

The Piercy / Misko Report – Darwin Run

Day 1: Of the Piercy / Misko trip to Darwin.

Left from Bullsbrook after giving Bob in his Model A and Erdie a 45 minute head start. We didn't see him again until Cataby. The old girl gave him no trouble and pootled along very nicely. We kept to the morning tea and lunch schedule and had drinks and nibbles in Geraldton by 4.30. A smooth start to the journey. Camp was very comfortable at the Batavia Coast Caravan Park with Horace and Jean in their van and Darryl and Tania with a pop top tent and trailer.

Bob and his Erdie shot off at 8.00am for our longest drive to Carnarvon.



Day 2:

Left from Geraldton nice and early for another long day of driving- 460km. Still made time for morning tea at Galena Bridge and lunch at the Overlander. The days are starting to warm up now, but the old girl Celie and the old boy driving her (Bob Piercy) continued along no trouble.

Overnighted at a great park in Carnarvon called Wintersun, which we'd all highly recommend to anyone passing through. Still just the 2 modern cars and 1 model A, but we expect to meet with others in Broome in a few days' time. Expect some bush camping tomorrow night and some camp cooking too.



Day 3:

Bob and Celie got an early head start away from Carnarvon, only to find them parked up on the side of the road having a yarn with the Miskos 45 minutes later. No mind, we were on our way for another long day. A long day of 481km made all the longer and tedious by approximately 65km of road works between mandatory morning tea at Minilya and lunch. We eventually (after more roadworks) arrived at our first campsite where we set up for a night in the Bush. Just us and 4 dozen other caravans and campers.



This was our first night with a campfire and we all sat down to a camp stew and frozen chocolate dipped bananas which are a Carnarvon speciality. Plans are already in place to get more of these gastronomic delights on the trip back! So far there has been no sign of any other Model A's.

Day 4:

To cover 385km to Port Hedland. A shorter day but still an early start in case of mishaps. I wouldn't like to cast aspersions on the old girl Celie, but better to be safe than sorry. Also, an early start to ensure the backpackers camped behind us were awake and listening to us banging and thumping about seeing as we had to listen to them carry on half the night. Fair's fair. More road works today, but the drive was uneventful. Days are heating up now, so much so that Bob Piercy in the Model A was straight into the Whim Creek pub for a



Little rehydration after lunch. On to Port Hedland in the afternoon with all the usual attention for Celie and Bob at stops along the way. As usual, when setting up for the evening, admirers wander in to chat. One fellow showed Bob a picture of another Model A he'd taken earlier in the day. What a coincidence it was a shot of Peter Eardley near Karijini. After a few phone calls, it is expected that we will catch up with Eardleys and Bristow-Staggs tomorrow as they camped just north of Port Hedland. Another couple staying at the Cooke Point caravan park was Alan and Gail Dunn heading to Darwin meet too.

Day 5

Things went well leaving Port Hedland for a 457 km day. We drove into increasing heat and flies through Pardoo and stopped for lunch at Sandfire where all the trees and shade were a welcome change. Met up with Eardleys and Bristow-Staggs who were stopped to top up the latter's radiator every 50 km. This group went straight through to Broome for Friday night but we had a great camp at Goldwire after collecting some firewood on the way. The flies nearly carried you away and the moths invaded Bob's tent after he went to have a shower and left the light on, but it was still a very nice evening.



Horace Misko and Bob Piercy tucking in at Goldwire camp.

Day 6

Left by 8am after a bumper cooked breakfast. We wanted to look into Barn Hill Beach Side Station. The track in proved a bit much for Celie and the old girl dropped a headlight glass on the road. Luckily the soft sand did no damage and she was patched up in a jiffy. At this time Des Addison happened along in the opposite direction and we had a quick catchup before looking over Barn Hill and proceeding to Broome.



Des Addison on the track to Barn Hill

We caught up with Eardley/Bristow-Staggs convoy at Roebuck Plains Roadhouse where it was decided they would also move 'into town' to be nearer mechanical help for Bristow-Staggs car.

Their bad luck must have rubbed off onto Celie as no sooner than we left them, Bob pulled up on the roadside with a broken timing gear. The Miskos and Darryl Friend went into town to drop off trailers and caravans and returned to tow Celie the last 5km to Broome. Oh the indignity.



