

QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

Day 0, Thursday 20th June, Warwick to Longreach

Refuel - Roma

Wheels up at 7.15 am and miracle of miracles we didn't forget anything this time so I didn't have to do a mercy dash back to town. As would be expected, it was quite cool when we left home. Everyone's planes started ok and we were off on our big adventure. John,



Gwen, Mark, Kelvin and Denise, Grah and I and then the Goynes. The plan is for everyone to be in Longreach by Saturday evening. Several of us have left early because of a wet weather front coming through from the north combined with a low that looks like it might cross the coast Friday. That would ground us!

We stopped for a stretch, toilet break and refuel at Roma. It was very cold. I ended up wearing my jumper and jacket from there. The flight was uneventful and very smooth. Beautiful flying weather in fact.

We left Roma for Longreach at about 10.15. It was almost three hours of sitting in one spot. I end up with the odd cramp, restless legs and numb butt. Don't know how the pilots sit in one spot for so long!

There is a lot of nothing between Roma and Longreach and the further north we got the drier everything looked. This area missed their usual summer rain, so water storages look pretty dry. Arrived just after one

and refuelled before dashing into the QANTAS museum coffee shop for late lunch. As we were getting our bags from the planes Lou arrived in his Super Petrel. Another one of the mob. We all traipsed over to our accommodation and settled in before heading into town to the RSL for dinner. Once there we were joined by Lyn and Wal, John and Louise and Louise and Randolph. Only the Harsletts, G2 and Derek and the Doughton's to catch up now.



Day 1, Friday 21st June - Longreach (3 nights)

Slept in until we felt like getting up. How nice. After we struggled up and had some brekky we taxied it into town and did the shops over....even Vinnies. We all met up for coffee at



the yummy Merino Bakery before wandering around a bit more and then heading for Kinnon & Co shop for lunch...stew and bread. Some of the mob went to have a look at the Powerhouse Museum, but to their disgust it was closed and they missed out.

We decided to self cater tonight so have all bought some barby food and a bottle of wine and we're ready to party.

I'm resting up this arvo while Grah has walked back into town with John Reid and is now over at the airport again, this time playing with

Lou's plane. I think I'll go for a walk up to the Hall of Fame for fun. I feel guilty for being such a sloth.

Been up to admire the Hall of Fame and wander around the grounds. We've been in before so I'm not really interested in going through it all again.

Back to the cabins in time for a tour brief and barby and lots of chatting and some good laughs, mainly courtesy of Robyn. Doug keeps telling us we don't need any entertainment..Robyn is it!

QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

Day 2, Saturday 22nd June - Longreach



Woke Saturday to a freezing morning. The aircon is running and we are starting the day in longs again. It's supposed to be 22 here today so will probably peel off later.

We've noticed an incredible number of B-triple cattle trucks heading west empty and then east full of cattle. Poor graziers are out of feed and water out here. Hard to believe its been so wet at home and is so dry here.

We came up with a plan to meet at 10am to walk to town (about 1.5 klm). Grah and Doug went over to the airport to

check something on someone's plane before we left and arrived back quickly. There was a gas leak and the airport was in lockdown. We suspect the cafe went berserk and forgot to turn off the gas.

We all trundled off (straggled might be a better description). Some of us decided to walk to the Thompson River and some of the wiser ones went into town for coffee and apple turnovers! It ended up being over 6 klms from the cabins to the river. Needless to say we rang for the maxi taxi to get home. It ended up costing us \$3 each.....should have gone out in the taxi too!!

We had a nice, well earned pub meal of fish and chips when we got back.....plus a BIG cold drink..... or two.

Graham had received word from our last two pilots due to get here, and G2 and Derek were here when we got home and John Doughton was due in at 4pm. Grah, being Grah felt it his duty to meet John and went over (luckily some of the other boys went too) to the airport. He had a dizzy spell and got quite crook over there so when he felt able to walk, Kelvin saw him home safely. He's had a couple of



Donnatabs, some lemonade and two Panadol and is trying to sleep it off. Fingers crossed he feels ok tomorrow or we will be relying on Graham Mansey to fly him, in our plane, to the next stop (Adels Grove). I will get to ride with Derek in the Cirrus if that happens. Hope he's back to his usually healthy old self in the morning. It's a worry.

