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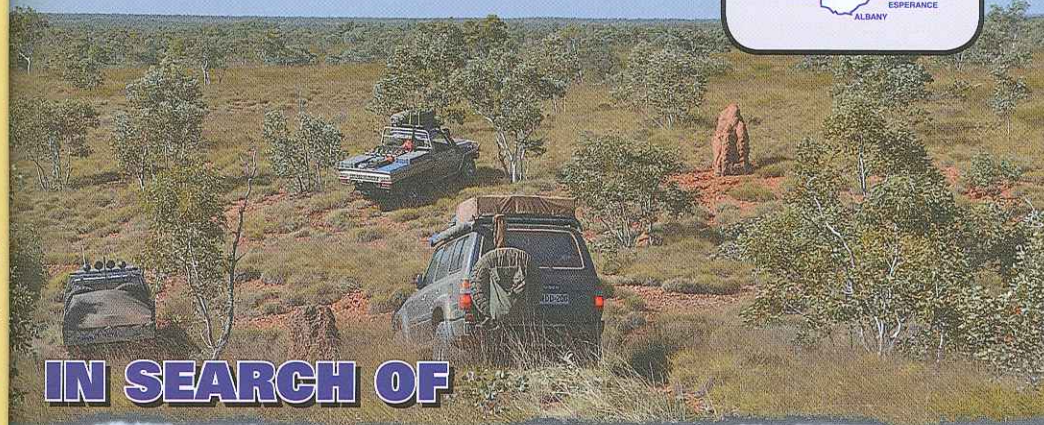
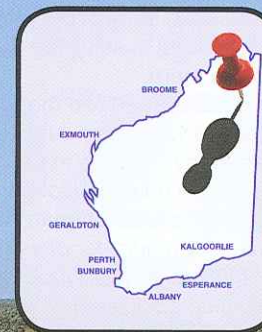
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the smart cookies at Jaram.

Simple really. They've taken the sides off their ever popular Tracklander to produce the new "Flat" Tracklander (Flatlander?) Jaram says with the sides off "the completely flat platform gives you as much or as little space as you need. Ideal for awkward sized items". And we concur. You could easily get three medium - sized mothers-in-law or a brace of unruly kids up there no problem. Coupla ratchet straps and off you go to Goondiwindi. Other benefits? Well it's lighter and lower, has tie-down points all over its fully welded mesh base, incorporates Tracklander's super strong gutter support system and will take every accessory known to Jaram - like jerry can holders, spade clamps, wheel holders, jack holders - the list goes on. Now you don't need to rack your brains for an excuse to get down to Jaram at 12 Railway Parade Welshpool or call them on 9451 0700 for your nearest retailer.

Phil Bianchi heads off on another remote 4WD adventure, this time following part of David Carnegie's 1896 exploration route...



IN SEARCH OF

SHIDDI POOL

This nine day trek in the remote East Kimberley had challenging terrain, exhilarating 4Wdriving, magical scenery; it also had punctures galore, blocked air cleaners and mechanical problems.

After topping up with fuel in Halls Creek, we were ready for the next stage of our Kimberley adventure; to follow in the footsteps of David Carnegie. Our journey was to take us 130 kms down the Tanami Road, westward across to Mt Bannerman then northward following Carnegie's exploration route. The travel party was made up of four vehicles; Dave with me, Alan

and his dog Massie from WA, John and Sue from South Australia and Peter from Sydney. I must admit I was a bit worried about travelling with the eastern staters; although I relaxed a bit when I found out

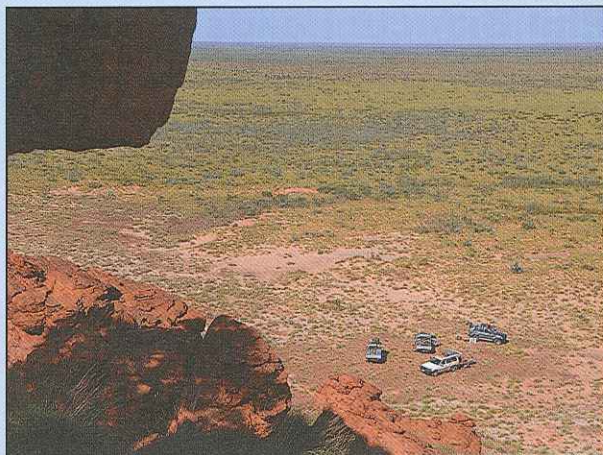
Parts of the trip were child's play.



they spoke English over there but decided to still keep a wary eye on them.

