

Thanks to Ian Wallis for his timely email.... and for spurring us on to write this article to update the general membership on adventures....



George Gill Range
From "Tank Hill"- Kings Creek Station

I can remember my first trip to Central Australia with my grandfather (Ruth's dad) who had somehow become involved with a church group heading off on a bus trip to celebrate Fr Max Bowen's inordination... That was in 1972.

I distinctly recall the feeling of being 'home' in the red dust and the expanse which is the central Australian desert. The roads were all unsealed and interspersed

with bulldust holes which seriously threatened the welfare of the buses and the passengers. The buses had been "named", for the purposes of the journey "Alpha" and "Omega" (the beginning and the end). Little did I (Sue) know just how much of a beginning this journey was to be. But in 1972 as I sat in the bed of the Todd river watching some little Aboriginal kids and elders; the interaction sparked something in my heart. This something never went away and over the past decade and a half our visits back to the heartland of Australia have become more frequent, more intense and much more focussed.

Merette's first red centre experience was in her Navy days in 1973/74 whilst en route to/from Darwin but we are locals now and we have purpose and intent in our returns. Funny how things take place isn't it.

In 1991, before Kings Canyon resort had been officially opened; Rette, myself and a Melbourne friend had made a trip to Central Australia. Of course hire car contracts say no dirt roads...oops.... The road to Kings Canyon was dirt and loose gravel and corrugations all the way from the Lasseter hwy turn off.... on the way we passed a little place known as Kings Creek Station.... there was a transportable building, a fuel pump and seemingly not much else.

In 1994 we again returned with a group of 16. The road to Kings Canyon had been realigned and was bitumen... and, being adventurous we traversed the newly opened, very rough, Mereenie Loop Road/Track back to Glen Helen!!! By 1996 Kings Creek Station was getting bigger and catering for more tourists. But again we passed by without stopping.

1998/9 – in preparation for the New Year celebrations we began the logistics for a trip for 150 Adults and 10 kids. Our 1999/2000 New Millennium celebrations were held at Kings Canyon under the stars.

2001.... Another visit organised for a group but this is where things become interesting synchronistically. This Melbourne/international group were at Kings Canyon in August and in meditation we connected with the elders and the dreamings. I asked permission for our group to

enter and pass through the Aboriginal Lands...and, in meditation, permission was granted by a tall, very slim, bearded Aboriginal Elder...who *appeared* to me as we drove the Mereenie Loop Road. Unbeknownst to usat the same time a group of Aboriginal men were holding ceremony in Kings Canyon area and a traditional elder witnessed the commitment by another indigenous man to look after the women and children of this particular area. I have since seen a photo of the Elder and it is the same man who "*appeared*" to me.

A few days later, after returning the bus to its Alice Springs town base, I was sitting quietly in a taxi deep in my own thoughts and on the way to the airport when the driver suddenly looked at me and said "You been out to Santa Theresa?" (Aboriginal community) "No", I replied. "You should go. They need you". The Taxi driver had no idea of what we were doing or why we had visited but knowing my own commitment, I nearly fell out of the taxi.

We returned to Melbourne and got on with our lives but the love of the desert and it's people had never left. Nor had our passion to make a difference for the Aboriginal children abated.

The Aboriginal elder who had held the Kings Canyon ceremonies was murdered in Alice Springs later that year, and my teacher who witnessed my commitment died in 2002.

In 2005, Rette and I took off for a 7 week trip and this time we stayed at Kings Creek Station. We camped in their campground and each time the owner of the station went by he would stop and chat to us, and he began to share. We were taken to some incredibly precious places way outback on the station and on our last day there... in chatting to the owner and his wife the word "Reiki" came up. "Oh, we wish we'd known you do Reiki... we would have loved a Reiki while you were here.".... "We'll be back" was our reply. They thought we meant next year... or the next...,

We did return for a couple of days two weeks later and the look on the faces of Ian and Lyn Conway was something to behold. Our return, in service of them, sealed what has grown to become a deep and lasting friendship!

In 2006 we focalised a group of 19 from across Australia and overseas, introducing them to our friends and the wonder which is Kings Creek Station and the George Gill Range area. This trip had been entitled "Healing with the Land" We took the group on an overnight Quad bike tour where we slept in swags and we lay eyes to the sky entranced by the blanket of stars..... Healings happened. Discussions took place and it became obvious that our paths had crossed with the Conway's, our dreams, hopes and visions for children had connected....

