



## Newsletter No. 35 August 2014

### *What have we been up to?*

It's definitely been hectic here at GDT with our winter season of tours kicking off, and as I type this we have three trips on the go and I'm about to head for 7 weeks leading the Arnhem Land tour and then the Flinders trip.

We have a couple of really exciting things happening too which you might want to participate in so let's get on with it.

### *Vic's birthday bash on the Madigan*

Well, what a way to celebrate my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. We did the famed Madigan Line in the northern Simpson Desert. Possibly, yep definitely, the hardest and most remote 4wd track in the Simpson Desert. Nine days of cross desert travel, but to be honest it was not as hard as we expected even though on some days we only managed to cover 55 kilometres after a full day of driving. The Madigan is getting used a bit more these days by well prepared outback explorers and so now there are faint tracks to follow in most places. However, the dune crests, and there are many of them, were still devoid of wheel tracks and the trip reminded us a lot of our First Across the Desert trips.



**Happy 60th Vic**

This is a truly great trip and we have decided to run it again next year in May and

open it up to our wider client base. So if you are looking for something very different and truly unique consider joining us next year, all the details are on my website now.

### *Big Red Concert Tour*

We were no sooner back from the Madigan trip and it was time to lead another group back out to Birdsville for the annual Big Red Concert. This is an event that coincides with the Big Red Run and raises money for Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Read more about it here and donate if you wish also.

<http://www.bigredrun.com.au/brr2014/Fundraising>

The concert this year on Big Red was held over two days with the feature artists on day 1 being John Williamson and Casey Chambers and then on day 2 the super group of Darryl Braithwaite, James Reyne, Joe Camilleri and Ross Wilson. Wow! What a line up and what a hoot that concert turned out to be.



**Darryl looks a little older these days but sings even better**

We had a great drive out via some iconic outback tracks through Louth, Wanaaring, Tibooburra, Santos, the Dig Tree, Innamincka, Walkers Crossing and the Birdsville track. Whilst out at Big Red we

also took our group into the Simpson Desert to Eyre Creek for lunch and back and then on the way home we stopped at Kilcowera station near Hungerford for two nights and explored this beautiful property.



**Early morning mist at the base of Big Red after the concert**

This concert is on again next year and we'll be going again, hope you can join us because it is truly a special event.

### *Plenty of other trips too*

Whilst I was having all this fun we had quite a few other trips taking place too. Dave Fullerton led a group on our usual Simpson Desert Safari tour in May, this was a new time slot for this trip and judging by the bookings it proved to be a popular time to run the tour, so we will do it again in May next year.

Then Ian Bragg repeated the same trip in July in the school holidays, we even managed to meet up with Ian and his group in the Birdsville hotel for dinner whilst on the Big Red concert trip. Also during this time Ian Sheppard took a small group on our Corner Country tour, which also passed by Birdsville a couple of days prior to Ian and myself, Ian reckons Birdsville in July is GDT's second home.

Wayne Desmond was leading his last Canning trip as he is retiring from the long outback trips after his current Kimberley tour but fear not as we are doing the Canning next year with the latest member of the GDT team, Brian Sommerville from GPSOZ. This trip is now listed on our website and bookings are being taken.

[http://www.4wd.net.au/Canning\\_Stock\\_Route.html](http://www.4wd.net.au/Canning_Stock_Route.html)

### *Day and weekend tours too*

We've been busy in this department also, with Alex and Greg D looking after this side of the business whilst we've been outback. Alex took a group in May up to the beautiful Barrington Tops and Myall Lakes, this trip was accommodated but our next trip up there on **22-23 November** will be a camping trip when the warmer weather returns.

Alex also took a group to Stockton Beach on 1 June and again on 6 July and once again wowed them with his wit and water finding skills – you'll just have to join him on 14 September to understand that comment.



**Wayne and Jenny's Iveco 4x4 on Big Red**

Greg D led another of his great trips through the Turon River area on 22 June and the Cliffs and Canyon trip on 20 July.

