

Kimberley revisited after 61 years

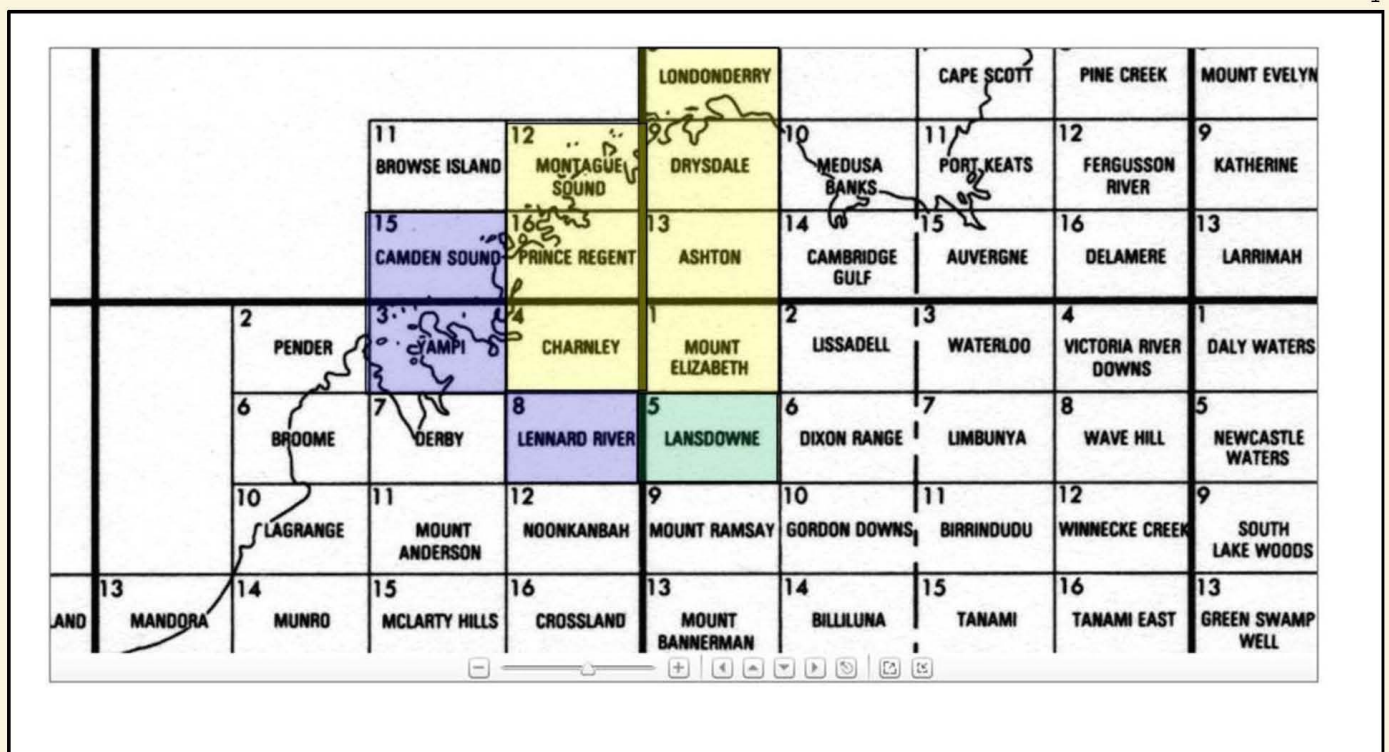
BMR Lansdowne mapping 1964

Compiled by Geoff Derrick, 17 October 2025

This was the task, undertaken by the Bureau of Mineral Resources, with help from GSWA—to map Lansdowne sheet at 1:250,000 scale.

BMR geologists: Ken Plumb (party leader); Dave Gellatly (just arrived from Great Britain and Somali; Geoff Derrick—graduate geologist from UQ; Tony Allen (GSWA—hydrologist). Vehicles - SWB Land Rovers and a Bedford truck, WW2 vintage. LANSDOWNE shown in green below.

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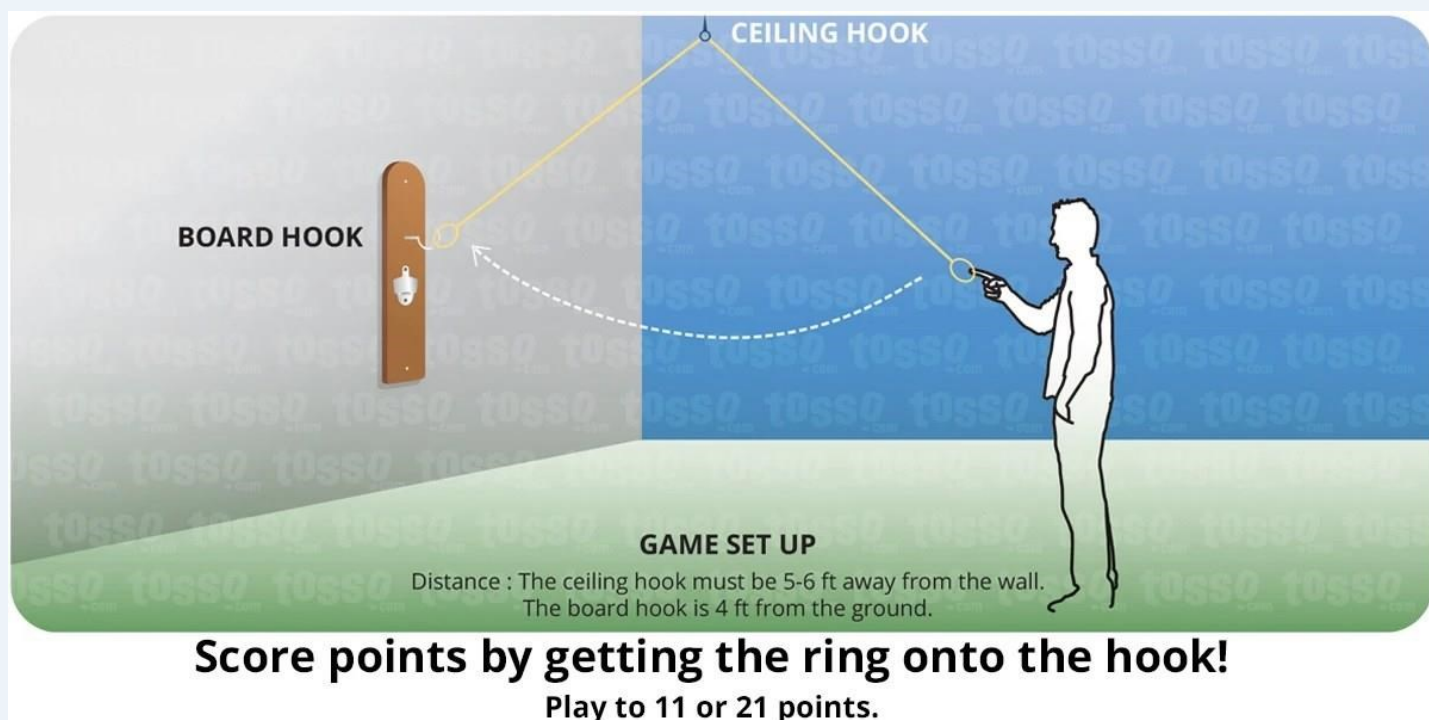
All vehicles were painted Dept of Supply yellow; the LRover was fitted out with bullbars, winch, and black rails on sides and front to deflect small trees etc.



