

Back-Over

Continuing the remarkable story by Louise Yeoman of her family's voyage right across the top of Australia from Townsville to Broome - and back again! This month, we pick up the crew at Broome, and travel back through the Kimberley, fishing in some of the most productive fishing country left on the planet . . . but be warned, the images on the following pages will make an indelible impression, followed closely by heartache and a burning desire to travel . . . *nor west!*

Following a busy week preparing the boat, servicing, re-fuelling, and shopping, we finally left Broome for a bumpy and restless night's travel up the West Coast. Onboard this leg was my husband Steve, friend Louise, our children Cooper (5) and Emmily-Rose (3), plus our new 'crew' of Yeoman, Ken, Colin and Anita.

25th September, 2003. After an uncomfortable ride to the Lacapedes, we moved with the current to cross the notorious King Sound. After 22 hours straight, with poor Anita hanging her head over the side of the boat, we cut

The Top!



the motors, and moored in a little cove adjacent to Cockatoo Island for a calm night's rest.

Collier Bay At daybreak, we continued on to some of our favourite stops. First, Crocodile Creek for a swim in the higher spring-fed pool because the 10.6 m tide had flooded the lower pool, and could have brought a croc in with it. I made a photo-board to hang on the shrine (erected by the miners) to commemorate our trip in the Kimberley.

Our second stop was in Silver Gull Inlet, a very picturesque anchorage.

Following a reef walk at first light on low tide, we stopped at Silver Gull's swimming pool, which is an old concrete water tank that was installed by the Cockatoo Island Mine. We also took the opportunity to re-fill our fresh water tanks by the spring-fed stream. After 3 hours lazily swimming, we headed off to Dog Leg Creek where we re-fuelled. (The fuel is delivered by barge from Derby)

After waiting to move with the ingoing tide (down 10m), we entered Talbot Bay. We took *Steel Haven* through the narrow passage, which was quite frightening. The currents and whirlpools were so strong, I thought at one stage we were going to be pushed into the rock wall. Steve had it all under control, trying to avoid the whirlpools. (For the less adventurous, we suggest you wait for the ebb tide before entering this gorge.)

Another potential danger encountered when negotiating this area, are the sea planes. These waters double as a landing strip for the sea plane that visits this area up to 4 times a day, bringing day trippers to the Horizontal Falls. We eventually got permission from the nearby pearl farm to anchor on their cyclone mooring for the night.

The men decided that they wanted to fish inside both the narrow passages of the Horizontal Waterfalls. They could

only enter at 9am on low tide, and had to wait 6 hours to come back with the high tide. Gold trevally, giant trevally, cod and sharks were the order of the day. Coming out of the first chasm, Steve spotted Malcolm Douglas who was in there filming a documentary. Stopping to say hello, Malcolm was surprised to see a small tinny in these remote areas.

Our 15hp outboards were not powerful enough to carry us all through the turbulent waters of the falls, so while the guys were gone for the day, we kept ourselves amused, feeding large bat fish up to 50cm long, enjoying the views of the area, watching the tourist planes fly overhead, and general household duties including tossing out the fruit, vegetables and eggs that had already gone mouldy.

Only a week into the trip (with five weeks to go) we had to start on the dehydrated and the tinned food. With the build up to the wet season, the weather had intensified. It was very hot and humid with sweat literally dripping off us.

Another sunrise and we jumped in the tinnys, and went for a play and a spin in the whirlpools while admiring the Horizontal Falls in the morning sun light.

A short distance later, after stopping to observe the many migrating humpback whales, we went over to Koolan Island, a closed iron-ore mine, to explore the remains of the mountain, and the big water filled hole in the hill.

Red Cone With the ingoing tide, we passed Raft Point continuing on to Redcone (aka Ruby Falls) to anchor 2 miles upstream. For the next 5 days, we had barramania extravaganza, with



a total of 28 barra, and 5 crocodile captures. All of the barra were caught on baits, with the biggest 102cm.

We all put in one big day. Anchored in 10 foot of water, an assortment of fish were caught: salmon, fingermark, cuda, catfish, bream, cod, sharks and mud crabs in pots. Nearly every bait producing a fish.

