



Newsletter No. 48 August 2018

*G'Day, Outback Vic here.*

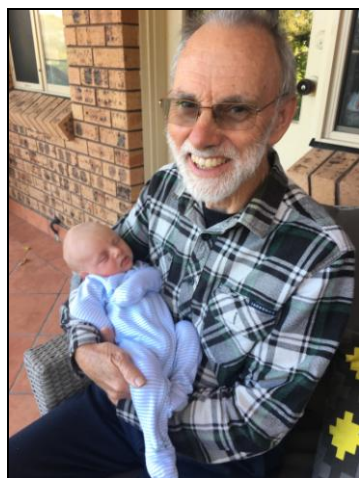
We are currently in full outback tour season, so I thought why not add to my work load and get another Newsletter out to everyone. The real reason of course is I have some amazing trips to tell you about, some we have done and some I have in the pipeline for later this year and next year. So let's see if I can make this a short, sharp, punchy newsletter. Tell him he's dreaming son!



are all doing well and Emma and Mike are very happy parents and adjusting to family life very well. This makes me a grandfather or Pa 3 times over with my other daughter, Lisa already providing Julie and I with a granddaughter and a grandson.

*Historic Simpson Desert trip*

In May, whilst my daughter was delivering her first baby, I was out making my own little bit of history with my epic Simpson Desert Circumnavigation tour. The concept was to drive full circle around the Simpson Desert. Four crossings in one trip, east west, south north, north south and west east. I really have no idea if anyone has done this before, but I am fairly certain it has been done, but also rather confident in saying I would be amongst a small group of people who have achieved this goal.



**Xavier James, a future 4wdriver and owner of GDT?**

*A new Grandson*

I am really excited to let everyone know that my daughter Emma gave birth to her first baby on 12 May 2018, a healthy boy named Xavier James, with the James name coming from his Pa (that's me) whose middle name is James. Mum and baby boy



**Remote desert travel with great people, doesn't get much better than this**

I met our customers in Cobar all 8 vehicles in total, and I had Neill Bell riding shotgun with me in my Cruiser, his biggest worry was that I was doing the

cooking for 3 weeks, I just told him look on the bright side, he would have a body just like mine at the end of the trip, that cheered him up no end!

We headed straight to Trilby station, where we camped in a great spot overlooking the Darling River, in fact it was so nice under the river gums that we had a leisurely afternoon in camp. It was so peaceful I didn't want to leave the next day. But leave we did and we were lucky to be able to use station tracks through Trilby, visiting their original homestead (Newchum) on our way to Wanaaring.



**The Colson Track was quote overgrown**

That night I used another of my secret camp sites along the Tibooburra road, a beautiful spot on a small clay pan. From here we refuelled in Tibooburra then headed north into Queensland via Warri Gate making another great bush camp near Epsilon. The following day we visited Burkes Grave on Cooper Creek and enjoyed the warm showers in Innamincka before tackling the Walkers Crossing Track which we camped on. By now, even the locals had agreed the flies were as bad as they had ever seen. The little blighters were to stay with us for the remainder of the trip and certainly tried our patience whilst preparing lunch and dinner. In the end we were happy to drive until 30 mins before sunset, make camp and then wait until darkness fell to cook dinner after the

persistent flies had all gone to bed (we did wonder where they actually slept every night?)

It was at this point that my original plans had to be changed, I had my heart set on entering the Simpson Desert via the Warburton Crossing, just south of Clifton Hills on the Birdsville Track, but alas 4 days before we reached this point floodwaters that had been coming down the Diamantina River for the past 3 months, crossed the Warburton Track and it flooded immediately and still remains closed today. So when we reached the Birdsville Track we drove north to the famous town and camped that night in brand new cabins all part of the Caravan Park but actually next door to the Hotel where we enjoyed dinner.



**The Madigan Line is the perfect Desert track these days**

We all took on our huge fuel requirements in a very quiet Birdsville, for me that means 270 litres in my long range tanks plus 3 x 20 litre jerry cans on the roof rack. We had about 1500 k's to do before the next refuel point.

