

Shark Bay/Stromatolites - Monkey Mia - Kalbarri NP – Hutt Province & more



Hamelin Pool Marine Reserve at Shark Bay is one of a few places in the world with living marine stromatolites or “living fossils” – monuments and records to ancient life on Earth over 3500 million years ago: Layered mounds, columns and sheet-like sedimentary rocks originally formed by cyanobacteria, a single-celled photosynthesizing microbe. Hamelin Pool is almost twice as salty as the sea and water temperatures between December and March can exceed 45C. Stromatolites thrive in these unique conditions...



A shell species known as Hamelin cockle is so prolific here, they have compacted into a solid mass called ‘coquina’ which can be cut into blocks. A number of Shark Bay Buildings were built with this material harvested from the Hamelin shell block quarry.



Building blocks

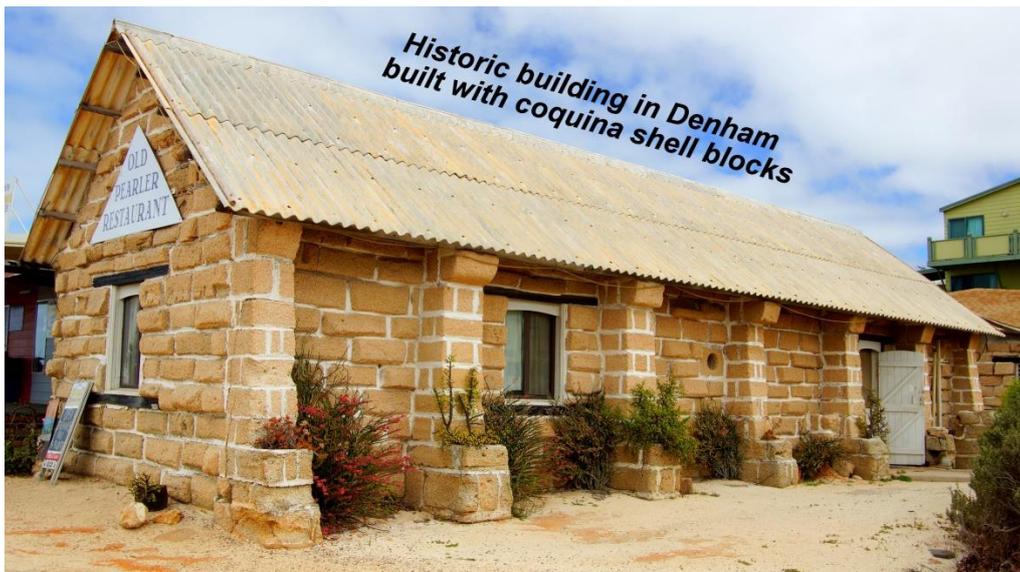
Newcomers used coquina for building.

While Aboriginal people moved around following seasonal resources, European settlers took a different approach and made permanent homes.

From the early to mid 1900s, these shell blocks were a handy building material in this area.



Early settlers in this area had few sources of timber or rock for building. But coquina provided a solution.



Historic building in Denham built with coquina shell blocks

Shell quarry at Hamelin Pool





On to **Monkey Mia**, one of the most reliable places for dolphin interaction in the world. This is the **only place in Australia where wild-living dolphins visit daily**, not just seasonally! Researchers from across the globe congregate here to study these fascinating creatures. Back in the 60's local fishermen started sharing their catch with some of the dolphins. Since then, trust grew with visitors and researchers alike over decades of tradition.

Veteran '**Surprise**' is one female of the first generation who showed up at Monkey Mia. She must be nearing the end of age of her life span – the oldest living dolphin found in the wild clocked up 48 years, the equivalent of 120 human years! One tell-tale sign of a dolphin's old age are the "beauty spots" that begin to show with maturity:



The memory of our first visit to Monkey Mia about 20 years ago had left a somewhat cynical impression of what seemed, back then, a 'tourist trap' with one dolphin turning up to about 300 rather unruly spectators. Though, in defence of 'National Parks' who now operate the event, very much has changed since! The daily "feeding" has taken on a much more serious scientific approach. For example, interaction with mothers and calves is strictly limited to 15 minutes: Calves need to regularly suckle within this time frame during which the mother must not be distracted, lest the calf might get disoriented and beach itself. While a free-living dolphin needs to consume up to 12kg of fish daily, the visiting candidates are

only fed a few hundred grams each; just enough to keep them motivated to return the next day. As a result they are often seen hunting along the beach during the day rounding up fish on their own.

