Dockers, as the pub has posters, photos, memorabilia, banners and even a doorway named "Dockery Way". I said to Val "I reckon they barrack for Freo here!" .... Apparently Freo lost on that night and the bar's residents were inconsolable. When asked if we supported this team I said "Oooh yes! Love Freo! Absolute fans". I later said on Facebook I don't even know what the bloody sport is....might be a tennis team for all I know.