Day 3, Sunday 23rd June - Longreach to Adels Grove Refuel - Cloncurry

Beautiful clear day dawned after a fairly sleepless night worrying about whether Graham would be well enough to fly our plane. In the end he was back to his old self and we were up, packed and at the airport before sunrise! It was quite cold again and we ended up starting a couple of other planes with our battery due to the cold.



I said hello to Dick Smith who was there in his helicopter overnighting, on a trip from New Guinea, heading home.

We were among the last few to leave and just as we were about to taxi out I noticed Gwen T coming back from the holding point, followed shortly after by John T in Harslett's plane. He'd had to abort his takeoff due to the engine missing



QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

badly. They decided to contact the Harsletts and then leave the plane at Longreach where it could be looked at before continuing. Alec and Denise will fly up on Monday and sort things out. They will probably join us at Kununurra all things being equal.

We arrived at Adels Grove in time for late lunch and after booking in and changing into cooler clothes went for a walk down to the creek. Grah had a rest while I reorganised our bags. We had an enjoyable evening meal on the deck at Adels and most of us retired early. Cool night, but other than that our room was comfortable.

Day 4, Monday 24th June - Adels Grove to Daly Waters

Refuel - Borroloola



We all set off fairly early after a hearty breakfast (part of the accommodation deal) and headed north west for our refuel stop at Borroloola. It was an uneventful flight. The country is vast and basically lots of mulga type scrub. Not many cattle visible not to mention humans!

After miles and miles of boring 'tiger' country Grah and I decided to head straight north until we hit the gulf and then follow the coast for a while. Wow! It's beautiful sightseeing country up that way. Took lots of photos and then rejoined the mob at Borroloola. We weren't far behind after our little diversion.



Borroloola is mainly an aboriginal settlement and is away from the airfield. We did meet two lovely women, Julie and Pricilla, who were waiting for Julie's daughter to arrive home from boarding school.

We arrived at Daly Waters in time for lunch. It's quite a place....needs to be seen to be believed! The caravan park is PACKED and the accommodation where we stayed (cabins) seemed to be full too. The famous old pub seemed to be staffed by friendly, cheery backpackers mainly. We had to book in for dinner which was their famous beef and barra and a free show by local entertainers Steve and Chilli. It was the best night!

We had lots and lots of laughs. Chilli was a comedian, poet and singer and was just fantastic. We stayed to the very end he was so good. What a fantastic place and worth a visit if you ever get the chance.

To top the visit off we were ferried to the airfield in a Holden Senator (current model). Eat your heart out Jane!!



Day 5, Tuesday 25th June - Daly Waters to Kununurra (3 nights)

Refuel - Victoria River Downs

After our great night, breakfast was provided at the pub from 7am and we were all in the air again at a reasonable time. We flew west to VRD (Victoria River Downs) to refuel. That was a spectacular place. We bought our fuel from Heli-muster who are based at VRD. There were 7 choppers sitting on the ground and another 7 out working. The (noticably young) staff were friendly and easy to deal with. The Wickham River that flows through VRD near the buildings was full of water and the area around the homestead was well maintained, green and neat. All in all



QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013



quite an impressive place.

The interesting thing we found out when we were refuelling was that the airforce were holding special operations in the area and we should have all been flying below 2500 feet. Most of us had flown over from Daly Waters at 4500 feet. Oops. At least nobody was shot down or had an FA18 fighter jet round them up. We did see a big tanker plane refuelling the fighter jets in the air way up high. There were some interesting contrails from

the boys playing air war too! Once we left VRD we made sure we stayed below 2500 feet until we cleared the area!

We all arrived at Kununurra after flying over some spectacular country. It's quite different to anywhere else we've seen. My photo downloader is playing up so will see if I can work out another way to get photos to my iPad so I can add them to my story.

The Doughton's caught up with us in the air as they rejoined us from Darwin.

We also heard from the Harsletts who had a complicated start to the trip and who spent last night at Tennant Creek on their way to catching up. Hopefully tonight we will all be together for the first time.

Days 6/7, Wed/Thurs 26/27 June - Kununurra

Wednesday: I was wide awake at 5am this morning. My body clock says it's 7am!