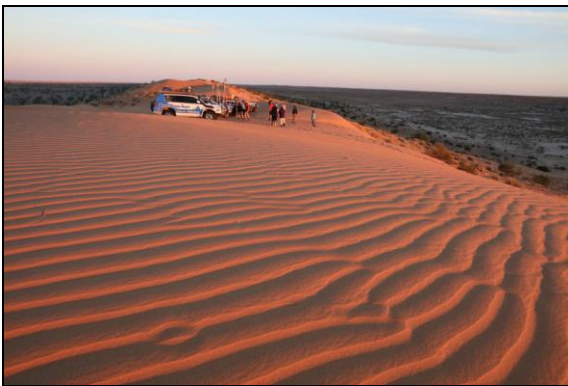
Over the next 14 days we circumnavigated the Simpson, initially via the QAA Line to Poeppel Corner then down the K1 Line to the Rig Road which we followed all the way west until we joined the WAA Line and then drove north up a very overgrown Colson Track to the Madigan Line.

Our group of nine 4wdrives then followed the Madigan Line to the Hay River Track and then this track all the way to Batton Hill camp. From here some of us had to drive out to the Plenty Hwy to refuel and then we headed south along the Hay River Track to once again join the Madigan Line and complete driving it back to the QAA Line near Eyre Creek. Finally back over Big Red and back to Birdsville 14 days and 2100 desert kilometres later.



#### **Lake Caroline on the Hay River track**

There were many great moments during this trip, including spotting lots of camels, repairing cars in the middle of nowhere, driving at night down the Hay River track to rejoin the group after one of the vehicles had to get out to Alice Springs for urgent mechanical work and of course some great sunrises and sunsets.



#### **Sunset on Big Red**

After Birdsville we visited Haddon Corner, the Arrabury Road and the Dig Tree, then Noccundra for a final

magnificent camp in the outback with a superb sunrise before our last night together in the Underground motel in White Cliffs. This was a one off trip that notched up 4 crossings of the Simpson desert and brought my personal tally to 26 now. It was a very unique and special trip, made even better by the wonderful people who accompanied us.



#### **Sunrise near Noccundra**

Whist on this trip we all discussed other locations for our 4wd adventures and these was no doubt that a visit to Tasmania was high on everyone's wish list. As a result, on return home I immediately designed a trip around Tassie that not only takes in all the best tourist locations but includes the sought after off road bits as well. The group also strongly suggested that any trip in Tassie would need to include accommodation each night due to the harsh and varied weather conditions that can be experienced in our most southern state.



#### **Bay of Fires is on our visit list**

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The trip is planned for November 2019, a long way off yet, but 5 of the 8 couples on my Simpson trip have already booked their spot on it. I fear this trip will fill very quickly, so rather than include its itinerary with this newsletter, this time I am asking you if you would like a copy of the planned itinerary please drop me an email at [info@4wd.net.au](mailto:info@4wd.net.au). I will be doing a reccie around Tassie in late October and confirming all the accommodation I plan to book, and just to be prepared I will also seek out availability for a second trip in Nov/Dec 2019 as I'm sure the first trip is going to be fully booked very quickly.

### *Botswana delivered*

Jenny and Wayne and Ian Sheppard were lucky enough to escort my two trips to Botswana in June 2018. They have all come back with glowing reports on the huge number of animals sighted and photographed. In fact, Ian, who also accompanied me last year to Namibia, was so excited about the trip that he was first to put his hand up to return again next year. We have tweaked the itinerary for our trip in May 2019, adding a couple of extra days where needed such as the incredible Victoria Falls, see the pdf file attached to this email for more details.



**This fella sneaked up on Jenny, can you imagine an elephant sneaking up on you??**

### *Red Centre Circle Tour*

Whilst I did my quadruple crossing of the Simpson Desert in May I also planned another "Circle" style tour. I'm still very keen to access the Simpson Desert via the Warburton Crossing and hopefully by August 2019 it will have dried out and be open. So my Red Centre Circle tour was born, it will start in Port Augusta and take us up to Marree, then up the Birdsville Track and into the Simpson via Warburton Crossing. When we reach the K1 Line we will follow this delightful track north to Poeppel Corner and then continue north on the Hay River Track all the way to Batton Hill. After a day exploring the local area we will drive down the Plenty Hwy to Alice Springs and amongst other things catch sunset on the beautiful Rainbow Valley.



**Rainbow Valley, one of many highlights**

Then we drive south following the Old Ghan Railway line past Chambers Pillar all the way to Finke and eventually to Mt Dare. A swim in Dalhousie Springs in its beautifully warm waters followed by a drive down the Oodnadatta Track to William Creek will lead us to the Painted Hills, please read my next piece of gossip on this amazing location.

