

Les the Perentie

Gaynor Schoeman, the lady who walked the CSR solo in 2013, is back for another adventure on the Canning. This time she is travelling in an ex-Australian Military vehicle. It's a tough as 1990 110 Land Rover Perentie with a 3.9 Isuzu diesel motor and 4 speed LT 95 gearbox, she has called it Les after Bush Tucker man Les Hiddens.

Purchased at auction Les came without frills of any kind. There is no key to start the engine, no door locks, no sound deadening or dust sealing; air-conditioning is available by winding the windows down. A real adventurer, befitting his new owner, he has two large tow points front and rear so he could be pushed from an aeroplane or helicopter attached to a parachute or for extraction from an area using a helicopter; not that there is much call for that kind of use anymore.



There is a huge PTO winch out front that looks like it could extract an army tank. Being PTO driven it could run all day as long as the engine had fuel. Regular engine oil is used in the gear box / transfer case, what a great idea but obviously not feasible for today's

THE THINGS YOU SEE!

WITH (TRUTHFUL) PHIL BIANCHI



hi-tech 4wds. The fuel cap and filler neck are so big they look like they came off a ship, no problems with fast fill large bowser nozzles here. Inside there were brackets front and



rear in the cargo area so two first aid stretchers could be carried. Gaynor realigned the brackets so they could be used as part of a camp stretcher, a much appreciated fitment for rainy and windy conditions. Also inside were gun racks that could securely hold two rifles, another attribute that has not much call in Les's

new life. Another feature that's not of much use is a stealth mode where most of the lights can be switched off and those lights that are left on have covers above them so as to keep light immediately in front of the vehicle and to reduce risk of detection. Since being

purchased by Gaynor, Les has had all kinds of new gear to dress him up from his former Spartan military clothing, a comprehensive roof top solar panel system with a dual battery and Victron mppt regulator, 1000 watt inverter, Koni Shocks, UHF radio, MaxTraks, Michelin tyres, water tank and 12 volt power sockets everywhere, Les must be really enjoying his new life as a tourist, he recently did a casual three month trip up the CSR and after a break will come back down again.

Phil's Suitcase

I was asleep in my tent and woke to hear solid rain; "I hope my nephew zipped up the Rhino roof top bag when he got the sleeping bags out," was my immediate thought. "Can't do anything about it now", was my next thought, so I went back to sleep.

Come the morning I found he hadn't and the roof top bag was now a swimming pool. After questioning his parentage (sorry Sis), getting soaked while emptying the unwanted swimming



pool and sorting out the wet gear, my thoughts turned to finding a better way of carting gear without risk of it getting wet or covered in dust.

Many campfire discussions during that trip resulted in exploring the potential of having a metal box made, preferably aluminium. My good mate Gibbo, a dreadlocked rabid Dockers supporter

with whom I've shared many trips to Steep Point lure fishing for Spaniards (Mackerel), was an expert welder including on lots of dinghies. A phone call soon elicited;

"How about we build a big suitcase".

"A suitcase!" I exclaimed.

"Yes a big ally box that has a hinged lid like a suitcase" was the reply.

With that in mind I spent an afternoon at his place enjoying a few 'lemonades' and enduring much ribbing about how the Eagles were going as he drew up a plan for the suitcase, which as well as a hinged lid was to have gas struts. To lock the box he said he would fit over centre toggle latches and would have the lid and bottom section lips folded over to provide additional strength.

"And to fix it up top all you need do is place it on your roof rack and bolt it down in each corner using plates on both sides" he explained.

When asking how much it might cost, in case it was prohibitive, he replied:

"Don't worry about that, it will be the cost of materials, folding of the ally and some beers".

Turning up three weeks later with some Kimberley currency under one arm and steeling myself for the inevitable; "How are the Eagles going?" I entered his shed. I must say I was stunned by the quality

and design, the lightness and strength of my new suitcase. Despite him being a Dockers supporter I had to admit Gibbo sure knew his stuff. The lid was sealed to the box via a compressible seal from UES International, the gas struts were great; they allowed the box to stay open during access and all seams were expertly welded. The suitcase was so light I could pick it up with one hand.

After many years of service and having travelled extensively off road and cross country through all of the Western Deserts and trips along the CSR, the suitcase is still going strong and I reckon it's one of the best after-market fitments I have ever had.