



EXPERIENCES

An occasionally regular newsletter to our friends.

Issue 3
Winter 2000

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Briefly:

- **National 4x4 Show**, Melbourne Exhibition Centre, 19~22nd October, 2000. For the third year in succession we will have a stand there. Please drop in and see us there!
- **Gippsland 4WD Centre** in Traralgon, local ARB agents, have been working with us organising day trips for their customers. The aim of these days is to demonstrate in action the use of some of the 4WD accessories they supply and fit. They also provide a BBQ lunch, so it's a great way to meet others in a fun day of 4WDing. For further details contact David Taylor on 5174 1560.

Hi friends,

There are times in this business when we realise that we really are where we're meant to be. Take the day in February when I had our Land Rover Defender parked in the main street of Walhalla, waiting for passengers for the "Copper Mine Adventure". Out of the blue someone approached me asking "Do you want another one of those vehicles?"

"Well I'm not really looking for one" I replied, "but tell me about it." It turned out that I was talking to the Managing Director of a successful agricultural supply business who runs a fleet of 45 vehicles, one of which was a well used and no longer required Defender which he was offering to me at a very attractive price. Whether it was that I was a like-minded Walhalla supporter and Land Rover nut, or if it was just his generous nature, I don't know. However after agreeing to purchase the vehicle he sent it to his mechanic with the instruction: "The person who is buying this vehicle needs it to be reliable, so everything you can find that needs fixing, fix it." I later obtained a computer print-out from the mechanic three pages long! Then before we had even paid a deposit he drove the vehicle down to Morwell, handed Andrea the keys, and caught the train back to Melbourne saying: "Drive it around a bit and pay me when you're ready." Finally, when the new tyres that he had fitted turned out to be not our preferred choice, he said: "Get them changed and charge any cost difference to me."

Well, we still had a lot of hard work to do to clean it up and prepare it for business use as a passenger and rental vehicle, but it's now part of the fleet with Ian "Inspector Gadget" McCowat as owner/operator. This means we now have five business vehicles with a total seating capacity for 40 passengers.

Q: So which one is the newest addition?



Despite warnings, we all survived! (Labour Day long weekend)

Spinning Stories on the Web

Increasing numbers of people are now finding our web site www.latrobe.net.au/camier, which is updated monthly, especially with news items at the top of the home page. We also have been adding information and links to other sites in order to make it more of a resource on all sorts of subjects of interest to our customers. Examples include the Baw Baw snow page now carrying everything people need to know for planning a trip to the alpine resort there. The Walhalla heritage page is soon to be updated similarly. Also we have joined the Rover Web-ring, so we are now one of about 50 world-wide sites of interest to Land Rover gonzos. We are finding that overseas 4WD enthusiasts visiting Australia are blown away by the fantastic mountain areas we have available in eastern Victoria, and the opportunity to drive themselves by

Briefly:

- **GST impact:** As of 1st of July life is going to be a little more expensive for all of us. At Mountain-Top Experience we have decided that we will not increase any of our prices at present. We are small enough that we don't have to register for GST (but we have an ABN), plus the cost of having to reprint our brochures would be substantial. Instead, our aim is to maintain profitability by ongoing growth in customer numbers. We are encouraged in this by 80% growth over the past year.
- **Discount reminder:** As this newsletter primarily goes to our past customers it is opportune to remind you that a 10% discount still applies to our standard rates when booking a second or subsequent trip. Often past customers have kindly introduced new people to our business, so this is one way of expressing our thanks.
- We're in: "What's on in Baw Baw", Winter 2000, "Out There Australia, 2000", "Mt Baw Baw 2000", "Gippsland Has It All", Winter 2000.

Losing Your Bearings!

Once upon a time, in response to millions of complaints about Land-Rovers leaking oil, company chairman Lord Diprotodon decreed that "something would be done". So as a nominal gesture the rear wheel bearings were packed with grease and inner axle seals were installed to prevent oil from the diff entering the hub and leaking out when the hub seal failed. This reversed a half-century tradition by copying Toyota Land-cruiser practice. Well the masses cheered. "When will they pack gearboxes and engines with grease as well!" we exclaimed!

However the result was that there was now no indication when the hub seal was worn out, and water and mud began entering the hub. Furthermore the quantity of grease applied by the scotsman on the assembly line ensured that the axle and other internal parts of the hub had no protection against corrosion. So flakes of rust were added to the grinding paste now lubricating the bearings!

Why am I telling you all this? I am writing while stranded in Mallacoota waiting for \$750 worth of parts to arrive following a wheel bearing collapse on my Defender. The driving flange had parted company with the axle and only the brake disk stopped the wheel from falling off! As well as the repairs and 4-day delay, can be added lost wages and towing and accommodation costs.

