



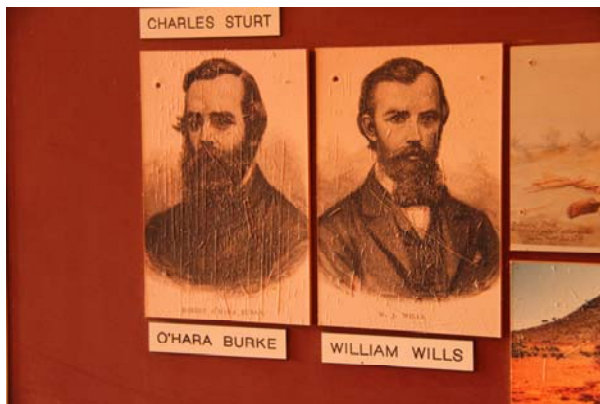
Newsletter No. 26 September 2011

What have we been up to?

The last newsletter was in February, so I have to apologise for the time taken to pen this next issue, but soooo much has been happening, read on.

Burke & Wills 150th Year Anniversary Tour DVD

As you may recall, one of the highlights of our 2010 tour calendar was our 150th anniversary Burke and Wills Expedition tour. We retraced this fateful expedition from Royal Park in Melbourne all the way to the Gulf of Carpentaria. This was an incredible trip and we were very lucky to be accompanied by John and Anne Morton from Lifestyle Video Productions who recorded the whole trip on film.



They have now finalised the DVD and it has been released to the public, naturally you can purchase copies through GDT. I know you will say I am biased, but this is truly an incredible record of not only our trip but the whole Burke and Wills saga. The detailed historical information that has been included by John and Anne is excellent and if I had my way this DVD would be compulsory viewing in all schools as it clearly explains one of the great chapters in our early history.

If you would like a copy you can purchase them from me for just \$30 plus postage, just drop me an email at info@greatdividetours.com.au

Vic's new Book

It seems like I've been working on this book all year, in fact I have. The book known as Vic's Classic Outback Tracks has now grown to provide 19 different outback tracks with detailed information on their history plus what you'll find when you drive them. I've just completed the final edit and there are over 62,000 words of wisdom contained in its colourful pages along with maps, reference numbers and email addresses for each location. Thanks to Jenny who works a couple of days per week in my office for compiling all the map data and reference numbers.

The book is scheduled to be on the book shelves in time for Christmas, so if you are looking for a great Christmas gift either for a friend or yourself, drop me an email and you will be among the first to get a copy as soon as it is released. I should know the price and postage costs by the end of October.

A Promotion at Overlander magazine

Most people know that I've been free lance writing for Overlander 4WD Magazine for the past 7 years. In May 2011 the Magazine was sold by News Limited to Express Media Group. Shortly after this I received a phone call from EMG asking me if I would like to be the head and shoulders of the magazine in the position of Editor at Large. Naturally I said yes. My first issues in this role came out in July 2011 and I'm now writing the Editorial page each month along with several travel and tips and techniques articles.

This is a huge achievement for me and I'm still shaking my head at the thought of heading up one of Australia's leading 4WD magazines. If you have seen the new look magazine and read my contributions please let me know what you think of the product and how we might continue to improve it.



A new Cruiser for Vic

If you have visited either the 4WD show at Eastern Creek or the Penrith 4WD show held a couple of weeks ago I'm sure you may have noticed my new Cruiser. Yes, that big bright blue FJ Cruiser with all the fancy sign writing is indeed owned by me. I know this has taken many people by surprise, but I'm looking at the FJ as a marketing tool to sell our tours and driver training and raise awareness of GDT overall.



It certainly seems to attract a lot of attention and I have to be careful when-ever driving it that onlookers don't accidentally run into me.

The FJ is based on the Prado with the same 4litre V6 petrol motor, sadly there is no diesel version available. Interestingly, it is a part time 4WD but once 4WD is selected its traction control system with a new enhancement referred to as A-Trac makes it an almost go anywhere machine, and then if you do get stuck it also has a locking rear differential all as standard. Anyway, I think it looks funky and with help from ARB who assisted with the pricing on the suspension, bull bar, roof rack, winch and driving lights (Crikey, this stuff is expensive, it still cost over \$5k with a decent discount!) the FJ is starting to look the part.

It is up at Out of Town 4WD in Newcastle at present having a second fuel tank installed. This will add another 120 litres to its rather paltry 72 litres. I'm still hunting around for a storage system for the FJ and a cargo barrier and once I source these items it will be ready to hit the track – after I have its beautiful blue paint work wrapped in an Ozicozi to protect it from all those nasty scratches.



The FJ will be embarking on a few of our day and weekend trips plus our driver training and it will even be available for hire at our driver training courses for those who attend without a 4WD. So if you know someone who you would like to have trained up in the art of 4WD driving but they don't have a vehicle themselves, why not hire the FJ for the weekend course.

As mentioned, the FJ is a bit of a marketing tool and you should see it doing the rounds of various shows, and 4WD workshops over the coming months.