Then we will finish the Red Centre Circle tour underground at Coober Pedy. I plan to personally lead this trip and have attached the itinerary to this newsletter email for your info.

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## *There is Life on Mars*

Well, I'm pretty sure there is, because I've been there! Just last week my old mate Trevor Wright who owns Wrightsair and all of William Creek invited me out to William Creek to visit Mars. So after 3 days and 8 plane flights, I can now attest to the fact that if there was any place on Earth that resembled Mars I have just visited it, and it is outstanding!

So what the hell am I talking about?



About 10 years ago when doing an aerial tour of the flooded Lake Eyre with Trevor he flew over a place he calls the Painted Hills, this is not the Painted Desert near Oodnadatta, nor is it the Breakaways outside of Coober Pedy and no, you can't access it via land.

It is a huge area about 30 kilometres long found 100 kilometres south of William Creek on the huge cattle station known as Anna Creek. Like the Bungle Bungle ranges in WA, it has existed for 130 million years, but only in recent times have us mere humans had a chance to see it. Up until just a month ago, there was no land access, that is until now.

Trevor, in consultation with the new owner of Anna Creek station and under strict visitation guidelines, has now been able to put a rather rough unsealed and short air strip in the centre of the Painted

Hills on a gibber plain, and only last week I was amongst the first people to be able to land out there and walk amongst this Mars like landscape.

From the air the Anna Creek Painted Hills are sensational, and as the light plane circles the Hills you certainly get an awe-inspiring view of the extent of this lunar like landscape. From the air the most striking features are the incredible colours in the hills and of course the weird rock formations standing like sentinels to a lost world. This sight alone is worth the air fare, but once the six seater has landed and you climb out onto the rock strewn landscape you are immediately transported into a world of question marks!



**Anna Creek Painted Hills we can take you there first.**

That is the best way I can describe what I saw, everywhere I looked I kept asking myself, "But how?" What is going on or has gone on here?" "Is that a fossil, if it is, its huge!" This place would be heaven to a Geologist, and it would not surprise me if eventually it is proven to be one of the richest and oldest landscapes in Australia, I don't mean rich in a monetary sense but in a geology context.

How do you explain two rocks lying side by side, one has the weight and

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consistency of a piece of cuttlefish whilst the rock next to it is obviously full of iron as it weights 3 times as much as a normal rock. But that is only the tip of the iceberg, there are so many other weird rock formations that it just fills your head with questions and all the time you are surrounded by the beautiful colour of the Painted Hills.



**Can anyone explain these for me? Not my boot!**

I was very lucky, I did two visits to the Anna Creek Painted Hills in one day and on my second visit accompanied Trevor Wright as we walked about 4 kilometres across this Mars landscape, past ancient fossils and crazy shaped rocks, some polished smooth next to others still rough and sharp, I even thought that perhaps a meteor shower had come down here. We walked to the incredible twin rock towers know as the Pinnacles, absolutely stunning in the afternoon light.



So of course, I want you to see this and experience what few have.

I have designed my new Red Centre Circle tour to visit William Creek with the intention of allowing you time to experience the Anna Creek Painted Hills from the ground and also my new Madigan Line itinerary, see the next topic in this newsletter.

But I can't wait until next year to show you this extraordinary place, so I am offering you the opportunity to visit William Creek and the Anna Creek Painted Hills with GDT later this year.



**Guardian of the Painted Hills**

Firstly on a 3 day fly in fly out tour, exactly as I did. Fly from your capital city to Adelaide then fly to Olympic Dam to be collected by charter aircraft from Wrightsair to William Creek, overnight in their accommodation and then fly out to the Anna Creek Painted hills for an extended ground tour (approximately 2 hours) before returning to William Creek for the 2<sup>nd</sup> night. Then on day 3 fly back to Olympic Dam and back to Adelaide for you to make your way home. This Flying trip will be fully escorted by a Great Divide Tours staff member who will meet you at Adelaide airport and accompany you throughout this amazing trip. The 3 day fly in fly out (FIFO) trip is scheduled for **26-28 August 2018**, just one month away. It also includes your flights from

Adelaide to William Creek and return, accommodation for 2 nights at William Creek plus all meals from arrival to departure at William Creek. I have attached the itinerary to the email with this Newsletter. Let me know if you would like to see the incredible Anna Creek Painted Hills.



