

A driver's guide to the Humpty Doo Rice Trail

The Humpty Doo Rice trail drivers guide takes you some 70 kilometres from Darwin's port to the Adelaide River coastal plain and internationally renowned Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve. It allows you to see key locations of the historic Humpty Doo Rice Project and to consider its vision and rationale.

Most locations display a GPS coordinate link that can be displayed in navigation and map applications on most smart phones with GPS turned on.

On your journey along the trail you will find signage at some locations that links in to the text of the audio drivers' guide. **Please be respectful of locations noted as private property** and view these areas from the road where possible.

While most remnants of the Humpty Doo Rice Project of 1954-64 are outside Darwin city, the project made use of the Port of Darwin and the suburb of Nightcliff maintain links to the project.

The Port of Darwin - Viewing Platform [GPS S12.46721, E 130.84464](#)

The Port of Darwin is best seen from the viewing platform on the Esplanade beside Government House. The port was used to import machinery and export rice. Rice and other bulk and bagged products were loaded onto ships at Fort Hill wharf. The port today is vastly different to its appearance in the 1950-60 era. Then, the Fort Hill jetty was of short length and close to land. Its larger replacement is now regularly used by cruise liners. The Stokes Hill jetty is now a popular tourist precinct that includes restaurants and cafes.



The suburb of Nightcliff

John Beams former residence [GPS S12.37802, E130.84779](#)

Private Property.

Opposite the public swimming pool on Casuarina Drive, Nightcliff was where Territory Rice Limited's manager John Beams lived in a modest elevated house.



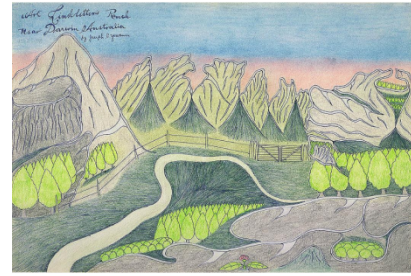
Seabreeze Hotel History Sign [GPS S12.37978, E130.84270](#)

Negotiations for Rice Development Pty Ltd to take control of the rice project took place at the site of the former Seabreeze Hotel, on Casuarina Drive near the Nightcliff jetty in June 1958.

Nightcliff was devastated by Cyclone Tracey at Christmas 1974 and both the house and hotel were destroyed. Of interest, even though American TV star and Territory Rice



TV star Director Art Linkletter didn't own property in Darwin. Despite that, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC has a painting by Joseph E Joakum entitled Art Linkletter's Ranch in Darwin.



De Caen Close, Virginia

Kennon's Water Pump [GPS S12.503890, E131.017231](#)

At the entrance to 30 De Caen Close, just off the Arnhem Highway, Virginia, there is a large blue painted water pump that was purchased overseas for the rice project, apparently by Art Linkletter, but forfeited as Territory Rice could not afford the customs duty. SG Kennon & Co. supplied equipment to and provided contract work for Territory Rice, including the installation of the main water pump and sluice gate on the Adelaide River. Stan Kennon, the founder of SG Kennon, had been involved in equipment salvage after World War II. He acquired the pump when it became available at auction. The pump now features at the entrance of its current owner, H2O Pty Ltd.



Coolalinga - Rice Mill Building [GPS S12.51929, E 130.03702](#)

At Coolalinga on the Stuart Highway, 28 km from Darwin, the rice mill building remains on private land. This can be seen from the access road to the shops on the north side of the highway.

Originally part of the RAAF and later the 10th Aust Base Workshop complex in World War 2, the higher building was transformed into a 'state of the art' rice mill in 1957, by a leading rice mill expert. It operated until 1966.



The curved roof "Quonset" buildings were used to dry the rice. Milled rice was exported through both the Port of Darwin and from the main pump station site on the Adelaide River.

Along the Arnhem Highway

The Humpty Doo Road [GPS S12.56505, E131.07381](#)

was where rice farmer Bob Parker started clearing vegetation with a bulldozer to form a 30 km dirt track from the Stuart Highway to the Territory Rice Limited village and the Adelaide River. Known as the Humpty Doo Road, this provided access to the rice project from Darwin.



Construction of the Arnhem Highway, a major upgrade of the Humpty Doo road, began in 1966-67 to provide access to a small iron ore mine at Mount Bunday, east of the Adelaide River. The highway was extended in the early 1970s to support mineral exploration and future mining around Jabiru, in what later became Kakadu National Park.

Humpty Doo Hotel [GPS S12.57806, E 131.12891](#)

6 km along the Highway on the right is the Humpty Doo Hotel that was built in 1972. Before that the name Humpty Doo referred to the location of the Humpty Doo cattle station. The area now named Humpty Doo is a thriving rural residential and horticultural area.