Alan who organised the trip, and whom we dubbed Carnegie Alan, was in the lead. Alan has been following Carnegie's expedition to Halls Creek for a number of years. In 2003, on a quad bike, he travelled up as far as the South Esk Tablelands before running out of time. His father and brother provided vehicle support but were only able to meet him at select points; for the most part Alan was out in the desert on his own. To read more about this modern day adventurer's journey go to, <http://members.iinet.net.au/~equinox/dcre/Old%20Halls%20Creek.htm> Peter is a professional photographer and would drag out huge lenses like you see at cricket. He patiently provided us with many photographic tips; I hope we do justice to his advice. John and Sue are retired. I would almost call them professional 4WD travellers; they are on the track almost full time. Alan led us on an exhilarating drive through some spectacular rangeland country dotted with ranges, bluffs, breakaways and creek lines. Much was cross country driving or on faint overgrown, rocky and washed out tracks until we got into pastoral country. If you're worried about adding character lines to your vehicle, scraping your belly over countless rocks and termite mounds or dragging your bum through creek beds, then this trip isn't for you. You will soon tire of

"At the top we sat down and using Carnegie's drawing, picked out of the features he named".



▲ **Superb views from atop Mount Bannerman.**

pushing your way through scratchy acacia belts and high spinifex covered flats. Once we left the Tanami Road we also left the traffic and pastoral country.

Approaching Mt Bannerman, we headed cross country to the base of this most imposing feature, named by Carnegie after his sister in law.

After much puffing and blowing on my part I managed to get to the top. What a view, almost 360°, with the best

In country like this you need plenty of fuel and water to see you through.



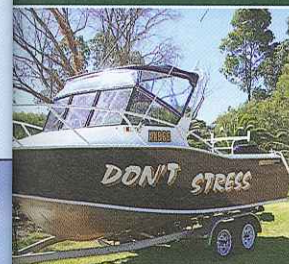
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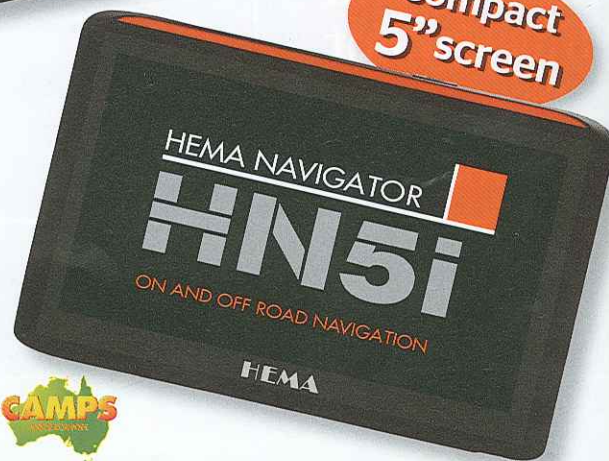
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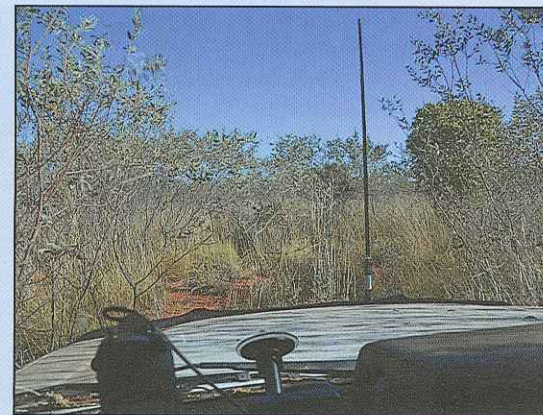
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views to the south. At the top we sat down and using Carnegie's drawing picked out the features he named. We felt so privileged sitting here, so we spent some time taking it in.

What a superb spot!