Figure 2: Our route up the northern highway; our stops are named and highlighted with a red dot. Our major breakdown with one of the Bedford trucks happened between Port Hedland and Broome.

Major breakdown near 80-Mile Beach at green star—12 hours delay while fixing broken spring on truck. The trip Perth to Landsdowne took about 8 days.

**Whim Creek—a whistle stop between Roebourne and Port Hedland,
where one plays the Ring and hook game**



The Whim Creek
Hotel, April 1964



At the truck breakdown, we walked 4km or so to 80 Mile Beach—at that time, very deserted, but with vast numbers of flies, and amazing collectible shells lying everywhere, untouched. . .



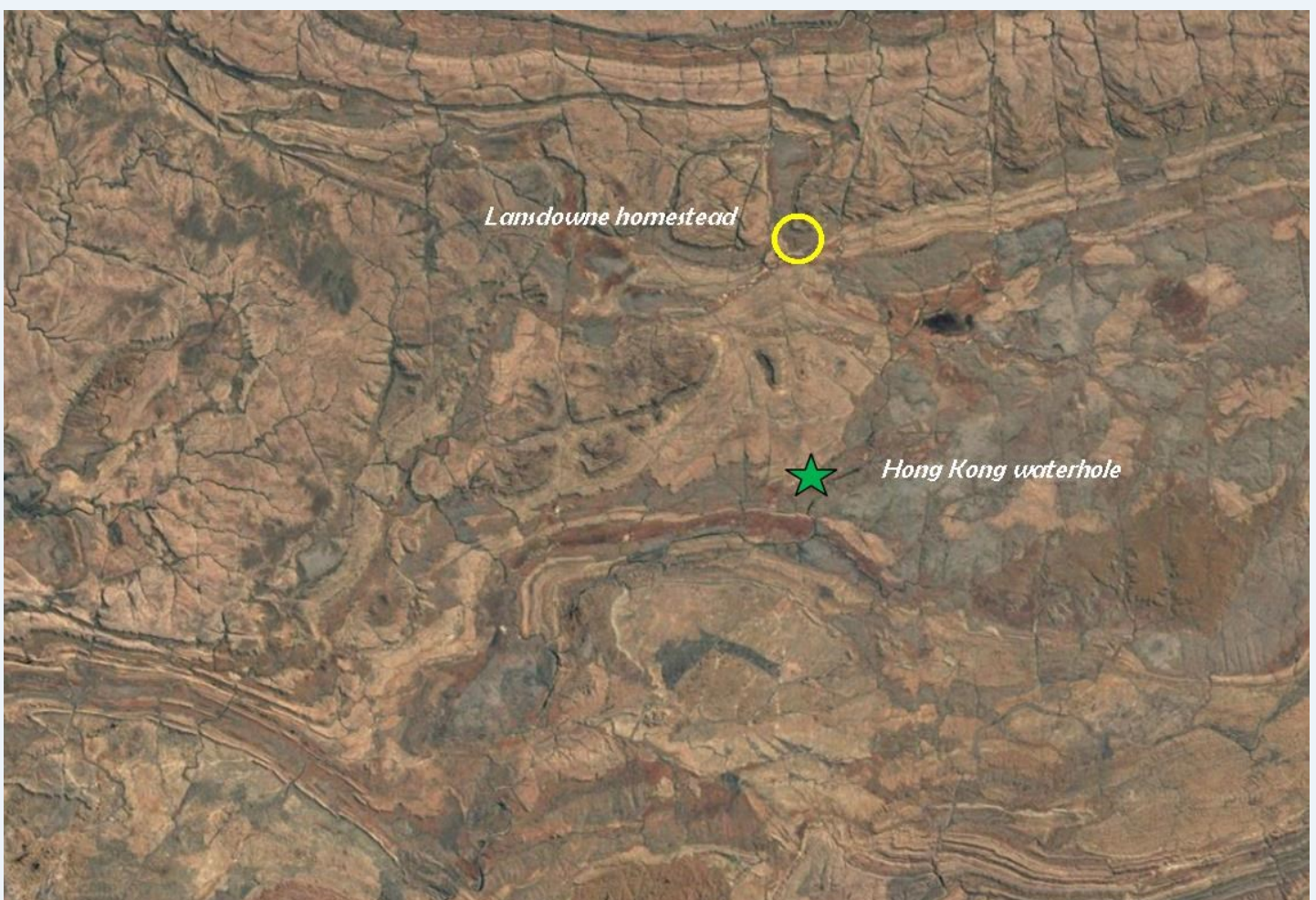
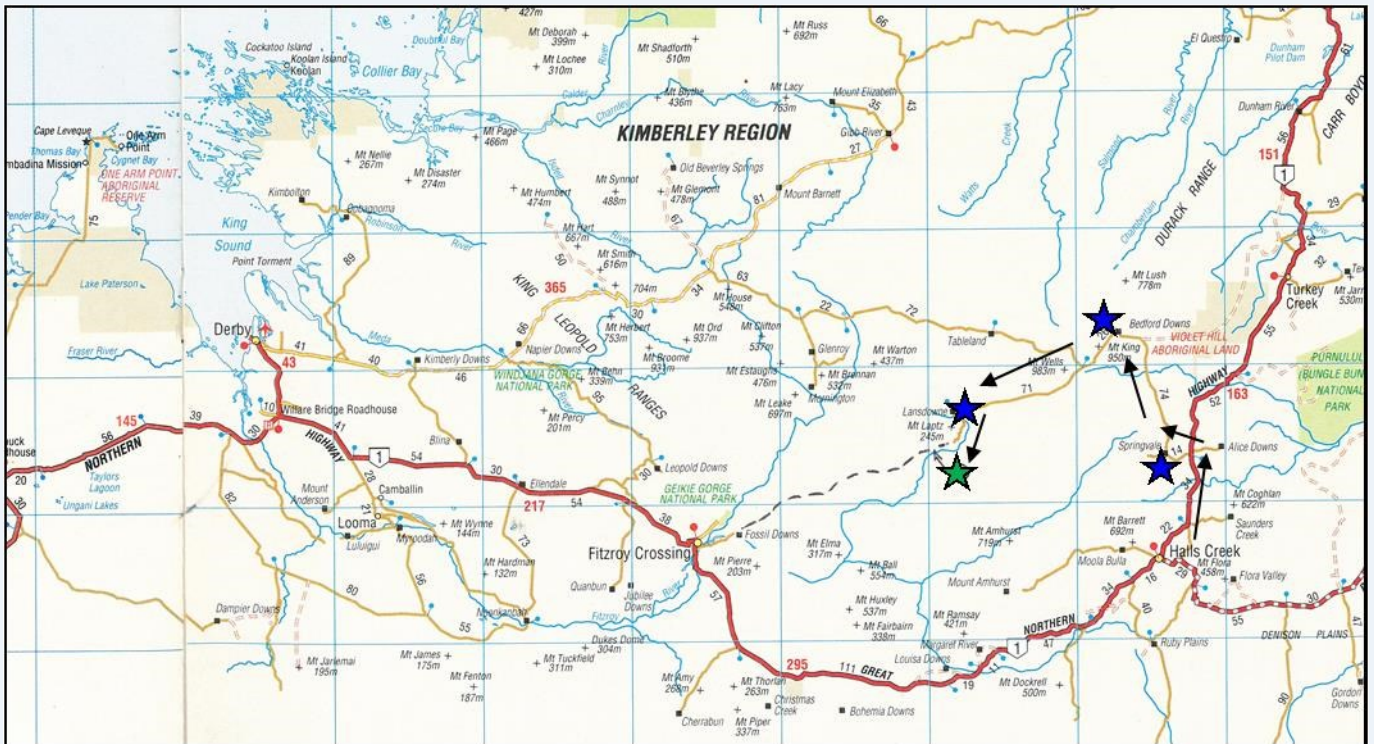


