



What have we been up to?

It has now become painfully obvious to me that I just don't have enough time in the day to write a regular Newsletter, and to all those that look forward to receiving them, I apologise. My last newsletter was in April this year and now its almost Christmas time! To be honest, I do put a lot of effort into updating the Great Divide Tours Facebook site, so if you wish to keep abreast of what we are doing on a more regular basis may I suggest you follow us on Facebook.

Anyway, how to fix my problem? Part of the issue is that the longer it goes between newsletters the more I put it off because there is more and more to write about. Maybe I should just write much shorter newsletters and more often, what do you think?

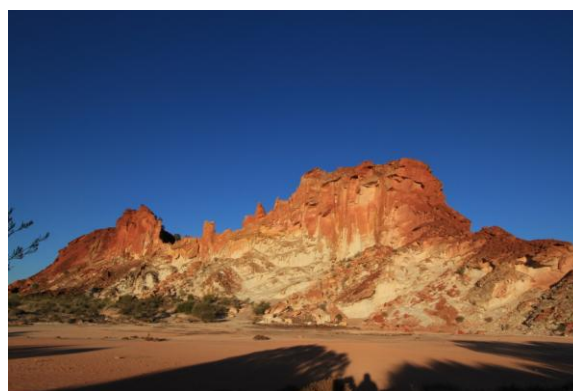
So here is a quick overview of what has occurred at GDT over the past 7 months.

We had a very successful outback touring season which many of you participated in. Some great feedback from our customers for all of my guides too.



Sunset at the Rock

Dave Fullerton led our May Simpson Desert trip and then two Cape York trips in August. Ian Sheppard took on the infamous Madigan Line with a handful of adventurous customers. They even attempted to find Geosurveys Hill, this required a day or two of cross country driving which proved extremely tough and a real challenge, which by all accounts everyone revelled in the difficult going. Sadly, the tough sand dunes and spinifex mounds proved too difficult and they had to turn back when only a few kilometres from their goal. It must have been seriously tough going at the time and there has been a lot of talk about mounting another expedition to Geosurveys Hill. In fact, Ian will be leading this trip again in May 2016 and I believe he has devised a plan to avoid the really difficult dunes that stopped him this year, are you up for the challenge?



One of my favourite places, Rainbow Valley

Wayne Desmond came out of retirement (yet again, he's had more comebacks than John Farnham!) and led two epic trips for me. Firstly the July Simpson

Desert crossing quickly followed by a second Kimberley tour.

New recruit Brian Sommerville from GPSOZ joined the GDT team in 2015 and led his first Canning Stock Route trip and really enjoyed the challenge and remoteness that this trip offers. He then followed this up with our second Arnhem Land trip which he had joined me on last year and once again had a crocodile of a time in this amazing location.



The road to Ross River

I managed to get away for a few weeks leading my Red Centre trip with our little Kiwi worker, Tony Davys joining me for more on the job tuition before heading out on his own to complete 3 months of outback touring. Tony did the Red Centre with me and then the first Kimberley trip and the first Arnhem Land tour followed by our amazing 12 day Flinders Ranges trip. Leaving home in Mid June and returning at the end of September he reckons the Winters in Braidwood aren't too bad at all, I think his wife and twin boys may not agree.

Virtually all of these outback trips were fully booked, so it was a good year for us, thanks to you our customers.

The Red Centre

My Red Centre trip had the smallest group, some say it was because I was leading this one personally, but I'm sure it was just that it didn't hold the mystique of our other trips. In fact, it was an amazing trip starting in Port Augusta and exploring the Gawler Ranges before heading north through such iconic locations as Coober Pedy, the Painted Desert, Ayers Rock, Kings Canyon, Rainbow Valley, the Finke River, the Binns track, Ruby Gorge and the Davenport Ranges. We had some amazing camps in absolutely beautiful locations.



