

it is difficult to see much from them.

However, we have been 'off piste' for the last two days to ensure that we saw something of real Malaysia, and both Myra and I are pleased we deviated from the published rally route. The rest of the participants missed a great deal of interesting sights and sound of the country.

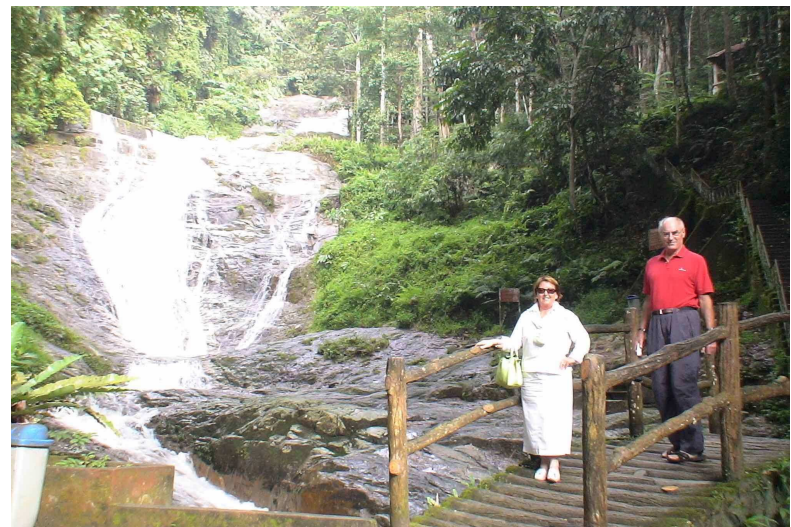
From Pinang we travelled up the hill to the Cameron Highlands. This was a pleasant drive through tea plantations and rose gardens. The temperature dropped significantly as we approached 5,000 feet, and we really enjoyed the cool after a week of fairly hot weather. Our hotel was next to the HK Bank Bungalow, which brought back memories of the Swire houses in Hong Kong, Sek Kong and Lan Tau that we used to stay at years ago.

The Highlands have been a bit overdeveloped like most of the Thai and Malaysian resort towns we visited but it was still worth the trip if only for the crazy corners on the way down to Kuala Lumpur.

KL was, as always, a bit smoggy, so we went straight through and headed west to Port Dickson on the coast. We stayed at a water bungalow hotel which was very relaxing, before moving on to the old colonial town of Malacca, where the famous canes originate. This was a romantic moment for Myra and I as it was the first port we called in at on her first trip to sea with me in 1974. It was lovely to come back and be reminded of those days on the Serenia with Captain Hoyle.

The day we arrived at the Singapore border the heavens opened and we were flooded both inside the car and out on the road. What an arrival, damp and bedraggled, but at least here.

The day after our arrival at Raffles, we took the car to the local Mercedes dealer, the brilliantly named Cycle and Carriage! They worked all day on fitting a new radiator,





fan and getting the bonnet to fit without the need for a strap. Great work guys. In the afternoon we spent four hours cleaning the car. I've never seen so much sand come out of a car before - at least five deserts worth! We finally delivered the car to Jurong Port where we loaded it into a container and waved it on its way to Darwin. It is going on a Perkins container ship, rather disappointingly as Swire's had one leaving about the same time. It would have been very appropriate, after all their help, if it had travelled with them. Never mind, as long as it arrives that is all that matters.

Two further days relaxing in Singapore and Myra and I flew home to the UK. Thanks Myra for the great navigation through South East Asia. It went without a hitch, even if you did have the map upside down!

That's it for now folks! I'm back on the air as soon as we arrive in Darwin on the 31st October. Sydney here we come....

Well, here we are back again after a hectic seven days back in the UK. Myra has rejoined the rally as navigator as our friend Richard could not come. After a disastrous flight home on BA, I cancelled our flight to Australia and back with them and rebooked with Emirates. British Airways is once again in a mess. Not only could they not seat Myra and I together after I have paid a full round trip fare for a one way ticket, but the air crew are so arrogant and unhelpful. BA, you have just been scratched from my preferred airline list. Yes, I do have a choice!

Anyway, Emirates took us via Dubai and Perth, and was a great flight. It cost me half the British Airways cost, yes half! And I didn't have to put up with rude staff!