Visiting dolphin numbers vary daily (10 showed up on our day including two mothers with newborn calves); only four females of the original troupe (plus their direct offspring) are ever being fed. Other members of the wider pod never receive any handouts, nor do any male dolphins. The latter have proven to become too aggressive over time.



Randomly selected visitors are called forward by the volunteers to hand freshly caught fish to the dolphins. All dolphins have names and are easily identified by the shape of their dorsal fins.



Sadly '**Puck**', one female, turns up this morning with half her dorsal fin missing – she had suffered a shark attack that previous night. The injury is not life-threatening as it is mainly missing cartilage which will heal not before too long. About 85% of dolphins here show some signs of shark interaction – living dangerously... in Shark Bay... after all!



To my utter surprise I am being singled out to hand a fish to 'Surprise', the other female. Needless to say, I am moved to the core of my heart by this privileged experience – for a fleeting moment making close-eye contact with such adorable amazing and elusive creature!







Eye-to-eye with a smily dolphin



'Surprise' claims her fish



*Exploring Francois Peron NP
near Denham/Shark Bay*



Yeah, that size shark
could
take your head off!



Coral Bay



Coral Bay



Coral Bay sunset

Investigating a salt pan up-close suddenly springs a soggy surprise...



Oh yeah - let's ckeck out that salt pan!