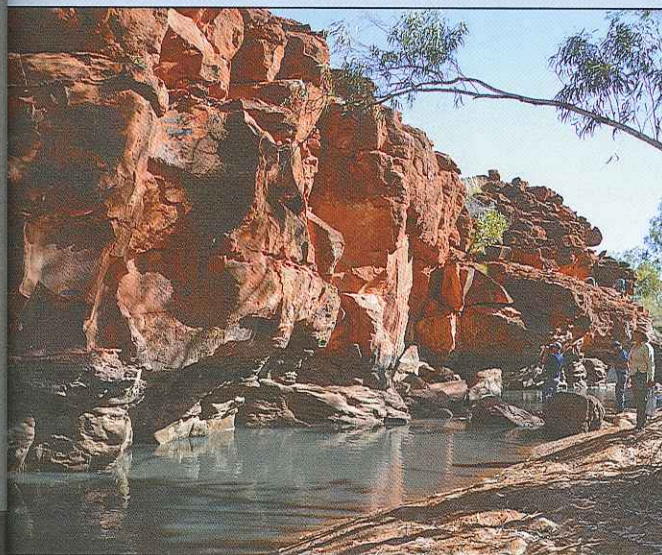
When Carnegie got here in 1896, it signalled the end of the monotonous and treacherous sand dune country; he was now able to readily find water and feed for his beloved camels. At morning tea I walked around the front of my cruiser to check for built up spinifex and spotted a new licence plate cable tied over the existing plate - "Dad n Dave" it said. When enquiring what it was all about, they made comment about me being blind and that it had been there for days. They also reckoned Dave and I were always arguing about this or that, like Dad and Dave. We went along with the gag even though Dave is older than me. Funny bunch these eastern staters, but you've still got to keep an eye on them! Our next goal was Carnegie's Shiddi Pool on the north side of the range. Although it's a short run, it was a bumpy drive full



▲ The track got a bit faint in places.

of twists and turns, over rocks, in and out of dips, across dunes and through acacia belts loaded with yellow flowers and pollen. Approaching Shiddi near dusk we hunted for a relatively boulder free area to set up camp; we were to stay here for three nights. Shiddi Pool was a short walk of some 500m from our camp. This picturesque long pool protected by sandstone ramparts was a surprise to all of us. You wouldn't believe so much water could be found in such seemingly dry country.

The pool was just like a parched Carnegie described it in his journal on 1 November 1896; "... our eyes were soon cheered by the sight of a fine pool of water some 40 yards long and 20 across, with a few creek gums bending over it." Walking both up and down the gum tree lined creek bed we came to numerous other pools; some large bodies of water and some small.



◀ We stayed three days to soak up Shiddi Pool.

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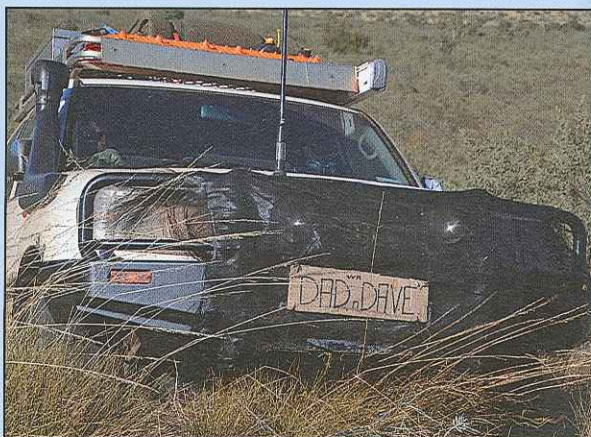
Downstream, about 3 kms one way, we located another Carnegie pool, Redleap. It was equally impressive with large boulders and cliffs lining it. Looking around the boulders and sandstone ramparts lining most of the pools that contained water we could see ancient petroglyphs; they were so old they were almost eroded away. Why Shiddi and Redleap?

They were the names of two of Carnegie's camels that died here from eating poison bush. The unfortunate camels survived the tortures of the desert only to die within a short distance of Halls Creek.

During our three day stay we checked over the vehicles. We found the air cleaners full of acacia flowers, despite all of us having snorkels. A bit of blacksmithing was carried out by John to make some stronger steel support brackets and tyres were checked to find a number of annoying tiny slow leaks that had escaped detection so far.

We also decided to do some washing with so much water about. Alan decided to have a couple of swims in the freezing cold pools; he fell in whilst trying to creep around the edge of rock pools to check out petroglyphs.