But its not all been beer and skittles as they say, we had planned a 3 day trip over the long weekend in June only to have to cancel it due to very poor weather conditions that were predicted for the region just prior to commencement.

The Deua National park on the south coast where we take this trip is one of the best 4wd locations in NSW but as a consequence that translates to steep tracks and deep water crossings, when wet weather hits these tracks and rivers they become impassable and whilst some in our 4wd fraternity think this is the best time to visit an area, we believe we need to act responsibly and look after our tracks and the safety of our

customers. We are doing this trip again over the October long weekend and only have two spots remaining.

[http://www.4wd.net.au/Ridges\\_and\\_Rivers.html](http://www.4wd.net.au/Ridges_and_Rivers.html)

### *4WD training*

This aspect of GDT has been booming and we've held several courses since our last Newsletter, in addition to our usual weekend courses we had my longest employee Robert take care of an Advanced course at the end of June for us. I've also just returned from another 20 Army personnel who undertook our 4wd training prior to being posted overseas, a great bunch of guys and girls who simply loved the training we delivered.

The Army is very impressed with what we offer and have already booked two more courses later this year. Of course our other big corporate, client the AFP, also have a couple of courses booked with us in September and November.



**GDT is offering driver training to some members of the Australian Army**

### *Camper Trailer training too*

This has been the big boom area for us of late with two courses held in May and a couple of individual courses too. We now have a great team for delivery of this training with Wayne and Jenny and Chris and Ty all capable of handling these weekends, they've even showed me how to reverse a trailer, you should have seen me last week with the trailer full of firewood, first attempt into the courtyard at the training centre, pretty good if you ask me.

### *Survival training*

We held the first of these workshops on 14-15 June and it was a ripper too! I've learnt how to light a fire without matches, how to build a smoke beacon, how to catch water from a few leaves and what to pack in my hiking kit. These workshops are presented by Scott Heiman. As a former military and police trainer and Environmental Scientist, Scott is an outdoorsman who is experienced in diverse fields, and he's an avid four wheel driver too. So we have taken his unique skill set and applied them to the situations you could find yourself in as a four wheel driver.



**Scott showing us how to make fire without matches**

What would you do if your vehicle broke down on a remote 4wd track? How would you handle becoming separated from your friends or family on a bush walk? It can happen and panic is often our worst enemy, but not being just a little bit prepared can be just as bad. So we've designed this course around real life 4wd situations, Scott has built purpose designed scenarios at our training centre and we have equipped ourselves with the best survival expert in the business. It costs just \$275 and we'll even provide dinner and lunch for that!

Our next workshop is scheduled for 30 August at our training centre so do yourself a favour and join us. See the details here <http://www.4wd.net.au/Bush%20Survival%20Workshop.html>

### *Camp Oven Cooking course – you asked for it*

We've had a lot of positive responses to the idea of running a camp oven cooking course so here it is. Join us on Saturday 22 November 2014 at our 4wd training centre for a day of cooking and eating. We will have the famed Alex and his damper cooking skills to help you bake the best damper ever and then in the afternoon we'll be cooking up a roast or three along with baked vegies all in the camp oven. Jenny will show you how to make pizza in the camp oven and we will round it off with a baked desert hot from the coals. Bring your own camp oven if you have one and learn how to make it weave its magic.



**Camp Oven baked damper yum!**

And in between all the cooking and eating we will have Brian Sommerville from GPSOZ on hand to help you understand your GPS system and answer all those questions you secretly have but were afraid to ask.

See all the details here and register now. <http://www.4wd.net.au/Camp%20Oven%20Cooking%20and%20GPS%20course.html>

### *New Zealand Tour on again next year*

I've had a lot of interest in this spectacular trip and for 2015 I've asked my NZ guide, Steve Beston, to put together the best of the best for us. He has just sent me the itinerary and it is absolutely outstanding.