Eagles entertained us with their ability to pick up dead fish from the surface. Egrets, cranes, jabiru, kingfishers, swifts and many other mangrove birds were interesting to observe also. Stopping next to a muddy bank was very entertaining, viewing the mud skippers and the fiddler crabs, while waiting for our rods to take off.

The kids and I mainly fished early morning and late afternoon in the tinnys, as it was just too hot during the day, and the crocodiles were a real nuisance. Many days were spent cooling off in the spring-fed falls and freshwater pools.

For a change of pace, we spent one morning re-visiting Montgomery Reef at low tide to witness the phenomenal cascades falling off the reef in the morning light, while enjoying the sight of many sea turtles as they popped their heads out of the water like submarine periscopes. Another morning was spent at nearby scenic Vinneys Creek. We were not successful with fish, but managed to find a fresh little spring surrounded by ferns, with fresh water running down the rock face - fresh water in the Kimberlys in the dry season is a valuable find.

Our final morning at Red Cone, the guys excitedly set off early. Ken went up one creek, while Steve took another. Ken and his crew, being pre-occupied with catching fish and not keeping a close eye on the water, got stuck high and dry, and had to wait 2 hours for the tide to come back in. Steve also got stuck up the river as the river mouth had closed, and he could not pass the sand bars. Fortunately for Steve, after

Isn't this something else? "Steel Haven" moves in under the King George Falls in the Kimberley, WA.



anchoring in a foot of water, the fish were still on the bite, as were the insects. It is important to monitor your depth, and learn to read the tidal movements.

While enjoying a siesta, the Customs plane flew over, turned and flew back again. They called us up to advise us that a 4 metre croc was nearby, heading our way. We thanked them for the call.

Used to these visitors, we continued with our relaxation. Steve was preparing the main meal of green curry barramundi on rice, whilst we feasted on mud crabs. We were lucky to get some crabs because earlier in the day, when checking the pots, remnants of sharp teeth were found in all of the floats, and holes in the nets. Many nights were spent scanning the torch around to locate the red eyes of the crocs, who were also enjoying the aromas of the good cooking.

Leaving Red Cone at 3.30am to move with the high tide, the next stop

was Bigge Island. Here we explored many interesting caves. A treasure cove of many separate Aboriginal art galleries kept us exploring here for more than an hour. Some of the paintings depicted European sailors, a dugong, hand prints, goannas, ships, and other wildlife. It is said that the paintings are of the Wandjina style, dating back some 300 plus years. It was also a great cave for the kids to play hide and seek in the many nooks and crannies.

In one particular cave, with an entrance especially chosen perhaps because of its unusual structure, a burial site was discovered. It contained 3 visible skulls, which were facing the entrance to the cave, with further human skeletal bones placed up on a higher ledge. In respect for the departed, I did not video or take photos, or move in further to disrupt the grave site.

An Aboriginal Bora ring – a ceremonial ring, was also present

nearby, as were many animal tracks and droppings. Turtles, crocs, goanna, mojon, and pigmy bats in the cave, gave us a fright.

This stop had us all in awe, and left us discussing the excursion for quite some time.

Stopping for morning tea, and once again waiting for the tide to turn, we took the tinny trolling around the rocks of Cliffy Island for some piscatorial fun on lures.

Steve hooked up to, but lost 5 G.T's, one of which was taken beside the boat by a large 6 foot whaler shark. I managed to land one giant trevally.

Across to Trig Island and nearby groups, we explored many beaches. At this stop, we were in awe of the different types of rare dome corals surrounding the cliffs and the beaches.

Mitchell River On the 14th October we arrived in the Mitchell River nearing the spring tide, to find the water very muddy, with no

Skipper Steve steered his family back and forth across the top of Australia, from Townsville QLD to Broome WA over a distance of 7,000 incident free miles - an outstanding achievement by any measure. And don't worry, he did his share of fishin' too - as this superb Barra attests!



visibility. We had heard good reports about this river, but were disappointed when after one and a half days of full-on lure casting, and exploring the river, we only produced one barra, a jewfish and one salmon. We began to wonder why we ever left Red Cone. "Things, can only get better!" was the song of the moment. We persevered while setting the mud crab pots which produced four crabs - at least we had enough for tea.

