

## Darling River Run April 2009

Monday 13th April.

After a great Easter weekend with Alan and Ben we waved goodbye at Walgett and headed West. It was raining heavily all the way through Brewarrina and onto Bourke (washed 20-30 kilos of Lightning Ridge mud off the car!) and we were unsure if the River Run would be accessible. After inquiring at the Information Centre in Bourke and a few phone calls to property owners we were assured that the black soil tracks were passable. We continued South down the Kidman Way to Gundabooka National Park for our first night.

Interesting Aboriginal Art and beautiful scenery. It is the home of a nocturnal omnivorous ant that builds a huge nest and had Nev intrigued!!

Tuesday 14th April

We headed west again, came to the Darling River and followed the river banks South to the small township of Louth. Famous for Dunlop Station the first sheep station in the world to use mechanical shears and the town cemetery which has a granite headstone that catches the sunlight of the setting sun and reflects it through the town. After the cemetery Nev took a short cut and sank the Nissan in the wet black soil track up to the diff, how embarrassing! As we were stuck just the other side of the road from the Pub, the whole population of 6 would have known about it. We managed to get out with a few quick gear changes and a lot of luck!!

We followed the river closely to the township of Tilpa which consists of a 100 year old Pub covered with travellers' graffiti which we added to by giving a donation to the RFDS. Very interesting reading!!

On to Old Buckanbe Sheep Station where we camped right on the river bank. Nev soon had the fire going and we cooked another fabulous meal on the coals. The weather was perfect and after a magnificent sunset, we sat back to watch the 2 or 3 gazillion stars, punctuated by the odd satellite, in another crystal clear outback night.

The river had quite a bit of water in it courtesy of the rain in Qld, as there has been no rain out there for some time, everything was dry with a lot of dead animal carcasses on the parched ground.

Wednesday 15th April

Travelled a short way down the river today and stayed in The Pardoo Darling National Park and camped at Wilga Camping Area right on a bend of the river.

Thursday 16th April

Continuing down the River Run through Wilcannia. A very sad town with beautiful old sandstone buildings and an interesting BP service depot, but that is about it. We headed to Menindee for our next stop. We were disappointed as there was no water in the lakes and hasn't been for the best part of 6 years which meant no birds, fishing, water sports or anything they advertise about the area! Checked out the National Park and its historic relics including a magnificent sheep shearing shed. We camped at the site of the Burke and Wills expedition of 1860. Continued on our way through the quaint little town of Pooncarrie where we saw the flood levels of years ago where the mighty Darling River had reached. We completed the Darling River Run and ended up in the lovely town of Wentworth where the Darling and Murray Rivers meet. A 3km trip to Perry Sands was intriguing as the red sand dunes just seem to appear from nowhere.

Got a cabin here which was actually out over the waters of the Darling River. Plenty of bird life here and a very historic port for the paddle-steamers of years gone by.

Friday 17th April

Left the bitumen and back up to Mungo National Park, famous for its lunette known as the "Walls of China". It is the remnants of an ancient lake with ancient sand dunes running more than 20kms along one side. After an informative walk with aboriginal guides we drove the circular 70 km route around the park. The remains of a once thriving sheep station are still there and National Parks are preserving the historic shearing sheds and many relics from the harsh days of the early sheep stations. Camped at Turlee Sheep Station and met some guys from The Central Coast 4X4 club.

Roger, the hairy nosed wombat said to say hello! Compulsory happy hour and another fantastic camp fire and yarn.

Saturday 18th April

We had completed the Darling River Run from the start to finish and headed back to the big smoke stopping at Cowra for the night before arriving back into Sydney on Sunday morning.

We would recommend the Darling River Run to anyone who would like to experience a very historic trip and beautiful scenery. No 4x4 (unless it rains!).

Kerry and Neville Jacobs