

Newsletter November 2010

What have we been up to?

Well, I've been away for nearly 2 months since the last newsletter, leading our fantastic Burke & Wills trip and then the drought breaking Across the Top tour, see below for separate reports on each. Plus I've just put together my 2011 calendar of trips and had the website updated, see it at www.4wd.net.au

Burke & Wills 150th Year Anniversary Tour

20 August 2010 marked 150 years since Burke & Wills set out from Melbourne on their ill fated journey across Australia. We started our tour out of Royal Park and for 18 days traced their footsteps across Australia. We had 13 vehicles in the convoy, including a film crew, the DVD should be out early next year, plus three of the GDT team including Pauline & Rich who acted as my history researches and provided a wealth of information as we travelled through the very country that B&W walked.

This trip was the culmination of about 6 months worth of work and judging by the feedback I have received it was all worth it.



Pelican from Burke & Wills Bridge

You will be able to read about it in Overlander Magazine around January/February, or take a look at the diary we maintained whilst on the trip which will

be posted on my website (as of 8 November) and check out the photos in the Gallery section of www.4wd.net.au which are there now.

Some of the highlights were:-

Sunset at Mungo, seeing Menindee Lakes full of water, camping for 3 nights at Mootwinjtie NP and completing most of the walks in the Park whilst we waited for roads to dry out, camping beside a beautiful lake near Warri Gate which should not have been there, camping at the Dig Tree with thousands of birds and green grass, it was like a real Garden of Eden, seeing over 10,000 birds off the Burke & Wills bridge, having a water view from our camp at Big Red and witnessing numerous thunder storms sweep in from the Desert, plus a magical sunset, escaping Birdsville with just 24 hours to spare before it was closed for 5 days, crossing flooded roads on the way to and from Boulia, finding O'Hara's Gap in remote north Queensland and camping at B&W's most northerly camp (Camp 119) in the Gulf Country.



Sunset with a water view at Big Red

Also, this trip was sponsored by my good friends at Cooper Tyres and at the end of the trip we put everyone's name in a hat and drew out a lucky winner. Maria, David and Sebastian won a set of Cooper tyres for their 'Cruiser. Congratulations.

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Across the Top

Following our very successful Burke & Wills trip I led a small group of devoted 4WD Drivers on an adventurous journey across the Gulf Country from Karumba to Mataranka and then with our route changed due to flooded roads in Central Australia we managed to experience some incredible mud driving down the Old Ghan railway.



Mud near Mt Dare



Incredible sunset where the Cooper crosses the Birdsville track



Vic and bull dust, yep that would be right

Once again there were many highlights including the oppressive heat for 10 days with the mercury touching 40 degrees most

days, canoeing up Lawn Hill gorge, battling deep bull dust, flying and walking over/through the Lost City at Cape Crawford, swimming in the hot pools of Poppy's Pool on Bauhinia Downs station, Driving the Frew River track in Davenport Ranges, seeing millions of wildflowers through Central Australia, driving a washed out Old Ghan railway track, seeing camels approach our camp on sunset on the old railway, driving through the deep mud around Mt Dare station, camping on the Cooper Creek on the Birdsville track where no water has run for 20 years, crossing the Cooper Creek on the car ferry that last operated in 1990, seeing the most amazing display of wildflowers in the Flinders Ranges and seeing Willandra NP covered in green and gold where usually there is nothing but red dust.

Once again check out our diary in the website and my photos, you will be amazed at the sights we saw.

Vic's Book

I mentioned last Newsletter that my new book "Travelling the Outback" had just been released, thanks to everyone who has been purchasing it, sales for the first 3 months have exceeded 2000 copies, and it really is a good read. I'm now working on my next book "Vic's Outback Tracks" and this one will be a real cracker as it covers many of my favourite trips throughout Australia, it should be out by April 2011.

On the Gravy Train

Just last week Julie & I were invited up to Moreton Island to write a story on the location for Overlander Magazine. All expenses covered, (almost) and my friends at Jeep provided a 5 door Wrangler for my use on the Island. I had not been there previously and what a contrasting place it was. Tangalooma is the usual bustling tourist resort with all the mod cons, and the rest of the Island is great! Lots of sand, some fantastic camps sites on the edge of the trees looking out across the Bay and not a lot of people. There are in excess of 200 camp sites scattered around the island by National

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Parks and plenty to see and do provided you like Sand driving.

We had just 2 days on the Island and thoroughly enjoyed the place. The weather was kind to us and I note it has rained every day since, it wouldn't be much fun in the rain. The car ferry trip from Brisbane to the Island was excellent but quite expensive, I'm glad Moreton Island Adventures were paying for it. If you are looking for a great place for your next holiday, and no this is not a plug for another GDT tour, why not check out

www.moretonislandadventures.com.au



Moreton Island, we were there last Saturday!