Lame Celie

Bob Piercy (L), Celie (middle) and Darryl Freind (R)

Repairs are underway on Saturday afternoon with the mobile workshop of Darryl Freind coming in handy. Lots of onlookers and tyre kickers following the progress and offering 'advice' as they stroll past our beachfront campsite. We should be charging entry fees for the entertainment.



(L-R) Peter Eardley, Horace Misko, Ray Mahony, Bob Piercy, Celie, Darryl Freind.

Early night tonight, very pooped.

Day 7

R&R in Broome today. An early morning fix for the Eardley's teardrop trailer consisting of a bit of grinding and welding on a cracked drawbar. It's 8am on a Sunday, who would complain? Most spent the day reading and seeing the sights of Broome. Mango smoothies from the markets and a visit to Matsos were top of the list. Barry and Sylvia are laid up with radiator troubles and are hoping for a quick fix on Monday morning before continuing with some help from the Mens' Shed.



Cable beach sunset. Just us and 375 other tourists

Day 8

After some investigation this morning it was discovered that the radiator shop wouldn't even have time to look at the Bristow-Stagg's radiator today let alone repair it. This was disappointing news. With our appointment in Katherine in mind, the rest of us pressed on to Fitzroy Crossing for the night. The journey involved a few mandatory stops for Boab photography but these were short as the heat drove us back to the AC pretty quickly (at least those that had it). Arrived at Fitzroy River Lodge after 396km day.

Our little group has grown to include Mahoneys with their bus and trailing the Buckboard, Eardleys driving with teardrop camper and Des and Lizzie camping. Horace and Jean with their caravan, Bob Piercy driving his Model A with his Celie and Tania and Darryl in modern vehicle with trailer.



Bob, Des, Horace (doing the washing) and Jean enjoying a convivial aperitif at Fitzroy River Lodge



Willare Bridge roadhouse -a long way from anywhere

Day 9

Left Fitzroy River Lodge (great camp site) bright and early after a chilly night which saw us reaching for the extra blankets. We had another 400 km day ahead. This far east first light is about 5.30am (first road train about 4.45) and sunset is 5.30pm so we have to make sure we make it to next camp in time to set up.

The morning past slowly with the scenery looking very spectacular. After lunch at Halls Creek we continued the short stretch to this evenings stop at Leynsters Rest. Halfway there Peter & Kaye got a flat tyre which was a few moments excitement followed by some tube repairs at the nights stop. The evening was full of tall stories, jokes and laughs. No PC police here. Horace dusted off the jaffle maker and it was toasties and baked bean jaffles all round. Because we were all roughing it on camp rations we finished the meal with banana splits with ice cream, cream, toasted nuts and chocolate sauce.

Day 10

We had visitors during the night in the form of 3 bulls who slept beside our camp. There was a lot of bellowing and rough housing before they settled down for the night. Much like camping beside backpackers really. Bob swapped a tyre out on Celie which was mysteriously wearing around only half the circumference. This mystery generated a lot of wild speculation before it was realised that we were driving to Darwin in a clockwise direction and that the return trip anti clockwise would surely fix it. Peter was disappointed to see his newly repaired tyre flat again by morning. He used the nearby river to find the puncture for a patch repair. I understand this is

his 4th puncture for the trip so far. After repairs we were ready to roll. We had a short 261km run to Kununurra which we reached by lunchtime. We'd finally found where all the water in the north-west was hiding.



Kununurra. All the water.



'Campgrounds' at Spackman's house

In Kununurra we were met by Bernice and Bevin Spackman. They had invited us to stay at their spectacular home on the Ord River. The Spackmans were truly hospitable and provided a fantastic dinner and dessert too. We got to poke around Bevin's Toyshop which contained his bikes, a jeep, jukebox and bar. Other bikes from his collection are on display in Gulliver's Bar and the produce section of the Local IGA!

We noticed our first Cane Toad here and it was joked that we'd need a torch to avoid stepping on them when going back to our tents. We were perturbed when told "nah, it's the snakes you need to look out for. The place is crawling with them".



Camp at Leycesters Rest.

We had a great nights camp here and were ready to leave when Bevin remembered he hadn't show un his convertible 67 Cadi. Peter jumped at the chance of taking it for a spin and he even managed to pull three chicks for the cruise. THEN we left for the crossing into the Northern Territory.

