

# Trip Reports:

## Simpson Desert Trip 17<sup>th</sup> September 2009 to 4 October 2009

### Participants

Nissan GU Patrol Ute  
Landcruiser Ute  
Nissan Patrol Ute  
Pajero Wagon  
Nissan Patrol Wagon  
200 Series Landcruiser  
V8 60 Series Landcruiser  
Landcruiser V8 Troopie  
Pajero Wagon

Evans Everywhere: Greg and Tom Evans,  
Clarke Capers: Dave and Doreen Clarke,  
Legs Eleven: Campbell, Jeannie and Zeb Griffin  
Richo the Toolman: Barry Richardson  
Rocket Robbo: Dave, Tom and Elly Robertson  
Barbwire Bruce: Bruce Gooday  
Laurie the Legend: Laurie  
Spuns: John and Barbara Spinner  
Team shopping Trolley: Stan, Bethne, Molly and Bryn

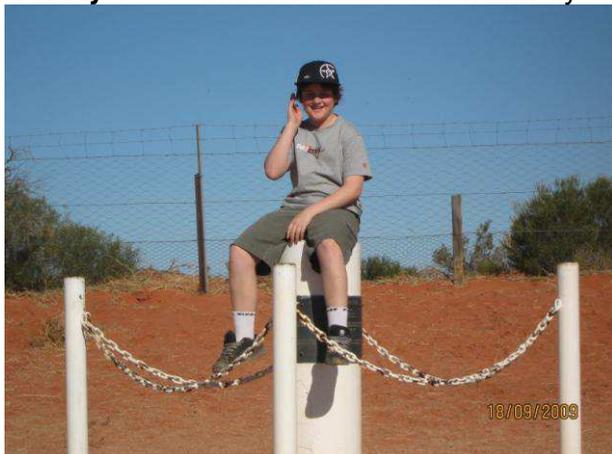
**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup>** 0700 left home on time.

Trip meeting time was to be 0830 time hitting the road was slightly delayed in order to allow Stan time to devour the largest meal on the menu, called the “campers breaky” served by the Tocumwal Pavilion Cafe and Bakery. We left Toc at 9am minus team Robbo, who had blown an air-conditioner belt the day before departure and had to get a replacement. He felt that resorting to the old fashioned open window was insufficient cooling for modern 4WDing experiences.

Changed the GPS voice to male at the driver’s request, advising Stan that he’s over the speed limit in a female voice was apparently annoying. Lunch at Ivanhoe and had a surprise meeting up with Bruce and his Gippslanders – they were supposed to be way ahead of us. They had enjoyed a lovely camp on the river at Hay, and were hoping to get to White Cliffs to camp. We would be an hour behind them and would meet up at Cameron’s Corner or Tibooburra.

Rain made the Cobb Highway a bit of fun with more than one vehicle sliding off the road into the burra-pit. Waltzing Cars lead to smiles all around – great fun indeed. We pushed on to Wilcannia and fuelled up, then camped 18km north of the town. Robbo arrived in camp with Elly and Tom at 8pm, tired but pleased to have caught up.

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup>** Stan took credit for the lovely rain the day before and the fun on the Hay plains. Bryn



thought that the sand on the road was hard to drive on but great fun to jump in. Bruce and co washed their cars at White Cliffs where they had camped in the caravan park, but everyone else looked very muddy. Bruce hit a fence at 100km/hr on the track from Ivanhoe and damaged his UHF aerial hence the name “Barbed Wire Bruce”. He jerry rigged a handheld to make do. Barry came to the rescue and repaired his aerial to as good as new. A drink at Tibooburra then on to Cameron’s corner. We camped on the Bore track that night.

**Sat 19<sup>th</sup>** Camped on the Cooper Creek near Innamincka gentle rain all day, enough to settle the dust but not boggy. Innamincka publican said it was the best

rains in 2 years. The hotel was booked out so the travellers could avoid the windy conditions. Our camp was very comfortable. Campbell had a flat tyre and got a quote but decided to wait till Birdsville. Robbo and Campbell shared accommodation in Innamincka and watched footy on TV (Collingwood versus Geelong). And Campbell met up with their neighbours who had by chance flown in to Innamincka that afternoon. They were staying the night then flying off to Birdsville, on an aerial trek.