We took the opportunity to stopover in Perth to see Duncan Telfer, the boss of Swire Pacific Offshore out there. We thought Perth very clean and pleasant, but like US cities, it was a bit quiet in the centre. We went out to Fremantle for lunch and this was a great town, with lots of fish restaurants on the wharf and boutique shops. Any Ecoflow distributors planning a trip to West Australia will enjoy this area. We were



not able to make it to the Margaret River which was a pity but will wait until next time.

Darwin has changed a lot since 1971. It's hard to recognise now, very clean and pretty if a little hot! Having arrived on Monday our cars were, once again, fumigated over night before being opened.

The quarantine operation here is taken very seriously and it took some time to thoroughly remove all signs of dust even after hours of cleaning in Singapore. However AQIS were very helpful, and we were not held up by the process.

So on the very day the whole of Australia stops for the running of the Melbourne Cup, we managed to persuade all parties to offload us, inspect for bugs, carry out MOT inspection and get us on our way by late afternoon. And that was even after a break for the race itself! Thanks to all concerned.

Chris Simons has also been here to help us get ready, and we spent Tuesday evening carrying out a service at a car care centre completely rigged out with Tecalect equipment. Amazing! Of course before I bought them, they had a much more global reach and apparently supplied a lot of equipment in the 1970s to the whole of Australia.

On Wednesday we put Chris and his wife Jackie on the Ghan train to Adelaide, two days of travelling across the outback on what is said to be a marvellous way to travel across Australia.

Myra and I spent Wednesday at the Litchfield Nature Reserve which is very green, humid and wet. We tried the spa waters which were very refreshing, and had a Barra (Barramundi) and chips for lunch.

We hired a Jeep for the day in the park. Can you believe the registration number -



1 BUF913? The Mercedes registration number is 824 BUF

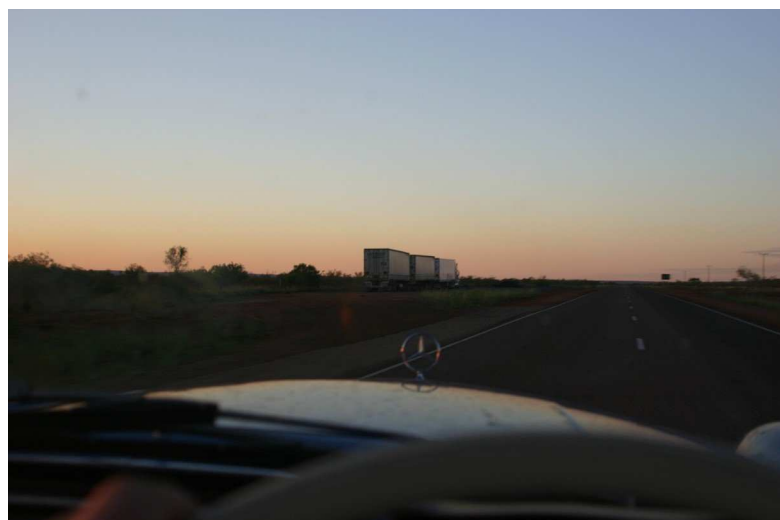
Things in the New Territories move at a similar pace to Devon where they say ‘we’ll be there directly’, only over here they say ‘NT – Not Today, Not Tomorrow, Not Tuesday or Thursday and never at the Weekend’! Great pace of life, no wonder they have such a good time up here.