Testing the new Cooper STT Pro in Ruby Gap, they are amazing

A mercy dash

When the trip concluded in Tennant Creek it gave me time to visit some old friends who now live there, Jeff and Narelle. Jeff and I competed in the 1986 Australian Safari in his Hilux, that was a very memorable off road rally from Sydney to Darwin. We lasted 5 days of the 9 day rally, we had to withdraw due to physical exhaustion, in 5 days we only managed about 12 hours sleep, I had lost over a stone in weight, not sure what that is in kg's but I went from a light 8 stone to a very light 7 stone in just 5 days. But it gave us young lads some great memories and I still tell many stories

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around the camp fire from that incredible experience. The race was won by Andrew Cowan in a works Ralliart team Pajero.



The road to Tower Rock on the Binns Track

After my brief visit it was time to head home and I wasn't looking forward to the long drive from Tennant Creek back to Sydney on my own. As it turned out this trip was made a little easier due to a couple of incidents. Firstly, Wayne Desmond was heading across the Simpson on our July Simpson trip and he rang me on the satellite phone to advise that his alternator was playing up and he would need a new one once he reached Birdsville. So I rang around outback Australia to find the only one around was in Mt Isa. So I set off for the Isa on a mercy dash to pick up an alternator and get it delivered to Birdsville in two days.

Without customers following me now, and with an authorised speed limit of 130kph I set the cruise control on 130 in the 200 series and watched the kilometres tick away steadily between Tennant Creek and the Isa. I was wondering what it would do to my economy which has been a bug bear to me in the new 200.

Up to that point I was getting my best economy ever whilst cruising at 100kph

at around 14.5L/100k's. After 5 hours of 130 kph I reached Mt Isa, collected the alternator and filled the tank, it had used 19L's/100k's. Not too bad given the speed and the weight of my 200. I have to say the 200 cruised effortlessly at 130 and certainly showed to me that it is an amazing outback touring vehicle.

I then headed south in the afternoon towards Boulia where I had booked a room for the night, the last few hours of the drive was in the later afternoon light and the colours of the outback were outstanding and even though I was all on my own in a very desolate location it was absolutely beautiful, a drive I will remember for a long time.



The outback is stunning

The Boulia pub was full of people returning from the Big Red Bash at Birdsville and they were all buzzing about how good it was and the performance of Jimmy Barnes at the base of Big Red. Wayne and Jenny from GDT had led our trip out to the Bash this year and although they were now in Winton, I was to catch up with them in Nyngan and they confirmed it was a great concert.

The next day I drove down to Birdsville which I reached at lunchtime, and delivered the alternator to Wayne in the

grounds of the caravan park, where with the help of a few of his customers he fitted the new alternator and was ready to leave the next day on his trip.

I headed east to Winton and Quilpie for the night then down to Cunnamulla, Bourke and Nyngan where I joined our Big Red Bash participants for their last night. The next day I was back home after a rather big drive via Birdsville from Tennant Creek.

Talking books

Whilst in Ayers Rock I found a talking book, a 5 CD set on Len Beadell's book titled "Blast the Bush" I found this a fascinating way to pass the time whilst driving endless outback roads, listening to his book being narrated. This told the story of Len Beadell being asked to build a town known as Maralinga for the atomic testing being carried out by the British.



**We will see Emu One and Two
Vic's next adventure**

This gave me the idea of running a trip out to Maralinga, fortunately one of my guides, Ian Bragg, was on a private trip at the same time to Maralinga, so we got together and designed an amazing 22 day trip that will not only visit Maralinga and Emu where three atomic bombs were tested but also see us visit Lake Gairdner, Googs Track, the

beaches around Ceduna and Fowlers Bay, then after the bomb sites we will drive the length of the Anne Beadell Hwy and back up to Surveyor Generals Corner (WA/SA/NT) then along the Sandy Blight Junction road, then down to the Finke River (one of my favourite outback locations), Rainbow Valley and finishing in Alice springs. This trip will take place in May 2016 and I have a few spots remaining on it if it interests you.