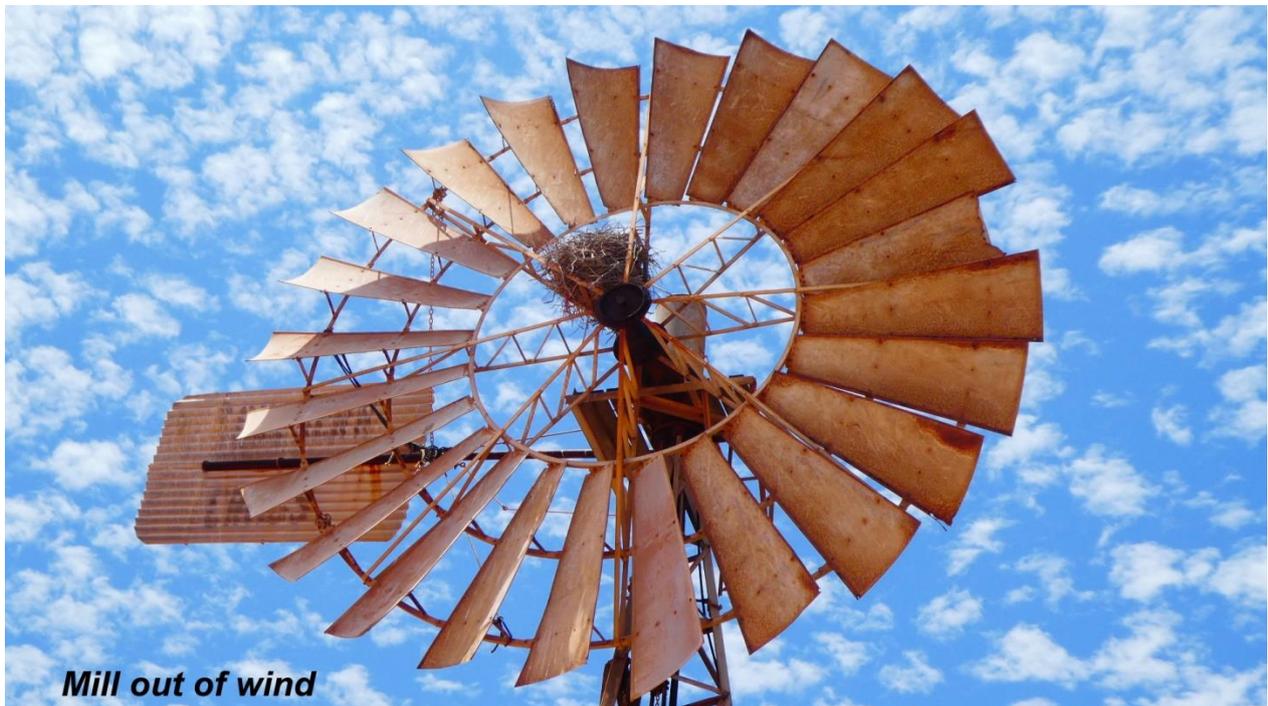


**Salt pan:
Classic case
of
stuck-in-the-mud**



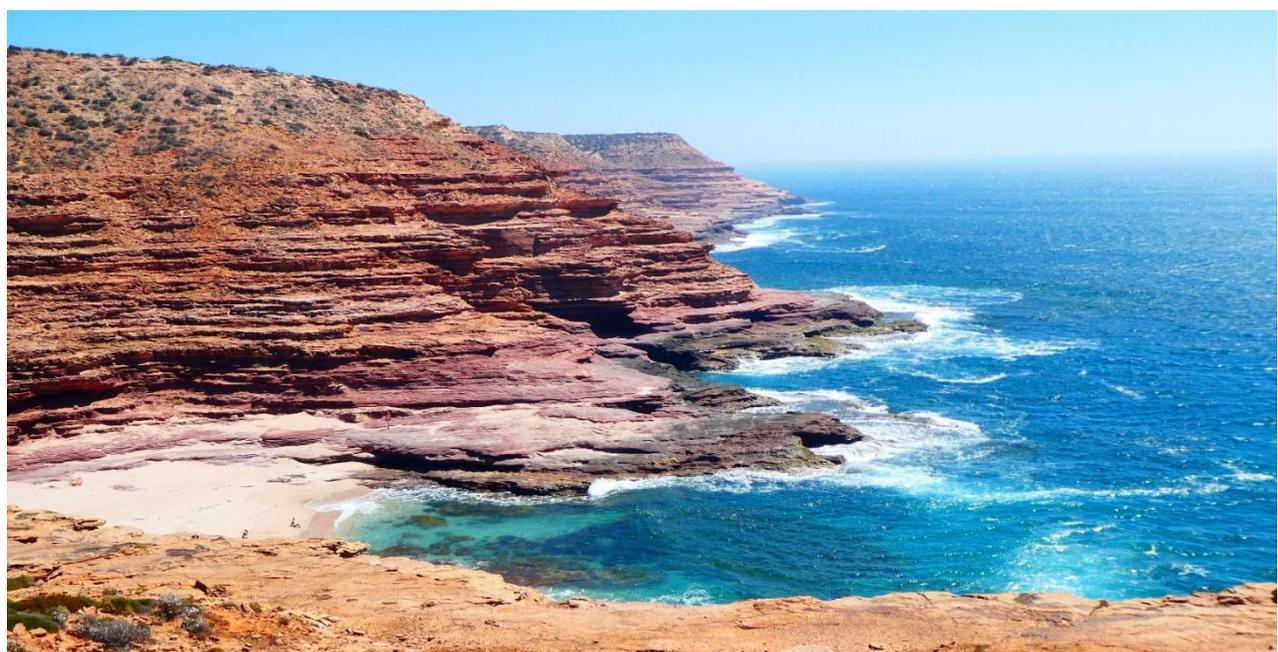
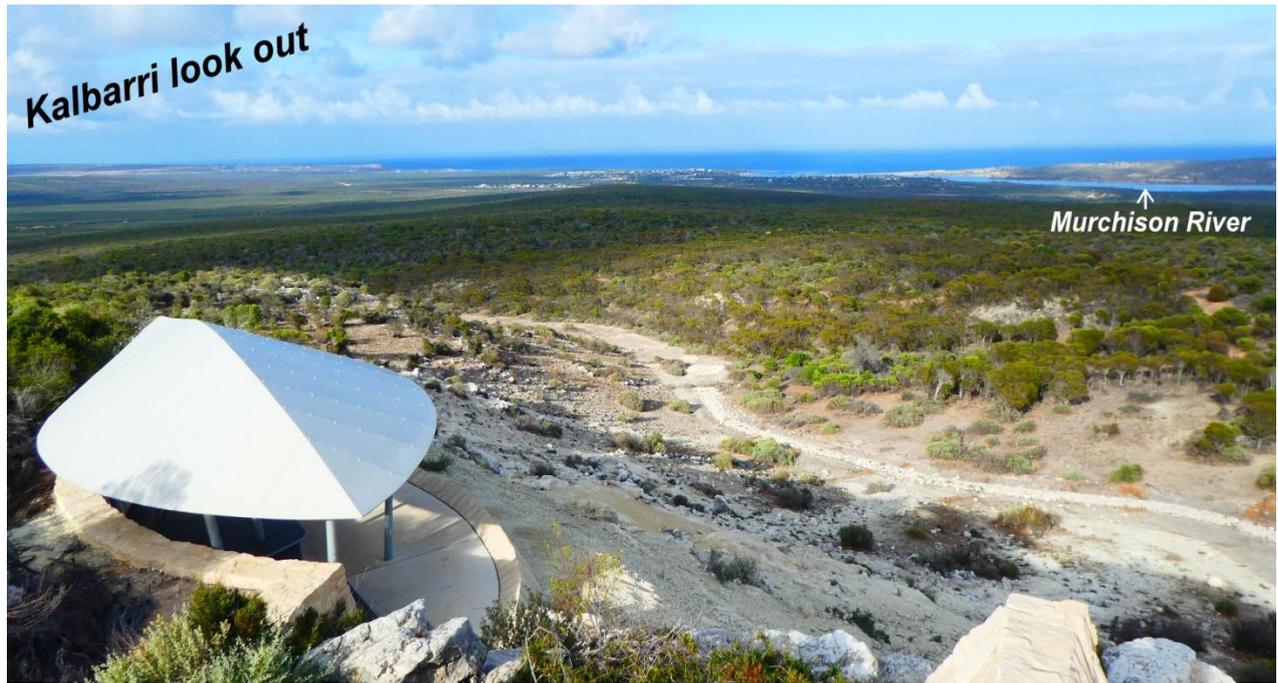
Should have heeded the warning ☹️