Heading north we had to tackle some very sandy dunes; the best technique we found is to aim for the lowest point of a dune, drive up as far as possible, stop then reverse down, then up again until you get over the top. This puts in a wheel pad, making it easier to get over and puts less strain on your vehicle. Some might think this is boring grandpa type driving. I say what's the point in rooster tailing sand everywhere, digging big holes, chewing up heaps of fuel then leaving the next vehicle with a struggle to get over - in the process risking suspension, gear box and drive line damage. As it was, our fuel consumption was dreadful.



▲ The bush took its toll on our radiator blinds and filled the air filters with acacia pollen.



The acacia belts were proving very troublesome, resulting in blocked air cleaners, forced deviations and the team getting four punctures by lunch time. Although we risked our lives at the breakneck average speed of 4.8 kph, we travelled 22 kms by lunch time!

Arriving at Mt Moyle, a short climb up took us to a specky cairn; it was built of stone and was dome-like in construction. We could tell we were now back into pastoral country, the fly menace had increased because cattle had left cake style markers everywhere. On the horizon we could see a prominent rocky hill looming. Upon arrival, we

decided it was time for morning tea and when cracking out the cups I was told it had been named by the eastern staters, Bianchi's Knob! Cheeky buggers. Cummins Range, named by Carnegie after the Halls Creek mining warden, loomed on the horizon. When Carnegie got here he walked his camels over the top. Our rubber tyred camels couldn't manage it; we were forced to seek another route. Finding an overgrown and washed out old track, we followed it around the range to the northern side, but not before more rock polishing by the underside of the vehicles.

After continually picking our way ever northward over the trackless terrain, we arrived at the wide dry sandy creek bed of Christmas Creek.

Now that we had a better understanding of the terrain, we were concerned that crossing the creek would only get us into a maze of tributaries that would give us lots of grief and hold us up. As it was nearly dark we decided to camp by a junction of two large creeks and sleep on what to do next. In the morning we would also search for a tree blazed by explorer Frank Hann in

1896, only a few months before Carnegie went through.

What a freezing cold night it was; down to 1.1°C. After scouring the area for two hours looking at every tree we couldn't find the blaze. Giving up, we decided to head back south away from Christmas Creek - this time along the eastern side of a large valley that looked like it had been carved with a giant ice cream scoop. It was cross country travel again, with rocky creek beds, small ravines and soccer ball sized rocks to climb in, out and around. Even the termite mounds, some three metres in height, were now adding to the challenge.

When we were able we travelled eastward, keeping to higher ground between the Christmas Creek drainage system to the west and Wolf Creek system to the east.

This proved to be a master stroke, although it meant we would miss out on some of Carnegie's route northward. Alan in the lead vehicle had a horrific



▲ A loose drag link gave the lead vehicle a bit of grief.



▲ Great views greeted us from Taylor Lookout in the M°Clintock Range.

morning; he repaired five punctures by morning tea. At this rate our tyre plug stock was rapidly depleting. More vehicle problems followed. Alan was having steering problems; it was diagnosed as a loose drag link. John was out with the spanners in a flash; it was almost like he was hoping someone would break down so he could get his fix and he soon had Alan underway again. Once we could start heading northward our next objective was Taylor Lookout in the McClintock Range; it was named after famous CSR drover Ben Taylor, the owner of the old Lamboo Station in days past.