The fish carcass excited some nurse sharks up to 7 ft long, and a black reef tip shark. This kept us all amused for 2 days while waiting for the right tides. We tied off the carcass on some rope while young Cooper eagerly held the rope tight with the sharks thrashing around on the opposite end.

A new day and an early morning start produced 8 hits for Steve, with 3 captures of barramundi, while Ken and Colin caught a mixed bag of fingermark, trevally and catfish. Everyone was excited after such a productive morning, so we all put in a big day. We anchored up creek at "Surveyors Pool" at the rock bar tossing lures. The barra like to sit behind the rock bars which

provide shelter from the current, while they wait in ambush for the baitfish to come through.

After 5 hit and misses we put bigger treble hooks on the D.K.lures - another fish lost, another lesson learnt. (We just don't know what the lesson was.) Soon, a reasonably sized crocodile came to annoy us, which had us on the move.

Ken moved on, while Steve and I both wanted to climb the rocks at the end of the creek, to explore the gorge we could see in the distance. This turned out to be a very rewarding exploration. After a short climb up and across the rocks, a narrow gorge 20m wide and 300m long, with a beautiful fresh water pool awaited us. A few

pandanna trees were scattered along the edges, with a narrow walk way providing a path to stroll to the small trickle of fresh water still flowing. Steve scaled the cliff face to follow the stream and found a further deeper tropical oasis with bottomless holes for swimming.

The rock walls were so cured and smooth, indicating vast and fast amounts of water moving through the area in the wet season. We only had a half hour gap to spend here as the fast changing tide was on the way out and we had to pass the rock wall in the tinny.

Day 4 An eager crew awoke early and soon headed off to the snags to

more time to swim. Following on afterwards, while casting lures, Steve hooked up to a 4ft croc. It actually took his lure! Knowing that crocodiles are difficult to unhook, but not wanting to lose a \$15 DK lure, he gradually pulled the croc in. The crocodile eventually thrashed around and spat the lure - luckily, as I was going to have to cut the line.

Day 5 I was feeling lucky this morning. The water was clear and reflective. Back to our favourite snaggy spot, Steve's second cast produced the 1st barra for the morning. I quickly followed with 2, and with in 10 minutes, we had 11 misses, and 4 captures. Trolling along, Cooper

managed his first barramundi which jumped, and tossed, becoming airborne, while Emmily-Rose caught a small G.T. Ken was concentrating on captures of line class, successfully capturing a 7.6kg barra on 4kg, and a 3.6 kg on 2kg line, which are potentially new club records. (S.G.G.F.C.)

Noticing a swirl in the distance, I cast my lure and I found the mark. I was soon hooked up to a threadfin salmon. While



cast some lures. The water was still a bit dirty, but an erratic moving gold classic barra lure had 4 hits for Steve, and at last my drought had broken for this trip after catching an 80cm barra. With warmer waters, the fish were more aggressive this time of year - they strike hard, and fight hard. A heavy trace is vital as the gill plates and fin spikes (serrated edge) carve through the line - and through your hand if you are not careful when removing the hooks. If you fish with sensible tackle, you are half way there.

We decided to share our new found swimming pool with the others, and spent 2 hours here, cooling off. We parked the tinnys on the far side of the rock wall, and walked further, to allow

Steve was removing the treble hooks, the salmon thrusted, causing the hook to penetrate into his forefinger. Steve knew it was more than just a pin prick, noticing that the barb had lodged itself deep in his finger. Ken had not long left the area, so I drove the tinny flat out in the hope of flagging down Ken so that he could assist with the removal of the hook.

We eventually caught up to him, then it was a mad dash back to S.H. to administer the first aid. While us girls were discussing which needle to use to apply a local anaesthetic, Colin had removed the barbs from the other two hooks, while Ken tied a braid around the hook, ready for the yank. Holding the eyelet to the skin, he gave Steve a

cloth to bite down on. Ken said " O.K. On the count of 3, 2,1, ." and then he yanked the hook out. S?!@! was Steve's reply. You can't blame him. However, he was still jovial enough to gloat about his morning's good fishing.