We taught to Reiki classes to the owners and employees of Kings Creek Station and brought our Teachers' dream of a Reiki centre in the Desert into reality.... and we started *Dreaming* with Ian and Lyn Conway.



Where is that pipe line to Eppalock? 2007

Ruth and Ken Hill came to visit and it rained... no, it poured while they were with us, and we were cut off from the Resort, the Station and everywhere else.....



the roads and the roadside were like vast rivers and lakes but a few days later the water receded and the desert came to life.

On our way home to Melbourne at the end of April 2007 we spent time with Ian and Lyn Conway at their Adelaide home. We had further visits to Kings Creek Station in July and September of 07 and a month there during the Olympics in 2008, living in the homestead while Ian and Lyn went

overseas to their daughters' wedding.

3a goes in here.....

In amongst it all, Sue retired on 31/12/08 after 33 years in the Police force. Now we make regular trips to Adelaide when six cultural Aboriginal children have compulsory exeat weekends out of the boarding facilities at Prince Alfred College and Westminster School.



When these children, sponsored by the Conway's, and now the first of the "Conway's Kids" arrived at Kings Creek Station en route to school in Adelaide they had only the clothes they stood up in. The old suitcases they carried to the plane were empty, but they didn't want to go without luggage! Ian and Lyn Conway, together with their supporters, have provided everything and the children, so used to living in the red dirt, are embracing the opportunities with gusto....

Children from Ukaka Homelands

We have spent innumerable hours on the computer creating the necessary corporate documents, had numerous phone calls and email contact, meetings in Adelaide, Alice Springs, and Daylesford of all places so that, on the 10th of June, 2009 the Conway's Kids Trust Fund was officially launched at Prince Alfred College in Adelaide by Senator (the Honourable) Nick Minchin



Conway's Kids ' exeat' weekend at Mannum

in the presence of Judge Andrew Wilson and other distinguished guests.

The vision : *To ensure that Cultural Aboriginal Children from remote Homelands have the same educational opportunities as wider Australians.*



The Conway's Kids Trust Fund aims to be able to fund placements (at the request of and with the support and permission of their families) for 20 cultural Aboriginal Children to attend Boarding Schools in Adelaide within five years.

Our Website (www.conwayskids.org.au) is under construction... please check as by the time you read this it may be live.... So now, just for Info...

**Children with Elder - Lizzie Jako at Launch of
rust - Prince Alfred College, Adelaide 10/6/09**

Kings Creek Station is an 1800 square kilometre Camel and Cattle property. It fits between Tempe and Angus Downs Stations; and Watarrka National Park. It backs onto Curtain Springs Station on the Lasseter Highway and it extends to the edge of Lake Amadeus. Toyota did the filming and photography for the launch of the 200 series land cruiser at Kings Creek Station in August of 07 and National Geographic, Dick Smith; Suzuki, and so many other well known people are known names at KCS. There are petroglyphs, dating around 40,000 years old in the rocky outcrops on the station and Ian was one of the first to export live camels back to the middle east.

When Ian and Lyn began life at Kings Creek Station they had no power, no water and no homestead.... Water was collected from a waterhole 8 km away and trucked to the homestead across rough desert 4 x 4 tracks. Lyn had a washing machine but no power and all this was in 1980! Water is now drawn from 180Ft down via a bore. Power is provided 24/7 by two diesel generators; washing machines, air conditioners and all the other 'mod cons' we have in the city are also available.

The first thing Ian did when they acquired the land in 1980 was to (by hand) create an airstrip to ensure his children could be flown out for medical treatment if needed. KCS now has a 1630 metre all weather 24 hour illuminated airstrip which serves the RFDS to medically evacuate about 50 tourists a year from the area. It also serves the "Conway's Kids" who are flown home by light plane for school holidays.

