



## Newsletter April 2009

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

Like everyone else I speak to, I can't believe its already April and Easter is just a week away. Thank goodness daylight saving has lasted 6 months, I for one can use daylight at the end of the day and not in the morning when my brain doesn't function and all I have to do is negotiate the Harbour Bridge traffic on the way to the office! Anyway, now that we are back to EST, I guess that means it will be cold and windy and that can only mean one thing WINTER is not far away!

So what have we been up to? To be honest we have been flat out with work. It is a really weird year thus far, the first 3 months have been ultra busy, so much so that we actually conducted 3 driver training courses in a row in March or four if you count the Camper Trailer course on 1 March.



**John lends a helping hand at Driver Training**

But, things have slowed down again for April and we do need more of you to come and join us over Easter, more about that later.

### *High Country Camper trip and bushfires.*

This trip was scheduled to depart Bright just one week after Black Saturday, no-one felt like enjoying themselves whilst there was so

much devastation in Victoria so we postponed the trip for one month. Whilst most of the participants said yes they would do the trip on the new date, when the time came around only one could make, so sadly we had to cancel the trip.

I just saw this week's Getaway program on Channel 9 and they were talking about how all the tourists were staying away from the mountain country in Victoria due to the wildfires. It was obvious how badly this was affecting all those establishments that relied on the tourist dollar and many of these businesses may simply have to close up shop. There was a real plea to get the tourists to come back.



**The High Country looks fantastic at this time of year.**

Reflecting on our own situation with having to cancel our trip, this meant there was up to six different nights of accommodation booked in Bright before the trip and after the trip that now did not occur. It also meant that the service stations in the mountains that would normally sell us about \$3600 worth of fuel (3 fill ups over the week multiplied by 6 cars at \$200 each per fill) did not occur. Then there is the lunch at the Dargo Pub, worth about \$600 to the Hotel and of course Wayne D or WD40 as we call him, who did not get paid for the week, and of course GDT that refunded all the tour fees

out of good faith. So you can see how the cancellation of just one little trip actually affects the local trade so much.

The Getaway segment demonstrated that not all of the High Country was affected by the fires, in fact on our 7 day trip only half of one day passes through recently fire affected country and the 4 day Man From Snowy River trip was not affected by these fires at all.

How do we know this? Wayne actually got to take a family of friends and relatives on the 7 day High Country trip in mid March and saw firsthand what had been affected by the fires or in this case not affected. His overwhelming comment was how quiet it was in places like Bright, the High Country and Dargo.

Anyway, if you are still wondering what to do over Easter or the school holidays in April, come on down to the High Country with us, we have vacancies on both trips and your presence will inject some much needed revenue back into the local communities.



**You could be at this lookout next week.**

### *Driver Training*

I'm not going to cry poor mouth all the time, we have had an excellent March as mentioned previously and in all honesty it has really helped us through a tough time. As it turned out we had three Introductory 4WD courses in a row and due to other commitments that I had with other trips, Wayne and Jenny in the door belled Troopie attended all three of them. What really stood out here was how much the lady folk at the

courses enjoyed having Jenny as their trainer. Now, I don't want to start a sexist war of words, but it is a fact that our partners are put off a bit by the macho man only environment that 4wdriving seems to portray, so when they find a lady trainer, the partners are more than happy to have a go and learn the ropes of 4wdriving. Looks like Jenny might have a permanent training job from now on, that's a lot easier than me dressing up like a Sheila!



**Wayne was a little upset on reading how much everyone liked Jenny's style of training.**

### *More Driver Training*

Something else we have noticed is the increase in individual driver training. We had quite a few people this year elect to receive one on one tuition from Dave, mind you, if they knew how much Dave enjoyed a chat before signing up, it might have been a different story.



**Irene reckons she gets two days relief when Dave takes on the individual training, she wants more of you to book these courses.**

I know that this individual training is considerably more expensive than joining a

group but it appears that a lot of people actually see the great value in having the trainer all to themselves for two days. The other great thing about this is the amount of personal recommendation to attend our courses that is occurring. It is very satisfying to know that people really enjoy our training courses so I just wanted to say thanks to all those of you that have spoken highly of our training to their friends.

### *Floods in the Outback*

As I write this Newsletter the very first of our 4 day flights across the flooded outback and Lake Eyre is taking place. One of my very good customers, Michael Alexander is on the first flight and I am really looking forward to his feedback and especially his photos.



**Water everywhere in outback Queensland**

We have two planes going out over the weekend of 17-20 April and I'm currently negotiating more dates in May with Trevor Wright from Wright's Air.