While the kids and I stayed on S.H. during the heat of the day, and having been stationary for 5 days, I ran the generator to put some charge into the house batteries. This gave me an opportunity to download some photos onto the computer, and gave the kids a chance to play some computer games.

Steve's successful day continued with 5 further barramundi captures for the afternoon. It is prime barra time with the build up to the wet - the fish are feeding hard preparing themselves for spawning condition. With this, along with the right tides, moon and an appealing lure action, Steve was blitzing the fish.

Ken and crew also had a successful sunset, with Anita capturing her first barramundi, while the guys kept a close eye on a not so friendly 9ft crocodile.

Day 6 Another peaceful, calm sunrise - perfect for an early morning fish. We arrived at our most productive spot, amongst the snags and overhanging mangroves along the river's edge. Within 7 minutes of fast and furious action, we had 2 captures each, ranging between 70 and 90cm. The fish were in such great condition - nice and thick. Steve's first for the day was a thumper 20lb fish. After some piscatorial aerobic action, the barra took off around some snags. Not wanting to lose a lure, Steve motored over to the muddy bank and keeping a tight line, he moved all of the branches until he found the one that his line was wrapped around. Towing this branch with us until he could get his line around it, the fight continued, and fortunately with the aggressive feeding of the barra at the moment, the fish had swallowed the lure deep into his mouth, and was well hooked. After

some quick photos - the barra nicely swimming, was released.

By 8am, with the sun rising fast, we zoomed back to S.H. for breakfast, and a swim in the safety of the boat tubs. We noticed many box jelly fish in this river, therefore we sieved all the buckets of water before filling our tubs. (We used a curtain as a sieve.)

Steve headed out again, for a fishful day. He caught a selection of fingermark, cod, queenfish, salmon, herring and 2 more of those elusive barra before heading home for lunch. After a siesta, and wanting to make the most of the prime barra time, Steve took off again, this time working an eddy on the run-out tide. Casting his classic gold barra lure, he did better



than a hat trick. Five casts produced five good size barramundi. Not wanting me to miss this action, he sped as fast as the tinny could take him back to S.H. to pick up the kids and I. (What a husband!)

Our first casts found the mark, a double hook-up. I was on to an erratic barra (cartwheeling across the water) trying to keep my braided line away from Steve's, and out of the snags, while Cooper was trying to capture the footage on video. This is the sort of fishing you read about, and hope it happens to you one day. Things went quiet after this - you begin to wonder if all of the fish you have released, have gone to warn their mates the lure hunter is here.

Day 7 Our final barra day in the Mitchell River left us feeling elated. As soon as we arrived at our snag destination, bang, bang, bang, we both caught 2 barra each, and Emmily-Rose got a small queen fish. Colin was fly fishing near-by. Spotting 2 barra in the clear waters, he tossed a fly, and he was also successful. A beautiful morning's fish was followed by a very lazy day, after putting in a big week. We had a water fight on deck, a bite to eat, and everyone found a spot to lie down and have a snooze, while the kids happily and quietly played around all the bodies on the floor.

After the wind died down, we headed out again in the tinny hoping to finish the week off on a high note.

We had trouble finding a barramundi however, wedging the tinny into a small back water, Steve noticed a large tail fin sticking out of the water. His lure found its mark, and it took off like a steam train. I threw the tinny into reverse to move the fish out of the snags, and into the open waters to fight. A 104cm threadfin salmon was soon hauled into the boat to be measured, had a photo, and was placed back in the drink. It took a while to swim him, he had really exhausted himself with the fight, so we slowly motored until

he was ready to kick away.

It was a great end to a week's fishing in the Mitchell.