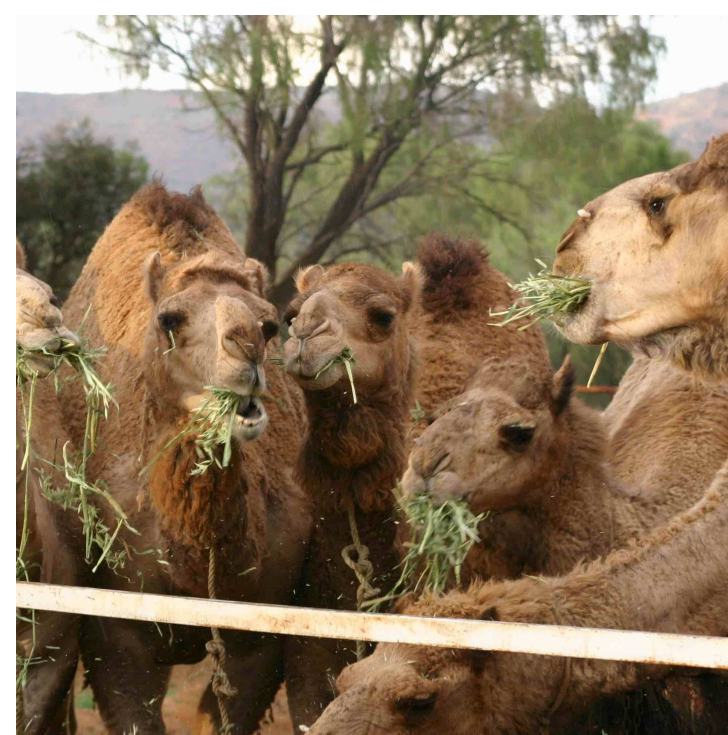
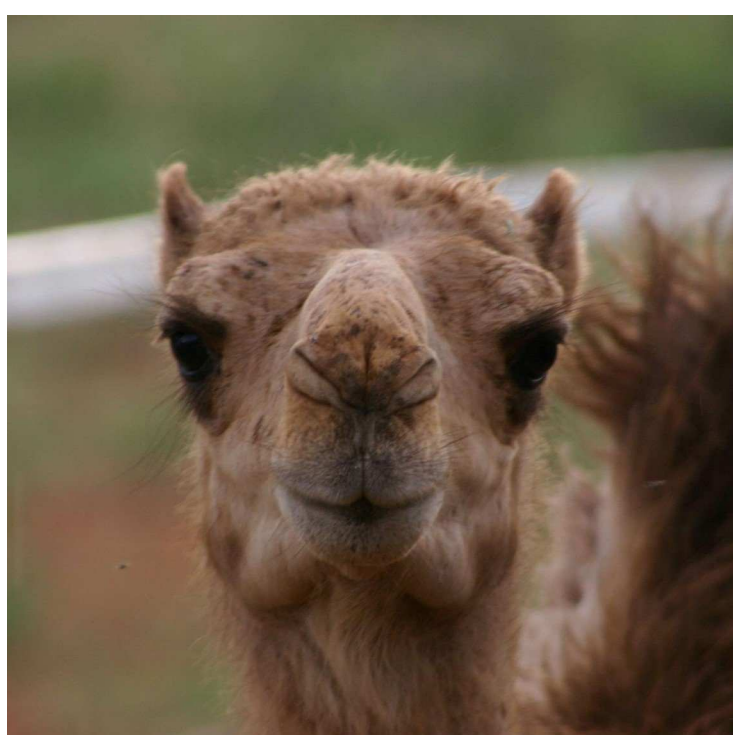
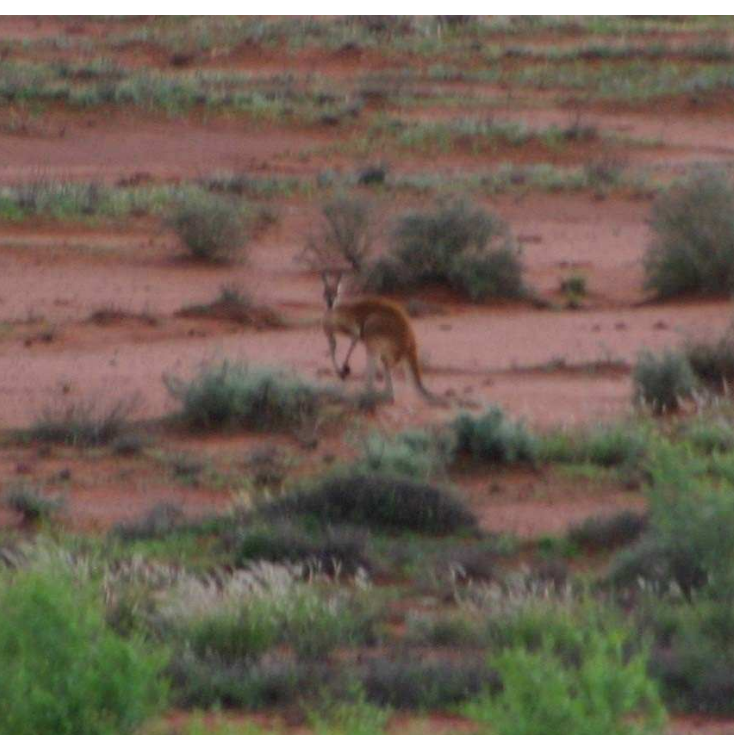
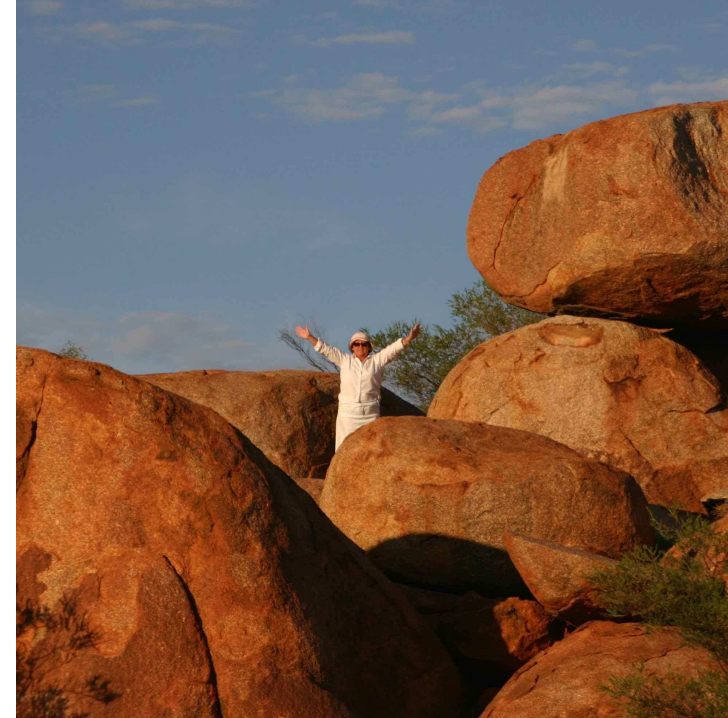
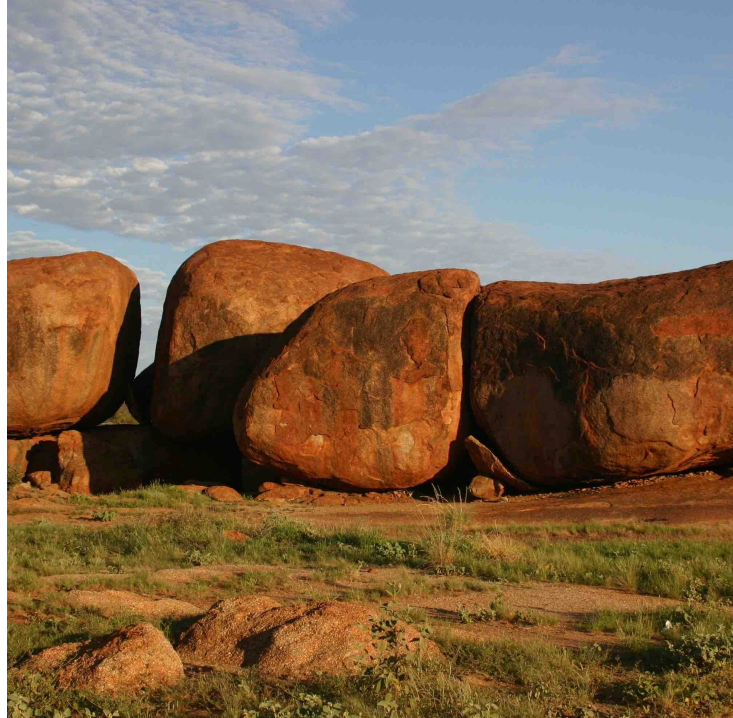
It is rather strange being back on the rally, and a bit of an anti-climax after all our adventures in Asia. We are not expecting the awful roads, appalling driving and difficult pedestrian situation. Instead we get great roads and speed traps! We are therefore starting a new era in the rally, and I suspect these reports will be more a travelogue than a retinue of disasters. Well, I hope so anyway.