Camp wine posh box Doreen and David’s Hardy’s Cabernet Sauvignon or the Merlot Stan was drinking was Peasant Pack. Doreen had lowered herself to drink out of a cask, which was a valiant effort that all applauded with gusto.

**Sun 20<sup>th</sup>** After a night of pool and football (Geelong won apparently) and the downcast Collingwood supporters returned to camp. Much to Robbo's disgust and Jeannie and Bruce's joy. Bruce produced a Cat's beanie which he proceeded to wear for some days, albeit at great personal risk. We drove out to the dig tree and had lunch with a leisurely jaunt back on the Andando Loop. We were surprised that the bitumen is only 50km from Innamincka so you can now drive on black top all the way to Brisbane.

Then camp oven roast lamb for tea, including Doreen's Rosemary. Stan was heard to exclaim throughout the camp in consternation "what's this weed cra# in the camp oven", however the seasoning was saved and enjoyed by many. It was revealed after tea that Dave & Doreen had enjoyed some lively driving discussions and their animated conversation was witnessed by Bruce and Barry. Barry did the gentlemanly thing and offered to drive whilst the Double D's were waltzing around the vehicle oblivious to their audience. Ah, the desert does wonderful things to the soul!

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup>** Regular outback travellers know, sometimes fuel and supplies can be unreliable so it is



wise to have back up plans and alternative options to cater for many unforeseen delays and distractions. Monday morning saw a line of vehicles endeavouring to obtain fuel from Innamincka store to no avail as the pumps had decided to cease working. The store manager was rather upset and unable to give a likely time that the pumps would be repaired. So we headed out the road and topped up the Pajero with a jerry, enough to get us to Birdsville. Intriguingly our nextG phones received signal and incoming messages in the middle of nowhere on the Walkers Crossing track. Sorry Molly only the blue Tick rural nextG phones get signal out here – yours will have to wait till Alice Springs. We worked out that we were around 30km from the

Moomba Gas field. The phone signal was strong enough to ring home and hear about the inch of rain that Benalla and Wangaratta had over the weekend, and how freezing cold the weather was down south. We were all in t-shirts and the temperature was a comfortable 25 degrees, which made us glad to be out of Vic.

We had lunch just past Walker's Crossing, then a bit of a unexpected recovery demonstration from a muddy area was completed. Then on the road to Birdsville arriving at 5pm to a rather dusty evening. Robbo and the Griffins again chose to rough it in the motel, while the remainder of the group camped in the caravan park. All enjoyed a lovely meal at the Birdsville pub, and got some washing done ready for tomorrow's desert crossing.

**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup>** Late start after the tyre repairs as the red Ute had a tyre separate from a rim, and a replacement for Campbell as his tyre was not repairable due to the side wall damage. All made it across big red, and we had a few extra goes, because it was there of course! Back and forth for the fun of it. Greg also had seconds in the red ute.

Slow going for the first dozen sand dunes until everyone followed the trip leader's advice and let their tyres down till the vehicles would float over the sand easily. We crossed the Eyre Creek and avoided having to do the bypass track thanks to Laurie the Legend who was game enough to try the crossing and we all had no problems, and it saved us quite a bit of time.





Robbo had the biggest flag. Prize for size. At the end of the day we camped in wind low visibility conditions 3km from Poeppel Corner, after a very hard day on the dunes. With high winds and nearly everyone needing 2<sup>nd</sup> tries or to be snatched forward or back, except for beginners Greg and Tom in Stan's red ute who was the only vehicle that made it all the way under their own steam without any help! Well Done. Bryn saw our first camel and was very excited.

Robbo the Rocket and Laurie in front, Barbed Wire Bruce close behind helped out with a few tows until everyone got the hang of it.

Police headed out to Poeppel Corner to recover a vehicle buried in the sand. The driver had set off

an E-pirb. Dave nearly backed over Doreen, and she got a fright. Kids all had fun and we made over 250 dunes for day one!

**Wednesday 23rd** 0830 is a good time to make a start, before the desert winds gets going around 9 as the sun warms the sand. Barb heard on her handy little transistor radio that Sydney Airport had to be closed because of a huge dust cloud. That was us! First couple of hours were clear of dust. Group photo at Poeppel corner and then back to the K1 line. Live moving sand dunes covered the road. Tough going long day. Dave lost his glasses heading back to rescue Campbell.