Kingsmil Islands Onto Kingsmil Island group where our real fun began. Anchoring beside a cliff face, the queenfish were thick right on our doorstep. While Steve was at a nearby beach exploring, Ken and Colin were having fun hooking up to the queenies. A King brown snake sunning itself on a rock had Steve leaving one island, and heading to another across the bay. While he was on the island, he noticed fresh baby turtle tracks in the sand, and found two dead hatchlings. Searching, he found the nest, and knew that the hatchlings were ready to enter the



world. He covered up the nest with more sand because if the turtles hatch during the day, they would all die. They head for the light which at noon is high in the sky, and they just end up dying of heat exhaustion.

When Steve returned to S.H., I was ready and waiting to jump in the tinny to join in on the queenie extravaganza. The fish were thick, and every cast of the lure produced a follow up - erratic lure movements were required to interest the fish, and before long, we had a double hook up. I was on a lure, while Steve was using a fly rod.

We continued catching fish for the next hour, allowing Cooper to successfully catch and release two queenies. While Emmily-Rose was happily reeling in a queenie, using all of her strength, the fish cartwheeled across the water, when we realised a shark was after it. Steve took over,

hoping to save the fish from the shark, but it was too late. It was already chomped in half. Nearby, Colin and Ken were also successfully catching queenfish and trevally. Ken was trolling a hookless popper, encouraging the fish around, giving Colin a better opportunity of finding the mark with his fly gear. Colin managed a 7kg G.T. on his fly rod, which took about 30 minutes to land along with 3 queenfish.

With the sun quickly going down, a decision had to be made. Leave the fish and check to see if the turtles are hatching, or keep fishing while the fish are around. We opted for the turtles as this opportunity to witness nature at its best does not come along often.

At 5pm, we dragged the tinny up the sand, and eagerly jumped out, running up the beach to see if any turtles had come out. Steve had earlier left a shrine, a rock pillar standing on its end,

for us to easily recognise the nesting site. We arrived just in time. Steve removed the top layer of sand while we all sat around in awe at what we were witnessing. The first of about 40 baby turtle hatchlings broke free, poking its little head out of the sand, taking its first breath of fresh air. *Ohhh!! Woowwww!*

Following close behind were its siblings, all in a hurry to race each



other out of the nest. Cooper and Emmily-Rose were lying on their tummies, peering into the crater where the turtles were emerging.

Within 10 minutes, with the sun setting on the horizon, all of the hatchlings were out, and were making their way to the remaining light at the water's edge. Some of them paddled there way out of the nest, and over to us as if to say "hello," Natural instinct soon had all of the hatchlings racing off into the sea. They will probably never get to meet their Mum. Any surviving females will return to the same beach to lay their eggs some day. It is for this reason we had to leave them to make their own footprints in the sand, so they can find there way back home.

We did each manage to have a cuddle, and a photo, before putting them back on the sand. The whole process was over within half an hour. While the baby turtles swam away, fighting for survival, looking for their first feed, we sat down feeling exhilarated, enjoying a meal of satay chicken for dinner.

Another early morning, up before the sun, and on the move. We stopped at Low Rocks for lunch, and noticing birds working in the distance; we could not get into the tinnys quick enough.

The next 2 hours was endless fun catching all types of pelagic fish, consisting of G.T, golden trev, queen, mackeral, coral trout and more. A weather warning came over the

satellite phone and interrupted the fun, announcing a tropical cyclone warning for WA coastal and island communities within 24 hours

This had us quickly on the move heading to the mainland to try to find shelter up a river, but in fact, no cyclone arrived in our area.

A Customs plane flew over us for the 4th time in a week, and advised that they had not heard anything about a cyclone warning. (It was a false alarm)

We were running low on fuel for the outboards, having used a bit fishing for the barra in the rivers. We had to be conservative with the amount we used because we wanted to save some for our favourite destinations over the two weeks remaining.

Napier Broome Bay

A spot you don't want to miss. Our overnight stop at Anjo Hill, the west side of Napier Broome Bay had us all curious about an interesting discovery. Over on the beach were the remains of 7 fire places used to cook sea slugs, by the Indonesians over 100 years ago. Spread out evenly, the rock mounds were piled with small boulders, and could easily be mistaken as a grave site

Having demolished a batch of pancakes for morning tea, we continued on in the Bay to Louis Island. We remembered this area from the good fishing on our down trip - the only trouble was the weather was against us then. The middle of the day was too hot and humid. We tried to stay cool by filling the fish bins with salt water, and lying in them. After a little siesta, Ken and I took the tinny out to the eastern side of the rocky reef, to a fisherman's delight, a brilliant pelagic fishing ground. This is my first time out this trip fishing – *no husband or kids!*

We fished the outgoing tide, with a slight westerly wind creating a little chop on the bay, but it was not enough to deter us, in fact it was nice to be out in the breeze.

