



HSNT ANNUAL FIELD TRIP 18-20 JUNE 2025

NT/WA BORDER: THE 1927 KIMBERLEY OBELISK, ROSEWOOD & ARGYLE STATIONS

A plaque on the Northern Territory/Western Australian border has been replaced nearly 100 years since it was first mounted and twenty years after it was missing. The purpose of this 4WD trip was to replace the missing NT plaque on the NT/WA border obelisk. In 2005, members from the Kununurra Historical Society visited the site and discovered the missing plaque. It was in 1921 that the WA/NT border determinations were made by WA Government Astronomer Curlewis, South Australian Government Astronomer, Dodwell along with SA Surveyor Hambidge. The men arrived on the WA State Ship *Bambra* to determine where the border was on the ground. In 1927, the obelisk was erected by a WA Survey crew which included WH Brown and Tom Cleave. Andrew Barker, President of the Kununurra Historical Society had regularly visited the obelisk and on the fourth visit in 2015 obtained the measurements so a replica plaque could be made. Andrew sent the measurements to HSNT Member, Earl James who arranged and paid for a new plaque. However it has taken until 2025 to make the trip



Historical Society members, Earl & Wendy James, Lyn Reid & Janie Mason at the site in 2006

Photograph courtesy Brian Reid



The plaque to be mounted

On 18 June, participants met over dinner at the Timber Creek Roadhouse.

We left early next morning and headed in convoy westward along the Victoria Highway. On the way, we visited Auvergne Pastoral Station to see Sam Croker's grave. Samuel Burns Croker (20 June 1852 – 20 September 1892) was a stockman and drover in Queensland and the Northern Territory. He was known as "Greenhide Sam Croker", because of his skill in working with greenhide which is the untanned hide of an animal. He often worked alongside Nat Buchanan and, together, they 'pioneered' the Murrarji Track in 1886. A participant in several Aboriginal massacres, he was killed by Aboriginal stockman Charlie Flannigan on Auvergne Station.

Also buried on Auvergne Station are rough rider Archibald Skuthorp (14 February 1886- 30 June 1918) and Auvergne manager, George Nudely Fogarty (10 June 1895-5 December 1972).

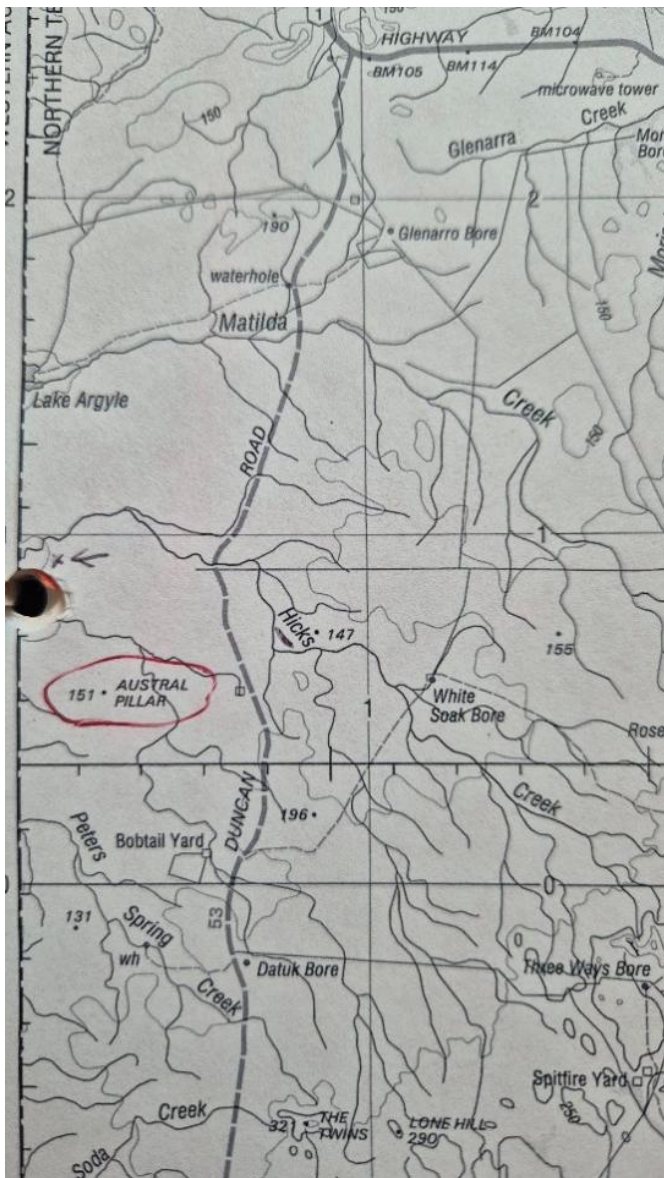


Ian Archibald, Bev Phelts & Jared Archibald at Sam Croker's grave

Arrived at the Duncan/Victoria Highway at lunchtime. Meet up with Jared & Ian Archibald and Kununurra Historical Society President, Andrew Barker at Matilda Waterhole. Further down the Duncan we stopped for a lunch break



Lunch break - From left: Derek Pugh, Jared Archibald, Allan Mitchell, Andrew Barker, Jim Leach, John Krumbeck & Ian Archibald



After lunch it was time to tackle the very rough track to the obelisk which is on south side of the Hicks Creek fenceline. The track is extremely overgrown and it put some deep scratches in the 4WDs. The track is not for the faint-hearted, bouncing over many blacksoil basalt boulders in places. We had one blow out, one flat and a broken aerial on the track. Even though it was only 7kms in, it took us a good hour one way



Tyre changing

The easy part was mounting the plaque on the obelisk and Derek Pugh and Ian Anderson made light work of it.