Broome jetty, Anzac Day , 25th April 1964. . .



The Roebuck Bay Hotel, 1964. Mangroves and the water are to the left

The final drive into the belly of the beast—via Springvale and Bedford Downs station, where spouse Helen spoke to and befriended the legendary Tom Quilty



Arrival at Lansdowne , and discuss camp sites; Hong Kong waterhole, 20km south had been picked out and discussed with Rod and Edna Quilty as suitable for our camp.

Camp life, Lansdowne 1964

Essentially, 4 geologists, 4 field hands, cook, mechanic, three spouses, all thrown together from late April to mid- October, with a job to do, and live in a degree of harmony. Some adjustments are made, a bit of give and take here and there, egos stroked, and darts and cribbage are played. Work schedule is 5 days on in the field for the geos and fieldies, Saturday a work day, and Sunday a rest day, apart from field hands preparing their Land Rovers for the next week. One field hand per one geologist.; In a normal; working week, the camp was occupied by the cook, mechanic and spouses.



The Lansdowne camp along Hong Kong Waterhole. The Derrick tent is circled in white. The tents were the old-fashioned canvas rectangles with fold-up sides. We did have sheets on our camp beds. . . s



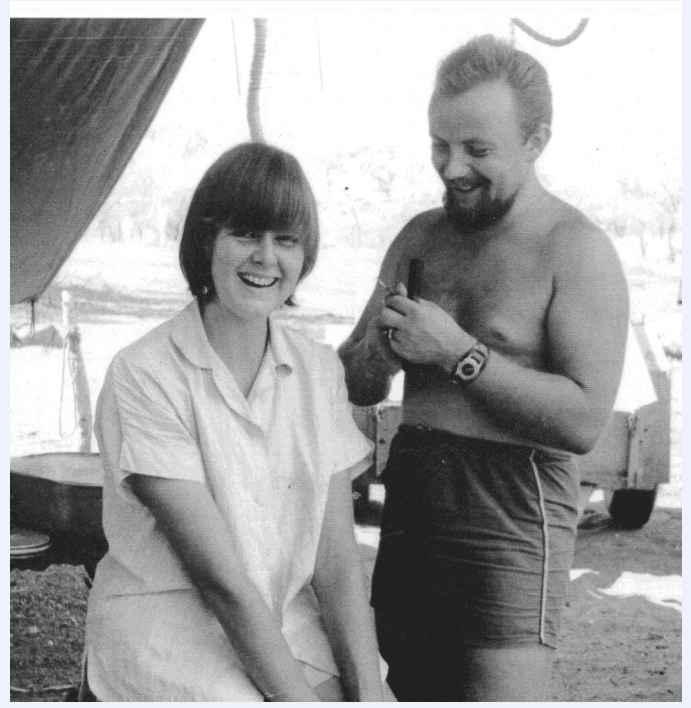
A wood stove was the centre of the kitchen, insulated with flaggy sandstone cemented with crushed ant bed; fridges were mix of kerosene and gas.



Saturdays saw the fieldies checking with the mechanic and getting firewood. .

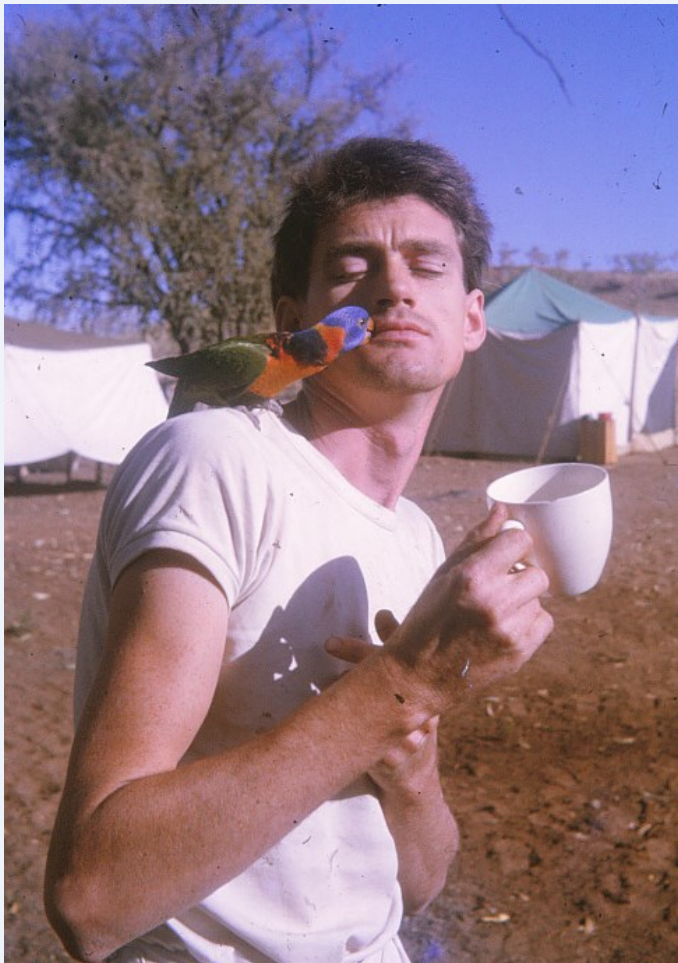


The kitchen area with fieldie Chick Archer at work. Kitchen area shown with water trailer, and Helen Derrick using the wood-fired washing tub before a bough shed was built. ..



Helen Derrick is washing Bootlace, the endearing camp puppy; at right, draftsman Andy Mikolacjack became camp barber as required. Below, fieldie Chick Archer trims fieldie Len Adams, with fieldie Alan Winkler looking on.