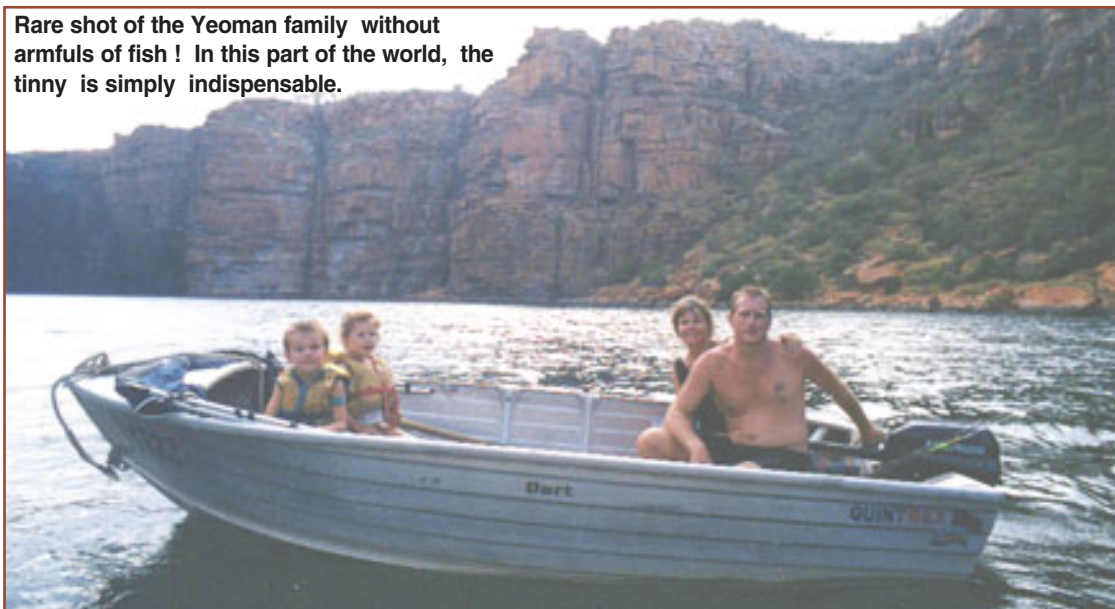
Trolling lures, we were soon hooked up to giant trevally ranging in size from 4kg to 6kg. Even the smaller G.T's pull hard and have you really working the gear. The G.T's hit the lure while on the run, and keep going like a steam train, with a bit of head thudding. Each time we were about to

land a fish, all of its mates were swimming beside it, creating a carpet of fish effect, and the perfect opportunity to cast another lure, and hook up right beside the boat. This created a snowball effect, with the action not slowing at all. The fish darted from the left side to the right side of the boat. We were continually weaving in and out of each other, trying to avoid tangles, and keeping on top of the fish. Soon my hand was molded to the shape of my rod, my stomach region was feeling bruised and battered, my thighs were tight from bracing myself to the side of the tinny so the waves didn't knock me out, and for once in my life I didn't think about food.

no time, they were in a feeding frenzy. As soon as they were hooked up, they jumped, sometimes up to 3 metres out of the water. The aerial action continued until we really had to leave. We were so worn out, we boarded *Steel Haven*, but the adrenalin was still pumping, and we happily ate our already prepared dinner while replaying the afternoon - some 30 fish caught and released - over and over.

On Monday morning, at sunrise, all the crew were eager to get to the hot spot to see if we were just pulling their legs. Within a minute of trolling our lures, we had a hit. The same scenario... double hook up's while tracing one fish. The opportunity for a fly fisherman was endless. Steve

Rare shot of the Yeoman family without armfuls of fish ! In this part of the world, the tinny is simply indispensable.



