



## Newsletter May 2008

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

Okay, get over the shock of two Newsletters in consecutive months, and please don't expect it to keep up. I was forced into getting this one out to let you all know about the FREE talk I am giving on Tuesday 20 May at TJM Megastore at Blacktown. See below for more details.

Well, last Newsletter I told you how we had been over to New Zealand to celebrate 30 years of marriage, thanks to all of you who sent emails with their best wishes and congratulatory comments, just goes to show that there is an appreciation for Julie putting up with me for so long.

Now I don't want you to think that I never work or have headed off for early retirement but Julie & I have been away again on a short break. This time in my MINI with my MINI club. As usual I put together the drive and the logistics for the group of 8 MINI's. We headed for the town of Tumut over the ANZAC weekend to participate in the Festival of the Falling Leaf parade. After this we scooted over the Mountains to Bright and then down to the Great Ocean Road before returning via the Grampians, Echuca and once more over the Snowy Mtns on the Alpine Way.



We were away for 8 days, covered about 2700 kilometres at an average speed of 75

kph with a fuel usage of 7.8 litres per hundred. It was either wet or overcast for most of the trip and the Grampians were completely fogged in which meant we missed the fantastic views that this area offers. But the Great Ocean Road was fun, and the scenery stunning, but it appeared to me that someone has stolen about 6 of the 12 Apostles.

We had some snow and one day where the temperature never got above 8 degrees all day, but best of all we had loads of fun.

Another point worth noting is that we had Wayne and Belinda Desmond along as our back up crew in a new MINI Clubman on loan from MINI Australia. We even managed to convince big Wayne to take care of his MINI like us real owners do, i.e. we had him washing it every morning. There were some comments that Wayne had become a metrosexual? But he swears he has never had sex on a train.



What this trip did make me realise is there is an awful lot out there to see, even on the main roads and in the major towns. We could have easily spent twice as long doing this trip doubling our time in each town. I can hardly wait until retirement is really upon me.

## *Happy Birthday*

Speaking of retirement, let me dispel the rumours immediately. I am not that old (yet) I celebrate my 54<sup>th</sup> birthday on 19 May, so make sure you come along to the talk at Blacktown on 20<sup>th</sup> May to help me celebrate.

## *Speaking of Birthdays*

I'm not the only one getting older apparently. Eric also celebrated his 54<sup>th</sup> on 9 May, you would think that given he is older than me he would be more wiser. But as you see from the following photo he is prone to wearing silly hats. In fact, this totally dispels the rumour that I have a BIG head, as Eric is seen here wearing my hat!



But Eric knows how to celebrate a birthday, you see his present to himself was an upgrade to a 100 series Landcruiser. One of our faithful customers recently contacted me to advise that his 100 series diesel `Cruiser was up for sale. This vehicle had been set up by Eddy & Chris at Artarmon Automotive to do a Simpson Desert crossing a few years ago with us, I believe Eric was even leading the trip. But now it was time to move on and Eric was in the position of also deciding to move on from his 80 series Landcruiser. So now Eric will be enjoying the comforts of one of the best 4WD drives ever built. His new vehicle will sport the Great Divide Tours livery hopefully by the end of next week.

If you are looking for a hardly used, but loved 80 series you should contact Eric via my email address.

## *Recent trips*

We had a successful trip to Stockton beach on 13 April and we even have our poop bags, which I wrote about in the last Newsletter.

Wayne D took another group down to the High Country during the school holidays and by all accounts he had a great time. It is amazing to hear how pumped up Wayne is after these trips. He certainly loves the High Country and this trip had perfect weather which really makes the beauty of the High Country look its best.

Alex took a group on our new Yerranderie Ghost Town tour and this combines some great 4WD tracks with the history of the silver town known as Yerranderie and a self guided walk through one of the caves at Wombeyan. Despite the wet weather that prevailed in mid April, the group seemed to avoid the worst of it and Alex even managed to cook one of his famous camp oven dampers for everyone. This trip also led to the startling discovery of the closure of another of our 4WD tracks, see below.

Eric took a successful trip into Deua National Park over the ANZAC weekend, I say successful as you will know we had to abort our Australia day trip due to a vehicle breakdown.

And whilst I was away MINI'ing, Wayne B and Jenny and Robert took care of another successful driver training course at Braidwood.

## *National Park madness*

This is a bit like a regular column these days, but our mates at National Parks have done it again. There is a track called the Limeburner's track which crosses the valley between the Oberon Stock Route and Range trail which leads to Wombeyan Caves. I have been using this great 4WD track for the past 30 years, I've camped many times in the beautiful valley that the track leads through, there is even an historic grave site in the valley floor. But it is now closed, without notice and under the auspices of

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rehabilitation. The NPWS website says it is closed until further notice and when I spoke to the contact ranger I was advised the closure was indefinite.

This is the only 4WD low range track in this part of the National Park. There now remains no 4wd tracks of this standard between the Kowmung River and Araluen, south of Braidwood, which is over 200 kilometres away! Is this really what we want from our Parks, the ability to close tracks without notification and without a time frame for re-opening. This results in the complete denial of our access to our places of special interest.

And another matter, I think NPWS are trying to hide these closures from the general public, how else could they explain that the notices and gates closing this track are not located at the entrance to the track off the Oberon Stock Route or on Range trail but are found a few hundred metres along the fire trail requiring you to turn around in a tight situation on a single lane 4wd track.

I have no problem with trails and camping areas being maintained and even suffering short closures for this purpose, but I do have a problem when the managers of these areas can't actually advise how long the closure is for other than indefinitely, which in my books reads **forever!** I also share the frustration of NPWS when irresponsible people use tracks when they are wet and rip them up or do burn outs on the grassed camping areas. But once again it seems that the majority of responsible users are suffering due to the actions of a few mindless idiots.