At top, Helen Derrick is washing Bootlace; our cook, Harry McAnnaly, befriends a lorikeet, and at right, Helen and Catriona Gellatly are feeding a pet kangaroo



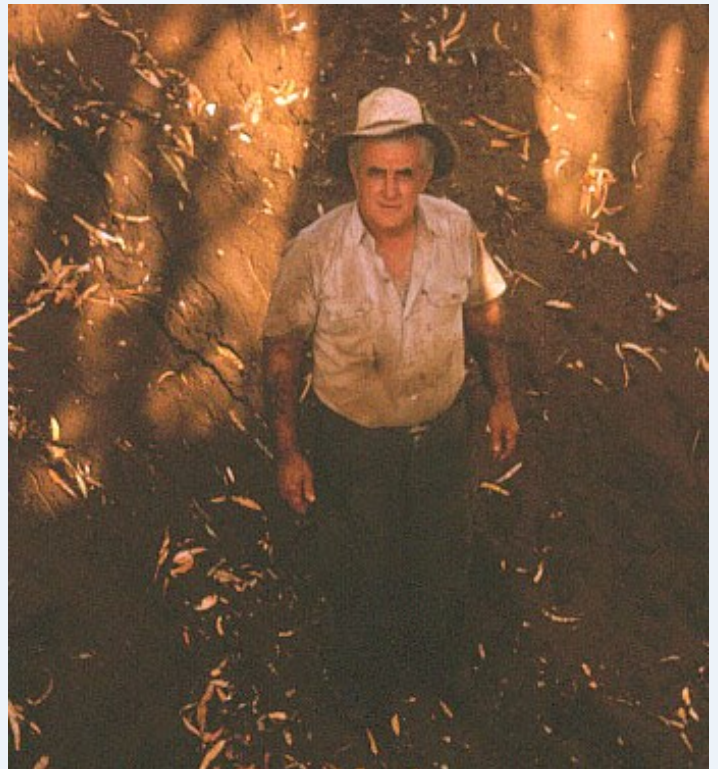
Joey, the pet camp kangaroo, probably an orphan from a vehicle collision with a parent kangaroo.



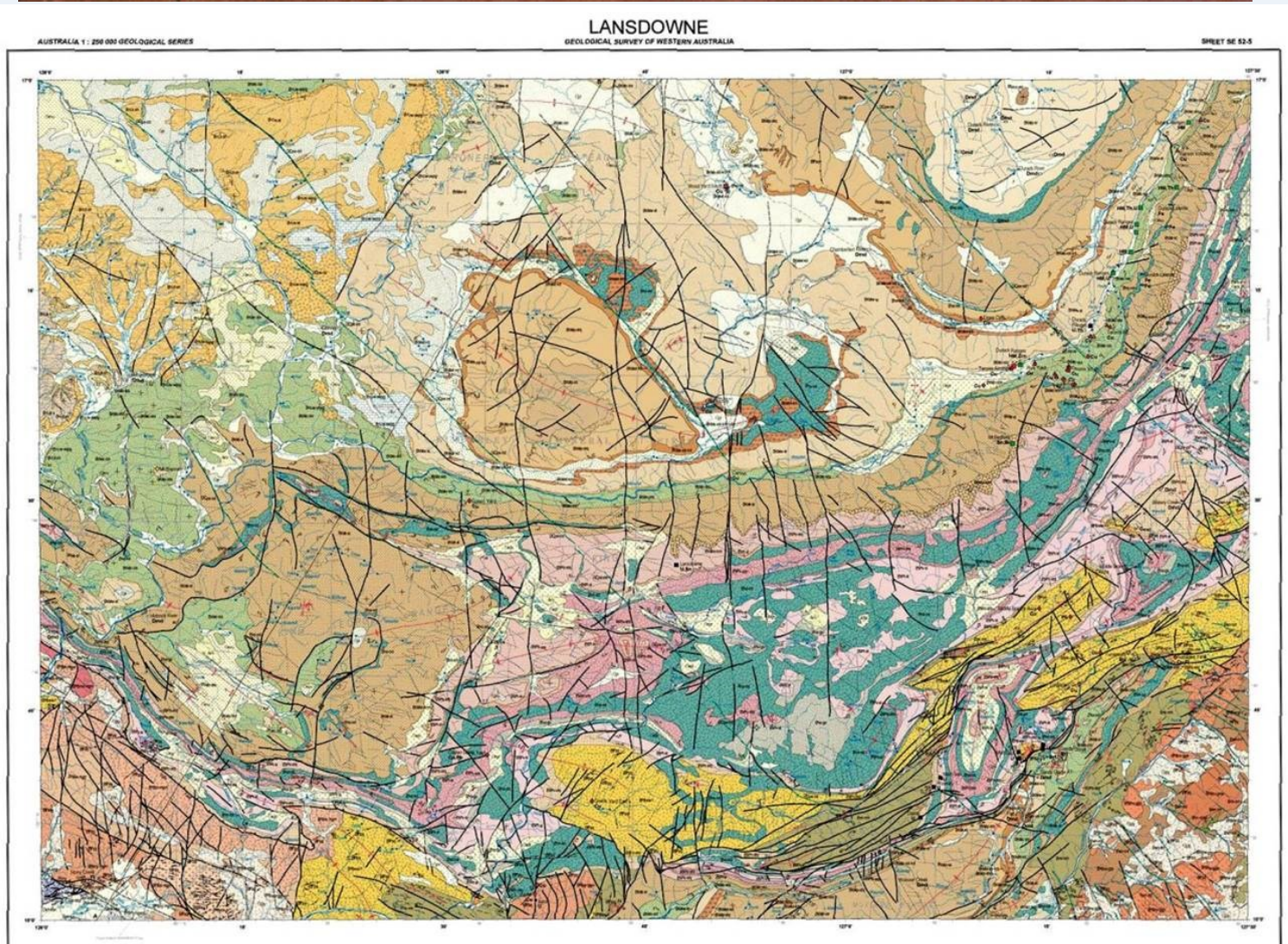
Hong Kong waterhole held a large population of freshwater crocodiles, which lived up one end of the waterhole. The species are now protected



At top, Catriona Gellatly, 3 years old, nurses the camp cat, beside the camp vegetable garden. At bottom, grown men enjoyed catching yabbies at weekends.