I'm pleading with you to do yourself a favour and consider joining us next March on what you will agree is one of the most spectacular things you have ever done. I'm still finalising all the details at the moment.

But I'll take deposits now. The trip will see us fly into Christchurch around 20 March and embark on the most amazing 7 day 4wd trip you could ever undertake. At the end of it we will have a couple of days in beautiful Queenstown so you can enjoy this spectacular area at your own pace and then we head to the beautiful town of Cromwell where I'm working on something truly special. How about a hot lap in a Porsche around their Highlands Track?



**You will not be disappointed by our New Zealand 4wd tour in March 2015**

I haven't finalised this yet but that is what I'm aiming for. Then back to Christchurch for the flight back home. I won't have a chance to finalise all this before I head up north, but we can only take 8 vehicles so I suggest you email me now and book your spot as this is going to be something truly special.

### *Penrith show 5-7 September*

While I'm transiting from Darwin to Port Augusta the Penrith show will be on at Penrith Panthers. We will have a display inside the pavilion and you won't miss the GDT stand with its super mural backdrop depicting the amazing Big Red at a stormy sunrise. Richard, Wayne, Jenny and Alex will be on hand so drop out and say hello.

### *Sydney 4WD show 17-19 October*

Mark this one in your calendar, held at Eastern Creek it is everything 4wdrive and I'll have the mighty 200 series on display. If you ever wondered what you would get if you spent \$30K on every conceivable off road mod on a 4wd, then drop out and have

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a look. I'll be fresh back from my latest Arnhem Land and Flinders trip too so drop by and hear all the tall stories about these incredible tours.



**Come and see the 200 in the flesh**

### *Flinders Ranges Spectacular*

This trip commences on 8 September from Port Augusta and there is still time to join us. There has been excellent rain fall over Winter and the Ranges are already emerald green so with spring just around the corner it is very likely that our trip is going to coincide with one of the best wild flower displays ever seen in the Flinders, if you can spare a couple of weeks in September come and join us, you will soon see why I rate the Flinders as high as the Victorian High Country for four wheel driving and scenery. [http://www.4wd.net.au/Flinders\\_Ranges\\_Wildflowers.html](http://www.4wd.net.au/Flinders_Ranges_Wildflowers.html)

### *Speaking of the High Country*

Our trips this year have proven to be more popular than ever. Starting with November we already have the first trip fully booked, so we have put on a second trip commencing 30 November and would you believe we now only have two spots remaining on it.

Then we move to our Christmas New Year trips, these are dedicated off road trailer trips through the high country. The trip commencing 28 December is now fully booked, that's right, we are still 4 months away and this trip is already full. But fear not as we have now put a second trailer friendly trip on commencing out of Bright on 31 December. Plenty of spots at this stage but don't delay booking it; we only take 6 trailers on this one.

Then moving to our New Year trip this is a non trailer trip starting out of Bright on 4 January and we have only 5 spots left on it at the moment, so if you are thinking of spending your summer holidays exploring the beautiful Victorian Alps with GDT I suggest you get on line and book your spot asap.

### *Advanced 4wd Training*

While I'm bragging about how busy we are take a look at this. We hold a couple of Advanced courses each year and we usually get 4-5 cars attend. Well, forget those figures, our next course at the end of November now has 12 bookings which means we have two fully booked Advanced courses taking place over the same weekend. That is the beauty of our 4wd training facility outside Braidwood, we have designed it so we can do just that, run two courses simultaneously.



**We do get serious at our advanced courses**

This does mean we are booked out now for the Advanced course, so I'm looking to see if we have any spare weekends around that date to slot another one in.

### *The 200 series story continues*

I know a lot of you are keen to know how my new 200 is going and what else we have done to it. Its first major trip was the rather difficult Madigan Line, certainly a test for any vehicle let alone one that was undertaking its maiden run. Before we left Port Augusta and with a full load of fuel and water and all our food etc for the trip on board we put the 200 on a weigh bridge.