BTW – did you know there was an FJ Cruiser club? Yep! I'm now a member, just imagine a whole gaggle of FJ's on the beach at Stockton, what a hoot!

Past Trips

The winter season of trips has just concluded and as per usual we had numerous outback safaris taking place. Both of our Simpson Desert trips were marred by floods in the Simpson Desert with Eyre Creek causing each trip to be re-routed. For some though this meant they got to use the car ferry on the Birdsville Track and see the huge lake on the east side of Big Red.

The rain over the past 2 years has created a huge amount of growth in the Desert regions and our Hay River trip was almost unrecognisable due to the lush growth throughout the desert. The flooded Eyre Creek also meant we had to come down the Hay River instead of up it as per usual. This

saw our group then complete a huge north to south and then east west crossing of the Simpson. Aply led by Greg and Helen everyone had a great time.

Greg and Helen also led our new Corner Country/Birdsville trip which was trailer friendly and turned out to be a fantastic trip through this unique part of Australia, this trip will definitely be on the calendar next year.

Wayne D led another happy group up the Canning Stock Route and he had to be on his best behaviour as his lovely wife, Belinda accompanied him. Sadly however, WD40 as we call him, then suffered ill health on the Kimberley trip and ended up in Darwin hospital due to some heart problems. He finished up back home and awaiting some major surgery which we hope will take place real soon. I'm sure everyone wishes Wayne a speedy recovery and we all look forward to him getting back on the road real soon.

Fortunately for the Kimberley customers, Irene and Dave were on holidays at the time and were over at Karratha, they hastily made a dash back to Kununurra and were able to lead the Kimberley tour for the remaining 20 days. They then continued on their around Australia trip. You can see their full trip courtesy of our SPOT tracker, just go to the home page at www.4wd.net.au and follow the link.

Up the Middle

Eric, Anne and I led this new trip with 6 participant vehicles during August. Trekking across outback NSW through beautiful Willandra station and the still flooded Kinchega NP we then went west to Mt Ive Station to experience the amazing Lake Gairdner before using some new tracks to head north towards Coober Pedy. We had a memorable night crowded together under Eric's tarp on our one and only evening of rain and then experienced the beautiful Painted Desert. We joined the mainly overseas tourists at sunset and sunrise on

Ayers Rock and did the 4 hour walk around Kings Canyon.



Sunset



Sunrise

We then split our convoy into two as trailers were not permitted up the Boggy Hole 4WD trail. Eric had a relaxing time with them up the Mereenie Loop to Palm Valley whilst I and the other 3 4wdrives experienced one of the best 4WD journeys available in Australia. The Boggy Hole route was indeed memorable and I'm sure Stan Sheldon managed to get some more award winning photos on the reflective waters adjacent to our camp.



We regrouped and were thwarted by a bush fire to visit Owen Springs, but a fortunate meeting with a life long mate (Jeff and his delightful wife Narelle) helped us find an excellent camp for the night on the Hugh River. We then visited Rainbow Valley at sunset (more great photo opportunities) before heading out of Alice via N'dhala Gorge and into the very rugged Ruby Gap.



Rainbow Valley

This track had been closed for 18 months and only opened the week before we arrived. It proved rather difficult in some spots and Berkeley and Sandra had a prolonged stop on a rock in the river bed whilst Eric tried every trick under the sun to get them off their high point.



Dunes north of Lake Gairdner

From here we followed the Binns Track due north, finding a top camp site in the middle of no-where beside a windmill before once again visiting Davenport Ranges. Camped at

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old Policeman's Waterhole we all had a swim and enjoyed the evening and early morning chorus provided by the abundant bird life. This trip concluded at Tennant Creek, it truly was a fantastic experience.



*The scene from or camp at Boggy Hole
Arnhem Land*

I know many of you are keen to know how I went with my reccie trip to Arnhem Land. I have at least 25 interested parties for a trip up there next August. I have to say I had a magical 2 weeks exploring Arnhem Land. First we covered Katherine Gorge and all the major highlights of Kakadu NP including Twin and Jim Jim Falls, a swim in Gunlom Falls and a sunset cruise on Yellow Waters. We also squeezed in sunset on Ubirr Rock, another croc spotting sunset cruise near the Adelaide River as well as the jumping crocs, I then explored Litchfield and all of its wonderful waterfalls and even tackled the infamous Reynolds River 4WD track in fading light. Let me assure you, driving through crocodile infested rivers that were near waist deep in half light certainly helps keep you awake!



Yellow Waters Cruise

So what about Arnhem Land? Well we went up to Cobourg and had a couple of days here, lots of great beaches and some of our party tried out a local fishing charter and fed the whole camp, a big tick from me for next year.