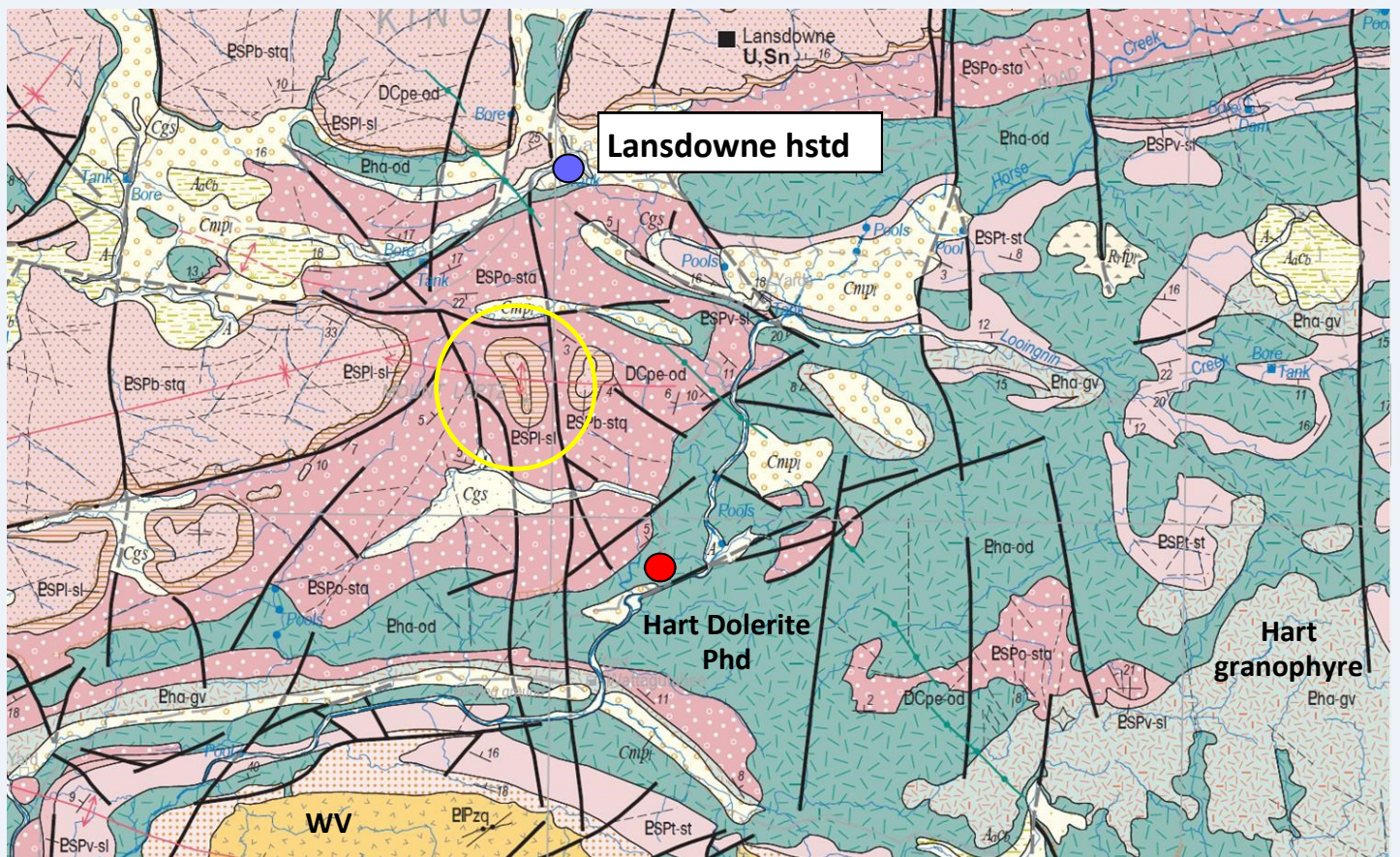
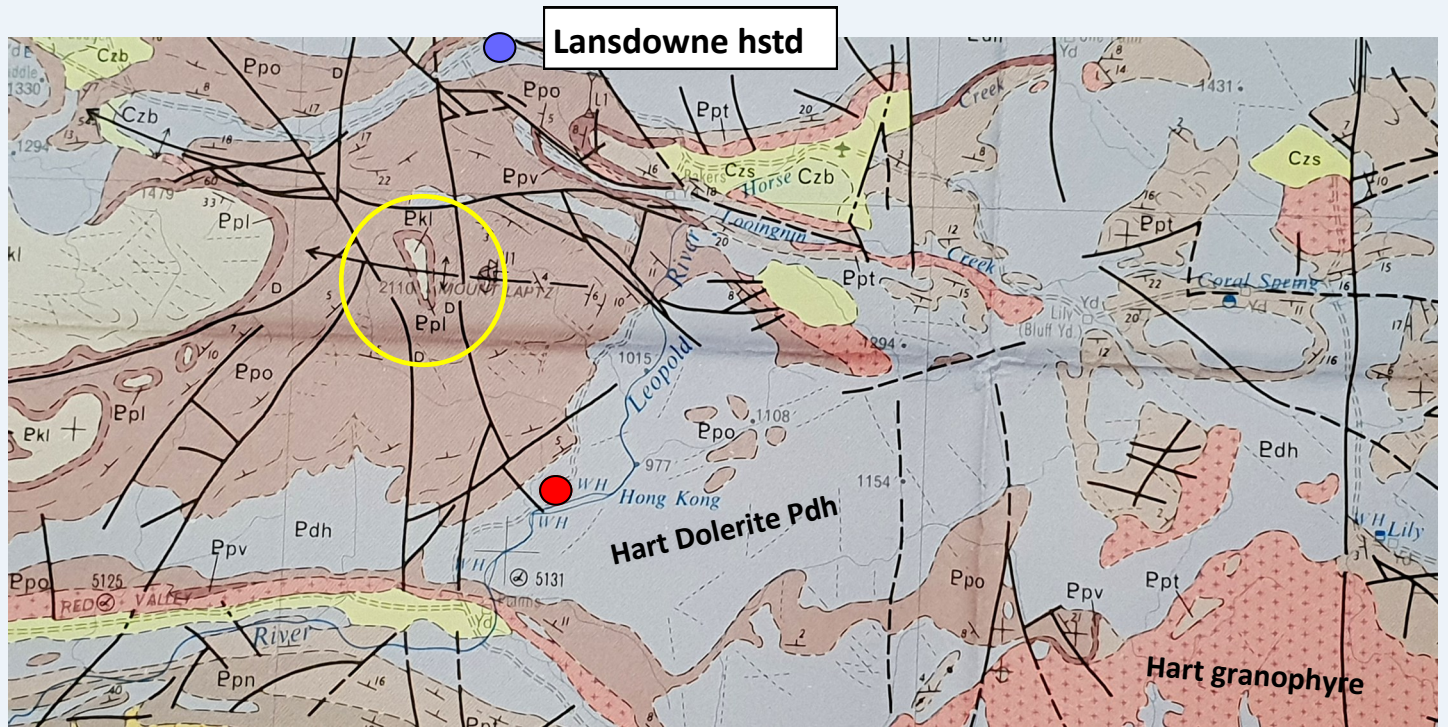
At top, the camp shower with hot water was a masterpiece of bush plumbing; the taps and pipes were treasured items and were returned each year to the Perth Dept of supply. Below is fieldie Len Adams.



The DC3 mailplane came in fortnightly, and camp people visited Edna Quilty at Lansdowne for an afternoon tea in the homestead. This map is a revised 2018 edition of Lansdowne.



The tyro geo, Geoff Derrick, on traverse 1964; Alan Winkler, fieldie, feeds a wild young donkey, which were routinely culled by landowners. As Hong Kong water-hole dried up, we dug a 'sink' to get more water. Tony Allen is digging.