The flood waters have reached Lake Eyre, this has featured in various newspapers and on the Sunday program on Channel 7, so there is a lot of interest in the flooding of Lake Eyre at present. I only spoke to Trevor last Wednesday 1 April, and he said Lake Eyre was already half full and he estimated there was more water in it than in the 2007 flood. He also indicated that he had never seen Eyre Creek with so much water and estimated it to be 16 kilometres wide in the Simpson Desert, just imagine seeing that from the air! I doubt anyone will be driving across the Desert until well into June.

Trevor also said there are hundreds of pelicans now massing along the waterways starting their breeding cycle which indicates the water will be around for some time yet. Take a look at [www.wrightsair.com.au](http://www.wrightsair.com.au) for more photos of the flood waters reaching Lake Eyre.

### *A trip to see the Greening of Australia*

As you will know from my previous newsletter I was hoping to get into the outback around July to see the wildflowers and the greening of the flooded country, sadly, for various reasons I can't get away now. Instead I have put together a short 10 day trip up through the Channel country and back down to Birdsville with a flight over Lake Eyre from Mungerannie station on the Birdsville Track scheduled for the end of May. Wayne, WD40, will lead this fantastic trip just before he heads out to the Canning Stock Route. I have attached the itinerary to this email so you might have a look and perhaps you would like to join us.

### *Looking after the Sponsors*

In mid March, Alex and I joined collective forces (yes I know a very dangerous situation) and spent a weekend with our Sponsors Cooper tyres. These weekends away are an ideal opportunity for Cooper Tyres personnel to get out and do a bit of 4WD driving. Whilst these guys might sell and fit the best 4WD tyres all week, very few of them actually get the chance to experience their performance in REAL 4WD terrain.



**I did the chain sawing, the Cooper lads did the rolling.**

**Well, we fixed that.** We started off with a day on the steep tracks of the Gloucester Tops Caravan Park where the lush rainforest and leeches kept us on the hop. Fallen trees had to be cleared and lots of lies told around the campfire, don't believe any stories you hear about me playing the spade guitar by the fire light!



**If you thought the gorilla was good on the drums, you haven't seen Vic play the spade!**

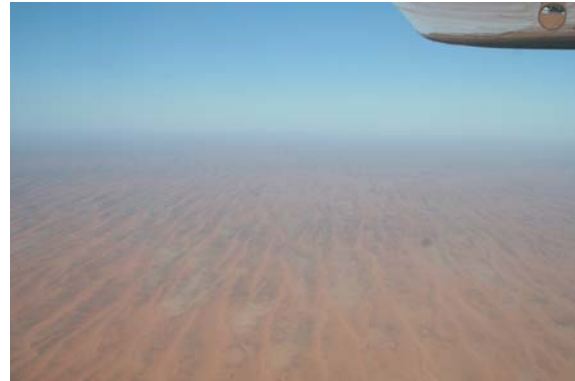
On day two we took them into the incredibly steep country around the Cells River Conservation Park. Low range is required for about two hours solid, and the chainsaw was needed a few times to clear fallen trees, although when you come across a sapling across the track on a 30 degree climb... well, all I can say is thank goodness TJM build strong bull bars!

Needless to say, we all had a great time and the blokes who fit your tyres now have a much better appreciation of the product they sell.

### *The oscillation of the Earth*

On the Cooper tyres weekend and then the following weekend when I was asked to take a group of friends on a 4WD jaunt (back to Barrington Tops) I was relaying my theory on how corrugations are formed. In fact, I am now convinced that corrugations not only on the road, but those same ripples you see up hillsides, on the beach where the waves wash and even the Simpson Desert viewed from 5,000 feet (which looks like giant corrugations) are actually caused by a fault in the Oscillation of the Earth.

You see, every so often, the Earth gets out of whack with its orbiting thingy (pardon the technical terms but I don't wish to confuse you) Anyway, this oscillation that is set up when the old planet goes a little haywire on its axis is causing these corrugations to form. Some are small like those found on dirt roads, whilst others are much larger and last a lot longer, like the parallel sand dunes found in the Simpson Desert, it's all true, you can believe me (see Alex, I told you I would spread this rumour, watch it become an urban myth).????



**The Simpson Desert from 5000 feet clearly shows the corrugations caused by the oscillation of the earth getting out of whack!**

### *4WD Show*

The Rosehill Caravan Camping and 4WD Show kicks off on 18 April to 26 April. GDT will be there, but we may be a little hard to find this year. Instead of being in our usual spot on the Mezzanine level of the J R Fleming grandstand we are one floor down next to the Seminar room. Some say we are in the bowels of the earth, but I prefer to think that we are on the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor. Anyway, if you are visiting the show make sure you find us on the lowest level of the JR Fleming grandstand on site number 14, we have a gift for everyone of our customers that find us at the show. TRUE!