Ken was calling me Monica Seles because of all the excited moaning and groaning. Can you blame me? I captured thirteen giant trevally, not to mention the one's I lost. They really gave me a work out, and I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of the highly addictive pain.

The G.T's moved out, and the queenfish moved in. The tinny was low in fuel, and the sun was dipping below the horizon - we were not sure what we would run out of first, light, fuel, or stamina.

We continued fishing as long as we could, when the G.T's went off the bite, the queenfish, averaging 5kg moved in. Each time a fish was beside the boat ready to trace, a second one was hooked up with one cast of the lure. It was a fisherman's dream. We really needed a second tinny to capture all the action on video because we had

caught 2 big queen's on fly before losing his fly, and having to move to conventional lures. The queen fish seemed bigger today, up to and over one metre long. We were keen to try to video some of the fish underwater, so after 10 captures, and many hits missed, we raced back to S.H. to get the underwater gear.

It was now 8.30am, with an ebb tide, little water movement, and great visibility under the water. Having been able to fish happily without any interference from sharks or crocodiles (amazing), Steve entered the water with his spear gun, a knife, and underwater video camera – completely prepared for a predator attack.

While Steve was underwater, snorkeling around the rocks, and the two tinnys, we all kept watch for dangers while still casting lures. We all enjoyed the reef fish swimming in the

shallows where we were anchored. Slate bream, pale lipped surgeonfish, parrot fish, black tailed dascyllus, gar fish, long toms, queens, barracuda (which were very curious), mangrove jacks, and two white tipped reef sharks were a few of the different species.

Hunger pains began to creep in, so we went home for brunch, and a restful day. After preparing dinner we set out again at 4.30 hoping that the G.T's were back. They were back, but not in abundance. A further selection of mainly big queens, and a few G.T's were caught, with Cooper excitedly catching juvenile G.Ts - enough to give him a workout.

Another early pre-dawn start. We didn't have too many days left to fish, and we wanted to make the most of our opportunities. Again, the queenfish were the catch of the morning, even Emmily-Rose caught 2 nice size fish. (We only helped to support the rod.)

She loved it when they jumped, and joined in on the yahooing. Cooper was happy to be the skipper, doing a great job driving the tinny, finding the right speed, gear, and even managing to pull start it himself. He looked very much at home.

Truscott Air Base As a sideline, we had pre-arranged with Truscott airbase to have a tour, so we were soon headed over to West Bank to wait for our guide to arrive.

The airbase was operational during WW2. At that time there were 2,000 personnel (now 4) who were secretly placed at Truscott to watch the coast for activity. They only ever found one Japanese plane (they believed was a kamikaze), and they shot it down before the pilot could report what he had found.

A couple of hundred planes, mainly Spitfires and Liberator bombers were stationed here. A little make shift town

was built to service the staff including a small hospital, a picture theatre, a machine shop, a laundry, and a bakery – to name a few. Many relics remain including old bread tins and plates, the old officers latrine (8 old rusted dunnies), about a million rusted 44 gallon fuel drums and tyres are scattered around the 60km perimeter. Old trucks, an old bus and other vehicles also rest in the vehicle graveyard.

The old airfield is now used as a base to service the oil rigs which are dotted around our waters, closer to Indonesia. The staff live in very basic accommodation. It is so hot on the land in this remote part of the country, that they do have airconditioning in their



shacks.

We were very fortunate to arrange a tour - having stopped at the wreckage of a DC3 on our down trip, we managed to find out Truscott's phone number, and arrange the visit. The history and stories of lives lost at Truscott were touching. A memorial stands to honour those who made the supreme sacrifice.

Our last day in this Bay, and our last chance to catch some fish in this area, I was up before Ken at 4.30 am, dressed and hurrying Ken for once. We had a nice morning, our lines were kept tight on G.T's and queens. Steve stayed home doing some maintenance on S.H. Colin and Anita came along at a decent hour. Colin had been teaching Anita how to fly fish, and she successfully captured two medium sized queens on

the fly rod. By 9.30am, we were pulling anchor, heading to Governor Island.