Yikes! It weighed 4 ton! No wonder my GVM upgrade to 3.8 Ton was struggling.

In the fuel economy stakes the extra weight and all that bar work was knocking things around too. On the highway cruising at 100kph it was returning 17.5 litres per 100 k's. The best I got was 14.8L/100. From Mt Dare to Birdsville across the Madigan Line it went up to 24.1 L/100. I felt that the shocks were too soft for the moguls in the sand dunes and there was a lot of axle tramp. In hindsight perhaps I should have dropped tyre pressures even further, I was around 18psi.



**The 200 cruising over Big Red**

A couple of other things didn't go to plan either, we hadn't allowed enough space between the body work and the bull bar and over the moguls etc there is a lot of movement between the chassis and the body panels, consequently the plastic skirt along the front of the vehicle fouled the bull bar. This has been resolved with a little heat treatment and bending the plastic down a little more.

The lightweight ARB alloy roof rack didn't like the movement from one of the 9kg gas bottles either and the mesh floor in the roof rack fractured around the base of the bottle. This was fixed by re-welding the roof rack mesh and now carrying the gas bottles in a stylish looking milk crate!

What did I like? The power from the standard V8 diesel twin turbo is pretty good, but a little sluggish at first (due to the weight no doubt), the LED lights fitted inside and at the rear by Artarmon Auto are magic, as are

the camping lights around the roof rack, when activated they really light up the immediate camp area. The ORS storage system worked a treat along with their 60 litre water tank, but it is a bugger to fill and I really need to find a better method of getting water into it. So overall I guess I would give the 200 8 out of 10 thus far.

Once back in Sydney I was approached by Ray Malligan from Taipan exhaust systems in respect of fitting one of his stainless steel 3 inch exhausts to the Cruiser. After speaking with Ray I decided that the Taipan seemed to be one of the better systems to go with and I liked the fact it was an all Australian company employing Australians and making all their own components. Not wanting to do things by half I also decided to fit a chip to the motor and Ray recommended the Unichip and also arranged a before and after dyno test to see exactly what difference it made.



**Out with the old and in with the new**

So in mid June I spent a very long day having all this work done to the 200. We dynode the 200 before doing anything and it recorded 110kw's at the wheels. Then I had Eddy and Chris at Artarmon Auto fit the exhaust and went back to the dyno tester where they fitted the unchip and tuned it to the motor and then dynoed it again. Suddenly it was producing 170kw's at the wheels!

Whilst on paper this was a huge increase in power the real test came when I drove the 200 back home.

OMG! I could four wheel spin off the lights if I wasn't careful. The power is crazy! It drives more like an SS commodore now and would probably out drag one too! I was seriously worried how would all this power would translate off road, would it have too much and wheel spin itself into the sand? Would it break CV's or axles?



**A very neat and professional fit from the Taipan Exhaust**

The test came when we loaded the 200 up in early July for the Big Red concert and drove back out to Birdsville. Overtaking is effortless, hill climbs don't exist and I need not have worried about all that power in the sand, provided of course I don't floor it. Using the auto like a manual the 200 was so much easier to drive in the sand now. It even went straight over Big Red on the hardest track for me.

But the big question was how did it change the fuel consumption. Well, it was getting 1.5 litres per 100k's better on the highway and at least 3 litres per 100k's better in the sand. Not a huge difference and yes, I doubt I would ever recover the \$6000 outlay that all of this work would cost. But having endless power on tap brings more rewards than just to your hip pocket. If towing a big caravan it would be awesome! I did have the sport muffler fitted and yes its a bit noisy now, not the beautiful V8 burble I was hoping for but everyone now knows this is not your average 200 series.

### *What's coming up?*

Over the next two months we have some great 4wd trips for you to join us on.

**16-17 August** we have our 2 day **Abercrombie Hill End tour**. This tour is accommodated in Oberon so you don't need to worry about the freezing weather. It takes you to historic Hill End and then follows a track across the Macquarie River. On Sunday it explores the beautiful Abercrombie National Park west of Oberon.