And we will see plenty of these

Meanwhile back at the ranch

Back home and with Tony in the outback leading trips I needed to spend a lot of time down at the training centre, delivering lots of 4wd training and cutting lots of firewood. It does get very cold in Winter down there and its incredible how much firewood you can go through trying to keep the open fire going 24/7.

The training has been going great with lots of bookings and our resident corporate bookings with the Defence Force and the AFP continuing to roll through. The Defence Force asked us to include an off road defensive driving component and I have developed a course to suit their needs in this respect. We are fortunate to have access to a local gravel air strip where we can

demonstrate emergency braking and cornering techniques on gravel roads.



We will show you how to stop in a hurry

One thing we pride ourselves in is the ability to tailor our training courses to our client needs whilst maintaining the core subject material to address the nationally recognised standards that are required. If your workplace has specific training needs give me a call to discuss them.

A new 4wd

With the down turn in the mining industry sadly the large 4wd hire company known as Sargents went into receivership, this affected the ADF 4wd training in that they hired their vehicles from Sargents, so I offered my Rodeo and the FJ for hire for their training courses. But we needed more than 2 vehicles, the new Triton had just been released and the old model was being heavily discounted at the time. So I purchased a brand new dual cab turbo diesel in manual for just \$27,700, not bad for a new 4wdrive with a 5 year warranty. I added a canopy and a bull bar and we now have it available for hire at my driver training centre. I am very impressed with this vehicle for the money, and it returns 9L's/100km's which is amazing!



Not bad for under \$30K

Lots of interesting stuff

The training centre has been kept busy with all sorts of activities of recent. We had a film crew book it to film a new 4wdrive TV commercial, that was a very interesting day with over 100 people on hand, catering trucks, sound equipment, cameras and even movie stars, I can't say any more as the advertisement has not been released as yet, but keep an eye out for it in a few months time.

We also hosted 45 x 4wdrives all with Active Camper slide on campers for their annual get together. Again over 100 people spent 3 days at the training centre and they all spoke very highly of the facility, it was great to have them there enjoying the beautiful grounds, the comfort of the centre and sharing their stories and modifications to their respective vehicles.



Reflections in my dam

Recently I also had the chance to have many of the staff from Ultimate

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Campers based in Moruya attend the training centre for a couple of days of 4wd training with their 4wd drives and with a brand new Xterra Ultimate Camper in tow. This gave the people who build these great campers the chance to see them in action and see what we teach people who own off road campers, why invest \$50,000+ in a camper and then not invest in how to tow it off road?



One of the best off road trailers money can buy

The new Hilux

In early October the new Hilux was launched on the Australian market. Given the numbers of Hilux that sell in Australia, this was a significant vehicle release. We were chuffed that two of Sydney's major Toyota dealerships, Clintons and Lander Toyota chose my training centre to show case the new Hilux to their corporate clients. I got to drive the Hilux on my various tracks including up the infamous Cooper Climb. It handled it easily. Some models come with a rear diff lock as standard and this certainly helped on the steep and slippery Cooper Climb. I was also very impressed with the seamless activation of the traction control system, very similar to what I experience in my FJ Cruiser. Sadly the traction control is

deactivated when the rear diff lock is engaged, a retrograde step if you ask me.



The new Hilux was very impressive

We did good

Last weekend we had our final driver training course for 2015 and judging by the feedback and phone calls to date everyone was more than pleased what we were able to deliver, as an example take a look at this email which I received this week.

A huge thanks to Vic, and in particular, our Trainers, Wayne and Tony.

Their knowledge, professionalism and patience was 1st rate. It was a joy to learn exactly what my Landcruiser could do, (which left me somewhat breathless) and with a bit of confidence, how easy it was to get it to do it.

All the research, reading, studying and siphoning through all the "expert advice" on-line is no replacement for hands-on, practical experience. To be able to drive so many different types of terrain and so many different challenges in one short weekend was GOLD!