Day 11

We had a short day of 228km from Kununurra to Timber Creek. The scenery through here is very spectacular with dark red outcrops and beautiful boabs and gum trees. There are lots of photo opportunities which were almost impossible from the vehicles as the roads were so rough compared to WA.

The Eardleys veered off for a quick look at Lake Argyle while the rest of us tooled along to our camp destination, only stopping for a roadside morning tea of rockmelon and watermelon kindly provided by Bevin and Bernice. We stopped for fuel at Timber Creek by mid-afternoon and were lured into staying by the green lawns (and perhaps the pub). Road temperatures that afternoon were said to be 45deg. Des tried for some rehydration at the pub but found it a bit too pricey for his thirst. The Eardleys caught up in the early evening and a great evening was spent around the table with dessert provided by Mahonys and a nightcap of Bob's cask port.



Scenery through Judbarra/Gregory National Park.

Day 12

Timber Creek to Katherine was 292km. With the change in time zones, first light was now about 6.45am so we didn't leave as early as previous days. Continued with the beautiful scenery and stopped for morning tea of more rockmelon. We were able to see some cattle mustering close to the roadside which was something a bit different.

Reached Katherine by lunchtime and after 3867km, the Piercys and Miskos parted ways to their respective pre booked caravan parks. We all made extensive use of the pool and showers at Shady Lane Tourist Park which are outstanding.



A bit of mustering along the roadside.

We were all pleased to see the Bristow-Stagg's arrive in the late afternoon. They made a huge effort to get here after breakdowns on the way. Time to spit and polish the old girls and give them a well-deserved check-up.



Peter Eardley and Wilson (Peter is the one lying down)



Celie after some priming

Registration Day

After all the kilometres, sweat and tears of what Horace whimsically calls the Single Ply Tour of the North, the big day has arrived. In 36 deg heat we all trundled to the museum for registration and public display. All the old girls looked great and created quite a lot of public interest especially when touring around Katherine in prior days. They still turn heads on the road and kids especially loved to stop and chat. If we had \$1 for every photo of Celie taken over the last few weeks, we could probably cover the fuel bill to get here.... Maybe.

Darryl's mobile workshop is the 'go to' place with your mechanical woes for entrants from all states. It appeared he was offering a drive through serve for a while there.



Ian Paisley, Alan Jones, Darryl Freind, Our neighbours from QLD club and Peter Eardley at Daz's Driveway Mechanics.

NT Model A Ford Enthusiasts put on a great event with Devonshire teas, shady seating and wonderful goodie bags for entrants. Between registration and the nibbles and natter a short bus tour with a local historian was on offer which was very interesting and a welcome option. The nibbles and natter was a great opportunity to catch-up with old friends and meet some new.



Knots Crossing in Katherine on the points of historical interest tour.

On returning from the registration it was out with Wilson's (Eardley) radiator which had been leaking. A fellow tenant at Shady Lane was passing and in conversation discovered Wilson's predicament. Luckily he is a radiator repairer and offered some expertise and labour which saved the day.

Day 14

After a sleepless night (between the heat and the weaning cows mooing in a nearby field) the boys were finishing off Wilsons radiator. Another patient in Daz's Driveway Mechanics was Murray from SA. He needed a shockie repair weld which was carried out in a vacant caravan lot. I doubt we will be invited back.



Katherine Gorge

Then it was off to the museum to pick up our prepaid lunches before the first run of the rally to Nitmiluk Gorge and the river cruise. Again, it was a very hot day especially on the walks to the jetty and back but beautiful on the river. It was straight back to the caravan park and pool for an afternoon dip and nana nap before the evening welcome dinner.

NT Enthusiasts went to great lengths to provide bus transport for all attendees to the welcome dinner. What a great idea. We were ferried to the Katherine Country Club where we were fed an excellent buffet dinner and fantastic array of desserts. We were entertained by an ode to Mary and raffles were drawn (quilt won by yours truly - yah). Ferried home again by a somewhat frazzled looking driver and straight to bed (not with the driver). Great night NT Enthusiasts.



