

A Trip Through The Central Wheatbelt

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I had first heard about the Kwolyin Campground about 18 months ago when I was having a discussion with my mechanic and we were discussing a couple of our 4WD trips around Western Australia. Tom informed me that the campground at Kwolyin was built on the old town site oval and had new toilets and a camp kitchen. It had been built as a part of the Western Australian Royalties for Region program and was a free campsite. This pricked my interest as I am always looking for somewhere new to visit and stay.

The town of Kwolyin was built in the early 1900s and is located between the towns of Quairading and Bruce Rock. It was abandoned in the late 1970s and the last building standing was the Kwolyin Tavern which was burnt down under mysterious circumstances in 1992.

The campground was built by the Shire of Bruce Rock after camping at Kokerbin Rock was banned and following the formation of the Granite Way Tourist Route.

Last year I managed to pass the campground whilst on a trip through the Eastern Wheatbelt visiting some of the granite rocks located out there and my first impressions were good and I was eager to get back and spend a night there.

So on the Australia Day long weekend in January this year my wife and I packed up the 4WD, hitched up the Campertrailer and headed off for a look through the Central Wheatbelt and to stay the night at Kwolyin. This trip was to be a combination of a photographic trip as well as a recon for an up and coming 4WD trip that I am leading for members of the 4WD Club of WA.

We left our home in Rockingham and headed towards Armadale as our route was to be via Armadale to Beverley along the Brookton Highway and then onto Westdale Rd. Apart from some minor traffic issues we made good time and we were soon turning left onto Westdale Rd.

Even though it was the middle of summer the day was beautiful with bright blue skies and a comfortable temperature. The countryside looked dry and most of the harvest had been completed but there was still a stark beauty in what we were looking at as we casually drove along.

After a while we came across a small church with the unique name of St John's in the Wilderness. This is just one of many small churches dotted throughout the Western Australian countryside. They served as a meeting place for the remote country communities as well as places of worship. Most of them are small in size and were built from local materials and this beautiful church was no different.

It was built from local stone and construction was completed in 1895 with restoration work conducted about 20 years ago. There is a small graveyard with some very interesting headstones and one can only wonder what the stories the old

timers could tell. One set of three graves was a man and with his two wives on either side of him, one hopes they all got on well together!



After our short break it was time to get back on the road and we made our way towards Beverley where we stopped for morning tea and had a short stroll around this small country town's main street. The main street is lined with a number of buildings built in the 'art deco' style of the 1920s and have been kept in an excellent condition one such building is the Town Hall. There is good parking in the main street as well as the information bay for larger vehicles and is a short stroll to the shops.

Also located next to the information bay is the unusually named Dead Finish Museum which provides an insight into the old days and way of life in early Beverley. Beverley also has an Aeronautical Museum that has a great display of aircraft.

We could have easily spent another hour or two here but we had to get back on the road to head towards our next stop which was to be for lunch.

We headed off on the main road towards York but soon turned off and made our way through the countryside towards the small settlement of Greenhills which is located on Greenhills Rd approximately 27 km east of York.

We arrived at Greenhills just around midday and before going for lunch we went and checked out the old Greenhills Bakery (no longer in use). This small building was built in 1896 to service the surrounding area and would have had to have been one of the smallest bakeries ever built. The bakery was restored a few years ago by the current land owners and has a small photographic display which is viewable through the window.



After checking out the bakery and feeling hungry we made our way back towards the Greenhills Tavern. This old tavern has undergone some major restoration over the last few years and walking inside the doors is like stepping back a quite a few years to the early 1900s.

While we waited to place our order two young guys were served their lunch, both had ordered the Chicken Parma and the size of the meal was something to believe and my wife quickly said to me “No, you can’t have it, remember you are on a diet!” and with that I dutifully ordered two steak sandwiches as well as some drinks.

As we waited for our meal we had a chat with the barman / owner as well as some of the other patrons while a steady flow of day trippers made their way in and ordered their meals as well.

After a short wait our steak sandwiches arrived and it was a great meal, not too big (great for my diet) and just the right amount of chips. Soon we had finished our meal and were back on our way.



We headed towards Quairading and then onto the Kwolyin campground. As we drove along the skies started to fill with dark clouds and the air thickened and it was clear that one of the Wheatbelt’s famous summer thunderstorms was brewing.

On arriving at the Kwolyin campground we did a quick circuit and found a nice cleared spot and set up the Campertrailer. As mentioned earlier the campground is on the old sports oval and it is circular in shape with sites for large vehicles and caravans cleared on the ring road. Most of the sites can easily fit large fifth wheelers or two caravans if you wanted to set up with friends. Also the sites are spaced well a part from each other giving you privacy.

There is a site inside the ring road for campers to set up their tents and this is near the newly constructed toilets and camper’s kitchen. No open fires are allowed between Nov – Mar and there was a great information board near the toilets.