A STORY OF TWO MAPS —At top, the *Lansdowne map* from our 1964 mapping, with Lansdowne homestead as BLUE dot, and our camp site the RED dot on Hong Kong waterhole. The 1964 team mapped the Hart Dolerite AND the Hart granophyre, which is the felsic component of the dolerite, commonly located at the upper margins of the dolerite sills. MT LAPTZ, within the yellow circle, is labelled as **Pkl** on the old map (King Leopold Sst), but **PSPI –stq** on the new map—the older Bedford Sst. Note the 1855Ma Whitewater Volcanics (WV)—crystal tuff and lavas— in yellow on the new map.



Rarely, a spouse was allowed on traverse with her husband—the week was generally a low-risk week with no difficult creek crossings or bush-bashing. Here is Helen Derrick in fieldie regalia, showing also how the SWB Land Rovers were configured—stretchers, swags, tucker box and food etc prepared on the rear fold down gate of the Land Rover.

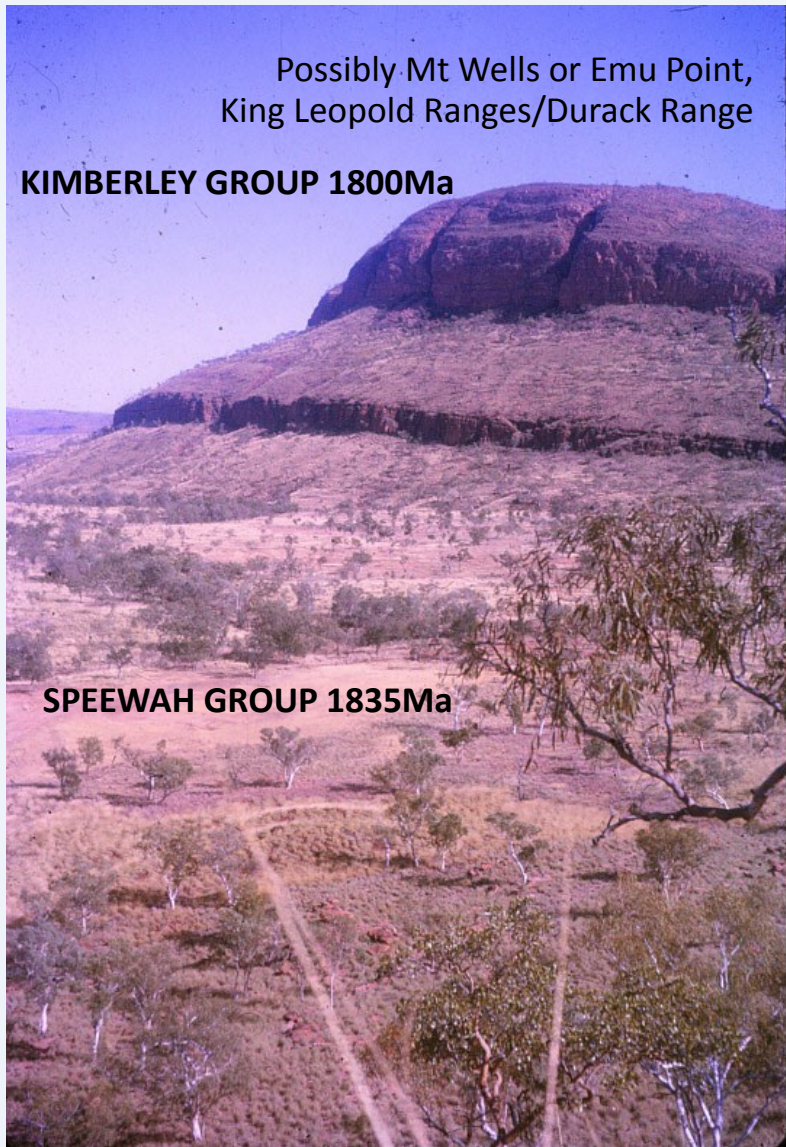


The bustard, or plains turkey, was a common sight on traverse, and on rare occasions one made it back to camp as fresh meat. They are now a protected species.

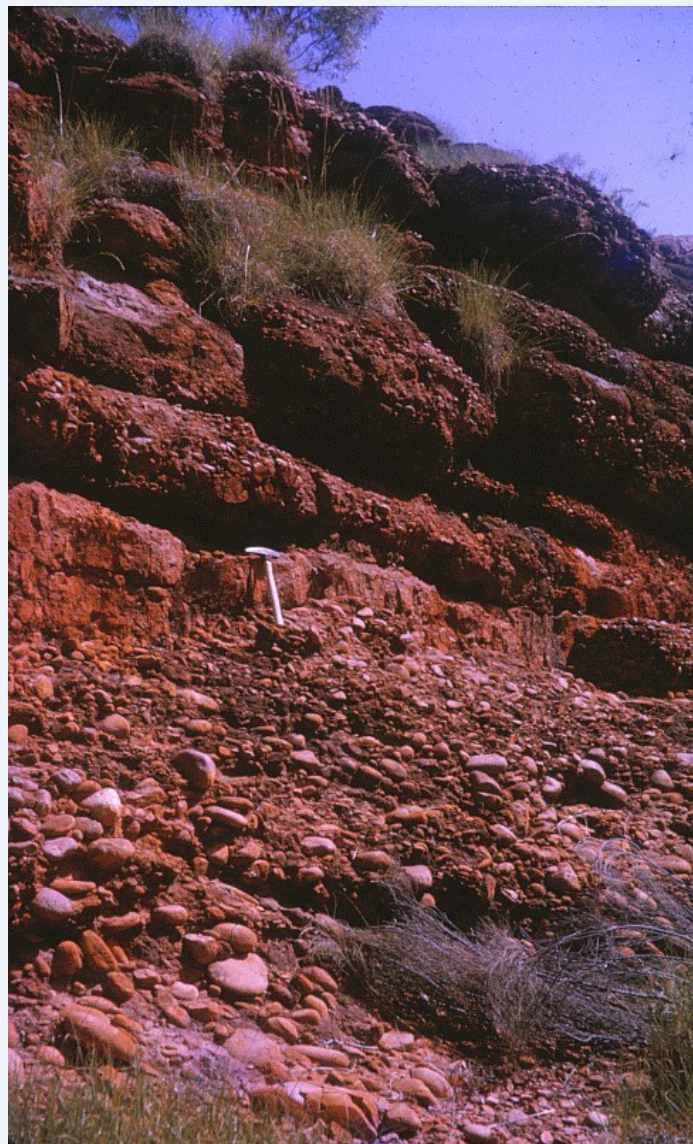
The camp purchased beef from Rod Quilty at Lansdowne.