Tough existence: Salt encrusted vegetation



Mill out of wind

Our next aim...



A merciless Kalbarri coast that has claimed dozens of ships and hundreds of lives over the centuries

Not a good place for a shipwreck!



Are we, too, risking life and limb here?

Warning

Safe walking - *Warning - heat stroke can kill!*

Heat Kills!
Hikers have died on this trail

DANGER

STOP

DANGER

Tourist dies on 40C walk
A 64-year-old English

Kalbarri tourist death

"If the sharks, crocs and snakes don't get you, let the rest of the environment take charge to knock you flat!"

DANGER

Path surface may be slippery

DANGER

WARNING

Coastal Risk Area

Lives have been lost in this area. Even calm days can be hazardous.

- Do not explore alone.
- Stay on the trails where provided.
- Keep clear of the waters edge.

Take at least 3 litres of water per person



Different methods of keeping the cool

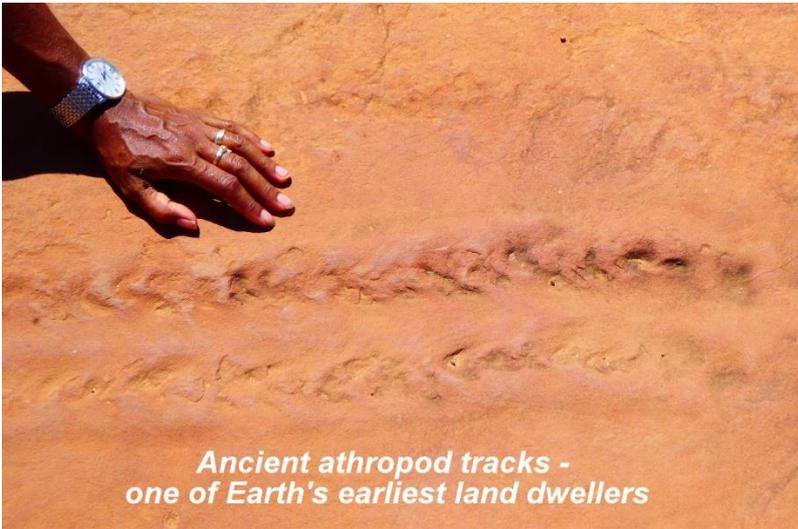




Lord Of The Flies

They carry you off!!!





Ancient arthropod tracks - one of Earth's earliest land dwellers



That's the fella



'Skolithos'

Fossilised worm burrows

Other early signs of life are the fossilised burrows created by ancient worm-like organisms known as **Skolithos**. They lived in a shallow sandy marine environment during the Silurian period about 420 million years ago – now part of the coastal Tumblagooda Sandstone formations.



A more current little trackside warrior!