I was concerned about what to write about during our transit of the Great Australian Bush, but in fact have lots to talk about.

The stops we have made on our way to Ayer’s Rock have been interesting but not notable: Katherine, Tennants Creek and Alice Springs are perhaps exactly what one would expect of the Northern Territories of Australia.

However the scenery and culture is not at all what we had expected. The ‘Bush’ is just that; a continuous area of low trees, bushes, tall grasses and millions upon millions of termite mounds ranging from small starter homes to massive Beckhamham Palaces. The Bush just goes on for ever, and the Stuart Highway down which we are travelling bisects this enormous area. You can drive for several hours without seeing another car, and then suddenly meet a 55 metre Road Train made up of 4 full size Petrol Tanker Trailers doing 70 mph coming the other way. These mammoth trunks are daunting the first time you see them, but one becomes quite blasé about them after passing a few.





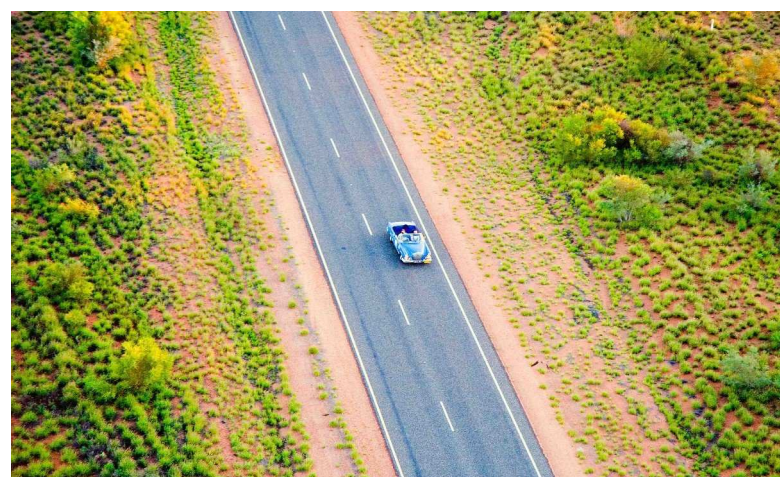
The people here are a funny mix. Some of the people staying in the towns see themselves as pioneers and indeed they are. It is hot up here the whole year around and rains for a good third of it. There are beasties of every kind and very little in the way of organised entertainment. But most seem to love it.

The local indigenous population -I think it is still PC to call them Aboriginals - live their own lives but are getting drawn into some of the worst excesses of the white community: drink, smoking and gambling. One person said of an indigenous acquaintance, ‘well she gambles for entertainment which is better than drinking’, isn’t it ?’ It seemed to me that they do not want to be westernised, and want just to be left with their traditions and way of life. We have met several people sent up here to ‘help’ the aboriginals and there is obviously the will to help them integrate into what was their country. Good luck to all of them. We found them most friendly and hospitable.

So there you have it: a frontier country full of pioneers, hot and sticky but full of character.

As we arrived in Alice Springs the climate changed somewhat and so did the landscape. The country is more rolling here; still ‘bush’ in the main but with some cleared areas. It was dryer in general, although we have seen more surface water than I had expected.

What we hadn’t yet seen were kangaroos. We were getting so concerned about them that Myra finally went behind a Roadhouse in which we were having breakfast and found four wild ‘roos’ and one tame one sat in a compound. Not quite how we expected to see them, but at least we have seen some. In Alice Springs we went off camel riding. Yes you may well say why on earth did we do that? But, as we hoped, doing this took us into the bush and we finally saw several groups of wild kangaroos.