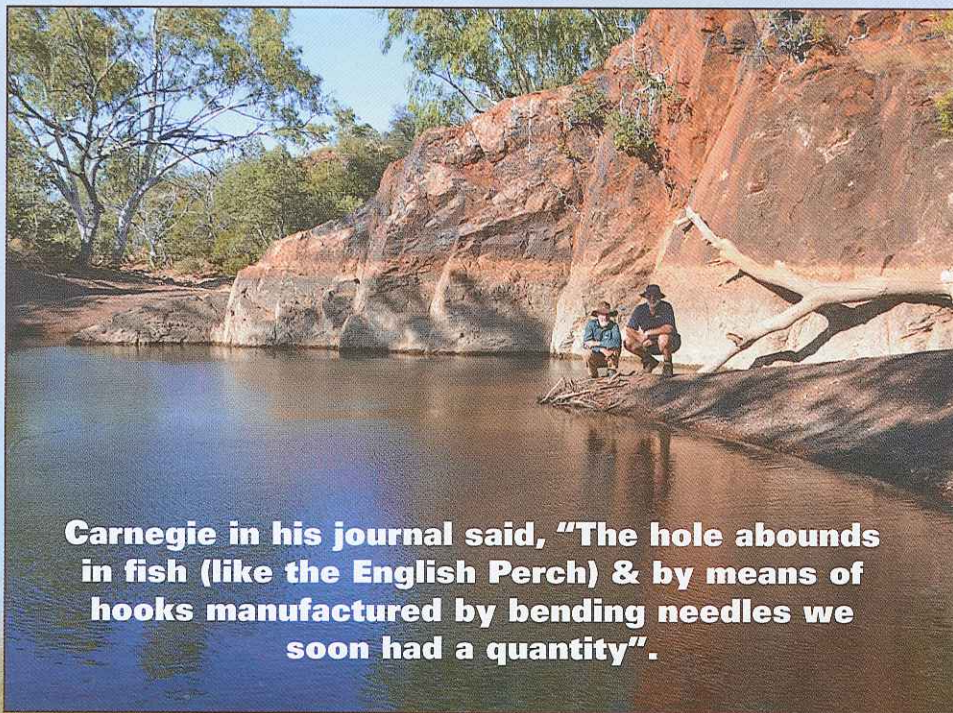
The climb to Taylor Lookout was up a lung busting steep narrow quartzite ridge, about 150 metres above the plain. The views were unbelievable. The ranges to the north of us looked fantastic, but travelling through them they were formidable.

We travelled 76 kms that day, yet in a straight line we were only 34 kms from last night's camp, that's how rough

the country was.

This was now real station country, with cattle in mobs and numerous tracks, some recently graded for mustering and fences. We woke to the news that Cadel Evans had won the Tour. Well done Cadel, but even you would have struggled out here, despite your mountain bike experience. Today's target was Fish Pool, strange name but another Carnegie named site. In 1896 in Janet Creek he found a pool with fish in it. Carnegie in his journal said, "The hole abounds in fish (like the English Perch) & by means of hooks manufactured by bending needles we soon had a quantity". Our challenge was how to get there. The maps showed an infestation of creek lines and steeply contoured country with tracks of doubtful quality and existence. We wisely decided to head north towards the Great Northern Highway and come back down a better used track to Janet Creek.

The tracks we took followed high ground and gave us superb vistas into valleys and