**Anna Creek Painted Hills**

As a second choice I am offering a 4wd tag-along tour from Cobar out to William Creek and back to Port Augusta, fully accommodated each night including dinner and breakfast. We will visit places such as Menindee Lakes, Broken Hill, Hawker, Brachina gorge, the Prairie Hotel, Marree, Lake Eyre Sth, William Creek, the Painted Hills, Oodnadatta, the Painted Desert, Coober Pedy and Woomera.

This trip will take place from 16-21 September and will give you the opportunity to experience the outback and the amazing Painted Hills in just a week away from home or work. I have also attached the itinerary to the email with this Newsletter. If you would like to experience Life on Mars drop me an email and book in for one of these incredible trips.

### *Celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Madigan's Crossing of the Simpson Desert.*

As you know I love outback travel and the only thing that makes it better is the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our explorers as they discovered our great and vast land. I retraced the footsteps of Burke & Wills on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their tragic exploration in 2010 and then in 2012 I led a group of clients to be the first people to cross the Simpson Desert in its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the first motor vehicle crossing by Reg Sprigg in 1962. So when I realised that 2019 would be the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cecil Madigan's epic journey by camel across the Simpson Desert it was logical that GDT would run a trip to celebrate this great achievement.



**Madigan's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary tour with GDT**

I have attached the itinerary for our 2019 Madigan Line Anniversary tour to this email. Commencing on 27 July and going through to 4 August 2019 this will see you follow Madigan's camel pads from Old Andado Station all the way to Birdsville. Having completed most of this route on my Circumnavigation tour, I can assure you that the desert travel in the northern Simpson is the best you can do. Of course, as we will be passing through William Creek on our way to Old Andado I have

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allowed time for you to visit the Anna Creek Painted Hills by plane if you wish.

*But wait! There is more!*

I wish there was more time in the day, you see I have so many grand ideas of 4wd trips and places I want to share with you I just don't have time to plan them all.



**Across the Top in 2019**

Another trip I hope to add to my 2019 calendar will be a fantastic journey along the Binns Track in the Northern Territory and then across the Gulf of Carpentaria to Cairns. Starting in Alice Springs and ending in Cairns it will include places like Tower Rock, Policeman's Waterhole, Davenport Ranges, Daly Waters, Roper Bar, the Lost City at Nathan River, Lorella Springs station, Cape Crawford and its Lost City, Borroloola and across the top road to Hells Gate, Lawn Hill and Burketown, Leichardt River and Karumba, Cobold Gorge and eventually through the hinterland to Cairns.

This one is still in the planning stages and will take place in August 2019, let me know if you would like more info and the itinerary. Let's call it the Across the Top tour.

*What's coming up*

Well, it is just one week away from our fabulous Christmas in August trips with Alex. The first takes place on 4-6 August and we have just two spots remaining, then our second snow tour is the following

weekend on 11-13 August and we have 4 spots remaining. Not only do we have great accommodation for our two nights in Tumarumba but we have a full Christmas feast and a visit by Santa along with lots of great 4wd tracks during the day, can we promise snow? Not really, but last year we had blizzards on both trips and the way the weather is going lately I'm pretty sure there will be a few snow fights along the way. The cost is \$1190 per couple and includes your accommodation for two nights, dinner and breakfast on two nights/mornings, special Christmas function, park fees and lots of laughs with Alex.



**Christmas in August, a fantastic trip**

We have also listed a 2<sup>nd</sup> Arnhem Land tour commencing 1-20 September as our first trip is fully booked, this is another once in a lifetime experience as we take you to places that you simply can't reach on your own.

**Extraordinary Flinders Ranges scenery**

Also in September we have our beautiful Flinders Ranges Wildflower tour starting on 3 September and again its one of those trips that delivers in so many ways. Great scenery, great 4wd tracks, great camping locations and all led by Great Divide Tours! Drop me an email for a copy of the itinerary. Speaking of the Flinders Ranges, stay tuned for a fully accommodated tour to the Flinders for 2019, let me know if you would like to receive the itinerary on this one too.