The bonus of being able to do it all under the watchful eye of Wayne and Tony made it that much better.

I cannot give enough praise either to the facility itself. A real credit to Vic in what he has built there.

I can't wait to do the advanced course.....bring on Coopers Hill!

Please pass onto Wayne that his advice was heeded.....I'll be hanging onto my 100 Series for a long, long time!

Roger

The new Navara

We also had one of the new Nissan Navaras with standard rear diff lock on this course, so it was interesting to see how it performed, especially with my recent Hilux experience.

The Navara is a much nicer looking 4wdrive than its predecessor but although it has traction control it was very late to engage. In fact, on our wheel articulation exercise, designed specifically to show people how to use their traction control to their advantage, we could not get it to activate without serious power input and wheel spin, nothing like the smooth operation of the traction control in the Hilux, so that was a big fail in my opinion.

Shorter trips

Of course that is only part of the story for GDT, during the past 7 months we have continued to offer numerous day and weekend trips to all parts of NSW, these are always well attended and everyone continues to have a great time, Alex with his Stockton Beach trips, Wayne and Jenny in the Brindabellas, Ian Bragg down at Deua National Park and Ian Sheppard and Greg Dickinson along the Turon River. We will have all our old favourite trips going again next

year and I will hopefully find time to explore some more territory and be able to offer something new. Our 2016 calendar is attached to this email.



Alex paid them a lot of money to smile

So what is coming up?

Well, I'm not going to sit here and list everything that is on over the next few months, but let me put it this way, some of our longer trips are already booked out and 2016 looks like being a very busy year for us. So if you are planning on joining us on one of our fabulous 4wd tag-alongs to avoid disappointment, please consider booking as soon as you can.

This is what you've already missed out on as these trips are fully booked.

Man From Snowy River over New Year 2015/16

New Zealand Tour in March

Victorian High Country tour 10-16 April 2016

Simpson Desert in May - well there is just one spot remaining and I have someone interested already

Cape York 25/7 to 12 August 2016, one spot remains with a decision pending

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Arnhem Land 10-28 August 2106

Fortunately we have scheduled **extra tours** as follows:-

The High Country in April, Cape York in late August and a second Arnhem Land trip in mid August.

Other trips such as the Kimberley and Canning Stock Route are already half full, I suggest you book asap, if you are thinking of joining us.

Out of the ordinary trips

I've also put together a few special trips again for 2016. These will be simply amazing each in their own right as they are both diverse and historic.

The Big Red Bash is on again in early July. We have had sell out tours to this incredible event for the past 3 years and already have the 2016 trip half full. This year the artists will be performing for three afternoons and evenings, so we have added an extra day to our tour to allow us time to enjoy what is becoming the greatest outdoor concert you can attend.



It's amazing what people do when you point a gun at them!

Jimmy Barnes is back in 2016 to rock the desert, along with Russell Morris, Bryan Cadd, Glenn Shorrock, Troy

Cassar-Daly, Adam Brand, The Angels, Christine Anu and lots more well known Aussie artists.

Following the success of one of our most adventurous outback trips, the Madigan Line, in 2014 and again in 2015 this trip is scheduled for May 2016 again. Ian Sheppard is raring to lead it again and this time intends to reach Geosurveys Hill.

Although this is a trip that demands good vehicle preparation, few trips, upon completion, can give you that sense of great achievement. The fact that we are the only tour company doing this trip at present is testament to how unique it is.

We have the return of an amazing trip in August and September. I first ran this in 2010 with Alex and in 2016, Alex will be leading it again.



It is called in the Footsteps of Burke and Wills. This trip traces their fateful journey from its very beginning in Royal Park in Melbourne, through central Victoria, past Swan Hill and Mungo National Park onto Menindee and Kinchega NP, through Mutawintji NP and the Corner Country to the Dig Tree on the Cooper Creek, across Walkers Crossing and up the Birdsville Track and

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then north through the Channel Country and the rugged hills around Mt Isa all the way to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

This is one of those great outback treks woven around our history that helped forge Australian folk lore. This trip promises to be outstanding and I personally highly recommend it to all 4wdrive owners.