What actually makes me even more infuriated over NSW NPWS is that they have just announced a new newsletters and website that will promote the tourism values of their Parks. How can they promote tourism and yet close large tracts of our National Parks?

## *Dave on the road to Recovery*



As you may know our beloved Dangerous Dave from Braidwood has had a successful hip replacement and is slowly on the mend. I believe he is driving Irene crazy with being house bound and she can't wait to get him back to his Driver Training duties.

## *4WD Shows and Talks*



As mentioned earlier, I will be presenting a "Night in the Outback" on Tuesday 20 May at 4WD Megastore 12 Garling road Blacktown. We will kick off the nights activities from 7pm with a talk on outback vehicle trips and preparation, there is a free sausage sizzle and I know for certain that the Megastore is offering some sensational sale prices on lots of gear including Waeco fridges which will save you lots of dollars, its worth coming along just to pick up some of the great sale items. If you would like to attend, its easy, just call 9622 1000 and let them know you are coming and bring your own camp chair so you sit in comfort whilst I ramble on. This will be a great opportunity for anyone joining us on one of our outback trips or planning their own to, not only meet our guides and learn how to prepare your

vehicle for a big trip, but also pick up some genuine bargains.

### *Exciting trips coming up*

Now for the hard sell. Well, if you wanted to get away to the outback with GDT in the July holidays you may have left it a little late. Our Corner Country trip is fully booked and I only have one spot remaining on the Simpson Desert Safari tour. The same can be said for our Kimberley trip and Cape York tours which also only have one spot each available. I have detailed itineraries on all our outback trips, so if you are keen to join in the fun drop me an email and I'll gladly send you the itinerary.

We do have a few trips with plenty of spots still available such as the amazing Simpson Desert Hay River starting 25 August and my own Ocean to the Outback trip in September which has 5 starters thus far.

I can't stress how good the Flinders Ranges is for a 4WD holiday that not only presents some of the best 4WD driving there is available but combines it with the most amazing scenery. We have just two bookings on our Flinders trip which commences on 15 September, and we need another two to make sure it goes ahead. If you have completed the High Country trip with us and thought the 4WD driving and scenery awesome, then you should join us on our amazing Flinders Ranges tour it is equally as good and some say even better!



### *Tassie Tour Now Available*

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, Pete and Ngaire have now surveyed and designed

our Tassie tour which is taking place in December. I have had a lot of inquiries on it, so I suggest you get in quick with your deposit to secure your position in the Apple Isle trip.

### *Day Trips and Fuel Prices*

A funny thing happened in the last two weeks. As at 1 May I had just two bookings on each of our upcoming one day trips, the Turon River trip on 18 May and the Escarpment Escape trip on 25 May. But in the past 2 weeks we have taken solid bookings for both of these trips which now have only a couple of spots each remaining.

I was wondering if this is because of the soaring cost of petrol and diesel which is making people change their minds on their holidays from longer trips to just short escapes. Whatever the reason, please be aware that GDT is busy and we are limited in the numbers we can take on trips, so you should book early to ensure you get in.

### *4WD Tip*

This tip is tinged with sadness. We have had a bit of rain up and down the east coast of recent. Please remember, if you come to a flooded river, it is dangerous, and if you can't or decide not to walk it, you should not drive it. One of my customers recently lost his life as a result of a flooded river. Strangely it wasn't in the river that this terrible accident occurred, but the circumstances that led to him slipping and falling which resulted in his death originated from an attempt to cross a flooded river. His vehicle was partially flooded but he managed to escape, tie off the vehicle and recover some essentials. It was in the process of walking out to get help that he had his tragic accident. All of the staff at GDT were stunned by this event, I am protecting his name in this newsletter in respect of his family with whom our thoughts are with.

A plea to all of you, 4WD driving is a great pass time, but it is an adventure activity and you need to think seriously about all your actions and preparations, please be careful.

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### *Employee Profile*

Skippy or Yarn or Ian, no matter what you call him his flowing beard and sheepish look are endearing. Ian is new to GDT and still under training, (by the way Ian, Robert has been with me for 18 years and he is still under training).



Skippy brings a wealth of knowledge on all things camping, until recently he worked at Kangaroo Tent City so it is fair to say he knows a little about the camping aspect of four wheel driving. Skippy tagged along on my Hay River trip in 2006 and survived the famous “I’ve lost my swag at Haddon Corner” episode, and last year he assisted Pete on Cape York. You are likely to see Yarn at our Driver Training facility or at the various 4WD shows. I think the beard has gone for now, but if you see this face, then you will know exactly who it is, Skippy or Yarn or Ian???

### *Have you been spotted*

Remember, if we spot you with a GDT sticker on your 4WD you just might win something. Nicole was recently seen driving her Landcruiser with a Great Divide Tours sticker on its rear window and she now has a copy of my book in her collection.

When it comes to being spotted, I should mention that back in March when Julie and I had just stepped off the plane in New Zealand and were sitting in the car park at the airport familiarizing our selves with our rental when two of our customers Callum and Allison spotted us. We didn’t win a book but I was sure glad I was with Julie!

### *Do you need some Cooper tyres*

As you know we use and recommend Cooper tyres, its hard to find a better off road tyre in my opinion. We all need and use tyres and I have been trying to get good prices for my customers on Cooper Tyres for some time and might have finally done so. Glen and Malcolm at Tyrepower in Garden Street Nth Narrabeen have indicated



they will look after the clients of Great Divide Tours when it comes to purchasing Cooper tyres, so give either of the boys a call on 02 9970 6670 when you need some new tyres. And I wish Malcolm the best of luck in the Outback Challenge in which he is competing as you read this Newsletter.

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

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

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