Of course not everything went to plan and next time I share a camp fire with you, make sure you ask me about my little adventure with the keys to the Wrangler!! All I can say is thank goodness for fencing wire!

The other Manly

On our way to Moreton Island we stopped over at Manly on the east side of Brisbane. I had never been here before and what a lovely quaint place it was. There is a great foreshore walk around the Bay, nice little shops and a really good feel about the place, not bad for a major city like Brisbane and all those fantastic Queenslander houses with their wide covered verandas and lovely painted timber work. Truly unique!

The Adventures of Jeepers

If you missed my last Newsletter let me explain. I'm writing a series of articles for

Overlander magazine on where you can go in an All Wheel Drive and Jeep have provided me with a Jeep Patriot for the numerous stories. Jeepers has been taking me all over the place, although with 2 months away not as much as I might have hoped. On return to the big smoke I loaded up the little blue Jeep with some sand going gear and took it up to Stockton Beach on our regular tour in mid October. I let Alex run the trip and acted like a customer for a while. Jeepers handled the sand OK, certainly it couldn't go everywhere the bigger 4WDs could but Emma, my other daughter, and I certainly had a fun time.

This also gave me the chance to check out the new access arrangements onto Stockton Beach from Lavis Lane, it is now a lot easier to access the beach.



Jeepers tackles a dune on Stockton

I am a bit worried about the management of Stockton Beach though, it has been under the control of the Worimi Conservation Lands who handed it back to NPWS to manage. A new management plan for Stockton is already under review but already you cannot do the following :-

Camp in the sand dunes further than 100 metres from the high tide mark, you must remove all human waste (try doing that!), you cannot collect firewood off the beach, you can only have a fire in the campsite fireplaces, but there are no designated camping spots??, you must not drive on any sand dunes?? Now that one really baffles me and if this is enforced it will kill the reason for going to Stockton. All I can say is join us on one of our trips to Stockton sooner rather than later as I fear that before long we won't

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be allowed to go there. Our next Stockton trip is on 12 December 2010 and then the 16 January 2011.

The Adventures of Dave and Sebastian



Come and hear Dave Cornthwaite and Sebastian Terry speak of their amazing adventures.

I first met Dave Cornthwaite in 2006 on the Nullabor Plain, he was a mad Englishman who had decided to skateboard across Australia! Like I said he's mad. Then last year he paddled from the source of the Murray River to the sea in South Australia. He started off by walking to the very source of the Murray deep in the Snowy Mtns on the October long weekend in 2009, the only problem was it snowed and snowed and snowed, over half a metre of snow fell on him and it looked like he might perish in the first few days, but he didn't and he completed his long lonely paddle over the next 2.5 months!

In the meantime, Sebastian Terry is an Australian and should know better, he decided after a mate of his suddenly passed away that he needed to accomplish something in his life, so he wrote a bucket list of 100 things as bizarre as you can imagine to achieve in his lifetime. One of these goals was to be awarded a Guinness Book world record. He accomplished this by crushing 24 eggs between his big toes in 30 seconds, guess who was placing the eggs there, yep Dave Cornthwaite. These two guys have now teamed up to provide a series of motivational/inspirational talks in Australia during November and I would like

you to join me at one of these talks on Wednesday 24 November. The talk is being given at North Sydney oval from 5.30pm to 7.30pm in one of their function rooms. Tickets are a crazy low \$15 each and I hope you will join me for what will prove to be a funny and interesting night listening to these two young adventurous and the things they have achieved all around the world. To book your tickets go to <http://hundredsthousandssydney.eventbrite.com/>

Drop me an email too so I know you are coming, I expect a big turn out and the function room only holds 120 people so get in early.

I'm supporting Dave and Seb over the next 2 weeks as they tour up the east coast of Australia, I've also convinced Jeep to let them have the Patriot for their adventure and on Sunday 7 November (probably as you read this) I'm giving them driving lessons on Stockton Beach.

Mark 24 November in your calendar and come along to hear these two great guys.

Here is a bit out of their website.

Between them, Dave Cornthwaite and Sebastian Terry have broken world records, written books, produced films and presented to audiences on four continents. Accomplished speakers at home and abroad, they are delighted to announce 'Hundreds and Thousands', their first joint speaking tour. This inspirational and entertaining lecture is complimented by stunning slides and video, designed both to amaze and provoke thoughts about exactly what they hope to achieve from their lives.

Delivered with honest and humorous self-assessment, Dave and Sebastian present side by side, equating their individual and shared ventures by explaining how they have managed to stretch their boundaries without compromising the sensible stuff that modern life requires of us. Book now for 24/11/10 <http://hundredsthousandssydney.eventbrite.com/>

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Past Trips

Greg completed the Best of the West trip through WA and on reading the diary kept on that trip it certainly sounds like everyone had a fabulous time in this beautiful and then very remote part of Australia. Wayne D or WD40 as we call him led a very small contingent of just 3 vehicles up Cape York whilst I was doing the Gulf country trip and had such a great time he has put his hand up to do the trip again next year. But this time, Wayne has said he is prepared to take a couple of off road trailers in the group. As you know we have not taken trailers on this trip previously but Wayne says he reckons he can handle 2-3 of them, so if you have been contemplating doing the Cape with us but wanted to take your trailer here is your chance. Our trip leaves Cairns on 20 August 2011.