From left front: Ian Anderson, Jim Leach, Derek Pugh, Bev Phelts, Andrew Barker, John Krumbeck, Ian Archibald, Allan Mitchell

At the back: Harry & Roy Pugh, Jared Archibald

Photo courtesy Derek Pugh



Historical Society of the NT
President, Derek Pugh and
Kununurra Historical Society
President, Andrew Barker

Derek on the NT side and Andrew
on the WA side

Job done – and a few beers were cracked when we returned to the Duncan



From left: Andrew Barker, Jim Leach, John Krumbeck &
Jared Archibald

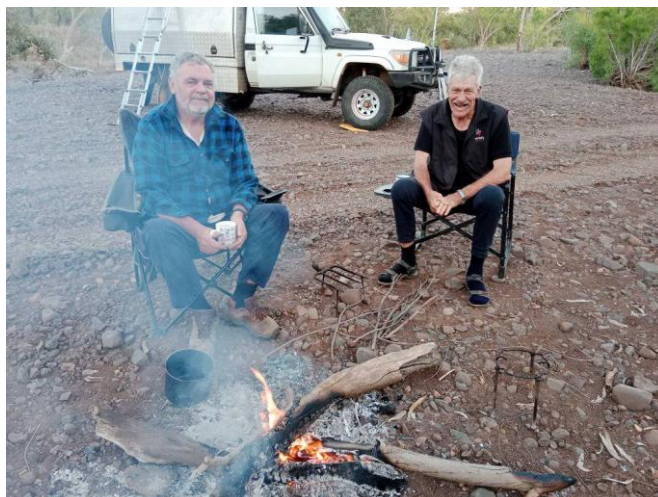


The 4WDs at the end of the track

It was almost 5pm and we needed to set up camp on the Behn River, about 37 km / 40-50 minutes south on the Duncan Road.



Allan Mitchell & Jim Leach



Derek Pugh & John Krumbeck



Ian Anderson & Allan Mitchell



Around the campfire telling big tall stories
From left: Derek Pugh, Jim Leach, John Krumbeck, Bev Phelts & Jared Archibald
Photograph courtesy Allan Mitchell

The successful trip was well toasted and we hope the plaque will remain on the obelisk for the next 100 years.

Next morning we all went our separate ways – some went back to Darwin and others to Wolf Creek Crater

For those interested in obtaining more information, the Kununurra Museum has a permanent display of information and photographs on the history of the obelisk, the people and the region.

Big Thanks to Derek Pugh for organising the trip and Andrew Barker for his reccie run to the site and the historical information about the site

Participants

Derek, Roy & Harry Pugh, Andrew Barker, Bev Phelts, Allan Mitchell, Ian Anderson, Jared Archibald & Ian Archibald, John Krumbeck, Jim Leach

Mechanical problems and flat tyres – One blow out, one flat tyre & one broken arial

Photographs

All the photographs, unless otherwise indicated, were provided by Bev Phelts



The Historical Society of the Northern Territory replaced the lost border plaque on the Kimberley obelisk during its annual field trip.



Bordering on bizarre – remote trek leaves mark

Camden Smith

A contentious plaque on the Northern Territory, Western Australian border has been replaced almost 100 years after it was first laid and 20 years after going missing.

The Historical Society of the Northern Territory replaced the lost border plaque on the Kimberley obelisk during its annual field trip.

HSNT president Derek Pugh said the obelisk sat on the 129th meridian and was reached via Duncan Rd and 10km of "rough" bush bashinh.

Mr Pugh said the (then-) NSW border was originally moved from 135° east to 129° east after Fort Dundas, the first settlement on the north coast, was built on Melville Island in 1824.

"It was, at first, just a line

on the map," he said. "But in 1920, accurate astrological measurements taken by WA government astronomers found that the border that passed through local Kimberley cattle stations was incorrect.

"It was 2.9km east of the 129th meridian."

Seven years later, the Kimberley obelisk was erected by Western Australian surveyors WH Brown and Tom Cleave exactly on the meridian.

They installed brass plaques on both the WA and NT sides.

"Western Australian cattlemen were furious," Mr Pugh said.

"Michael Durack of Argyle Station complained that he had lost 2km of land as it had become a part of the Territory.

"On the other hand,

Territory cattlemen were pleased as Rosewood, Newry and other Territory stations claimed it."

Mr Pugh said society members discovered the original plaque on the Territory side had been stolen during a 2007 field trip to the obelisk to mark its 80th anniversary.

Then Historical Society president Earl James arranged production of a new plaque, but it's taken until now for a subsequent site visit to be organised.

"It was a pleasure for the historical society to make the trek west and to replace the plaque, despite several flat tyres and damage to vehicles on the rough track in," Mr Pugh said.

"Brass plaques last a long time, and we are hopeful it will still be there thousands of years from now."

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From left front: Ian Anderson, Jim Leach, Derek Pugh, Bev Phelts, Andrew Barker, John Krumbeck, Ian Archibald, Allan Mitchell

At the back: Harry & Roy Pugh, Jared Archibald