Vic's next adventure

Each year, I like to personally get away and explore some of my favourite locations and some new places that my boots are yet to tread. In 2016 during May I'm returning to one of my favourite locations, Mt Ive station and Lake Gairdner, followed by Googs Track and the beautiful beaches around Ceduna and Fowlers Bay. This will encompass some of the best coastal driving and desert driving you can enjoy BUT, then I head into new country for me, all the way to the infamous atomic bomb testing site of Maralinga.

We have arranged special access into this corner of Australian history that many would prefer not to be known. Then we push further into this forbidden territory (don't worry it is safe) to the other atomic test sites of Emu One and Emu Two. We will then head west along the Anne Beadell Hwy all the way to the Great Central Road, returning east to visit the little accessed Surveyor Generals Corner (where WA, NT & SA meet). Then its another new track for me, the Sandy Blight Junction Road which goes north until we turn south again past Hermannsburg to again travel down what I rate is possibly the best red centre location, the beautiful Finke Gorge and Bogy Hole.

This epic 22 day trip concludes in Alice Springs. I only have 4 spots remaining on this trip, so if it whets your appetite, drop me an email and I'll send you the full itinerary, it is going to be truly amazing. And for fans of my guide Ian Bragg, he will be with us all the way as part of your tour guide team along with our film crew.



**The high country is a 4wd mecca
High in the high country and a
discount!**

Don't forget Christmas holidays are just 2 weeks away, if you have a few days up your sleeve I have a swag of Victorian High Country trips taking place just after Christmas Day. The trip departing Bright on 27 December for 7 days is camper trailer friendly and has 2 spots remaining on it. We have a non camper trailer 7 day high country trip leaving Bright on 30 December and it has 3 spots remaining and then the same trip departing Bright on 3 January for 7 days with just 2 spots remaining. Mention this Newsletter for a \$100 discount on these high country trips.

Stockton Beach

Great Divide Tours was recently invited to the Worimi Lands which is Stockton Beach to celebrate the release of the Management plan for Worimi Lands. Our resident Stockton Beach guide, Alex

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attended the smoking ceremony on the beach and was treated to an incredible display of cultural awareness via dance and song. This proved to be an invaluable knowledge sharing experience for Alex and he is more than excited that he is leading a day trip up there on **10 January**, where he will be able to pass on the things he learned from those people who have frequented Stockton Beach for thousands of years.

We have a few spots remaining on this great school holiday trip, so once the fun and excitement and family get togethers over Christmas come to a close, you might like to join us for a great day of beach driving and learning.

Bay of Fires

In November, Julie and I did something we have never done previously, we participated in a 3 day guided walk. I had heard so much about the Bay of Fires in Tasmania I decided we had to get down to the Apple Isle to see for ourselves what all the fuss was about.



One of the most beautiful places in the country

We joined a tour group called Life's An Adventure, and spent 3 days walking the amazing coastline from Mt William NP to St Helens. There were stunning coastal scenes, the famous red lichen covered granite boulders, beautiful

Eddystone Lighthouse and of course lots of walking. In fact we walked about 15k's each day, now if you know me, I'm not really a walker, and my wife, Julie, has never done any extended walking.

But we made it, I will admit by day 4 after the tour I was stuffed! It took about a week for my inflamed hip joints to settle down, but it was a fabulous experience and one I would highly recommend.

I have just written a yarn about it for Pat Callinan's Unsealed 4x 4 on line magazine, so keep an eye on the GDT Facebook site where I'll advise everyone when it is to be published.

Bruny Island

We also spent 3 days on Bruny Island exploring its length and narrow breadth and in particularly participating in the Bruny Island boat tour around the southern tip of the Island. This was an excellent 5 hour boat trip, we were lucky that we had a relatively good day weather wise, but still had big swells that kept the various sea caves spewing their plumes of white water skyward, an awesome sight for sure.