Upcoming Trips

I know its hard to believe given the weather we are currently having but, it is almost summer and that means the High Country is open for business. WD40 takes the first group on our 7 day trip out of Bright on 21 November and we still have a few spots if you are keen. He heads back down there on 29 December on our annual 4 day New Year trip through the Snowy Mountains and I've only got 2 spots left on this great trip. Then in January we have our usual 7 day trip starting once again out of Bright on 3 January and this is followed immediately on 10 January by our 7 day Camper Trailer High Country trip which allows those of you with Trailers to see this magical location.

NZ

We are offering some incredible 4wd trips in New Zealand in 2011 starting with a 4 day weekend escape on 14-17 January 2011 and our wonderful 9 day South Island tour in early March. Current exchange rate is around \$1.30 NZ so its not a real expensive holiday, send me an email for more info on each of these trips.



The scenery in NZ is amazing

Trailer's Galore

On my recent trips out west I noticed that 3 out of 4 4wdrives were towing off road trailers. So we have looked at all of our trips to see what we can do to make them trailer friendly. National Parks will not let any commercial operators take trailers into the Simpson Desert (although I note quite a few of our opposition ignore this rule and do so, we won't disregard the guidelines issued to us by the authorities) But of our major trips here is a list of those that are camper trailer friendly.

Kimberley Explorer
Best of the West
Cape York (limited numbers)
High Country (Camper trailer trip)
Darling River/Mungo
Corner Country/Birdsville
And now a new 2 day Brindabella tour

In addition to this we are offering extra camper trailer driver training courses throughout the year.

New Trips

Did you notice I mentioned the Corner Country / Birdsville trip? This is a new format for a trip in the July school holidays which not only takes in the delights of the Corner Country including Cameron Corner, White Cliffs, Sturt National Park and Depot Glen but now wanders up the Strzelecki Track to Innamincka and then all the way to Birdsville. We will take you to the top of Big Red before returning to Haddon Corner and the Dig Tree and back to White Cliffs via Warri Gate. This will be a fabulous trip

and as mentioned it is camper trailer friendly.

The Darling River trip remains on our calendar too and after visiting Mungo and Mootwintjie on the Burke & Wills trip let me assure you this is an excellent outback adventure that you should consider. It is being offered in both the April and October school holidays next year.



Don't miss sunset at Mungo on our Darling river trip

I've also twigged the Hay River trip and next year after exploring the Northern Simpson we will head into the Red Centre and have included the beautiful Cattlewater Pass track, Palm Valley, Finke Gorge, Kings Canyon and of course Uluru.

Photo courses

Following the enormous success of this course, and I can vouch for the improvement in my own photographic skills, I'm offering this weekend away again with pro photographer Phil Cooper on 26-27 March 2011. The first of our photo weekend tours with Phil takes place next weekend (13-14 November 2010) and whilst it is fully booked, if you wish to join us let me know just in case we have any late cancellations. We are doing this weekend again next year in July.

Driver Training changes

Sadly I've had to increase the cost of our two day driver training courses, obviously with rising costs all around us it was only a matter of time. But I've also introduced a budget priced one day 4WD course which

might appeal to some. Check out our website www.4wd.net.au for all the details.

4WDOTY Judging

I set off in a couple of weeks with the boys from Overlander on the week long test program for this year's 4WD of the Year, I'm not exactly sure what has made the short list but no doubt we will be having lots of testing times (I couldn't resist that one). Let's hope we aren't let down by street tyres like we were last year (Yes I know, another play on words).

Discounts?

OK, here are a couple, on 14 November we have our Cliffs & Canyons trip scheduled, I'm offering a 20 % discount to any bookings made in the next 3 days. The same applies to the following weekend with our fantastic South Coast Explorer trip, a great 2 day trip into some of the best parts of the Sth Coast with accommodation in a great sea side caravan park at Batemans Bay.

Merry Christmas

It's hard to imagine that its almost that time of year again so let me take the opportunity to wish every one a safe and Merry Christmas, have a great break and we hope to see you soon.

Of course if your are looking for Christmas gift ideas don't forget we do gift vouchers for any of our trips just email me at info@greatdividetours.com.au or why not purchase one of my books as a fantastic gift under the Chrissy Tree, Travelling the Outback or 4WD Driving Skills.

That's all for now from the crew at Great Divide Tours:-

Vic, Julie, Wayne D, Wayne B & Jenny, Alex, John, Eric & Anne, Brian, Dave & Irene, Richard, Greg, Ian B & Skippy/Yarn/Ian.

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