The time change has tricked us a bit. WA is 2 hours behind home so yesterday was a long day.

Today we are heading off on a boat trip down the Ord River to Lake Argyle (which we saw from the air yesterday). They pick us up at the caravan park at 9am and we should have an interesting and relaxing day.

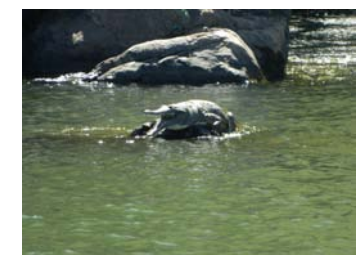
Wow! What a beautiful river, although the locals don't call it the Ord River, they call it Lake Kununurra because its dammed at the Lake Argyle end and at Kununurra where the channel gravity feeds out into the irrigation area.

Triple J Tours were very professional and everything was clean and modern. Great boat and Dillon, our tour guide and driver for the day was excellent.

He explained the whole Ord River system to us before we ventured off up the river, which helped us understand the whole system much better. The scenery was spectacular and we saw lots of fresh water crocs along the banks. We even saw a genuine female Jabiru bird.

We stopped way up the river and climbed out onto the bank where, around behind the bushes there was a delightful picnic area set up and Dillon produced a lovely lunch 3 meats, salads, condiments, bread rolls, cold drinks and even coffee and tea. Very nice!

Unfortunately we weren't able to get all the way to the dam because the hydro scheme had the gates closed and that made the water too shallow for our big boat and it's three 350 hp outboards. That meant we missed seeing Lake Argyle and the bus trip back. We had the offer of a bus trip to the dam in the morning or a refund of \$30 each. Most of us were happier to return by boat anyway and tomorrow morning we will be flying over Lake Argyle so will see it from the air.



QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

Some of we girls visited a couple of art galleries this arvo and then went to the shops while the boys went out to the airport to tweak their planes. Tonight we had a briefing in preparation for tomorrow's flight over the Bungle Bungles, then after dinner we all sang happy birthday to Mark after he blew the candles out on his (and Louise and Phil's) cake. The night was topped off by a Queensland win in the State of Origin and the interesting (but tired) change in our Prime Minister. Ho hum!!

Thursday 27th June (Kununurra):



We were awake early again (WA time, anyway) and the taxi dilemma started again. Don't go to Kununurra car-less because taxis are hard to get! Goose (caravan park owner) drove us out in shifts. We were to leave in two times slots anyway to fit in with the local charter flight boys.



We flew down the Ord River (where we boated yesterday) and then the western side of Lake Argyle. The amount of water has to be seen to be believed. there is an incredible volume in Lake Argyle. We saw the dam and the hydro station as well as the Argyle diamond mine off to our right before heading south east for the flight entry point for the Bungles. It starts out not that spectacular and gets more and more amazing as you get further into the area. The rock formations are just incredible. I took lots and lots of photos...just couldn't help it, all the while thinking how much Bib would love it because it's a landscape artist's paradise.



One interesting thing we saw were big patches of black everywhere in one area. They looked like burnt areas but we decided it was exposed black rock. Not sure.



We flew over El Questro and Emma Gorge on the way home. El Questro is teetering on the edge of a gorge. Amazing! I think we self-flyers are extra lucky because of all the pretty gorges we see from the air that are inaccessible by road.

It was a wonderful flight (over 2.5 hours) and I'm so lucky to

have been able to see it all from the air.

We were all hot and tired by the time we got back to the park. As usual, no taxi, so the very kind ladies from Avis car rental drove our group home in one of their hire mini buses. Very good of them. We had our 5 pm briefing at Mark and Lou's cabin and then all met at the barbecue area for dinner. We had an early night because we were all pretty tired. I think the hot weather knocks us around a bit.



QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

Day 8, Friday 28th June - Kununurra to Drysdale River Station

Refuel - Kalumbaru

We were leaving Louise and Randolph at Kununurra. They are waiting for parts for the wheel of their plane. They are going to stay there until Monday until they get their wheel sorted before flying around the Bungle Bungles and meeting up with us again at Halls Creek next Wednesday.