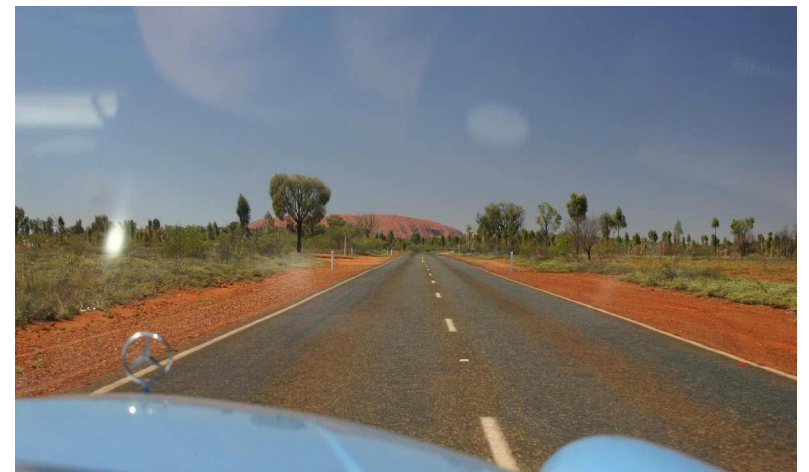
Thank heavens they have not all been shot.

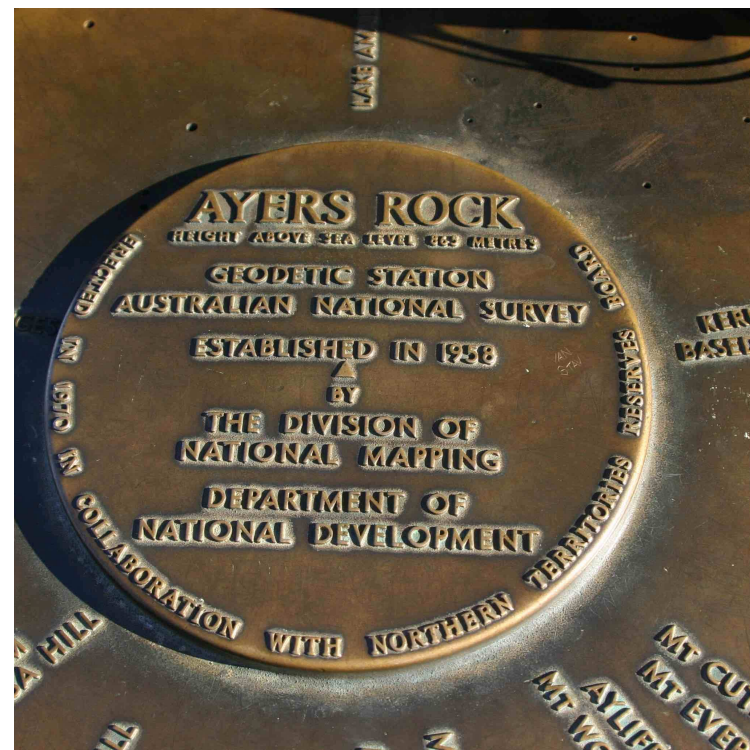
The Northern Territories are really a new part of Australia from a history standpoint and the local government have obviously decided that World War 2 largely featured Darwin and the surrounding area. There are dozens of WWII sites gazetted including airstrips, petrol dumps, hospital camp sites etc. A war buff could spend a week seeing all these places. Then there are 'historic roadhouses', which are 'old' cafes on the Stuart Highway. Not sure why this 'history' is needed as the whole area is more a 'now' experience than an historic one.

After several days of driving, we arrived at Ayers Rock, politically correctly called Uluru, almost unpronounceable, but important to Australian integration. This rock is a magnificent sight, and not only did I fly over it in a helicopter but Myra and I climbed it at dawn to the very top. This was a difficult decision as there are mixed messages here, as in all things aboriginal. The indigenous population see Uluru as sacred and are not overly keen on people going up it. The park authorities however, have painted dotted lines up the route to the top and fitted a chain linked rail for us to pull ourselves up on. It seems that local feelings come second to Aussie dollars, a common occurrence all over the world. Anyway after much debate we decided, on the spur of the moment, to climb the rock and then go to the Aboriginal Culture Centre afterwards to make up for it.

We have to say it was magnificent. The views were spectacular, and the feeling of serene beauty when standing at the cairn on the top awesome. Sorry guys, we just had to do it!