Humpty Doo Cattle Station [GPS S12.608083, E131.265889](#)

20km along the Highway on the right is the entrance to Humpty Doo cattle station. The rice project was situated on Humpty Doo and Koolpinyah cattle station land, then both owned by the Herbert brothers, Evan and Oscar, who were sons of a former Administrator of the Northern Territory, Charles Herbert. Both stations were given the names that the Aboriginal people used for the areas.

Humpty Doo station is now owned by the Kenyon family, some of the area's Aboriginal Traditional Owners who operate Pudukul Aboriginal Cultural Tours and, at Beatrice Hill, the Wetland Top View Visitor Centre.



Territory Rice Limited's 1954 rice growing trials were located between the Humpty Doo station homestead and the TRL village on what is now Thomsen Road.

Electrical Sub-Station [GPS S12.60808, E131.26590](#) Private Property

21km along the Highway on the right is an electrical sub-station that was used to distribute electricity generated in Darwin to TRL's water pumps, village and government research centres. In 1966 government installed a new 2kV electricity feeder line to upgrade supply to the Humpty Doo rice project area and Stan Kennon's pink granite quarry at Mount Bunday.



Radio Transmitting Station [GPS S12.61447, E131.28230](#) Private Property

25km along the Arnhem Highway at the corner of Anzac Parade (on the left), Territory Rice intended to build a substantial airfield to replace the small Kemp airstrip it had built 8 kilometres along Anzac Parade. The land is now the Humpty Doo radio transmitting station of the Department of Defence, established after Cyclone Tracey destroyed much of the Royal Australian Navy's transmitting station at Shoal Bay near Darwin. The site now also services the Air Force.



The Anzac Parade Area [GPS S12.62091, E131.28864](#)

Anzac Parade, so named because construction commenced on Anzac Day, 25 April, 1956, was built by the Royal Australian Air Force's No. 5 Airfield Construction Squadron under the command of Squadron Leader (later Wing Commander) Arthur Harrison. It extended approximately 15 km from TRL's village south of the Arnhem Highway to a pumping station at Middle Point on the Adelaide River. Bob Parker cleared the bush for road construction, as he did for the building the Humpty Doo Road/Arnhem Highway.



For the duration of the rice project, with the exception of access tracks and roads, the land along Anzac Parade was forested bushland.



After the commercial rice project ended, the Thomsen family acquired the Territory Rice Village and Anzac Parade south of the Arnhem Highway was re-named Thomsen Road.

Beatrice Hill Farm (visible from road) [GPS S12.61333, E131.29439](#) Private Property

Opposite the government's Humpty Doo radio transmitting station is the Northern Territory government's Beatrice Hill Farm for cattle and buffalo research.

Centre Road, the entrance to Beatrice Hill Farm, ran through the Centre of the rice project. It was originally named Hill Road as it provided access to Beatrice Hill where the government conducted rice growing trials and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO) established its operations base. A bridge along Centre Road is named Olympic Bridge.



Harrison Dam Conservation Reserve.

Wood Lane [GPS S12.59452, E131.31279](#)

Turn right along **Wood Lane** at the Harrison Dam sign, 4 km along Anzac Parade. This leads to Harrison Dam and the coastal plains where Territory Rice Limited had its main rice fields.

Harrison Dam [GPS S12.58995, E131.33983](#)

Harrison Dam was built in 1958 and named after Squadron Leader Arthur Harrison. With just a small catchment the dam was to be filled with water pumped from the Adelaide River. Due to pumping problems the dam contributed little to the irrigation of the rice.

Climb to the top of the wall to see the dam and TRL's main rice fields on the flood plain.



Rice Bin [GPS S12.59033, E131.33983](#)

The remains of a bin used to hold freshly harvested rice for transfer to the Coolalinga mill can be seen on the right, at the entrance of the Conservation Reserve.



Pumping Stations

Remnants of two pumping stations can be found on the floodplain. Do not try to find these in the wet season, when ground conditions can be treacherous.

Although a popular location for bird watchers, the NT government allows the hunting of magpie geese and ducks at Harrison Dam Conservation Reserve, usually from September to January each year.



Private Properties

Past Wood Lane on the right hand side of Anzac Parade there are now several small horticulture properties and a crocodile farm that were established in the late 1970s. The rice project took gravel from some of these properties for road building.

Coastal Plains Research Farm (visible from Road) [GPS S12.60051, E131.31853](#)

The Northern Territory Government's Coastal Plains Research Farm is on the left past the radio base. It is a horticultural and forestry research centre.