Curiously none of my previous Land-Rovers have had any wheel bearing problems over 27 years, and after about 10 years I even gave up carrying spares! This Defender has only done 110,000 km, so in my idle time a check of the other wheel bearings showed the other rear one to have the grease almost dried out, whereas the front ones were quite OK because they still use oil lubrication!

So what is the solution? If you own a post-1992 Defender, Discovery or Range Rover which has done over 100,000 km have a look

at the rear wheel bearings now, and convert them back to the previous design simply by removing the inner axle seal. It is accessible by removing the brake caliper, complete hub assembly and stub axle (special tools required: circlip pliers and hub nut spanner). I am hearing anecdotal evidence that many vehicles are now reaching the age where an epidemic of these hub/axle failures is starting to occur.



PS: Since writing the original of this article, and circulating it to a number of Land Rover Owners Clubs worldwide, I have heard more stories of how common these hub bearing failures are becoming. Also, when dismantling to remove the inner axle seal always replace the hub seal, preferably with the earlier County type, which is designed for oil service. Another option for newer vehicles is simply to remove the axle and poke a hot wire down the axle tube to melt a few holes in the in-



Mt Murray Mission trip (Easter) - Fantastic scenery, but probably our coldest night's camping ever. We wondered whether it was possible to suffer dehydration from nose-dripping and eye-watering! (Dawn at the summit)

Andy's Peanut Bikkies

Amongst the special extras that we try to have on trips sometimes is a little home baking. In response to requests for this recipe here it is !

125g butter or margarine
1 cup sugar
1 egg
1 cup self-raising flour
1 cup rolled oats
½ cup chopped salted peanuts

1 cup corn flakes

Cream together butter and sugar. Add egg and beat well. Fold in sifted flour. Work in the rolled oats, peanuts and corn-flakes. Blend well.

Place teaspoonfuls on greased oven trays leaving room for spreading. Bake in hot oven (200°C) for 10 minutes until lightly golden brown. Cool on racks then store in airtight container.



Food: The prime part of any 4WD trip?!



Inspector Gadget

The frantic pace of life for Ian and Rita continues unabated. Since our last newsletter, projects have included major kitchen renovations, ducted heating system installation, and spray painting two cars. Setting up the new Land Rover Defender has been a significant effort for both Ron and Ian. Looking to the future, as an adjunct to "Mountain-Top Experience", Ian has set up "MTE4x4" as a business mainly aimed at manufacturing our unique range of 4WD accessories. These include a quick-action rear awning for attachment to roof racks/bars (\$500), high strength roof bars which can carry anything from skis to roof-top tents (\$90), in-vehicle computer mounts (\$250), and handy bull-bar shovel mounts (\$90).



Rear awning for convenient access to your gear when it's raining!

Peter & Penny

The latest chapter in our "soapie saga" of the newlyweds is that they finally got around to having a honeymoon in April. However they forsook the 4WD for some motorbike touring to the Barossa Valley in SA!



Getting away from 4WDing and honeymooning as well.



Border Track Deserts

Experience the stillness of the desert, the challenge of the big dunes, and desert wildflowers at their best.

Sat 4th ~ Tue 7th November (Cup Day Long Weekend, 4 days), \$280/vehicle

CENTRALIA WITH INSPECTOR GADGET

See the icons of the Macdonnell Ranges, Uluru, Palm Valley, Chambers Pillar and the Finke River Gorge. 4WD off the beat track with the back-up security of the Gadget mobile!

Aug/Sept (3-4 weeks)
\$490/vehicle tag along

SNOWEXPED I-



Join our 4WD wagon train forging through the high country in winter. One day optional XC skiing/tobogganing and one day 4WD exploring.

Aug/Sept, date to be set
(Fri night & weekend),
\$140/vehicle or passenger,
plus cabin accommodation

The Leap of Faith !

Make a splash from the broken dam. Xtreme rock-climbing by 4WD. Camp out in pristine wilderness. A sensational weekend for teenagers!

Summer holidays
(2 days, 2 nights)
\$140/vehicle or
passenger



The Last Word: Quotes from mail we've received.

- "We're all in the reality of our routine of daily life, but our memories of the trip are still putting a smile on our faces."
 - "I have been on a high all week talking about our Sunday trip, so I thought I had better say thank you... and I have no doubt we will see you again."
 - "Your presence was reassuring and we all learned a great deal. You are a great teacher (not just the driving bit). As a non-4x4 driver I was able to concentrate more on the scenery."
 - "Everyone enjoyed it very much. You looked after us very well. The scenery... was absolutely magnificent... Please put on your thinking cap for another 4WD trip early next year. I am sure I won't have any difficulties getting another group... together"
- Thanks everyone for your encouragement - it's the people we meet who are the greatest reward in this business. Regards, Ron, Andrea and the team.

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A: Yes it's the one on the left.