The rest of us were ready to go at 7am and fortunately two tour group members had hire cars so relayed us and our luggage out to the airport. We flew over Wyndham and then up the coast to King George falls. The coastline in this area is beautiful despite the haze/smoke in the air today. The falls, which were at the end of a long gorge, were another highlight. They even had their own big boat anchored near them just to add to the scene.

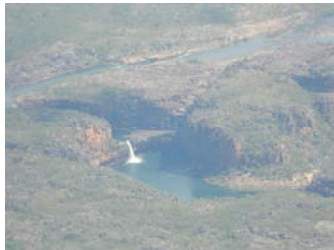


We overflew Faraway Bay, another expensive resort right at the top of the country and then on to Kalumburu for a fuel top up. As we were coming in Kelvin gave a call from the ground alerting us to an incident and a plane still at the end of the runway. We could see the plane nose down as we flew downwind. Unfortunately it turned out to be the Harsletts who had landed long and overshot the runway.



The front of their plane was quite damaged, but very fortunately neither of them were hurt and the

plane is insured. Poor Denise felt terrible and we all felt bad for her too. The local police turned up and helped out and there was an aircraft leaving there at 1pm for Kununurra with



spare seats, so they have decided to head home.

From Kalumburu we headed south west to have a look at the Mitchell Falls. This whole area has little waterfalls everywhere and these bigger ones are lovely. There was a chopper flying low over the falls to



add to the effect.

We arrived at Drysdale River Station quite a bit later than originally anticipated and G2 and Derek were waiting there to help refuel all the planes from drums we had pre-purchased. It was time consuming and very hot. We were all glad to finally get to the station and have a cold drink.

Grah is having a rest as I type this. I get hot and tired and all I have to do is sit there and make sure the GPS is pointing us in the right direction, so he must get tired having to fly the whole way. Everyone is a bit upset after Denise's incident too I suspect.



We had a late briefing tonight before dinner and then we had a lovely group dinner at the main kitchen area. Staff waited on us and the meal was very nice.

The rooms here are small but comfy. Two bedrooms are joined by a shared bathroom. We're sharing with Doug and Robyn. There is a nice area kitchen for coffee and tea as well,

so we'll eat our cereal there in the morning before we head off for tomorrow's adventure to Cape Leveque where we have a two night stopover.

QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

Day 9, Saturday 29th June - Drysdale to Cape Leveque (2 nights)

Refuel - Derby

Land and park - Lombardina

We left Drysdale River in three shifts to get some separation for the sightseeing flights on the way to Cape Leveque, which in a way, is the piece de resistance of the trip. Phil and Wal have their fishing gear packed especially for these next couple of days.



Our first waypoint was over Kings Cascades which were towards the ocean end of the Regency River, which for the last many miles of its life is a spectacular gorge. There were lots of waterfalls and cascades along the gorge and the smaller streams that run into it. We have to be aware of other planes in these areas as they are popular tourist scenic flight spots. The helicopters and most scenic tour operators fly much lower than our group so we haven't encountered any problems yet.

From there we flew south west and over the narrow part of Walcott Inlet and headed west to the Horizontal Waterfalls. Doug had been doing lots of research and found out from local tour operators that the best time to fly over the falls was around 9 to 10am when the tide was high. It's amazing that we can keep being surprised with the beauty of our very own country. The waterfalls were different to anything else we'd ever seen. The tour operators were arriving as we flew over so we knew we were there at the right time!



From there we headed for Derby and a refuel. We ended up flying in a group with Phil and Mary, Doug and Robyn and Wal and Lyn which was easy as we all travel at a similar speed. Grah and the boys adjusted the idle on our plane at Derby because it was a bit slow but the plane is going really well other than that.



After Derby we had a water crossing (it would be more aptly described as a mud crossing as the tide was going out fast - the tides in this area are 10 to 11 meters, so run pretty fast) and headed for Cape Leveque, flying up the coast where there were some little, remote settlements. We overflew Cape Leveque and then landed south of the Cape at Lombadina where there is enough space for parking all of our planes. The strip and terminal there look very new. It so so remote up here I keep being surprised at the fortitude of people who love here, especially the permanent ones! We were picked up by Steve and Robert in a couple of 4x4's - a definite requirement seeing as the road was deep



red sand a lot of the way.