Special event: Catching up with long-standing dive buddies after several failed attempts due to unfortunate circumstances: Note the 2x bottles of champers!





*At Nature's Window
with Brian*



View through Nature's Window over Murchison River



Morning wake-up swim at Blue Holes/Kalbarri



Another Kalbarri special is our visit to the **Rainbow Jungle** - a most beautifully created parrot habitat, described as one of the wonders of Western Australia. Definitely **the** place for 'birders'...



Moving on to **Hutt Lagoon** and **Pink Lake** – the radiant pink hue of this unusual lake is created by the presence of carotenoid-producing algae *Dunaliella salina* with a reddish-orange pigment called Beta-carotene, a food-colouring agent and source of vitamin A. The lagoon covers 70 square kilometres and lies below sea level. About **2500 hectares are being used to cultivate the algae** from which Beta-carotene is extracted. It is also an antioxidant – health benefits include lowering the risk of some cancers and heart disease.



We overnight at a farm-stay nearby called '*Linga-Longa*', but we don't...

We move on the next day, though not before learning some valuable life skills and dunny wisdoms!



Outback survival:

**PLEASE put the LID DOWN
& CLOSE the DOOR**

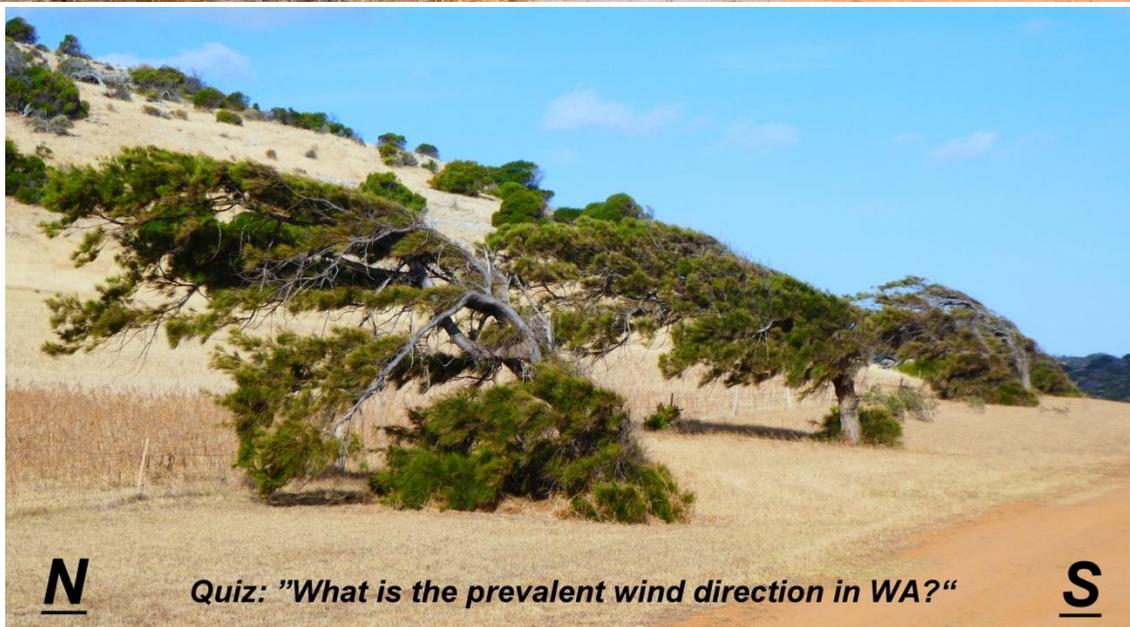
To Keep out the frogs, snakes etc.



We have been enduring incessant cold southerly winds ever since we left Karijini National Park six weeks ago. No wonder they call this month "*Blovember*" – apparently these irritating winds are normal for the west coast at this time of the year and we are 'a bit over it' to say the least!

We notice, even the trees are trying to escape the crazy blow...
some actually jumping fences probably thinking 'life's better on the far side'...

Incessant winds in WA: Even trees jump fences and scramble across the road...!



N

Quiz: "What is the prevalent wind direction in WA?"

S

Mind you, some are welcoming the howling gales!



Windfest at Dongara



Hydrofoil-Kiteboarder travelling at incomprehensible speed!

At first sight... this guy **seems** to be carried (or rather thrown along), so **utterly out of control at wind speed**, we actually fear for his safety!