There she blows

We saw the usual Sea lions and seals and a huge pod of dolphins, probably over

100 of these playful creatures. What intrigued me about Bruny Island was its supposed population of white or albino Wallabies, they appear in the brochures on the island but I didn't really expect to see any, but we did. One wet afternoon whilst out touring, we spotted a white wallaby in the distance, fascinating!



Yes, its real

Sad times

We only had 9 days in Tassie but made the most of it with the 3 day Bay of Fires walk, a driving tour through central Tassie, 3 days on Bruny Island and finishing off with the Salamanca Markets and a stroll through the beautiful Hobart botanic gardens.



Hobart Botanic Gardens

It was during this visit, surrounded by amazing flowers and beautiful gardens that we heard of the news of the terrorist attacks in Paris, it seemed surreal that we were in such a beautiful location whilst

so many horrors were taking place elsewhere. Unfortunately I'll forever remember my Tassie trip for all the wrong reasons, but it made me realise how bloody lucky we are, let's not ever lose sight of that!

Old Friends

Whilst in Tassie we met up with some old friends who had moved there 10 years ago. Dave was a mechanic who worked at Bill Buckle Toyota in the mid 1970's. I got to know him because in 1974 at the age of 20 I purchased what was then my dream car, a purple Toyota Celica! I wouldn't let anyone work on my beloved machine without me standing beside them, I was even known to polish the rear diff housing True!

I met Julie for the first time on the day I bought this car, some say it is the only reason she went out with me in the first place. I reckon it was my good looks and not the Celica!



Dave and Lynne formerly from Curl Curl

Dave and I became good friends, he had a love for cars too, restoring old American muscle cars and hot rods, we spent a lot time together during the 70's and 80's but then Julie and I had children and to make ends meet when home loan interest rates were 17% I was working 7 days a week and then I started Great Divide Tours in 1990 and as well as

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holding down my Government job, well, there wasn't much time for anything else. So it had been nearly 30 years since we had seen each other.

A random call from Dave one day changed all that. He was now living in Tassie, retired and still restoring old cars, so as we were going to Tassie we planned to meet up. Its funny when you haven't seen a mate for 30 years how old they look when you reunite. I was glad I hadn't aged as much (as if).

It did take a couple of inquisitive stares and tentative questions are you Dave? are you Vic? But then we spent a couple of hours reliving the good old days and catching up on the past, that was fun, in a cafe in Deloraine in Tasmania.

Vale 4wd legends

During the past few months two absolute legends of the 4wdrive industry passed away. The first was Robert Lovell, who was the owner of Lovells Springs of course. Robert was one of nature's gentlemen, I first met him in 1986 when he agreed to sponsor me and my mate Jeff Knox in the across Australia rally known as the Wynn's Safari. He supplied the heavy duty leaf springs and Bilstein shocks for Jeff's Hilux.

That started a great relationship with Robert, he was passionate about his spring making and when we managed to break one of his coil springs on one of my 80 series cruisers, he was mortified. This led to two major things, firstly they changed the process in the manufacture of their springs so they could detect the fault that occurred in this spring.

Secondly, he became aware of the tremendous loads that some 4wd drivers

would be carrying when crossing our continent. To address this he developed an extra heavy duty spring called the Platinum series which was thicker than his standard high lift spring and painted silver instead of his traditional blue. This spring has been the best spring I have ever used. Sadly it is no longer available in that guise.

Robert joined me in 2001 on my epic double crossing of Australia and his happy character and dedication to business is something that others could only dream of. Robert passed away due to Prostrate Cancer, which, had it been detected earlier, he may well still be with us, so guys, you know what has to be done, get yourself checked at least every 2 years and beat this insidious cancer.

The second legend to leave us is someone few of you may recall unless you have been around as long as I have in the 4wd world. I am speaking of Ric Williams who passed away in early October. Ric started the very first 4wd magazine in Australia back in 1974, he went on to establish, write and print his own 4wd magazine which dominated the 4wdrive mag market through the 70's and 80's known as Bushdriver Magazine.

