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## WE CLAIM A CONFLUENCE

OK we thought it a bit of a silly idea at first. Fancy driving around the countryside looking for something we couldn't even see when we found it. But whilst we pored over the maps on our recent Campfire Escapes Great Victoria Desert expedition, our eyes would furtively seek out any confluences close to our intended route. (A confluence is where lines of latitude and longitude intersect on a map.)

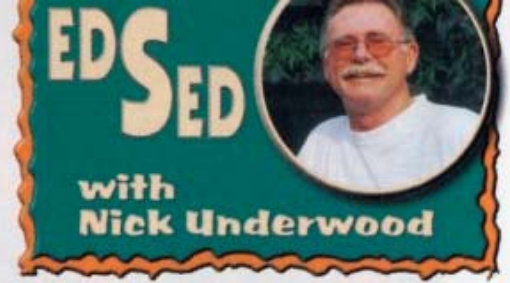
Well you wouldn't read about it - there was one only 5 kms off our course. After a bit of persuasion exerted on our trip leader (Mr. E) he agreed we might as well pop down for a look and make a bit of history and the rest is, er, history.

A concerted effort by our convivial confluence conqueror, Ray Harris, soon had us converging (in convoy) on our confluence. After a brief walk around, GPS in hand, he confirmed (and we concurred) that the confluence was contiguous. We all congregated on the spot and congratulated each other on our conquest, took photos, constructed a mulga marker and continued on our way.

It might be out of our system for now but I'm sure we'll be looking for others. The biggest buzz was its remoteness and so our challenge to you is to go out and find a confluence in an interesting location. Don't forget the photos.

The co-ordinates for our confluence were: 28° south by 125° east.

*For the big story turn to page 103.*





# CAPTURING CONFLUENCES

By DOUG HENDERSON



**Confluence, kon'floo-ens, n. a flowing together; the place of meeting, as of rivers; a concourse. [L. confluere, confluum, from con-, together, fluere, to flow] is the dictionary definition.**

To many people however it is the imaginary point on the earth's surface where lines of latitude and longitude meet.

Visiting those locations and posting your

success on the Internet has become a pastime to many devotees.

You can find out all about the Degree Confluence Project on; <http://www.confluence.org/>

There are 129,600 confluences on the earth's surface (or any other planet for

34°S 119°E. Been there, done that - didn't get a T-Shirt



that matter) and of them some 37000 are on dry land. Of these 2544 have been successfully visited and claimed on the web. Another 169 have been attempted. Australia has 737 confluences of which 225 have been visited and 17 attempted. Western Australia has 247 of which only 57 have been visited and 3 attempted as of 18th. June 2003. This will shortly read 58 visited and 2 attempted as the SW 4Wheel Drive Club visited 34°S 119°E during our visit to Bremer Bay during Easter 2003. It had previously been attempted by Donna Weston and Sarah Long who had driven as close as they

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could without opening gates, then

visited a couple of nearby farms to ask permission. They found no one home so returned to the gate and started walking with 1.33 km. to go. They felt the area had a weird feel about it and caution got the better of them so they abandoned their attempt. Donna, by the way is the Australian co-ordinator of the Degree Confluence Project and if you claim a confluence you will find her a charming and helpful person.

We had more luck and found Wayne Barrett home at nearby Glendale Farm. He readily gave consent for us to drive on his farm and radioed his father, Graham, who was picking up stones to tell him some "city slickers" were coming to look for a large X in the middle of one of their paddocks. We drove through the



gate into paddock No. 21 and came upon Graham who was busy filling a creek crossing with rubble to make our journey easier. (He was spoiling all our fun!)

We reached the paddock where the confluence was and watched the zebras come up. It

got to 33°00'01" 119°00'00" and I hoped out and started walking, head down looking at the GPS. Everyone else trotted after me in single file, " like the children following the Pied Piper" Vinna, my wife said. It was a most amusing sight. Finding the spot we formed a semicircle with our vehicles to record the event on film. There is a confluence within 79 km. of you but most of the ones in the SW of the state have been visited. Some are as easy as the fairway of a Perth Golf Course but most of the unvisited ones are in our desert country, the Nullarbor Plain and the Kimberley. Many confluences are on private property and that makes getting permission an imperative. Few are near roads and many require a lot of cross-country travel to reach. So it is not as simple as it first looks to visit one.