There is no wash or splash – he looks like he's flying airborne at gusts' violent mercy...

Then we spot his hydrofoil – **INSANE... His speed is INSANE!!!**

Enter the **Principality of Hutt River Province** – what an intriguing story!!



HRP is a **micronation** and **independent state** within Australia, founded on April 21 – 1970 when **Leonard Casley** declared his farm of 75 square kilometres an independent country: The **Hutt River Province**! He seceded from the *Commonwealth of Australia* over a dispute of wheat production quotas when **government restrictions would have sent him broke**. When a court claim for losses over \$52 million against the Governor of Western Australia was countered by a new law, hastily introduced by parliament in response, for compulsory acquisition of Leonard's land, Casley made his move while making a strong point that he remained nonetheless **loyal to Queen Elizabeth II** and asserting that the principality had successfully seceded from Australia.



Prince Leonard



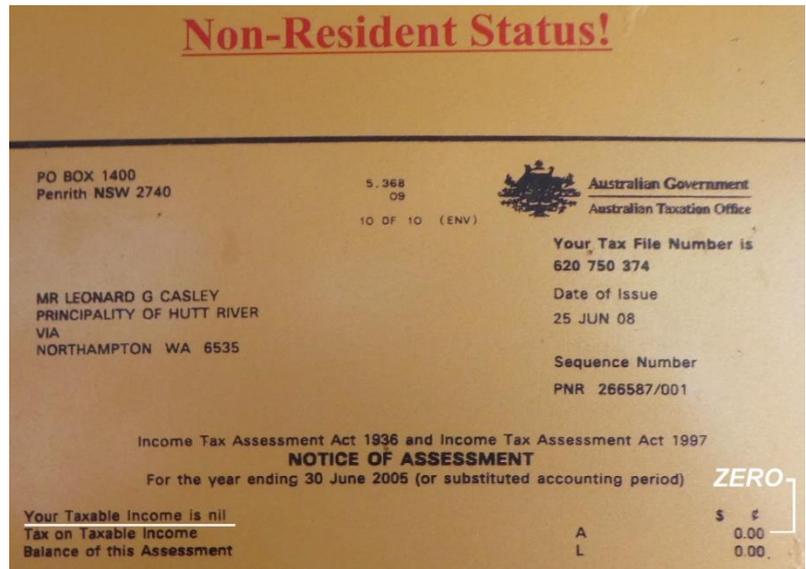
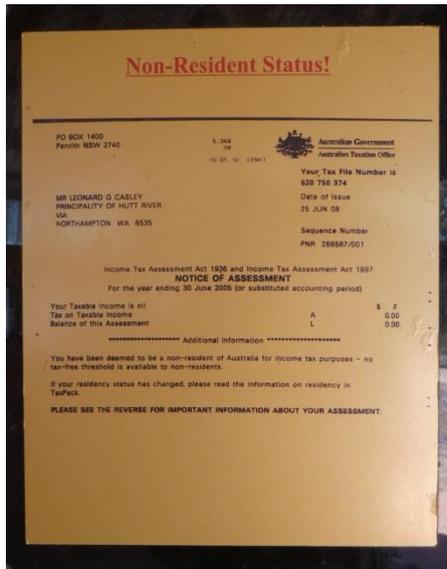
Sharp as a tack:
Prince Leonard at age 92

Casley styled himself '**His Majesty Prince Leonard I of Hutt**', granting many of his family members royal titles. He also did this because it would enable him to take advantage of the *British Treason Act of 1495* (indeed, *Leonard had studied the finer degrees of international law by then!*) which provides that the *de facto* king of a nation cannot be guilty of treason AND that any act against that lawful king which interferes with the monarch's duties could be charged with treason. **Casley continued to sell wheat in open defiance of the quota.**

He says that under Australian law the federal government had two years to respond to his declaration of sovereignty. The WA government failed to respond...

In 1977 Casley was successfully prosecuted for **failing to supply** required documents to the Australian Tax Office. On 2 December 1977, famously, the **Principality declared war on Australia!** Casley notified authorities of the cessation of hostilities several days later: The short state of war between the principality and Australia allowed Casley to argue that, under the *Geneva Treaty Convention of Aug 12 – 1949*, a government should show full respect to a nation undefeated from a state of war.

The Australian Tax Office is chasing back payments to the tune of \$2.7 million but Leonard states, **as classed by the ATO**, that he is a *“non-resident of Australia for income tax purposes”* and does not pay tax.