We had a very rough 3 hour trip across Napier Broome Bay, until we found some shelter near Cape Londonderry. Objects were flying everywhere in the cabin. Waves crashed over the top of the boat, and then the side-on swamps started. The tide was changing, and the winds were against the tide. The kids took shelter beneath the table, lying down so as not to hit their heads.

It is the first time I had really been worried, I suggested everyone downstairs wear life jackets, and we discussed safety procedures – yes, it was that scary. Later, in the safety of a

calm bay, Steve said, "If you see me put a life jacket on, then you have something to worry about." Nevertheless, we were very relieved when we finally anchored.

The wind blew for 3 days before we could continue moving around the cape. In this time, it was actually a relief to have the wind keeping us cool. After 3

restless nights sleep, we had a break in the weather, and managed to get around the Northern Cape to head south down the east side of the West Coast for Faraway Bay Bush Camp for a fuel pick up.

Faraway Bay Arriving at Faraway Bay - a delightful secluded remote bush camp, the caretakers Craig and Jenny invited us up for a coffee, and a play with their 3 children, Sam 10, Anna 8, and Curtis 4. It was closed season with no guests, so this coffee turned into endless cups of coffee, culinary delights, swimming and relaxing while sharing stories for three days, with new friends who are also living their dream.

But it was soon time to re-fuel and say our good byes. The hospitality we

received was absolutely fantastic, A1. Their generosity will be remembered forever. (Check out their web site www.farawaybay.com.au)

Our final destination before the big slog to Darwin, was back to the beautiful King George River. With its towering gorge - up to 300 feet in parts, this was another of our favourite destinations. We slowly took S.H. up the 12km river, while we crowded the bow of the boat, hoping for a breeze while taking in the breathtaking views. We stopped at King George River for 3 nights, while waiting for the winds to abate before crossing the Gulf.

The days are so hot, and the humidity at about 90%. It gets to a point that you do not want to do anything from 9am until 4pm. You just try to stay cool. At the top of the river, where the gorge meets, the towering cliff provides shade in parts. We would take the tinny for a run just to sit in the shade, while at the same time admiring the small aquarium of sea life below the boat. We fished a little bit in the late afternoons for a few trevally, while Ken made the most of his last fishing days, and fished all day for a variety of fish including 5 barra all within legal

size.

On Thursday 6th November at 3.45pm, we left the King George River, headed east across Joseph Bonaparte Gulf for a 30 hour steam home to Darwin. As soon as we took off, big storm clouds crowded the coastline, with a spectacular display of lightning in the skies.

Emmily-Rose had a cold, a hot temperature, diarrhoea, vomiting, and a headache. Whilst the sea was perfect for the crossing, with a full moon lighting up the way, the two nights were awful attending to a sick child, and the noisy thumping of the motors, which produce heat. Poor baby! I felt so sorry for her. The day was awfully hot, not even a breeze to cool us down. Our shower water was hot, and so was the seawater. Sweat was literally dripping off us. No relief anywhere. Worried that Emmily-Rose could be a close candidate for dehydration, it was a battle to keep her cool, and keep the fluids into her. We continually kept encouraging her to suck on ice cubes. It was a relief to be close to civilization again.

We finally arrived safely in Darwin after a journey spanning more than

7000 km. The last two years, *Steel Haven* has travelled from Sydney to Broome, and back to Darwin, all with Steve at the helm, safely navigating many uncharted waters, reefs, rocks, whirlpools, tidal currents, prevailing winds, sandwaves, whales, ships and other potential hazards. We have had an ammazzing fun filled, action packed, unforgettable lifetime experience, with so many highlights and adventures that we have shared with our kids, old friends, and new friends we have met along the way. This trip was our lifetime dream, and it was more than and better than we could have possibly imagined. The only dilemma now is that we want to do it all again, just slower next time.....

Thanks to Broome Pistol Club, Faraway Bay, Barra 'B', Paspaley Pearls, Truscott, Ships Bell Townsville, Curly at Dog Leg, friends at Silver Gull, Mercury Marine and DK Lures, for helping us along the way.

F&B