Cape Leveque is quite different as a resort. I think this area is all owned by the Bardi aboriginal people. We had a very nice lunch of fish and chips on their deck before checking in to our cabins....very interesting.....they are log cabins with push out wooden windows and are not sealed (no screens) from visitors in the night, as Phil and Mary were to find out.



QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

Day 10, Sunday 30th June - Cape Leveque



When they were getting dressed this morning Mary and Phil discovered a python wrapped around the corner post inside their cabin. Fortunately in our diverse group we had a snake catcher (Lou) who gently removed it and returned it to the bush. We had the morning sun on our front patio this morning and the bed last night was very comfy. We share a little ablutions block, just up the back, with the Goyne's. It's very rural and I love it.

During the night the wind got up and it's still blowing a gale.

They boys have gone up to the resort hub to see if anyone is going to check the planes are ok. Everyone tied down well so I'm sure all will be ok.

We had a nice group smoko on our patio this morning and Robyn and I put our togs on and went for a lovely long walk along the beach. Seems hard to believe it's the Indian Ocean.



We had a lazy afternoon resting and packing up after walking over the hill to the restaurant for lunch. We had pizza for dinner and an early night in readiness for an early departure Monday for



Broome which is tomorrow's destination. It could be doubly tricky because it's a controlled airport (special procedures) and it has become very windy.

Day 11, Monday 1st July - Cape Leveque (Lombardina) to Broome



The group was to leave Cape Leveque in two groups so that all Recreational pilots left first followed by GA pilots. This was to accommodate our arrival at Broome, which is a towered airport. The first four of us (we were



second) arrived at Broome before the tower opened. This was probably a bit disappointing for Grah who had been over and over all the procedures required to talk to the tower. Never mind, next time!

The coastline between Lombardina and Broome was magical. The tides up here are very high (10 to 11metres) so run very fast and leave huge beaches at low tide. From the



QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

air the colours are very interesting. I'll probably wonder why I took so many photos of



things when I get home but everything seems so photo worthy as you fly along. This area is different from anything else I've ever seen. Mostly just plain beautiful, but remote as well. Broome is interesting. I'd say the people's social standing and finances range from nothing to quite well off. We were all hungry when we arrived at the Mangrove Resort so walked into Chinatown for morning tea. We are back in the Boab tree area again. I love them, they are such characters! It's a bit touristy

here with lots of pearl shops (all very expensive). There are some nice eateries (very expensive) too. I think we'll have Maccas for dinner tonight. I need some bland, cheap food for a change. After a briefing, we ended up having pasta (Grah) and salad (me) at the resort instead. Much easier.

Day 12, Tuesday 2nd July - Broome (2 nights)



The boys are off to the airport this morning to service the planes. They are also doing a tour of the airport tower at 11am. Some of the women are going to go back to town and poke around the shops.

This afternoon we are booked on a local double decker bus tour, with commentary, which goes all around the area. I'm really looking forward to that. More on that later.

Well, I survived a shopping trip. We girls did the dress shops and some pearl shops over. I didn't buy anything

(not enough money in my kitty) but it was fun helping the others spend a bit!

We met the boys for lunch when they came back from the airport and by the time we walked home and freshened up it was time for the bus tour. It was really great. We all sat on the top deck while we were taken all over Broome and the immediate area...all with local



knowledge commentary. It's made our stay in Broome so much more interesting. The population is around 15,000 but swells to 30,000 in the tourist season (now). The local population consists of 49% aboriginals (some sad looking cases at that).

We finished the tour by watching the sun go down on the southern tip near the

port of Broome looking out over Roebuck Bay....stunning!

We all ate in the resort restaurant to save traipsing back down the street....not a nice thought when there was a crowd of aboriginals shrieking at one another just down the road. The meals here are lovely and quite reasonably priced anyway.

We have a 6.30am pickup in the morning. First stop is Fitzroy Crossing for fuel and then some of us will overfly Wolfe Crater en route to Halls Creek for our next night stopover. We are heading east again.....home, here we come!



QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

Day 13, Wednesday 3rd July - Broome to Halls Creek

Refuel - Fitzroy Crossing

We left Broome before the control tower had started work for the day, so there weren't any

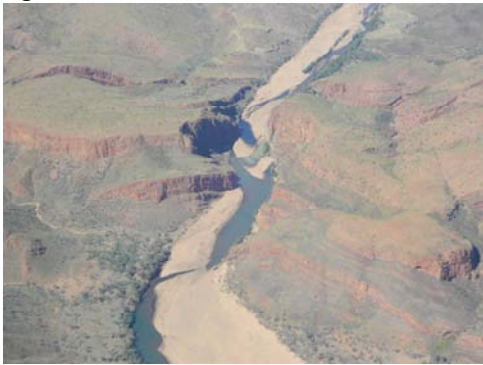


issues again. We had mapped to fly over a couple of features, so after some local knowledge followed the

Fitzroy River until we came upon Gieke Gorge, very nice, and then we tracked for Wolfe Creek meteorite crater except the navigator made a mistake with the GPS points which sent us off



slightly off course. Fortunately, my error ended up taking us over some spectacular mountains and gorges. Once I realised, we headed off in the right direction to see the crater. It was amazing really and certainly looked like something



very big had whomped into the earth. We then flew back to the north to Halls Creek for our overnight stay at the Kimberley Hotel. I'm amazed at how nice some



of these remote places are. Mind you the government dollars being pumped into aboriginal housing (many are nice houses but complete pigstys) would curl your hair! A lot of the (custom orb) houses at Halls Creek seemed empty. The outback pubs are employing lots of hard working backpackers while the locals sit around either doing nothing or drinking. Very, very sad. Easy come, easy go. Some people in power need to ignore the do-gooders



and help these people learn some self respect and self worth, which would lead to respect for others, property etc I'm sure - same principle as child rearing.

Louise and Randall were waiting as we landed at Halls Creek. They sat it out in Kununurra waiting for wheel parts for their Technam and flew to Halls Creek from there yesterday to rejoin the tour today.

The Cirrus boys, G2 and Derek left us this morning also. They are making a quick trip home, stopping one night only at Mt Isa on their way to Caloundra. You can do that sort of thing when you travel at 180 knots!

We've lost one plane and gained another today.

Day 14, Thursday 4th July - Halls Creek to Barkley Homestead

Refuel - Hooker Creek

Refuel - Tennant Creek

We had a good sleep in our comfy motel room and got away bright and early for a change. Usually we are one of the last to leave because Grah wants to make sure everyone is right before he goes. He's getting that heading home feeling!

QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013



First stop after 2 hours flying over the (vast and boring) Tanami desert was Hooker Creek. Another well appointed aboriginal town of about 800. Usually there is a remote air service at these centres which sells Avgas and I'm guessing is partially or fully government funded. We did hear that the aboriginals get free flights here and there, but that may not be true.

Next stop was Tennant Creek after another 2 hours flying over very desolate countryside. Just after we landed the

Flying Doctor arrived and then an ambulance turned up and they transferred a mum and baby (aboriginal) off. Other than that we didn't see anyone there but the terminal was very nice even if empty.

We ate our left over cold chicken pizza for lunch there with Kim and John, John and Gwen and Kelvin and Denise. It was a nice break.



Last stop for the day was Barkly Homestead roadhouse. The airstrip is parallel with the Barkly highway (the roads and straight for as far as you can see and that's from 5000 feet in the air!) and ends just west of the roadhouse. We refuelled and booked in, had a cold drink and a rest before dinner. Believe it or not there was an entertainer playing 60's, 70's and 80's

music for a gold coin donation. We enjoyed his singing while we ate. We even bought one of his CD's. He used to play with Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs apparently. Grah and I were the last to leave of our group. He was great and we loved all the old songs.



It was Louise's birthday today and as she usually does (bless her) Robyn made up a special little gift and wrote a verse especially for Louise. She commandeered the microphone and wished Louise a happy birthday and the whole crowd sang happy birthday. Louise said it was very special and she would remember it forever.

Our motel room here is lovely. I suspect it isn't all that old. I can just hear the music. The power has gone off a couple of times (generator overload?) but the iPad has been enough to keep us from pitch black until it came back on.

Barkly is well maintained and well staffed with backpackers. It's a lovely spot and I even met a sweet little kitty (Whippy) to pat!

Tomorrow we have a long, long leg from Barkly to Boulia....almost three hours. I can feel butt cramps just thinking about it. We can always stop at Urandangie if need be and stretch our legs I guess.