As we set up our Pioneer Campertrailer I asked my wife if she wanted the awning up because of the likelihood of rain. She replied “what do you think?” and I said “these storms usually pass quickly” so we decided not to worry about the awning.

No sooner had we finished the set up and there was a big clap of thunder and the rain came, not heavy but enough to be annoying and lasted for about two hours, so while my wife had an afternoon nap I rolled out the awning on the 4WD and sat there and enjoyed the thunder and lightning.

In between the rain showers we went on a walk around the old town site which has an interpretative trail with signs explaining what buildings had existed at certain points. It was an interesting walk and rather pleasant, even with the odd drop of rain falling and a good way to stretch the legs.

By 6pm the rain had cleared but the thunder and clouds stayed and this ensured a beautiful sunset as we prepared and then ate our dinner. By 9pm I was falling asleep in my chair so I decided it was time to go to bed.



The next morning we were woken by the calls of many birds and were greeted with bright blue skies with just a small amount of white clouds snaking their way across the sky. It was shaping up to be a glorious day.

We made our breakfast and once we had finished it we slowly packed up. We were in no hurry plus I wanted the canvas of the Campertrailer to dry out as much as possible before we packed it away.

By 9am we were packed up and ready to leave, so one final check that everything was stored and secured and we headed off. Exiting the campground we turned left and made our way to Kokerbin Rock which is reputed to be the third largest monolith in Australia.

The road to Kokerbin Rock is a sealed road and the short drive of 9 km only takes about 15 mins and soon to your left you see this large granite rock suddenly grow out of the ground. Unfortunately, unlike Uluru where the country around it is flat which adds to the dramatic appeal of seeing it, the country around Kokerbin Rock is hilly which somewhat reduces the impact of seeing the Rock and it's size until you actually turn into the reserve and see it up close.

There is a small picnic area with tables and new toilets which has a small parking area. There are interpretive signs that show the Rock and points of interest. The main feature here is the large piece of the Rock that has broken off and slid down forming a large cavern like cave. One can only imagine the noise it made when this came crashing down.

There is a ring road around the Rock and some larger areas for parking as well as points of interest to stop and have a look. At the site of a historic well you can park your car and take a walk a long a track that takes you to the top of Kokerbin Rock where the views are apparently stunning. Unfortunately for me walks like that are no longer viable so I just have to take their word for it.

After an hour or so it was time for use to leave and we exited the reserve and turned left onto O'Grady's Rd and headed towards Mt Stirling which is another of the granite rocks to be found along the Granite Way tourist route.

The route we took was on mostly sealed roads or well graded gravel roads with no major issues and soon we turned into the small parking area at Mt Stirling. One of the reasons I wanted to stop here was to visit the old church but access to it

was on a road which had a sign post informing that it was a private road and no access was granted so not wanting to upset anyone we decided not to venture up it and decided to have morning tea instead.



Once finished we made our way across to Goldfields Rd which runs between Tammin and York to head into York. This road was first used back in the mid to late 1800s by fortune hunters making their way to the Yilgarn and Kalgoorlie goldfields.

Along the way you pass through the locality of Youndegin and you will see an old building on the north side of the road which has been restored by members of the Cunderdin Historical Society. The historical significance of this building is that it was the first country police station built in Western Australia. It was constructed in the mid 1800s to protect travellers heading to the goldfields. It was later turned into an Inn before falling into disrepair.

Soon we were passing through York and we decided to take the backroads from York to Clackline and then onto Bakers Hill where we stopped for lunch at the Bakers Hill Pie Shop and it is well worth it. Once we finished our lunch I started the vehicle up and pulled slowly out and turned onto the Great Eastern Highway to make our way to Perth and then down to Rockingham bring to an end a wonderful weekend driving through a beautiful part of the Western Australian countryside.

Do yourself a favour, if you get the chance get out and visit the Wheatbelt and you will be pleasantly surprised.

Fact File

Beverly is situated about 140 km from Perth in the Avon Valley via the Brookton Hwy and Westdale Rd. For information on things to do and museum opening times visit - www.beverleywa.com

Greenhills Tavern is approximately 27 km east of York on Greenhills Rd via the Quairading – York Rd.

Kwolyin Campground is located on the Quairading – Bruce Rock Rd about 7 km west of the small town of Shackleton. Camping is free at the campground and most sites are large enough for bigger vehicles such as fifth wheelers. There are flushing toilets and a camp kitchen. No open fires from Nov – Mar inclusive.

Kokerbin Rock is approximately 9 km north of Kwolyin campground and is a part of the Granite Way Tourist Route.

Baker Hill Pie Shoppe is located on the Great Eastern Hwy and serves great pies, sausage rolls and sweet cakes.

All roads are sealed roads or well graded gravel roads; however, caution should be taken when driving on country roads.

Fuel is available at most of the major towns enroute but may operate limited hours on weekends and at night.