Chris Armistead at the custom made lecture (working lights and attention grabbing horn)

Day 16

Up bright and early to break camp and set off to Darwin. We are allowed to make our own time and there was a range of options to stop at along the way. Neither Celie nor Wilson were ready to leave creating a bit more work for Daz's Driveway Mechanics then we were off. Wilson expressed his displeasure in the best way he knew how; another flat tyre for Peter to change (7 count so far?).

So, here's the story. Some MARCWA's went to dinner a few nights ago and Peter got talking to the musician. Turns out his partner is the sister of an old Esperance friend of the Eardleys and he is a teacher at Pine Creek Primary School. 'Would we like to bring a few cars along to show the kids?' You bet. Four model A's detoured to visit the school on the way to Darwin where they were a big hit.



Peter Eardley giving a talk to a captivated (or should that be captive) audience.



Looking pretty pleased with himself in I'anson's ute.

Arrived in Darwin without further incident, checked in and had a catch-up at Rally Headquarters are Club Tropical.

Day 17

A free day today with optional runs to museums and points of interest to visit around Darwin. For those of us camping over the last few weeks it was a morning of shopping and washing.

Daz's Driveway Mechanics and Tool Hire (borrow) shop got a workout this morning from all states and the Misko Spare Parts was also open for business. A special few are off to Parliament House this evening but not us. We're out to dinner on The Waterfront. All of Darwin we've seen so far has been neat and appealing, but very steamy (and not in a good way).

It's hard to go far in Darwin without bumping into other Rallyers. As well as the Miskos, we ended up eating with Des Addison and wife Marg fresh off the plane, the Bristow-Staggs and the Roberts'.



Harbour side dining at Stokes Hill Wharf.

Day 18

Another day amusing ourselves with the many optional runs around Darwin. We drove out to The Darwin Military Museum on East Point. It was extraordinary and very interesting. The whole exhibit is a real credit to the curators. The Defence of Darwin multimedia experience is a must see. It recounts the 1942 bombing of Darwin and is entirely wonderful.



Museum exhibit.



Commemorative plaque.

The mandatory run to Mindil Markets in the late afternoon was a huge success with all the old girls getting a lot of interest and questions from the public. Visitors were able to vote of their favourite entrant and the winning vehicle will be announced later. Eating was a high priority with the range of cuisines a bit overwhelming from Italian bakery to Sri Lankan. I was up for the challenge however and visited as many as I could.



Line up of Model A (photo courtesy of Jean Misko)



Darwin sunset - standing room only (photo courtesy of Jean Misko)



Line up of vehicles at Mindil Markets (photo courtesy of Jean Misko)

To give you an idea of the weather we're experiencing on Tuesday, our first day here, at 11.30pm it was 26deg and 87% humidity. And this morning at 7.30am it was 25 deg and 92% humidity! It means the pool is THE place to be.

Day 19

Off to the wetlands this morning. It was a hot drive for the old cars but worth the trip. Everyone enjoyed the Windows on the Wetland centre. Many took advantage of the Jumping Crocodile River Cruise and commented on the witty and knowledgeable guides. Returned to Rally HQ for happy hour and a catch-up on the day's events.

Final day

As many people are leaving right after the farewell breakfast tomorrow, is effectively our last day. Washing, prepping and shopping for the journey home are all top priority. The Misko/Piercy party will be reforming but Eardleys, Mahony's, Bristow-Staggs's and Addison (singular) will be taking their time with family visits and side trips so will not joining us for the entire trip. They will all be missed around the camp table in the evenings especially Ray's 'True Stories'. There are a few eastern staters who intend taking the long way home via WA and we might see them on the way.



Decorations at the farewell dinner.

The farewell dinner was a huge success. The setting was enticing around the pool and the weather was balmy and still. We were entertained and moved by Waldo Bayley - The Bush Poet and by Tony and his poem to Bootlace, his Model A.

We have a very enticing presentation for Murray Bridge 2018 which had people signing up on the spot.



Diners at table in a beautiful setting at Tropical Resort.

Compliments to the NT committee for all their thoughtful planning and arrangements. The all round opinion is that the 24th National Model A Ford Meet has been a huge success and is a credit to the organisers. I know our group has had a wonderful time making new friends and catching up with the old ones and seeing the sights is the NT. Tomorrow we head off again for home, but that is another story.

Many thanks Fred for updating the website, this is the last one.

Off to farewell breakfast then home.

Regards Tania Piercy and Darryl Friend