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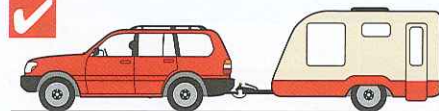
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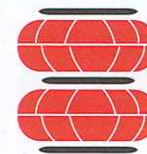
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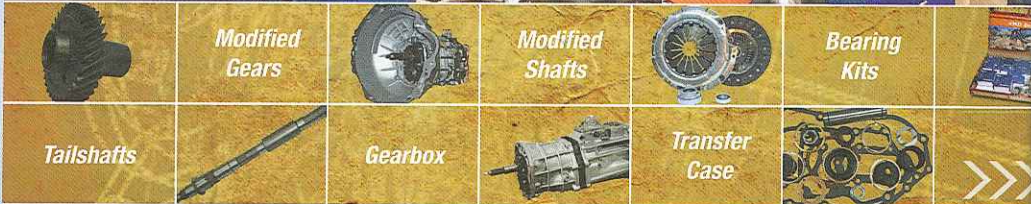
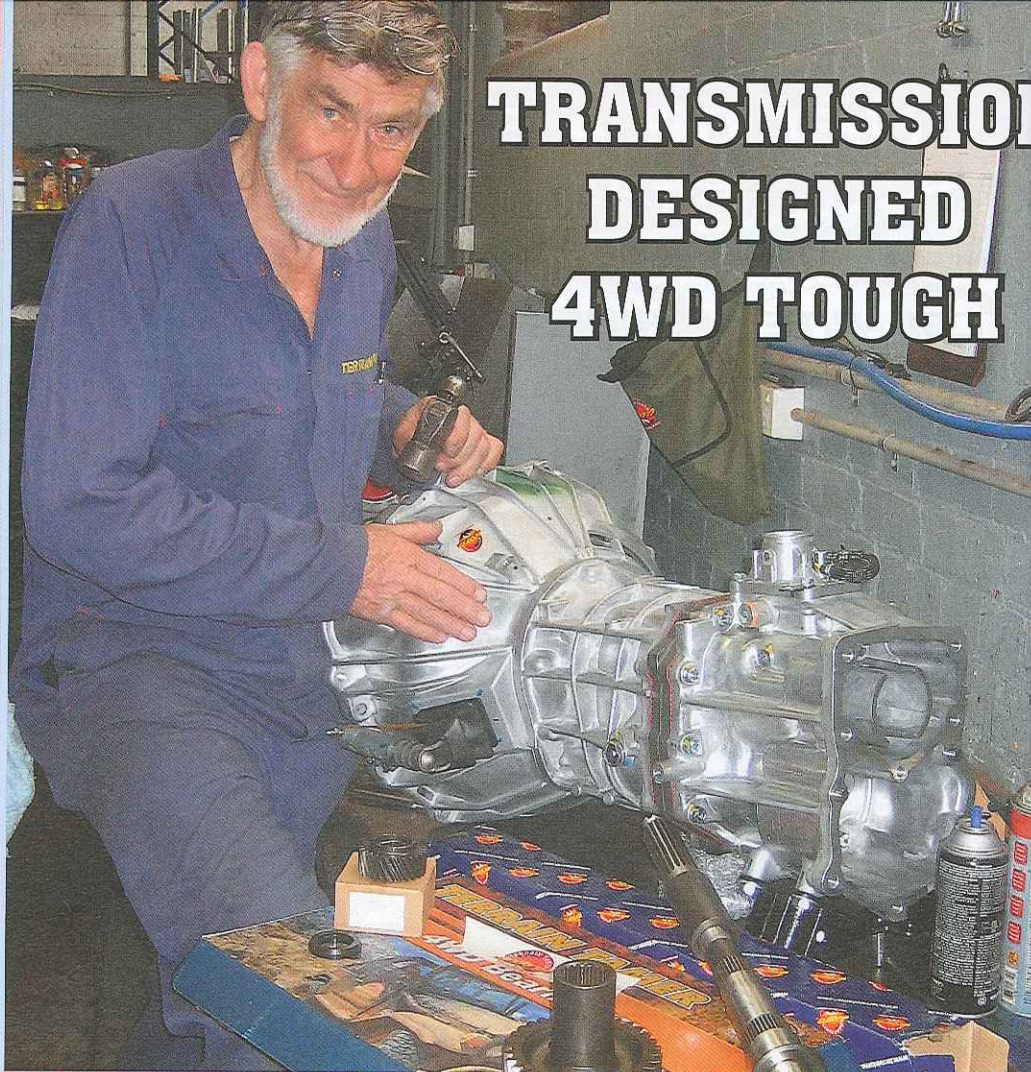
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across toward far off ranges. With a blue sky all day it was a fantastic drive. Janet Creek was named by Carnegie after Billy Janet, a prospector whose initials Carnegie found on a nearby tree. We soon found the pool and we too found fish, small but fish just the same. Imagine Carnegie's shock when he saw so many fish and the chance to change his diet from salted meat and damper. Fish Pool is in a high rock walled part of the creek; we found a number of pools on our visit in July. As Carnegie's visit was towards the end of November, we speculated he would probably only have found the main pool.

Looking at the nearby rock faces we picked out some old stick figure petroglyphs and where some idiots had chiselled their names over the top of the art. Graffiti is bad enough at any time but why do it over ancient aboriginal art? I just can't figure some people out.

Our trip was drawing to a close as we headed along various tracks northward. It was another exhilarating drive along ridges, across creek lines, with granite outcrops dotting valleys and hillsides; real picture postcard stuff. Upon reaching Great Northern Highway we stopped for a cuppa and were shocked back into reality by the number of caravans, trucks and



Excerpt from HEMA's WA State map. Copyright HEMA propriety Ltd 2010.

Britz vans whizzing by. We wanted to turn around and head back. Our fantastic nine day trip had come to an end. In the final wash my turbo diesel 100 Series travelled 584 kms and consumption was 29.43 litres

per 100 km or 9.58 mpg in the old money, or about double normal. These figures show just how tough the country was. We wouldn't have been able to take the trip on if it hadn't been for the support of our eastern states friends, John, Sue and Peter. To Carnegie Alan, thanks for a fantastic well researched trip; where are we going next?

◀ **Back on dirt tracks it was good to shift up a cog.**