The Reid's have said their goodbyes as they are heading down through Mt Isa, Longreach, Roma as John has to work Sunday arvo. They will be gone by the time we get to our plane. Now we are 10.

Day 15, Friday 5th July - Barkley to Birdsville Refuel - Boulia



After our enjoyable night last night we were awake at 5.30am in the pitch dark. We had our brekky, packed and by the time we poked our noses out we discovered most of the gang were at their planes getting ready to head off. Lou was even sitting at the end of the runway waiting for daylight!

QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

Kelvin's plane wouldn't start again, so a few of us waited around to make sure he got going. It went eventually and away we went, keeping an eye on the cattle grazing on the side of the airstrip as we took off.



We had our longest leg this morning, most of it over the Tanami and part over the Barkley Tableland. We flew down the river systems that run into the channel country. Obviously most are dry at this time of the year, but there are so many it's hard to imagine what it would look like in the wet! Pretty spectacular, not to mention impassable on the ground I imagine.

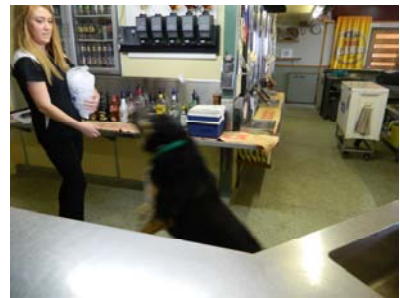
The flying was lovely and smooth and we went up to 9,500 feet to get a good tail wind. It made the long leg pass fairly quickly. I spent time looking for all the

waterholes and bores marked on the map. Grah commented that it must be vast country with not much to look at when the main map features are waterholes!

We refuelled at Boulia and most of us walked into town.



Robyn wanted to do some family history research which she thought might be on the walls of the pub. We didn't find anything of significance but I did



have a chat with the lovely Irish backpacker who was working there and she showed me how the pub dog (who was behind the bar with her) loved to eat ice. I did

get a photo but it's a bit blurry.

We had morning tea at the Min Min light cafe while we waited for Robyn to scour the library. She did find what she was looking for so eventually we tagged onto the tail and headed for Birdsville.



We've never been to Birdsville before, so it's been good to see this icon. We had a bit of lunch/arvo tea at the famous bakery (lovely place, nice people) and then went for a town walk. It turns out the Big Red Run is on here next week and they are expecting an influx of about 1000 people by Monday. Lucky we booked early! The run goes for several days (total distance 250 klms) with runners covering 42 klms each day through the deserts. What heroes! This is the inaugural event and they are fundraising for diabetes research. We decided

to donate \$20 from our kitty for their cause.

We all had dinner at the pub (we are staying in lovely motel rooms out the back of the pub) together. It was a smorgasbord type barby and very nice.

Birdsville doesn't seem to have a blade of grass, with the exception of the town oval/cricket field. Even the footpath around the pub is just dirt! The only green things growing seem to be trees or



QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

weeds. This is winter, so everything must frizzle in summer!



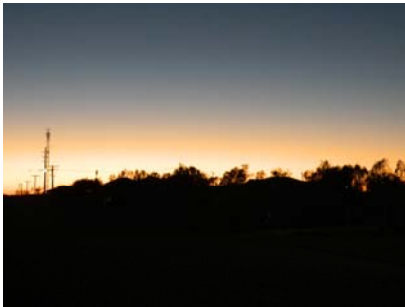
Tomorrow is our last full tour day and we are having lunch at Moble station, south of Quilpie, thanks to Mary Goynes who arranged it. I'm looking forward to seeing and hearing about a working sheep station out in this vast and fairly barren part of the country.

After Moble we head for Charleville. We have our group farewell dinner at the Mulga Country Inn where we are staying. We have a couple of birthdays to celebrate as well, so it will be a nice fitting end to a great tour, as we tend to

split up a bit after Charleville with various people heading to their respective homes.

Day 16, Saturday 6th July - Birdsville to Charleville

Refuel - Windorah, Lunch - Moble



We were up before the sun and were packed and ready to go when the sun came up. We're even getting away before 'Lark and Moo' (Mark and Lou) now, such is the pull for home for Graham. We refuelled at Windorah with



Neicie again (same as last time). She had her Aunt Margaret with her who knew the Moble family and even knew Robyn's Quilpie relatives.