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>** Bryn's Birthday. 0830 start again and some more good sand dunes. 183km to Purnie Bore. Met a French couple headed east on their own, no UHF. Another 2 hired Prado's again with no UHF radios. Tour Bus and support vehicle also with no UHF radios.

No rescue for Greg and Tom all the way across. Arrived at Pernie Bore at 1830 and some early birds had showers and set up camp. Bryn's stars were her candles and sang happy birthday. All presented Bryn with a lovely card and Barbara authored a clever poem for Bryn to remember her desert 11<sup>th</sup> birthday. Laurie had some damage to his sway bars and the Troopie had a bit of a lean on top of a dune and was snatched back to upright. We all enjoyed Barb's nickname for the passenger handle in the cab – her B-jesus bar! Barry was admirable as Tail End Charlie (TEC) Rocket Robbo spent some time on the launching pad ready for take off, and powered across a particularly large and tricky dune. With his larger than large sand flag like a beacon in the sky and his bull bar blasting through the sand he landed safely on four wheels, on the other side.

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup>** We left Pernie Bore and sighted a group of camels 9 adults and 4 babies. Wind had come up and was blowing sand around again. Dalhousie for a swim, and morning tea. Shower was cold but lovely at 28 degrees. Then lunch at Mt Dare, Fuel and the shopping trolley got a flat front left tyre 10km from the pub. Pies and drinks all round. Clean cutlery and plates with no sand on them was very nice. Most rang home to find it was raining and cold with snow down to 800metres. Hail and rain were predicted for the AFL grand final. It was 30 degrees at Mt Dare and Hot.

We Left Barbed Wire Bruce, Laurie, Barb and John at Dalhousie to fix Laurie's cruiser and the party split as planned to take separate routes back to Victoria. Robbo decided to leave us at Mt Dare to head to Kulgera for the night and then on to places unknown. We enjoyed spending time with Tom who is a very clever mimic and had us in stitches with his rendition of Little Britton. He was great company with his interest in the animal life and tree climbing while Elly was quiet but she told us she was enjoying the desert trip very much.



We turned north and headed to Lambert's Centre of Australia, via Finke. We met up with Robbo who was on the way out as we drove in. Camping at Lambert's centre for the night. It was very windy and blew the rear tent poles down twice.

Robbo's forgotten port was put to good effect by those left in the group, in particular Jeannie found it quite enjoyable into the evening. It proved to be efficacious in loosening the tongue and assisting with the revelation of the desire for a personal cow to deliver milk on a daily basis to the back door by cocking its leg. Listeners were enthralled with the image but how the milk would make it into the cup of tea and cereal bowl was somewhat unclear as the author was distracted at the vital point by the appearance of the beloved and his gorgeous legs, which listeners all agreed emphatically were quite nice.

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> Left at 0830 into a routine with morning packing up by now, and stopped at Finke for some to re-fuel although being grand final day it was dubious if service would be available, however success to those who persisted and waited until the clocked ticked over to the limited opening hours. The rest of the party awaited for them outside town.

We followed the old Ghan railway north to Alice Springs. Counted 14 dead cars on the side of the road "spotto". We checked out the Finke Desert Race track, looked at the Aboriginal carvings and the old Ghan rail remnants and travelled along the new 2WD road being constructed to allow Tourists to do a loop from Alice Springs to Chambers Pillar and around to Uluru.



Arrived mid afternoon into the McDonald Ranges Caravan park on the south side of the Gap, Stan's favourite park in Alice. The kids spread out and had a wonderful time on the playground equipment particularly the huge jumping trampoline which is as large as a basketball court, the hire bikes and pedal powered carts, and the pool tables and the games room. A fantastic feed of Fish and Chips for tea was obtained from the Shark and Shavings shop opposite the information centre, around the corner from the Mall. The girls all had a lovely cappuccino with 'real' milk in the Mall while waiting for our order.

On the way home to Vic we toured the Painted desert, stayed a night underground in swags or sleeping bags. The shopping trolley needed a replacement starter motor in Coober Pedy so tool man Barry stayed for moral support while a replacement started was delivered from Adelaide. Home via Crystal brook and the Burra.

Bethne

Andrew James  
Director



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