

A very Savory Creek

Everyone doing the 1,800 km Canning Stock Route trip has to cross Savory Creek, a heavily saline creek near Lake Disappointment. I have seen the depth vary from 300 mm to almost a metre, normally such water depths wouldn't bother most 4wdrivers, but the heavily saline water plays on people's minds. There is a crossing point most 4Wdrivers use. The bottom is firm but one needs to choose a line that misses a couple of deeper spots or you'll unnecessarily be in much deeper water.



Often the first topic of conversation when meeting vehicles going the other way is, 'How deep is the water at Savory? Vehicles approaching Savory Creek from the north meet it close to where it joins Lake Disappointment, the track then takes you westward for some

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Images by Graham Sweetman

four kilometres to the recognised creek crossing. While on the westward track, and dependent on the season, stop at some of the deeper pools and you'll be surprised at the oily looking nature of the water and the visible salt crystals. I have heard of drivers, seeking to avoid the salty creek crossing, continue driving up to 10 kilometres westward past the crossing point hoping to find a shallower or no water crossing. There isn't one; apparently the creek, in places, does get shallower but it's also wider and marshy. They return to the usual crossing. Rather than charge the crossing as some are apt to do, select low range and keeping the revs up make a steady pace without having water splashing over the bonnet. On one trip on the Canning Stock Route I was asked how Savory Creek and Lake Disappointment were named. Never one to miss the opportunity to impart wisdom, the historian in me explained that Lake Disappointment was named by intrepid explorer Frank Hann in 20 April 1897, 'I was





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disappointed in not finding water in it'. I then explain: Savory Creek is one of the few waterways in WA that flow eastward. Although noted by explorers Hann and Rudall in 1897; it wasn't until AW Canning's CSR well construction party of 1908-10 that the excellent properties of its salt were discovered. Canning noticed that Savory Creek was highly saline and had large deposits of salt. When using it to salt beef and camel meat, his party found it had unusually good qualities in preserving

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and a savory taste over regular salt. Remember folks, no Engels out here, this was in the days before refrigeration was available and most food had to be canned or dried using salt or it would spoil quickly. Once the Savory Creek salt deposit became known, it was highly regarded and became valuable, commanding eight to ten times the value of regular salt. Intrepid bushmen packed it onto donkey teams and took it to Carnarvon for export by ship to the eastern states' canning works. It was so high in quality it could be used without processing for canning of meat, fish and for making biscuits. Canned foods were marked 'Savory Creek salt used' and although much more expensive, they were highly sought after and considered gourmet tucker. That evening around the campfire I told them that Truthful had been at work and the creek was named after pastoral lease holder Fred Savory and the whole story about savory salt was a load of bull. The look on their faces was priceless; I got a few more nick names that night.