While 'up home' we have

- ✍ Sat in the sand with the Aboriginal women, been hunting for honey ants and witchety grubs, (yes we have eaten them – yum!).
- ✍ Been part of a clean up team for the Ukaka community – front end loaders, trucks, graders and lots of rubbish bags! The 'powers that be' had provided the community a big trailer to do the rubbish run but of course...they had nothing suitable to tow it with!
- ✍ Played and swum with, amused, fed and cuddled the Aboriginal children and babies, and advocated for the Aboriginal people to centrelink and other government agencies.
- ✍ Run in 12 new Quad bikes... over two very hot days ...miles upon miles up and down the airstrip and the quad bike tracks through the desert. We have experienced temperatures of 33 degrees at 0730 and a top of 53degrees (now that's hot)

- ✍ Delivered lunch to those working ‘out back’... where we left at 11 am and returned at 4.30 - just to deliver food and boil a billy for them!
- ✍ Attended accident scenes – roll overs and alike. The local police are a minimum of 2.5 hrs away.... the closest medical service 40 km away.
- ✍ Raised a baby kangaroo (Rueben James) until he was old enough to be released.
- ✍ Helped to raise a baby camel “Missie” who is now “out the back” doing her adolescence before being trained to be in the string for tourist rides.



We have learned that

- ? The common species of snake out here on the station are King Browns and Western Browns – and in the hot weather they move at night!!!! You don’t go anywhere in the dark without a torch. Death Adders are more likely found around the Kings Canyon resort and in the rocky outcrops.
- ? You never go anywhere with out a water bottle (2 ltrs minimum);
- ? It is best to always sit (or sleep) on the open ground...never amongst the leaf litter under the trees.
- ? The desert is regenerating. When Ian was raised on Angus Downs station (60years ago) the land was largely bare. Now it is a carpet of green - mulga, witchety bush and desert oaks.

The difficulty with travelling anywhere after dark are the numerous wild horses, camels and kangaroos which roam the desert. The horses stand on the bitumen at night because it’s warm! The camels lie down on the road at night because it’s warm! We have seen the damage to people and vehicles of not heeding the don’t travel at night lesson.

- ? Aboriginal dot painting and didgeridoos are not native to the central Arrente lands. Both originate from much further north.

- ? Mutijulu people are not the traditional owners of Uluru (Ayers Rock) – it is an area where all Aboriginal peoples came and it just happened that when the govt asked “who owns this area, these people were presentand of course said “we do”...but ask any other group and they will say ‘we do’ too!
- ? Luritja which is the area around the George Gill Range means stranger. So when someone asked “who are these (aboriginal) peoples?” The answer came back from the traditional owner inhabitants “Luritja”...meaning strangers....

Our ‘duties’ when at the station:

Mail deliveries. Meet the plane at the airstrip at about 0830 every Wednesday – It buzzes the station so we know when to head for the airstrip. Then deliver the mailbags to the Station, Northern Territory Emergency Services, The Ranger Station, The Resort, The remote health clinic and the Homeland school teacher. Have coffee and a chat at a couple of the stops.

In the Cafe at Kings Creek: Making Coffee (I make great Latte’s); cooking burgers/chips and making sandwiches; washing dishes... cooking dinner for the 20 plus staff who work at the station;

Helping in the souvenir shop;

Creating things in the workshop... general maintenance of the camp ground and station (raking, painting, repairs);

Riding quad bikes and leading tourists on quad bike tours and showing campers to their camp sites.

Taking the dogs for a swim in the dam about 6 km out from the station- you take a beer with you and when the beer is finished so is the swimming!

Preparing and servicing the overnight camp site for quad bike tours. This involves taking everything required about 10 km out to the site – it is a 4x4 track up to the top of the ridge where a 3 walled shower and flushing toilet are in situ - right on the edge of the escarpment... a loo with a view!

And much more depending on what the need is, such as: On one visit Ian shared that he was creating a rocking horse for the children at Ukaka homelands. He used an air compressor cylinder as the body, put an old saddle on it and mounted the lot on a couple of old car springs...but it needed a head and I was given the task of creating one (Yes.... jigsaws, paint and other tools – my world!)

“Oh, and we need a tail” said Ian. Now Rette and I had been driving along a road a few days prior and on the side, a few km away was a horse which had been hit by a bus.... We knew where to get

the tail! We cautiously approached the very bloated carcass from upwind and gently cut the hair away...aware that any sudden movement could cause it to explode.... We returned triumphant, but the day after, as we drove by the same spot, nature had taken it’s course and the decomposition was even further advanced...how close we had come!

As for sailing....I have mentioned this to Ian.... land yachts could be a good tourist attraction – on the claypans out the back.... imagine a day of adventure... a quadbike ride to the claypans and an hour or two of sailing in the desert!

This last initiative would certainly test our loyalty to Victoria....but time will tell. In the meantime we have plans afoot to go home to Kings Creek Station again in the near future. If you are travelling through maybe we will see you there.

Sue and Merette