Middle Point Village

CSIRO Village [GPS S12.57979, E131.31477](#)

On the left, 6km along Anzac Parade from the Arnhem Highway, is the village the CSIRO built in 1959 to move its operations base from Beatrice Hill to continue its research on rice varieties, pest management, soil and hydrology. This research continued until 1973.



Renamed Middle Point, the village originally had 12 houses and single people's accommodation. Transportable buildings were later added. Many of the houses and a community social club building have been removed.

The University of Sydney commenced long term longitudinal studies of the area in 1985. Its Tropical Ecology Unit, now a part of Macquarie University, occupies the village and continues this research. When pest cane toads (*Bufo marinus*) arrived in the area in 1985, the Unit studied the impact of toads on the environment, ways to minimize the impact and is seeking weaknesses in their physiology for potential control.



Fogg Dam Information Board

Outside the village a Friends of Fogg Dam signboard provides information on Fogg Dam, its wildlife, the rice project, indigenous and current land use in the area.



Primary School [GPS S12.57613, E131.31636](#)

Private Property

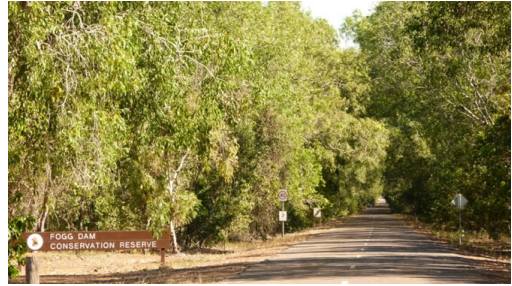
A small primary school at the end of the village is used by children from the local area and from the Corroboree and Marrakai areas, 40 km to the east.



Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve [GPS S12.57405, E131.31715](#)

Overview of Fogg Dam

On the left past the school, Harrison Road, named after Squadron Leader Harrison, leads into Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve.



Fogg Dam is the most visible remaining feature of the rice project and provides an outstanding wetland area for birdwatching and biologists.

It's a shallow 120 hectare dam of 3,400 megalitres capacity built in 1956 by to provide water to the seedling rice crop. However, the floodplain was so wet the main channel to the rice fields, opposite the first platform on the wall, could not be built until 1962.

Fogg Dam was named after Mr James D Fogg, Managing Director of TRL's engineering design contractor, Utah Australia. TRL workers would water ski on the dam's open water - something not possible now with little open water and more than 10 crocodile inhabitants. Originally the dam had spillways at both ends of the wall but in most years the eastern end had to be breached to prevent water overflowing the wall and causing damage.

Fogg Dam 1959

In 1959 Fogg Dam was made a Bird Protection District and later became a Conservation Reserve. It is the only Top End wetland accessible throughout the year from Darwin. With a variety of habitats in a small area, Fogg Dam has become known internationally amongst birdwatchers and biologists.



Heritage listed 2009

Early in the 1990s, three lookouts and two islands were built at Fogg Dam and the wall was modified to allow wet season water to overflow halfway along its length, creating a great place to view the water birds.

Carpark at [GPS S12.56713, E131.30838](#) is located for visitors to take the Woodlands to Waterlilies and Monsoon Forest walks.

Main Water Channel [GPS S12.56345, E131.30363](#)

The main water channel from the dam to the rice fields was built across the floodplain in 1962. Its across the dam causeway opposite the lookout.



Overflow Point [GPS S12.56248, E131.30234](#)

A spillway has been created half-way along the dam wall. The wet season overflow is attractive lots of birds.



Fogg Dam today

Today the Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve is jointly managed by the Aboriginal Traditional Owners and the NT Parks and Wildlife Service. As part of the Adelaide River floodplain it's an Australian "Key Biodiversity Area" and contains numerous species of flora and fauna within its diverse habitats. Fogg Dam's floodplain is reputed to hold the world's greatest known predator biomass concentration: water pythons - the rainbow serpent of Aboriginal mythology - which feed almost exclusively on the native dusky rat. Yet nearby, to the west of the overflow channel the predator biomass is poor. A truly unique situation.



Kemp airstrip and the Middle Point swimming hole

Kemp Airstrip [GPS S12.56114, E131.32721](#) Private Property

Kemp airstrip opposite No 830 Anzac Parade is now on private property. It had many uses including aerial surveys and crop management. The American investors often flew to Kemp from Darwin rather than use the rough dirt roads of the 1950s.

A bore beside the airstrip could provide over four million litres of water a day to the rice project. A small pond beside the bore was used as a swimming hole by CSIRO/Middle Point village residents until the mid-1990s. About 1990, a light aircraft of Arnhem Air Charter clipped the power line on Anzac Parade and crashed. No-one was seriously hurt and the airstrip was relocated to the Coastal Plains Research Farm.