### *Exciting trips coming up*

I've already mentioned our 4 Day Man From Snowy River trip which kicks off next Friday and our Victorian High Country trip which also starts next Friday, we do have spots available on each of them if you are interested.

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**You could visit this hut next Sunday with Eric on the Man From Snowy River tour.**

Also starting next Friday is our 9 day trip along the **Darling River**, Alex is leading this one and even though we have just one booking at this stage, we are going ahead with the trip, so if you are looking for something completely different to do next week, give me a call on 9913 1395.

On the 19 April we have one of our most scenic day trips our **Cliffs and Canyons** tour in the Gardens of Stone National Park. I will offer a \$20 discount for the first three bookings to mention this newsletter, OK.

Then on the ANZAC weekend of 25-26 April Alex will be back from the Darling River and leading a trip to Yerranderie, the old Silver Mining town west of Mittagong, if you would like a nice relaxing weekend away, then try this one.

The Canning Stock Route Trip in June is fully booked but we are taking bookings for 2010.



But our Simpson Desert Safari tour over the July school holidays has just two bookings

and we really need at least one more to ensure this trip goes ahead, I know Brenton is dying to do this trip, so can someone else book it. We have run this trip every year since 1992 and this will be the first time we are short of bookings, so come on, let's not break our great tradition. Yes, Eyre Creek should be navigable by then and the greening of the desert and the wildflowers where the flood waters lay will make this an amazing trip.

*You be the Judge*



Last Newsletter I asked you to be the judge as to whether Alex should keep his beard or not, here are some of the responses I received by email:-

*We had Alex on a Stockton trip in December...without the facial hair. Now I think he would scare my kids and drive away your customers.  
Craig*

*Mate are you sure that is facial hair on Alex, or could it be some undercarriage grease or oil from all the time he spends under his car on our trips?  
Obviously he is VERY thin skinned because he could not even hold onto it until your mystery tour???? OR perhaps he wound the window down on the cruiser and it blew off????.....LOL, no matter how hard he tries he will not get Santa's job on the special snow tour?????  
Meg and Dave*

*Regarding Alex and the beard – Hmm. Although I am a beard girl myself (my husband has one, not me I hasten to add) I prefer Alex clean shaven. His boyish*

good looks was the impetus for me to follow him up and down steep tracks, but this photo would definitely cause me to go in the opposite direction! Also, those shades.... Alex, we can't see the roguish twinkle in your eye, although the picture is pretty roguish.

Ashley

Scares me to say this, especially to you!!!! But I do think Alex should go without the goatie cause if you look closely, any longer and it may be mistaken for chest hair!!! We will never know where the chest hair finishes or the goatie begins!!!

From his wife!

I offered a prize for the best response and I think **Craig's** idea that he would scare the kids is all too true, so Craig, a little surprise will be in your letter box next week.

*But wait, there's more.*

I mentioned that it is dangerous to get Alex and me together on a trip, and that we actually did get together during the Cooper tyres weekend. Anyway, I'll let you be the judge on this. (Yes another prize for the best response to my question).

We were sitting around the camp fire in the Barrington Tops with all these big burly Cooper tyre fitters, chewing the fat as we do, when at about 10.30pm the skies thundered and lit up with lightning. Everyone scattered to their tents except Alex and I, being the professional tour operators that we are, we had no nancy tent to sleep in, of course we had rolled out our swags for the night. Now, as anyone who has slept in a swag in a thunderstorm would know, it's not necessarily the most water tight place to be. So I set up a lean to off the side of my Cruiser with my ground sheet to keep me dry and out of the tempest. I survived the wild night, but you can imagine the look of horror on my face when I saw in the bright clear light of a new day what Alex had rigged up over his swag. Anyway, Alex and I then had quite a discussion about the merits of each of our efforts to keep

ourselves dry during the night. Take a look at the following photos and you be the judge, let me know who you think made the best effort at keeping dry on that stormy night. Email me at

[info@greatdividetours.com.au](mailto:info@greatdividetours.com.au)



Alex's effort at keeping the rain off



And Vic's dry sleeping arrangements

*Finally*

I mentioned last newsletter that I was off to Perth for a conference and then would spend a few days touring around the Sth West, well the conference was good but the touring was better, I am going to write one of my columns in Overlander about my experiences, probably the June issue, so I won't spoil it here, but I really found it to be a great part of our magnificent country.

Until next time stay safe and happy travels.

From the crew at

Great Divide Tours:-

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

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