Possibly Mt Wells or Emu Point,
King Leopold Ranges/Durack Range

KIMBERLEY GROUP 1800Ma



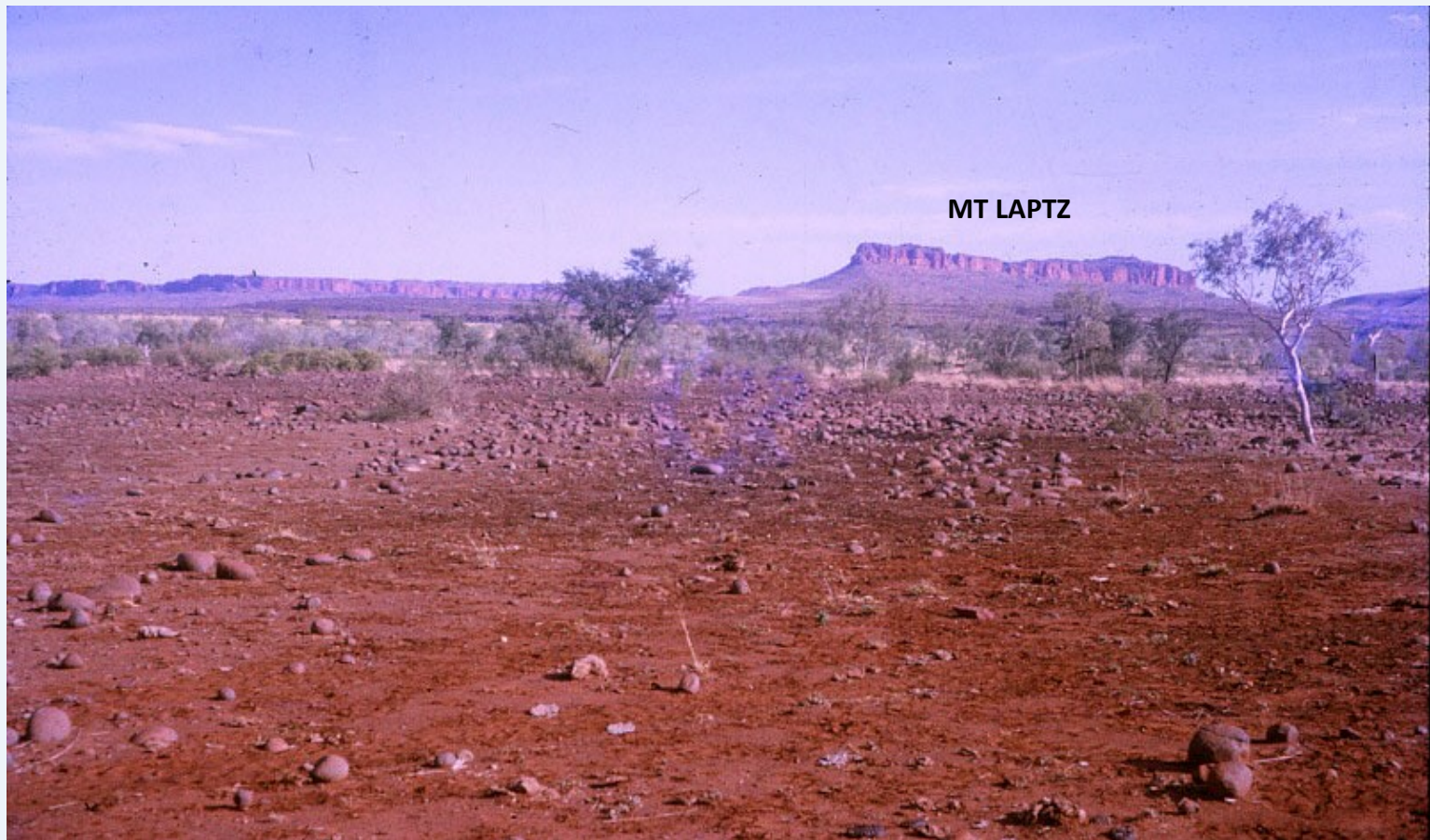
SPEEWAH GROUP 1835Ma



Near Fitzroy River
gorge, west Lans-
downe



Above: cgm, King
Leopold Sst;
To left: Arrow
shows
unconformity
between
Speewah Group
1835Ma and
older ?/Halls
Creek Group
turbidites
(1880Ma)



Mt Laptz, view to west— an outlier of King Leopold Sandstone on our map, but Bedford Sst on new map; foreground is typical weathering soils of Hart Dolerite plus rounded dolerite cobbles



Large ripple marks in unnamed Speewah Group unit



Fieldie Chick Archer measuring dip on sandstone surface



Aboriginal art, mainly in gorges of the King Leopold and Durack Ranges



Possible pillow shapes in Carson Volcanics



Amygdales in Carson Volcanics, which overlie King Leopold Sst. NO ESTWING HAMMERS IN 1964 !!



Scenery to die for—not literally; gorges and waterholes everywhere, with not a human foot set upon them in 1964

