

# PT STUART/MARY RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE NT CAMPING TRIP: July 2007

By Bev Phelts



The annual HSNT camping trip was held within the Proposed Mary River National Park located 150 kilometres east of Darwin. On Friday 27 July 2007 we mustered at the Bark Hut for morning tea. The first day was spent visiting Brian Creek and Mistake Billabong before setting up camp at Point Stuart Wilderness Lodge.

Left: Some of the group. Ruth Kerr, Executive Federation of Australian Historical Societies and HSNT Secretary, Janie Mason

The rest of the day and following morning was taken up with exploring nearby Jimmy Creek Monsoon Forest and the abandoned Pt Stuart abattoir.

Right: Ray Rushbury, Melbourne visitor, and the abattoir and its dam



The highlight of the trip was walking the last section of the track to the sea where John McDouall Stuart ended his south-north expedition. This was Stuart's third attempt to reach the northern coast and his success ensured that the Overland Telegraph Line and settlement would follow. The track had only been opened up by Parks and Wildlife three days previously. We were the first group to go through.

Left: Council Members, Bev Phelts, Yvonne Forest, Janie Mason & visitor, Ray Rushbury



Along the track - Stuart's Cairn which was erected by the NT Reserves Board in 1971. The Cairn replaced a tree that Stuart had engraved his initials on. Unfortunately, the tree had been burnt in a bushfire in 1902.

We reached Stuart's northern coast (Finke Bay). The tide was out but we hoped it was in for Stuart's arrival and the mosquitoes not so active.



On the last day we took Hardies Track. The track was named after Frank Hardie, a buffalo & crocodile hunter, who was the first leaseholder to build in the area. On the way to the Arnhem Highway we visited Corroboree, Mary River, Bird Billabong, Hardies Lagoon and Rockhole. There was plenty of wildlife – wallabies (in our camp), crocodiles, buffalo, birds and lizards. The trip was hailed a success and probably our first without any flat tyres.



Pelicans and ducks on Bird Billabong



Buffalo on Stuart's track