Ric was an avid outback explorer, off road competitor and his rough and ready attitude would sometimes upset a few but he always produced a quality mag and an enthralling read. He pioneered 4wdrives competing in off road rallies such as the Borneo and Malaysian jungle rallies, one of his drivers at the time was Norm Needham who was the then owner of Traction 4 at Artarmon (now ARB Northside). My thoughts are with the extended families of both Robert Lovell and Ric Williams.

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Film Festival

Bright in Victoria hosts the Adventure Film Festival each year in mid February. Next year's festival will be held from 12-14 February. I attended it this year and found the various short films and presentations by adventurers to be inspiring and exciting. I'll be going down to Bright again in 2016 and this year I have been invited to present our film that we shot whilst completing the first crossing of the Simpson Desert in its 50th anniversary year of the first motor vehicle crossing. If you would like to attend the festival check out their website, you won't be disappointed. <http://www.adventuretravelfilmfestival.com/australian-festival/added-attractions/>



The film festival is a must for anyone with the spirit of adventure and travel

A GPS course

I've tried to put these together a few times now but finally I think I have a winner for everyone. Imagine spending a whole day with Mr GPSOZ himself, Brian Sommerville, being classroom and outdoor trained on how to get the most out of your GPS. Well that is exactly what we are offering. Set aside the 19 March 2016 for this great day of learning. It will be conducted in the Scout Hall at Bayview on the northern beaches of Sydney and the cost will be just \$100 per person or a couple if you bring the other half along. Brian gave

me the following agenda so you can see what he will be doing.

Planned Agenda:

Start at 9am

- 📍 Theory of GPS (not heavy!)
- 📍 Review of navigation techniques, grid references, datums, projections
- 📍 Practical uses, impractical uses
- 📍 Terms and definitions
- 📍 Features and functions
- 📍 Practical exercises in nearby parkland. Walking only, no vehicle exercises
- 📍 Recap/answers of practical exercises, lots of discussion I'm sure!

Lunch Break:

- 📍 Optional vehicle exercise to buy lunch!

PM:

- 📍 Advanced uses of GPS
- 📍 Trip planning
- 📍 Tips and tricks for getting the most out of your GPS
- 📍 Review of practical exercises and more discussion!
- 📍 Demo of the latest software available
- 📍 Installation ideas
- 📍 Anything else you want to talk about.

We always plan to have a fun and relaxed day and to impart some practical knowledge we have learned along the way. Conclusion around 3:30/4:00pm

So if you wish to join us, you do need to nominate for it and forward your payment in advance, just email me at info@greatdividetours.com.au or go to www.4wd.net.au to book your spot.

Prepare Respond Prevail workshop, How to survive the Aussie bush

One of the most enjoyable and popular initiatives has been our 'Prepare Respond Prevail' Workshops – a one day (one night) bushcraft and outdoor survival activity that's aimed towards

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the outdoors enthusiasts among us – whether that’s 4WDers, caravanners, bushwalkers or trail bike rider.

We’re running our next workshop **on 6 February 2016** and you might like to join us. Or perhaps you’d like to give the gift of survival to one of your friends or loved ones?



Scott Heiman prays for more water in his bag

We’ll be kicking off from 9am on Saturday morning at my 4wd Training Centre, near Braidwood. This 240 acre property is great for getting our hands dirty with practical demonstrations, with the added bonus of a well-appointed training room and dining facility, and bunk accommodation for those of you who like to sleep with a roof over your head. For the rest of us, camping is available just in front of the training centre, with toilets and showers co-located.