We voted Kelvin as the leader into Moble but when he went to leave his engine was



playing up. It's been hard to start on recent mornings so the Jab boys decided to have a look at it and try and sort it out. Phil left as the advance party to Moble and Kelvin, Mark, Grah, John T and Wal investigated and eventually removed the cold start kit and replaced



it with an original magneto. It fired up and hasn't missed a beat since. Grah and John T are planning on removing their cold start kits when they get home as well. They interfere with the taco and Grah isn't convinced they work anyway. Apart from the very stoney strip at Moble, we really enjoyed our visit there. Brian and Kylie (Rutledge) were very welcoming and gracious hosts. We enjoyed a lovely lunch of lamb shank

casserole and rice followed by coffee and slice. Brian took us on a walk around the homestead area and to the original home where his parents live when they are at Moble. They have artesian water as well as creek water so the area around their home is just beautiful. Lovely lawns and gardens and a billabong in the garden complete with friendly ducks. Their dogs all enjoyed the extra company too, especially Jess because some of us



QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013



threw a ball for her. They normally run about 10 to 12 thousand wool grower sheep. They shored 9000 in May but are starting to struggle with the dry now. They have been beaten down by years of drought, followed by their wettest year in history in 2010



and were just getting back on their feet and now things are 'going pear shaped again' (to quote Brian). I was impressed by the straw house Kylie (with help from the family) had built. It was great. One of the daughters lives in it.



The bathroom was something else! Regrettably the time came for us to head off for Charleville and our last night together as a group.

We had time to freshen up before we met for pre dinner drinks and the Events committee boys took the opportunity to thank everyone for participating in and helping with another great tour. Robyn and I had made up awards for all members and we handed them out just for fun. Robyn had even cut up a

drink bottle and borrowed a pen and some wool to make medallions. She sure is the queen of innovation!



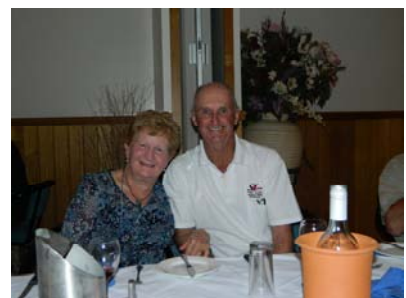
We had a lovely dinner together and then were very pleasantly surprised by a huge chocolate mud cake which Nicole Goynes had organised from Brisbane (without Phil or Mary's knowledge) for Phil's birthday. We sang happy birthday to both Phil and John T

as it was Phil's birthday Saturday and John's on Sunday. What a lovely end to the evening and our last night together.



Day 17, Sunday 7th July - Charleville to Warwick Refuel - Roma

We were all ready and waiting for our 7am taxi, except for Graham and birthday boy John T who decided to walk. Everyone was up and away with only a slight hold up with Lou's plane which came ok. We landed at Roma for refuelling and a quick cuppa (we had ours with us) before taking to the skies for the last leg. We flew at 9500 feet again to get a good tail wind. Low down it was a head wind! Everyone but Doug and the Chapmans arrived safely home. Doug struck cloud on the mountains up Kingaroy way so diverted to Warwick. He put some fuel in his plane and headed home to Caboolture via



QRAA Kimberley Tour, June/July 2013

Gatton and arrived safely with no problems. The clouds must have only been on the range further north. The Chapmans had chosen to leave a bit later than us and spend a night at Lightning Ridge before heading home to Guyra on Monday morning.

We had our usual debrief (cuppa) at Kelvin's hangar before heading home where it was lovely to have Jane, Kris, Kate and Meg waiting for us with some lunch.



All up we flew for 48.2 hours and travelled 4741 nautical miles (8780 kilometres) in the 18 days we were away. This works out to be 10.75 litres per 100 kilometers (bearing in mind we are travelling at about 200 klms per hour). Five of those days we didn't fly at all. I'm sure there would be no better way to see that vast part of our magnificent country. If I thought at one stage I would like to go caravanning up there I certainly don't any more! Thanks must go to my favourite pilot for keeping me safe during our great adventure.