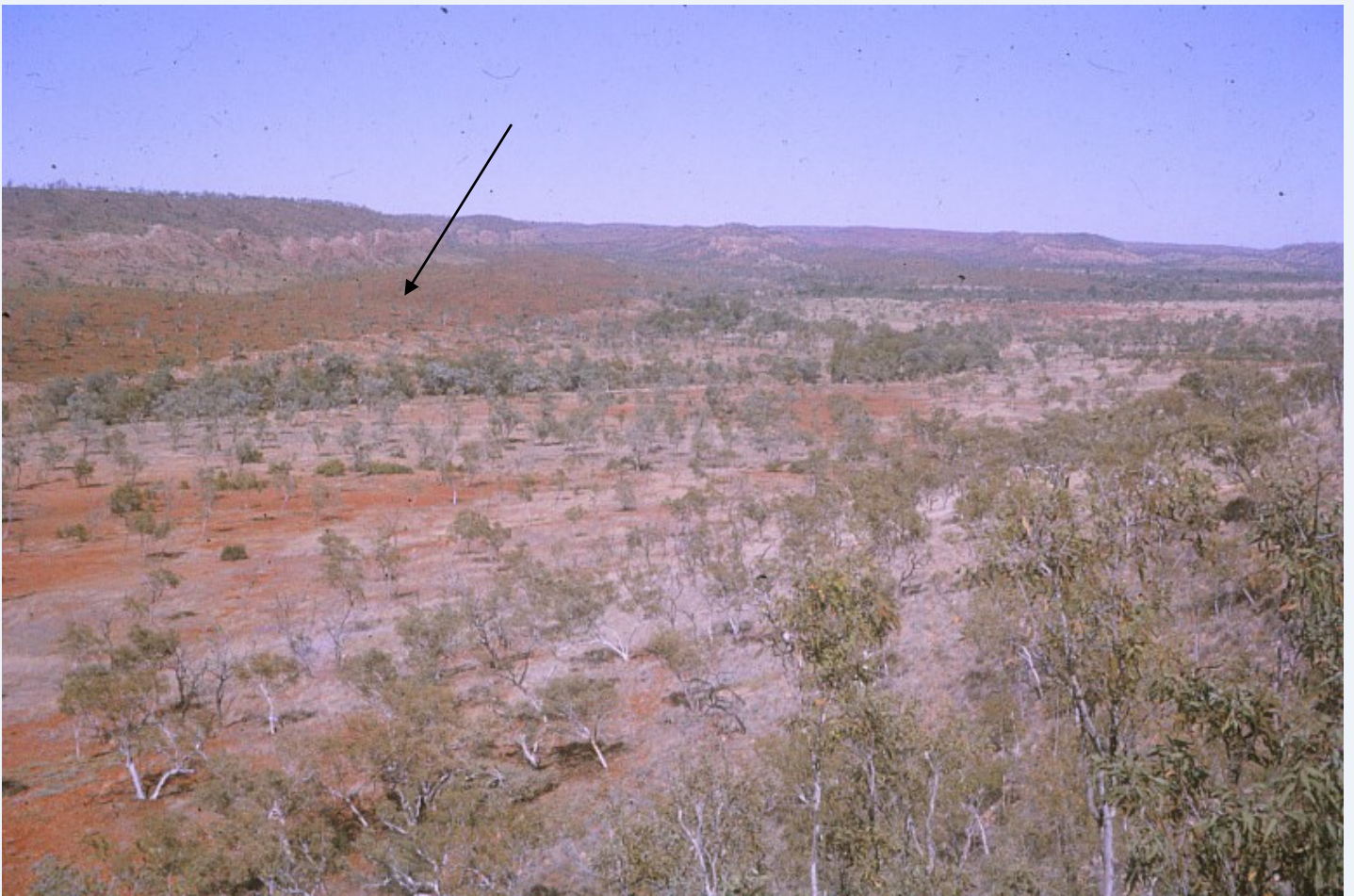




Tourmalinised nodules in basement granites, ca.1850Ma



Glacigene deposits in central Lansdowne, overlying Warton Sst. Described as 'tillite'



General landscape of Speedwah Group, SW Lansdowne, with prominent sill of Hart Dolerite 1800Ma (arrowed)



West Lansdowne, view to east, with Fitzroy River in Speedwah Group, and Diamond Gorge with prominent sill of Hart Dolerite. A chopper was used for 10 days of mapping.



October 9th 1964: Time to pack up, tidy up, and depart for Perth and a career at BMR. Helen Derrick burns cartons, but near Geraldton gives the wildflowers a bit of competition



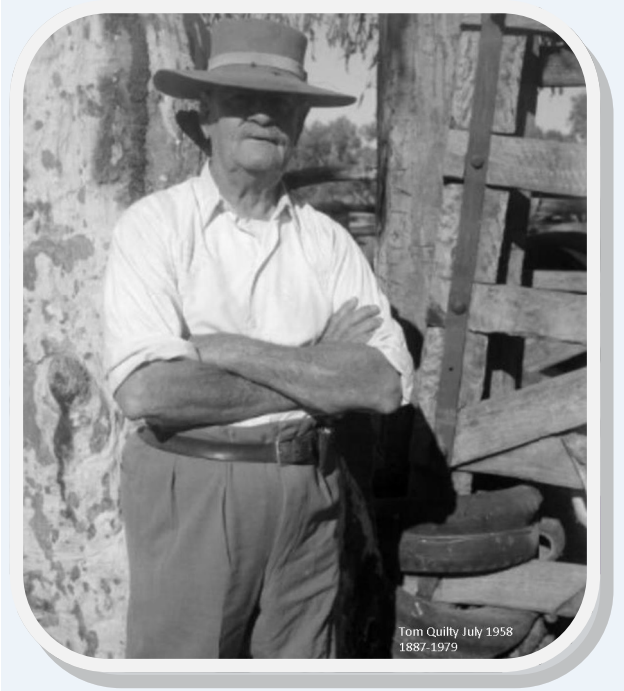
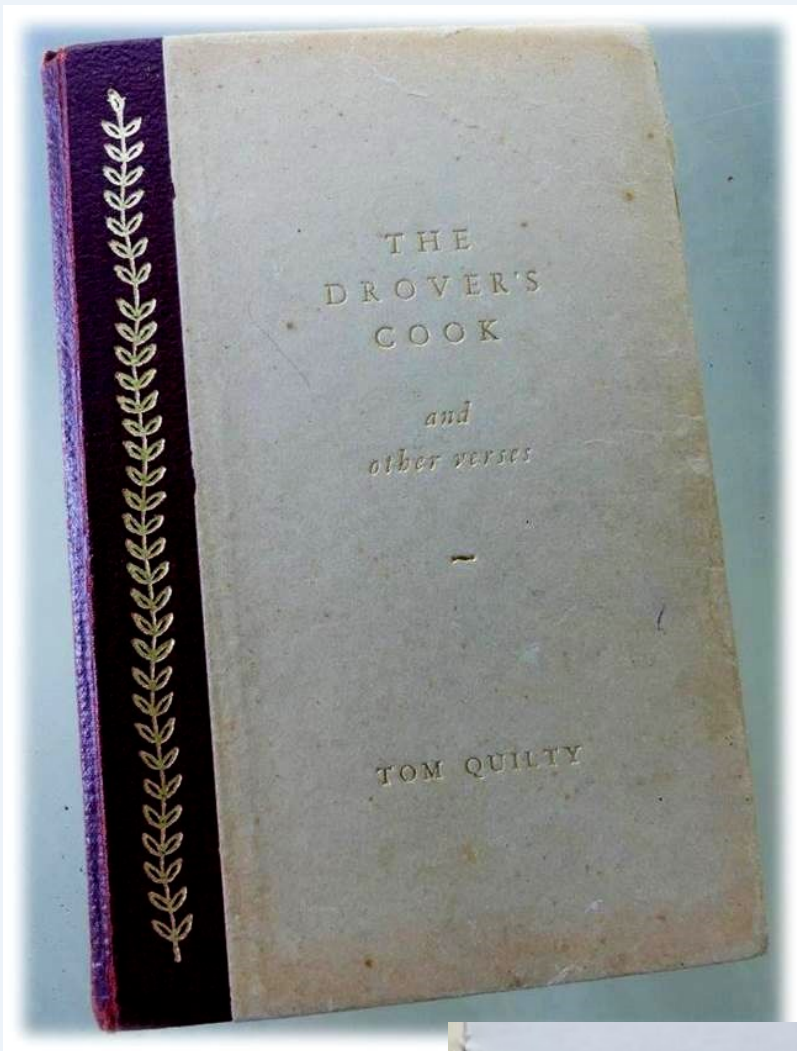
Depart our camp for Perth via Fossil Downs, late October 1964, near the main Derby to Halls Creek highway



The plaque says:

"Here, 3rd June 1885, the Macdonald brothers of Goulburn NSW, halted their wagon, completing the world's longest droving trip to stock Fossil Downs with cattle from their Clifford Downs station, Laggan, NSW (*near Crookwell*), whence they set out on Easter Monday 1882. Their bullock wagon was the first vehicle to cross the Australian continent from East to West, and this tyre from the rear wheel commemorates their exploits.

Set in position by the Hon. Lady Gairdner on the 70th anniversary of their setting camp at this spot" - (*that makes it 1955.*)



Tom Quilty

And a final tribute to Tom Quilty, scion of the Quilty family in the Kimberley, a father of the cattle industry, and also a famous bush poet.

We have a copy of his book, "The Drover's Cook", with a personal note for Helen.

One of the poems is titled **"Pants Down at Lansdowne"**