The Workshop costs \$275 per person and that includes instruction, breakfast, lunch, dinner and morning/afternoon teas. The courses are conducted by Scott Heiman from Heiman Habitat check out his website www.heimanhabitat.com.au

Radio TV and Print media

My Track talk segment on radio 2GB has been going for over a year now, they keep asking me to ring in and speak for

10 mins or more, so they must be enjoying it. After having a woeful time slot of 10.30pm on Saturday night during the footy season we have moved back to 3.30pm on Saturday afternoons, so you can catch the show on 873 am or via the internet at www.2gb.com.au and if you miss it you can podcast it at anytime.

I continued my advertising on the Offroad Adventure show during its second season on Channel 10 and joined the boys from the show for one of their episodes, I have a great head for radio, that is for sure. I believe they might re run the series next year so keep an eye out for it on TEN and ONE.



Vic & Rick O'Brien, too good looking heads

Sadly, after writing for Overlander every month since approx 2003 I have now written my last column and travel story, as they need to reduce their costs and do all their writing in house rather than using freelance writers such as I. My last column will appear in early 2016. But, Unsealed 4x4 magazine, an on-line magazine, has taken a couple of articles from me, so check it out.

I'm also writing for Holidays with Kids and I've donated some articles to the Volunteer Fire Fighters magazine, the latest one was on using an electric winch. Hope to pick up some more

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work in the writing field especially with all the great adventures I have planned for 2016. Of course I continue to do my photography and will be running another photo course for you in April 2016.

How about the 200?

For those of you following this saga, I have stuck with the Ultimate/Lovell springs suspension set up and it is performing well, it went really well on my trip out to the Red Centre. Finally the fuel economy is starting to improve too, I saw a mid 14's on the Red Centre trip, my best yet. I have clocked up 40,000 k's now so the engine is starting to settle in I think. I have learnt to always carry a spare fuel filter or two though and know how to change it, there is a lot of dirty fuel out there.



Bogged? No, not me!!

On the drive from Mt Isa to Birdsville I did sustain a broken windscreen, the first windscreen I have ever had to replace in all my years of driving, makes me think they don't make windscreens as tough as they once were.

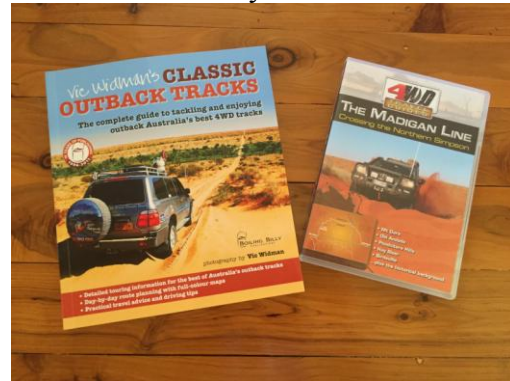
Last minute Christmas gift ideas

Well you should have seen this one coming.

We are doing gift vouchers for any of our trips or driver training courses or the

GPS course and the Prepare Respond Prevail workshop.

You can nominate any amount you wish from \$50 to \$50m (I wish!) Just drop me an email or call me on 02 99131395 and we can email the gift voucher to you almost immediately.



What everyone wants for Christmas

Or you might like to purchase one of my books or DVD's, we now have our latest DVD on our **Madigan Line** crossing as well as our New Zealand tour, the First Across the Desert and the epic Burke and Wills trip from 2010. You can combine any of my books "Classic Outback Tracks", "Travelling the Outback" or the "4WD skills manual" with a DVD of your choice too. Prices start from just \$20 plus postage.



The drive along the Finke Gorge is one of the best

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FREE

I've tried to sell them and had no takers so here they are FREE, 5 tyres off my FJ Cruiser, original equipment Grantreks in HT pattern 265/70/17 Free to anyone who can pick them up. Call me on 02 99131395



Five of these brand new tyres for Christmas and they are free!

As you see I shouldn't let it be 7 months between Newsletters as there is just too much going on, so I promise to do better next time. In the meantime, I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and trust that no matter where you are and whatever you are doing over the festive season that you keep safe.

See you in 2016.

Vic Widman
Great Divide Tours



Scenes from my adventures this year