Another confluence that I have visited is 29°S 129°E, Surveyor General Corner and my photograph of John Byland, Graeme Sneglar and Vern Padman taken during our trek up the WA border (see Western 4WD No, 30. February 1999) is on the web.

*...Everyone else trotted after me in single file, " like the children following the Pied Piper"*

However I had visited there many years before in 1983 with a 16 year old American Rotary Exchange Student. At that time fewer white people had visited that

marker than had visited the South Pole. We were staying at the nearby native

settlement of Wingelinna as guests of the local schoolteacher, Ross Woodhouse. Audrey Woodhouse used to have to wash the children's hair when they came in naked from the bush before they were given a pair of shorts and a shirt to attend school! What a cultural shock for a young girl only five weeks out from New York.

Visiting the Corner is now much easier and permits can be obtained from the Ngaanyatjarraku Council in Alice Springs. Tourists have to make the trip and return in one day from the Warakurna Roadhouse, as camping is not allowed at the Wingella Community. There are two markers at Surveyor General Corner. This is because in 1920 radio was used for the first time in Australia



**An Unusual Confluence**

Visited by Scott Berk and Kathy Cannon

The photograph shows the Royal Observatory Complex, situated on a high hill on the outskirts of Greenwich in London, UK. The observatory itself is on the left. The red ball on top of the dome to the right once served as England's official timepiece (a key aspect of successful navigation by sea involved the use of precision timekeeping devices, a field in which Britain also excelled). Even now, the ball drops down the pole every day, indicating the precise moment of noon, Greenwich Mean Time. The photograph shows demarcation of the hallowed line itself "East & West"

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to accurately determine the time for a series of astronomical observations. This was used to mark the border of South Australia and Western Australia at the 129° meridian of longitude on the Trans-continental Railway and the Deakin Obelisk was erected on that spot.

In 1921 a similar series of observations were carried out in the Kimberleys to determine the border between WA and the Northern Territory and that spot was marked by a pillar simply called the Obelisk but unofficially called the Barclay Obelisk from the surveyor who completed the work.

The Boundary Agreement was signed by the three governments in 1922 stating that "a line true south to the coast and true north to 26° South Latitude, from the position of the Deakin Obelisk would be for all times, and irrespective of where future surveys placed the 129° meridian, be the boundary between WA and SA. Similarly a line true north and south from the Barclay Obelisk would be the

boundary between WA and the NT.

The agreement also set up a board consisting of the three Surveyors-General to work out the practical application of the decision. The minutes of the first meeting indicated that "the work should be carried out with a reasonable degree of accuracy at a minimum of cost, and that an academic result was not to be sought after, with a high and fanciful degree of accuracy." Alas this was not to be as the Deakin Obelisk is now accepted as 129° 00' 01.8584"E and the Barclay Obelisk 128° 59' 57.2933" E, with the result that where they were supposed to meet at the NT SA border on 26°S they are in fact 127 metres apart.

To have joined the two obelisks with a straight line would have been well within the tolerances allowed for in the agreement and would have produced a blend of considerably less than a minute of arc that would certainly not be visible to the naked eye. Unfortunately at the board meeting in 1967, possibly due to the mineral discoveries in the area it was decided to place two markers at Surveyor Generals Corner, one due north of the Deakin Obelisk and one due south of the Barclay Obelisk.

Another confluence that I know about is 32° E 118° S, which is south west of Bruce Rock near my daughter's farm. Donna Weston and Sarah Long also visited it the day before their attempt at Bremer Bay. The farmer knew about the confluence because he uses a GPS and software on his harvester to map the yield of his wheat crop. He then feeds the information into his seeder which places extra fertiliser on the areas where the crop is lighter. Talk about high tech farming.

We will now be looking for any unvisited confluences during our 4WD trips and hoping to get some new ones under our belt.

I trust that many of you who read this article will do the same.

Happy hunting.

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