The Middle Point of the Rice Project [GPS S12.55264, E131.34686](#)

The original location of the name "Middle Point". During the rice project, the land at the northern end of Anzac Parade was known as Middle Point as it was the middle point of the rice project. The irrigation channel between Fogg Dam and the rice project's main pumping station on the Adelaide River can be seen there today.

A culvert once crossed the channel to the experimental rice fields of the CSIRO. To the right, the dirt road leads through the former CSIRO rice fields on private land to both the Adelaide River Cruises jumping crocodile cruise and the Humpty Doo Barramundi fish farm.



The Adelaide River Cruises crocodile cruise (which operates dry season only) passes the ship mooring site at the barramundi farm.

On Private Property beyond Anzac Parade - The Humpty Doo Barramundi farm property has the remains of culverts made from wartime 44 gallon/200 litre drums, small pumps, the main river water pump and the anchor blocks used to moor ships loading rice as well as paddy fields and contour and levee banks.



The large pump is now heritage listed. The anchor blocks were made from material recovered from the World War 2 submarine net that stretched across the entrance to Darwin Harbour.

Beatrice Hill and Wetlands Top View Visitor Centre

Return to the Arnhem Highway and travel east towards the Adelaide River

Thomsen Road [GPS S12.62237, E131.29034](#) Private Road and property

Thomsen Road (now a private road) was originally an extension of Anzac Parade that led to Territory Rice's substantial construction and operations village and initial rice trial area.

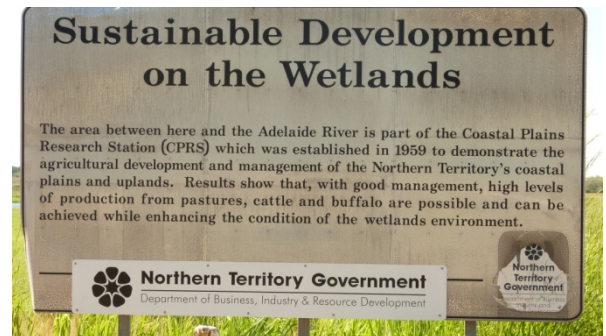
TRL's workers competed in Darwin's soccer and cricket competitions. Following the rice project, the Thomsen family acquired the property and found many of the original buildings and assets had been stolen. Very little of the original village remains.



Beatrice Hill Area [GPS S12.64860, E131.31602](#)

Continue along the Arnhem Highway and take the turnoff to the Wetland Top View Visitor Wetland Centre at Beatrice Hill and Spectacular Crocodile Cruise.

In 1956 the government established an agricultural research station at Beatrice Hill to assist the rice project. Experimental rice plantings commenced in 1957. From 1959 the research emphasis at the Beatrice Hill farm switched to livestock and tropical pasture when the CSIRO relocated to Anzac Parade.



Rice Project Memorial [GPS S12.65041, E131.32010](#)

A memorial with some of the equipment used during the rice project. The road to the right up the hill leads to the visitor centre while the road ahead and to the left goes to the Spectacular Crocodile Cruise.

The road from the rice project memorial to Spectacular Crocodile Cruise passes through some of the government's former rice paddies. Cattle, buffalo and birds can often be seen. The road itself was a levee bank to keep river floodwaters from the rice paddies.



CSIRO Accommodation Buildings [GPS S12.64955, E131.31793](#)

The visitor car park is where the CSIRO had accommodation buildings for its research staff during the rice project. In the late 1980s the buildings were used by prison workers attempting to eradicate the thorny weed mimosa pigra from the Adelaide River flood plain. The buildings were demolished when the visitor centre was built.



Wetlands Top View Visitor Centre [GPS S12.65146, E131.31853](#)

Formerly known as Windows on the Wetlands.

Wetland Top View Visitor Centre is a moderate walk from the car park. Disabled parking is provided at the Centre entrance. The Centre provides a range of information on the wetlands and provides expansive views of the Adelaide River floodplain.



Irrigation Pump *GPS S12.65294, E131.33817*

A pump had been situated beside the Adelaide River below the building pictured at the site of the Spectacular Jumping Crocodile Cruise pictured, to irrigate the government's rice trials with river water.



You have now completed the Humpty Doo Rice Trail. We trust you've enjoyed your exploration of the rice project. For further and more detailed information on the project and Fogg Dam, please refer to the Friends of Fogg Dam website, www.foggdamfriends.org

The Northern Territory Government through the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport is pleased to sponsor Friends of Fogg Dam. This publication may not represent the views of the Northern Territory Government.