We had one other interesting experience. On the way to Ayer's Rock from Alice we passed a broken down jeep with four local chaps waving people down. I have to be honest we were not keen on stopping and went past feeling very sheepish. Later that morning we came across another truck with four guys sat by the roadside around a camp fire. One was holding a pair of jump leads in the air. We felt we must stop this





time, so we pulled up past them and got out. They needed a jump from our battery pack, and we had them going in a minute. It turns out they had been on a walkabout, for how long they didn't say, but long enough for the battery to fail! They had arrived back the night before to find the car would not go. They built a fire, hunkered down and waited for us to pass. They were very nice guys, if scary to look at, with their long beards and wild hair! Off we all went again. We stop at a Roadhouse for thirty minutes sometime later for breakfast, and as we leave these guys are coming down the road the other way all waving and shouting thanks. We felt great, and pressed on to Ayer's.

John Faulkner in a 4x4 and Paul Marsh helped two young females who hit the only patch of standing water on the road we have seen in 2000 kilometres, aquaplaned and ended up in a lake off the side of the road. Luckily they missed the bushes and trees. John and Paul yanked their car out of the lake and back onto the road using a KERR (Kinetic Energy Rescue Rope) rope and got them on their way. Imagine what could have happened to these two girls if they had not been able to flag the lads down. The bush is a scary big place even in daylight.

The Northern Territories has been an adventure, not as difficult as Southern China, but definitely a great adventure.....

Well, we are almost there now, and looking forward to the finish with increasing excitement. We are all very tired - as are the cars. Having said this though, the Merc has been performing very well in Australia and, besides having a constant problem with the idle, we have had a clear run so far. Bits continue to fall off: the latest being the handbrake cable fraying such that I have had to tape a bolt to the lever to remind me not to pull too hard each time I go to pull it on. Inshala, it will make Sydney.

Our final day in the Bush saw us cross the state line into South Australia on our way to Coober Pedit, translated as 'where white man digs holes in the ground'. In getting there we cross the Dog Fence, the longest fence in the world, which attempts to keep





dingoes out of the sheep country to its south. This used to be called the 'Rabbit proof Fence' and a brilliant movie was made with the same name about three Aboriginal children who travelled along the fence, pursued by the law, attempting to return to their mothers.

Coober Pedy was as rough as you might expect for a mining town. It is the headquarters of Opal Mining in Australia and is characterised by thousands of piles of white powder left over from the mining process dotted all over the landscape, hence the Aboriginal name for the place.

Some of the rally slept underground in mine shafts but the saner stayed above ground in a proper room. The town is a bit notorious for trouble at night and we had to have our cars watched to ensure there were no problems.

We moved on to Adelaide, and the Great Ocean road. The climate changed dramatically as we passed Port Augusta and the high humidity and temperature gave way to sunny warm weather with showers. In fact on leaving both Adelaide and Portland we were so cold we had to wrap up in our Quba gear and leave the roof up until ten in the morning. However the early mornings were pleasant and on a number of occasions we spotted the Southern Cross just before the sun came up.

Kangaroos are still in short supply, with 90% of the rally still to see one. Some participants have taken to visiting wildlife parks whilst others just dream the beasties up. We on the other hand have seen quite a few along with two rock wallabies that we came across on the Great Ocean road. We have not however seen a Koala Bear, so there is still work to be done in the spotting department.

We passed the Twelve Apostles on our way to Melbourne. It was a bit of a disappointment; we cannot find the Twelve, not even the Eleven that are left after one fell down recently. But the sea views were magnificent, and the surf superb. Aaron and Owen eat your hearts out; the waves were bigger than a house!



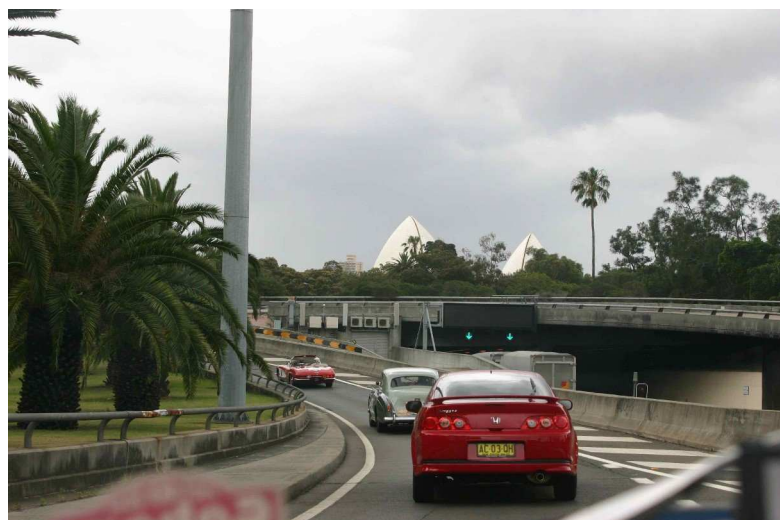
Apollo Bay was particularly fabulous, and we stopped there for a long Sunday breakfast and a lounge in the sun. This coastline is so like Devon and Cornwall, Dartmoor and the Highlands. Passing through early in the morning avoided the crowds and left us on our own at all the tourist spots along the way.