The HRP issues its own visas, stamps, coins and orders.
It has exchanged diplomatic missions with 28 countries.





BULLS HEAD
Symbol of:
Rural; Strength

EAGLE
Symbol of:
Freedom

SCALES
Symbol of:
Justice

THISTLE
Symbol of:
*Independence;
Defence of Right*

WHITE
Colour of:
Purity; Perfection

BLUE
Colour of:
Faith; Justice

RED
Colour of:
Liberty

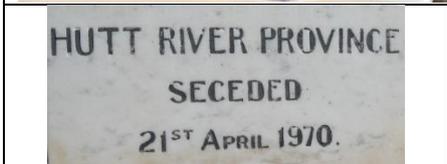
GOLD
Colour of:
Honour



We duly receive our visas and have our passports stamped...

Prince Leonard received a congratulation letter in 2016 from Buckingham Palace and Queen Elizabeth's good wishes on the 44th anniversary of the founding of the principality! There is a chapel, a Royal Mail post office, government offices, a flag and a national anthem ("*It's a hard Land*") – all hallmarks of a a sovereign nation!

Prince Leonard
Hutt River Province Principality
Via Northampton
Nain
6535
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

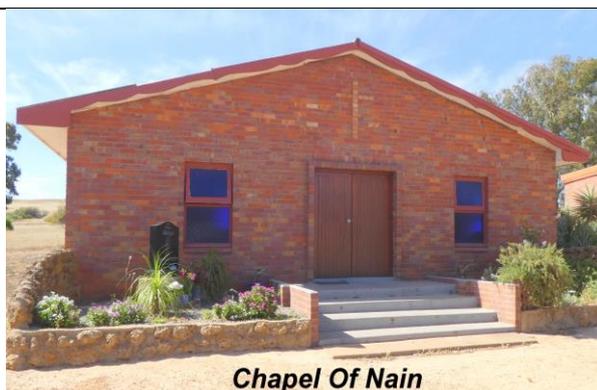
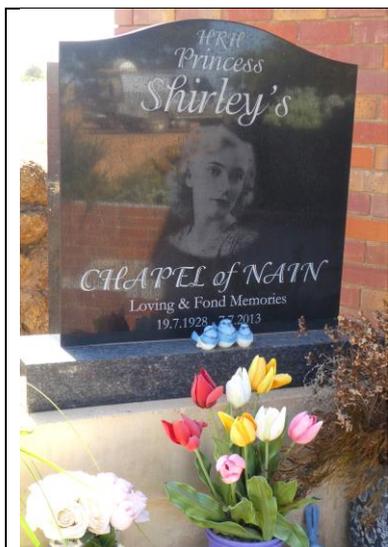


In March 2017 at age of 91 and after ruling for 45 years, Prince Leonard abdicated the throne in favour of his youngest son, **Prince Graeme**.



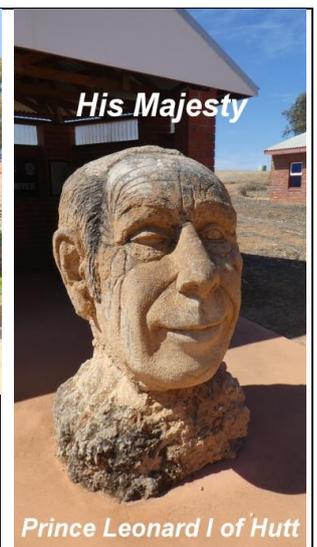
Meeting HRH Prince Graeme

We have the privilege to meet both, Prince Graeme AND Prince Leonard I. The latter's right eye black and bruised from a recent fall, not in the least from his wrangles with the tax department! **Hats off to Leonard Casley (a clever 'no-holds-barred' Aussie Battler) - May God save the Prince!**



Chapel Of Nain

Prince Leonard lost his precious wife HRH Princess Shirley in 2013 - She rests in peace in front of the chapel.



Prince Leonard I of Hutt



Thus we travel on to meet a much more mundane appointment – helping ALDI celebrate their Geraldton opening day!



Shot of the day:



Next episode: Slowly trekking south for Perth... more in 2019!

We wish everyone a blessed Christmas, a safe and happy New Year!
Wherever you are, we hope life is being kind and your winds favourable ☺

*Greetings from
Chris and Katherine*