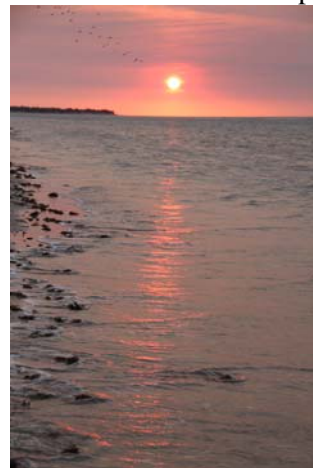


Twin Falls



Vic at Jim Jim Falls

Then we headed to East Arnhem Land and Gove. As it turned out we were welcome with open arms by many people we met up there and we were invited to join several communities for a real cultural experience.



Sunset at Coburg

The stand out feature had to be sitting around a camp fire with an aboriginal family singing traditional songs and having their “pet” crocodile come out of the ocean just 8 metres away. It sat on the waters edge, all 4 metres of it and watched us for 2 hours, we watched it too! A truly amazing experience! Then we visited another community which is just starting to understand the importance of tourism, I think we may have been their first visitors, the camp here was rated by our friends, the travelling Catteralls (they are following my around Australia notes on a 6 month family holiday) as the BEST they had experienced to date!



Lessons in spear throwing



Yep we caught Barramundi

Needless to say we had an absolutely awe inspiring time in Arnhem Land, I’m now working with various communities and local indigenous councils to provide the most outstanding Arnhem Land experience. Once all the details are finalised I’ll contact everyone on the wait list with all the details. I believe I will be running at least two trips up there next year to cater for the demand. If you are interested in getting more details on this trip drop me an email and I’ll forward them once it is finalised. Things do move slowly in Arnhem Land so it may be another 3 months before I have it all locked away.



Jumping Crocs!



Our camp with our indigenous hosts, absolutely heaven.



We were invited to this idyllic location



Upcoming Trips

It's not too late to join us on any of our school holiday trips over the next couple of weeks. Starting this Saturday we have our great 3 day South East Forest trip ably led by Alex. Starting Sunday is our 10 day Darling River trip which Wayne B and Jenny are leading, it's not too late to jump onto either of these trips as we do have vacancies.



Water crossing on the way to Gove



The Walls of China at Mungo



One of our special places in Arnhem Land

The October long weekend is being held from 1-3 October and we are heading down into Deua National Park on our Ridges and Rivers trip, this is one of the best 4WD trips you can do in NSW and yes, we have a few spots still available. Then on the last day of the school holidays 9th October, Alex will be taking a group up to the fabulous Stockton Beach so why not shout the kids out to a day at the beach before they head back to school.



Magnificent beach scene near Gove

Later in the month we have our Turon River 4WD trip on 16th October and our popular

accommodated Hill End/Abercrombie trip on 29-30 October.

If you are thinking ahead to the summer holidays we have a few spots only left on our 4 day Man From Snowy River trip over New Year and our 7 day High Country trip starting on 3 January and our Camper Trailer friendly High Country trip commencing 10 January.

NZ

Julie and I and three of our customers experienced our 4 day NZ 4WD trip in May and I have to say what a blast it was. You really don't know what you are missing by not joining us on these NZ trips. I've got another 4 day NZ escape trip being held from 25-28 November. All you have to do is get yourself to Christchurch and after that we take care of everything, the 4WD hire, the meals, the 4WD tour, the accommodation and some of the most spectacular scenery you will see anywhere in the world.



A New Zealand sunrise

I'm working on new dates for longer NZ trips for next year and these will be on my website real soon.



Incredible scenery on our 4 day NZ tour Cape York in 2012

We have had a huge number of inquiries about our Cape York trip for 2012 and I can now announce that Irene and Dave will be leading this great trip next August. I'll be posting details on the website shortly, but if you are keen to join us please let me know as I already have about 5 keen participants waiting for the details.

New Product test

On my Up the Middle and Arnhem Land trips I have been testing the new HEMA HN5i Navigator. This is a brilliant GPS that worked faultlessly throughout the 15,000 k trip. Not only does it come with all the HEMA maps and topo maps but it has street navigation too which works a treat around town. All the issues of the old Navigator have been addressed and this has to be one of the best navigational aids I've ever used. Contact Brian Sommerville at GPSOZ for further details 02 9999 2313



At the same time my Cruiser was fitted up with the new Cooper ST Maxx tyres. Just take a look at the photo of these tyres after

15,000k's of incredibly hard outback roads, absolutely brilliant!



4WDOTY Judging

I set off this weekend to a secret destination in South Australia to pit 8 of the best 4wdrives against each other. The winner will be announced in the January issue of Overlander available from 14 December. We are also making a DVD on the test so look for this with the magazine, provided you can put up with me appearing on your TV!!!!

We are on Facebook – be my friend

Yes GDT is up with the social media and has its own Facebook page. During the Up the Middle and Arnhem Land trips I kept the masses informed on our progress and was even able to post up to date photos of what we were experiencing. This is a fantastic tool for keeping in touch with all our friends and not the least making them a little jealous. So follow the links on the home page on my website www.4wd.net.au and be my friend, please.



Camp site in the outback

That's all for now from the crew at Great Divide Tours, don't forget to contact me if you wish to join any of our trips over the next couple of weeks and all the best to Wayne D with his hospital appointment in the next few weeks:-

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

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The end to another great day