We must not forget Adelaide. This was the second time we have been there and once again we were reminded of how central it is to the wine districts of the Barossa, Eden and Maclaren Vale wineries. A group from the rally went off to visit some of these on our rest day. Myra and I explored the city, attended a Remembrance Day service (do not ask us why) and then had lunch out at Henley Beach home of the Great White and other indigenous nasties. As when we were in HK, people here do not concern themselves with sharks, and the beach was already busy, even though it is still spring here.

We arrived in Melbourne to be greeted by my old shipmate Paul Bundy and his mother, Jane. Having been posted here a year ago, he is already looking like an Aussie whilst retaining his English accent. Melbourne is a great city; much bigger than I remembered, and much more prosperous than we expected. Skyscrapers are going up everywhere and the whole town is buzzing. We had supper on a colonial tram which winds its way through the city whilst serving a five course dinner with all you can drink for Aus\$99 (£40). Well worth doing if you pass this way.

Well, we made it! Thanks heavens we are here, as the saga has continued right up to the end. Leaving Melbourne I broke one of the catches for the driver's seat so had to drive on a slant, and gave myself back ache before wedging a toolkit behind the seat for the final day. The same day I found the clutch reservoir empty, and, if that was not enough, later in the day we tore an inner tube to threads and had to change a wheel!

However we fared better than some. The Patchetts, in one of the Pagodas, T boned



another car at Bateman's Bay only two hundred kilometres from the finish. They wrote their car off, but luckily got away with only slight whiplash. What unbelievable bad luck!

The Bentley had its brakes lock and overheat a hundred kilometres from the end! The dynamo on Mike Barnes' Porsche stopped charging! So by the time we reached Botany Bay we were all praying that nothing more would go wrong.

However we did make it into Sydney. And we drove over the bridge to be given a fabulous welcome by Ecoflow Distributors and friends waiting for us at Blues Point, including Colin and Phillippa McLachlan, fellow rallyists who live here in Sydney who came to wave us in.

What a great way to finish what has been, at times, a gruelling drive over 17,500 miles (28,000 kilometres) across the world. We have traversed the Tropic of Cancer and Capricorn as well as the Equator. We spent twenty one days transiting China and went through five states in Australia. We drove the length of Laos, Thailand and Malaysia, as well as visiting Singapore.

The car has been rebuilt once, repaired more times than we can remember, but, above all else, got us here safely.

We have converted most of the rally to using Bioflows, as well as gained a number of new distributors in Europe and Australia.

We have many fabulous memories of the places we have visited, and key highlights along the way such as Goreme, Iran, the Karakorum Highway, our welcome in Xian, traversing Yunnan province, Laos, Northern Territories and finally arriving in Sydney. The many peoples we have interfaced with and some we have helped such as the homeless of Bam, The Aga Khans people of the Northern Area, Uighers of Xinxiang Province, the mechanics of LiJiang who rebuilt the car, the friendly Laotians and Thais



and finally our rugby and cricketing nemesis, the Australians.

Thanks to my fantastic navigators without whom it would definitely not have been possible – Steve Hill, Chris Simons and Myra Markland.

Rick Dyke Price and Stuart Onyett did a great job over the last two years in planning the route, arranging the hotels, border crossings and shipping of the cars.

This rally has given Ecoflow the opportunity to raise awareness in ways that motivates and excites our people. The Orion Club coming to Australia with the rally has been a highlight for the company, and meant that the launch of our Business Opportunity in Australia has surpassed all expectations.







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