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We have heaps more trips coming up, just check out my website [www.4wd.net.au](http://www.4wd.net.au) How about this one, a fabulous weekend trip to Hill End and Abercrombie NP on 11-12 August, or a great one day trip on Sunday 19 August to Cox's River and Kanangra Walls and I have one spot remaining on our fully accommodated Outback Icons tour out to Innamincka and Birdsville on 31 August to 8 September.

### *If this doesn't make you jealous!*

Also attached to this email is pdf document on our 2019 Botswana Tour and our very exciting 31 day 4wd tour of Madagascar in 2020. We have again partnered with Self Drive Adventures to bring you these amazing overseas locations with each trip being fully escorted by a Great Divide Tours staff member for peace of mind.

### *The Secret is almost out!*

As if things weren't hectic enough for me here at GDT HQ, I have a very new venture in mind which will come to fruition during September, I can't say too much more but it is going to provide you with the opportunity to have the ultimate escape. Stay tuned to my social media via Facebook.

### *Another fleet vehicle*

With Wylie McGuinness joining the GDT team recently, he needed some good looking GDT wheels to get him around our great country, so last month I purchased a 2013 model Mazda BT50 which is in the process of being fully kitted out with all the necessary four wheel drive gear to run trips for me. It has just had the signage done by Outback Signs, it is getting its Ozicozi clear coat put on it to make it really dazzle and repel all those bush scratches, then it is off to Off Road Systems for its storage shelves and drawers in the rear before heading

over to Artarmon Automotive to get all the ARB gear fitted up, it is going to be an awesome outback tourer, watch this space or my Facebook for updates on its progress.



### **Watch this BT50 turn into a super tourer** *Thank you*

To all those that contributed to my fund raising entry in the Prostate Cancer Research 4WD Rally I am leading in late September, a big thank you. Our entry list has grown to an incredible 40 vehicles and it looks like we should raise close to \$100,000 for the Research Fund, its not too late to still support me and every cent you contribute goes to Prostate Cancer Research. See here where you can donate if wish.

<https://outback4wdadventure.everydayhero.com/au/outback-vic>

### *Need a Plumber?*

While I'm thanking people for helping me raise funds for Prostate Cancer Research let me say a big thanks to Ty Widman for donating \$500 to the fund, remember if you've got a drip you can't stop, call Stop Drip Plumbing on 0403 847 378. Ty is now offering 24 hour response, he mustn't like sleeping!



## *For Sale*

Many of you have travelled on our trips with my guide Dave Fullerton, better known as Coighty after the famous Russell Coight from All Aussie Adventures, which by the way is making a return to the small screen in early August, should be a lot of fun as per usual.

I'm not sure if Dave Fullerton being known as Coighty is a term of endearment or a reflection on how he runs his trips, but those that travel with him seem to love him, either that or he pays them a lot to email and tell me what a great time they had with him!

Anyway, Dave (Coighty) for no other reason than he thought the time was right, has just upgraded his 200 series Landcruiser to a brand new one, in fact its up on Cape York at this very moment. So this means he has his 2013 GXL 200 series Landcruiser sitting at home waiting for someone to come along and purchase it. So here it is, in case you are that person. Its got a lot of the essential off road gear already on it and is an outback tourer just waiting to be snapped up.

**4.5 litre diesel V8 GXL 200 series Landcruiser,**  
7 seat, manufactured 2013,  
registered 30 November 2013  
133,000 kms on the clock  
Fully and regularly serviced with log books

Aftermarket additions as follows:  
Old Man Emu lift and heavy duty suspension  
Safari Snorkel

ARB "Intensity" LED spotlights  
ARB bull bar including side rails and heavy duty side steps  
Warn XD 9,000 lb winch  
3rd battery tray with auxiliary battery controlled by a Redarc battery management system which also allows for additional charging via solar panel, all 3 batteries replaced mid 2017  
Bushranger hot water shower system  
Cooper ST Maxx 285/70R17 tyres all round 30k travelled  
Tow bar kit installed  
Uniden 80 channel remote unit UHF radio  
Additional wiring and plugs for charging including wiring for fridge  
Flashlube pre filter  
MSA Seat Covers on front seats

Price: \$76,000 ONO

Give Coighty (or Dave ) a call on his mobile 0411 154 956 but remember he is on Cape York at present and may not be able to get back to you straight away. So leave a message.



**That's it for now have fun! I am!**  
**Regards**  
**Vic Widman**

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