

# Everything has a beginning ...

## And crossing of the Nullabor was no exception

Since 1770 when the Endeavour navigated by Lieutenant (later Captain) James Cook first landed at Botany Bay's Inscription Point near Silver Beach on the Kurnell Peninsula, the eventual crossing from east to west was inevitable especially when the first European settlement (later to be named Perth) was established on the Swan River in 1829 by Bruce James Stirling. It wasn't until 1849 that it was formally constituted as a penal colony and the transportation of convicts began.

Edward John Eyre was an English land explorer of the Australian continent. In 1840, along with his Aboriginal companion, Wylie, he became the first European to traverse the coastline of the Great Australian Bight and the Nullarbor Plain from the east on an epic 2000 mile trip to Albany, WA. He originally led the expedition with John Baxter.



The rest is history as many have followed this often unforgiving coastline in an effort to map a path for others to follow with a great deal of emphasis on motorised transportation.

Now famous pioneers such as Murray Aunger and Harry Dutton who, in 1907 driving Dutton's 10 hp Hillman Talbot, set out to map a path from Adelaide and north through the rugged centre to Darwin. They got bogged and had to abandon the car until another attempt a year later in a 12 hp Talbot. They rescued the original car and took both on to Darwin. The first ever crossing established.



- ▲ Murray Aunger & Harry Dutton
- ▲ Edward John Eyre
- ▼ East - West Telegraph Line



The construction of the East – West telegraph line in the 1870's along Eyre's route resulted in a hazardous trail that could be followed for interstate travel. However, a national highway was called for but the Federal Government did not see the importance until 1941 when a war in the Pacific seemed imminent. The highway was constructed between July 1941 and June 1942 and useable by motorists although with the warning 'Eyre Highway Track Construction'. Although originally referred to by the war cabinet as 'The Forrest Highway' it was officially gazetted 'Eyre Highway', a name agreed upon by the states nomenclature committees. The finished road, while an improvement on the previous route, was still not much more than a track and remained as such throughout the 1940's and fifties.