**24 August** and we have our **Cox's River** day trip which is a nice easy run through some great scenic country including a visit to Kanangra Walls. Alex will be leading this one too and we know all of his trips are simply awesome.

**30 August is our Survival course**

**8-29 September is the fabulous Flinders tour**



**The Flinders tour**

And on **14 September** we have another **Stockton beach trip**, hope you can join us.

### **Arnhem Land 2015**

Please be advised that our scheduled trip for next year commencing 13 August 2015 is already fully booked. As a result we will be running a second trip commencing 19 August 2015 and I already have bookings for it, so don't be disappointed and sign up soon if you are thinking of doing the best 4wd tag-along you can.



**You won't see this place with any other tag-along tour company, guaranteed!**

### *GDT sponsors up and coming race driver Luke King*

A quick update on Luke's performances thus far. He has competed in three endurance races now in a Honda Integra and has been crowned the winner in his class, a very impressive debut indeed, well done Luke.

In his Formula Ford championship he is in the running to take out Rookie of the Year, although at his last race a week ago he had a small crash and broke his wrist in practice. He had it strapped and went on to still finish a creditable 7<sup>th</sup> in his races over that weekend keeping his hopes alive for rookie of the year. This will be decided over the October long weekend, so fingers crossed for this young man.



**Speedweek on SBS has been providing coverage of Luke's racing and interviewed him after he won the Endurance Championship trophy, well done Luke.**

### *Trusting*

Have you ever befriended a complete stranger over the internet? Yeah I know,

they tell us not to do that, it could be dangerous etc. Well I did and here is my story.

In April I received an email from a lady asking about my 4wd training courses. After a few email exchanges I discovered this girl named Miranda actually lived in New York and she and her partner James and two twin boys Lake and Fenn were planning a 12 month trip around Australia where they would buy a 4wd and a camper trailer for their year long lap.

I said, 'would you like some help with all of that'? Miranda said yes please.

So I found a beaut 100 series Landcruiser at the right price for them in Adelaide, they bought it and paid for me to fly over and drive it back to Sydney. They then took my advice on what I thought would be the best off road trailer for them, a Cub supamatic, and they arranged to have a brand new one built. Then I suggested their Cruiser needed some work done to it to make it off road ready. They went along with this advice and Eddy and Chris at Artarmon Automotive did all the work.

They fitted suspension, bull bar, tyres, battery, driving lights, ORS storage system, water tank and cargo barrier, roof rack UHF, fridge etc etc.



**James, Miranda, Lake and Fenn from the USA**

Finally Miranda and family arrived in Australia last Friday, they pick up their Cruiser and Trailer this week and will be attending my 4wd course this coming weekend. They are a lovely American family about to explore our great country.



So if you think I took a chance doing all this for them, imagine how they felt about me? But it just goes to show, you can still trust people these days and if you can do a good turn for someone, then do it, it makes you feel bloody fantastic!

### *That's all for now*

This was to be a quick newsletter to bring you up to date before I headed out for another 7 weeks, and when I get back there is a heap of 4wd training already being lined up plus a trip to Norfolk Island to deliver some training over there, tough job but someone has to do it.

Hope to see you at our Survival course and the Camp oven cooking course.

Please stay safe and be kind to each other and tell your family you love them.

Vic, Julie, Wayne D, Wayne B & Jenny, Alex, Brian D, Dave & Irene, Richard, Greg & Helen, Ian B & Skippy/Yarn/Ian, Chris, Greg & Ty Widman, Dave Fullerton, Brian S and Tony Davys (I didn't mention him, he's a new recruit doing his apprenticeship with me in Arnhem Land along with Brian S)



**Tony Davys from Christchurch NZ joins the GDT team**

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**The camp lights on the 200**



**We had our film crew on the Madigan Line trip, I'll let you know when the DVD is available**



**Nothing beats a desert camp**



**We do have fun on our trips!**